Diversity vs. Difference: A Critical Analysis of Hybridity and Cultural Identity Crisis in the Novels of Cheikh Hamidou Kane and Chinua Achebe

Alassane Abdoulaye DIA
Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis
Senegal

Abstract
Hybridity has been one of the most recurrent themes of the African fiction during and after the colonial period. It is one of the complex issues of postcolonial Africa as it was difficult for many Négritude writers, such as Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and Frantz Fanon, to find a common ground on what colonization bequeathed to Africa. Hence, Senghor (1977) came up with the oxymoron of “colonization as a necessary evil”. However, to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of colonization to Africans, in terms of impact, one should go further than expected to approve or dismantle Senghor’s position. The issues of cultural hybridity and identity crisis are still topical in African literature. Also, in the context of globalization, it is relevant to study the post-independence situation of African societies as represented by their early prominent and visionary writers such as Chinua Achebe from Nigeria and Cheikh Hamidou Kane from Senegal. Therefore, hybridity becomes a concern, through which writers address the dilemma of the African. They portray the intellectual who is entrapped in two different cultures and becomes alienated. The corpus of this article showcases this phenomenon through the characters of Obi Okonko in No Longer at Ease (1960) and Samba Diallo in Ambiguous Adventure (1962). Through a critical analysis and a post-colonial perspective, the article focuses on identity crisis, alongside the contentious debate over cultural diversity versus cultural difference, which is highly reflected in the novels investigated in the paper.

Keywords: African fiction, Cultural Crisis, Globalization, Hybridity, Identity Crisis

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1. Introduction

The periods, before and after independence, particularly from the early 1950s to the late 1960s, are turning points in the history of African literature. These periods were marked first by the beginning of the post-independence era characterized not only as a decisive but also a turbulent one because of the announcement of the end of colonization corroborated with the building of a new nation alongside the quest for a new identity, on the one hand, and the historical clash of cultures deeply delved into by writers, on the other hand, to address the issues I have mentioned altogether in their novels. In addition, many of the novels which appeared on the literary scene at that time, raised in their authors’ mind the zeal to give a realistic picture of Africa in the wake of the clash. This made a range of those novels classics of African literature. As such, the question of developing themes like culture, the quest for identity, parallel to the ideology of deconstructing the colonial discourse, dominated the African novel. Most of the works, published during that period, focused on the issue of colonization and its aftermath of which the clash of cultures is the most crucial.

With this historical background to the African fiction, the present paper investigates and analyzes, focusing on the fictional works of two prominent African writers; Cheikh Hamidou Kane (1962) and Chinua Achebe (1960), their holistic vision, predictions and, if any, solutions to the cultural crisis generated through the contact between Africa and Europe. It emphasizes, mostly, the notion of hybridity, conveyed in the novels under consideration, as the main process of the identity crisis. The paper aims to analyze, through a comparative approach, which enables to distinguish the similarities and dissimilarities between Kane’s and Achebe’s visions of global civilization. The arguments raised in the paper are supported with ideas of theorists of culture such as Léopold Sédar Senghor (1977), Homi K. Bhabha (1994), Jean Pierre Makouta-Mboukou (1980) and Joseph Ki-Zerbo (2004). It is believed that the such clash of cultures led to a dilemma first and then to a crisis.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Background

This study builds upon a critical analysis of the afore-mentioned 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 Africans, epitomized respectively in Ambiguous Adventure (1962) and No Longer at Ease (1960) by the 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 to the diagnosis. While analyzing the phenomenon of hybridity, one cannot dispense with the theme of colonization 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 western school. However, the heritage has been judged from different angles depending on the vision (positive or negative) one may have on it. Attempt has also been done to analyze the manifestations of hybridity, and the controversies over the issue, which gives birth to cultural diversity and difference as the crisis opposes Africa to Europe. The paper also attempts to show, through the novels under study, how the Africans have decided to accept or reject the global civilization.

