Volume: 7 / N°: 1 (juin 2020), p 591-610 | **Almodawana**

Biblical Archetypes and the Representation of the West as a "Demonic Other" in Ama Ata Aidoo's Our Sister Killjoy

محاكاة نماذج من قصص الكتاب المقدس لشيطنة الغرب في "أختنا هادمة اللذات" للروائية "أما اتا آيدو":

قراءة نقدية أسطورية للرواية

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Received: 27/08/2019 *Accepted: 2020/04/02* *Published:30/06/2020*

Abstract:

In this paper, an attempt is made to offer an archetypal reading of Ama Ata Aidoo's semi-biographical novel Our Sister Killjoy by relating her appropriation of the archetypal patterns from the biblical narrative to the castigation of the West as an embodiment of evil. This stereotypical representation of the West is partly achieved through her symbolic reference to the biblical story of the "Fall from Grace" on the one hand and the explicit condemnation of the Western degenerate culture which naturalises homosexuality that was practised by the dwellers of the biblical city of Sodom on the other. It is indeed the German woman Marija who almost causes the novel's heroine Sissie to "fall from grace" by inciting her to adore Western commodities and thereby seducing her into a lesbian relationship. Also, through the Sissie's sojourn in Europe, Aidoo satirises the idealistic view of the West that compares it to paradise. In sum, by representing the West as a "demonised other" through the redeployment of the biblical archetypes in this novel, Aidoo kills two birds with one stone: indicting Africa's neo-colonial domination by the West and inviting Africans to take part in the process of regenerating their continent.

Keywords: *Archetypal Criticism, Biblical Archetypes, Representation of the West, Ama Ata Aidoo, Our Sister Killjoy.*

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ملخص:

يهدف هذا المقال إلى دراسة دور محاكاة الروائية "أما أتا آيدو" لنماذج قصصية من الكتاب المقدس في شيطنة الغرب في روايتها الأولي "أختنا هادمة اللذات" والغرض من شيطنتها للغرب هو تقديم خطاب مناهض للإستعمار الجديد في قارتها الإفريقية. تجدر الإشارة على أن الرواية تحتوي على مشاهد مشابهة لقصص من الإنجيل منها قصة أكل سيدنا آدم عليه السلام من الفاكهة المحرمة و كذلك قصة قوم سيدنا لوط عليه السلام في قرية سدوم و كل هذه النماذج ترمز إلى مدى استعمال الغرب لأساليب شيطانية من أجل ضمان هيمنته على إفريقيا، ورغم نجاح الشخصية الألمانية "ماريا" الممثلة للعالم الغربي في إغواء الشخصية الغانية "سيسي" للأكل من فاكهة البرقوق و التي ترمز إلى الفاكهة المحرمة إلا أن ''سيسي'' لم تقع في شراك "ماريا" التي حثتها على فعل قوم لوط و هذا ما جعل "سيسي" التي أصبحت تكنى بأختنا هادمة اللذات تحفز الأفارقة في أوروبا الذين يسعون وراء أهواءهم على العودة إلى قارتهم الأم من أجل بناءها.

كلمات مفتاحية: النقد الأسطوري، النماذج القصصية من الكتاب المقدس، شيطنة الغرب، "أما أتا آيدو"،"أختنا هادمة اللذات".

INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to offer an archetypal reading of Ama Ata Aidoo's debut novel *Our Sister Killjoy*. To this end, a link is established between the author's appropriation of the biblical archetypes and the way she represents the West in her novel. Indeed, by considering the references that Aidoo explicitly or implicitly makes to the bible in her work, the West is presented as a "demonised other" who is behind the predicament of the African people during the neo-colonial period, in general, and who tempts the educated Africans, including the novel's main character Sissie, to embrace the materialistic culture to the detriment of their cultural identity and their community's moral values,

in particular. As will be seen later, the relationship between a virtuous Africa and a demonic West is allegorically represented by the friendship between Sissie and her German hostess Marija, who nearly causes Sissie to "fall from grace". Once in Europe, Sissie fails in her first moral test as she appears to be infatuated with Western commodities. Yet she manages to "pass" her second moral test when she refuses to be involved in a homosexual relationship with Marija.

