

WRITING AFRICANITY IN AYI KWEI ARMAH'S *THE RESOLUTIONARIES*

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Abstract: Published in 2013, *The Resolutionaries* portrays Africanity as a therapy to colonial cultural disorder. With Africanity, Ayi Kwei Armah sets African ancient tradition, Egyptology, at an equal foot with Western culture. Armah pithily writes Africanity as a therapy to the dying tradition and the lost Africans in Western culture. Through the theory of Afrocentricity, this article argues that Armah uses centricity, renaissance, polydialects, and womb-envy to revive Africans and their tradition from the perilous position.

Keywords: Africanity, polydialect, self-consciousness, renaissance, cultural melancholia.

Résumé: Publié en 2013, *The Resolutionaries* de Ayi Kwei Armah sort la tradition ancienne de l'Afrique de l'antiquité, Kemet, de la marginalisation pour la placer en égalité avec la culture occidentale. Armah use avec concision de l'Africanité pour redonner vie aux africains et à leur tradition en périls dans un monde occidental. Pour se faire, à travers une étude Afrocentrique, cet article soutient qu'Armah fait usage de la centricité, de la renaissance, du polydialecte, et de womb-envy pour redonner vie aux Africains et leur tradition marginalisés par l'hégémonie culturelle de l'occident.

Mots-clés: Africanité, polydialecte, self-consciousness, renaissance, mélancholia culturelle.

Introduction

Globalization makes the return to the ancient tradition for the renaissance of African culture be a controversial debate among critics. As the concept of Africanity is coined by Molefi Kete Asante to be concerned with the fact that "Afrocentric education centers the child in African history and culture, rather than outside it" (Asante, 2007, p.81), Clarence E. Walker sharply stands against it as separationist. He writes: "In its call to black to 'recenter' themselves in 'Africanity,' Afrocentrism rests on the dubious assumption 'that no one can know anything beyond their own bodily identity'" (Walker, 2001: xxv). The critic goes on to argue that he does "not think that demonstrating intelligence in school is a form of racial inauthenticity or 'acting white.' To read a book, answer a question in class, or in general show you are intellectually competitive is not thought of as an act of racial betrayal." (Walker, 2001: xxxiv). As a reply, Molefi Kete Asante makes it be known that when Clarence E. Walker takes Afrocentricity as separationist, he misinterprets the concept as the opposite of Eurocentricity. He defends: "Afrocentricity, if anything, is a shout out for rationality in the midst of

confusion, order in the presence of chaos, and respect for cultures in a world that tramples on both the rights and the definitions of the rights of humans" (Asante, 2007, p.7). *The Resolutionaries* can be said to be an enlightenment for such an antagonistic conflict about African tradition. It is an African novel which makes it be known to Africans and to the world that contrary to Clarence E. Walker's *We Can't Go Home Again*, there is a necessity to make recourse to ancient tradition for the renaissance of Africa as advocated by Melefi Kete Asante. It is to show it that I undertake the following topic: "Writing Africanity in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Resolutionaries*." The novel is written by the Ghanaian pan-Africanist Ayi Kwei Armah in 2013 to advocate Africanity as a therapy to colonial cultural disorder.

Through the novel, I show that Armah writes about Africanity. He advocates the use of the ancient tradition for education so that the "educated person ... views both African and European education as significant and useful" (Asante 79-80). The central question that guides this objective is as follows: Face to Western culture that threatens African culture, what does Ayi Kwei Armah suggests for African renaissance? Simply put, what are the strategies that Ayi Kwei Armah makes use to write about Africanity? The following hypothesis makes perceive the importance of the issues risen by the different questions.

In the novelistic world created by Ayi Kwei Armah, after being at loss by translating conferences during which African leaders appraise colonial culture, Nert Lihamba and Salimata Ka find healing by setting themselves in TransInter. They create TransInter as a language organization where ancient tradition or history is at the heart of African education. The TransInter is held by Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga, two friends, who have a mastery of both Western culture and the Egyptology. In the TransInter, as Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga work to help Nefert Lihamba and Salimata Ka see themselves in African ancient tradition, the two women feel to have found home.