3. Understanding the Concept of ‘Hybridity’

Hybridity has been defined in different ways by various scholars, but to put it in simple words, it is the fact of being cross-bred or living in-between two cultures. The concept of hybridity has been theorized from different viewpoints by many thinkers in the field of literature. Bill Ashcroft et al. (1995) claim that, ‘The 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’ (p. 55).
Homi K. Bhabha’s “The Third Space of Enunciation” is one of the most interesting theories about hybridity. In The Location of Culture (1994), Bhabha (cited by Ascroft et al. 1995) proposes “the Third Space as a solution to cultural difference”. His theory (cited by Ascroft et al. 1995) is the expression of the “Third Space” as a place of enunciation to experience multiculturalism through the concept of hybridity. 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 (1962) and No Longer at Ease (1960), one can notice that Kane and Achebe are not against the synthesis of cultures; but their concern is that Africans should be conscious of their identity and mind the return to the source. Therefore, the compromise is first to be rooted in one’s culture and opened 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 anticolonialists who radically reject the concept. Unlike Achebe, Kane depicts the colonial system in a harsh way by emphasizing its violent and military forces. However, he recognizes that it contributed to his training as an African intellectual who also regards himself as an eye-witness of the colonial scene. Kane (cited by Jean Getrey, 1999) acknowledges the fact that he has cut out the reality when he simply shows the materialist and Cartesian aspect of the West (p. 94). (Author’s translation). Kane and Achebe regard colonization as a relatively good thing despite its disadvantages. Showing his vision about that debate, Achebe (1975b) 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 (p. 57).

In this perspective, one can believe that Kane and Achebe have the same vision as Senghor (1977) who defends through an oxymoron that colonization is a “necessary evil”. The way it is accepted in the Diallobé country in Ambiguous Adventure (1962) and the Ibo land in No Longer at Ease (1960) is very strategic because, like many historians, these societies admit that colonization is an irresistible historical fact in Africa. The latter cannot refuse or resist it. The only solution that is possible is to accept it as a compromise but not as a defeat of their civilization in the building of a global culture. Achebe (1988) 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 (1962) [...] 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 (p. 52).

To support his position on the dialogue, Kane, (cited by Jean Getrey 1999.), adds that African people have been too much tempted to assimilate western culture or to deliberately turn their back to it. Whatever the attitude they adopt, it seems to him to be the worst thing that an African may have chosen (p.92). According to Senghor (1977), the global
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civilization’s base 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 theorists like Jean Pierre Makouta-Mboukou (1980) as a solution to cultural difference. So, African societies will inevitably 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 source. The building of the new civilization is to be forged as a global one that combines all the good things of each culture then merge through a process of hybridization.

Hybridity is a cultural instrument which can better set the dialogue between cultures. In so-doing, it echoes Senghor’s conception of the universal civilization (quoted by Jeune Afrique n°11 hors série, 2006):

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 take”, which will be born dialectically from the confrontation of all civilizations in particular (p.5), (Author’s translation)

It is true that cultures differ, but according to the twentieth-century’s civilization, they have to come into contact. They will live together within their differences. Therefore, the phenomenon of hybridity should normally be taken as the appropriate instrument for the cultural dialogue. This is definitely a historical and cultural heritage of the twentieth-century world’s civilization generated and experienced through the colonial system. This is the reason why the Diallobé, in Ambiguous Adventure (1962), have to understand the Most Royal Lady’s opinion in order to send their children to the new school. She believes that African people cannot avoid the clash of cultures. They should be flexible and aware of what western education means to them. She makes a strong statement:

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 (p.46).

