

Destabilizing the Colonial Legacy in Postcolonial Ghana: A Study of Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

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Abstract

Though Ghana got its political independence from the British colonization in 1957, the lifestyle and life choices of the Ghanaians in the postcolonial era indicate that they are still colonized from within. In their daily life, they proceed from a deeply rooted belief in their inferiority compared to their former white colonizers and, thus, they still do not see any avenue for getting into the future but through the white culture. As a result, they send their sons to the West to complete their study, deny their national history with specific regard to the dark moments in it, other the weak and the powerless sections in society, and look upon woman from a sexist perspective. Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965) comes at this critical period in the history of modern Ghana to revolutionize the consciousness of its readers/spectators by making them question their colonial mentality and practices. The researcher argues that the play is a revolutionary one that provides a powerful critique of the dominant colonial ideology in postcolonial Ghana through uncovering the colony within the Ghanaian people's psyches. In place of the imperialist ideology that dominates all aspects of life, the play poses a postcolonial national ideology based on the resurrection of a shared history and a common culture that can reunite all Ghanaians under their umbrella and help them get rid of their colonialist legacy and rebuild their indigenous postcolonial identity.

Key Words: Ama Ata Aidoo, The Dilemma of a Ghost, Neocolonialism, Colonial Mentality, Postcolonial Identity, Ideology

خلخة الإرث الاستعماري في غانا ما بعد الاستعمار: دراسة لمسرحية "مأزق شبخ" للكاتبة أما أيدو

الملخص

على الرغم من حصول غانا على استقلالها من الاحتلال البريطاني لأراضيها في العام ١٩٥٧ إلا أن الواقع على الأرض كان مختلفاً تماماً عن نظيره على الورق، فاختيارات الغانيين الحياتية وممارساتهم اليومية ظلت بعيدة كل البعد عن الاستقلالية بل جاءت تعكس تأثيرهم الشديد بالإرث الاستعماري الطويل نفسياً واجتماعياً وثقافياً، فلا يزال الغانيون يرسلون أبناءهم للغرب ليكملوا دراستهم هناك وما زالت نظرتهم للمرأة تتسم بالدونية وما زالوا ينتكرون لتاريخهم القومي وعاداتهم الأفريقية الأصيلة انطلاقاً من أيديولوجية استعمارية خلفها الاستعمار وراءه وسيطرت على رؤية الغانيين للحياة من حولهم، وتتمركز الأيديولوجية الموروثة من عهد الاستعمار حول الاعلاء من شأن الثقافة الغربية الدخيلة على حساب الثقافة الأفريقية الأصيلة لسكان غانا، وفي وسط هذه الثقافة الاستعمارية والعقلية الأفريقية المتشعبة بها كتبت أما أيدو في عام ١٩٦٤ مسرحيتها الشهيرة "مأزق شبخ" لتعريه هذه الأيديولوجية وكشف زيفها للغانيين. ويرى الباحث أن مسرحية أيدو مسرحية ثورية من الطراز الأول تقدم نقداً لاذعاً للأيديولوجية الغربية المتفشية في المجتمع وما انبثق عنها من عقلية ونفسية خانعة تؤمن بكل ما هو غربي وتتنكر لكل ما هو قومي ومحلي وذلك من خلال دعوة الجمهور لمراجعة مواقفهم واختياراتهم الحياتية، كما لا تكتفي الدراما بذلك وإنما تطرح أيديولوجية قومية بديلة تقوم على احياء الثقافة الأفريقية والاحتفاء بالتاريخ القومي المشترك لتوحيد الغانيين جميعاً تحت مظلة ثقافية واحدة في عصر ما بعد الاستعمار مما يدعم بلورة الهوية الأفريقية الحقيقية ويحقق الاستقلال الفكري والنفسي والاجتماعي عن الغرب الاستعماري في العهد الجديد.

Destabilizing the Colonial Legacy in Postcolonial Ghana: A Study of Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost*

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Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965) is one of Ghana's first and most influential postcolonial literary works that followed Ghana's independence from the British colonization in 1957. The play came out to light in a critical period in which the postcolonial Ghanaian identity was being formed on all levels: psychological, social, political, etc. Hence, its exceptional importance in the history of Ghana in particular and Africa at large. Though Ghana, as a historical fact, was not the first African nation to get its independence, both Egypt and Sudan preceded it in 1956, its liberation from the British imperialism was a landmark in the history of the whole continent. Historically and geographically, Ghana occupied a significant position in the history of colonialism and liberation movements in Africa. Its location on the western coast of the continent enabled it once to play a prominent role in the slave trade between Africa and the New World for over three centuries through its famous historical ports as Cape Coast and Elmina that are referred to in Aidoo's drama in question. As such, the emergence of the new nation-state of Ghana was at the center of attention of all those concerned with the historical conflict between colonialism and anti-colonialism, the West and the East, and tradition and modernity. In other words, Ghana has become a major field of postcolonial studies.

In their seminal book, *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, et al. maintain that the term "postcolonial" extends to "cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2). "Postcolonial literature",

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therefore, refers to all types of literary works written in cultures that have been affected in a way or another by colonialism, including the literature of Africa, India, and Asia to name but just some examples. What combines these literatures together in spite of the wide differences among them is that "they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial" (2). One of the central ideas that postcolonial literature deals with is the aftermath of decolonization and the formation of independent nation-states for the first time. Issues like identity, nationalism, indigenous culture, national history, status of woman, and decolonization of the mind are but a few of the many sophisticated and problematic issues that have popped up to the surface in the post-independence period and become the hot topics of the literature of the era. Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* is no exception. The play was written just eight years after the liberation of Ghana from the British rule in a turbulent period where most of the above-mentioned issues were still very hot and demanding. Given that, the play addresses such controversial themes as the formation of identity of recently-liberated Ghana, the vacillation between the Western culture of the former colonizers and the authentic national culture of the natives, the legacy of the slave trade, and the African stance towards Africans of the diaspora. On the top of these subject-matters that Aidoo's drama handles is the colonial mentality that still lurks deep inside the psyches of the Ghanaian people despite the fact that actual liberation from colonialization has already been obtained on the political and military levels.

After nearly a decade of independence, Ghanaians are still unable to completely rid themselves of a colonial ideology that has penetrated the structure of the Ghanaian character due to a long

history of colonization. Every aspect of life in the emerging state has been infiltrated by this ideology, from social life to the psychological sphere through the historical and educational domains. The Ghanaian citizen has internalized the colonial belief that he has no true existence but through relating to the imperial centre from which he derives his worldview and, more dangerously, his self-image. Though he has managed to liberate himself on the political level, he is still unable to take such a daring step on the personal and social levels. He still gets dressed like his former colonizers, eats like them, talks like them, uses their language, adopts their perspectives, and reproduces their colonial mechanisms towards the weaker sections of society. Cultural heritage and national history are still empty slogans that have not been turned into real causes to be lived by and for. In such a context, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* came in the right time as a loud cry of anger against the still-colonized mentality of Africans in the postcolonial epoch.