For the study to reach its goal, I make use of the theory of Afrocentricity. For Molefi Kete Asante, "Africanity refers to the tradition, custom, and values of African people. But Afrocentricity is a much more self-conscious approach to agency of African people within the context of their own histories" (Asante, 2007: 11). Pithily put, "Afrocentricity" is the study of "Africanity." With the theory of Afrocentricity, I demonstrate that Ayi Kwei Armah's narrative goes along with Molefi Kete Asante. Like the critic, the novelist portrays Nefert Lihamba, Salimata Ka, Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga to assert that African should be educated "within the context of African history and culture" (Asante, 2007: 16). Like Asante, Ayi Kwei Armah shows that the education of the Africans outside their own history and culture sets them into loss. To avoid the loss, Africans must be educated within their tradition and history. If I take a stand on Afrocentricity, Armah's *The Resolutionaries* cannot but be read as advocating Africanity to be the panacea for cultural marginalization. Through Africanity, Armah brings into an equal foot African ancient tradition set in a dying position by colonial paradigm. This helps the Africans find home in their community.

The work is organized through different axes. The first step consists in showing that, in *The Resolutionaries*, Armah presents Africanity through his

portrayal of the ancient tradition which brings healing to the colonial cultural anxieties endured by Nefert Lihamba and Salimata Ka. From there, the analysis demonstrates that Africanity is also presented in the novel through Armah's writing of cultural renaissance before carrying on with polydialect culture as Africanity. To end, the study analyses womb-envy as an Africanity in *The Resolutionaries*.

1. Blackness and Cultural Healing: Rebirthing the Tradition

The origin of blackness cannot be denied to Frantz Fanon's insight into the impact of colonization on the colonized. For that, suffice it to mention Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. Though Fanon's blackness sets the Africans in colonial history where they experience "a feeling of nonexistence" (Fanon, 1967, p.139), some critics do acknowledge this blackness as self-consciousness that mirrors Africanity. As I say this, I direct my thinking to Bill Ashcroft et al. In their insightful reflection on blackness in "African Literary Theories," Ashcroft et al. observe that, though, Frantz Fanon's approach of "Blackness" stressed "'Blackness' at the heart of the oppression and denigration endemic to the colonial enterprise, it also recognized the essential ... the readiness with which ... Black could be persuaded to don a white mask of culture and privilege" (Ashcroft et al., 2004, p.123). In this paper, I consider blackness from both the post-colonial theorists and the theorists of Afrocentricity. They develop blackness as self-consciousness which celebrates Africanity as a therapy to colonial cultural disorder.

Molefi Kete Asante contends: "Blackness means that the person has found a commitment to the emotional, political, and social interests of the black community and knows how to master the language of community ambitions" (Asante, 2007, p.154). Such a blackness is opposed to blackness of colonial "myth of the Negro" (Fanon, 1967, p.139). In this regard, it can be said that rather than leading Africans into postcolony, a colonial trouble that Achille Mbembe terms "*being nothingness*" (Mbembe, 2001: 4); blackness in the context of Africanity helps the Africans to regain self-consciousness, cultural rebirth par excellence.

In Frantz Fanon's stance, being self-conscious is being for oneself. Fanon puts it as follows: "In its immediacy, consciousness of self is simple being-for-itself. In order to win the certainty of oneself, the incorporation of the concept of recognition is essential. Each consciousness of self is in quest of absoluteness" (Fanon, 1967, p.217). In this quotation of Fanon, self-consciousness consists in asserting one's existence in his/her own history. If one succeeds in incorporating oneself in such self-recognition the certainty of oneself is won. Self-consciousness in such a standpoint of Africans being at the centre of their own history is what Molefi Kete Asante coins as centricity education.

Molefi Kete Asante defines centricity as "process of locating a student within the context of his or her own cultural reference in order to be able to relate to other cultural perspectives" (Asante, 2007, p.79). It is such a centricity education that Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga perfectly fit. Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga have the mastery of Western culture. They are translators. In addition to that, they have the mastery of Egyptology. Salimata Ka

and Nefert Lihamba attribute Egyptology to Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga respectively as follows: "Your idea of the house of life in Kemet" and "your Egyptology" (Armah, 2013, p.413). From the point of view of etymology, "your" is a possessive adjective. It is an adjective that qualifies somebody to be an owner. Salimata Ka and Nefert Lihamba's uses of "your" attributes Egyptology or Kemet to Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga. Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga in such a context are culturally healthy.

