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# **Diversity vs. Difference: A Critical Analysis of Hybridity and Cultural Identity Crisis in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* (1963) and Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1975)**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The periods before and after independence, particularly from the late 1950s to the mid 1960s, are turning points in the history of African literature. The stakes of this period are, on the one hand, that it marked the beginning of the post-independence era characterized as decisive but also turbulent because of the announcement of the end of colonization corroborated with the building of new nations alongside the quest for new identities and the historical clash of cultures deeply delved into by writers, and on the other hand to address the above-mentioned issues altogether in their novels. In addition, many of the novels which appeared on the literary scene at that time raised in their authors' minds the zeal to give a realistic picture of Africa in the wake of the clash, which made a range of those novels classics of African literature. As such, the question of developing themes like culture or the quest for identity, parallel to the ideology of deconstructing the colonial discourse, dominates the African novel. Thus, most of the works published during that period focus on the issue of colonization and its aftermath of which the clash of cultures is the most crucial element.

This paper aims at putting in light, in the fictional works of two prominent African writers – Cheikh Hamidou Kane and Chinua Achebe –, their holistic visions, predictions and, if any, solutions to the cultural crisis generated through the contacts between Africa and Europe. It emphasizes mostly the notion of hybridity conveyed in their novels as the main process of the identity crisis analyzed here, through a comparative approach which enables one to distinguish the similarities and differences between Kane's and Achebe's visions of global civilization. I will back up my arguments with many of the ideas of theorists of culture such as Léopold Sédar Senghor, Homi K. Bhabha, Jean Pierre Makouta-Mboukou and Joseph Ki-Zerbo. Obviously, the clash first led to a dilemma, then to a crisis. However, the perspective was

not an end as such but rather the birth of a global culture which aims at creating the universal civilization advocated by Senghor.

Pertaining to methodology, this study is built on a critical analysis of the aforementioned theories, converging or diverging from different angles, to provide various outcomes and perspectives on the cultural clash which led to an identity crisis. Thus said, the method used is a comparative approach of the process of hybridization experienced by the Africans, epitomized in Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* (1963) and Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1975) by their respective protagonists: Samba Diallo and Obi Okonkwo. The paper expounds each author's vision of the question of hybridity. It gives perspectives on the colonial system, which is relevant in terms of diagnosis because while analyzing the phenomenon of hybridity, one cannot dispense with the theme of colonization, insofar as it is supposed to be directly its exogenous factor. In other words, it is the result of colonial domination which first imposed itself through the settlement of the Western school. However, this heritage has been judged from different angles depending on the vision one may have on it. In the process of the study, I will analyze the manifestations of hybridity before discussing the controversies over the issue, which gives birth to diversity and difference in the crisis opposing Africa to Europe. Finally, I will show how the latter have decided to be at the crossroads of cultures, to accept or reject the global civilization.

### MANIFESTATIONS OF HYBRIDITY

According to *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, “[h]ybrid is a term applied by plant and animal breeders to the offspring of a cross between two different species or genera and by geneticists to the offspring of parents differing in any genetic characteristic” (first edition, 1963). To put it in simple words, cultural hybridity is the fact of being cross-bred or living in-between two cultures. Therefore, after the contact between Europe and Africa, a cultural antagonism developed over the years in the way intellectuals tend to embrace the two different cultures. This accounts for the hybrid character of African intellectuals which first manifests itself in the form of ambivalence as far as the educational systems are concerned. It also resonates with a duality or dialectics between “the old order and the new one.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, it is the confrontation of two opposed worlds, modernity and tradition, which Achebe

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<sup>9</sup> This conflict is apparent in many of his works such as *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), *Chike and the River* (1966), etc.

calls in his writings “the conflict between the old and the new order.” Indeed, dialectics is defined by the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Encyclopedic Dictionary* as “the art of discovering and testing the truths by discussions and logical arguments or criticism that deals with metaphysical contradictions and how to solve them” (first edition, 1989;1992). In this study, it is the second approach of the definition which interests me. Similarly, there appears an intellectual *drama*<sup>10</sup> in the two novels. So, in *Ambiguous Adventure* and in *No Longer at Ease*, one can refer to this conflict as a world of dichotomies, the cohabitation of two things, each one claiming to be the total opposite of the other. Hence, the notion of duality characterizing the coexistence of two “camps”: that of tradition and that of modernity.

Hybridity stems from the colonial rule, even if it can have other causes dating back to the slave trade with the arrival of the first Portuguese on the African coast; but these events had simply secondary effects on the issue. The main concern is the new school established by the white settlers as a means of spreading their civilization. It was offered to the African elite in an ambivalent form: the young intellectuals, supposed to receive Western education, experienced a two-fold upbringing represented in the conflict between the rationality and materialism of the West and the African traditional school.

If hybridity first manifests itself through ambivalence, it exalts unquestionably a dialectics of “the old order and the new one.” In other words, the dichotomy stands for the conflict between modernity and tradition. This conflicting aspect is the second facet of the duality and also the cause of the deviation of the concept of hybridity from its normal cycle to the ultimate test of its mediocrity. It is first seen through the eyes of the educated characters as an ambivalent training. The dual character of their education is significant in the growth of the concept in so far as cultural hybrids are supposed to find a new identity in the itinerary they undertake. The combination of Western education and African wisdom received either from the Glowing Hearth or in the household directs the itinerary that Samba Diallo has to choose in order to “become two in one,” as Senghor postulates. This is the task that he assigns himself in his mission as a “courier” in *Ambiguous Adventure*. He identifies with “a cultural ambassador” or the go-between of the Diallobé and the West for the building of a global civilization.

The manifestation of hybridity has two facets in these novels. One is ambivalent and appears clearly in *Ambiguous Adventure*. The notion of ambi-

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<sup>10</sup> This word is not in its appropriate use. I borrow it from the historian Ali Mazrui who uses it as the French “*drame colonial*.” In this sense, it means “tragedy.”

valence that Samba tries to internalize consists in embodying both Western and African identities in one character. He assigns himself to “join wood to wood” (AA 32). In Ezeulu’s words, in *Arrow of God* (1960), he is the “eyes” of the Diallobé in the cultural exchange which he is introduced to. His very challenge lies in the ardent zeal to combine Western and African cultures without counterbalance. The strategy therein is to make a merging of the two educational systems with a cultural equilibrium. Samba is trained to be illustrative of the case. At the age of six, he was among the first children of his society to be chosen by the Diallobé to attend the Western school. Baydallaye Kane highlights this duality:

Kane [C. H. Kane] introduces a reflection based on two types of education. One is taken from the school of the colonizer. The other consisted of the whole of knowledge articulated around the symbiosis of an Islamic culture and pre-colonial African traditions. The novelist emphasizes the second type which is the subject of marginalization because of its being relegated to an abstract sector by the colonial State. (2004 48)