The present study paper argues that Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* provides a powerful critique of the dominant colonial ideology in postcolonial Ghana and poses instead an alternative national one based on the resurrection of the authentic Akan cultural heritage and the empowerment of the subalterns on all levels. In face of the negative criticisms of the play on the ground that it "does not offer forms of resistance nor does it contemplate challenging the superiority of the West" (Abou-Agag 60), or that the play "has not contributed to giving the subaltern a voice" or that in the play the voice of the native culture is so faint to the extent that it is hardly heard or that there is no hope for a bright future but through tracing the steps of the colonizer (61), and contrary to those critics who claim that "the reconciliation of African and English legacy is a key aspect of her [Aidoo's] work," and that what is fascinating about Aidoo's work is "her blending of English and African traditions" (Pujolràs-Noguer 10-11), the researcher argues that *The Dilemma* is a revolutionary drama that unmasks the latent, yet highly proactive,

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imperial ideology that dominates the psyches of Ghanaians and permeates all aspects of life in the postcolonial era. In place of it, the text poses a liberating ideology that is based on the celebration of whatever is indigenous and the empowering of whatever is marginalized in the colonial epoch. The audience are invited to reconsider their current state in a way that may lead them to think of changing it. The hoped-for change that Aidoo aspires to takes the form of key successive stages: understanding the present situation, questioning it, mentally rebelling against it, and finally changing it.

Building upon this thesis, the present paper raises and attempts to critically answer the following questions: What is postcolonial literature? How do postcolonial literary texts share a common background despite their specific regional and environmental differences? How is Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* a typical postcolonial text? Which ideology does the play attempt to refute? What is the alternative ideology the drama presents? What are the features of the colonial mentality that controls the lives of the Ghanaian people as dramatized in Aidoo's text? Which postcolonial tenets does Aidoo propose in her drama to replace the colonial ideology prevalent in emerging decolonized Ghana? On which ground could *The Dilemma* be classified among the first revolutionary postcolonial dramas not only in Ghana but in Africa at large?

For critically attaining the objective of this study, that is to critically prove that *The Dilemma of a Ghost* belongs to the revolutionary literature that aims at dismantling the colony within the Ghanaian people's psyches in the post-liberation era, the writer leans heavily on the postcolonial literary theory as a theoretical framework for the reading and analysis of the text in question. Writings of such eminent names in the field as Bill Ashcroft, Frantz Fanon, and Paulo Freire will be referred to recurrently throughout the study with the aim to form a solid theoretical background against which the argument of the study is carried out. The rationale

beyond the use of the postcolonial critical theory lies in its ability to make us realize the strong relationship between all our domains of experience: psychological, social, political, cultural, etc., and how these domains should be seen inseparable in any serious attempt at understanding the lived experience of a certain nation. Postcolonial criticism as a theoretical framework “seeks to understand the operations – politically, socially, culturally, and psychologically – of colonialist and anticolonialist ideologies” (Tyson 418). Phrased differently, the postcolonial critical approach helps us understand how a literary text either reinforces or debunks the colonial ideology in a certain society whether at the time of colonization or after independence as is the case with Aidoo’s text.

Ama Ata Aidoo was born in 1943 to a father who had a prominent role in leading resistance against colonialism. He was a tribe chief who was detained by the British for his prominent role in the fight for independence in colonized Ghana. Though still a child at that time, Aidoo lived the colonialist age at the peak of its oppression, witnessed the liberation stage, felt the ecstasy of the moment, and observed with anxiety the remains of the colonial legacy sneaking into the lives of the recent independent people. She has taken upon herself the task of destabilizing the neocolonial ideology spreading in society through uncovering its insidious tactics and seemingly natural logic (Pujolràs-Noguer 3). She does so out of a firm belief that she belongs to the rising revolutionary theatrical movement in Ghana after independence that adopts a shared national project founded on a common collective African culture and identity (16). As a result, her works in general and her first drama in particular abound with serious criticism of the cultural life in Ghana that has become a field of conflict between the Western values and the African ones, individualism and collectivism, modernity and tradition, and the individual and the community.

In her interview with Adewale Maja-Pearce, Aidoo takes an uncompromising stance against the imperial West attacking its

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intentions and attitudes towards its previously colonized subjects: "There's no doubt that, as of now, the liberal West's notion of us is not healthy, their plans for us are not healthy. Nothing good has come out of the West in relation to Africa" (18). If nothing good has come out of the imperial West in Aidoo's words, something awfully bad has been left behind: its negative colonial ideology that has come to dominate the psyches of its former subjects. Denying one's history, inability to celebrate one's native culture, othering the marginal and the weak, stereotyping woman in traditional gender roles, and believing in the superiority of the white skin and the inferiority of the black one are just some of the manifestations of a deeply rooted colonial ideology that did not leave with the colonizer's military forces. Rather, it has remained back working in a society that is in bad need of developing a distinctive postcolonial national identity. The colonizer's shadow is still cast over formerly oppressed Africans embodied in their unshaken admission of the supremacy of its values. This belief has engendered blind imitation of everything the Western man does. "The behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior" Paulo Freire argues in his inspiring book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, "following ... the guidelines of the oppressor" (46-47). He asserts that the root of this mimicry behavior lies in the liberated people's fear of freedom as freedom entails responsibility which, in its turn, requires high self-esteem that they have lost over years under colonization: "The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility" (46-47). This oppressing ideology traps Africans after liberation in its shackles as they are still economically and scientifically dependent on the West as Nadine Gordimer argues in her introduction to Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, "It is not easy to escape mentally from a concrete situation, to refuse its ideology while continuing to live with its

actual relationships” (35). It is this colonialist Eurocentric discourse that Ama Ata Aidoo strives to destabilize and refute in her drama.

In *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, the protagonist, Ato Yawson, a Ghanaian young graduate was sent by his Fanti family to the United States for completing his study. In the meanwhile, almost all property of the family was sold for carrying out the sacred mission of having a member of the Odumna clan educated in the white man’s land. When he comes backs, the family is horribly shocked on knowing that he is married to an African American, Eulalie Rush. According to the Fanti culture, such a marriage is considered a disgrace to the family, for a wife should belong to a well-known African tribe not a “slave” as they think of Eulalie. Most incidents of the play revolve around the conflict between Ato’s people and his wife on the one hand and the husband and wife on the other. Through this plot, the legacy of colonialism that still pervades daily life in decolonized Ghana is uncovered, people are invited to question it, and a new national postcolonial worldview is presented as an alternative.

The very choice of the dilemma tale, a traditional African mode of storytelling, as a literary form in which the plot is told is a significant hint from Aidoo to the objective of the play from the start: to get her people’s attention turned back towards their past and cultural heritage instead of clinging to a colonial legacy that traps them in its shackles and drives them away from their roots. The dilemma tale has been known in Africa for centuries. It presents an oral story whose ending is not final and decisive. Rather, it is an open ending with the aim to engage the audience in the story told and the moral, social, and personal issues implied in its details. The dilemma tale does not, therefore, provide ready-made answers to the questions it raises but rather provokes thought and generates discussions among the audience about its moral and social problems (Al-Khafaji 137). About the significance of the dilemma tale and its relationship with the ideology of society Vincent Odamtten writes:

The effectiveness of the dilemma tales abides in the unavoidable critical reading that they exert upon the audience. In other words, they stimulate a questioning of the general ideology of society by placing this ideology in the dialogical ground of the text where different voices are shaped and heard and which interact with each other and with the audience at large. The result is that the dilemma is always extended out of the text and into the context of the audience. (qtd in Pujolràs-Noguer 151)

The dilemma tale, thus, engages the readers/spectators into a critical standpoint in which they contemplate the dilemma posited in the work, figure out the reasons that stand beyond it, and think of their own way out. In this way there is much similarity between the classic African dilemma tale and Brecht's modern "estrangement or alienation effect" in that both "aimed at entertaining while instructing" (Pujolràs-Noguer 153). While the audience enjoy reading *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, for example, they are invited to check the imperial ideology that still dominates their lives despite the historical fact that they are formally decolonized for nearly a decade. Through the dramatic use of the dilemma form in Aidoo's text, the hidden colonial mentality is exposed, its ways are uncovered, and course correction is offered. The audience come to realize that in their speech, behavior, and thinking, they proceed from a malignant colonial legacy that is rooted deep within and that they are still in bad need of liberating their own minds from the fetters of the inherited colonial mindset.

