

REVOLUTIONARY AESTHETICS IN AFRICAN NOVEL: A POST-COLONIALIST STUDY OF AYI KWEI ARMAH'S *TWO THOUSAND SEASONS* AND YAMBO OUOLOGUEM'S *BOUND TO VIOLENCE*

BY

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SPS/12/MEN/00043

BEING A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES, BAYERO UNIVERSITY KANO, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN ENGLISH (LITERATURE)

AUGUST, 2016

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is written by me and that it is a record of my own research efforts, undertaken under the supervision of Professor Mustapha Muhammad. It has not been submitted or presented to any institution for the same purpose or submitted in any previous application for the award of higher degree or certificate. All sources have been duly acknowledged by means of references at the foot of this thesis.

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CERTIFICATION

This thesis has been examined and approved for the award of the Degree of
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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my dearest loving mother, Hajiya Hassatu Ibrahim: my beloved wife Maryam Mansur and my children: Abubakar, Asma'u Aminu, Aisha, Abdullahi and Abdruhman, May Allah bless them all, amen!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my profound gratitude to God Almighty whose Grace kept me through the course of this program. However, this thesis could not have been successful without the helping hands of my mentor. I therefore wish to express my deep sense of appreciation and sincere gratitude to my father, mentor, role model and above all my supervisor, Professor Mustapha Muhammad for his meticulous supervision of this work. My heartfelt and cheerful gratitude goes to my internal supervisor, Professor Muhammad O. Bhadmous, who despite all odds, stood by me to see that this work becomes a success. I thank you for your guidance and patience without which this work would not have been possible. My gratitude also goes to my Head of Department, Dr. Amina Adamu, my Post graduate coordinator, Dr Rabi Ibrahim for their concern to see to the successful completion of this work. My special gratitude goes to all my lecturers especially to professor Ibrahim Bello Kano and Professor Isma'ila Tsiga, Professor Ahmad Babura whose scrutiny, comments and criticisms have kept this work from falling apart. I thank you for being there at a time when I need you the most.

My gratitude also goes to my mother, my late brother and father, Alkali Kabir Ibrahim, My dear wife, my colleagues, friends, brothers and sisters and finally to all for your encouragement and moral support given to me. I thank you all.

ABSTRACT

The study investigates the extent to which African continent over decades became an object of Arabs and European attention. As a result of that original relationship, several European literary writers and their history counterparts have misrepresented or distorted African history and culture in their writing. In this study therefore, post colonial theory is used as the theoretical framework to analyze how African revolutionary writers have reacted against this misrepresentation with close reference to two texts: Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* and Yambo Onuologuem's *Bound to Violence*. It was found out that, through revolutionary recreation of history and culture, the perception that Africa was a cultural and historical desert until the advent of the white man could be corrected. Although the two authors share similar vision of reconstructing out history, the application of the theory in unveiling the thematic preoccupation of these writers coupled with the use of the medium of symbolisms by these writers to distort their misrepresentation posed a problem to the study. It is the aim of this study to undertake a critical and programmatic re-reading of the two primary texts in order to highlight the complex nature of both the European misrepresentation of Africa and the specific responses of the two authors under study to this misrepresentation.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

It would be impossible to understand and appreciate what African literature stands for, as well as determining its revolutionary aesthetics/development without delving into its historical past. Thus, in the search for an understanding and appreciating its revolutionary aesthetics, the limits of enquiry have had to be fixed as far back as the colonial period. In all aspects, the European colonization of Africa was a complete destruction of the black man's sense of personal worth and dignity. It was achieved in violence and was made possible by the use of some kind of force and coercion against Africans.

The parceling out of pieces of African real estate to diverse European powers as a result of Berlin conference of 1885, ushered in a new era of imperial subjugation that has been termed as the colonial experience. In Anglophone countries of West Africa, the colonial system was set up and sustained by an unremitting application of force. The colonisers exploited their initial superior of military and technological power to overcome and subjugate the natives. They use force to pacify the colonial territory and employed its monopoly of superior force and the system of indirect rule to keep the colonised people down and ensure that political and economic control rested with them.

Within the Francophone countries of West Africa, the effect of colonialism did not only share glaring resemblance with their Anglophone counter-part but fed with a dehumanizing pill through the politics of Assimilation. In this regard, the French introduced a system of education geared towards making the Black man a French man with distaste for his root and culture while claiming alliance with French.

The showpiece of British colonialism in East Africa was an extension of the obtaining precedence in West Africa. Having imposed its rule and hegemony, the European settlers, took control of the productive forces of the colonised and thus the wealth produced by them. Through a white settler presence, the British took control of both the economic, political, cultural, and ideological aspects of the people. They imposed an educational system which denied the colonised real knowledge about the wealth produced in the land. Going down North and South Africa, it is discovered that the inhuman nature of the white man knew no bounds. While the situation in Northern Africa shared similar traces with those of West and East Africa, that of South Africa was characterized by racial discrimination through the apartheid system.

The impact of colonialism on Africans provoked a divergence, although bulk of the writes from Africa wrote primarily as a revolt against the expatriate oppressor. While the Francophone writers of West Africa were concerned with

cultural emancipation, the Anglophone writers of West Africa indulged in the proclamation of political freedom. In most of these writings, we are confronted by an aggressive exposure of the African situation- one which has witnessed a cultural destruction. The African writers, therefore make a plea on all Africans not to seek the truth of their cultural heritage.

Most African writers (novelists, poets, dramatists) highlight more vividly the innate corruptness of our elites, who having given the mantle of leadership devised new corrupt ways of looting our treasury. The writers take a critical look at the lifestyle of the totality of the ruling elites which is characterized by affluence, selfishness and several other evils.

From the above analysis, African literature seems to embrace most of the experience of the African-world-modern and historical- and is forever geared towards re-awaking the consciousness of the black man.

1.2 On Revolutionary Aesthetics

In this study, revolutionary aesthetics is not considered in its wider perspective but rather in its connection with post colonial writers whose style of writing and their thematic preoccupation witnessed a radical change in depicting vividly the best of who we have been, who we have become and who we still can and must be. Revolutionary aesthetic in its aesthetic form-as that philosophy of art

that encompasses the principles by which work of art should be interpreted and judged- is viewed in this study as the prime aim of the two primary authors which is revolutionary recreation of art with a view to critically and radically depict an object in its realistic form.

Revolutionary aesthetics in Africa has taken root, though not in the advanced, mature and openly ideological and programmatic form it manifests itself in the erstwhile Soviet Union and the European countries that were previously socialist. It is still the most decisive method and the prime mover of African literary process. The emergence of this tendency in African literature is explained by the vast limitations of critical realism in correctly apprehending the crisis of Africa and advancing genuine solutions for their removal; the increasing aggressive fascist and pro-imperialist nature of many an African state: the upsurge in the rebellion and revolt of the mass of exploited; and the decisive intellectual current sweeping African Universities that favour left wing ideology until lately.

Revolutionary aesthetics is a reaction to a given world situation in specific context, and established this reaction in a variety of manners, forms, genres, all these having a direct bearing on reality.

Revolutionary aesthetics is a specific, particular and far from universal method in aesthetics of alternative tradition and is distinct from other authentic aesthetic formulations that owe allegiance to that alternative ideology.

Revolutionary aesthetics has very specific and identifiable features as an aesthetic category and ideological weapon, some of which are service to the people and adherence to partisanship, close bonds with the working people's struggles, historical optimism, rejection of formalism and subjectivism, and of nationalist primitivism.

Revolutionary aesthetics is realism enriched by the ideas of classical and critical realism, by the accumulated experience of all progressive and genuine realistic depiction of objective reality. It is nothing more than enriching realism tradition by revolutionary humanism, which are realistically depicting the fight against imperialism, wars, and are for national liberation.

Revolutionary aesthetics as a giant step in the stride of mankind's artistic and cultural development, grew out of concrete experiences, and as a methodological system is not to be judged only by its formal elements, but also by its revolutionary content which is based on a logical cognition of reality.

A glance at most critical analysis of revolutionary works in Africa reveals that critics are merely interested in looking at the unity of ideas and homology of

content in the works and at the ideological position of the writer, without a close scrutiny of the level of class consciousness, historical conditions, and the resolution of the conflicts indicated in them. Whether the works are written within a space of decades is not important; whether they apprehend colonial or neo-colonial reality is not vital; what is crucial for the critics is that the writers have revolutionary sympathies and, therefore, their works are infused with revolutionary humanism and ideals.

In other words, politics and ideology, the level of class consciousness and political awareness, the broadness of the issues at stake, the form and pattern of revolutionary struggle and the tactics and strategies of revolutionary agitation, more than and above the time the work is written or published are what determine the earliness or presentness of revolutionary aesthetics in Africa.

However, if there is to be a present stage in the development of revolutionary aesthetics in Africa, then the works to be considered have to show maturer, clearer and sharper embodiment of the above stated criteria. Is the class struggle now more bitter than before, thus meaning that the works will definitely progress more than the earlier ones? Is political consciousness higher now than then? These questions will determine whether there is progress in the dialectics of revolutionary aesthetics apprehension of reality, for they are the socio-historical

factors that could generate the positive artistic vision required, and the equally critical responses desired.

Revolutionary aesthetics is the successor to all the genuine realist practice of art throughout the ages, incorporating the best artistic methods of all the epochs and periods of human history, creatively enriching them, expanding them and accommodating all their humanistic values. As a logical extension of artistic epistemology in its varied forms- both in cognition and creative practice- it harnesses all the variables of aesthetic thought for the service of man. As an artistic movement and methodological system, revolutionary aesthetics is not just an heir to past artistic cultures, but a qualitatively new artistic formation. Revolutionary changes purvey new reality- in all its multi-forms and multi- valences- and though necessarily sustaining a link with artistic practices of the past-has created a new artistic practice corresponding to the new revolutionary reality.

As pointed out earlier, revolutionary aesthetics- if all its main features are closely studied, analyzed and noted, if all its extensive possibilities are scrutinized, and if all its diverse manifestations and mutations are periscoped- will be seen as the missing link in African literature, the prime - mover of African literary thought and the main determinant of African literary process.

In summation therefore, the African revolutionary artists are foremost radicals who, correctly understanding and interpreting African socio-economic development, have come to the conclusion that only revolutionary alternative in all spheres, including literature, would draw us out of the dead alley of both colonial and neo-colonial rape and plunder.

1.3 African literature:

It is axiomatic that a people's literature evolves out of their individual and communal experiences. In the works of African writers, there is a harmonious interplay of history and tradition. African literatures are more shaped by social, cultural, political and intellectual factors. This becomes the medium through which cultural sentiments are expressed and projected. Africans have, for a long time, been subjected to cultural imposition and displacement of their indigenous cultures.

African literature refers to the literature of and from Africa. While the European perception of literature generally refers to written letters, the African concept includes oral literature. African writers, taking their cue from oral literature, use beauty to help communicate important truths and information to the society. Indeed, an object is considered beautiful because of the truths it reveals and the communities it helps to build. African oral literature may be in prose or

verse. The prose is often mythological or historical and can include tales of the trickster character.

Storytellers in Africa sometimes use call-and-response techniques to tell their stories. Poetry, often sung, includes: narrative epic, occupational verse, ritual verse, praise poems to rulers and other prominent people. Praise singers, bards sometimes known as “griots”, tell their stories with music. Also recited, often sung, are: love songs, work songs, children’s songs, along with epigrams, proverbs and riddles.

Oral literature, including stories, dramas, riddles, histories, myths, songs, proverbs, and other expressions, is frequently employed to educate and entertain children. Oral histories, myths and proverbs additionally serve to remind the whole communities of their ancestor’s heroic deeds, their past, and the precedents for their customs and traditions.

In the colonial period, Africans exposed to western languages began to write in those tongues (French, Portuguese, and English). The African works best known in the west from the period of colonisation and the slave trade are primarily slave narratives such as Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789). Although these works move between fiction and political advocacy, its publication and positive reviews in the western press mark a watershed moment in African literature.

African literature in the late colonial period (between the end of World War 1 and independence) increasingly showed themes of liberation, independence and (among Africans in French-controlled territories) negritude. One of the leaders of the negritude movement (a literary movement on the part of French-speaking African and Caribbean writers who lived in Paris during the 1930's, 40s and 50s), the poet and eventual president of Senegal, Leopold Sedar Senghor, published the first anthology of French-language poetry written by Africans in 1948. After World War II, as Africans began to demand for their independence, more African writers were published. Such writers as, in western Africa, Wole Soyinka, Achebe, Sembene, Agostinho.