The Most Royal Lady’s strategy – “to learn from them the art of convincing without being in the right” (p. 55)– 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 has 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 have 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. (pp. 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 the Most Royal
Lady’s ideas, Jean Pierre Makouta-Mboukou (1980) implies that hybridity is a kind of a death which makes sense only because there is 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 (p. 53). (Author’s translation)

The Most Royal Lady understands very well the wheel of history and she warns her people that the colonial system is an unfailing enterprise under any circumstance. Kane’s prediction about the transition can be summed up through the preceding quotation that relates the Most Royal Lady’s concern. Her flexibility results in acquiring western culture, through school, which is the main factor of the synthesis. In sending their children to that school, one may conclude that they will accept to lose one part of their culture by adding aspects from another one. So, the children of the Diallobé are going to receive an ambivalent training which enables 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 cultures. But, they know that what they have inherited historically from colonization has to be domesticated and taken as an integral part of their cultures. It is an advantage for the building of a new world that they depict in their writings. One of the precious aspects of the heritage is the use and dominance of foreign languages in African literature, which gives it a hybrid character. These advantages of the synthesis urge the Senegalese and the Nigerian writers to postulate hybridity, as a double heritage, which enables Africans to be at the crossroads of cultures. This philosophy demonstrates their openness to modernity, but the ambivalence is to be handled very carefully as Kane and Achebe show it through the ideas of some characters.

The Ibo and Pulaar societies, which Achebe and Kane depict respectively, have to accept the cultural dialogue. However, the introduction of modernity, in the Pulaar society in Ambiguous Adventure (1962), does not proceed the same way as in the Ibo society in No Longer at Ease (1960). Nevertheless, the latter are conscious that the very transition occurred in their society. They have to integrate the modern world, which the narrator explains 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” (p. 9).

In this novel, 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 many 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 [...] 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 (p. 49).

This passage proves that Odogwu in No Longer at Ease (1960) and the Most Royal Lady in Ambiguous Adventure (1962) have the same ideas about the issue. They use a quite similar metaphor while explaining the “greatness of changes” (No Longer at Ease (1960) and “the tornado which announces the hibernation of the transition” (Ambiguous Adventure (1962).
4.1. Cross-cultural awareness and conflicts in the novels of Kane and Achebe

The idea, of being both open to other cultures and rooted in one’s own culture, is the identity of a modern person as a prototype of the third millennium’s civilization. Samba Diallo, in Ambiguous Adventure (1962), undertakes this mission and he is a “courier”, which he tries to defend in this statement: “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” (p.150).

Here, Kane’s hero adopts Makouta-Mboukou’s position (1980): “not to pretend to have an African or European identity, but to choose to be both of them” (p.48). However, this is what entraps him and relates hybridity to identity crisis. These corollary phenomena, in the third millennium world’s philosophy, were predictable and showcased some years ago in many African fictional works. A telling example is the Knight’s statement in Ambiguous Adventure (1962):

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 (pp. 79-80).

4.2. Notion of ‘Identity’ and Identity Crisis the Novels of Kane and Achebe

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 pre-requisites of the global civilization. In order to follow the new world’s tune, one of the African historians, Joseph Ki-Zerbo (cf. 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”. Joseph Ki-Zerbo (cf. Dani Kouyaté 2004) infers 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. 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, Elika Mbokolo (cf. Dani Kouyaté 2004) 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 have in their writings to prove that they are not apologists of cultural radicalism. They share the ideas of their contemporaries who are open-minded.

However, the tragic ending of Ambiguous Adventure (1962), caused by identity crisis, as Samba is totally metamorphosed and dies, does not mean that Kane has a negative vision on the question of hybridity. Despite the tragic ending of the novel, Kane is convinced that the synthesis is possible as Vincent Monteil (Preface of Ambiguous Adventure (1962) puts it:

The ending 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” (Author’s translation).

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, or
progress. It is the same in *No Longer at Ease* (1960). 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* (1960) or *Ambiguous Adventure* (1962) but also in Achebe’s *Arrow of God* (1964) in which 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 (p.55).