The Dilemma of a Ghost starts with a prelude narrated by "The Bird of the Wayside", an omniscient folkloric African narrator who knows of the past, present and future. The narrator identifies herself as "an asthmatic old rag" whose job is to narrate the events of the Odumna clan story. However, she maintains that she will not tell everything she knows but will leave the reader to discover the rest of the story by himself: "I can furnish you with the

reasons why / This and that and other things / Happened... / Look around you, / For the mouth must not tell everything. / Sometimes the eye can see / And the ear should hear” (Aidoo, Dilemma 7). In the same way Shakespeare used the chorus in his plays, Aidoo used her traditional ever-present, knowledgeable African storyteller to comment on the incidents occurring on stage. The storyteller of the play complies, then, with the conventional form of the dilemma tale in that both do not tell everything; rather, the reader is invited to shoulder his responsibility in knowing the rest of the story by himself, contemplating its dilemmas, and actively thinking of solutions for them.

Another important oral technique that goes side by side with “the Bird of the Wayside” narrator is the two African women that comment every now and then on the incidents of the story, usually ending their comments with tribal proverbs that encapsulate the wisdom of African culture. Along with the Bird of the Wayside, both women function as a traditional chorus to the play. The extensive use of oral devices – the dilemma tale, the Bird of the Wayside, and the two female commentators – reflects the playwright’s fascination with the storytelling oral tradition she had inherited from a long Fanti heritage that is as old as Africa itself. Aidoo is so keen for the continuation of this long tradition “through the integration of the oral folk heritage with Western written literary conventions” (Hill-Lubin 222) to fulfill more than a function at a time. First, it “represents a dynamic process of communication between the teller and the audience vis-a-vis a narrative performance” (222). Second, it reminds the audience of their cultural heritage that collides with the Western discourse that dominates their lives and, hence, invites them to reevaluate their status quo. Phrased differently, the dramatist meant from the start to highlight an utterly different perspective in decolonizing the mentality of Ghanaians represented in resurrecting the cultural heritage with all its indigenous elements.

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The setting of the play is closely interrelated with the dilemma tale form and the message of the drama itself. Through the time and place of the play, one can figure out the dilemma of the protagonist and the African character in general after independence. The stage directions read that "the actions take place in the courtyard of the newest wing of the Odumna clan house" which is enclosed on the right by the walls of the old building and on the left by those of the new building designed particularly for the newcomer, Ato Yawson (Aidoo, *Dilemma* 5). "At the right-hand corner a door links the courtyard with a passage that leads into the much bigger courtyard of the old house. In the middle of the left wall there is a door leading into the new rooms" (5). The old part of the house on the right stands for tradition, history, and cultural heritage, whereas the new building on the left represents the new lifestyle, ideas, and modernity that are associated with the West. The events of the play take place, as the stage directions indicate, in the courtyard between the two buildings, something that indicates how Ato is trapped in the middle between two competing cultures; he is unable to choose for himself between adopting the new Western culture with its concomitant colonialist ideology and sticking to his cultural roots with all its customs and traditions. This is the dilemma that is expressed later in the play by the ghost song which encapsulates the main theme of the play: wavering between tradition and modernity, the East and the West, collectivism and individualism, national ideology and colonial one.

From the outset, the prelude casts doubt on the strategy the Fanti people adopts towards the national/colonial duality. After describing how rich Ato's people were, "And they acquire gold / As if it were corn grains," it invites the audience to reconsider whether the strategy of sending Ato to the West was the right decision or not: "But if in the making of / One Scholar / Much is gone / you stranger do not know" (Aidoo, *Dilemma* 7). Yet, as a tradition of the dilemma tale the answer is left for the audience themselves to figure

out. The family's colonial mentality, with specific regard to the self-contradictory stubborn mother, Esi Kom, manifests itself early in the play when we know of the family's former decision to send the hero to the United States to make a scholar of him, expecting so much from him on his return. Ashcroft et al. argue in this regard that "All post-colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neocolonial domination, and independence has not solved the problem" (2). It is the same case with Ato's people who are but just a microcosm of the Ghanaian people and, without exaggeration, the African people at large after autonomy. Instead of getting back to their indigenous culture and national common history, they still undergo spiritual and intellectual colonization in the form of a deeply-rooted internalized sense of the superiority of the white culture and the inferiority of their own. In other words, they still do not see any available avenues for achieving progress and getting into the future after liberation but through the West. Their self-value as a sovereign nation that can choose its future social, political, and cultural paths has been diminished by a long history of military colonization accompanied by an underlying colonial ideology that has contributed to the loss of this self-value over years. Out of this sense of inferiority and lack of potential, Ato's mother decides to send her son to complete his study in the States opposing most of the family members. Though many of the protagonist's relatives were against Esi Kom's plan from the beginning, they now feel thrilled on his return boasting of him as their new "White Master" as referred to occasionally in the play. The sense of joy mixed with pride with which they receive Ato on his coming back despite their former disagreement over his education in the USA signifies that though some Africans may object overtly to the colonial ideology prevalent in society, they are intellectually chained to it and deep in the recesses of their hearts they embrace and celebrate it. Labelling Ato throughout the play as the "white master" is, therefore, an indication of an "obnoxious attitude that 'white is better'" (Asiedu 11).

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Sending Ato to the white man's land to get taught there and expecting him to stick to his cultural heritage on his return as indicated by his relatives who blame him in more than an occasion for forgetting the tenets of his Africanness reflect the chronic schizophrenia of the African psyche after independence. The African self has been fractured between its desire to go back to its cultural roots and its need to keep in touch with the means of advancement that are only available through the previous colonizing culture. Though infatuated by their native African tradition, they are haunted by an aspiration for achieving a quick and powerful thrust into the future which they believe will not be achieved but through slavishly following in the colonial West's footsteps; here lies another dilemma: the historical cause of Africans' backwardness has turned to be their means of development and, hence, the African psyche's state of fracture is deepened. In *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, for example, Esi Kom falls prey to self-contradiction more than the *been-to* himself. Though she is the ardent advocate of the native culture throughout the course of the play, she is, surprisingly enough, the one that insists on sending her son to the West opposing almost all other members of the family. On the return of her son, she is the one that mostly criticize him for his westernized behavior forgetting that she is the one to blame first and foremost for it. When Eulalie, for example, throws her mother-in-law's snails gift out of the window, Esi Kom bombards her son with a flood of scolding questions on forgetting his native customs and traditions: "And what, my son? Do you not know how to eat them now? What kind of man are you growing into? Are your wife's taboos yours? Rather, your taboos should be hers" (Aidoo, *Dilemma*, 33). It is such an ambivalent attitude of Africans towards the West that Aidoo is attempting to eradicate by writing a play that makes her readers question its validity.