It is that form of education, through the contact between European and African civilizations, that Kane and Achebe propose to expose through Samba and Obi. The tactics is to negotiate one identity through the double heritage of being “two in one.” Samba defends this idea during his sojourn in France to show that the globalization of culture starts from the consciousness of bearing a hybrid identity. One of the requirements of the merging is to be complementary, but with no distinction of any culture to the detriment of the other. Samba identifies himself with this equilibrium:

I am not a distinct country of the Diallobé 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. (AA 150)

What is important to notice in Samba’s task is that he has to know how to handle his philosophy “to join wood to wood,” and he needs to be conscious of his double identity, because being “two in one” is already ambiguous and it engenders the complex situation that intellectuals are likely to face. Baydallaye Kane pinpoints this aspect of Samba’s upbringing which determines the identity formation of the young African through Thierno’s ideas:

Convinced that the new institution presents more disadvantages than advantages, he [Thierno] launches to his people a call for vigilance, espe-

cially, to their children who are to attend it. They must draw attention to the education disseminated by the white man because it must be put at the service of safeguarding the faith of the Diallobé: "We should build solid residences for the men and it is necessary to save God inside these residences. (2004 51; my translation)

Undoubtedly, Thierno's biggest worry is about his student's training after his transfer from the Koranic school to the Western one. He fears that Samba might fail his itinerary, which may cause the triumph of Western education over the African one. However, Samba manages to regulate his double identity until his sojourn in France. Unfortunately, his condition changes with time. His hybrid situation does not create a blend of two cultures any more, but rather a division of his person in two different identities soon in conflict. He deviates from the "fusion of two in one" to move to the division of "one in two different cultures." From this stems the conflict of cultures embodied by his character.

At this point, ambivalence changes gradually from ambiguity to conflict. As a matter of fact, the pathos of the story rests on this basis. The assignment of being "two in one" cannot be achieved, while what seems to be acquired as an experience results in becoming "one divided in two." Baydallaye Kane regards this aspect of the hero's fate as the reverse of the strategy of the ambivalence he undertakes to embody. He writes:

In a reverse strategy consisting in sending the children of the colonies to the school of the white man is a double-edged knife. The initiators of the request show a certain naivety and discover to their detriment the essentially dialectical dimension which hybridity creates through the introduction of the colonial school. The education provided for Africans will carry in them a unit of opposed things in which they become "one divided in two" but "not two merging in one. (2004 57)

Baydallaye Kane analyzes the main problem of Samba's experience. He also foretells the consequences it entails as this ambiguity can be derived from the concept developed by Senghor. As things stand, I do not think that Senghor's formula to "be two in one" is appropriate for Samba's condition, because this leads him to cultural alienation. Normally, the accurate formula is "to be one within two,"<sup>11</sup> since the compromise is to make a merging of two

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<sup>11</sup> This is my opinion whereas Senghor's formula for the cultural synthesis is to "become two in one." Indeed, he argues on the basis of his assertion that "cultural hybridity begins with alienation." To my mind, this is not appropriate for the vision Kane and Achebe have,

cultures without counterbalance. Samba defends: "I am not a distinct country of the Diallobé [...]. I have to become the two" (AA 150). The quest of the hero depends on its result: it can be a success as it can be a failure. We have noticed that Samba's trajectory is already a division as ambivalence shifts to ambiguity, while the formula "to be two in one" proves to be a division of one in two. This fusion does not make sense to the extent that it begins with a division. This echoes Senghor's position according to which "cultural synthesis begins first with alienation." Therefore, in Samba's eyes, hybridity becomes ambiguity, which constitutes the beginning of a long conflict whose aftermath rises at the end of the adventure. That is why he clarifies, in accordance to Senghor's concept (to be first alienated):

Sometimes the metamorphosis is not even finished. We have turned ourselves into hybrids, and there we are left. Then we hide ourselves, filled with shame. (AA 111-12).

Conversely, in *No Longer at Ease*, there is no clear ambivalence, though obviously Obi's journey evokes that of Samba. Obi originates from a traditional society which has managed to engraft him in tradition, despite the influence of Western civilization. So, he implicitly embodies ambivalence, but in a different way. The difference lies in the novels' thematic evolution. In *Ambiguous Adventure*, there is first the question of an ambivalence transformed into Samba's "ambiguous adventure," whereas in *No Longer at Ease*, there appears dialectics instead of ambivalence. Achebe develops the cultural synthesis through a conflict between modernity and tradition. The matter starts with *Things Fall Apart* (1958) which marks the first time the white man appears on the African scene, "injecting" his civilization into the minds of the young generation that attended school.

The manifestation of hybridity in *No Longer at Ease* is progressively shown in the dialectics of the old order and the new one represented in the conflict between tradition and modernity. Achebe devotes a long chapter to this issue in his novel. The ninth chapter explores the contentious debate between traditionalists and modernists. Achebe in his turn claims that there is a risk in experiencing synthesis because the cultural equilibrium required

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since Senghor's formula is too closely built upon the *Négritude* movement of ideas of the Negro's consciousness, so that his formula means division. Then, this will forcedly lead to crisis, loss of identity and the failure of any accurate synthesis. The appropriate formula in my analysis is rather "to be two within one" in order to achieve the fusion without "counterbalance," as Samba says.

by the intellectuals does not reflect reality. Western education seems already to have the upper hand over African wisdom inherited from oral tradition. The counterbalance turns into the triumph of Western education due to the excessive adhesion of the younger generation to Western civilization. The reason for this situation in *No Longer at Ease* in comparison to *Ambiguous Adventure* is evident in so far as Achebe dramatizes the African elite's fate at the crossroads of cultures. Almost all the characters in his novel are educated, except a few cases among the traditionalists. The latter can stand for what Kane calls "*les gardiens du temple*," meaning the conservators. They are opposed to the half-traditional and half-modern people that Jean Getrey calls *Les personnages croisés*<sup>12</sup> in *Ambiguous Adventure*. Among them we can identify the Most Royal Lady, The Knight and his son Samba. This type of characterization is also found in *No Longer at Ease*: it is the cross-bred class of Isaac Okonkwo, his son Obi, and the other young intellectuals. Kane uses Samba as a narrator-focalizer in a semi-autobiography to show the tragic end of the immature African elite exposed to a hybrid world whose tune he is doomed to follow.

The manifestation of hybridity as an "ambiguous adventure" in Kane's novel echoes the dialectics of tradition and modernity in Achebe's novel in terms of narrative technique, particularly in the characterization. In the two novels, there is a division of the characters into two different groups: the traditionalists and the modernists. The latter are called by Jean Getrey the group of "progressists," or the "cross-bred characters." In *Ambiguous Adventure*, the traditionalists are: Thierno the Master of the Diallobé, The Chief of the Diallobé, the Fool, and the Knight. The "progressists" comprise the Most Royal Lady, the Knight, Samba Diallo, Pierre Louis and his family. In *No Longer at Ease*, the traditionalists are found in the old generation: Ikedi, Odogwu, Josiah Okeke, etc. The younger generation of intellectuals is the group of modern people: Obi, Clara, Joseph, etc. Similarly, in each novel there is a central character found in the two opposed groups. These "go-betweens" are Jean Getrey's "cross-bred," because they advocate the openness of African culture to Western civilization, and they have experienced symbiosis. In *Ambiguous Adventure*, it is the Knight (Samba's father) who plays this role, as in *No Longer at Ease*, it is Isaac Okonkwo (Obi's father).

