

# *Towards a Revision of Concepts in the Literary Criticism of the African Novel of Expatriation*

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THE AIM OF THIS PAPER is twofold: to outline some problems involved in the literary appreciation of novels based on cultural contacts, and to suggest a possible way of handling them.

Whenever two cultures are brought together in contact by individuals who represent them, terms like culture conflict, alienation, assimilation, acculturation, or preservation are often brought about by sociologists or anthropologists who try to understand the way in which these cultures affect each other. These terms have equally become a kind of *locus classicus* of literary critics dealing with novels of expatriation<sup>1</sup> or other related literary works. The use of these concepts, however, has not been without serious controversies. This can be seen, for example, in John Povey's remark about Achebe's novels. Writing on Achebe in 1966, Povey rightly maintained that "Because of his [Achebe's] superior skill the term culture conflict seems much too shallow a rubric to encompass the power he brings to the dilemmas of his tragic protagonists" (3). Today, this remark can be extended to other complex novels of expatriation such as Ousmane Socé's *Karim*, Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure*, and Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?*

The inadequacy of the above concepts in effectively describing the various relationships and tensions involved in a literary work seems to stem from the fundamental difference between literature and the disciplines which are usually associated with them, sociology and anthropology. Although the anthropologist, for example, and the novelist share an area of concern in which both seek to understand and describe human beings or human societies, they

differ in approaches and aims. The anthropologist usually bases his research on a group of individuals, with a view towards finding and classifying its general, characteristic traits. Because of his treatment of the group or society as a whole, the concepts he works with — assimilation, alienation, acculturation, or culture conflict, for example — are usually broad, general, just as the conclusions he arrives at are also general.

The novelist, on the other hand, proceeds from a deep analysis of the society through individuals. He never takes the society as a whole, although his final picture may show that many individuals share certain behaviour patterns. Unlike the anthropologist's broad, superficial portrayal of the society, the picture of the society presented by the novelist seems to be complex, complete, detailed, and most reliable. Rather than simply describe and classify general traits of a group, the novelist depicts individuals in a manner that leads them to revise their preconceptions. Hence, it would indeed be erroneous to base a critical study of the novelist's world on the anthropologist's broad concepts. This is the reason why instead of describing the complex behaviour of characters in novels of expatriation as assimilated, alienated, or acculturated, it would be better to see the contradictions or trauma in these characters' personalities as expatriation problems.

In fact, a thorough analysis of a novel of expatriation should, as a matter of necessity, include the following points:

- (1) The character in his tradition, motives for his departure, and his ideas about the outside world before getting exposed to it.
- (2) The character's problems in the outside world.
- (3) The drama resulting from the contact between the two cultures and its impact on the character.
- (4) The character's final strategy.
- (5) The novelist and his character.
- (6) Rapport between the novelist and his audience, and the way it affects the portrayal.

A character's native environment, his traditional values and way of life, always play a part in his behaviour in an alien cultural milieu. Hence any serious attempt to understand such a

behaviour should start from the roots; that is, from the character's tradition. Perhaps it is the failure to consider this fact that leads critics such as Larson and Yetiv to quick and simplified conclusions comparable to those often reached by sociologists and anthropologists. See, for example, this comment by Larson:

This 'trapped' portrayal of the African who has been assimilated, and then found it impossible to accept his own traditional culture, has played a part in a number of other significant Franco-phone African works: Ousmane Socé Diop's *Karim* (1935), Bernard B. Dadié's *Climbié* (1956), Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'Aventure ambiguë* (1961), works for the most part published prior to African independence. (70)

This is, in fact, like saying that Fielding, Miss Quested, or Mrs. Moore in Forster's *A Passage to India* are portrayals of assimilated English who "find it impossible to accept their own culture." Such a criticism is definitely erroneous, and it oversimplifies the complex nature of problems or tensions involved in cultural contacts as expressed, for example, by Aimé Césaire:

They demand of us: "choose . . . choose between loyalty and with it backwardness or progress and rupture." Our reply is that things are not so simple, that there is no alternative. That life . . . does not accept this alternative . . . For our part and for that of our particular societies we believe that in the African culture to come or in the para-African culture to come, there will be many new elements, modern elements, elements if you like borrowed from Europe. But we believe also that there will survive in that culture many traditional elements. (qtd. in Jahn 227)

Césaire's opinion has also been supported by many African writers, who have often been said to be assimilated. Cheikh Hamidou Kane, for instance, when explaining the purpose of his novel, *Ambiguous Adventure*, in an interview with Egejuru, has said:

Sometimes the white men who have colonized us, particularly the French, think they have to assimilate us. They say to themselves, 'These people have no culture, no wisdom, no civilization therefore we shall give them our culture, our wisdom, our civilization. We shall make them French men with black skin.' *L'aventure ambiguë* was a warning to the Europeans. It was to tell them that what they are thinking is not possible. (Egejuru 149)

However, at the end of his study of expatriation problems (which he unfortunately simplifies under the title of "Alienation") in the modern novel of French North Africa before independence, Isaac Yetiv formulates an outline of the behaviour of expatriate characters, which he believes applies to "the literatures of other hybrid cultures." The outline which he says "moves from acculturation to alienation" includes the following progressive stages:

- (1) The intellectual native makes an enthusiastic discovery of the new culture;
- (2) he makes a great effort to identify, assimilate, integrate;
- (3) this effort is often accompanied by a violent scorn for his own culture, family, religion, and traditions, even for himself;
- (4) it is rare that the 'other' will take these affections seriously and welcome him with open arms; most often there is total rejection;
- (5) disillusionment results, followed by a strong self-affirmation and spontaneous desire to find once again his origins and himself;
- (6) if things stop there, hope still remains for the culturally colonised individual; but most often this return to one's origins proves impossible. . . . (85)

The present study, however, supports Yetiv's conclusions only partially. It finds that in the novels which deal with the early contact between the European and African cultures, the initial attitude of many Africans to the infiltrating European culture is negative. The European is essentially seen as the potential destroyer of the prevalent traditional order. However, if some natives such as "Osu," Nneka, Nwoye (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*), Oduche, Moses Unachukwu (Achebe, *Arrow of God*), Waiyaki, Nyambura, Muthoni, Joshua, Kabonyi (Ngugi, *The River Between*), and Samba Diallo (Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*) join the white man's religion and school quickly at this stage, it is either because they have found an alternative to the tradition that has rejected them, or because they have been urged by their parents to study the white man's ways in order to return and enlighten their people on how to fight him out, or because

they have been intrigued and perhaps seduced by the white man's gun power (his technology). None of them seems to go to the white man's world out of solid faith.

Furthermore, these characters' behaviour in the white man's church, which is either cautious (for example, that of the Christian converts and the "Osu" in *Things Fall Apart*, Moses Unachukwu in *Arrow of God*, Waiyaki, Muthoni, Nyambura, Kabonyi in *The River Between*, or Samba Diallo in *Ambiguous Adventure*), or fanatical and perverse (e.g., that of Enoch in *Things Fall Apart*, Oduche in *Arrow of God*, or Joshua in *The River Between*), betrays a feeling of uncertainty and confusion, and it shows that the characters are still steeped in their people's beliefs. In fact, Achebe for example has remarked "that his people accepted the missionaries 'with humour', and Ibos have always regarded the British administration with a good deal of ironic amusement" (Mahood 182). Judith Gleason thus seems right when she maintains that "most converts, however, secretly retained these (their customs) at some level of consciousness . . ." (5). Hence one can hardly say that these characters seriously scorn their cultures, families, traditions, or themselves. Nor can one see the perverse fanaticism of some of them in the white man's religion, which seems to stem from their immaturity or lack of understanding of the new faith, as a proof of their strong attachment to the new system.