The prelude stimulates the critical appetite of the readers from the start by such a statement as follows: "The ghosts of the dead

ancestors are invoked and there is no discord, only harmony and restoration of that which needs to be restored. But the Day of Planning is different from the Day of Battle. And when the One Scholar came I cannot tell you what happened. You shall see that anon” (Aidoo, Dilemma 8). Here the audience are invited by more than one mechanism to get involved in the dilemma to be told before the play even starts. Dramatically, the playwright uses an ambiguous phrase, “*that which needs to be restored*”, to open up possibilities of interpretation of what it is “which” needs to be restored: is it their man, Ato, from the hostile West? Is it their wrong decision to send him there from the beginning? Is it the money and properties spent for the sake of making him a scholar? Or is it the cultural heritage Ato is supposed to resurrect? All these possibilities are left open for the audience to reflect on while starting to read the text. Another mechanism that Aidoo uses to involve the readers into the dilemma of all Africans before setting out to read the text is the “capitalization” she uses at the beginning of the words, “Day of Planning”, “Day of Battle”, and “One Scholar”. The ungrammatical and unexpected capital letters are intended here to engage the audience to the utmost in contemplating what each of these phrases means separately and in relation to the rest. Finally, the Bird of the Wayside as usual arouses a state of suspense when she states that she cannot explain further as the reader will discover everything on his own. Suspense is built up and the audience get eager to know what will happen. However, some of the clues are given so that the reader can be on the right path. When Aidoo writes that the day of planning is different from the day of battle, the reader anticipates that there was a plan that has not worked as expected. Later on, he will discover the whole story by himself. The mother has invested in the wrong way. By sending her son to America, she expected to make a scholar of him that may one day compensate her of all she has lost for the making of him, be it money, time, or effort. Yet, on his return she discovers that she has been wrong from the very beginning to expect goodness to come

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from a culture that has ever been enemy of her own culture and people. Akroma, Ato's younger uncle, summarizes the failure of the project from the start in a powerful metaphor derived from native African wisdom. "We can soon know the bird which will not do well," he addresses Nana, "for his nest hangs by the wayside" (15). For Akroma, the whole family (the bird) had put its aims and goals (egg) in the wrong soil (the wayside) by sending their son to the white man's land and expecting too much out of him. For Akroma and for Aidoo herself, the project is doomed from the very beginning since the end does not justify the means.

The key element Aidoo uses to criticize the colonial mentality of Ghanaians in the postcolonial period is the result they obtain from succumbing to the colonial oppressive ideology itself. In the play, this result is personified in the unsympathetic, indecisive, and irresolute character of the protagonist. The dramatist succeeds through the characterization of Ato to produce a bleak nightmarish vision of the horrific consequences of following the dominant Western ideology without seeking refuge in one's national history and cultural heritage. The hero is presented throughout the play as stuck at the crossroads between two cultures unable either to belong to any of them or bridge the gap between them. He is torn between his African allegiance and his American education dramatized in the play by the conflict over having children immediately after marriage or postponing having them to a later stage, bearing in mind the exceptional importance of having children in the Akan culture. According to the African traditions, having children is the main purpose of marriage and the natural right of the whole clan not just the couple while in the Western culture only the husband and wife have the exclusive right to decide for themselves. In other words, Ato is pulled by two cultural extremes: African collectivism and Western individualism, and in the meanwhile he is paralyzed to action. "Ato's dilemma is an epistemological one," Tuzyline Jita Allan sees the case, "He must reconcile two opposing systems of

knowledge in order to maintain a coherent sense of self. His failure ... exemplifies the disorientation and sense of irrelevance that afflict his class, namely, Africa's intellectual Bourgeoisie" (175). Allan's generalization is not far from the truth; the disorientation that Ato suffers from throughout the play and that he cannot rid himself of till the end is not specific to him as an individual case. Rather, it reflects the dilemma of the African intelligentsia who cannot find a solid body of distinctive culture to belong to in post-independence Africa. They are used, against their will, by both their native people and their former colonizers for different purposes; yet the result comes disappointing except for the colonizer himself. In some cases, an individual is sent to the West as in the case of Ato to improve on his return the financial and social status of the family and be an object of pride for his clan. In other cases, he is sent to function as a bridge between his traditional native culture and the modern culture of the former colonizer. However, in both cases the project is doomed, for the gap is never bridged and the financial status is not improved. As for the imperial West, the matter is utterly different. It constantly strives to have its effect in the making of the African intellectual Bourgeoisie. About the intention of the West beyond this project and the strategies it exploits for sustaining it, Jan Paul Sartre writes in his Preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*:

The European elite undertook to manufacture a native elite. They picked out promising adolescents; they branded them, as with a red-hot iron, with the principles of Western culture; they stuffed their mouths full with high-sounding phrases, grand glutinous words that stuck to the teeth. After a short stay in the mother country they were sent home, whitewashed. These walking lies had nothing left to say to their brothers; they only echoed. From Paris, from London, from Amsterdam we would utter the words "Parthenon! Brotherhood!" and somewhere in Africa or Asia lips would open "...thenon! ...therhood!" (7)

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For Sartre, then, the main strategy the colonial West uses to enlist African intellectuals for the service of its agenda is to implant its values and culture in their minds so that they become addicted to "mimicry", one of the major syndromes of submission to the colonialist ideology.

Mimicry is incarnated in the desire, usually fueled by the colonial authorities, of "those from the periphery to immerse themselves in the imported culture, denying their origins in an attempt to become 'more English than the English'" (Ashcroft et al. 4). Throughout the *been-to's* stay in the West, he is taught to get fascinated with whatever is Western: values, customs, daily habits, way of thinking, etc. He is made to absorb the cultural values he experiences there to the last drop so that by the passage of time he becomes a typical domestic Westernized version that, on his return home, would carry out the neocolonialist agenda as best as ever. The *been-to* develops "a desire to be accepted by the colonizing culture" and is programmed to see his own indigenous culture as inferior (Tyson 421). The mentally-colonized African *been-to* becomes, therefore, a mere copy of his former colonizer; he eats, drinks, dresses, talks, and thinks as they do in the West. The case as such, Western neocolonialism is immune to rebellion against it, for it is difficult to rebel against a system one is programmed to look upon as superior to his own.

The protagonist of *The Dilemma*, when still in the United States, under the hypnotism of the American culture, takes two related decisions that bespeak his utter surrender to the lure of the Western system of life under the magic of the neocolonial ideology that he falls prey to there. First, he decides to marry an Afro-American though he knows in advance how such a decision will put him in conflict with his family for many reasons. Marriage conventions in Africa require the wife to be of a pure African origin and the descendant of a historical Fanti tribe. When Nana hears of Ato's marriage to someone not belonging to an African tribe, she

exclaims shockingly, “since I was born, I have not heard of a human being born out of the womb of a woman who has no tribe. Are there trees which never have any roots” (Aidoo, Dilemma 17)? Though he fully realizes that his wife will be marginalized as a cultural outsider by his people and conflicts between them will arise over many issues, he goes on the marriage affair. The second decision the protagonist takes mimicking the white mentality and ignoring his cultural background is to postpone having children for a later stage in his life although he knows the extraordinary importance of having children for the Fanti. In the Akan culture, marriage is essentially for having children so that the family will expand over time. On their conversation with Ato, both Akroma and Petu, Ato’s uncles, stress this fact:

Petu: When two people marry, everyone expects them to have children. For men and women marry because they want children. Or I am lying, Akroma?

Akroma: How can you be lying? It is very true.