Aidoo is a Ghanaian woman writer who is usually identified with African Feminism. However, the latter is not, arguably, the writer's most concern in her aforementioned work since it addresses first and foremost the question of neo-colonialism in Africa. More precisely, Sissie, as her story unfolds, sets herself the goal of ending neo-colonial hegemony by inviting Africans abroad to return to their continent in the hope of rebuilding it. Yet some critics have vociferously argued that Sissie is concerned, among other things, with deconstructing the patriarchal order in her country. For example, Chiomo Opara contends that

> *Sissie's voice is so forceful in this novel that the whole work can be said to present her attack on racism, neo-colonialism and sexism. The reader becomes aware of the world-wide oppression of women, situated in the Ghanaian context by its author writing towards an ideal of women's autonomy.*[1]

However, our focus in this paper is not to confirm or disconfirm the view that Sissie represents feminist consciousness. After all, feminist consciousness is not a matter of all or nothing. More importantly, Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* has been often taken to task for being a racist book as it elucidates "a reverse racism [that] result[s] from an inversion of colonial narratives [especially Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*]."[2] In general, a lot has so far been said about the racist discourse and the anti-neo-colonial rhetoric of the novelist in *Our Sister Killjoy*. On the other hand, to our knowledge, no researcher has seriously attempted to provide us with an archetypal reading of this novel.

This being so, as mentioned previously, this paper is chiefly intended to examine the so-called Aidoo's 'racism in reverse' (i.e.

showing that the Westerners embody societal degeneration and moral decay) that can be conveyed by the novelist's use of biblical archetypes. As will be discussed later, these archetypes are put in the service of creating a postcolonial discourse in which the colonialist thought that presents the West as an epitome of progress is deconstructed. If anything, this indicates that, unlike many other writers like Wole Soyinka and Ayi Kwei Armah, Aidoo does not use African myth in *Our Sister Killjoy* in order to communicate her futuristic vision of her continent.[3] The call for African regeneration by African expatriates that Sissie makes in the last part of the novel is more motivated by a cynical view of the role by West in bringing progress to her continent. Her sojourn in Europe has taught her that the West is identified with such evils and social vices as loneliness, materialism and moral decadence.

In other words, this paper aims at showing that, whether consciously or not, Aidoo in this novel uses some of the biblical archetypes that serve in the deconstruction of the myth of Euorpe as 'paradise and, even more so, in 'othering' the West as incarnation of the devil who is behind the African subjects ' descent into moral decay. While associating the West with the archetypal patterns that connote viciousness, Aidoo discredits the neo-colonial African elite's belief that associates the West with the biblical archetype that stands for idealism and virtue. More interestingly, these archetypes have been appropriated from the biblical master-narrative, and this provides further evidence that *Our Sister is Killjoy* is a postcolonial novel *par exvellence* because its author appropriates Western literary forms in a bid to attack the Western hegemonic discourse of colonisation and neo-colonisation.

Importantly, too, the biblical archetypes are used by the novelist to show how the West is viewed by the deracinated Africans, on the one hand, and how the actual condition of living in the West is perceived by Sissie who acts as a the author's surrogate commentator, on the other hand. If put differently, in this novel there is one archetype that idealises the West and there are two archetypes that demonise it. However, the archetype that serves in the idealisation of the West is called into question and ultimately refuted as the story of Sissie progresses. By contrast, the archetypes that tend to present Europe or the West as an incarnation of moral decadence are confirmed by the end of the story since they are used as arguments, among other

arguments, not only to justify Sissie's return to her homeland but also to urge other African expatriates to follow in her footsteps. That is to say, the stronger the relationship is made by the reader between some of the novelistic scenes in *Our Sister Killjoy* and the biblical archetypes, a more demonic image of the West will be developed in his mind.

To be more precise, as far as role of the biblical archetypes in the projection of the image of the West as a source of damnation rather than salvation for Africa in Aidoo's novel is concerned, we have to shed light on the following biblical archetypes: the notion of paradise, the story of the fall and the condemnation of homosexuality in the biblical narrative. To establish a link between the author's appropriation of the biblical patterns and her identification of the West with the inimical forces of neo-colonialism, an archetypal approach to literary criticism is adopted. The coming section aims at defining this approach.