Furthermore, Imhotep Benga's centrality education is given more proof when Salimata Ka appraises him as a polyglot. She appraises him as a translator who is a "language wizard who knows Latin, Greek, Egyptian. Also some Arabic, Kiswahili, and Zulu" (Armah, 2013, pp.31-32). Likewise, Nefert Lihamba appraises Jehwty Lumumba as a polyglot. She appraises him as a translator in "Akan, English, French, Kiswahili" (Armah, 2013, p.40). Salimata Ka and Nefert Lihamba convey that if Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga translate in Western languages, they do have a mastery in the African ancient tradition. Seen in this light, Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga have received centrality educations that make them be culturally healthy. By portraying Jehwty Lumumba's and Imhotep Benga's centrality educations, Armah brings to the fore a self-consciousness which puts African tradition at an equal foot with Western culture.

If centrality education sets Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga in cultural health, this centrality education does not miss to bring healing to Nefert Lihamba and Salimata Ka who are in cultural melancholia. The centrality education that Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga give Nefert Lihamba and Salimata Ka helps them recover from their cultural melancholia. In fact, Western cultural hegemony which is at core of Western education has decentred Nefert Lihamba and Salimata Ka from the traditional culture. It sinks their psyches into cultural melancholia. Nefert Lihamba and Salimata Ka echo Armah who in *Two Thousand Seasons* voices: "A people losing sight of origin are dead. A people deaf to purpose are lost" (Armah, 1973, p.13). Melancholia, as Roy Osamu Kamada contends with Freud stance, is "a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activities" (Kamada, 2010: 140). Such a melancholia holds true in Nefert Lihamba and in Salimata Ka. Salimata Ka's melancholia lies in the phobia she expresses vis-à-vis her family history related to her mother, while Nefert Lihamba's melancholia lies in her grievance risen by her profession of translation.

Anne Anlin Cheng defines grievance as "suffering of anxiety to speaking out that anxiety" (Cheng, 2001, p.3). It is such a grievance that Nefert Lihamba experiences when she translates. If one takes a close look at: "I was in trouble, emotionally. Living in this world of conferences, making a living from this work. I needed to see a way out, but couldn't. I was about to stop looking" (Armah, 2013, p.414), what one unravels is an anxious grievance. Starkly put, what one must be alert to is a painful dejection, loss of the capacity to love, or inhibition from Nefert Lihamba when she describes her emotion to be in trouble and her eagerness to leave her translation. Nefert Lihamba in this context echoes Achille

Mbembe's stance for which in the postcolony, the mimic "does not exist but only lives" (Mbembe, 2001, p.27).

Though Nefert Lihamba gets enough money through translation, she is in a state of unhomeliness in this Western profession. She comes across what Homi K. Bhabha terms as "to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English" (Bhabha, 1994, p.87). Though Nefert Lihamba is Westernized, she is not an English. She does not feel at ease in Western world. She feels that she is exploited for Western own interest at the detriment of her African community. She translates for Western world not for her African community. Nefert Lihamba in this vein echoes the Afrocentrist Ama Mazama who writes: In Africa, "European cultural ethos generated the economic exploitation and political suppression" (Mazama, 2003a, p.4). Nefert Lihamba's anxiety risen by her Western culture illustrates it well.

As well, Nefert Lihamba echoes Aimé Césaire's stance of blackness of the Westernized Africans when he writes: "It's true that superficially we are French, we bear the marks of French customs; we have been branded by Cartesian philosophy, by French rhetoric; but if we break with all that, if we plumb the depths, then what we will find is fundamentally black" (Césaire, 1972, p.17). Like the Africans criticized by Aimé Césaire, though Nefert Lihamba has Western profession, she does not feel at ease. She rouses into grievance at any time she performs her Western profession. Nefert Lihamba visibly goes along with the protagonists of Amma Darko in *Beyond the Horizon* and *Between Two Worlds*, where respectively Mara and Jofri's cultural struggles go along with Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi's standpoint of cultural "trauma" (Gikandi, 2003, p.169). As for Salimata Ka, what she experiences is phobia. She experiences phobia as perceived by Frantz Fanon when he writes:

Phobia is a neurosis characterized by the anxious fear of an object (in the broadest sense of anything outside the individual) or, by extension, of a situation.' Naturally that object must have certain aspects. It must arouse, Hesnard says, both fear and revulsion [...] This object is endowed with evil intentions and with all the attributes of malefic power.

Fanon (1967, pp.154-155)

If one takes a step into Salimata Ka's family history, one sees that she experiences phobia. The history between her lover and mother sets her in fear and revulsion. She voices the history as follows:

I was scared to visit the pass. Talking to you made it less painful. It helped me understand some things. Hard things. Can you imagine what it felt like, surprising my mother and my lover making love? Nefert, they couldn't see me. I had a full view of them. They thought they were alone [...] It made me see home as something to run from.