With liberation and increased literacy, since most African nations gained their independence in the 1950s and 1960s, African literature has grown dramatically in quantity and in recognition, with numerous African works appearing in western academic curricula and on best lists compiled at the end of 20th century. African writers in this period wrote both in foreign languages and in traditional African languages. Consequently, as Africans became literate in their own languages, they often reacted against colonial repression in their writings, others looked to their own past for subjects. Thomas Mofolo, for example, wrote *Chaka* (1931) about the famous Zulu Military Leader in Susuto. P'Bitek, Okot's *Song of lawino* (1966) and *Song of Ocol* (1970), and often shared the same themes:

the clash between indigenous and colonial cultures, condemnation of European subjugation, pride in the African past, and hope for the continent's independent future. Similarly, much of contemporary African literature reveals disillusionment and dissent with current events.

Thus, the major developments and themes of African literature have undergone many transformations through history and passed through phases/generations in its development in the past five centuries. This is as a result of the experiences of the different parts of the continent coupled with the situations at hand, over a particular period of time.

The thematic preoccupation of the pioneering phase of African writers (1930s and 1940s), which include Negritude writers of French expression is that of writers in 'exile' keenly aware of being colonials, whose identity was under siege. It was that of protest against exploitation and racial discrimination, of agitation for political independence, of nostalgic evocation of Africa's past and vision for her future.

However, although these were themes common to writers of both English and French expression, the obvious differences between them have been the intensity with which they felt their physical exile from Africa coupled with their exposure to the experimental contemporary modes of writing in France, the style of

the francophone writers was more vigorous. The Anglophone writers on the other hand, did not feel the same compulsion to explore their own artistic background and seemed satisfied with poorly imitating the English Victorian poets and the tradition of hymn writings. More so, the pioneer writer's technique was slacked or borrowed or suffered from patches of clumsiness. There was a cryptic Linguistic convulsion displayed in much of their writings. They were also writing for others, not for Africans as Okigbo and Soyinka were known to have attested to it. Thus:

**Somehow I believe I am writing for other writers
poets all over the world to read and see) (Okigbo
P:135). I don't think I need to bother my head ... at
all about the audience (Soyinka P: 177).**

These pioneer writers were committed to the idea of the progress of the black race, Christianity and heroism. Thus, a historical perspective in which the protest movement of the 1930s and 1940s gave way to the crisis of identity which accompanied the attainment of political independence by African states in the late 50s and early 60s.

With the formal termination of the imposed European rule and the resultant transfer of power to the Africans, the colonisers finally acknowledged the inevitability, and even desirability, of that process in the years following World War II, when they began the belated work of cultivating suitable Africans to assume power on the departure of their European rulers, the transformation still

progresses. African literature as an integral part of that transformation essentially a twentieth – century phenomenon, came into being.

The transitional phase of 1950s and 1960s African literature is characterized by its competent and articulate use of the received European language, its unforced grasp of Africa's physical, cultural, and socio-political environment and often its lyricism. This phase is noted for the satiric and deflationary tone of the writers anxiety to debunk false positions taken by their immediate predecessor. These writers, living in a period of transition, expressed the unease at the crossroad between two cultures and the feelings of ambivalence about colonialism that ultimately translates into culture conflict. Their writings were characterized by freshness of imagery, innovative use of language and utilization of African experience. They criticized the rampant corruption that followed political independence and chronicled the political and social ills of their time. Thus, there was the significant absence of experimentation with the European medium of expression in this phase, although, the African environment is there in the lexical items and themes, but was not fully harvested.

In the mid -1960s and Early 1970s, another phase of African writers began to emerge: the modernist phase. During this phase, the writers turn more and more inward towards personal exploration and the discovery of their roots in the traditions of their ancestors. They think of themselves more as artists rather than as

politicians and the forging of links with the artistic traditions of Africa was steadily undertaken. By modernist phase, it refers to the awareness, under the impact of early twentieth century metropolitan practices. This awareness led to the experimentation with oral material, such as the translation from Ewe dirges which abound in Kofi Awoonor's poetry in the 1960s. In East Africa, experimentation took a more deliberate form early in the work of someone like Okot P' Bitek, who started by collecting folk-tales and songs in the vernacular. Perhaps, the outstanding characteristics of this phase are in the writer's self-conscious search for techniques from native traditions as a means of extending and authenticating their sensibility. These writers are products of a period in which many witnessed civil wars, military coups, dictatorships and other evil vices.

Subsequently, the contemporary phase which has no absolute distinction between it and the modernist phase is what Africa is now experiencing. The contemporary writers are highly educated, who shed those imitated techniques from the older writers to chart and refine their own individual craft. They appear to reject the western initiative aspects found in the techniques of the earlier generations. They are products of a period in which many witnessed civil wars, military coups, apartheid, military/civilian, dictatorships and other forms of social, economic and political instability. And as a result, they see themselves as agents of change, often directing their effort at local sociopolitical and economic issues, and

raging against the social ills of corruption, injustice and economic mismanagement. They therefore write in the hope of moving their societies towards greater social freedom and at the same time, believing in human possibilities and are convinced of the abundant inner resources of ordinary Africans. They reflect not a clash of cultures between Africans and Europeans, but, mainly class based conflicts. They indeed, attain the appropriation of Africa's spiritual heritage. For in them 'custom' has indeed become the spreading laurel 'tree.' The intensity of their understanding of the traditional aesthetics has made their exploration and their grasp of the contemporary situation firmer and their writings more expressive and more resonant.

Goodwin 1982, in *Understanding African Poetry* has this to say:

The first significant stage in the formation of contemporary African literature in English was ... Emancipation from 19th century cultural imperialism... (Goodwin 1982p:ix).

However, African writers have not abandoned the debate over language and form, and its search for the most appropriate narrative style and aesthetics. Adeola James, in an Article says:

Our literature must be seen as part of the struggle for the Liberation of Africa, Politically and morally. It must reflect a full respect for the value of human life, our aspirations and that of humanity in general... any creative writing by an African where the writer is

motivated not by the desire to speak his mind about the African Dilemma but by the desire to please a foreign audience, deserves not to be classified as African literature. (July 1969, P: 6-9).

1.4 On the primary texts

Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), written during Armah's stay in Tanzania, marks the author's search for a narrative mode that would approximate to more genuinely African forms and more revolutionary than that of his previous books. The book postulates the indigenous African way of life anterior to both pre-colonial and colonial corruptions, the dogma of 'the way' which opposes the ideals of communality, creation, connectedness and reciprocity to the selfish individualism, destructive fragmentation and exploitative relationship, that feature in the contemporary Ghana (Africa) of the early books.

In the same vein, Yambo Ouloguem's *Bound To Violence* is a revolutionary literary realist in orientation, in its violent attack of the Arab, European and African compradors.

1.5 Problem statement

As this study is concerned with how post colonial African writers reacted to the distortion, misrepresentation and to some extent neglect of the African culture, history and origin by the European literary writers and their history counterparts, the application of the study theory (post colonial theory) as its theoretical framework in the interpretation of the texts posed a problem to be study. This is because the European writers used medium of symbolisms (mostly) in distorting African history and culture, as the post colonial African writers also used medium of symbolisms in counter attacking what has been said or written about them. However, a close scrutiny to the connotative meanings attached to those symbolisms and their sources by this research helps in unveiling, and appreciating the post colonialist analysis of the two primary texts of the study.

1.6 Research questions

1. Have the African continent been represented properly by European Literary writers and their history counterparts?
2. Have the way Africa is depicted by Europeans been counter-attacked by the indigenous African writers?
3. Can one discover qualitative changes in the content, perspective and form in recent/ present revolutionary works in Africa?

4. Is it distinct from the concern of the supposedly early works of African writers?
5. Are the works of the writers of post colonial period infused with revolutionary depiction of the African continent?

1.7 Aim and objectives of the study

The aim of this research is to unveil how African writers have reacted against their misrepresentation by non Africans through revolutionary recreation of history as told by insiders (writing back) from their own point of view.

1. To discover primarily if the African continent has been represented properly by European Literary writers and their history counterparts.
2. To show how the two authors selected share the same vision in counter-attacking Africa's misrepresentation and redirecting the level of consciousness, historical condition and how the books reflect revolutionalist zeals of Africa.
3. To show that post colonial literature is a literature of commitments, of the negation of all that colonialism stands for.
4. To discover the radical and revolutionary shift in the depiction of African history, culture, character and characterization by the African writers.

1.8 Scope and limitation

This research is limited to the two primary texts mentioned in the title: Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* and Yambo's *Bound To Violence*. They are chosen because of the pertinence to the topic as that they both enact/depict certain revolutionary resistance that took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's pre colonial, colonial and neo-colonial African situation.. The work also keeps in bounds of the revolutionary shades of these texts, with post-colonial theory as the yardstick.

1.9 Significance of the study

The significance of this study is to create awareness about how revolutionary aesthetics in the post-colonial discourses aids the decolonisation process in most post-colonial countries and to show how revolutionary works, especially in Africa, awakens the consciousness of the African community, as well as contributes to the restoration of national pride, dignity and integrity. Its significance is profound for all Africans fighting to reclaim out stolen land and resources, primarily because it tells a story built upon the progressive theories of African revolutionaries.

1.10 Theoretical framework

In order to substantiate my discussion on revolutionary aesthetics in African novel, post colonial theory has been used as the frame within which the study was

discussed. Post colonial theory is all about revolutionalization and critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and modes of discourse that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France and other European imperial powers. These studies have focused especially on the third world countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean Island and the South America. Some scholars, however, extend the scope of such analysis also to the discourse and cultural production of such countries as Australia, Canada and New Zealand, which achieve independence much earlier than the third world countries. Post colonial studies sometimes encompass also aspects of British literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, viewed through a perspective that reveals the extent to which the social and economic life represented in the literature was tacitly underwritten by colonial exploitation.

But since this study uses the theory only as a tool in unearthing the study's primary texts in the analytical chapters, and not the theory as a concept, emphasis was only paid on the basic elements of the theory that has a direct bearings with the topical concept of the study.

This study therefore focused on Edward said's view and ideas for the simple reason that Said is considered the one who laid the cornerstone of this theory (post colonial theory), despite the importance of other leading figures such as Gayatri Spivak, Homi, Bhabba and Frantz Fanon in this respect. Edward said, the

Palestinian-American, and the notable academic and lecturer, had been the professor of comparative literature at Columbia University for a long time until his death of leukemia in 2003. Said's name came to light when his book *Orientalism* was published in 1978 and laid the ground for the theory of post colonialism, sparking a storm of controversy, which didn't die with said's decease.

Said's theory of post colonialism is mainly based on what he considers the false image of the orient or the east that has been fabricated by western explorers, poets novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists and imperial administrators since Naoleon's occupation of Egypt in 1798. According to Said., these have always shown the orient as the primitive, uncivilized "other"., in an attempt to create it as the contrast to the advanced and civilized West. In his highly influential work, *Orientalism*, Said considers that "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident". Said believes that such discourse has been used either in preparation to military campaigns and colonialism against the orient or as a justification for the occupations and horrors that accompany them. He goes further, contending that it is quite misleading to consider that such horrors came to an end with the end of direct colonialism. On the contrary, he believes that the consequences of colonialism are still persisting in the form of chaos, coups, corruption, civil wars, and bloodshed; which pervade many of these countries,

mainly because of the residues of colonization. In this respect, Said believes that a powerful colonizer has imposed a language and a culture, whereas cultures, histories, values and languages of the Oriental people have been ignored and even distorted by the colonialists in their pursuit to dominate these peoples and exploit their wealth in the name of enlightening, civilizing and even humanizing them. What seems to be so infuriating to Said is that such peoples, who, in most cases have completely different cultures, have always been stereotyped by the so-called orientalists, who so simply cross out all the distinctions and national characteristics of these diverse cultures. Consequently, the colonial texts have depicted the Indians, the Egyptians, the Palestinians, the Latin Americans the Africans and many others as almost the same, the Orient, the “Other”, in juxtaposition with “Us”, the Occidental.

This view, however, infuriated and coincides with the concern of this study and hence the selection of the two authors who share the same post colonial view of revolutionizing the colonialists view on Africa as we shall see in the analytical chapters.

He describes the way the imperial West has always seen the Orient and how this view is obvious not only in many text written by early travelers and explorers, but also in important literary works of prominent writers. These texts, according to Said, are highly biased, depicting the Orient as irrational, strange, weak, feminized,

“other”, contrasted with the rational, familiar strong masculine West. He affirms that the West needs to show this difference so that it would legalize the domination of the superior “civilized” West over the inferior “primitive” East. He concludes that “The relationship between Occident and orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony”. In the *Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin support Said’s idea of the condescending view the West has always seen the Orient through, by showing how Africa and Africans, for example, appear in the eyes of Western writers and thinkers as not only the primitive and demonic “opposite to the angles of reasons and culture” but even to the extent that “Hegel could define the continent as being ‘outside history’.

In her landmark essay “can the Subaltern Speak?”. Gayatri Spivak deals with the problems of “how the third world subject is represented within Western discourse” (Brydon 1427). She shows that even now the powerless are unable to express themselves, and that the experiences of such groups are inevitably distorted by the perspectives of the elite, such as academics, who are describing them. According to her “certain varieties of the Indian elites are at best native informants for first world intellectuals interested in the voice of the other. But one must nevertheless insist that the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous”.