What is Archetypal Criticism?

In general, archetypal criticism is a way of approaching a literary text by relating it or some of its components like symbols, narrative techniques and characters to myths and archetypes that can be found in ancient religious beliefs or sacred texts like the bible. For this reason, archetypal criticism and myth criticism are most often used interchangeably. As A.S. Kharbe points out, "Archetypal literary criticism is a type of critical theory that interprets a text by focusing on recurring myths and archetypes (…) in the narrative, symbols, images, and character types in a literary work."[4] That is to say, the role of the critic in the archetypal approach to literary analysis is to identify some mythical and archetypal elements in the text in the hope of giving them meaning and, whenever necessary, identifying the possible functions that they can perform in the literary text. Besides being used as symbols, the recurring myths and archetypes that the writer appropriate can communicate his ideological vision. For example, in his study of E.M. Forster's fiction, C.Y. Margan concludes that Forster uses classical myths and recurring archetypes of earth and nature in order to elucidate his vie w about the rootlessness and alienation of the modern man.[5] In this article, the link between Aidoo's deployment of recurring biblical archetypes in the novel in question and her ideological vision

of her continent will form the substance of the coming sections' discussion.

Historically speaking, many scholars see that by the publication of Northrop Frye's famous book *The Anatomy of Criticism* the archetypal approach to literary criticism has been established. But this approach has also been identified with Carl Gustav Jung whose *The Collective Unconscious* provides an exhaustive account of his views about the psychological source of the archetypal patterns in human cultures. Remarkably too, James G. Frazer through his reputed book *The Golden Bough* has largely contributed to the rise of this critical approach in the twentieth century. Yet the work of Frye seems to have overshadowed his predecessors. As far as this point is concerned, Irene Rima Makaryk puts it as follows:

> *It is important to recognize that [Frye] disengaged the concept of the literary archetype from its anthropological and psychological beginnings. For him Frazer's work is a study of the ritual basis of naïve drama and Jung's work makes possible an understanding of the dream basis of naïve romance. In learning from either of these pioneering thinkers, according to Frye, the critic need not be concerned with ultimate sources in primitive ritual or a primordial unconscious, nor with questions of historical transmissions.*[6]

Also, the recent contribution of Joseph Campbell in this field is undeniable. Campbell is primarily notorious for his focus on the quest motif of the mythical heroes. Also, in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* he establishes a firm relationship between myth and dream especially when he says that " dream is the personalised myth; myth is the personalised dream"[7] The critic in the archetypal approach to literary analysis considers the text to contain some mythical elements or archetypal patterns that are not purely created by the author but are rather redeployed by him. For instance, the literary archetypes in the postcolonial literary tradition are supposed to have an ideological function or serve a particular discourse such as discrediting colonial or neo-colonial hegemony. In other words, the postcolonial author does not appropriate or deploy the archetypes gratuitously.

It must be stressed that the word archetype in his article is used with its most general sense. Hence, it is not to be defined solely in the Jungian sense to mean as a recurring myth or symbol originating from the people's collective unconscious. Our interest in this paper in the archetypes including symbols, images, or subplots which are rooted in the biblical stories and which have been redeployed by Aidoo in *Our Sister Killjoy* to deconstruct the colonial myth of Europe as paradise and to offer an exposé of the demonic forces of neo-colonialism. Formulated differently, the biblical archetypes in this novel are part of the postcolonial rhetoric that casts the West as a source of damnation rather than salvation for the Africans in the age of neo-colonialism.

Despite being one of the recognisable approaches to literary analysis, archetypal criticism has rarely been used in the study of postcolonial fiction. This could be attributed to a number of reasons. First, archetypal criticism today is not as famous as, say, Marxism, Feminism, or Psychoanalysis. This accounts in part for the fact that this approach to literary criticism is not included by M. A. R. Habib in his book *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present* in the list of the major literary theories of the twentieth century.[8] Furthermore, this is in tune with Kharbe's comment when he says that archetypal criticism "is no longer widely practised, nor have there been in major developments in the field."[9] Secondly, the archetypal approach to literary criticism has fallen into disfavour following the rise of such theories as Postmodernism and Postcolonialism. Last but not least, Postcolonial writers, in general, are fundamentally concerned with the revival of their indigenous cultures and hence they tend to pay less attention the Western mythical archetypes.