The dialectics is not only apparent in the characterization, but also in the settings of the novels in which there is another confrontation between the

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<sup>12</sup> Jean Getrey calls the educated characters that are at the same time traditionalists and modernists "cross-bred characters."



rural area and the urban zones. This aspect is relevant in the stories because the Diallobé and the Ibos respectively portrayed in *Ambiguous Adventure* and in *No Longer at Ease* are rural people. Hence, both Samba and Obi live in a village, but they finally join the town. This confrontation between the village and the town is an indigenous factor of hybridity in these novels.

Apparently, the conflict exists in the two novels in parallel with a societal division present in each story. The writers refer to the dialectics itself to draw the world's attention to the dichotomies which the *universal civilization* is likely to represent. Obi's earlier training is overlooked in the narration by means of devices, analepses and prolepses, in order to give the novel the form of a series of episodes, instead of a classic chronological setting.

This dialectics is also found in the spatio-temporal structure of the novels, which gives further understanding of the complex situations of the characters. The writers try their best to locate the conflict in time and space in their respective narratives. Concerning time, it is remarkable that each author chronologically evokes the pre-colonial era, but focuses on the colonial period. The clash identified in the novels dates back to the colonial era. It started in the 1950s, even if Kane unravels the beginning of colonization which took place in late nineteenth century. Things were more striking in the 1950s because of the fascination for the West of the first generation of African intellectuals who are typified in *No Longer at Ease* and in *Ambiguous Adventure*. This also accounts for the numerous highly educated Africans who migrated to Europe somewhere along the line, and who finally experienced a cultural clash, both physically and spiritually.

As far as space is concerned, the two novels are set in Africa. In reality, the Diallobé country is the geographical representation of Senegal. Yaya Wane (1969 24) sees an allegory in the *Jallubé* or Diallobé, one of the tribes of the Pulaar Diaspora in the heart of Fouta Toro, an area extending around the River Senegal which separates Mauritania from Senegal. Lagos and Umuofia too represent Nigeria. Sometimes, the plot shifts from Africa to Europe so as to help the reader better examine the evolution of the confrontation, as in both narratives the writers resort to a narrator-focalizer to report the protagonists' situation once in Europe.

Akin to this spatial conflict is that between the rural area and the urban zone evidenced in the two novels. This is mostly represented by focussing on the rural exodus that transcends the different realities of the town and the village. Both Samba and Obi are village boys. Before they move to Europe, the first spatial conflict they encountered was due to their migration to the town. The cosmopolitan aspect of Lagos as a *carrefour* is very informative

about this duality. The spatio-temporal structure is then instrumental to the understanding of the plots of these novels. It provides evidence for verisimilitude insofar as each writer depicts his own society in its local area. Although the novels deal mostly with Nigeria and the Diallobé country, they are emblematic of what Achebe calls “the metaphysical landscape of Africa, a view of a whole cosmos perceived from a particular position” (1975b 50). In a word, there have been many ways of manifestation of cultural hybridity after the colonial contact, but, as seen in the narrative discourses, the concerned African societies have to choose either to accept or refuse it.

### THE COMPROMISE TOWARDS A GLOBAL CIVILIZATION

The concept of hybridity has been theorized from different viewpoints by many thinkers in the field of literature. Bill Aschroft *et al.* claim that:

[t]he concept of universalism is one of particular interest to post-colonial writers because it is this notion of unitary and homogeneous human nature which marginalizes and excludes the distinctive characteristics, the difference, of post-colonial societies. (1995 55)

Homi K. Bhabha's “The Third Space of Enunciation” exposes one of the most efficient theories about cultural contact. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (cited by Aschroft *et al.* 209) proposes the Third Space as a solution to cultural difference. His theory is the expression of the “Third Space” as a place of enunciation to experience multiculturalism through the concept of hybridity.

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to ascend into that alien territory [...] may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. (Bhabha 38)

For Bhabha, the “Third Space of Enunciation” is situated between the “I and the You.” It facilitates the integration of each culture in the universal civilization, because for him, hybridity is not only biological but also cultural. So, the Third Space helps the alien better combine the culture of origin and the one acquired in the process of hybridisation.

Throughout *Ambiguous Adventure* and *No Longer at Ease*, one can notice that Kane and Achebe are not opposed to the synthesis of cultures, but that their concern is that Africans must be conscious of their identity and consider the return to the sources. Therefore, the compromise is first to be rooted in one's culture and then to be open to other cultures. In effect, this symbiosis turns out to be possible in either novel. In terms of concept of the global civilization, hybridity is not viewed by Kane and Achebe as something negative. Their visions are different from the anti-colonialist's who radically reject the concept. Unlike Achebe, Kane depicts the colonial system in a harsh way by emphasizing its violence and the involvement of military forces. However, he recognizes that it contributed to his training as an African intellectual who regards himself as an eye-witness of the colonial scene. Kane (cited by Jean Getrey: 1999 94) acknowledges the fact that "he has cut out the reality when he simply shows the materialist and Cartesian aspect of the West" (my translation).

Kane and Achebe regard colonization as a relatively good thing, despite its disadvantages. Showing his vision about that debate, Achebe comments:

Of course there are areas of Africa where colonialism divided up a single ethnic group among two or even three powers. But on the whole it did bring together peoples that had hitherto gone their several ways. And it gave them a language with which to talk to one another. If it failed to give them a song, it at least gave them a tongue for sighing. (1975b 57)

In this perspective, one can believe that Kane and Achebe have the same vision as Senghor who first asserted that colonization was a "necessary evil." The way it is accepted in the Diallobé country and the Ibo land is very strategic because, like many historians, these societies admit that colonization is an irresistible historical fact in Africa. So, her societies cannot refuse or resist it. The only solution possible is to accept it as a compromise but not as a defeat of their civilization in the building of a global culture. Achebe makes a relevant comment on Kane's novel to show that they share the same point regarding the "philosophical" dialogue between cultures, particularly the West and Africa:

The philosophical dialogue between the West and Africa has rarely been better represented than in *Ambiguous Adventure*. In the first part of the story the proud rulers of the Diallobé people – bearers of the crescent of Islam in the West African savannah for close upon a thousand years – are

suffering the traumatic anguish of defeat by French imperial arms, and pondering what the future course of their life should be. Should they send their children to the new school or not? After a long and anguished debate they finally opt for the school but not on the admission that their own institutions are in any way inferior to those of the French, nor on the aspiration that they should become like the French in due course, but rather on the tactical grounds only that they must learn from their new masters “the art of convincing without being in the right. (1988 52)

In order to support his position on the dialogue, Kane adds that African people have been excessively tempted either to assimilate Western culture or deliberately turn their backs to it. Whatever the attitude they adopt, it seems to him the worst thing that an African may choose one and reject the other (Kane qtd. by Jean Getrey 92). According to Senghor, the global civilization’s basic idea is to be regarded as “a *rendez-vous* of the give and take.” It appears here as a proposal, a solution to the rocky transition in African history. In other words, hybridity is regarded by postcolonial theoreticians like Jean Pierre Makouta-Mboukou as a solution to cultural differences. So, African societies compulsorily have to undergo a disruption with their past, but not as negatively as some may expect it, because there would be a return to the sources. The building of the new civilization is to be forged as a global one that combines all the good things of each culture, melting one with the other, each one experiencing it through a process of hybridization.