Petu: Therefore, my nephew, if they do not have children then there is something wrong. (44)

Fascinated with the Western model he lives in America, Ato unconsciously mimics it regardless of its radical difference from his cultural customs and traditions. On his return home, however, the westernized version of Ato is violently shaken on his encounter with his own people as cultural differences dominate the situation. He comes to suffer from a psychological state that Du Bois calls in his *The Souls of Black Folks* “double consciousness”, “One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, [an African]; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (8). In a similar way, Ato, on his return to Africa, is torn between two worldviews that pull him in two opposite directions: that of the colonizer and that of the colonized. He develops a neurotic state in which his psyche is fractured between two extremes that he is unable to reconcile and he remains trapped in this vicious circle till

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the end of the play unable to liberate himself. Emeka Nwabueze argues in this regard that:

It is clear that this behavior is definitely un-African, and that Ato is just behaving according to the American culture which he has now internalized. But since he is returning to Africa where both of them will ultimately reside, he has to create an attitude, a face through which he has to face the paradoxes of his own personal existence. It is this creation that creates the neurotic stance in his psyche. (2)

Ato's double consciousness and incapability of decisiveness haunt him even in his sleep in the form of a recurrent dream that mirrors his desperate psychological state and which gives the play its title. He dreams of two children singing a song about a hesitant ghost stuck at crossroads unable to decide whether to go to Elmina or to Cape Coast, two historical cities in Ghana that have a significant connotation in this regard. Elmina is somehow an old city that has much affinity with the slave trade in Africa since the Portuguese built their first fort there for transporting slaves from Africa to the New World at the end of the sixteenth century. Cape Coast, on the other hand, is somewhat a modern city that was used by the British as a centre of administration in Ghana. "Both cities evoke the encounter of Akan people with Europeans ... [and] the Ghost's indecisiveness, which strikes such terror in Ato, seems to reflect the main character's constant wavering between African and Western perspectives on life" (Dilemma of a Ghost). He loves his wife, yet he is unable to play the role of the mediator between her and his culture. He sticks to his people's cultural traditions and rituals, but he falls short behind meeting their expectations. In short, "he tries to have the best of both worlds by not rejecting any part of either" and, thus, like the ghost he remains stuck at crossroads between the two cultures unable to move forward. Ato's state of indecisiveness is much similar to that of the hero of Albert Memmi's *The Pillar of Salt*: "Just as I sat on the fence between two civilizations, so would I

now find myself between two classes; and I realized that, in trying to sit on several chairs, one generally lands on the floor.” It is not just the case of Ato as an individual but that of the educated class in postcolonial Africa at large:

This dilemma in which Ato finds himself, serves as a powerful imagery of some educated Africans who have become somewhat alienated from their own culture by virtue of their western education. They question certain traditional practices of their people and yet do not have the courage to openly challenge them, while at the same time there are elements they greatly value and do not wish to discard. (Asiedu 14)

In Aidoo’s drama, Ato falls prey to the nagging expectations of all parties around him. For his former colonizers, he is their man in Africa whose western education and mentality entitle him to be the propagator of the Western ideology and, therefore, be their faithful soldier in paving the way for neocolonialism. To his African-American wife, he is her “gallant black knight” or “darling Moses.” The last is a significant Biblical allusion to the role Prophet Moses performed with the Jews in ancient times. In the same way Moses led the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Holy Land, Ato is expected to guide Eulalie from racism and oppression in the US to the promised land of nativism and purity in Africa. There is still a third party that expects so much on the part of the protagonist. Ato’s family expects from their new superior “white master” to achieve a financial and social breakthrough for them on his return from the white man’s land. On the protagonist’s coming back, however, all expectations turn out to be false, except those of his neocolonialist makers. The darling Moses at the beginning of the play becomes at the end a “damned rotten coward of a Moses” (Aidoo, Dilemma 47) as he fails miserably to carry out the sacred mission of leading Eulalie from her historical and psychological strangeness in America to freedom and familiarity in Africa. His role as a translator between the two cultures that might have guaranteed a smooth transition of his wife from the West to the East

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is not carried out as expected because of the state of bafflement he is caught in. He also proves a big failure at performing the role put on his shoulders by his family, for he neither guarantees them financial security nor social prestige. Dipped in meeting the material needs of his demanding wife, he almost wastes his salary and there is nothing left to help his family with or pay back their debts that have piled up in the course of making him a "white master". Social stature is never attained as he lives in the city and, even on his occasional visits to the village, the deeds of his wife disgrace him and the whole family.

Ato's main dilemma is that he is caught up in the grey area between two different cultures unable to fulfill the special mission assigned to him as one of Ghana's intellectual vanguard in the post-independence era, that is, to mediate between the East and the West. He needs to know that "Each generation must ... discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it" (Fanon 206). Unfortunately, he is so reluctant to accomplish his undertaking and this reluctance "at this decisive moment of the struggle will give rise to tragic mishaps" (148) as it already happens in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. The hero's inability to translate dates back to his days in America when he insists not to tell Eulalie the truth about the cultural differences between the East and the West and, thus, contributes to complicating her encounter with his people on returning to Ghana. "But Sweetie Pie, can't we ever talk, but we must drag in the differences between your people and mine? Darling, we'll be happy, won't we?", as such Ato speaks to his wife in America, and when she asks him if his mother can be a sort of a second mother to her, he answers "*slowly and uncertainly*" as the stage directions indicate that "Sure she can" (Aidoo, *Dilemma* 9). Unluckily, this hoped-for happiness and warmth in Africa are smashed on the hard rock of the cultural differences that Ato fails to explain to the different parties involved. Another example of the protagonist's inability to translate between the culture of his wife and that of his people is the birth

control decision he takes under the lure of the American lifestyle, failing, however, to pinpoint to his wife the probable conflicts that may ensue from this decision with his family back in Africa: “[Vehemently] Look at me, we shall postpone having children for as long as you would want” (10). Though the initial decision is his and he is the one who assures Eulalie that everything would be ok with his people as it is understood from the previous quote and the tone, “vehemently”, that he speaks in, he is the first one to let his wife down when the conflict between his family and her spirals towards the end of the play. The following conversation between his wife and him at the end of the play reflects much about the failure of the protagonist to carry out his supposed-to-be mission successfully to the shock and disappointment of his wife:

Ato: They came to ask why we haven’t started a family.

Eu: And what did you tell them?

Ato: Nothing.

Eu: what do you mean by “nothing”? I should have thought the answer to that question is very simple.

Ato: They would say we are displeasing the spirits of our dead ancestors and the Almighty God for controlling birth ...

Eu: [*Bitterly*] You knew all this, didn’t you, my gallant black knight? Now you dare not confess it before them, can you? [She yawns] Oh God! What an awful mess! (45)

The question that arises now is who is responsible for Ato’s state of fractured psyche, confusion at the crossroads of cultures, and inability to function as a mediator between the East and the West. Searching for a satisfactory answer to this question one would surely find it in the colonial mentality that dominates in postcolonial Ghana. It is this still-colonized mindset that leads Ato’s family to send him from the start to the white man’s land so as to psychologically reenact the colonizer-colonized relationship by reproducing a new “White Master” on his shoulders they put all their hopes and wishes for a better future, financial security, and social pride. Though on the surface they are horrified by the new

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version of the been-to Ato that collides with the tenets of their Akan heritage, they deeply celebrate him as a modern colonizer that may lead them to new life horizons both socially and financially. It is the same colonial ideology that seduces the protagonist into mimicry of the Western mentality when he decides to postpone having children though he realizes the exceptional importance of the children within the family and marriage institutions in the Akan culture. Mimicry causes those "from the periphery to immerse themselves in the imported culture, denying their origins in an attempt to become 'more English than the English'" (Ashcroft et al. 4). In the same way, Ato literally imitates what he sees in America regardless of its suitability to his native culture and, thus, serves the purpose of the neocolonialist powers by ensuring their cultural hegemony forever.