Unlike many characters of the novels which treat the early contact between Europe and Africa, those of the novels of expatriation which deal with the colonial and post-independence experience, such as Obi Okonkwo (Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*), Kamara (Conton, *The African*), Dele (Omotoso, *The Edifice*), Baako (*Fragments*), Modin, Solo (*Why Are We So Blest?*), Samba Diallo (*Ambiguous Adventure*), or Doumbe (Diopoko, *A Few Nights and Days*) do show admiration and enthusiasm for the Western world before their journey into its heart. However, their shocks at the outset of their sojourn there tend to show that their early enthusiasm (mainly conditioned by the physical or technological aspect of the Western civilization rather than its spiritual, social, human values) is a result of their immaturity. This is in fact the reason why most of them quickly revise their

attitude towards Europe, and resort to a psychological reunion with their people at home as they ponder on how to solve their peoples' problems, how to get them out of the mess in which the West has put them.

In many cases, as Yetiv argues, African characters are indeed rejected by the alien society through its rigid social structure based on individualism, materialism, and racism. But some of them, such as Baako and Modin, simply refuse to give themselves up to the white man's friendship which they see as superficial and a calculated attempt to perpetuate the destruction of the black man. Hence their withdrawal into loneliness. However, there is no doubting that Europe has not been tolerant to the Africans in the way Africa has been to European characters.

Indeed, social ties play a great role in the development of characters' personalities in novels of expatriation as they do in life. In Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*, for example, Ranjit Singh's deep conflicts and shocks in Isabella Island and London appear to be closely linked with his cultural origin. Does he not curse history for having uprooted peoples from their respective worlds and exposed them to all sorts of misery and suffering in strange lands? One gets acquainted with Ranjit Singh's conflicts as he uncovers the basic aims of his story:

It was my hope to give expression to the restlessness, the deep disorder, which the great explorations, the overthrow in three continents of established social organisations, the unnatural bringing together of peoples who could achieve fulfilment only within the security of their own societies and landscapes, to the restlessness which this great upheaval has brought about. (38)

Cut off from his roots by waves of the inevitable migrations which took his parents out of the Indian cultural values and way of life, Ranjit Singh experiences a life of permanent conflicts, but not without showing a strong attachment to his fatherland. This land is the subject of his concern, and he spiritually lives in it. Isabella Island is for him a "manufactured land" in which life is "unbearable." It is an Island full of vices, racial discrimination, job discrimination, poverty, and misery. Singh describes it as "man-made . . . exhausted, fraudulent, cruel and, above all not mine" (60). His strong affinity with his fatherland, apparently

one of the reasons for his disgust with Isabella Island, is better described as he says:

I had read of the homeland of the Asiatic and Persian Aryans, which some put as far away as the North pole, I lived a secret life in a world of endless plains, tall bare mountains, white with snow at their peaks among nomads on horseback, daily pitching my tent beside cold green mountain torrents that regarded over grey rock, waking in the mornings to mist and rain and dangerous weather. I was a singh. And I would dream that all over the central Asians plains the horsemen looked for their leader. Then a wise man came to them and said, 'you are looking in the wrong place. The true leader of you lies far away, shipwrecked on an Island the like of which you cannot visualize.' (118)

This uneasy situation of deep internal conflicts will impart to Ranjit Singh the idea of escape for the best. Probably the West or "the world of light," he thought, would be able to solve his problems. But can he forget his Asian world by the fact of being in London? His disillusionment with the London life at the outset provides the answer. London is not the solution either. On the contrary one witnesses a Ranjit torn by sorrowful feelings of a double removal from his ancestral realities. London, in fact, takes over Isabella's cruelties and vices. He states: "So quickly had London gone sour on me. The great city, centre of the world, in which, fleeing disorder, I had hoped to find the beginning of order. So much had been promised by the physical aspect" (22).