According to Said, the present is a mirror to the past, and it would be absolutely gullible to study it ignoring the role played by the colonialists in forming this

present. Consequently, Said contends, both histories of the colonizer and the colonized are inextricably interrelated and cannot be studied from a unilateral point of view. In the last chapter entitled “Orientalism Now”, Said draws a comparison between Conrad’s Marlow and Lamartine, pointing to the fact that both talk about “blank spaces on the earth”, while these blank spaces were inhabited by natives”. Such writing continued in the twentieth century by T.E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell, whose image of the Arabs is that of primitiveness and lack of wisdom. Said shows how such writers Eurocentrism and Ethnocentrism were, ironically enough, directed against both the “Muslims and Jews.

In view of the above, different cultures have responded to colonization in different ways making it impossible to subscribe to any single way of approaching post colonial studies. With those reservations in mind, the following assumptions and generalizations has by and large accepted as important to post colonial theory:

- Colonizers not only physically conquer territories but also practice *cultural colonization* by replacing the practices and beliefs of the native culture with their own values, governance, laws and beliefs. The consequences is loss or modification of much of the pre-colonial culture.
- When their own culture is forbidden or devalued, natives come to see themselves **as inferior to the conquerors**. They **abandon** (or hide) their

own cultural practices to adopt (imitate) those of the assumedly “**superior**” one.

- Colonial subjects practices **Mimicry**-imitation of dress, language, behavior, even gestures-instead of resistance. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Published in 1952, Franz Fanon, a psychiatrist, reasoned that the inferiority complex created in black people who have accepted the culture of another country as their own will cause them to imitate the codes of their colonizers. As the colonized become better educated and able to live as their white counterparts, they become increasingly imitative. Homi Bhabha points out that the mimicry is never exact, however. It ‘is at once resemblance and menace’. The colonizer both wants and fears that the colonized will be like him because the imitation honors and, at the same time, undermines the “authoritative discourse” of colonialism.
- European colonizers believed that their ideals and experiences were universal. As a concept, **universalism** is evident in the characters and themes in European (and, later, American) literature.
- The European colonizers assumed the superiority of their own culture and the inferiority of the conquered ones. They thought of themselves as civilized, even advanced, and of the colonists as backward, even savage. Using their own culture as the standard for what any culture should be, a

practice known as **Eurocentrism**, the powerful justified the imposition of their own culture on those they deemed to be of lesser status, the **subalterns**.

- The practice of **othering**, viewing those who are different from oneself as inferior beings, divides people and justifies hierarchies. Sometimes the dominant culture sees the “other” as evil, in which case it is known as the **demonic other**.
- On other occasions, the “**other**” is deemed to have a natural beauty to be the **exotic other**.
- Colonizers also become the colonized. In this two-way process, the Europeans too were affected by their contact with other cultures.
- The effects of past colonialism are still evident today and a new form of colonialism is currently effected by international corporations operating in developing nations.
- The interaction of cultures creates blended ones, mixtures of the native and colonial, a process called **hybridity** or **syncretism**. Characterized by tensions and change, this process is dynamic, interactive and creative. As Bhabha explained, “For me, hybridization is a discursive, enunciatory, cultural, subjective process having to do with the struggle around authority authorization and the revision of authority. It’s a social process. Its about persons of diverse cultural tastes and fashions.

The subject matter of post colonial literature is marked by its concern for ambiguity or loss of identity. Written by culturally displaced people, it investigates the clash of cultures in which one culture deems itself to be the superior one and imposes its own practices on the less powerful one. Its writers examine their histories, question how they should respond to the changes they see around them, and wonder what their society will become. They recognize in themselves the old culture and the new, elements of the native one and the imposed one. The result is writing that is critical of the conquerors and promotional about its own ideologies.

Hence, the emergence of revolutionary writers in Africa, writing back to the metropolitans from the African perspective. The African writer found his image of the past distorted, and through his colonial middle-class education, he found that he had no history and that the black man did not really exist, that he had slept in a dark continent until the living stones and the Stanley woke him into history through a gentle prod and with a Bible and a gun. Hence the use of the traditional African symbols and images in depicting the true image of both parties by African writers as we shall see in the post colonialists analysis of the two primary texts.

What the African novelist/writer has attempted to do therefore is to restore and revolutionalises the African character, history and culture to its history. He has turned his back and revolt against his misrepresentation and distortion by American/European writers and has given back to the African character the will to

act and change the scheme of things. Writers like Ayi Kwei Armah and Yambo Ouologuem have paved the way. These writers (African) have had the chance to write about themselves, to speak of themselves outside the frame they have for long been put into and given an image which is no more than a fabrication imposed on them by the powerful empire. In response to the colonial discourse, they (African writers) show that the natives did have a culture, history and a language before colonization as it has been vividly depicted in chapter three and four of this study.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a thematic review of the secondary literature on the primary texts, as many scholars have written on the topical concern of the study. Hence, as there is a vast amount of scholastic corpus on the primary text, the chapter concentrates on a selective review of relevant researches. The review therefore cover the general literature review on the primary texts, reviews of the individual primary text and a conclusion.

2.2 On the Primary Texts

Edward said in his *culture and imperialism* while commenting on the crop of African and the Caribbean literary writers, who have circuitously reacted to the colonial masterpieces which misrepresent them and stepped up to challenge the backward, racist ideology that permeates much of what is written about African people, history and culture has buttress the advantage, importance and emergence of African writers who have had their lives shaped by the experiences of colonialism to rewrite their history.

..."And now these writers can truly read their colonial masterpieces, which not only misrepresented them but assumed they were unable to respond directly to what

had been written about them. Edward said, *Culture and Imperialism*(1993:35)

In the same vein, Homi Bahbba in his *The Post Colonial and Post Modern* emphasizes the importance of the emergence of African writers whose lives and depictions were shaped by the awful experience of colonialism to critically write back to the metropolitan writers and prove them not only of being sentimental but also of being fallacious.

It is from those who have suffered the sentence of history-subjugation, domination, Diaspora, displacement- that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking. Homi Bhabba “*The post colonial and post modern*”.

The authors of the primary texts: Ayi Kwei Armah and Yambo Ouologuem examined indeed the misrepresentation of the African history and culture by the European literary writers and their history counterparts, and they respond in various ways, as insiders, to the implications, distortions and evil of that misrepresentations. They have on the one hand written historical works which are expressions of outrage over political, historical and cultural foolishness and exploitation and on the other hand, an African literature which is an artistic and conceptual initiation into ancestral rhythms and into that consciousness of man and his condition which those rhythms engender. In their treatment of history, culture and politics, Ouologuem and Armah thus demonstrate their interpretation of that

‘special responsibility’ which condition the modern African writer’s attitude to his art.

2.3 On Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons*

Many of us, have stepped up, in recent years, to challenge the backward, racist ideology that permeates much of what is written about African people, history and culture. Ayi Kwei Armah is one of the authors who has taken on the task of reconstructing our story. The body of work he has produced is just one example of how even creative outlets can be used to further our struggle for liberation. Ayi Kwei Armah has been described by many critics/ writers as one of the greatest prose writers to come from Africa. Wole Soyinka in his *myth, literature and the African world* while commenting on Armah says that :

Ayi Kwei Armah asserts a past whose social philosophy was a natural egalitarianism... The actions of protagonists are aimed at the retrieval for that past, but again Armah insists that the past is not a nostalgic or sentimental one. It is presented as a state embodying a rational ideal.

In a screening of African writers as candidates for the Nobel Award, Idang Alibi, a newspaper columnist says that, “Armah has shown in all his novels that he is a great prose stylist, a brutally frank socially committed African writer, a philosopher and artist per excellence”. Part of the comments on the back cover of one of his books *Why Are We so Blest?* Also reads: Ayi Kwei Armah is the major

prose stylist of the second generation of Anglophone African writers and the most significant Ghanaian novelist to date.

However, there are a number of critics of African literature who attack Armah on various issues. Some find his reclusive attitude rather uncomfortable others like Chinua Achebe and Charles Nnolim are disturbed by the sordidness of his scatological imagery and pessimism especially in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Some critics with interest in source hunting even claim they detect foreign influence in his works. In this review of criticism, attention and priority will be paid only to the criticisms on the primary text of the study in question,

Robert Fraser's *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah* represents a pioneering work in the sociological tradition, contending that artistic works must strive towards social goals and besides the creative vision which informs Armah's novels in particular is ultimately reducible to a passionate concern with the socio-political future of Africa. It is nonetheless handicapped by such weaknesses as misrepresentation or misinterpretation of sociological and autobiographical details, and disregard of the cultural groundings of Armah's writing. Preoccupied as it is with the exploration of the anti-colonial and neo-colonial themes in the novels from a socio-political perspectives, Fraser's study fails to render an adequate account of the cultural-cum-spiritual undercurrents and dynamics of Armah's creative vision. The crippling effect of this flaw is that we are deprived access to the full extent of not

only Armah's indebtedness to the extent oral traditions which embellish and regulate the Akan (African) world-view, but also the nature and personal stamp which he was imposed on them in fashioning out a distinctively moral vision. Even when Fraser opines that "Armah is a profoundly moral writer" and that:

There is a marked therapeutic value to much of Armah's works. We can now see that he is concerned fundamentally with the ethical quality of a nation's life, a potential for exuberant health he sees as having been strangled by an infection of foreign origin.

Perhaps C. R. Larson's, *The Emergency of African Fiction* epitomizes extremity of this kind of critical indiscretion to which Armah himself has given a succinct rebuttal. Even though a certain "Larsony" still persists in the works of Fraser and such others as Bernth Lindfors, Shelby Steele and James Booth, the bulk of these aspire to a critical integrity with which C.R. Larson cannot be credited. Fraser's study, despite its lapses, makes significant strides in an attempt towards objectivity. He does not attribute, wholesale, Armah's imaginative talents and resources to European sources. His work demonstrates, to a commendable extent, a scholarly appreciation of the various literary and historical antecedents (Such as the works of Frantz Fanon, The Algerian Revolution, the Black American and Pan-Africanist Movement) to Armah's literary ideas. Again, Fraser's work takes into some consideration the various aspects of the Akan (African) communal and mythological heritage which have exerted influence in the development of

Armah's moral and social visions. Fraser's endeavour in both regards has the effect of enhancing our understanding of the full extent of the various social, cultural and historical processes from which Armah's particular world-view emerges.

A similar enterprising approach to Armah's work is apparent in Hugh Webb's and Lemuel Johnson's articles, both of which attempt to provide objective appraisals of Armah's work without succumbing to the Eurocentric excesses of Charles Larson, unlike whom they recognize and duly emphasize the "Africanness of Armah's works, especially with regard to the literary techniques and the world-view they embody. Thus, for Lemuel Johnson (who regards Armah's work as being essentially concerned with the question of the breach of community values) Armah's novels present "an artistic and conceptual initiation into (African) ancestral rhythms." And for Hugh Webb, *Two Thousand Seasons* appears "as the most achieved work within the corpus of Anglophone African Literature" because;

It represents a significant artistic harmony of literary form that can be created by an artistic design uniting structure and meaning, ideology and performance.

The critical trend towards approaching Armah's works as manifesting influences of even originating from European sources is not confined to the European critics of African literature. Many distinguished African literary scholars have, for definitely different reasons (chiefly patriotic embarrassment) identified alien or alienated strains which they disapprove of in Armah's imaginative postures. Thus,

Ben Obumselu and Adewale MajaPearce(in the manner of Bernth Lindfors) consider Armah's art as a product of a "misanthropic mind."

To Achebe, Armah appears as an artist who is "squandering his enormous talents and energy in the unrewarding pursuit of the human condition" and, rather ironically, adds that Armah stands guilty of appropriating "foreign ideas" in the development of his vision of Africa. Nkosi, Palmer and Gakwandi trace, in Armah's writings, traits of the European modernists literary tradition. For Palmer, as for Nkosi, this is a welcome development for it signifies the graduation of African literature from its obsession with 'simplistic' anthropological concerns to more complex concerns with human (universal) issues unbound by the local, African environment. Thus Palmer, for example, sees in Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* parallel features with Bunyan's *Pilgrims' progress*. Accordingly, he considers Armah's achievement as essentially deriving from his use of "the symbolic moral fable" from which sprang European writing.

Against this background, critical studies of Armah by W. Soyinka, K. Ogunbesan, D.S. Izewbaye and I. Okpewho provide the most illuminating insights into Armah's creative vision. The distinguishing quality of their essays lies in the recognition and location of critical emphases on identifying and distinctly African aura of Armah's creative imagination. In their individual articles on *Two Thousand Seasons*, these critics have identified and duly emphasized the mythic

undercurrents of Armah's imagination which control his development of theme, character and situation. Unlike Fraser and others, who are bewildered by the narrative and structural density adopted by Armah, these critics probe beyond the surface appeal of his art to discover its distinctive revolutionary recreation of history, mythological and moral quality. For Soyinka, *Two Thousand Seasons* presents "the fulfillment of one of the social functions of literature. The visionary reconstruction of the past for the purposes of a social direction. And for Okpewho, it "fulfils one of the fundamental functions of myth, which is to transmute reality into fancy through the medium of symbolism". Thus, these critics base their discussions on the close affinity that *Two Thousand Season's* bears with the various forms of African Orature, and the result is a successful forging of a new and positive definition of Armah's vision.