Among the features of the colonial legacy in Africa that Aidoo directs her criticism against is Africans' denial of an important part of their history, namely, slavery. One of the main reasons beyond their refusal to accept the idea of the marriage between their son and Eulalie is that the wife reminds them of a painful historical stage which they try to obliterate from their memory. History for any people equals existence and the easiest way to blur the identity of a certain nation is to make it forget its history or feel ashamed of it. Since "history legitimates us", its denial alienates us from who we really are and to what origin do we really belong (Ashcroft et al. 355). The purpose of the neocolonial ideology is, then, to make Africans ashamed of their history of slavery and, therefore, blur their independent identity and ensure permanent hegemony over them. A close reading of Aidoo's play reveals two different viewpoints regarding the history of slavery in Africa: that of the wife and that of Ato's family. For Eulalie and many like Afro Americans, Africa, with specific regard to Ghana, stands for their lost history. It is the land of their great grandparents; there cultural roots are to be traced and true identity is to be sought. Ghana, in particular, has become the dream land of almost all Africans in the diaspora first because of its

location on the west coast of Africa that witnessed the departure of millions of slaves across the Atlantic towards the New World and second as one of the earliest African countries that got their independence from colonization. As a result, Ghana came to “represent the dream of freedom, equality and happiness [for African Americans] – the three bastions of American citizenship – which remained unattainable in their American home” (Pujolràs-Noguer 150). Though such a dream was built on many unrealistic expectations and a rosy vision of Africa as the land of “the palm trees, the Azura sea, the sun and the golden beaches”, it represented for them a sense of hope “to belong to somewhere again” (Aidoo, Dilemma 9). In her imaginary talk with her mother, Eulalie celebrates the idea of being in Africa at last and is sure that her mother would bless the notion very much: “Ma, I’ve come to the very source. I’ve come to Africa and I hope that where’er you are, you sort of know and approve” (24). Strange enough is that Eulalie who is American by birth and upbringing is in a continual search of identifying with her roots while Ato’s people who are African by birth and residence deny the heritage of slavery and feel ashamed of.

Ato’s family and the African people in general have a state of deliberate historical amnesia towards the slavery history in Africa and the involvement of many Africans in it though Elmina and Cape Coast ports which are mentioned in the ghost song are historical witnesses of the slave trade via the west coast of Africa and the shameful cooperation between Europeans and native Africans in this regard. The main reason beyond the conflict that arises between Esi Kom and her daughter-in-law is that the wife reminds them of this shameful involvement in the slave trade via the Atlantic. For them, the deliberate forgetfulness of history “ameliorate[s] the tragedy and guilt of the past and the oppressive conditions of the present” (Bryan 19). This explains the utter shock of the whole family from the grandmother to the sister on hearing Ato saying that he got married to an African American. The most shocked of all is Nana, the incarnation of the African history and the traditional

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connecting channel between the world of the living and that of the dead, the new generations and the ancestors, the present and the past. "My grand-child has gone and brought home the offspring of slaves. [*Women's faces indicate horror*] A slave, I say. [*Esi Kom enacts horror and great distress.*] Hear what has befallen our house," with this utter shock she receives the news (Aidoo, Dilemma 19). The following soliloquy reveals much more about the horror and agony that befalls Nana:

My spirit Mother ought to have come for me earlier.
Now what shall I tell them who are gone? The daughter
Of slaves who come from the white man's land.
Someone should advise me on how to tell my story.
My children, I am dreading my arrival there
Where they will ask me news of home.
Shall I tell them or shall I not?
Someone should lend me a tongue
Light enough with which to tell My Royal Dead
That one of their stock
Has gone away and brought to their sacred precincts
The wayfarer! (19)

The paradox here is that Nana feels lost at what to tell the ancestors about the deed of her grandson though those ancestors were witnesses themselves to the systematic process of kidnapping of Africans and sending them to the white man's land as slaves. Their successors, however, are ashamed of this history and unable to acknowledge it as a first step towards reclaiming their distinctive postcolonial African identity. The denial of the slavery legacy is manifest in Ato's people's inability, or rather unconscious psychological refusal, even to pronounce the name of Eulalie correctly. They furthermore do not understand the language of each other as each party speaks a different language and the cultural translator is metaphorically absent. The inability to understand each other's language epitomizes the failure to understand each other's

motives and backgrounds which, in its turn, reflects their unwillingness to accept and embrace each other.

The Fanti clan's unpreparedness to accept Eulalie which stands for their rejection of the diasporic part of their history drives them to exploit a traditional colonial mechanism that has been used against them for decades, namely, "othering". For global imperialism, othering has historically functioned as a quintessential mechanism for subjugating colonized people whether in the colonial period or after independence. Othering as a colonialist strategy depends for its functioning mainly on the idea of "difference". Though difference does not necessarily mean distinction, it has been used in this sense within the colonialist ideology. Difference for the West means that it is better, more civilized, and, hence, superior to other "alien" peoples of the world who are viewed as savage, backward, and inferior. It is, therefore, the legitimate right, rather, sacred duty, of the Western civilization to colonize and dominate the less civilized nations to civilize and teach them the universal principles of civilization and modernity. "Othering dehumanizes," Tyson argues, "because it permits one to identify oneself as 'the human being' and people who are different as something 'other' than human. Othering, thus, facilitates the demonization of people we define as different from us" (436).

Though the armed forces of the West have departed from the colonized countries in Africa and many other parts of the world, the colonial ideology unfortunately has not departed with it. Rather, it has been internalized by the formerly colonized people and reproduced unconsciously in many situations in which differences exist. Under the vogue of nationalism in the postcolonial era, people of the recently liberated countries have begun to other whoever is different from them and, thus, have turned to be colonizers in their own way. Nationalism as a trend in postcolonial states has driven these states to "take over the hegemonic control of the imperial power, thus replicating the conditions it rises up to combat. It develops as a function of this control, a monocular and sometimes

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xenophobic view of identity and coercive view of national commitment” (Ashcroft et al. 155). In the same vein of argument, Paulo Freire warns that “the oppressed must not ... become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both” (44). Unfortunately, the Fanti people in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* have turned, under the lure of the adherence to the tribal customs and traditions and their intolerance towards the idea of differences, into oppressors in their own way. As stated earlier, they are horrified by the mere notion that their son got married to someone who is different from them, a slave, and Act One ends with Nana lamenting the fact that she has lived so long to witness this disgrace (*Dilemma of a Ghost*). Out of their sensation of Eulalie's difference from them, they reenact the “othering” mechanism once used against them by their former British colonizers and, thus, turn to be oppressors themselves.

Throughout the play, Eulalie is othered as a demon. For the Africans, she has come from the white man's land with strange habits and customs that differ from their own and, thus, threaten their cultural purity. Monka, Ato's sister, summarizes this view in the words of a traditional song that she thinks best describes Eulalie: “She reminds me of the words in the song: She is strange, / She is unusual. / She would have done murder / Had she been a man. / But to prevent / Such an outrage / They made her a woman” (Aidoo, *Dilemma* 33)! The words “strange” and “unusual” are so significant in this context as they function as natural justifications for demonizing, victimizing, and othering Eulalie by Monka and her clan. They are the same reasons used in the past to rationalize colonization of the African countries under the claim that they are strange and unusual and, hence, subordinate and dependent. Strange enough, Eulalie is also othered by her own husband on the ground that she is both an African American and a woman. Though it is Ato's free choice to marry an American of African descent, he feels ashamed of some of her personal behavior such as drinking or

smoking in public on the basis that it is unusual in his culture and a taboo for a woman. Othering even extends to the denial of her basic right to use modern domestic appliances such as a fridge or a cooker. She is described by the two-female chorus in the play as belonging to “the young people of the coming days” who “are strange ... very strange” (38). The word “strange” here is a key word in understanding how othering as an oppressing colonial mechanism depends in its functioning on the idea of strangeness and difference from the norm.