In the chaos presented by the London life, Ranjit finds a strange sympathy towards Isabella Island which turns into a kind of terrestrial paradise in his mind, his Indian homeland being "heaven." To the displeasure displayed by London (artificiality, restlessness, loneliness, etc.), Isabella Island which was hitherto unbearable opposes purity, naturalness, life, and community. Ranjit thus maintains: "Everywhere there would have been the smell of old timber and wax; everywhere the eye would have found pleasure in fashioned wood. . . . There is no finer house than the old estate house of the Islands. Few survive; I doubt whether there are now four in Isabella" (39). Unfortunately, his return to Isabella does not solve his problems either. He finds the previous artificiality, though these feelings will be overshadowed

by his political activities and re-emerge only when he goes back to London, this time for an endless exile.

In Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* characters follow another path. Unlike Ranjit Singh in *The Mimic Men*, Moses and his companions do not make mention of their ancestral origin. They seem to have lost ties, but in reality they have not lost them altogether. It is just these ties and the non-acceptance in the Western world which have led them to the situation where they are.

Uprooted from their tradition and not finding their full place in the new society in which they live, Moses and his friends have lost their true or self independence, and are therefore bound to live in an unadjustable situation in the artificial world they have created for themselves. It is this pathos that leads them into immorality and the futile kind of life hated by both sides, their traditional society and the western civilization. However, Moses appears to be aware of their miserable state of mind, but still cannot get rid of it and continues to live a life of endless conflicts. Their situation is summarized by the narrator as follows: "As if, on the surface, things don't look so bad, but when you go down a little, you bounce up a kind of misery and pathos and a frightening — what?" (126).

This situation is also found in some African novels of expatriation such as Ousmane Socé's *Karim* and Sidiki Dembélé's *Les inutiles*, to mention only two. In *Karim*, educated in a strong African and Islamic tradition at St. Louis of Senegal known for its people's respect for traditional values, beliefs, and practices (drums, griots, hospitality, Islamic festivals and traditional dances), Karim will find difficulty in adjusting to the western style of life in Dakar (life in cinemas, books, bars, suits, and so on). Are not these ties with his tradition which send him to Rufisque in search of traditional drums, his true soul?

Constantly pulled by his tradition, Karim will find stability only in his own society after an uncertain journey into the western realities. However, the solution to his problems does not come from the old Africa, that of "Sambalinguere," nor does it come from the Europeanized society, as that suggested by the young



“bachelier” in the novel. He finds stability in an adapted African society.

Like Moses and his friends in *The Lonely Londoners*, Kanga Kone, the main character of *Les inutiles* lives a miserable life in Paris. While pretending to have lost ties with his people and tradition, he still cannot find his place among Frenchmen in Paris. He thus becomes an “evolue” who lives in a world of his own.

A consideration of the character’s ties with traditional values and life of his native community should include the following areas: politics, beliefs, education, philosophy, and social habits such as clothing, dances, and the like. The character’s interaction with these political, social, and cultural forces as well as expectations of his society over him are important in understanding his personality before he departs to the outside world. Thus, Ranjit Singh’s shock in view of the Londoners’ attitude towards death, for example, is to be traced to his Indian background. In London the death of a person is not accompanied by long ceremonies, it is “swift” and “secret.” But in Isabella it is followed by rites and processions which give it a very sacred character. When commenting on Mr. Shylock’s death, Ranjit says:

In the winter Mr. Shylock died. I knew nothing until I heard of his cremation from Lieni, who was herself affronted, and a little fearful for the future, that she had not been told by Mrs. Shylock of the event of the death. It was disquieting to me too, this secrecy and swiftness of a London death. And it also occurred to me that up to that time in London I had not been aware of death, had never seen those funeral processions which, rain or shine, had enlivened all our afternoons on the caribbean Island of Isabella. (8)

Motives for the character’s departure from his society and his idea of the outside society while in his community will also help a further understanding of the character’s reactions once outside his cultural circle. Many African characters go to the west with a public mission. They are often sent by their individual communities to seek the light in the western civilization so as to return later to serve their interests. Such is the mission assigned to Obi Okonkwo in *No Longer At Ease*, Samba Diallo in *Ambiguous*

*Adventure*, Oduche in *Arrow of God*, Climbié in *Climbié*, Baako in *Fragments*, to mention but a few.