Armah, (2013, pp.391-392)

The past participle "scared" in the position of adjective qualifies Salimata Ka to be afraid of her past. Additionally, the verb "to run" reveals the phobia in which

Salimata Ka's family history sets her. This is due to the fact that, like any phobic object, Salimata Ka's family history is endowed with a malefic spirit. It is endowed with the love affair between her lover and her mother. In this line of reflection, Salimata Ka fits perfectly Fanon's insight of phobia. But if Armah paints Nefert Lihamba and Salimata Ka's cultural melancholia to be risen by colonial education, it is undoubtedly to overthrow the hegemonic function of this Western education in the favour of centrality education. From their Western education which gives rise to cultural melancholia, Armah takes his two female protagonists to a centrality education which brings healing to them. Nefert Lihamba and Salimata Ka recover from their cultural melancholia when Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga make them undertake centrality education. Their centrality educations take place in the TransInter Africa, a language organization in which the Africans are educated in their own history. As they enter the TransInter organization, Nefert Lihamba and Salimata Ka are educated by Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga in the ancient tradition (Egyptology). As illustration, Nefert Lihamba voices:

Now that I'd committed energy and time to learning Egyptology, I got stuck, and called Jehwty for help. He was surprised, the first couple of calls, that I was managing to make headway on my own. Then he stopped expressing amazement and pulled me forward when the going got hard. Sali asked me how I was scheduling my exercises, and when I told her, she came over every other morning, so we could work together. She'd been calling Benga, working to a schedule that she thought uncannily similar.

Armah, (2013, pp.478-479)

In the above-mentioned observations, Nefert Lihamba and Salimata Ka are undoubtedly educated in their own tradition which is the ancient culture. Since in the context of centrality education, being educated in one's own culture is the condition to be able to be related to other culture, Nefert Lihamba and Salimata Ka cannot but be easily related to the colonial culture. They are recovered from their Western cultural melancholia. Nefert Lihamba mentions her recovery that occurs as the result of her Egyptology education when she voices: "Now, from being a source of nameless anxiety, my profession was turning into a field of open possibilities" (Armah, 2013: 420). Likewise, Salimata Ka's family history is no longer phobogenic. She is willing to forgive her mother. She mentions her recovery to Nefert Lihamba as follow: "The inside was definite. When Benga described the *Shemsw*, something clicked in my life." "I just want to go to mother, take care of her grave" (Armah, 2013, pp.393-392).

If Nefert Lihamba profession is no longer sinking her psyche into anxiety and Salimata Ka is willing to go to take care of her mother grave, it is because Jehwty Lumumba and Imhotep Benga have given them centrality educations. By learning Egyptology, Nefert Lihamba and Salimata Ka are educated in the ancient tradition which is their own African history. This helps them to be easily related to Western culture. Nefert Lihamba is no longer depressed by her Western profession. She sees translation as an open opportunity. Like this, centrality education healed Nefert Lihamba's psyche from cultural melancholia.

As for Salimata Ka, her centricity education helps her take her mother for and ancestor. As in African customs, the ancestors are celebrated for the recognition of the tradition, Salimata Ka's taking care of her mother's grave is the recognition of her tradition. Nefert Lihamba's and Salimata ka's psychic healings express social cohesion that centricity education helps achieve. Bertrand Russell gives credence to it when he writes: "The original mechanism of social cohesion, as it is still to be found among the most primitive races, was one which operated through individual psychology without the need of anything that could be called government" (Russell, 2005, p.23).

Centricity education of Nefert Lihamba and Salimata Ka reflects Ngugi wa Thiong'o's insight into the traditional culture. For Ngugi, "culture is a product of a peoples' history. But it also reflects that history and embodies a whole set of values by which a people view themselves and their place in time and space" (Ngugi, 1993, p.42). Salimata Ka and Nefert Lihamba educations in the ancient tradition help them mirror their lives. Nefer Lihamba no longer takes her profession as a burden. Likewise, Salimata Ka no longer remembers the love history in pain. In this vein, centricity education has helped them recover from Western cultural melancholia. In other words, through the use of centricity education as a cure from colonial cultural melancholia, the novelist brings to the fore a self-consciousness that helps rebirth African tradition set in footnote by Western cultural hegemony. But if centricity helps revive African tradition, renaissance does revive the tradition also.