As a colonialist technique, othering has two different, yet related, effects on the othered person. Internally, the othered person feels victimized by the dominant culture and, therefore, develops patterns of guilt and inferiority senses towards himself. He is always worried regarding how other people view him and what they might say about him. Self-integrity and individual identity are thus fractured in the attempt to be accepted and absorbed by the herd. Eulalie develops a similar attitude towards herself and others at the beginning. She attempts to act not according to what she likes but in accordance with the expectations of those around her. When her husband suggests for example that he can give the snails back to his mother to cook for them since his wife does not like them, she hurriedly refuses the idea on the ground that this action will “give them the opportunity to accuse [her] of unadaptability” (32). On the other hand, by the passage of time and under the intensity of othering by the dominant group, the marginalized person may in his turn practice the same mechanism towards his oppressors. As such, Eulalie acts towards the end of the play. Feeling rejected from all around her and not supported by her hesitant husband who does not have but “When in Rome, do as the Romans do” maxim to provide for her (48), she replays the othering game with Ato’s family and her own husband. She rebels against her new African oppressors by deliberately doing whatever they do not like such as smoking and drinking in public. And finally, she verbally revolts in the face of her husband:

'My people ... My people ...' Damned rotten coward of a Moses. I have been drinking in spite of what your people say. Who married me, you or your goddam people? ... What else would they understand but their own savage customs and standards ... Have they appreciation for anything but their own prehistoric existence? More savage than dinosaurs. I must always do things to please you and your folks ... what about the sort of things I like? Aren't they gotten any meaning on this rotten land? ... Can't you preach to your people to try and have just a little bit of understanding for the things they don't know anything about yet? ... do you compare these bastards, these stupid narrow-minded savages with us [Americans]? Do you dare? (47-48)

Othering is, thus, a prototypical colonialist mechanism that Africans inherited from their British colonizers and they now replicate it towards those who are different from them. Yet, it turns them into oppressors and oppressed at the same time; oppressors of Eulalie who is victimized by all around her including her husband himself due to her difference from the mainstream culture and because she has no backers at the land she always dreamt of as a promised homeland and among people she wished one day to be her own. In the same way the formerly oppressed Africans become oppressors of the "alien" Eulalie, they become oppressed the other way round by her on the ground of their difference, strangeness, savagery, and backwardness.

Othering as an imperial legacy cannot be separated from patriarchy, another colonial precept bequeathed to Africans by their former colonizers. The Western colonialist ideology is male-based in the first place. Colonialism by nature dehumanizes the weaker classes in society in favour of the stronger ones; it undervalues third world nations, blacks, ethnic groups, and women among others. Woman is therefore double colonized under the colonialist regimes, once by the military force and another time by the patriarchal

ideology that subordinates her to man. "In many different societies, women, like colonized subjects, have been relegated to the position of 'Other' colonized by various forms of patriarchal domination," Ashcroft et al argue adding that , "they thus share with colonized races and cultures an intimate experience of the politics of oppression and repression" (Post-Colonial Reader 249). Any alternative postcolonial ideology should be based on empowering the marginalized groups in society, on the top of them are women. Out of this firm belief in the importance of a postcolonial ideology that seeks to replace the colonialist agenda and give power to the weaker categories in society, Aidoo's oeuvre springs. As such, important woman issues like "marriage, motherhood, ... women's education, their political and economic marginalization, [and] their resistance to oppression," have come to the fore of Aidoo's interests as Maria Frias states in her interview with the playwright (10).

The roots of the modern African woman's dilemma go back to the period of colonization as Aidoo states in one of her interviews:

The colonial regimes were partly responsible. They came from a patriarchal society, all those Victorian men who didn't understand their own women and definitely did not understand the women of the colonized. They had attitudes about women and assumed that these attitudes would carry into the colonies ... They shoved their languages down our throats, we are wearing their clothes, driving their cars . . . they didn't come to understand us and definitely had very negative results and effects on contemporary African women." (We Were Feminists 17)

Aidoo's critique of the colonial ideology that still haunts the psyches and lives of Africans after independence is centered on uncovering the dominant patriarchal ideology that still oppresses women in postcolonial Ghana on all levels. In her texts, therefore, she sketches examples of women that are victimized by the male-dominated systems in the different fields of life. Though these examples appear on the surface to present contradictory types of

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women, devoted mother and destructive wife for example, they all serve one dramatic purpose: to expose and criticize the dominant patriarchal ideology at the base of the psychological, social, and political order in society. In *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, different kinds of women are presented for the previously mentioned reason. Eulalie is portrayed as a strong independent woman who is able to defy othering by her husband, his family, and the African society at large, a strong lady that is able to dream once in America and pursue her dream later in Africa till she obliges her rivals, Esi Kom for example, to accept her as she is at the end of the play. However, she is looked upon negatively by all around her under the effect of the prevalent male colonial ideology. She is viewed sometimes as "The Morning Sunshine" by Ato's family to indicate her "fragility and inability to adapt to hard-work" (Nwabueze 5); other times she is thought of as "rebellious, evil, and constitutive of mortal threats to stability and social equilibrium" (Seda 1). Despite the fact that "fragile" and "rebellious" are contradictory descriptions that are difficult to reconcile in one character as a fragile character never thinks of rebellion and a rebellious one must be so strong from within not fragile, both can be harmonized in patriarchal ideologies on the common ground that both descriptions are negative. As a result of this contradictory view of Eulalie as both fragile and rebellious, her sexist husband resorts to physical power against her at the end of the play so as to put an end to her verbal revolt against her African victimizers. When Ato slaps her in the mid of their heated argument, he proceeds from a rooted patriarchal view of her both as a wicked creature that needs to be disciplined and as a fragile subordinate that cannot defend herself.

Among the features of the male-centered colonial view of woman that Aidoo takes upon herself the burden of uncovering is the position of woman within the institution of marriage. Marriage in the Akan culture is for having children first and foremost. The wife is valueless without the fulfilment of this social function.

Barren women are, therefore, disparaged and looked upon as useless objects. When Ato's family observes that it has been so long since the couple got married and there is no child born yet, they consider Eulalie the cause of the problem not Ato; as a result, they decide to rub her belly with herbs and invoke the ancestors to grant her children as if the husband has nothing to do with it at all. The comment of the two-female chorus of the play on the issue reveals how women are biased against in the Akan society as mere objects for bearing children, and without this function they lose their worth in life. This justifies the terrible shock they receive on knowing that the wife could be barren. The word "barren" with a final question or exclamation mark is repeated seven times to indicate the horror that befalls the two women on hearing the news as if barrenness is a curse. They show genuine feelings of sympathy with her for the first time as they know what bareness for a married woman in Africa means; it is a stigma that the wife is to bear the rest of her life:

Barren!

If it is real Barrenness,

Then, Oh stranger-girl,

Whom I do not know,

I weep for you.

For I know what it is

To start a marriage with barrenness.

You ought to have kept quiet

And crouched by your mother's hearth

But you have one machine to buy now

That which will weep for you, stranger-girl

You need that most.

For my world

Which you have run to enter

Is most unkind to the barren. (Aidoo, Dilemma 39-40)

The marriage institution in Ghana with all its values is, accordingly, under the attack of the feminist Ama Ata Aidoo, for she sees it as an extension of the colonialist existence in Africa. For

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her, marriage is subject to the patriarchal, colonialist mentality that oppresses and victimizes women. In her seminal article, "To Be a Woman", which is considered the manifesto of African Feminism, Aidoo maintains that "it goes without saying ... that being married to the worst of men ... is better than being unmarried at all" (260). For her, marriage throughout cultures, not just the Akan one, has been a means for the victimization of women by men. Historically, marriage has "made it possible for women to be owned like property, abused and brutalized like serfs, privately corrected and, like children, publicly scolded, overworked, underpaid, and much more roughly exploited than the lowest male worker on any payroll" (263). Within the context of the marriage between Ato and Eulalie, for instance, Eulalie is scolded for smoking and drinking, denied its right to suspend having children, mocked for imaginary barrenness she is not responsible for, and finally slapped by her husband as a punishment for the mere thought of rebellion against the colonial-patriarchal ideology that dehumanizes her. Within the boundaries of marriage, woman is also restricted to the role of a mere follower to the needs and desires of the man. Her free will and independent character fade out in the will and character of her husband, so "your [Ato's] taboos should be hers [Eulalie's]," as Esi Kom reminds her son (Aidoo, *Dilemma* 33). Most strikingly, this statement comes from a woman not a man, which reflects the extent to which the colonial patriarchal ideology has penetrated the minds of African women themselves to the degree that they have become victimizers of other women and propagators of the sexist ideology in postcolonial Ghana. In other words, they have turned into "patriarchal women" under the influence of the imperial ideology.