After explaining in brief why the critic in the archetypal approach to literary study must be concerned with identifying the archetypes that he finds in the works of fiction, it is apposite now to look at the biblical archetypes that Aidoo deploys in *Our Sister Killjoy* and the ideological purposes that these archetypes purport to attain.

Paradise

The first biblical archetype that the reader comes across in *Our Sister Killjoy* is without doubt the notion of paradise. Interestingly, too, this notion is mentioned with respect to the depiction of the West . However,

it is neither the narrator nor Sissie who uses it to describe the West; rather, the West is compared to paradise by an obsequious young man called Sammy, who is fascinated by its civilisation and culture. By using this archetype, he presents Europe or the West in general in utopian terms. During the party where lavish dinner and expensive European wine are offered and which is organised by the German ambassador in Accra before Sissie's trip to Europe, Sammy tries to convince her that "going to Europe was altogether like a dress rehearsal for a journey to paradise" (*Our Sister Killjoy*, p. 9). It occurs to Sissie's mind that he is just invited to the party I order to "sing the wonders of Europe" (*Our Sister Killjoy*, p. 9). Sammy, thus, is one of the "gifted intellectuals who ae blinded by the dazzling light of Europeans' promises and utopia."[10]

The word "paradise" which is a biblical archetype summarises Sammy-like intellectuals' idealistic view about Europe and the West at large. Sissie, on the other hand, does not seem to accept the view of Sammy who sees Europe through rose-coloured glasses. As Brenda Cooper puts it, "Sissie, not surprisingly, reacts to Sammy's performance with discomfort."[11] In fact, by evoking the notion of paradise while introducing Europe to Sissie, he does not simply imply that there is an abundance of food and all sorts of pleasures in the European continent but he also indicates that the Western culture is superior to the African mode of living. In Brenda Cooper's opinion, "Sammy functions as an image of the modern African who has succumbed to the dazzling lure of Western commodities, mistaking superior Western material wealth for moral and cultural superiority."[12] Sammy is thus one of the characters in the novel who try to persuade Sissie to undervalue the African culture and to seek a self-fulfilling existence through the embrace of the Western civilizational paradigms.

In contrast, as Yogita Goyal aptly puts it, "Sissie will find in Europe not paradise but a nightmare."[13] As the story unfolds, Sissie's political consciousness grows by moving from the state of innocence to the state of acquiring ideological maturity that allows her to see life in the West as it actually is rather than as it should be. That is why, her journey to Europe could be described, in the words of Kofi Owusu, as an "internalised journey from innocence to experience."[14] The more realistic her view of the West is, the stronger her call for returning home

in the hope of building new African nations will be. Thus, it is not surprising that the Sammy's comparison of the West to the biblical archetype of paradise is refuted by Sissie by the end of the novel. If Europe were paradise, Sissie would never make a strong call for the African expatriates to go back home. It is indeed Sissie rather than Sammy who acts as the mouthpiece of the writer in this work.

Sissie's "Fall from Grace"

Nevertheless, Sissie's task of refuting Sammy's view that Europe is a paradise-like land has not been so easy because she has, at first been extremely fascinated by the over-abundance of food in Germany. But what makes us believe that there is some analogy between the biblical story and Aidoo's novel is that much like the story of Adam in the Book of Genesis, Sissie's stay in "paradise" (symbolised by the abundance of food in Germany) is spoilt by the presence of a temptress who happens to be her German hostess Marija. Even more so, Sissie, like Adam, is tempted to eat the fruit that causes her to "fall from grace". What follows in this section is an attempt to explain how Sissie falls from grace as soon as she eats from "the forbidden tree".