In a similarly rewarding essay of Armah's first four novels, Izevbaye too discovers *Two Thousand Season's* literary model in "the traditional dirge of Ghana". He further contends that the novel's;

...style is probably its most important achievement. In this work Armah develops what promises to be one of the major literary styles in Africa, finding its base in the same tradition that encouraged Aidoo's dramatic style. The writing is not merely oral, but oracular.

Moreso unlike, the existentialist writers (with whom he is often compared) who portray human foibles and depravity with startling moral neutrality, Armah is not

neutral in the conflict between good and evil. He takes sides with good and rages against evil. Thus, the tragedies and social tribulations observable in his works are always triggered by the destruction or infringement of moral codes of behaviour by corruption, greed and selfishness. It is in this light that Armah's view of history begins to emerge: history becomes the grounds of human aspiration and effort in which fulfillment in this world becomes achievable through a conscious pursuit of orderly human relationship based on unquavering and firm moral principles.

The repertoire of myths, legends, folkloric motifs, symbols and imagery in the Akan tradition, constitute the basic frame of reference, especially in Armah's later works. But from these he has distilled certain moral absolutes which have become his personal imaginative troops.

Finally, the different shades of critical standpoints on Armah's works point to the very nature of criticism itself. Despite all the criticisms therefore, this thesis, as is obvious from other reviews, is of the view that the text is a soulful journey into the greed, materialism, pain, struggle, betrayal, pride and beauty of the continent, everyone is present, the Nigerian, Ghanaian, South African, etc.

2.4 On Yambo's *Bound to Violence*

Yambo Onologuem is another crop of African writers who has taken up step to challenge what is written about African people, history and culture. In an interview

with the Guardian, it says that his work is an attempt to restore an historical dimension to the Negro problem. His thesis is that three periods of colonialism have been responsible for the Negro mentality. First, domination by African notables, then the Arab conquest; and since the mid-nineteenth century, British and French colonialism. After all, the white slave traders only proposed-it was the African notables, who disposed. Mr. Ouloguem is not an easy writer to appraise. He has, it is obvious great passion... an accurate and tender lyrical gift.. he has a real talent and... has written as unusual a book as we are likely to be offered for long enough. Wole Soyinka in *Myth literature and the African world* writes about this text that:

Bound To Violence marks a studied repudiation of historic blinkers. It rewrites the chapter of Arab-Islamic colonization of Black Africa, but moves beyond history and Fiction to raise questions of the very structure of racial heritage. Accepted history is held against an exhumed reality.

A lot has been said about the controversial Malian writer Yambo Ouloguem, and his novel *Bound to Violence* which was translated from the French into English by Ralph Mannheim. But much of the argument tends more to generate heat than to shed light on the author's literary intentions and his vision of the world. There is no doubt that Ouloguem's book is one of the best written and most audacious novels that have ever emerged from post-independence Africa; it can even be said to be a shocker to the 'outward-looking' literary Orthodoxy of pre-independence

African writers in French. The novel emerged to almost universal accolade: it received the 1968 prix Renaudot in France. However, this unmitigated appreciation did not last. After charges of plagiarism arose, the work's reputation became tarnished. Further, some African critics objected to the content of the work; that its violence and bleak outlook were supposedly exaggerated and could be used too easily to support an anti-African agenda. While these African readers and critics look at the book with rather unpleasant surprise, some racially minded literary critics and reviewers of Europe and America easily succumb to the temptation of regarding it as the greatest blow that has ever been dealt to African life, tradition, and values by an African writer.

Whether positive or negative reactions to this is invariably strong. The violent and/or pornographic scenes in its content, the disjointedness of the chronology, and the play with a variety of genres jar the reader and bring down existing conceptions of Africa and African writing. It is the intention of this study to throw more light on the study of this novel by touching on the violent and revolutionary rewriting of history as told by an insider.

However, after the novel's publication, a group of critics attacked Ouologuem, accusing him of plagiarism. Many differing opinions exist regarding the text's "borrowing" of material from authors such as Graham Greene and Guy de Maupassant. Ouologuem supporters find his use of other's text an example of an

African writer asserting his identity in the continent's post colonial society. His detractors see the supposed "borrowing" as blatant theft. Ouologuem defended his use of these passages by claiming that he had openly admitted the use of the text in interviews and before publication, the "borrowed" text was placed inside Quotation marks.

He claims that the marks were removed without this knowledge by the editor. Other reviewers find that given the history of the colonization of Africa and the fact that the novel is not a traditional African literary form, it stands to reason that African writers will absorb aspects (both literary and cultural) from the colonial powers that they have come in contact with, Eric Sellin explained:

The Ouologuem affair is a tragic by product of the culture conflict inherent in hybrid literatures which adopt the *Lingua* of another country but maintain their own ontology...

The stance of this study with regards to the above acclamation is that, from the puristic traditional African viewpoint, to so borrow is no more spurious than to write a letter using a published book of examples as a guide. Wole Soyinka writes about this text in *Myth, literature and the African world* that:

Ouologuem has been accused of an alienation technique; the opposite seems truer-such a level of inventive degradation suggests that Ouologuem is practicing some form of literary magic for the purpose of self inoculation

Critically, Soyinka does not mean that Ouologuem's readers should not identify with anything, but rather that they should be aware of what they choose to align themselves with and how it is simply a version, a spin put on "truth".

More so, Ouologuem is accused of playing with genre in the text, thereby combining the novel and the Epic and shows how the combination of the two genres in fact undermines both. Thomas Hale in his *Scribe, Griot and Novelist* 1990 writes:

Ouologuem's portrait of Sai'f Isaac al Heit leaves little doubt that he is following the medieval written sources regarding Askia Mohammed. Aside from the change in name, there is a relatively small difference between the itineraries of the real and the fictional rule".

The work uses the novel form but breaks it down repeatedly so that the reader never feels entirely comfortable throughout the reading of the text. His purpose is to shake faith in Africa's past and present. As a clear critique of Negritude (Ouologuem), Eileen Julien writes in *African Novels and the questions of Orality* that:

Ouologuem's *Bound To Violence* articulates its anti-epic in a griots style and effectively slanders Negritude's romantic vision of pre-colonial Africa.

The oral tradition is not accepted in this work; negritude promoted research into oral as a valid sources of African history. Thus fundamentally, this book and Negritude are at odds. The African values presented here are bloodthirsty and

violent. The tenets of negritude are shaken at their very foundation through the content of this narrative in *Bound To Violence*.

According to Hubert de Leusse, Ouologuem is out to destroy a certain fictitious and idyllic image of Africa's presented by African writers and ethnologists. Considering the wave of violence which runs across the entire novel, the critic comes to the conclusion that "Africa is in reality a land where violence is equaled only by the dread it called forth"-merely pushing the author's argument too far! Yves Benot remarks that Ouologuem is a 'non-conformist' writer who does not believe that Africa had been oppressed and subjugated by colonization, and he goes further to say that 'this is a consoling and comforting book' to the French reading public. Obviously these critics imply that the reason behind the overwhelming acclamation of *Bound to Violence* by many western critics, and their unanimity on the 'high quality' of the novel, is its attempt to destroy the image of Africa.

It appears to this study that most critics are so carried away by the blanket of violence with which Ouologuem covers his Nakem Empire that they tend to miss the over-riding message of the author-that man (not necessarily the black man) has a violent nature which can be utilized to establish, sustain and perpetuate political domination of a people. Gerald Moore has correctly remarked that.

Saif is offered as typical of oppression by which the 'notables' have always governed Africa; a system which, having survived the French conquest and the implantation of modern education, now hopes to manipulate even the nominal independence of Nakem to its advantage.

To get this point across, the author has chosen some sensitive moments of the black man's history-feudalism, Arab invasion, slavery, colonization –which he exploits and manipulates to conform to his violent vision of the world. If this central theme is accepted, it has to be said then that the African reading public is only worried over the rather unsympathetically distorted, and of course 'unorthodox', use which Ouologuem has made of African history and material to prove his case. Why must the author use his own continent and people to create the hideous image of man? Does he feel so comfortable and safe in his borrowed garment of white civilization that he negates his past and forgets his own alienation? These are two of the questions which the uninitiated reader of *Bound of Violence* is prone to ask. But the subtleties of the novel have yet to be completely realized before full justice can be done to the book and its author.

It is true that Ouologuem is a hard-liner in his novel, but it has to be recognized that he works with a double-edged axe which spares neither the black man, nor the western world, some of whose critics claim the novelist on their side. In fact one has to read in between the lines in order to understand that Ouologuem treats with equal contempt his Nakem Empire and the doomed colonial empire which the

French had wanted to create in West Africa. The story opens in a lachrymose and touching tone which indicates the subject matter, the time, and space of the novel:

Our eyes drink the brightness of the sun and, overcome, marvel at their tears. Machallah! wa bismillah!... to recount the bloody adventure of the niggertrash-shame to the worthless paupers! There would be no need to go back beyond the present century: but the true history of the Blacks begins much earlier, with Saifs, in the year 1202 of our era, in the African Empire of Nakem South of Fezzan, long after the conquests of Okba ben Nafi al-Fitri.

As one can see right from the beginning of the novel, part of the grand design of *Ouologuem* is to show how the ruling moslem dynasty in the Nakem Empire has, from 1202 to 1947, consistently used violence and intimidation to control the destiny of the common man, referred to in the book as ‘niggertrash’ and ‘pauper’. He is more concerned about the ‘bloody adventure of the niggertrash’ and the victimizer than with the so-called primitivism and barbarism of mediaeval Africa often harped on by critics.

Ouologuem’s black man is synonymous with suffering and resignation; he is the ‘worthless paupers’, dehumanized and exploited for centuries by the Saifs and Arab notables, ‘clubbed, sold, stock-piled, haggled over, adjudicated, flogged, bound and delivered with attentive, studied, sorrowful contempt-to the Portuguese, the Spaniards, the Arabs (on the east and north coast’s), and to French, Dutch and English (west coast), and so scattered to the winds...’ (p.12). when French

colonization came, it was the same 'niggertrash' who had to be victimized. For Ouologuem, both the black man and the white man have their share of the blame for the slave trade which depopulated Africa. Although he attacks the feudal system and its corollary, slavery, he does not seek to show that violence and oppression are consubstantial with the African: he rather attributes them to what can be called the general degeneration of the human kind of which the black man is only a part.

The mediaeval Nakem Empire which is the main theatre of action is supposedly located in western Sudan:

The fame of that Empire spread to Morocco, the Sudan, Egypt, Abyssinia, and to the holy and noble city of Mecca; it was known to the English, the Dutch, the French, the Spaniards, and it goes without saying, the Portuguese...(p.3).

There is a strong temptation among critics to associate it with the Mali empire of the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries. In fact nothing in the novel suggests that the Saifs who are of Arabo-Jewish origin are descendants of the ancient kingdom of Mali, nor can the 'well-beloved Isaac al-Heit', founder of the Nakem Empire and of the Saif dynasty, be compared to Sundjata, the great hero of the Mandingue epic so well celebrated by the famous historian Djibril Tamsi Niangé of Mali. It is true that the author of *Bound to Violence* is a Malian and that he may have drawn from his experiences in his society to weave the intricate story of his novel, but this does

not necessarily mean that this gruesome story of violence which he is telling is that of his country and people from 1202 to 1947 and even after; nor can it be said to be really and exclusively that of Africa. As professor E.N. Obiechina has well remarked 'Africa there certainly is in the novel, but so also are Arabia and the Orient, French and Europe. To ignore this fact is to do less than justice to the novel and pander to age-old mystifications.

One fact which readers and critics of Ouologuem's book have to admit is that the writer, as an artist, is a universal observer whose experiences and imagination cannot be limited to a definite geographical area with mathematical accuracy. In this regard Ouologuem himself has been reported to have said that his searching and critical eyes extend to 'Africa of the great empires, the Congo and ex-anglo-Egyptian Sudan', and that he has equally borne in mind Delafosse's account of the descendants of the Queen of Saba.

Two great periods of violence are easily discernible in the novel. The first is the mediaeval period masterminded by the Saif dynasty with the complicity of the notables. Here violence is essentially associated with the feudal cruelties of the overlords on their innocent and bastardized subjects who were often captives of war.