Esi Kom as an example of the devoted mother internalizes the sexist ideology of colonialism and reproduces it in her own way. In addition to othering her daughter-in-law both as an American and as a woman, she devotes the financial assets of the family to the benefit of the patriarchal authority in it, her son. In a moment of frankness, she

confesses to her son that for the sake of making a scholar of him she has lost so much including her own dignity in addition to almost all the family's fortune. "Apart from the lonely journeys I made to the unsympathetic rich," she tells her son bitterly, "how often did I weep before your Uncles and great Uncles while everyone complained that my one son's education was ruining our home" (Aidoo, *Dilemma* 35). The former quotation exposes the stubborn patriarchal character of Esi Kom. Out of a firm belief in the superiority of man and his exceptional right to get education and other privileges whose sister for example is deprived of just because he is a male, Esi Kom sacrifices everything for the sake of the male character. In *The Dilemma of a Ghost* life, then, centers on the male character's needs and desires with the utter oblivion of the female characters in the play, be they a mother, sister, aunt, grandmother, or wife.

This sexist thought roots in the colonial ideology that prevails all aspects of life in the postcolonial Ghanaian society. By exposing this ideology to her audience, Aidoo hopes they may adopt an opposing stance that can change the status quo for the better. In one of her interviews, she asserts that "Feminism is an ideological viewpoint" (Frias 30). As such, she poses feminism as an alternative ideology to the sexist colonial one and insists that "every woman and every man should be a feminist – especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives, and the burden of African development" (qtd in Kumavie 59). As a result, she struggles in her literature to give voice to the silenced African woman by subverting the traditional roles imposed upon her and breaking off the fetters of the sexist colonial ideology that chain her to the traditional role of the submissive, subordinate, and marginalized dependent.

Among the major tenets of the postcolonial national ideology that Aidoo poses in place of the colonialist ideology is going back to the past and embracing one's national history with specific regard to the slavery part of it. This occurs towards the end of the play when Esi Kom at last accepts her diasporic African American daughter-in-

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law. Once the mother discovers that the decision of postponing having children was her son's, her negative attitude towards her is altered as she blames her son for his mistranslation between his wife and his own people referring metaphorically to his inability to play the role of the mediator between the East and the West: "Who can blame her? No stranger ever breaks the law ... Hmm ... my son. You have not dealt with us well. And you have not dealt with your wife well in this" (Aidoo, *Dilemma* 52). In a final gesture of acceptance and co-existence, Esi Kom takes the hand of Eulalie addressing her as she guides her through the door that leads into the "old" house, "Come, my child" (52).

Although some critics have interpreted the ending scene of the play as one that "symbolizes the triumph of the Western voice in the play, represented by Eu and Ato," (Abou-Agag 60), this paper adopts a different interpretation. The final scene signifies the beginning of acceptance and celebration of one's history which is an important step towards discovering one's true postcolonial identity that is based on a postcolonial ideology that celebrates the native African culture and accepts the national history with all its complex and sensitive areas. In the final scene there is more than a sense of hope that Aidoo smartly incorporates. First, it is the mother and the wife, not the son, that lead the reconciliation of the Fanti family with its forgotten history and its members in diaspora all over the world. "The future does not lie in Ato's misleading translations," Pujolràs-Noguer comments on this sense of hope, "but in an untranslated female space created by his mother and his wife" (166). It is the traditionally marginalized African and Afro-American woman that can take the lead of resisting the colonial ideology which is mainly based on the oppression of woman and the distortion of national history. African feminism that Aidoo propagates in her works can hence be at the vanguard of liberating Africa from its colonial legacy. The second sense of hope the ending scene inspires lies in the direction towards which Esi Kom leads Eulalie after their

reconciliation. She leads her “through the door that leads into the old house,” as such the stage directions indicate. Significantly enough, the mother does not take her daughter-in-law to the new wing of the house, the residence section of the couple; rather, she takes her to the old building, the symbol of the traditional Akan culture with all its rituals, customs, and habits. This indicates that the reconciliation between Africans and their history must occur within the boundaries of their old native culture, and that any hope to resist neocolonialism and reconstruct one’s independent future identity must come through going back first and foremost to one’s roots. The past is thus, the thrusting point for the future and Africans “must pull their own weight by educating their children within the African socialization paradigm and engaging in the study about African culture and history ... because we are either African or nothing” (Appiah-Adjei 158-159). The past, hence, is the key to resistance and reconstruction as Freire maintains: “Looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future” (84). Again, the ghost song of the children is heard in the background at the very close of the play while Ato remains static in his place to powerfully indicate that as a representative of all the African intellectuals he will remain lost and at odds with himself and his own people until he goes back to the “old” house with his mother and wife, that is, to go back to his cultural and historical roots in search of a true postcolonial identity for himself and his people.

The Dilemma of a Ghost is, thus, a revolutionary play that exposes the emerging neocolonialism in Africa and its concomitant colonial ideology that has not departed with the departure of the military forces of the colonizers from Africa. Through the use of the dilemma tale as a traditional African narrative genre, the play captures the readers’ interest in the moral and social issues it proposes and open their eyes to the colonial legacy in Ghana. In reality, Africans are internally colonized on all levels and their life choices and actions spring from the mentality that still sees in the

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West the only hope for getting into the train of advancement and progress. The patriarchy of the Ghanaian society, the denial of the slavery history and the involvement of Africans in it, the othering of the weak and powerless, and most important of all the protagonist's inability to reconstruct his people's postcolonial identity are some of the most notable features of the colonial legacy in liberated Ghana. Aidoo's strategy for facing this rooted heritage depends first of all on opening people's eyes to the colonialist ideology that implicitly supports this legacy, i.e., to make them better understand their colonial status quo. As a result of this understanding, the audience are hoped to question their present state of affairs and ask themselves important existential questions regarding the outcome of their present worldview and if it is able to take them forward into the future or not as it happens when they are theatrically invited to question the benefit of sending Ato to the West for completing his education. On discovering the futility of their ways of thinking and modes of behavior, the audience start to mentally and psychologically rebel against their status quo and the ideology that rationalizes and, thus, stabilizes it. This psychological and mental rebellion finally leads them to revolt against their present status and replace it with an alternative one that sticks to the roots and celebrates history. Aidoo's play enhances this revolution on the part of the Ghanaian audience by posing an alternative postcolonial national ideology that can help them reclaim their true identity in the post-independence era. The text aims to make them feel ashamed of the latent colonial mindset that underlies their daily actions and life choices, and shame, as Marx said, "is a revolutionary sentiment" (Sartre 14), in the sense that it motivates people to change their status quo. The key step towards changing this reality is going back to the past for a shared history and a common culture that can reunite all Africans under their umbrella and help them rid themselves of the colonialist legacy and rebuild their postcolonial identity.

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