This passage points the fact that it was difficult for Africans to embrace the symbiosis of cultures which does not actually give positive prospects to some leaders like Thierno in *Ambiguous Adventure* (1962). They could only refuse it since the beginning; otherwise they would acquire it by force. Nevertheless, it does not hint that African people were not prepared for it or they were not aware of a new world civilization. The discussion, between Kane’s characters: Lacroix and the Knight in *Ambiguous Adventure* (1962), provides evidence that the compromise is imminent in as much 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[...]. 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 (pp. 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,” (p.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.” (p. 80).

This conversation is an allegory of the idea of creating a new world of technology and progress conceived in the “building of a future citadel”, which also stands for the global village. In this perspective, Jacques Chevrier (1987) qualifies the Knight as, “A positive actor who, *a posteriori*, ratifies the choice of the Most Royal Lady and he prophesizes the realisation of the global civilization which Senghor advocated in the “rendez-vous” of the give and take (p.125). (Author’s translation). According to the Most Royal Lady, Samba Diallo is a “courier”, the representative of the Diallobé in the “universal civilization”. Moriceau & Rouch (1983) comment on the role Samba Diallo plays as a grain or a “vanguard”. He is chosen among the elite to experience the fusion of cultures.

According to Rouch & Moriceau (1983), *Ambiguous Adventure* (1962) tells the itinerary of Samba Diallo by showing that he is a test, a “vanguard” chosen among the elite to try the adventure and to try to discover the secrets of the Whites” (p. 32). Next to Samba Diallo, who is referred to as a “courier”, there is a typical example through whose character the synthesis is approached positively and accurately. It is The Knight, Samba Diallo’s father. Moriceau & Rouch (1983) pinpoint him as the character that has set an example and 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 [...] 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 (p. 24). (Author’s translation).

The Knight in Ambiguous Adventure (1962) and Isaac Okonkwo in No Longer at Ease (1960) are the fathers of the heroes. They are good prototypes of the concept of a modern men forged by the global civilization as perceived by both Kane and Achebe. They are the right hybrids who assimilate western culture in a positive sense and who, at the same time, preserve their culture and return to the source. Although Achebe portrays Isaac, former Nwoye in Things Fall Apart (1958) as an alienated African, in No Longer at Ease (1960), 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 visions of the notion of hybridity. Their visions are shared by other thinkers like J. John Muntu (1961) 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 (pp. 13-14).

It is remarkable that the compromise is dictated by the imminent dialogue of cultures. So, the agreement to embrace the new civilization does mean that it is totally profitable. It is not also obvious that one can be spared of the identity crisis. Some characters in the novels, like many theorists of culture, are against the compromise and they express it through categorical positions.

4.3. Resistance to ‘Hybridity’

This section conveys the idea that some Africans are still reluctant to accept the symbiosis and prefer to preserve their culture. This rejection of the other can be referred to as “resistance to hybridity”, which Omar Sougou (2002) introduces as follows:

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 (p.113).

In Ambiguous Adventure (1962) and No Longer at Ease (1960), 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 difference. 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 difference. In this vein, the two systems tend to vindicate each the negation of the other. In such case, it is important to know that although Kane and Achebe are exponents of the globalization of cultures, they admit that some social groups of their societies are reluctant to share their visions. In his speech, Achebe 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 can become one, as Kane himself believes, there is another reality of the very world. It is the diversity of cultures which makes difference and which prevails in our planet. For some postcolonial theorists, there is much interest in the theme of universality, which may have influenced many positions. This viewpoint is supported by Bill Ashcroft et al. (1995) when they argue that 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” (p. 55). This is the reason why Kane and Achebe put forward, in their narratives, that cultural difference is a reality of the planet. It is the first obstacle to the global civilization advocated by Senghor: ‘the rendez-vous of the give and take” (1977). As a result, Kane represents his society’s radical opposition to the establishment of western school in their land. The opposition to western school in Ambiguous Adventure (1962), by people like Thierno, is the first sign 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 of identity becomes systematic because the cultural crisis turns out to be evident from then on. The issue is well-seized by Kane, in as much 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 we have still enough force to resist the school, and enough substance to remain ourselves” (p. 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 in three main facts. First, the Diallobé radically reject western school, which is the main factor of cultural interaction, because they are deeply rooted in their traditional values which they want to preserve. Second, their society is an aristocratic one which is more motivated and regulated by the worship of God, hence their double traditions: the aristocracy and the Islamic religion. For Thierno, his religion is pure and excludes any other mixture. This is why he is highly regarded in his society’s decision-makers. 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 in Ambiguous Adventure (1962):