In that age of feudalism, large communities of slaves celebrated the justice of their overlords by forced labor

and by looking on inert as multitudes of their brothers, smeared with the blood of butchered children and of disemboweled expectant mothers, were immured alive... That is what happened at Tillaberi-Bentia, at Granta, at Groaso, at Gagol-Gosso, and in many places mentioned in the Tarik al-Fetach and at the Tarik al-Sudan of the Arab historians.

2.5 Conclusion

By and large, whatever the criticisms on the two primary texts; be it on sociological, biographical contents, moral, stylistic, mythic substratum, plagiarism and the like. It is nonetheless handicapped and ultimately reducible to a passionate concern with the aforementioned aspects. The crippling effect of this flaw is that readers are denied and deprived access to the full extent of not only Armah's and Ouologuem's indebtedness to the extent oral traditions of Africa but also their revolutionary recreation of African history which depicts the true picture, history and culture of the African people as against its distortion and misrepresentation by the white writers. It is the intention of this study, therefore, to focus on how history and culture have been recreated and depicted by these two African writers that best represent the African continent.

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CHAPTER THREE

Armah's Two Thousand Seasons

3.0 Content and Contextual Analysis

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is going to discuss thoroughly on the contextual revolutionary recreation of history and culture of the African people by Ayi Kwei Armah. Armah's novel (*Two Thousand Seasons*) is written in part as a response to the assertion that Africa is devoid of culture and history and its people savage and primitive. This distortion and misrepresentation of African history and culture by the European literary writers and their history counterparts is probably one of the reasons why Armah chooses to write an Africanized form of English, and then builds his narrative on the African prophesy of Anoa which forecast two thousand seasons of tumult eventual triumph, and two Akan narrative traditions to drive his story Anasesem-history of a people as told through the family and Abakosem-history of a people as told through the history of a nation, as we are going to see in due course in the chapter. However, the chapter therefore covers the content and form of the text, the Eurocentric perceptions on Africa, the contextual analysis/post colonialism in the text as well as a conclusion.

3.2 About the Text (content and form)

The *Two Thousand Seasons* of title of Ayi Kwei Armah's novel represent the enormous arc of time of African history covered in it. "we are not a people of yesterday", begins the first chapter, but the book does cover the long and awful yester years that were traversed and endured. The book hopes to put it behind; "soon we shall end this remembrance" . Armah writes near the close of the novel "the sound of it" and the hope is for the present and especially the future.

Two Thousand Seasons is a pan-African epic . In many ways it is a summing up of the African experience for the past *Two Thousand Seasons*. Armah reduces it effectively to a thousand seasons wasted wandering amazed along alien roads, another thousand spent finding paths to the living way. Armah traces the paths taken: the many false ones and the true ones. There is no specificity to the place of origin of the story. Instead, the story stands for Africa and its people. It is a story of triumphs of the spirit and the will, despite unspeakable horrors, oppression and betrayals. It tells of the coming of the predators who bring with them destruction. The first predators to arrive are the Arabs and then followed by whites. The story gives hope for victory to the people of Africa in spite of the oppression, repression misrepresentation, distortion and subjugation of the predators, the Europeans and the Arabs. Thus, the novel is a novel of seeking, of loss and redemption. He warns;

“woe the race, too generous in the giving of itself, that finds a highway not of regeneration but a highway to its extinction”.

Although, Armah abandons his familiar method of constructing social reality from the view point of the individual protagonists to evolve a communal view using multiple protagonist. He develops his narrative in this text to historical and mythical configuration to expose the debilitating historical and social forces that inhibit the establishment of a just and human social order. The language of the novel is inundated with invective, pejorative and satirical innuendos in its denunciation of all foreign (Arab and European) intervention in Africa’s socio-historical evolution, and its attack on human greed, lust, vanity oppression and exploitation.

The story revolves around a group of twenty teenagers – 11 males and nine females –who are captured, sold into slavery and later escape. However, instead of returning to their families, they make the fateful decision- as a collective: to move along the slaving coast and risk their lives by freeing other Africans. In other words, they make a conscious decision to place collective survival ahead of individual survival; to become freedom fighters. The story truly begins with the coming of the predators who bring ruin. First it is the Arabs, then the Europeans “Whites” all. And always there are the weak and complicit locals, showing from the first a “fantastic quality...” fidelity to those who spat on them” helping to bring

ruin from within. The first predators to appear come as beggars. They are cunning and patient. They use their religion to inspire and hold sway over the weak, turning them against their fellow Africans. The predators reduce them to “beast” by starving their minds with their foreign religion and “indulging their crassest physical wants”.

The “White man from the desert” patiently makes in roads, returning stronger and wiser each time. The locals do not know how to protect themselves. This time again the predators came with force-to break our bodies. This time they came with guile also-a religion to smash the feeblest minds among us, then turn them into tools against us. The whites who come after the Arabs are not merely predators but destroyers-the armed colonial European powers. And Armah is certain; “There is nothing white men will not do to satisfy their greed-or “monstrous is the greed of the white destroyers, infinite their avarice”.

Among the destroyers are missionaries , too, with a different poisonous religion. It seems too simple, too ridiculous-and yet it too will subvert the ancient society from within. Thus, the text (story) captured in the book begins way before the first page and continues far beyond the last. The text ends, yet the struggle being fought continues, as it will until all African peoples have freedom, power and self determination. The text draws to a close with Africans in the midst of a fierce battle to counter the distortion, misrepresentation and ravenous colonization and to

recruit more and more people who are willing to make this struggle-revolutionary recreation of African history, culture and heritage-their life's work.

3.3 Eurocentric perceptions about Africa

As it has been mentioned at several places in this study that African history, culture and origin have been distorted, misrepresented and its people considered as savages and therefore were labelled with all sort of derogatory names, the story deems it fit to present some of the derogatory, awesome comments and statements as well as the negative depiction of African characters in some of the European writings and statements so as to appreciate the subsequent sub-heading and chapter in which the two Authors of the primary texts under study counter attacked what has been said or written about us (Africans). In other words, because the white historians and writers have either distorted accounts of the African past, or even worse, deliberately neglected the history of the black race as essentially unworthy of the historical interests. It is important to have an insight of what is said or written about Africans so as to fully appreciate and understand why African writers engaged in unearthing the rich history, culture, philosophy, poetry and dignity of Africa that the colonialist had wantonly entombed and destroyed.

With regards to African history, the renowned Regius professor of history at Oxford, Hugh Trevor Roper, 1963, in one of his repulsive statement denied the existence of African history; his words:

Perhaps, in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present, there is none; there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness... and darkness is not a subject of history.

The above statement is a deliberate neglecting and distortion of the African history which has been acutely counter-attacked and proved erroneous and fallacious by some African writers as we shall see in the subsequent sub-heading and chapter of this study.

It is axiomatic that the great Britain, for example was only compelled by the threats of economic melt down, avoidance of civil war and political instability at home, and hence its colonial mission. But shamefully intrudes into Africa on the pretext of civilizing Africans, to bring them out of a state of barbarism and to enlighten them. Simpson and Jones (2000) in their *Europe* quoted Cecil Rhode, explaining their need to conquer colonies:

In order to save the forty million inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, our colonial statesmen must acquire new lands for settling surplus population of this country, to provide new markets for the goods produced in the factories and mines. The empire, as I have always said, is a bread and butter

question, if you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialist (237).

Moreover, their “Eurocentric” behavior is also present in the assumptions and practices of Christianity. Initially, the Christendom, owing to a Christian faith, regards black skin as a symbol of hell, ugliness, night, bad, evil and satan.

According to Hill et.al.:

The Calvinists (the puritans) insist that Africans represent evil and are “cast among the non-elect” and for this they are “ideal subjects for enslavement”. They also insisted that Africans were really offspring of satan who was himself a black man, and the black skin was the mark for certain old testament curses.

Hence, the color of a person was believed to be nothing less than the outward expression of his character and race. In other words, a dark skin was (then) the emanation of “black” and hence satanic soul. This has also been counterattacked in due course. In an essay, titled “Olaudah Equiano” (1980), Ogude quoted America’s third president, Thomas Jefferson as saying;

...who in his moments of revolutionary zeal proclaimed that all men were born equal... the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in endowments both of body and mind.

David Hulme, a Scottish philosophical genius also expresses his perverted view of Africans;

I'm apt to suspect the negroes to be naturally inferior to the white. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation... no ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no science.

The British journalist and novelist, who also published the first English novel in 1719, Daniel Defoe is also one of the innumerable writers who think that Africa has no origin prior to the advent of the whiteman. In *Robinson Crusoe*, Crusoe's description of the Island which he conquers, following the wrecking of his ship and the black man he comes across evoke the Eurocentric representation of Africa:

My Island was now peopled, and I thought myself very rich in subjects; and it was a merry reflection which I frequently made, how like a king I had an undoubted right of dominion. Secondly my people were perfectly subjected: I was absolute lord and law giver: they all owed their lives,... however I allowed liberty of conscience throughout my dominions (157)

Moreover, in *Heart of Darkness* (1902) by Joseph Conrad, Marlow, the first person narrator through whom Conrad sees events and through whose mind he sees into the minds of other characters, describes the Africans he spots, as his ship sails towards Congo. Shortly after he is employed by the Brussels trading company that trades there as steamboat captain, "The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us—who could tell? (63).

The epithet “prehistoric man’ in Marlow’s narrative delineates the African man not only as a unique creature lacking an origin or root, but uncivilized. Commenting on *Heart of Darkness*, the renowned post colonial critic Edward Said argues that:

Conrad genius allowed him to realize that the ever present darkness could be colonized or illuminated... they (and of course Conrad) are ahead of their time in understanding that what they call the darkness has an autonomy of its own and can reinvade and reclaim what imperialism had taken of its own (P.33).

Joseph Conrad also in his book *Heart of Darkness* (1902), depicts and describes through his narrator the Africans he comes across on his way to the outer-station to meet the company’s accountant, shortly after his arrival in Congo as:

Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between trees, leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment and despair (p.44)

This is just the beginning, for throughout the story, the Africans are also depicted by other derogatory names such as; ‘negroes’, ‘cannibals’, ‘savages’, ‘criminals’, ‘blacks’, pilgrims, ‘barbarians’ and dark human shapes by Charlie Marlow. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993:198) Edward said does not conceal his disappointment at Conrad Eurocentric induced narrative;

Most readings rightly call attention to Conrad’s skepticism about the colonial enterprise, but they rarely remark that in telling the story of his African journey Marlow repeats and confirms Kutz’s action: restoring Africa to European hegemony by historicizing and

narrating its strangeness. The savages, the wilderness, even the surface polly of popping shells into a vast continent-all these reaccentuate Marlow's need to place the colonies on the imperial map and under the overarching temporality of narratable history no matter how complicated and circuitous the result.

What Marlow does is not diametrically opposed to Shakespeare's Othello, the hero of Shakespeare's play "Othello" (1622), who in his travels depict the non-European 'other' as men whose head do grow beneath their shoulder and others have "thick lips", 'sooty bosom', and animal lust (Loomba 1988:60). In Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, the novel's hero Crusoe tries to save a native he runs across in the Island from being devoured by other natives. He names him Friday, teaches him English and claims to have given culture. In Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939), Benjamin, who is portrayed as an African man, embracing western ways in preference to his culture, and who puts into action whatever first comes to his mind, unmindful of the consequences, is a caricature of an African man with no culture and paucity of sense of direction. Further, in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), the characters (the childrens) depicted and characterized the African forests and Islands as fearful with snakes, beasts, and diseases, unlike the Island in which they inhabited, as being free from all such evils. These and many other false and negative perceptions of the African continent and its people compel the African writers to produce their own culture of

opposition, build their own image and write their history outside the bondage which for long they have been put into.

3.4 Contextual Analysis/Post Coloniality in Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*

The assertion that Africa prior to the coming of the Europeans is devoid of culture and history and hence needs one is counter attacked and proved fallacious by Armah's deployment of Akan folklore motifs and historical material as well as building his narrative on the ancient African prophesy of Anoa and Akan narrative traditions which he manipulates to advance a particular view of Africa's experience of the slave trade and colonialism. Prior to the Arab-European presence, Armah suggests, Africa had enjoyed relative social tranquility and economic prosperity: "The peace of that fertile time spread itself so long, there was such as abundance of every provision, anxiety flew so far from us..." (P.10). The existence and flourishing of this primeval order of harmonious social co-existence and material abundance was however disrupted by interal rifts which evolved among Africans. First, tribal divisions and ethnic affiliations emerged and these led subsequently into inter-clannish warfare among them: "All the clans clawed each other, so that in the end exhaustion, not reason.. was the real bringer of peace". (P.10). The Africans were further fragmented by their abandonment of the ethical principle of reciprocal relationships.