To begin with, instead of staying in the youth hostel, Sissie is invited repeatedly to Marija's house, where she is at once impressed by the abundance of food and surprised by the white people's tendency to eat chilled food. More noticeably, Sissie is attracted to the succulence of the German fruit, most notably, the plums. The latter are indeed introduced by the author as a source of personal and gluttonous temptation for "Our Sister" (or Sissie's nickname). However, Sissie fails in her first moral challenge in the European land. As noted elsewhere, "Sissie's desire for these foreign fruits appears to be her undoing."[15] These plums are viewed by many critics as a biblical archetype deployed by the novelist in order to warn the Africans against the danger of being infatuated with everything Western. For example, Yogita Goyal argues that "[t]he plums stand in for the famous apple of the Garden of Eden, as Sissie finds herself in a seemingly idyllic pastoral, a truly romantic setting."[16] The idyllic and pastoral setting that makes Sissie's stay in Marija's house more comfortable is described by the novel's narrator in the following manner: "An ancient ruined castle at the edge of a / Brooding pine forest, on the / Bank of a soft flowing

river that / Sparkles silver / Under the late-night / Sun" (*Our Sister Killjoy*, p. 41).

In spite of having been object of a racist gaze upon her arrival to Germany, Sissie appears to have forgotten about this incident as her mind is now captivated by the flavour of the German fruit. It must be further stressed that she did not enjoy the food offered to her during the cocktail part that was organised in the German embassy in her home country before her departure for Europe. In Ranu Samantrai's view, Sissie's "inability to enjoy [the European food at the party] signals not its inherent lack, but its obvious function as mediation between herself and those who wish to impress upon her the wonders of Europe."[17] So what has changed in her character so that she begins to enjoy the European food? The narrator of the novel makes us aware that

> *It was midsummer and the fruit stalls were overflowing. She [Sissie] decided that being fruits, she liked them all, although her two loves were going to be pears and plums. And those two she gorged herself. So she had good reason to be fascinated by the character of Marija's plums. They were of a size, sheen and succulence she had not encountered anywhere else in those foreign lands*. (*Our Sister Killjoy*, p.39)

It is also interesting to discuss why the second part of the novel where Sissie is shown to be staying in Germany is entitled "Plums." Perhaps it is the author's way of saying that Sissie is more fascinated with the plums in Germany than with something else. And if the plums symbolise the forbidden fruit in the biblical narrative, this indicates that the African subject can fall from grace once he is attracted to Western commodities.

In fact, the scene of eating the fruit with orgasmic pleasure is in fact the only instance in the novel where Sissie's act is driven by a biological desire rather than by a wise thinking that defines her character in last section of the novel. In this scene, Sissie runs the risk of losing her ideological maturity that she has gained when she was subject to a racist assault in the town of Frankfurt. Sissie did not enjoy the European food when she was in Ghana because she did not believe in the neo-colonial elite's belief in the myth of Europe as paradise. By contrast, by inviting her to eat plums, Marija succeeds to some extent

in making Sissie believe in this myth In this regard, James M. Ivory interestingly observes that

> *Aidoo suggests that Sissie's overindulgences in these fruits develop in part due to their foreign character. And while Sissie will later criticise those "been-tos" who refuse to return home, here, she experiences the allure of foreignness*[18].

Thus, the subsection in the novel in which Sissie is shown to eat the fruits with greed causes her to "fall from grace", however temporarily. Despite the fact that she develops an anti-Western neurosis as she finally urges her compatriots to return to Ghana, Sissie does not prove to be strong in resisting Marija's temptation on this occasion. And this is clearly shown in this novelistic passage: "So she sat, our sister, her tongue caressing the plump berries with skin-colour almost like her own, while Marija told her how had selected them specially for her, off the single tree in the garden" (*Our Sister Killjoy*, pp. 39-40).

The novel's narrator's mention of "the single tree in the garden" is arguably reminiscent of the biblical story of the "Forbidden Tree" or the "Tree of Knowledge" in the Garden of Eden. As Ivory notes, "the single and isolated tree points the reader to the Biblical tree of knowledge."[19] As she has eaten from the plums which are the metaphor for the forbidden fruit in the Biblical narrative, Sissie, in Marija's view, displays some readiness to indulge in sexual pleasures, and this what explains the fact that Marija dares to seduce Sissie into a homosexual relationship. That Sissie does not resist the succulence of the plums, this could mean that she would not resist the temptation of being involved in a sexual relationship.