Hybridity is thus a cultural instrument which can better set the dialogue between cultures, what can be found in Senghor’s conception of the universal civilization based on the following compromise:

The civilization of tomorrow will be that of the truth or more modestly, contribute to the progress of Man. It will have to be the symbiosis of all the people, all the continents, all the races, even all the ideologies. Here is the global civilization; one which will emerge only with “the give and receive,” which will be born dialectically from the confrontation of all civilizations. (*Jeune Afrique* n°11, hors série, 2006 5, my translation)

It is true that cultures differ, but in the context of the twentieth-century world civilization, they have to come into contact and live together within their differences; but as Claude Lévi-Strauss puts it:

one would abstractly and logically say that each culture is unable to make a true assessment on another culture, since a culture cannot escape from it-

self, that its appreciation should consequently remain relative without recall. (cited by UNESCO: 1961 51)

Therefore, the phenomenon of hybridity should normally be taken as the appropriate instrument for a cultural dialogue. This is nothing but the historical and cultural heritage of the twentieth-century world's civilization, experienced through the colonial system. This is the reason why the Diallobé have to understand the Most Royal Lady's opinion in order to send their children to the new school. Her proposal serves as an example to show that African people cannot avoid the clash of cultures; they should be flexible but be aware of what Western education means to them:

The school in which I would place our children will kill in them what today we love and rightly conserve with care. Perhaps the very memory of us will die in them. When they return from school, they may be those who will not recognise us. What I am proposing is that we should agree to die in our children's hearts and that the foreigners who have defeated us should fill the place, wholly which we shall have left free. (AA 46).

The Most Royal Lady's strategy –“to learn from them the art of convincing without being in the right” – is one of the compromises of this *rendez-vous* to learn the secrets of the white man. Further in her discussion, she deepens her reflection on the question by adopting a metaphorical and analogical rationale, while warning her people that the event implies many stakes:

“But people of the Diallobé.” She continued after a pause, “remember our fields when the rainy season is approaching. We love our fields very much, but what do we do then? We plough them up and burn them: we kill them. In the same way, recall this: what do we do with our reserves of seed when the rain has fallen? We would like to eat them, but we bury them in the earth.” Folk of the Diallobé, with the arrival of the foreigners has come the tornado which announces the great hibernation of our people. My opinion I, the Most Royal Lady – is that our best seeds and our dearest fields – those are our children. (AA 46-7).

This female voice, whose ideas have nothing to do with feminism, is emblematic of the Diallobé's aristocracy, which she represents thanks to her age. Her status allows her to hold such a speech from which she gives the rationale behind the compromise. In such an argument, Jean Pierre Mak-

outa-Mboukou (1980 second edition) implies that hybridity, in the eyes of the Most Royal Lady, is a kind of death, which makes sense only because there follows a resurrection:

It is necessary for the Diallobé, as the Most Royal says, to agree to die in their children by sending them to the foreign school, so that they resurrect and live again, allow the vacant places left by the fathers to survive, and then effectively fight against the foreigners. No tree can grow on the ground if the grain does not die, no field can grow anew if it is not burned; in the same way, no new force can emerge from our race if our children do not go to the foreign school. (53)

The Most Royal Lady understands clearly the wheel of history and she warns her people that the colonial system is an unending enterprise under any circumstance. The writer's prediction about the transition can be summed up through her speech in these terms: "with the arrival of the foreigners has come the tornado which announces the hibernation of our people" (AA 47). Her flexibility results in acquiring Western culture through school, which is the main factor of the synthesis. In sending their children to school, one may conclude that they accept to lose one part of their culture by gaining new aspects from another one. So, the children of the Diallobé receive an ambivalent training which allows their people to achieve what is expected from their upbringing. Therefore, their training requires Bhabha's Third Space of enunciation.

Kane and Achebe are very fond of their past, but they know that what they have inherited historically from colonialism has to be domesticated and taken as an integral part of their cultures. It is an advantage for the building of the new world that they depict in their writings. One aspect of this heritage is the ambivalent situation of African literature that is derived from its hybrid character. The advantages of the synthesis urge the Senegalese and the Nigerian writers to postulate hybridity as a double heritage which allows Africans to be at the crossroads of cultures. But the ambivalence is to be handled very carefully. The accurate experience is to be "one within two" as a messenger or a "courier" in Kane's words, but not to become "two in one," which sounds like Senghor's ambiguous formula. This philosophy demonstrates the authors' openness to modernity. Each of them proposes it in his novel through the ideas exposed by some character. This is also the idea that Kane defended in the seventh biennial of the French language in 1977 in Moncton, Canada:

Throughout the history full of tests and dangers, the oral tradition has perfectly enabled the expression and the safeguarding of these elements of civilization. But time has changed. In a world where, henceforth, neither time nor distance constitute any more the obstacles to communication, a culture of orality becomes fragile and threatened. Its range of diffusion is limited, therefore, its power of competition and it is consequently in a situation of inferiority. The force of the feeling interns that the people of oral tradition have their cultures is not enough to preserve. These people enter the cycle of technical progress within a world that becomes one. (cited by Fouet & Régine Renaudeau: 1988 25-6)

The dialogue does not proceed the same way in the Ibo society. Nevertheless, they are conscious that a transition exists in their society: they have to join the modern world. The narrator explains this through Mr Ikedi words: "In times past 'he told him' Umuofia would have required of you to fight in her wars and bring home human heads. [...] Today we send you to bring knowledge" (NLE 9). In *No Longer at Ease*, even the old men who are conservative know what the transition offers them and how to profit from the exchange. Odogwu witnesses it by recalling the past and comparing it with the present:

"When I was young, I knew of them – Okonkwo, Ezeudu, Okolo, Nwosu" he counted them off with his right fingers against the left [...]. These men were great in their days. Today greatness has changed its tune. Titles are not great; neither are barns or large number of wives and children. Greatness is now the thing of the white man. And now we too have changed our tune. We are the first in all the nine villages to send our son to the white man's land. Greatness has belonged to Iguedo from ancient times. It is not made by men. You cannot plant greatness as you plant yams or maize [...]. The great tree chooses where to grow and we find it there, so it is with the greatness in men". (NLE 49).