This period, when the Black community was already disintegrating, witnessed the arrival of the Arabs into their midst. They brought along with them a culture and a religion which in their formulations, oppose every facet of the Black people's communal social heritage. Through the process of political intrigues and physical coercion, they were able to impose their socio-religious values on their hosts who now became subjected to economic exploitation by these "beggars turned snakes after feeding" (p.2). Their arrival was followed by the propagation of their religious creed: "They came with guile-a religion to smash the feeblest minds among us..." (p.33). the novel suggests that the Arab's reign in Africa was only arrested later by the coming of another group of white exploiters: the Europeans. The period of their coming is suggested by the novel's reference to the castles which the Europeans began to build as early as the fifteenth century. According to the novel, these new arrivals, the Europeans, also employed force and political intrigues to assert their power over the Africans. They also continued the system of exploitation of the Black people by engaging in the slave trade: "The white men have come here wishing to buy humans... and take them to unknown lands" (P.83). The coming of these two external forces into Africa, one from the desert and the other from the sea, led to the destabilisation of the pristine social structure of the Black people, which was based on the principle of reciprocal-egalitarian relationship: "Receiving, giving; giving, receiving, all that lives is twin. Who

would cast the spell of death, let him separate the two”(p.xiii). but as the Black people abandoned this spirit of reciprocal relationship and turned generous towards the invaders who came into their midst as paupers, they gradually lost all their liberty.

A segment of enlightened, conscious and educated Black people, however, were apprehensive of the dangers in their continued abandonment of ancestral values, warned through the voice of Anoa (one of the characters in the novel) that if they did not revert to their ancestral values, they would eventually be destroyed:

There is one cause-all else are branches; you have lost the way. You have forgotten the way of our life, the living way... Reciprocity, that is the way you have forgotten, the giving, the receiving, the living alternation of the way. The offerers, those who do not receive, they are mere victims(pp16-17).

The society, however, did not heed the warning and remained complacent against the growing Arab influx, the Arabs took advantage of that and threatened what were only the residues of Africa’s values: “Change or we will kill you, the first white predators, those from the desert, had said. Believe in our road; abandon your way...” (P.87). A section of the Black people, however, refused to succumb to the threat and instead of surrendering to the Arab hegemony, they decided to migrate out of their ancestral homes: “we came away from the desert’s edge thinking we were fleeing ruin... “ (P.59).The migration of the Black people towards the

African coastal regions, away from the Arab threat has on one hand had its objectives and on the other its disasters. One of the objectives is: “the search for a path to that necessary beginning” (P.149). And one of its disasters is the emergence of the scores of individuals who rose to claim special status among the migrants, which led them to drift further towards social fragmentation. Another disaster in the form of the Europeans appeared from the sea to further destabilise the Black people is that, the period of the European penetration coincided with the rising among the black people of a group of twenty youths (eleven males and nine females). These youths who, having undergone the communal ritual of initiation into adulthood where they acquired various skills of self-reliance, self defence and knowledge of their social history, had cultivated a bond of mutual co-operation and the spirit of brotherhood among themselves. This initiation had its root in the rich African cultural heritage in the tradition Akan/African social groups even before the intrusion of either of the colonizers. It is a magico-religious activities that is concerned with changes in the status of individuals or the group with the objectives of de-emphasizing the distinct individuality of the initials in favour of cultivating a sense of group identity and perceiving themselves as the children of the whole community instead of their parents alone. The tragic aspect of this is that they were opposed in their struggle to re-establish their society’s old values by the Arabs, the Europeans and their African acolytes.

Another striking post colonial features in the text are: its mode of collective or plural narration. Armah employs a number of narrator-protagonists who share a common view point. The group of the twenty youths are the narrators who ‘speak’ with one voice in order to establish a sense of their common plight. This phenomenon is attributed to the influence of the African communal perception on the African writer. The repetition of the pronoun ‘we’, which stands in distinct opposition to the other dominant pronoun ‘they’ provides emphasis to the sense of unity among the youths who share the common goal of reviving their African cultural heritage. It is also used to emphasize the need for African to revive their past communal and ethical values symbolized by ‘the way’. The repetition also emphasizes the sarcastic tone Armah uses to condemn the treachery of the African kings who prefer to destroy their subjects in order to maintain their position of power.

The language tone of the text at times appear to be cast, with a symbolic significance, on the Akan literary model of the funeral dirge. In Akan tradition, the singing of the dirge marks the culminating point of the preparation for the funeral as well as the beginning of the public mourning over the loss of the deceased. The most important function of the dirge is to serve in linking the society’s present with the past. The main funeral itself is aimed at stressing the unity in the lineage and the society’s link with its ancestors. Thus, Armah symbolizes it to depict the

mournful lost of the African cultural heritage. Another tone of the language used by Armah bears close resemblance to the eulogies sung by African court poets, which is build on the idea of praising the achievements and power of the royalty in the Akan culture. However, Armah's main purpose in employing features of court poetry in this text is not to honour kings or any individuals, but to glorify Africa as a community of Black people as well as to praise the efforts of those Africans, symbolized by the youths, who seek to reinstate Africa's abused traditions.

Occasionally, however, Armah's language too slips into the praise of individual heroism. Such individuals, however, are portrayed as an indistinguishable part of the larger social group to which they form a part. The character Anoa, who receives the greatest share of praise in the novel, is not praised as an individual but as a symbol of the natural beauty and the social ideals of the African people: "Anoa was not the first, not the second, not the third to speak" (P.13), "Anoa, she was not even the first to bear that name" (P.13). Interestingly, again, the African topographical features are also given the name Anoa in the novel:

... Those who saw you first Anoa! Who so mountains
flung far to the falling, so far they in the end seduce the
following eye and raise it skyward, whence the return to
the source to you (P.56).

The young spring that flows into the desert is also called Anoa. The African continent itself is called Anoa, thus making the name to represent much more than

an individual but the whole of the African continent; land, water, mountains, people and social values. Another character who is also praised for her physical beauty and fine moral character is Idawa. Her spiritual and moral qualities are used by Armah as symbols signifying the African social values which he glorifies:

From the hair on her head to the last of her toes there was nothing wasted in her shaping. And her colour; that must have come uninterfered with from nights on blackness (P.70).

And while describing her spiritual beauty, Armah's language again slips into glorification:

But Idawa's surface beauty, perfect as it was, was nothing beside her other, profounder beauties; the beauty of her heart, the way she was with people, the way she was with everything she came in contact with; and the beauty of her mind, the clarity with which she moved past the lying surfaces people held in front of themselves, past the lying surfaces of the things of this world set against our way, to reach judgements holding to essences, free from the superficialities (p.70).

Contrasted against such a perfect African beauty is the physically deformed and spiritually sterile Bentum's European wife; a creature who "looked like one trapped in a perpetual nightmare" (P.119). Armah caricatures her as an "apparition like a ghost... moving with a disjointed, severe, jerky walk... like that of a beginning stilt walker" (P.119). The imagery Armah employs to describe this character compares, in a slightly more grotesque form, with Aimee's figure in

Blest. Armah makes the physical appearance of these characters to serve as index to their degenerate moral characters. Thus, Armah depicts all the white characters to be synonymous with evil and destruction, whereas the Black characters who fight against them as invested with all the finest moral character.

Another aspect of post coloniality in the text relates to the novel's imagery and symbolism which appear to have their source from Akan oral poetry. Akan oral poetry is full of animals and plants which are used as metaphors or simile, or compressed ways of stating bits of social experience. Unlike, say in European poetry where animals and plants may also feature but only as images or symbols reflecting the poet's individual perception or appreciation of beauty or ugliness, in the Akan oral poetry such animal and plant imagery is used as a means of reflecting community social experience. Armah also employs imagery and symbols drawn from nature as a means of relating aspects of Africa's social history. These images and symbols are patterned on the basis of contrast between the African social values and those of the Arabs and Europeans. Images of life, vitality, fertility, purity and creativeness are associated with the Africans, and these are juxtaposed against the image of death, destruction and spiritual depravity associated with the intruders and destroyers. In the novel, the river and the desert appear as the most central symbols which Armah uses to distinguish the African

generosity and goodwill from the Arab/European parasitism and destructive behavior:

Springwater flowing to the desert where you flow there is no regeneration. The desert takes. The desert knows no giving. To the given water of your flowing it is not in the nature of the desert to return anything but destruction. Spring flowing to the desert your future is extinction (p.xi).

The spring water here takes a metaphorical significance; it symbolizes the self-destroying generosity of the African people towards those (Arabs and Europeans) whose only wish is to exploit them and thereafter destroy them. Active and generous, the springwater flows to create life while the desert, an agent of destruction and parasitism, lacks any reciprocal gesture to the spring's generosity.

While the spring upholds life, the desert opposes it and, in fact destroys it:

No spring changes the desert. The desert remains; the spring runs dry. Not one spring, not thirty, not thousand springs will change the desert. For that change floods, the waters of the universe in unison. Flowing not to coax the desert but to overwhelm it, ending its regime of death.. (p.xiii).

In the above lines, Armah suggests that just as the spring water cannot quench the thirst of the famished desert so also the African magnanimity and generosity of spirit can not change the destructive habits and the greeds of the Arabs and the whites. The only remedy against this destruction and greed of the desert is the coming of all the rivers of the world to overwhelm the desert: "What a hearing of

the confluence of all the water of life flowing to overwhelm the ashen desert's blight. What an utterance of the coming together of all the people of the way..." (p.206). In the same way, Armah uses the sea as an image of violence and destruction. The image of the sea as a life-sucking force is intended to serve as a symbol of the European exploitation of Africa's economic resources. The violent nature of the sea as it hits the African shore represents the violent force the Europeans used to blaster and conquer Africa. Its violent motion contrasts with the steadfast and calm flow of the spring water. The point where the spring water flows into the sea is used to counter attack the 'whites' all, in depicting the socio-cultural conflict between Africans and Europeans:

The seawater came in long, curling waves to a meeting with the darker water from the land. In both waters there was a forward motion, so at the place of their meeting there was no quite mixing but a violent upsurge from clashing waves (p.75).

Also, in counter attacking the perception that the black colour of the Africans is a symbol of evil, Armah uses the colours black and white for Africans (black) and Europeans (white) social values. Thus, in the novel, the springwater which flows to fertilize the land and sustain life is described as black whereas the rainless clouds of the dry season (symbol of death) are described as white: "the water was so far we forget the blackness of its flowing. The clouds left in the sky were streaky, wispy, barren, white" (P.11). Even the physical beauty of Idawa too is described

interms of the black colour. “And her colour: that must have come uninterfered with from night’s blackness” (P.70).

A lot of other striking features and polarized sets of symbols have been used by Armah to question the moral justification of the subjugation and distortion of one segment of humanity by another: the symbol of the duiker, described as the “best of animals, attacking none, knowing ways to keep attackers distant” (P.57), representing Africa’s lack of aggression against others, while that of the crocodile, is representing the exploitative and destructive behavior of Europeans; the place of the setting sun (west) and the rising sun (east) employed in the novel to contrast the African cultural values with those of the whites. The place of the setting sun which is the direction from which the Europeans came is a symbol of death, while the place of the rising sun as a symbol of energy and life is associated with the black people; the ‘way’ is also contrasted against the ‘road’. The former represents the African set of values while the latter stands as a symbols of the destructive technological values of the Europeans; circle symbols is used by Armah to contrast with the European line of destruction. Hence, the whites are associated with the “hollow cycle of shitting, smoking, fucking, drinking, eating and playing” (P.30); the images of sexual depravity, violence and religion, which Armah fashions to symbolize Africa’s violent history of slavery and imperialism. All these images

and symbols provide a unique experiment in the marrying of African oral art forms as well as a self-acclaimed version of African history and culture.

3.5 Conclusion

Although, Armah has been criticized by critics for making the Arabs and Europeans scapegoats for Africa's socio-political, historical and cultural predicaments. A closer look into the novel however, will reveal that Armah is as critical of Africans as he is of whites for the situations which have led to the Africa's devastating and traumatic experiences. While it may not be disputed that Armah totally rejects and condemns all foreign interference in Africa's social evolution, it is also true that he does not cast a blind eye on the role of Africans themselves in the initiation and eventual destruction of their own social systems.

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CHAPTER FOUR

OUOLOGUEM'S *BOUND TO VIOLENCE*

4.0 The text and its textual analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter, like the previous chapter, discusses how Ouologuem, who is considered as one of the preeminent post colonial African writers, questions the authenticity of the African history and culture as fabricated and distorted by both the European literary writers, their history counterparts and their African acolytes. It is therefore, in part a response to the distortion, misrepresentation and fabrication of the African history and culture by the author of the text, thereby revolutionalising, through rewriting what have been said or written about Africa. The chapter depicts vividly Africa as it was and is, from an African point of view by an insider. Meanwhile, since in the previous chapter, some of the awful Eurocentric perception and repulsive statements about and on Africa have been presented for proper understanding and appreciation of the writers effort in their bid to respond, preserve and uphold the African heritage, culture and origin, it would not be repeated here (in this chapter). However, the chapter covers the content and form of the text; the contextual analysis/post coloniality in Ouologuem's text and a conclusion.