2. Renaissance: A Cultural Revival

Renaissance in this section takes form in Negritude. Renaissance in this standpoint of Negritude denotes "black people have art, culture, music, dance, and song as beautiful as any in the world" (Asante, 2007, p.24). Likewise, renaissance as placed in this section echoes Tanure Ojaide's insight into the traditional culture when he writes: "Culture involves a shared experience of belief systems, worldview, traditions, and aesthetic standards" (Ojaide, 2012, p.9). In Armah's *The Revolutionaries*, this cultural renaissance takes form in ritual and onomastics. Ritual as addressed by Armah takes the context of African traditional practices of belief. It is illustrated in the novel when Rama Ly, the babysitter, informs Nefert Lihamba that "the *marabout* blessed" (Armah, 2013: 129) the canoe with which her fiancé Ibra Dieng is getting prepared to use to go to Europe. Rama Ly presents the *marabout* as a man of God in the same way that the priest is perceived by Westerners as a man of God. The extend of the divine function of the *marabout* is acute when Ibra Dieng himself informs Nefert Lihamba that he "gave the *marabout* something, for his blessing" (Armah, 2013, p.132). Ibra Dieng unmistakably puts at stake the value of African tradition. He valorises the *marabout* and his objects of belief such as leather amulets worn around wrist, biceps, neck and waist as a medium of "powerful protection" (Armah, 2013, p.132). Additionally, Ibra Dieng conveys that, like Western religion, African traditional belief obeys some commandments. He presents African beliefs as practices that obey to commandments like Western religion obeys to commandments when he mentions: "'Women can't touch it,' [...]' Not

if they can still bear children" (Armah, 2013, p.132). From this reflection, it comes forth that, by the use of the *marabout* and his practices Armah puts the traditional belief at an equal foot with Western religion.

I have considered ritual in Armah's novel as cultural revival. Alternatively, I must consider his portrayal of onomastics as means of reviving the traditional culture. Onomastics as it is broadly defined is the analysis of names. Armah uses traditional vernaculars to give value to African traditional culture. The vernaculars that revive the traditional culture is revealed when Jehwty Lumumba mentions to Salimata Ka that in Kemet "Ka means spirit [...] and in Mali, 'Griots were called jieli'" (Armah, 2013, p.259). Through this, Jehwty Lumumba informs Salimata Ka of the fact that Africa has traditional culture. He makes it be known to her that if the West has a name for everything that exists, Africa also has names for those same things in the ancient culture. In this light, Armah uses traditional dialects to inform that Africa has its traditional culture. Through the novelist's use of rituals and onomastics, he brings the tradition to an equal foot with Western culture.

3. Polydialectal Culture: Centring the Vernacular

Referring to Bill Ashcroft et al., there is a polydialectal culture in a text when the writer uses "variable orthography to make dialect more accessible, double glossing [...], and the selection of certain words which remain untranslated in the text. All these are common ways of installing cultural distinctiveness in the writing" (Ashcroft et al., 2004, p.71). If I follow this observation, the writing of Armah can be said to be a polydialectal culture which brings the vernacular to an equal foot with Western culture. This polydialectal culture that centres the vernacular is twofold: interlanguages and glossing. To start with, interlanguage denotes "the fusion of the linguistic structures of two languages" (Ashcroft et al, 2004: 65). During this linguistic fusion, there is no translation of any language. Armah's writing of such interlanguage lies in his fusion of the vernacular into the English language. For that, it is worth mentioning Armah's use of vernaculars such as: "*sakasaka*," "*baraka*," "*oware*," and "*ataya*" and the alike (Armah, 2013, p.63, p.132, p.78, p.408). Conventionally, a novel has to respect the linguistic norms of the language in which it is written. Strikingly, Armah's novel transgresses the linguistic structure of the English language in which it is written.

Taking my cue from Ashcroft et al., it can be said that Armah's use of linguistic interference cannot be a mistake but rather "a successful way to foreground cultural distinctions, so [...] profitable to [...] generate an 'interculture'" (Ashcroft et al., 2004, p.65). Armah's use of the untranslated vernaculars helps him release the traditional language from "the myth of cultural authenticity and demonstrate the fundamental importance" of the traditional culture (Ashcroft et al., 2004, p.65). Pithily put, the novelist uses the vernaculars to voice cultural coexistence at an equal foot. Next to interlanguage, it is glossing that the novelist makes use to bring to the centre the vernacular.