Hadn't Sissie being easily tempted by Marija when she offered her food, namely, plums, Marija would have never attempted to implicate Sissie in a lesbian relationship.. If anything, by eating from "the forbidden tree", Sissie "falls from grace" since her moral integrity is at stake, .i.e., she will be seduced into a practice that she violently condemns. Therefore, whilst eating Marija's plums, Sissie is not aware that she is the plum, so to speak, in the eyes of Marija. As James Ivory remarkably points out, "Sissie's reaction to or desire for these fruits,

which are identified with her own body (…) allows us to witness her vulnerability."[20]

Ironically, the only woman character in Aidoo's story who acts as a temptress is called Marija, which is the German name for Mary who symbolises religious and moral purity in the biblical narrative. In effect, many postcolonial writers have re-inscribed the biblical stories in order to serve their ideological discourse such as underlining the discrepancy between the colonial project that is based on the glittering concepts of salvation and enlightenment and the colonial realities that are marked by moral bankruptcy, cultural degradation and all forms of exploitation. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's parodying of the biblical master-text in his first Gikuyu-language novel *Devil on the Cross* is a case point. In this novel, he completely changes the Christian story of crucifixion by telling a similar story of how devil, who happens to be dressed in white man's clothes, is crucified by the oppressed black masses and later saved by their black oppressors. In Ngugi's novel, the white man pretends to be a saviour, but he is actually a demon. The character Marija in Aidoo's novel seems to fit into this category, though she is not demonised in the way white characters are being so in Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross*. She does not host Sissie for purely philanthropic purposes. Nevertheless, she is a victim in some sense. More specifically, according to Paula Morgan, Marija's "positioning is contradictory" because "she is both co-conspirator and victim."[21] She suffers psychologically because she lives in a society that is both individualistic and patriarchal. She invites Sissie to her house because she wants to end her sense of loneliness as she has for long been abandoned by her husband.

Generally, Aidoo, by the appropriation of the biblical archetypes in her work, tries to subvert the colonialist discourse that tends to equate whiteness with goodness and blackness with evil. In other words, in this discourse the white man is presented as an angelic subject; by contrast, the black man is shown to be a demonic subject. This discourse is summarised in the following passage "Angels are/ Western/ White/ English, to be precise" while "Lucifer, poor black devil" (*Our Sister Killjoy*, p. 27). In Aidoo's novel, the West is "theoretically" compared to paradise but the Western people who are represented by the character

Marija are shown to cause the Africans to "fall from grace" in a way that is reminiscent to the story of the Fall in the Book of Genesis.

While being seduced by food, Sissie is not easily seduced by Marija's sexual embrace, and to this point we now turn.

Homosexuality

Aidoo uses another archetype which is taken from the biblical story in order to show the West is not the bringer of salvation or the "angel of progress," to borrow from Anne McClintock. We are referring here to the same-sex relationships that are mentioned in the bible with reference to the story of people of Sodom. However, one may argue that same-sex relationships should not be always taken from biblical stories. But in archetypal criticism, as mentioned previously, plots and subplots in works of fiction are assumed to be re-enactments of archetypal stories or ancient myths. Secondly, Sissie uses the biblical concept of "Sodomy" to bitterly condemn Marija's sexual advances towards her. She indeed explains to Marija that homosexual acts are not simply castigated as bush practices, as it is shown below:

It is not just b-u-s-h
But a C-r-i-m-e
A S-i-n
S-o-d-o-m-y (*Our Sister Killjoy*, p. 67)

In other words, by using words such as "sin" and "sodomy", it is obvious that Sissie makes use of her Christian teaching in order to denounce homosexual acts. While she does not relate her seduction by Marija to eat the plums to the biblical story of the fall, she uses the word "sodomy" which has its origin in the biblical narrative in order to convince Marija that homosexuality is a condemnable practice by all moral standards. Sissie's immediate reference to the biblical word in the second instance is mainly due to the fact that homosexuality is, according to Sissie, obviously a vicious act. But this does not deny the fact that offering food could be a means of seduction. Hence, Sissie is to be blamed for not being cautious enough when she is offered food in Marija's "castle".