As for the European characters moving out of Europe, a sort of individual expiation is witnessed. Apart from those who are motivated by wanderlust, the European characters quite often escape their difficulties in the West and seek refuge in Africa. Africa then turns into a purgatory for them; that is, a source of new awareness and understanding of themselves and life. Such is the case of the characters in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Gary's *The Roots of Heaven*, Forester's *The Sky and the Forest*, Laye's *The Radiance of the King*, and Forster's *A Passage to India* (in the case of India). In his comments on the use of Africa as "an expiatory symbol" in the European novels of Africa, Echeruo has rightly stated:

Just as men fled from the world to the monastery, from the city to the countryside, from battlefields to libraries, from sin to redemption, so they moved from Europe to Africa in search of a different kind of life. The mere movement was enough symbolism in itself. And just as William Golding's choirboys moved from London into the jungle of primordial corruption, brutality and eventual redemption, so the characters of these novels moved into Africa to face their initial penance or baptism. In these novels, expatriation when involuntary became a kind of pilgrimage and ordeal, but became salutary when undertaken voluntarily, as a gesture of revolt from Europe. (14)

In many novels of expatriation the natural excitement which precedes a person's departure to a new region or country is present. But expectations vary according to the type of society one comes from. For African characters and those of other developing countries going to the west, this excitement is accompanied by a feeling or idea of going to a new order, a perfect world, a world of joy and harmony. These are the feelings that one finds in Obi Okonkwo, Samba Diallo, Kocoumbo, and Ranjit Singh. The European character will often go with prejudices and without glamorous expectations, but he gets interested and reaches a self-discovery as he proceeds. Such is the case of Clarence in *The Radiance of the King*. Although not interested like Clarence, Kurtz virtually reaches a new self-awareness, as Marlow says of him:

The wilderness had found him out early, and taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with the great solitude — and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. (106)

In the outside world the characters of novels of expatriation are usually faced with social, psychological, and cultural problems. These problems result from fundamental differences between the societies of which the characters are products, and the alien society they have migrated to. Social problems include group solidarity, rigidity of social structure, and attitudes towards foreigners. Among the psychological problems one finds, for example, differences in modes of perception and communication systems. Cultural problems include differences in values, attitudes, and other social habits. Efforts towards a deep understanding of expatriates' problems should, therefore, include a close look at the outside society as well, i.e., a consideration of its value system and way of life.

Perhaps the first feeling that expatriate characters display in the outside world is *disillusionment*. Suddenly they discover that the alien world of which they have held a high or low opinion, as the case may be, does not stand up to their expectations. This is the impression one gets in Ranjit Singh, Obi Okonkwo, Samba Diallo, Kocoumbo, Climbié, and Clarence.

In London Ranjit Singh finds disorder instead of the expected order. He says: "I felt all the magic of the city go away and had an intimation of the forlornness of the city and of the people who lived in it" (Naipaul 9). In Lagos, on his way to the U.K., Obi Okonkwo is shocked by the immorality brought by the western civilization. The first scene happens in Joseph's room where his girl-friend "left a nasty taste in Obo's mouth, like the multi-coloured word 'Osculate' on the pillow case" (Achebe, *No Longer at Ease* 13), and then in London where he gets his first sexual experience and where his religious belief decreases. Samba Diallo is struck by solitude and absence of love in Paris, as he says to Adele: "My hatred is a reinhibition, if I may use that word, an annulment, of love. I loved them (Europeans) too

soon, unwisely, without knowing them well enough . . . They are of strange nature" (Kane 158). In Paris Kocoumbo, the main character of Ake Loba's novel, *Kocoumbo, l'étudiant noir*, also finds a cultural vacuum:

When he set out all alone to hunt in the bush the invisible presence of millions of animals and insects would accompany him, the spirits of his ancestors would follow in his wake, whispering advice . . . But here nothing but stone choking the empty dusk, here no ancestors, no spirits, no throb, nothing, nothing, nothing. . . . (275)

Climbié also gets shocked by the whites' oppressive attitude towards blacks in Dakar.