Armah's vernacular transcription lies in glossing too. Glossing which consists in giving "the translated word" is "the most common authorial

instruction in cross-culture” (Ashcroft et al., 2004, p.65). Glossing as presented is a powerful way of centering the vernacular. Armah’s writing of the following traditional words and their translations: “Asaa [...] a drupe. It replaces sugar,” “Netetout is a wonderful condiment,” “Here on Jah land, Aafricaa,” Kemet - [...] country and culture” and “Per ankh. *Per*: house. *Ankh*: life. The house of life” (Armah, 2013, p.8, p.238, p.125, p.12, p.472) is his act of centering the vernaculars.

Armah’s act of cultural centrality echoes Homi K. Bhabha’s cultural relocation advocated by *The Location of Culture*. Put in another way, by centering the vernacular Armah revives the traditional culture. The novelist makes use of cultural centrality to dehegemonize Western culture as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak dehegemonizes Freud’s penis-envy with her coinage of womb-envy. At this point of the reflection, it is worth taking an insight into Spivak’s womb-envy and unravel it as Africanity.

4. Womb-Envy and Africanity

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s insightful reflection into womb-envy dehegemonizes Freud’s penis-envy. Since penis-envy is at the centre of the paradigms that hold Western myth of cultural superiority, dehegemonizing this penis-envy is to dehegemonize Western culture. Being in this context, I argue that womb-envy brings about Africanity. Put in other words, it takes womb-envy to release womanhood from its position of marginality occasioned by Western cultural hegemony. For this, it is worth defending womb-envy. When bringing to the centre the culture subalternated by colonial patriarchy – “the power of the new wind [colonial culture] disturbs the peace of the women’s quarter” (Spivak, 1987, p.230) – Spivak coins womb-envy to connote the act of stopping siding with man’s privilege or stopping privileging the phallus advocated by penis-envy to side by womanhood to release it from marginality (Spivak, 1987, p.82). Starkly put, Spivak uses womanhood glory to resist the marginalization of womanhood by western cultural hegemony as Bell Hooks combats womanhood subordination when she contends: “While male supremacy encourages the use of abusive force to maintain male domination of women, it is the western [colonialism] that is the root cause of violence against women” (Hooks, 1984, p.118). In this observation, what is at the heart of Spivak’s womb-envy is womanhood glory, an Africanity par excellence. In *The Revolutionaries*, I argue that Armah writes about a womanhood that appraises Africanity. Pithily put, a womb-envy is a womanhood glory that brings to the fore Africanity. Such a womanhood glory that appraises African tradition takes form in masculinity, mothering, sisterhood, and womb-producer.

To start with, masculinity in the true sense of Africanity consists in giving a true protection to wives. In his insightful reflection on masculinity in African traditional culture, Tanure Ojaide contends: “Masculinity [...] express[es] sensitivity to the female gender and the promotion of [women] virtues” (Ojaide, 2012, p.12). Masculinity in such a standpoint does not burden womanhood. It rather engenders womanhood glory. Armah’s writing of masculinity can be said to mirror a womanhood glory that appraises Africanity. The masculinity that brings about womanhood glory can be seen in Madame Dieuleveut’s husband

and in Ibra Dieng, Rama Ly's fiancé. Madame Dieuleveut voices to Nefert Lihamba: "My husband gave me twelve years of absolute bliss" (Armah, 2013, p.16). Like Madame Dieuleveut, Rama Ly voices to Nefert Lihamba that her fiancé Ibra and his friends are going to Europe. "They will come back as grown men, with substance in their hands, able to marry" (Armah, 2013, p.129). In the context as presented, Madame Dieuleveut and Rama Ly inform Nefert Lihamba about the masculinities of their husbands. The two women present their husbands' manly that praises the virtues of their wives. In this perspective, the novelist writes about a masculinity that gives glory to womanhood.

Masculinity that advocates womanhood glory can also be unveiled when I consider Resy's school principle Madame Dieuleveut's advice on marriage for Nefert Lihamba. Advising Nefert Lihamba to be married, Madame Dieuleveut voices: "'Let me tell you a secret. Get a husband. For your child's sake and yours. A child needs a father to shape him as he grows. The mother is only an anvil. the father is the hammer'" (Armah, 2013, p.16). Madame Dieuleveut informs Nefert Lihamba that a husband is important for women and children sake. What Madame Dieuleveut's advice conveys is womanhood glory. Alternatively, the novelist makes use of mothering to bring to the fore Africanity. Trinh T. Minh-ha contends that mothering is "women's status as childbearer and childrearer" (Minh-ha, 1997, p.31). Mothering in such standpoint of womanhood appraisal is what Spivak sustains in "Breast-Giver," the translation of Mahasweta Devi's short story "Stanadayini," when she refers to mothering as a "good fortune" for women (Spivak, 1987, p.233). Such a mothering is twofold: childbearing and childrearing.