This passage proves that Odogwu in *No Longer at Ease* and the Most Royal Lady in *Ambiguous Adventure* share the same ideas about the issue. They use a quite similar metaphor while explaining the "greatness of changes" (NLE) and "the tornado which announces the hibernation of the transition" (AA). These arguments surrounding the Most Royal Lady, Mr Ikedi, and Odogwu are reminiscent of what Senghor calls cultural convergences:

Gustave le Bon writes in his *Lois psychologiques de l'évolution des peuples*: "the clearest impression taken from my long journeys in the most various countries is that each people has a mental constitution as fixed as its anatomical characters, and from which derive its feelings, thoughts, institutions, beliefs, and its arts." This is culture; it is the psychological constitution which explains to each people its civilization. It is, in other words, a certain way peculiar to each people to think, to express itself, and to react. And that, "certain way," that character, as it is called today, is the symbiosis of the influences of the geography and the history of the race and the ethnic groups. (1977 122, my translation)

This statement illustrates that the writers themselves depict the reality as it is, while the phenomenon of hybridity is a turning point in their stories. To be open to other cultures and at the same time to be deeply rooted in one's own shapes the identity of a modern person as a prototype of the third millennium's civilization. Samba Diallo in his mission as a "courier" tries to defend this identity:

I am not a distinct country of the Diallobé 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. (AA 150)

Here, Kane's hero adopts Makouta-Mboukou's position "not to pretend to have an African or European identity, but to choose to be both of them" (1980 48). In fact, this is what has made hybridity and the identity crisis linked phenomena in the third millennium world's philosophy projected some years ago in many African novels such as Achebe's and Kane's. In the Knight's statement:

We have not had the same past but, you and ourselves, but we shall have, strictly, the same future. The era of separate destinies has run its course. In that sense, the end of the world has indeed come for every one of us, because no one can any longer live by the simple carrying out of himself. (AA 79-80)

It is noticeable that the notion of identity itself is in the throes of debates among Europeans and Africans. Parallel to this, identity is viewed by some thinkers not as a plural but a single entity. This is one of the prerequisites of the global civilization. In order to follow the new world's tune, one of the African historians, Joseph Ki-Zerbo (quoted in Dani Kouyaté: 2004) defends



that “Africans should not bear their identities on their breasts like a medal or a decoration, but they had better forge it day in, day out.” In addition to this, Jacqueline Ki-Zerbo affirms:

The phenomenon of plurality is due to the fact that Africa is marked by its plural identities which are sometimes conflictual. All these identities serve to find a local and indigenous development which will be possible only if these very identities converge. (quoted in Dani Kouyaté: 2004)

Joseph Ki-Zerbo deduces that Africans should change in order to run over themselves, and to run over the plurality of identities that exist nowadays and reach a higher level, that is to say an entity which likely plays a notable, visible, and credible role in the twenty-first century (*ibid.*). He sets forth that identity is to be forged as a single entity because if it is plural, Africans would never meet their expectations. Another historian, Elikia Mbokolo (*ibid.*) strengthens Ki-Zerbo’s point by resuming that Identity cannot be acquired passively. It should be negotiated politically and intellectually. For Mbokolo, this is nothing but the contribution of the active dialogue between the past, the present and the future. Indeed, it is the same vision that Kane and Achebe develop in their writings to prove that they are not the apologists of cultural radicalism. They share the ideas of those among their contemporaries who are open-minded.

The tragic ending of *Ambiguous Adventure* caused by the identity crisis stemming from Samba’s failure does not mean that Kane has a negative vision of the question of hybridity. Despite the tragic ending of the novel, Kane is convinced that a synthesis remains possible, as Vincent Monteil stresses in the preface of the novel:

The end is without hope, but the only fact that author could write it, justifies the major agreement between his spirit and his faith, his life and his work. This great man [...] open and sharp, with the firm authority, knew how to exceed his contradictions “to grow rich through his differences.” He represents Africa at the crossroads, which Léopold Sédar Senghor calls “the contribution of the Negro-African to the global civilization”. It is significant that Cheikh Hamidou Kane has succeeded in having Aimé Césaire’s poems, accompanied with the guitar, by the old tune of a griot from Fouta.

The first Africans to experience hybridity are fictionally represented as “couriers” in Kane’s novel in so far as it is a step towards the new world of science, technology, and progress. It is the same in *No Longer at Ease*,

while the elite is represented in the *rendez-vous* as “been-tos” playing the same role as Kane’s hero. They are there to be the “eyes” of their society. This aspect is not only apparent in *No Longer at Ease* or *Ambiguous Adventure* but also in Achebe’s *Arrow of God* (1960) when Ezeulu declares:

I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eyes there. If there is nothing in it you will come back, but if there is something there, you will bring home my share. The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend with the white man will be saying had we known tomorrow. (55)

This passage points to the fact that it was difficult for Africans to embrace any symbiosis of cultures, which does not actually give positive prospects to some leaders like Thierno in *Ambiguous Adventure*. They can only refuse it since the beginning; otherwise, they have to acquire it by force. Nevertheless, it does not mean that African people were not prepared for it or that they were not aware of the new world civilization. The discussion between Kane’s characters, Lacroix and the Knight, provides enough evidence that the compromise is imminent, as they agree that they have the same future:

Every hour that passes brings a supplement of ignition to the crucible in which the world is being fused. We have not had the same past, you and ourselves, but we shall have, strictly, the same future. The era of separate destinies has run its course. In that end, the end of the world has indeed come for every one of us, because no one can any longer live by the simple carrying out what he himself is but from our long and varied ripening a son will be born to the world: the first son of the earth; the only one, also [...]. This future, I accept it [...] my son is the pledge of that. He will contribute to its building it is my wish that he contribute, not as a stranger come from distant regions, but as an artisan responsible for the destinies of the citadel. (AA 79-80).