For the European characters, this disillusionment, as said above, takes the form of a self-awareness. Clarence comes to realize that his prejudices have no place in the African society, and that things are not as easy as he might have thought before. There are no special privileges for his colour, and there is nothing like being "a simple drummer boy" (Laye 38). He has, indeed, realized that he has much to learn.

This disillusionment leads most of the expatriate characters to develop strong affinities with their homelands. Thus, for Obi Okonkwo "it was in England that Nigeria first became more than just a name to him. That was the first great thing that England did for him" (Achebe, *No Longer at Ease* 11). For Ranjit Singh Isabella Island, which was hitherto disorderly and "not mine," becomes orderly when he is in London. Isabella is thus a place in which "everywhere the eye would have found pleasure" (Naipaul 38), though he knows that it is an accidental world for him. And London becomes reduced to an artificial city in which "Nothing . . . has been fashioned with love or even skill; there is as a result nothing on which the eye rests with pleasure" (41). In Dakar Climbié develops a strong sympathy towards the oppressed people of Dakar and his country, Ivory Coast. In Paris Samba Diallo feels strong compassion towards himself and his generation for losing little by little their ancestors' values and way of life. He says:

We are no longer living. We are empty of substance, and our head devours us. Our ancestors were more alive. Nothing sepa-

rated them from themselves... That... is because they had riches which we lose a little more everyday. They had God. They had the family, which was only one single being. Within themselves they possessed the world. We are losing all that, little by little, in despair. (154-55)

For Clarence the situation is different. Since he is disillusioned with his own prejudices, he will try to make concessions as far as he can.

After this first shock marked by disillusionment, the characters adopt various attitudes towards themselves and the outside world. For many, this loneliness and absence of love is an opportunity to think about their own societies and the way of solving their home problems. This is the case of Obi Okonkwo, Climbié, Naipaul's Browne, and Selvon's West Indians in *The Lonely Londoners*. In each case the character's home problems take over his individual miserable state of affairs in the West. What was going to be individuality in his personality gives way to a psychological reunion with his community. This situation usually ends with a particular political or social philosophy getting defined. It is in London that Obi Okonkwo develops his nationalism opposed to tribalism, the doctrine contained in his poem "Nigeria." It is also there that Browne works out his political thought on a new strategy to claim political and social rights for his race, known later under the theme: "the distress of his race" (222). It is in Dakar that Climbié defines his committed position and the idea of struggle against the oppressors of his people in Ivory Coast. These characters' acquaintance with different political thoughts in the western schools also serves as an activator.

Other characters strive to achieve harmony within that disillusionment. But in so doing, most of them fall into one of the two positions: either to embrace a permanent search for a synthesis which does not offer itself, such as in the case of Samba Diallo, or to create a new universe of their own within the outside world. The former is the type of the character who is in a kind of *locus medius*. Samba Diallo says thus:

I am not a distinct country of the Diallobe facing a distinct occident, and appreciating with a cool head what I must take from it and what I must leave with it by way of counterbalance. I

have become the two. There is not a clear mind deciding between the two factors of a choice. There is a strange nature, in distress over not being two. (Kane 150)

The second is the type of character who is consciously trying to forget his native community and push his way through the hostile alien environment. As said above, this is the type of character who lives in his own world, and who indulges in miserable deeds. Such is, for example, the situation of Moses and his companions in *The Lonely Londoners*.