4.2 About the text (Content and Form)

The novel focusses on the fictitious African country of Nakem. Ouologuem recounts its history, from grand empire to French colony and the truncated modern African Republic of Nakem-Ziuko. The ruling dynasty of Saifs dominates the history of the land, from ancient times to modern.

Bound to Violence has four parts. The first is a compressed history of the first several hundred years of the Nakem Empire, starting around the year 1200. It is a brutal, violent, oppressive, corrupt country. Slavery is widespread: "a hundred million of the damned -- so moan the troubadours of Nakem when the evening vomits forth its starry diamonds -- were carried away." There's even cannibalism: "one of the darkest features of that spectral Africa over which hung the malefic shadow of Saif al-Haram."

The Arabs had conquered the land (settling over it "like a she-dog baring her white fangs in raucous laughter"), and the common (black) man -- the *négraille*, as Ouologuem calls it, translated here as "niggertrash" -- suffers for it. Religion -- Islam -- is abused in order to consolidate and keep power. It "became a means of action, a political weapon."

The brief second part sees the coming of the Whites at the close of the 19th century. The empire is "pacified" and divvied up by the Europeans, with the French controlling what remains of Nakem. There is the hope that life will improve:

Saved from slavery, the niggertrash welcomed the white man with joy, hoping he would make them forget the mighty Saif's meticulously organized cruelty.

Each side uses the niggertrash to their own ends. The Saif remains influential and powerful even under the French administration; the subjugated commoners still have little chance of tolerable lives.

The bulk of the book is taken up by the third section, *The Night of the Giants*, set in the first half of the twentieth century. There are still all manner of horrific incidents as the Saif indiscriminately wields what power he has left. From female infibulation to the Saif's curious assassination technique (using trained asps) there is a lot of ugly violence here.

Beside the Saif the stories of two other figures are particularly important in this section. One is Fritz Shrobenius, transparently based on German archaeologist and anthropologist Leo Frobenius. He comes to learn about Nakem -- and to buy relics, masks, and other cultural artifacts. The Saif -- uninterested in history -- makes up stories and sells whatever cultural legacy can be procured. More -- tons - - is donated by the niggertrash "to the acolytes of 'Shrobeniusology' ". Later, after

Shrobenius, this "salesman and manufacturer of ideology", has popularized African art in Europe many others come to purchase pieces. Since no originals are left, Saif "had slapdash copies buried by the hundredweight" and then sold at exorbitant prices.

Another significant figure is Raymond-Spartacus Kassoumi, a child of poverty who takes advantage of the schooling offered by the French and achieves academic success that allows him to pursue his studies in France. He meets both success and failure in France, experiencing highs and lows. Beside his varied academic experiences he also is reduced to becoming the lover of a wealthy Frenchman and encounters his sister in a bordello -- finding that the long reach of Saif is practically inescapable. Raymond eventually returns to Nakem, in what he thinks is triumph, only to find that the ruling Saif is again manipulating him (and his country).

The brief concluding section, *Dawn*, offers some hope. Abbé Henry, the hunchback priest obsessed by the tragedy of the Blacks, half crazed with the Christian duty of love, as humbly beautiful as the despair of a Christian soul is now a bishop. The last section consists almost entirely of a dialogue between Henry and Saif, both philosophical discourse and power struggle. Saif -- this Saif -- appears vanquished, but Ouologuem reminds the reader: one cannot help recalling

that Saif, mourned three million times, is forever reborn to history beneath the hot ashes of more than thirty African republics.

Bound to Violence is an odd book, careening wildly about. Hundreds of years of history are compressed into a few pages, while brief episodes -- Raymond's homosexual corruption, various misdeeds by any number of the Saifs, the training of the asps, the visit from Shrobenius -- are more languorously drawn out. The shifts are radical and unexpected. From broad satire (the Shrobenius episode) to inconceivable violence (throughout) to isolated glimpses of humanity, Ouologuem throws it all in.

It is a furious flurry of a novel. Scenes are off-puttingly direct and touchingly circumspect. The language veers between carefully controlled and completely overblown. Generally, Ouologuem's style works -- but there is some horrible writing here too: "the caressing sun nibbled at her insolent, swollen breasts", for example. Indeed, sex, especially, is problematic throughout:

Her mouth was still hungry for this man's pink, plump mollusk, and the tongue in her mouth itched to suck at the pearl of sumptuous orient that flowed, foaming as though regretfully, from the stem .

The debut novel, *Bound To Violence*, which focuses on the violent history of a fictional African empire, received the prestigious Prix Renaudot award. However, after the novel's publication, a group of critics attacked Ouologuem, accusing him

of plagiarism. Many differing opinions exist regarding Le Devoir de violence's "borrowing" of material from authors such as Graham Greene and Guy de Maupassant. Ouologuem's supporters find his use of others' text an example of an African writer asserting his identity in the continent's postcolonial society. His detractors see the supposed "borrowing" as blatant theft. Nonetheless, Ouologuem's prose has earned him a reputation as an unflinching commentator on the state of African nations, one who vividly uses depictions of violence and rape to discredit other writers' idealistic portrayals of a carefree precolonial Africa.

Bound to violence is many things, including a literary-historical curiosity. It is a wildly uneven book, but still very worthwhile. And ultimately it is more interesting as a piece of literature than for the controversies surrounding it. It is certainly an interesting and even exciting novel. It won a prestigious French literary prize and was widely (and generally positively) reviewed and well received. It was rendered into English by heavyweight translator Ralph Manheim and received a great deal of media attention. To add to this, *bound to violence* is listed in Heinemann's 2000 catalogue; although it appears to be out of print now.

Little is holy to Ouologuem, and it is this sweeping all-out assault that makes the novel a success. Relentlessly, until the very end, he portrays a sick society and a people that cannot help themselves. The unscrupulous powers that be are also largely untouchable.

That is why some African critics objected to the content of the work; its violence and bleak outlook were supposedly exaggerated and could be used too easily to support anti-African agenda .

Ouologuem' novel is harshly critical of African nationalism, and in fact, reserves its greatest hostility for the violence Africans committed against other Africans. The story is convoluted and must be as a reputation of the false clarity in the first generation of African novels. The book introduced a small revolution into the history of the francophone African novel. The publication of *Bound to violence* fiercely introduced the sub-sahara African francophones novel into the heart of literary modernism that is to say "a critical literature". Critical of the world we live in and critical of literature, critical of criticism. And this criticism is always creative.

Alongside *The suns of independence*, *Bound to Violence* is the second novel to break new ground in the field of francophone literature. The novel's innovative theme deconstructs the Eden-like image of pre-colonial Africa invented by ethnologists and negritude poets. The author opposes the image of a continent by the cynicism of slave kings from their first contact with Arab slave traders. As a stylistic innovation, *Bound to Violence* inaugurates an aesthetic of the grotesque and a practice of inter-textuality. The aesthetic of the grotesque is, an aesthetic or rapture that the author successfully achieves in 1968s African literary field by

mixing the epic and the novel, parodying the detective story, conflating ethnology and third worldism in their celebration of eternal Africa, and ridiculing the epic songs of the griots and even the famous African traditions.

Some of the critics of *Bound to Violence* praised him for looking without complacency at Africa's past and appreciated the baroque exuberance of his narration; others criticized him for confirming Europe's negative image of Africa, by presenting pre-colonial Africa as a fabric of crime and violence. The author has violated, as said by many critics, a taboo respected by his predecessors in showing that well before the arrival of the Europeans, the continent was already a theatre of infamy. This infraction was unparadonable for the African nationalists and third worldists who, at the time, still considered African as the ideal place for the realization of the dream of socialist revolution. This epic or anti-epic which tells the story of a black empire called Nakeem from 1202 until 1947, remains unprecedented as a project in the history of Francophone African novel. Through its ample narrative scope and literary originality *Bound to Violence* is the sort of manifesto that can still ignite heated debate.

4.3 Contextual analysis/Post Coloniality in Ouloguem's Text

Going by the general assumptions and generalizations that have been by and large accepted as important to post colonial theory, discourse and writings- as has been clearly stated in the theoretical framework section of this study- Ouloguems

attempt as is shown in this section, is to show that the natives did have a culture, history and language long before the coming of the colonizers and that is even why he builds his narration from an African Empire –Nakem Empire: a kingdom in West African)- In response to the representation and distortion of Africa, Ouloguem’s text is not only critical to the coloniser’s perception and activities, but also harshly critical of the African nationalists and leaders on the roles they played not only to supplement the colonial perceptions and activities but also for the violence they committed against other Africans. Drawing his narration, references and characterization from an African empire, proved beyond reasonable doubt that the assertions, perceptions, misrepresentations and distortions of the African continent, is not only sentimental but also fallacious.

Purportedly a history of the Nakem Empire, a fictional kingdom in West Africa, *Bound to Violence* raises questions, about the value and “authenticity” of history, literature, and Négritude. The first section of the text entitled “The Legend of the Saifs” recounts, in a way reminiscent of the *griot* tradition, pre-colonial African history and also Arabic and European encounters with this African civilization. Ouloguem writes of the pinnacle of African rulership, Saif Isaac al-Heit, and then the succession of degenerate leaders who followed him. The second section, “Ecstasy and Agony,” recounts the specific “history” of French relations with Saif ben Isaac al-Heit. a figure whose corrupt and deceitful nature is in counter to that

of his namesake and the African people. Originally resistant to French domination, Saif eventually has to accede and his son, Madoubo, is sent to France where he becomes an object displayed on the altar of French colonialism. The third and largest section of Ouologuem's work is "The Night of the Giants." This middle section generally emphasises European contact with Africa, from the slave trade to initial colonial rule to European scholarship on Africa that claims specific, sublime meaning for every artifact. The narration eventually takes up the story of Raymond-Spartacus Kassoumi, as a person who takes advantage of his colonial education in order to find a tentative place in French society, working there, fighting on France's side during WW II and marrying a French woman. Kassoumi becomes a representative of the colonially-educated populace who took elected positions in African's post-independence governments. Saif ben Isaac al-Heit's manipulative hand hold a tightfisted control over everything: he participates in the slave trade, he sends the children of lower-class people to school so that the children of the more powerful will not be tainted by colonial influence. The references within the text to the epics of both Askia Mohammed and Sonni Ali Ber, whom Ouologuem uses as the models for good and bad African rulers. Ouologuem's "portrait of Saif Isaac al—Heit leaves little doubt that he is following the medieval written sources regarding Askia Mohammed. Aside from the change in name, there is a relatively small difference between the itineraries of the real and

the fictional rule” (144). He then discusses in detail the ways in which Askia Mohammed’s reign, as recounted in epic form by various griots, corresponds to the way the character of Saif Isaac al-Heit was written, ranging from characteristics found equally in both rulers to the way in which their successors are portrayed. Other textual mentions of epic highlight how politicians employ the epics that exist, Such as Sundiata, Askia Mohammed, and so on, to further their own aims. Politicians allude to epics in order to link themselves to the heroic tradition and legitimize their power. This reliance upon the epic tradition translated real world legitimacy both within Ouologuem’s text and the end of French colonialism in Africa. Ouologuem creates alternative historical genealogies for African traditions and customs, thereby creating a sense of instability in larger meta-narratives that had earlier explained those practices.

In the West African literary tradition, the epic is linked to the oral tradition because of Negritude’s assessment of this tradition as the most important conduit of the genre. In this text, Ouologuem draws upon tradition and references griots and legend, however, he makes sure that the narrative is unstable when he mentions these conduits. He offers different accounts of the stories, sometimes entirely inane ones, so that the reader can never entirely trust the information passed down through these means. The political and ideological connections Negritude sought to reference when it tied the oral tradition to the epic genre and

the ability to reach back to a non-hybrid African tradition are nullified. When the oral tradition is shown to be unsound, the project of Négritude is undermined as well.

To exemplify this shaking of faith in the practice of reaching back into Africa's past for present-day resonances and demonstrate metaphorically the change in the treatment of epic, Ouologuem offers a passage concerning European's search for African artifacts. After "Shrobenius" has come to Africa and undertaken the task of formulating philosophy about it, there is a rush to find African relics. People pay a great deal for these pieces and the supply does not cover the demand. Concluding his text, Ouologuem writes: ["one cannot help remembering that Saif, mourned three million times, is forever reborn to history beneath the hot ashes of more than thirty African republics" (181 -2).] Throughout the text, he has maintained that the legacy of the Saifs, even of Saif Isaac al-Heit who is touted as the pinnacle of African rulership, is bloody violence and political and social chaos. Is Africa condemned to Saif ben Isaac al-Heit's legacy? Since Africa is forever creating anew the Saifs, this story would have to be manipulated in order to make it worth recreating, a fact that demonstrates how the legends can and have been rewritten. It is the epic tradition that allows for "history" to be remade and presented as old and therefore authentic.