After the Most Royal Lady’s announcement of the change in a sophisticated and figurative language – “with the arrival of the foreigners has come the tornado which announces the hibernation of our people.” (AA 47) –, Kane moves the story to an optimistic perspective through the dialogue between The Knight and Lacroix. What is important to mention here is that The Knight is the epitome of the hybrid who has accurately succeeded in undergoing the synthesis. He expresses his openness to Western culture. He

is also convinced that it can proceed; hence he believes that his conversation with Lacroix will be instrumental to the building of “the future citadel”:

The future citadel, thanks to my son, will open its wide windows on the abyss, from which will come great gusts of shadow upon our shrivelled bodies, our haggard brows. With all my soul I wish for this opening. In the city which is being born such should be our work\_ all of us, Hindus, Chinese, South Americans, Negroes, Arabs, all of us, awkward and pitiful, we the under-developed, who feel ourselves to be clumsy in a world of perfect mechanical adjustment. (AA 80)

This conversation may be an allegory of the idea of creating a new world of technology and progress, conceived in the “building of a future citadel,” which can also stand for the global village. In this perspective, Jacques Chevrier qualifies the Knight as follows:

A positive actor who, *a posteriori*, ratifies the choice of the Most Royal Lady and he prophesies the realisation of the global civilization which Senghor advocated in the “*rendez-vous* of the give and take.” (1987 125)

According to the Most Royal Lady, Samba Diallo is a “courier,” the representative of the Diallobé in the “universal civilization.” Moriceau and Rouch comment on the role played by Samba Diallo as a grain or a “vanguard” chosen among the elite to experience the fusion of cultures. They analyze:

Although it appears only three times, the people of the Diallobé country are an element of the novel. All starts from him and is organised around him [Samba], even if, like any people, he waits until his leaders guide him and decide for him. (1983 32)

*Ambiguous Adventure* tells the itinerary of Samba Diallo by showing that he is a test, a “vanguard chosen among the elite to risk the adventure and to try to discover the secrets of the Whites” (*ibid.* My translation). Next to Samba Diallo referred to as a “courier,” there is a typical character through whom the synthesis is approached positively and accurately: The Knight, Samba Diallo’s father. Moriceau and Rouch pinpoint him as the one who has set an example and who fits the citadel very well:

Father of Samba Diallo, a civil servant of the colonial administration, the Knight is described, in chapter 5, like a great man, with *the powerful stature*

*but without pasting; his majestic port, his white grand boubou, his beautiful face [...] his stature makes him assimilate, for Lacroix like a knight of the Middle Ages. Noble, beautiful, in the force of the age, he apparently embodies the new African who manages to preserve his faith and his culture, reconciling the art of the White and the wisdom of Diallobé. (ibid. 24)*

The Knight in *Ambiguous Adventure* and Isaac Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease* are prototypes of modern men forged by the global civilization as perceived both by Kane and Achebe. They are the “right ones” who assimilate the Western culture in a positive sense and who, at the same time, preserve their cultures and return to their sources. Although Achebe portrays Isaac, former Nwoye in *Things Fall Apart* as an alienated African, in *No Longer at Ease* which is reported to be the sequel to his first novel, Isaac is on the contrary a typical example of the modern African that Achebe and Kane call for in their vision of hybridity. In fact, their conceptions are shared by several other thinkers, such as J. John Muntu who writes:

What the African intellectuals want is to preserve their past, what is valid for the present-day African to use it for the construction of a new Africa. The goal is neither to preserve the traditional African nor to forge a "black European," but to create the modern African, Which is to integrate all the European elements which fulfil the requirements of the contemporary life in the indigenous tradition rationally schematized. (13-14)<sup>13</sup>

It is remarkable that these characters are at the crossroads of cultures while the compromise lay in the dialogue. However, their agreement to embrace the new civilization does mean that it is totally profitable for all. Other individuals are against the compromise and they express it through categorical positions.

#### **THE REJECTION OF THE CULTURAL MERGING AS A CHOICE FOR CULTURAL DIFFERENCE**

This section conveys the idea that some Africans are still reluctant to accept the cultural symbiosis and prefer to preserve their culture. This rejection

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<sup>13</sup> My translation of the French version. The original version of this book being in English, consider this as my translation of the main idea.

of the other can be referred to as the “resistance to hybridity,” which Omar Sougou introduces as such:

The question of identity and culture in nations that have experienced the colonial encounter has been examined by theoreticians such as Frantz Fanon, Léopold Sédar Senghor, J. Pierre M. Mboukou, and Homi Bhabha who have variously addressed the cultural problematic. Writers of fiction have also addressed the issue; Cheikh Hamidou, Aminata Sow Fall, and Achebe for instance have broadly delved into the issue. (2002 113)

In *Ambiguous Adventure* and *No Longer at Ease*, the African world is constantly torn between two different systems: modernity and tradition. Modernity advocates cultural universality, whereas tradition is characterized by radicalism and cultural differences. These systems interact in a process in which the first tends to create a synthesis of African and Western cultures, whereas the second one chooses to establish a diversified world also characterized by cultural variations. In this vein, the two systems tend to vindicate each other as their respective negations. In such cases, I have to point out that though Kane and Achebe are exponents of the globalization of cultures, they admit that some social groups in their societies are reluctant to share their visions. Achebe (1996) admits this point in these significant words:

The world is big. Some people are unable to comprehend that simple fact. They want the world on their own terms, its peoples just like them and their friends, its places like the manicured little patch on which they live. But this is a foolish and blind wish. Diversity is not abnormality but the very reality of our planet. The human world manifests the same reality and will not seek our permission to celebrate itself in the magnificence of its endless varieties.

Achebe's statement shows that, despite his conviction that the world becomes one, as Kane himself believes, there is another reality of that very world. It is the diversity of the cultures which makes the difference, something that prevails in our planet. Some post-colonial theoreticians find much interest in the theme of universality, which may have influenced many ideological positions. This viewpoint is supported by Bill Ashcroft *et al.*: “A crucial insistence of post-colonial theory is that, despite a shared experience of colonialism, the cultural realities of post-colonial societies may differ vastly” (*op. cit.* 55). This is the reason why Kane and Achebe put forward in their narratives that the cultural difference is a reality of the planet. It constitutes

the first obstacle to the global civilization advocated by Senghor and his Francophone counterparts. As a result, Kane represents his society's radical opposition to the establishment of Western schools. In *Ambiguous Adventure*, people like Thierno are the harbingers of the manifestation of the refusal of the synthesis of cultures. The problem is all the more serious as Omar Sougou connotes it in his article as "resistance to hybridity." The apprehension of the issue becomes systematic because the cultural crisis turns out to be evident from then on. The issue is well-seized by Kane, inasmuch as the Diallobé refuse the new school which they consider to be at the heart of the matter. Thierno defends his opinion on the subject:

Our refusal is certain [...] the question is disturbing nevertheless. We reject the foreign school in order to remain ourselves, and to preserve for God the place He holds in our hearts. But have we still enough force to resist the school, and enough substance to remain ourselves. (AA 10).

Thierno's point of view as a religious guide of the Diallobé reinforces his society's decision to remain stern. Therefore, his vision of the world can be understood along three main facts. First, the Diallobé radically reject the Western school which is the main factor of cultural interaction, because they are deeply rooted in traditions they want to preserve. Second, their society is an aristocratic one which is more motivated and regulated by the worshiping of God, hence the double traditions: the aristocracy and the Islamic religion. For Thierno, his religion is pure and excludes any mixture. This is why he is highly regarded in his society's decision-makings. Thus, his words are very influential. The third reason for their resistance is the preservation of God as a priority, given that among the two distinguished traditions, religion remains fundamental. Thierno justifies this position in this passage:

"If I told them to go to the new school," he said, "they would go *en masse*. They would learn all the ways of joining wood to wood which we do not know. But, learning, they would also forget. Would what they would learn be as much worth as what they would forget? I should like to ask you: can one learn *this* without forgetting *that*, and is what one learns worth what one forgets?"