Childbearing is part of motherhood. It gives rise to childbirth. Armah's novel can be said to be replete with childbirth in such a standpoint when I consider Nefert Lihamba. Nefert Lihamba reveals her siding with childbirth in her conversation with Shaka Foreman vis-à-vis his hands-off attitude toward Resy as follows: "'You know I wasn't ready. I told you plainly.' 'I know. You wanted Resy aborted'" (Armah, 2013, p.82). Through this, Nefert Lihamba shows to Shaka Foreman that she is not for abortion. She is rather for childbirth. In this light, Nefert Lihamba echoes Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie's stance when she writes: In Africa "a childless woman is considered a monstrosity" (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1984: 501). Starkly put, by telling Shaka Foreman that she is for childbirth, Nefert Lihamba undoubtedly joins Ogundipe-Leslie to reject abortion that gives room to Western individualism in order to appraise African sense of living in community. She unveils that in Africa a child is always welcome in a family. In this line of reflection, Armah portrays childbirth to praise African tradition.

As for childrearing, it consists in raising the child. In African tradition, this is a matter that concerns the community not an individual. The novelist addresses such issue when he portrays Resy, Nefert Lihamba's child, to be reared by the community. This is unraveled when I consider Jehwti Lummumba, Rama Ly, Yaye Lyssa Ba, and Salimata Ka who join Nefert Lihamba to take care of Resy. For that, suffice it to mention: Jehwti "washed and dressed Resy" (Armah, 2013, p.83). Next to that, Rama Ly babysits Resy. Her good companionship with Resy helps him gain self-confidence. Nefert Lihamba narrates it as follows: "With me

Resy was often reluctant to switch from play to learning. With Rama the distinction disappeared. He grew from keen to do his lessons. It took me a while to learn Rama's secret: she asked him to teach her what he learned at school every day" (Armah, 2013, p.89). Likewise, Yaye Lyssa Ba, Resy's grandmother, "look after Resy" (Armah, 2013, p.13). Salimata Ka sometime helps Nefert Lihamba drop Resy to school with her car too. Even, a waitress "brought him a gift packet" (Armah, 2013, p.45). Through the community's rearing of Resy, Armah informs his readers that mothering is not an act taken only by the woman who delivers the baby. It is rather conducted by the community.

Through sisterhood, Armah appraises solidarity, an Africanity *per se*. The panacea of sisterhood that brings about solidarity are Salimata ka and Jehwty Lumumba. Salimata Ka's sisterhood is seen through her companionship toward Nefert Lihamba. Nefert Lihamba testifies it as follows: "As Sali helped me [...], I felt my energy rise, slowly" (Armah, 2013, p.13). Next to that, Nefert Lihamba confirms Salimata ka's sisterhood toward her when she says: "I see her affection in her behavior, in her ability to be with me, for me, in difficult situations where I thought I was alone, fated to fail" (Armah, 2013, p.92). Furthermore, the evidence of sisterhood is strengthened when Salimata ka voices to Nefert Lihamba: "'You'll stop thanking me when you understand what a friend is'" (Armah, 2013, p.45). Through these few examples, one cannot doubt that the novelist writes about sisterhood to appraise the sense of solidarity of the African community.

Next to women who express sisterhood among themselves, men undertake sisterhood toward women as well. Jehwty Lumumba expresses sisterhood toward Nefert Lihamba. The episode of Jehwty Lumumba that can be decoded as sisterhood is his childrearing. The narrator voices: "Jehwty Lumumba washed and dressed Resy" (Armah, 2013, p.83). Such an act of Jehwty Lumumba is nothing but a childrearing. By rearing Resy, Jehwty Lumumba brings parenthood to Resy while brings sisterhood to Nefert Lihamba. Though he is not a woman, he helps Nefert Lihamba in her task of taking care of her son Resy. Such an act of Jehwty Lumumba's childrearing cannot be denied to be sisterhood when I take my cue from Bell Hooks's insightful reflection into sisterhood as follows: Sisterhood is not only an act of women who "bond with other women on the basis of shared victimization;" but, it is also men who "bond with other women on the basis of shared strengths and resources" (Hooks, 1984, p.45). It is such a solidarity which is central to Jehwty Lumumba's friendship with Nefert Lihamba.