“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” (p. 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?” (p. 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 is 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 he 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 and he witnesses the failure of the synthesis. Jean Getrey (1999) 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 (pp.53-4). (Author’s translation)

After the misadventure of the Fool in Europe, he returns back 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 novel, Les Gardiens du Temple (1995). 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 as the defender of tradition. The second role he plays, like a conservative, turns out to be a solution to the role he was assigned, to assimilate western culture. This contradiction is emblematic of the significant return to the source suggested by the writers. Jean Getrey (1999) justifies the attitude of the Fool as absolute hostility to civilization which appoints him as the spokesman of the African tradition.

In either society, in the writers’ novels under study, it is the conservatives who are against the global civilization. Although they recognize somewhere that a cultural compromise 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 rationale 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 do. 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 the advocates themselves postulate as a fear for the success of the synthesis. Achebe (1988) explains 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 (p. 52).

Achebe is a realistic novelist who is preoccupied by his vision of the world in relation to its reality as a subject matter, because what he proposes may be in contradiction to the realities of his society. Kane has similar feelings regarding the doubt about a successful synthesis. On the contrary, he does not manifest it as explicitly as Achebe does in the above statement. But he is convinced that cultural hybridity is a pre-requisite of the third millennium’s policy to integrate the global civilization. Although it is not a success in Ambiguous Adventure (1962), in his second novel, Les Gardiens du temple (1995), he evokes
the same topic to show his concern 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 a cultural crisis. Hence, Samba dies and 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, Les Gardiens du temple (1990) 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.

4.4. Comparing and contrasting the novels with reference to resistance to ‘Hybridity’

In comparison with No Longer at Ease (1960), 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 (1960), there is a rejection of the synthesis of
cultures. But, it is different from that in Ambiguous Adventure (1962). What is common in the
stories is that both the Pulaar and the Ibos are conservative, notwithstanding their division in
two opposed camps, justifying the presence of the modernists but these ones are less
influential.

The difference of the stories, on 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 back to
western values that are taken from the new school supposed to be problematic to the
authentic African culture. The main problem here resides in the African societies portrayed in
Ambiguous Adventure (1962) and in No Longer at Ease (1960) as radical ones. Hence, the
social norms are restricted to three main characteristics: aristocracy – for the Diallohé –
democracy, and religion.

Definitely, it is Kane’s story, which better explains the way western school is rejected
in the former French colonies like Senegal, embodied in the representation of the Diallohé
country. As an example, Kane has more explicitly tackled the problem of the settlement of
the white colonizer, who provoked the Diallohé to violently resist the invasion as a military,
economic, and cultural domination.

The difference in content is also due to the context. Kane describes the early days of
the European invasion in Africa to establish a new school to spread western civilization. This
school is different from the Islamic/Koranic one, that the Diallohé preserve as both means of
education and worship. Kane’s novel is also a bildungsroman that shows gradually Samba’s
itinerary up to his tragic end caused by identity crisis. Achebe does not insist on the first stage
of the colonial issue as is the case in Ambiguous Adventure (1962). When the story in No
Longer at Ease (1960) begins, Obi the protagonist is between 24 and 25 years old, and even a
university graduate. So, in this context, the problem of the new school, is run over in the
thematic evolution. It was time to decide whether or not to send Obi to England for further
studies. Conversely, the choice to make on Obi’s departure is not as complex as that to decide
to send Samba to the new school at the age of six. This is not indeed where Achebe puts the
stress on. 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 radical opposition of Obi’s community to his marriage
with Clara (an outcast). It does not go along with some disregards to the tradition. The
president of the Umuofian Progressive Union in No Longer at Ease (1960) rebukes Obi for
turning his hybridization to “denaturalization”. He uses a metaphor to highlight the identity
crisis that Obi has undergone: “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 anthill. It is still on the ground” (p. 146).