At the Glowing Hearth, what we teach the children is God. What they forget is themselves, their bodies, and the futile dream which hardens with age stifles the spirit. So what they learn is worth infinitely more than what they forget." (AA 34)

The position that Thierno takes for granted is not factual. It is part of the social norms because his status allows him to be strict in his words. The following argument can help better illustrate it: “You are the landmark and you are the recourse. Put that a little to the test, Chief of the Diallobé. Has one man alone the right to monopolise what belongs to all? I answer, no. If the landmark moves, where do men go?” (AA 31).

Another reason for the Diallobé to be opposed to the new civilization is that they know much about its prospects. On the one hand, they do not doubt its success and its advantages given that The Knight is already a product of the synthesis. On the other hand, their reluctance sounds very reasonable because there is also among them a prototype of the failure of the synthesis. It is the Fool, who first undertakes the adventure of Samba Diallo, but finally comes back from the West totally metamorphosed. The Fool is the first of the Diallobé to experience the contact between Western and African civilizations. His character resonates as a precursor, but he witnesses the failure of the synthesis. Jean Getrey comments on this fact as follows:

The Fool who had the occasion to be in touch with the western world is therefore a witness sent by the Diallobé to the Occident; he is a kind of a precursor. He embodies the radical refusal to the intrusion of the West. That may be the reason for his attachment to Thierno. (*op. cit.* 53-54)

After his misadventure in Europe, the Fool returns home mentally depressed by the process of assimilation of Western civilization. His character doubles as a failure and a defender of the tradition. This is found in what Kane calls “le gardien du temple” in his second eponymous novel, *Les Gardiens du Temple*. This role is played by the conservators, Farba Mari, the Griot and Daba Mbaye. This dichotomized portrait of the Fool is significant to the extent that his double characterization accounts for the failure that he represents and which he tries to repair in his appearance of a defender of tradition. The second role he plays as a conservator turns out to be a solution to the role he was assigned: to assimilate the Western culture. This contradiction is emblematic of the significant return to the sources suggested by the writers. Jean Getrey (*ibid.*) justifies the attitude of the Fool as an absolute hostility to Western civilization which appoints him as the spokesman of the African tradition.

In either society in the novels, it is the conservators who are against global civilization. Although they recognize somehow that a cultural compro-

mise was found by the other camp – the class of modernists –, they also do not forget its foreground, because the compromise for the traditionalists was simply to avoid the colonial evil, meaning the military domination of the white man over their countries. However, the rationale behind it is different from that of the Most Royal Lady: “the art of convincing without being in the right.” For the traditionalists, their principle is rather “to experience but not to become.” In this respect, it is necessary to mention that they do not have the same vision of hybridity as Kane and Achebe. The latter, who are realistic and optimistic, specify at some point that the traditional camp may be right. Then, their reluctance can be expressed in what they themselves postulate as a fear for the success of the synthesis. Achebe exposes his doubt about the synthesis despite the positive aspects it entails by questioning the Diallobé’s decision:

The trouble with their decision, however, is that the children, these “wanderers on delicate feet” as the poet Senghor might have called them, these infant magi launched into an ambiguous journey with an ambivalent mandate to *experience but not to become* are doomed from the start to distress and failure. (1988 52)

Achebe is a realistic novelist who is preoccupied by his vision of the world in relation to its reality, although what he proposes may be in contradiction to the realities of his own society. Kane has similar feelings regarding doubts about a successful synthesis. But he does not manifest it as explicitly as Achebe in the above statement. However, he is convinced that cultural hybridity is a prerequisite of the third millennium’s policy to integrate the global civilization. Although it is not a success in *Ambiguous Adventure*, in his second novel, *Les Gardiens du temple*, he evokes the same topic to show his preoccupations with the subject matter. In his first novel, Kane applies the experience to the protagonist, Samba Diallo, who is a meeting point of the opposing forces, Europe and Africa; but it finally leads to cultural crisis. Hence, Samba dies but his death is rhetorical in the narrative: it means a physical and cultural one that captures the identity crisis itself. However, in the second novel, Salif Bâ, the hero, succeeds in experiencing the fusion. As a result, he is a perfect returnee and his people refer to him as the one who has built a new world thanks to his assimilation of two different cultures. Therefore, he becomes “one within two,” as the following passage illustrates



Salif Bâ had returned from Europe psychologically well-prepared. He was an agricultural engineer. The administrative authorities had sent them to the country of the Diallobé, his province of origin. As Farba was praising, it is true that through the native tang, his eyes of a wise man and a technician had perceived, as in filigree, another tang that he had undertaken to build [...] He kept in the heart the aspirations of the Diallobé. The Diallobé had to continue to be nourished mainly with their sweat, preserving in fact the respect of themselves to which they are so much attached [...]

He was the builder of a new world and he deeply had the capacity of implanting it in that ancient world to which he was attached more than all. (Kane: 1995 16-17).

In comparison with *No Longer at Ease*, one can observe that both Kane and his society converge on the same vision that there is a possibility of synthesis. With regard to the resistance to hybridity in *No Longer at Ease*, we can note the presence of a rejection of the synthesis of cultures, but it is different from that in *Ambiguous Adventure*. What can be found as common in the two stories is that both the Pulaar and the Ibos are conservators, notwithstanding their division in two opposed camps justifying the presence of the modernists; but these ones are less influential.

The difference in the stories concerning the phenomenon of “resistance to hybridity” lies in the fact that Kane seizes directly the subject matter by showing how his society is categorically opposed to it and by tackling the origin of the issue in its early days. Achebe, in his turn, seizes the problem indirectly by exhibiting the way the Ibos turn their backs to Western values that are taken from the new school supposed to be problematic for the authentic African culture. The main problem here resides in the African societies portrayed in *Ambiguous Adventure* and in *No Longer at Ease* which are very radical. Hence, social norms are restricted to three main characteristics: aristocracy – for the Diallobé – democracy, and religion.

Therefore, it is Kane’s story which better explains the way the Western school is rejected in the former French colonies like Senegal, embodied in the representation of the Diallobé country. As an example, Kane more explicitly tackles the problem of the settlement of the white colonizer which provokes the Diallobé to violently resist the invasion as a military, economic, and cultural domination.

The difference in content is also due to the context, since Kane describes the early days of the European invasion in Africa to establish a new school as a means to spread a Western civilization so different from the Islamic one. The decision of the Diallobé was strict, for they had to think over

the future of their society. Nonetheless, Achebe does not insist on the first stage of the colonial issue as is the case of *Ambiguous Adventure*. When the story begins, Obi the protagonist is between twenty-four and twenty-five years old, and already a university graduate. So, in this context the problematization of the new school is run over in the thematic evolution of the novel. It was time to decide whether or not to send Obi to England for further studies. Conversely, the choice to make about Obi's departure may not be as complex as that about sending Samba to the new school at the age of six.