Though she has eaten from "the forbidden" tree, Sissie refuses to enjoy the forbidden pleasures of an interracial same-sex alliance. It must be further emphasised that Sissie is on the verge of succumbing to

Marija's sexual temptations, and it is only when she recalls the biblical story of the people of Sodomy that she starts condemning violently Marija's desire to be involved in a lesbian relationship with her. At first, she imagines herself to be a black man who is having a "delicious love affair" with a white woman. But she soon realises that it is act of sodomy. Not only does the novelist relate Marija's homosexuality to the biblical story of the city of Sodom and Gomorrah through her mouthpiece Sissie but also makes a strong connection between this scene and colonialism through the novel's narrator. In this vein, Brenda Cooper argues that

> *Marija is lonely and isolated while caring for [her] baby. She seeks warmth, solace and friendship with Sissie to whom she eventually reaches out in a lesbian embrace. Aidoo suddenly lumps Marija with the colonisers then goes on to suggest that the motivation behind colonialism was just this kind of emptiness and lack that aberrant and frustrated individuals sought to overcome in Africa.*[22]

Therefore, the white colonisers, who are represented by Marija in this novel, are identified with the people of Sodom rather than the Christian saviours as they repeatedly allege. Also, Sissie's sojourn in Europe reminds her of her country's colonial past.

The question that looms large is: why does Sissie decide to return home at the end of the novel? Certainly, there are many reasons for her decision, but the most important reason is the stark contrast that she finds between the idealistic view of the West and the real condition there. The novelist uses the biblical archteypes to attack the idealism upon which the colonial discourse is based on the one hand and expose the true face of colonialism on the other. The biblical notion of paradise that is mentioned in the first section of Aidoo's work proves to be no more than a colonialist myth about Europe and the evocation of the biblical concept of sodomy lays bare the actual relationship between Marija and Sissie who represent the ex-coloniser and the ex-colonised respectively.

More significantly, one has to argue that Sissie after frustrating experiences in Germany and England becomes the killjoy in the novel, and hence confirming the novel's title. In fact, her earlier view about the West which could be reinforced by the novel's narrator's phrase

"Good night Africa, Good morning Europe" (*Our Sister Killjoy*, p. 11) is shattered by her stay in Europe to the point that she becomes suspicious about prospects of the successful heart transplant of the white doctor in South Africa. Due to the lack of her sense of self-fulfilment during her sojourn in Germany and later England, she does not see this prodigious medical achievement of the Western science in a positive light. Therefore, as her story develops, Sissie becomes "our sister killjoy". Furthermore, there are other instances in the novel where she can be duly regarded as a "killjoy". The following quote explains in some detail these instances:

> *The title [Our Sister Killjoy] implies that Aidoo, through her mouthpiece Sissie, does not have any intention of adoring the European colonizers and their culture. On the other hand, Sissie is a "killjoy" who spoils the fun of the European self-esteemed colonizers who try to impress her with the European civilization and its openness to difference. She kills the joy of her German friend, Marija, as she indifferently rejects Marija's odd sexual advances, reflecting upon the miserable life of European women who are suffering from loneliness and self-alienation. On the other hand, Sissie is a killjoy to the African self-exiles who are self-deceptively infatuated with European culture and forget their homelands.*[23]

Obviously, Sissie's ideological maturity grows as the story unfolds. She is no longer the "naïve" heroine who is not conscious of how life in the white man's land looks like. Once in Europe, she succumbs to Marija's temptation on one occasion and resists the German housewife's temptation on another. It could be contended that she fails to resist Marija's temptation when she fails to compare her eating of the plums picked up from the tree in Marija's garden to biblical story of the fall. She does not recognise that the plums might be the "forbidden fruit" that one can read about in the biblical text. On the other hand, she ceases to be tempted by Marija's sexual advances once she recalls the city of Sodom in the biblical narrative.