Definitely, Armah can be said to voice Africanity when his writing addresses Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's stance of womb-producer. By womb-producer, Spivak refers to women's presence in wage structure. Spivak puts it as follows: "The possession of a tangible place of production in the womb situates the woman as an agent in any theory of production" (Spivak, 1987, p.79). Such a stance of Spivak mirrors Africanity or African traditional value since in Africa a woman is at the heart of building the family. As Kwame Anthony Appiah puts it, Africa is a "matriclan" (Appiah, 1992, p.181). Appiah shows that in Africa the individual's belonging to the community is determined by matrilineal descent.

The critic presents mothers as first responsible people of the individual's existence in the community. Bringing a light to women's presence into constructing the families as advocated by Spivak and Appiah in *The Revolutionaries* is for Ayi Kwei Armah to appraise African tradition.

Armah appraises womb-producer to be Africanity through not only his choice to portray a narrator to be a female protagonist who is presence in wage structure (translator), but also by attributing to this female character the productivity of the community. Nefert Lihamba schools Resy. She pays "his fees regularly, on time" (Armah, 2013, p.14). Nefert Lihamba in this condition is a responsible mother. Not only that but also Nefert Lihamba employs Rama Ly as a "babysitter" (Armah, 2013, p.17), and pays her "forty thousand," a salary which is higher than what a European family who formerly employed Rama Ly pays. The European family who formerly employed Rama Ly pays her "thirty-five thousand cfa" (Armah, 2013, p.24). Generally, Europeans are said to give good salary to their employees because their rate of poverty is less than Africans'. But in the novelistic world presented by Armah, Nefert Lihamba is an African woman who gives higher salary to an employee than Europeans. Nefert Lihamba in this circumstance is a woman who participates to the reduction of poverty in her community.

Nefert Lihamba's image of being womb-producer is reinforced when she helps Ibra Dieng settles his commercial business. She voices it as follows: "'Ibra,' I said, 'I'll lend you the money for six months of rent, one hundred thousand.' I gave him the envelope (Armah, 2013, p.332). This act of Nefert Lihamba strengthens her contribution of developing her community. Such qualities of Nefert Lihamba as feature of an African woman show that the African woman is responsible. She holds the community and provide for this community as men do. In this sense Armah uses womb-producer to appraise women's chore as African traditional value.

Conclusion

The probe of centrality, renaissance, polydialectical culture, and womb-envy in *The Revolutionaries* reveals that Ayi Kei Armah makes use of Africanity to revive the traditional culture threatened by Western cultural hegemony. The novelist is clearly revealed to writing Africanity when reference is made to Jehwty Lumumba's and Imhotep Benga's centrality educations. Besides that, Armah's writing of cultural renaissance discloses when reference is made to ritual and onomastics. Similarly, the presence of polydialectical culture is perfectly illustrative of Armah's writing of an Africanity that revives the ancient culture. By the same token, Armah's writing of Africanity is disclosed when reference is made to his protagonists' womb-envy. The novelist writes to convey an Africanity that brings the traditional culture at an equal foot with the dominant culture. Ayi Kwei Armah's vision about Africanity is that the ancient tradition is the real foundation to stand on for the African child's development. Armah's portrayal of African tradition, it must be made plain, has nothing to do with advocating Western culture as the solution for African development as Clarence E. Walker argues with the case of Africans in America when he writes:

“Cultural change [...] was essential to the Africans’ survival in the Americas. They could not remain completely embedded in Africanity. Mastery of the dominant culture was an important strategy for survival” (Walker, 2001, p.67). The Ghanaian novelist rather advocates the African child’s education into the traditional culture as the solution for the African child’s psychological and social sustainable developments.

From Armah’s narrative of Africanity, one has to keep in mind that to have sustainable psychological and social cohesion, the African child needs to make recourse to the ancient tradition. No matter the level of psychic and social development that the Africans reach through Western culture, they will end in disruptions if they forget about their tradition. The education of the African child in his/her own history and tradition before any contact with other cultures allows him/her to avoid being loss from his/her community. It allows the African child to meet the world by having a culture to offer in the same way of appropriates from it. The novelist shows it well to all the Africans as well as all the world when he portrays the international translators to end in psychic crises and in seeing themselves being spokespeople of the West instead of speaking for their own communities. Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Revolutionaries* keeps faith with his ideology for which “people losing sight of origin are dead. A people deaf to purpose are lost” (Armah, 1973, p.13).

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