But this is not exactly what Achebe wanted to stress. He wants to show where the shoe pinches by pointing indirectly the "bad" attitudes that Obi adopts once in touch with the West. In other words, the rejection of the "universal civilization" is shown through the massive opposition of Obi's community to his marriage with Clara. It does not go along with some disregards to the tradition. The president of the Umuofian Progressive Union, too, rebukes Obi for his attitude to let him realize his "denaturalization":

A man can go to England, become a lawyer or a doctor, but it does not change his blood. It is like a bird that flies off the earth and lands on an ant-hill. It is still on the ground. (NLE 146)

In this perspective, it is worth specifying that tradition does not only appear as a leitmotiv in this novel but also in other novels in which the African tradition is firmly set against the intrusion of the Western culture. Thus, the Ibo clan's refusal to accept Obi's marriage is a relevant point worth noting here.

It is a social case and a central point in the story that Achebe tells in order to convey the idea that Ibo people are opposed to values that are not in conformity with their traditions. It is this notion of the authenticity of African civilization which Achebe and Kane try to reflect in their narratives. The rejection of the global civilization is accomplished through the affirmation of an authentic African identity rooted in its religious and traditional values. This is what causes Obi's marriage to be disapproved by the whole society. His contact with the West seems to have influenced him. As a matter of fact, he intends to marry Clara, who is an *Osu*. "She is part of the outcast whom the Ibo clan regard as slaves" and who are forbidden to marry the free-born. It is in this sense that his case with Clara is conceived as a tribal taboo. In order to show Obi how angry his clan is, his parents and other members of the Umuofian Progressive Union openly reject his desire to marry Clara.

The categorical interdiction of the marriage reminds us of the main pillars of this society: aristocracy and democracy. Clara, whom Obi loves too much, is the daughter of Josia Okeke. However, tradition forbade and still forbids an *Osu* to marry a free-born. In addition to that, an *Osu* is doomed to live, work, and die separate from the free-born. Then, Obi is enough warned about the consequences that such a marriage may bring about because his act would taint his descendants. The passage below illustrates the case:

*Osu* is like leprosy in the minds of our people. I beg you, my son, not to bring mark of shame and leprosy into your family. If you do, your children and your children's children unto the third generations will curse your memory. It is for myself I speak; my days are few. You will bring sorrow on your head and on the heads of your children. Who will marry your daughters? Whose daughters will your sons marry? Think of that, my son. (AA 121)

The passage above exemplifies that the attachment of the Ibos to their cultural values is as fundamental as Ali Mazrui defines it:

Culture is a system of inter-related values, active enough to influence and condition perception, judgement, communication and behaviour in a given society. (1986 239)

These values are also evocative of the message that Achebe and Kane give to the intellectuals: the return to the sources even if one considers oneself to be a cultural hybrid. This is the act accomplished by Obi's society. Much of its symbolism is exemplified by Isaac Okonkwo, Obi's father. He has revisited his past, although he was the first to break with the tradition in the early days of colonization. He was exiled from the paternal house and joined the white man. This dichotomy between son and father symbolizes the difference between the authentic traditional Africans and the present modern intellectuals, liable to become alienated at any cost. It is the representation of the resistance and survival of the tradition which still prevails despite the threatening Western values that continue to shake its foundations.

The issue of marriage which Achebe problematizes here again as the manifestation of the rejection of hybridity is not unprecedented in the African novel of tradition. Achebe underlines it again in his short story, *Chike and the River* (1965), imbued with the same tribal taboos. The marriage issue does not appear in Kane's book, but it is similar to another Francophone novel by Seydou Badian: *Sous l'orage* (1963). In the latter's narrative, a similar prob-

lem appears as a major theme. Seydou Badian also addresses the negative sentiments of his society *vis-à-vis* the trends of the new world. In his story, the arranged marriage between Famagan and Kany engenders a misunderstanding between the old generation and the new one. The former opposes the latter's decision in order to criticise the old beliefs, whereas the traditionalists get more and more connected with their values to express their originality:

"I don't love Famagan, I don't love Famagan, Kany cried on the top of her voice."

"It is not a matter of love", Maman Tene said. You must be obedient, you don't belong to yourself. You have no choice. It is up to your father who is the master and your duty is to obey. Things have been such since then. (Badian: 1963 72)

In the same regard, there is a contradiction between Obi's vision of the world and that of Achebe. However, what enlightens these different points of view is the writer's acknowledgement that the world itself claims universality while cultural difference prevails within it. Hybridity is proposed by many theoreticians as a solution to cultural differences, but Achebe's remark is that diversity remains a serious obstacle to the cultural exchange because even in international organizations like UNESCO, some intellectuals realize that globalization may be difficult to experience, owing to the diversity of cultures:

In this complex universe, the aspirations to identity are expressed with a real or supposed globalisation and are at any moment likely to be in confrontation with one another. The cultural and religious parameters are today in the heart of the international ratios as well as the traditional factors of the power, be they economic or technological. Talking about cultural diversity today is to initially open a debate on the relation which it maintains with globalization, its virtues and its dangers. (Lise & Paul Sabourin: 2005 4001)

#### **CONCLUSION**

As a whole, there are many common points in the perspectives on these novelists' visions. First, for both of them, the manifestation of hybridity is almost the same. Kane shows how Samba, the protagonist, is entrapped in his "ambiguous adventure" before he undertakes to become a cultural hybrid and finally dies in a cultural crisis. The merging of Western culture and

African traditional values through the Koranic school and the new Western one is a means that Kane uses to characterise Samba. Achebe too shows a dialectics of modernity and tradition in which Obi stimulates a difficult cultural identity. But basically, their visions are the same.

Pertaining to the compromise towards a global civilization, both authors show the advantages of hybridity first theorized by Bhabha and Senghor. There are positive aspects of the synthesis of cultures without any “counter-balance,” as Samba says. This is epitomized through the characters of the Knight (Samba’s father) and Isaac Okonkwo (Obi’s father). They represent the class of intellectuals who are accurate cross-breeds. They are among those who are at the crossroads of cultures. Nonetheless, there are not many differences in the form of the novels but rather in the way the African people fight for the survival of their cultures. In *Ambiguous Adventure*, it is the systematic resistance to western school whereas in *No Longer at Ease*, it is indirectly the rejection of Western cultural influences on the intellectuals.

In a nutshell, it is remarkable that the prospects raised on hybridity derive from its complex and various manifestations. This is what urges the concerned societies to develop different strategies. The opposition of the traditional camp to the modern one constitutes the backbone of the debate on universality and diversity or differences which are two main trends that today’s civilizations are faced with.

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