There is still another type who can be classified in a third position. Some characters do not seek a further confrontation after their first bitter experience in the outside world. They suddenly understand that it is very difficult to mingle and decide to withdraw. This is the case of Mrs. Moore in Forster's *A Passage to India*. India and its multicultures remain for her as dark and confusing as the darkness and the echo of the Marabar Caves. Instead of persisting in her efforts to understand India, she chooses to withdraw.

Perhaps the most dramatic situation in a novel of expatriation is the point where the character who has experienced another world and is marked by some of its unavoidable elements comes back to his native milieu. It is here that the battle between the two cultures takes a significant dimension. Most of the time the character in this position adopts one of the following three attitudes: (a) he may try to introduce some good elements from the other society into his own, or envisage substituting new beliefs and practices for some old ones; (b) he may pretend to be assimilated, and campaign for a total reverse of his traditional values; (c) he may be too conservative, and try to encourage his people to rebel against any infiltration of foreign elements into their society.

In many novels the first attitude leads to failure or success. Obi Okonkwo's sense of nationalism and reconstruction of Nigeria, for example, is doomed to failure as he gets into trouble with Umuofia Progressive Union and falls into corruption. But Karim in Ousmane Socé's *Karim* succeeds in adapting his tradition to the twentieth-century realities. The second position ends often with the character's destruction or a total failure. Tougon,

in Ake Loba's *Les fils de Kouretcha*, fails altogether in his attempt to "civilize" his strongly rooted African wife (Bonneau 7). The third attitude is very much encountered in novels which deal with the early clash between the European and African cultures. This attitude of rejection towards the western civilization plays a part in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Okonkwo, the main character of the novel, is seen launching a vast campaign of violence against the West and its Christianity. Still in this group one can put another type of character whose idea of revolt against aliens is different from the one just described above. Here the revolt is seen as a struggle for liberation rather than a simple rejection of foreign values. This type may be called a "liberator." Such is the case of Climbié who goes back to his home country, Ivory Coast, to fight the colonial oppression. In this third group too, the characters are often destroyed or made powerless. Okonkwo cannot win the battle and is destroyed, and Climbié is arrested.

The case of Samba Diallo is that of a character who is persistently searching for a compromise which seems not yet ready. Unfortunately, he is destroyed while still in search, and his death leaves the audience with an unquenchable thirst to know what he could have achieved. Other characters such as Moses and his companions, who have created a world between two worlds, tend to remain in that state of everlasting conflicts. They have, in fact, lost their identity.

The point "novelist and his character" should include a close look at narrative techniques, points of view, and such relevant devices as humour, irony, symbolism, or metaphor, by which the novelist normally detaches himself from his story and marks a distance between his character and himself. A deep consideration of these devices will not only help to point out the merits of the novel under discussion as a work of art, it will also limit prejudices often held about any writer who either writes abroad about his home country or writes at home after he has spent a long time abroad. Thus, instead of, for example, simply identifying Baako in *Fragments* with his creator, as Larson does (276), one should try to consider first how Armah combines the devices mentioned above in his work and how far he achieves the dis-

tancing effect. Surely not all novels of expatriation are as autobiographical as many critics have tended to suggest.

Finally, it is also important to consider the rapport between the novelist and his audience in the discussion of a novel of expatriation. Audience expectations and pressures on the novelist can have an impact on the way the character's fate is determined. That is why the European novels of Africa, for example, have been said to be about Europe rather than Africa, and to have been shaped in the way that satisfies the prejudices of a European audience.

What has been outlined in this paper is the idea that any serious literary criticism of a novel of expatriation should not be based on equivocal and confusing concepts such as assimilation and the like. These terms as currently used are evidently an outcome of an outdated myth. A serious understanding of a character's problem in the outside world can be achieved only if one considers at least the six points suggested here.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> A novel of expatriation in this context will be understood as one which deals with different problems encountered by a character whenever put in contact with alien socio-cultural, political, and economic values outside or within his community.

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