In this perspective, it is worth specifying that tradition does not only appear in the novel as a leitmotiv but also in other novels in which the African tradition is firmly against the intrusion of western culture. The Ibo clan’s objection to Obi’s marriage is a point worth noting. It is a social case, and a central point, in Achebe’s novel as regards the phenomenon of hybridity. It conveys the idea that Ibo people are against values that are not in conformity with their tradition. It is an expression of the authenticity of African culture/civilization which Achebe and Kane try to reflect in their narratives. The rejection of the global civilization is achieved through the affirmation of an authentic African identity deeply rooted in its religious and traditional values. This is why Obi’s marriage is rejected by the whole clan. For them, the 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 they are forbidden to marry the free-born. This is the reason why the Obi -Clara case is conceived as a tribal taboo in the Ibo land.

The categorical interdiction of the marriage reminds the reader of the characteristics of Obi’s society: aristocracy and democracy. Clara, whom Obi loves too much, is a daughter of Josia Okeke. Therefore, tradition forbids an Osu to marry a free-born. The rejection of the marriage exemplifies that the attachment of the Ibos, to their cultural values, is fundamental. Ali Mazrui (1986) 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” (p. 239). These values are also evocative of the message that Achebe and Kane give to the intellectual, the return to the source even if one considers himself to be a cultural hybrid. This is the act done by Obi’s society. Much of its symbolism is exemplified by Isaac Okonkwo, Obi’s father. He has revisited the 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 African and the present modern intellectual 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.

There is a contradiction between Obi’s clan’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, then by many theorists as a solution to cultural differences; but Achebe’s remark is that diversity is a serious obstacle to the cultural exchange.

5. Conclusion

There are many common points in Kane’s and Achebe’s visions. First, the manifestation of hybridity is almost the same. Kane shows how Samba the protagonist is entrapped in his “ambiguous adventure” before he endeavours 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 portray Samba. Achebe shows rather a dialectic of modernity and tradition in which Obi stimulates a difficult cultural identity, but in any case, their visions are similar. Pertaining to the cultural awareness, and the compromise towards a global civilization, both writers have shown blatant evidences of the advantages of hybridity first theorized by Homi Bhabha (1994) and Senghor (1977). There are positive aspects of the synthesis of cultures without any “counterbalance” as Samba says. This is epitomized through the characters of the Knight (Samba’s father in Ambiguous Adventure (1962) and Isaac Okonkwo (Obi’s Father in No
Longer at Ease (1960). They represent the class of intellectuals who are accurately cross-bred. One can also call them epitomes of Kane and Achebe.

To sum up, 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 (1962), it is the systematic resistance to western school whereas in No Longer at Ease (1960) it is indirectly the rejection of western cultural influences on the intellectual. In a nutshell, it is remarkable that the prospects raised on hybridity derive from its complex and various manifestations, which urges the concerned societies to develop different strategies to survive culturally. The opposition of the traditional camp to the modern one constitutes the backbone of the debate on universality and diversity vs. difference. These are trends that current civilizations are faced with today with regard to the phenomenon of globalization.

About the Author:
Alassane Abdoulaye DIA works as English Language Instructor in Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis, Senegal and is working on his Ph. D in Comparative Literature (African & African-American literatures). He holds two Master’s degrees: 1) in Literature & 2) in Civilization. He has also participated in various academic and international programs and has written research articles on African Literature & Civilization, Comparative literature, and Cultural studies both in French and English.
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