The myths in the work emerge both from European misconceptions as illustrated by “Shrobenius’s” myths and from Negritude’s misconceptions, such as those offered by epics of Askia Mohammed. In this work, the French Empire and its proponents are depicted as bumbling and ignorant. They happen to stumble upon a good opportunity to colonize, when the people of Africa are fighting among themselves, and simply take advantage of the situation, as Ouologuem’s narrator explains (37—8). Ouologuem takes French colonial forces out of the equation in the development of Africa. He further promotes this idea by showing how the French administration is often duped by the Saif regime. Ouologuem’s text suggests the French colonists never had the control they believed that they had, as demonstrated by the fact that Saif and his agents continually fooled them. However, the implication is that the Saif dynasty must have cooperated with, or at least allowed to happen, such events as the slave trade, the furnishing of soldiers for European wars, economic exploitation, and so on. Importantly, it is not the French Empire that is most prominent in this work. Instead, the Nakem Empire is key. It and its leaders, the Saifs, are more violent, underhanded, manipulating, enduring than the French.

The intermingling of epic and novel creates a schizophrenic hermeneutic that has difficulty being resolved. Wole Soyinka writes about this text in *Myth, Literature and the African world* that “Ouologuem has been accused of an alienation

technique: the opposite seems truer such a level of inventive degradation suggests that Ouologuem is practicing some form of literary magic for the purpose of self-inoculation (19).

Ouologuem tries to guard against being infected with any of the discourses that he tries to show to be invalid. Critically, Soyinka does not mean that Ouologuem's readers should not identify with anything, but rather that they should be aware of what they choose to align themselves with and how it is simply a version. a spin put on "truth."

At one point in the text, Ouologuem's narrator discusses the situation of Boureimi, a sorcerer, who seem to have gone mad. In elaborating upon this character, Ouologuem writes, ["I've a right to go mad. who's going to stop me? I have neither father nor mother nor God nor Devil. Against Saif I choose madness, others call it a way of being interesting, original, but what if my personal originality is madness?" (82).] This character creates an interesting dilemma for the reader. It seems that all of Boureimi's claims, according to the narrative, are truthful. We "know" that Saif did murder Chevalier and others and that he is treacherous, as Boureimi asserts. However, all of the people around him and even he himself profess Boureimi's madness. The only way to make meaning in the face of Saif, or what seems to be, by association, the metatextual discourses that he allows to continue because of his deceptions, is madness, a "personal" madness. Always

destabilizing, Ouoleguem, through his depiction of Boureimi. does not assert any authenticity for his own versions of discourse. The only effect of his text seems to be a personalized madness. a personal interpretation that is free from how external discourses would make meaning.

How can the binary, dialectical discourse that circulated under empire be avoided? Frantz Fanon offers a choice in his text *The Wretched of the Earth*; violence. From the first line of his text. Fanon discusses the binary that creates the opposition of “men” and “natives” (1). In Fanon’s understanding, this opposition is not a pure Hegelian dialectic since the power balance between the two halves is uneven. In the Hegelian “master slave” dialectic, ultimately the master-half needs the slave-half to create its subjectivity. To Fanon’s view, the man/native dialectic functions to “dehumanize the native” (42).The colonising force. when forced with its Enlightenment ideals of humanism, equality and freedom, can only carry out the acts it does in a colonised area by believing that it is not inflicting these acts on men, but on animals. Therefore the colonial forces create a metanarrative that robs the native of his subject status. Even after decolonization, Fanon suggests, this binary continues. The powerful African intellectual elite established a connection to the bourgeoisie of the colonizing nation and retain the binary. However, this discourse is not retained only among those cooperating with colonial powers. Fanon writes:

Thus we see that the primary Manicheisms which governed Colonial society is preserved intact during the period of decolonization: that is to say the settler never ceases to be the enemy, the opponent. The foe that must be overthrown(50-51)

Even those most deeply' invested in ensuring the success of decolonization are trapped in this dialectic. Fanon claims that the only way to escape this dehumanizing binary is with violence. Ironically, the violence that is used against the colonizing force is included within itself. Violence is the "natural state" of colonialism (61). The "native" learns his violence from the coloniser and at the most opportune moment is able to harness and utilize it to regain his subjectivity. Violence is the only means by which the native can become human again. The colonial machine's discourse requires violence to shatter it. The nation becomes for Fanon an almost idealized locus of communal violence against a common enemy. He suggests:

The practice of violence binds [the colonised people] together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain... in reaction to the settler's violence in the beginning . . . the future nation is already indivisible. (93)

The nation is born from violence. An act of violence is one that can both unite a nation and liberate it. According to Fanon, Literature has been misdirected. He claims that African literature prior to 1963, was directed to the west and homogenizes itself as a “Negro literature (212). Avoiding this fate. the “native writer” begins, as he realises the extent to which he is caught in colonialist discourse, to seek an audience among “his own people (240). This moment of changing the audience to whom a work is directed is the birth of national literature (240). This new literature addresses themes of national importance and becomes a literature of combat (240). National literature is another form of violence, either a call for fighting or a locus of battle. Yambo Ouologuem in *Bound to violence* attacks the meta narratives of African historiography, orality, genre and language usage. He takes on several colonialist metanarratives and disrupts them all. Certainly the binaries of colonialism and Negritude need to be scrutinized and Ouologuem provides a next that does so in a way that dislodges their stability. There is no real resolution in this text in terms of providing a way for a new discourse to emerge, however, the ideological goal of this text seems to be to destroy the veiled universality of these binaries. In his final section of *Bound to Violence*, “Dawn”, Bishop Henry claims about a film about African warfare that he has seen.. [I don’t understand. I try to piece the story together. On the one hand. I get a vague idea of the plot; on the other hand, carnage” (173).] After a brief

discussion with Saif, then, as they are about to begin a game of chess, Bishop Henry says to him, [“you play the game. But you don’t let yourself be made game of” (176).] Finally, elaborating on this thought, Henry urges

[“ say to yourself I want play as if they did not see me playing, entering into my game without ostentation, appearing to be in accord with myself and with them, making use of their quile, without ever seeming to face it head on or trying to divert it, exposing the intricate trap, but with caution, never touching anything until i have fathomed its hidden mechanism. Without such caution, my friend, can you hope to kill your adversary... in a game? (177)]

Ouologuem’s originality and revolutionary text securely place it in the cannon of African literature, a post colonial literature that revolutionizes the historical and awful activities and representation of the Africans. The novel centers around the fictional history of the Saif Dynasty of the Empire of Nakem from 1202 to 1947. The Saifs are treacherous and violent rulers. Their brutal actions toward women and commoners (who are referred to in the novel as nègraille, a term translated alternately as “black rabble” and “niggertrash”) are made possible by the power they hold. *Bound To Violence* opens with a description of the black African brutality perpetrated against the nègraille and later shows Islamic and Judeo-Christian oppression over the entire black African culture. The work ends with a

portrayal of French colonial disdain and domination of Africa. Ouologuem concludes that the crimes of these ruling forces created the “slave mentality” of black Africans. He contends that Africans have inherited a legacy of violence, to which their response is to perpetuate the violence, either against themselves or others. In *Le Devoir de violence*, Ouologuem repeatedly addresses the definition of the term *négritude*, which refers to exhibiting pride in the cultural and physical aspects of being African, and he attempts to dissolve the misconception that Africans lived a peaceful, idyllic life before the arrival of the colonial powers. In 1969 Ouologuem published *Lettre à la France nègre*, a collection of scathing essays that protest the cultural and racial attitudes of French colonialism. Later that same year, Ouologuem's second novel, *Les Mille et un bibles du sexe*, was published under the pseudonym Utto Rodolph. The novel tells the tale of erotic adventures undertaken by four French nationals, primarily occurring both in France and in Africa. Ouologuem depicts the sexual interludes in France as forced and unnatural, yet when the group travels to Africa, the land itself is so full of sensuality that the erotic escapades become more natural and organic.

Bound to Violence is controversial because of its approach to Africa. There is almost no romanticizing here, and it is a complete counter to senghorian “*négritude*” as he intended it to be. The portrayal of native blacks as victims not only of the western colonial masters, but also of the Arabs (and, significantly, the

religion of the Arabs, Islam) was also a significant step. The portrayal of blacks sold by each other was also an uncommon one. His tone at times, is one of content for the victims, doomed, he suggests, to remain as such forever. The reach of history is one of the or the more impressive aspects of the novel while only a relatively small portion of the novel is devoted t the time from 1200 to the 19th century, there is no romanticizing of the pre-European past. The niggertrash was subjugated long before then.

4.5 Conclusion

Finally, Ouologuem's text and its use of orality and epic simply encourage the readers of West African literature to become aware of those manipulations and created significances so that their eyes may be opened to the ideology at work as well as serving as a tool that teaches us to be critical readers of literature.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* and Ouologuem's *Bound to Violence* have indeed introduced a small revolution into the history of the Anglo/Francophone African novel and have set a precedence for African writers to react against the Africa's unjust misrepresentation of its history and culture by the 'centre' or Europe. The works are not only geared toward contradicting the Eurocentric, historical and cultural fallacies, but also reinstate Africa's besmirched reputation. "Writing back" to the metropolitan centre is a mandatory artistic responsibility shouldered on all African writers to 'reclaim Africa's past' from the "occident" the European man, who deems the black African as a western made or the "orient" the "subaltern".

Although the two texts highlight how narratives of history are invented, how discourses on Africa have been entirely revolutionize and fictionalized, how "truths" are re-written and fragmented in order to best suit the desires of the one referencing them. I assert that as the two books under study are similar in some aspects, they also contradict each other in other aspects. For instance: while Armah develops his narrative to historical and mythical configuration(myths, legend, and folk narratives) drawn from Africa (Akan oral tradition), Ouologuem does so very

differently. Instead of accepting the stories of the past, Oulognem raises questions concerning their authenticity. He refuses to make the oral sources as the basis for the text's history and rather situates that spoken history purely in the realm of fiction.

Again, Armah's narrative is build on the ancient African prophecy of Anoa and Akan to drive his story Abakosem, whereas Ouologuem's narrative is purportedly a history of Nakem Empire, a fictional kingdom in west Africa, which raises questions about the value and authenticity of history, literature and negritude. That is to say, it topples narratives of history, colonialism and African nationalism.

Ouologuem, unlike Armah, treated the past daringly. He does not allow himself or the audience to trust the ways in which the past has been presented, because the past, according to him, has been filtered through either African-idealizing lenses or French colonial lenses, thereby ensuring that the past is too ideologically charged to hold any authenticity. Additionally, any understanding of documented history is impossible in Ouologuem's text. Apart from legend and oral traditions, the concept of history is shaken through the text's manipulation of versions of history. For example, in his own conception of colonial history, the French were not able to move into African territory because of their greater military force, but only because different factions were squabbling amongst themselves and left themselves open to attack. In another example, female genital mutilation begins because of a

historical link to Saif ben Isaac al-heit, who enjoyed seeing someone in pain. Further, Saif himself invents African history, fabricating a tradition and repeating it to a European anthropologist, who writes down Saif's words and transmits them back to Europe as "authentic" and "true".

Ouologuem, significantly offers a strikingly disparate view of African history, but uses the same sources that were previously used. In my reading of this text, the version of African history proffered by Ouologuem does not need to be accepted as truth any more than does the Negritude version; however, they both have to be recognized as *versions* and not as "true". This is because, according to him, the myths in the work emerge both from European misconception as illustrated by "Shrobenius" myths and from Negritude's misconceptions, such as those offered by epics of Askia Mohammad. Surprisingly, that is why he himself takes on the task of exposing the fabrication of African history and legend transmitted through the oral tradition. In a sense, he exposes to his audience the extent to which they have become credulous customers and consumers of slapdash copies of African history that have somehow become imbued with the weight of four centuries.

Another contrasting aspect of the two novels is the depiction of Africa's past by Armah as that it enjoyed relative social tranquility and economic prosperity, a well defined structure prior to the Arab-European presence. That there was the flourishing of a primeval order of harmonious social co-existence and material

abundance which was disrupted by the coming of Arab-European invaders. Whereas, Ouloguem's depiction of the Africa's past does not evoke an Idyllic pre-colonial Africa, but instead present a bloody land of betrayal and false hopes.

Interestingly, the overall interest of these writers is to rewrite and represent Africa as misrepresented by the European writers. They are recreators of history, they depict a reversals of perception, insiders speaking to outsiders from their own point of view, giving an interpretation from an African perspective and consciously proving that their narration (Europeans) of us as unauthentic.

5.2 Recommendation

From the forgoing, the two texts appear to be a positive response to the call to the African writer to help in the generation and advertisement of ideas that will inspire the black man to regain his self-confidence, wretched history, culture and identity, battered by centuries of Arab and European domination over his affairs. Happily, with these crop of African writers, we would be having a literature written by Africans, who have a distinct background as far as their experience is concerned and who are writing, or atleast striving to write, within a specific cultural, social and historical framework. What remains is to integrate it (i.e the government) into the school system (primary-higher institutions), because literature, as Roland Barthes so aptly says, is what is taught.

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