In other words, her reading of the bible allows her to see the sinfulness of the same-sexual relationships, besides the fact they are

obviously unnatural. By relating Marija's sexual embrace to the biblical story of the city of Sodom and Gomorrah, her rejection of Marija's sexual desire for her body becomes more violent. That is, by remembering this biblical story, she acts a killjoy to Marija. It seems as though she has redeemed herself by refusing Marija's sexual overtures. Indeed, the actions that she takes and the decisions that she makes after her rejection of Marija's homosexual embrace display a strong commitment to her continent. After all, she will no longer see the West in bright terms

But Sissie has already been made aware that Europe is not the paradise that Sammy talked about. Once in Frankfurt , she was pointed at by a German girl in the German language as " **das Schwartze Madchen**" (*Our Sister Killjoy*, p. 12, originally written in bold). This German expression means in English a black girl. This scene makes her lose her racial innocence since she reacts in a conspicuously negative way by starting thinking in racial terms. Her development of racial consciousness that she is black and the Germans are white is clearly demonstrated in the he following passage:

> *And it hit her. That all that crowd of people going and coming in all sorts of directions had the colour of the pickled pig parts that used to come from foreign places to the markets at home.*
> *Trotters, pig-tails, pig-ears.*
> *She looked and looked at so many of such skins together.*
> *And she wanted to vomit*. (*Our Sister Killjoy*, p. 12)

Nonetheless, her negative reaction to the racist assault can be justified since she is not the idealised heroine who can surpass her emotions and act perfectly all the time. Also, whilst serving to foreshadow "her later fetishization and sexualisation in West Germany," this scene "functions as [her] rite of initiation into West Germany society."[24] However, her violent condemnation of Marija's homosexuality has nothing with the development of her racial awareness. For her, homosexually is immoral in Christianity as well as in traditional Africa. But she implicitly alludes to the biblical story of the city of the Sodom in order to convince Marija of the sinfulness of this practice.

Sissie's understanding of the difference between the black race and the white race deepens gradually. At first, the Europeans are viewed

as "the other for her firmly-centred, African self."[25] Secondly, she fails to see that the other could be demonic since she does not recognise the enormous danger of being lured by the abundance of food in Europe. Lastly, she concludes that the Europeans could be the "demonic other" because Marija accepts or is forced to accept homosexuality which is violently condemned in the biblical narrative. Interestingly, after having been lured by Marija into an abominable homosexual relationship, Sissie refuses to eat the food that her "temptress" offers her. It seems as if she recognises at this moment that this food is the "forbidden fruit" that may prompt her to lose her moral values. In other words, she is now conscious of the danger of being infatuated with what is western.

In brief, Sissie's different experiences in Europe are so shocking to her. That is why she uses an angry language instead of being romantic in her "unsent love letter", which has been described as "confrontational" because it is laden with political messages. Gay Wilentz makes a strong connection between Sissie's frustrating experiences in Europe and her later militancy by saying that "Sissie's angry language and shocked thoughts reflect a young woman who has expected to find a cultural paradise yet sees something far different."[26] More precisely, Sissie's Afrocentric perspective that she develops in the last episode of the novel is partly due to her identification of the West with the demonic forces of neo-colonialism rather than with the myth of paradise.

Finally, we should not press too far the analogy between some stories in the biblical text and some subplots in Aidoo's novel. While being influenced by some of the biblical archetypes in her novelistic composition, Aidoo is not supposed to replicate biblical stories to create subplots in her work. For instance, despite her sinful act of inviting Sissie to a homosexual relationship, Marija is not seen by Sissie as a wicked woman. This is in line with Chris Dunton's argument as he says that "Aidoo's treatment of homosexuality is not unsympathetic" since "Sissie is able to empathize with Marija (…) rather than stigmatizing [her] as another phenomenon of degenerate and oppressive culture."[27] In fact, Sissie mainly attributes Marija's lesbian impulses to her pathetic psychological state that stems from her loneliness. Marija is a victim of her European culture. If this culture has proved to offer no sense of

self-fulfillment to the Europeans, how can it be a source of salvation for the Africans?

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion suggests that an archetypal reading of Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* allows us to conclude that Sissie, the heroine of the novel, has gone through experiences that are similar to some of the stories that are narrated in the Book of Genesis. The novel begins by showing that Sissie is "innocent" as she is not conscious of the moral challenges that she has to face in Europe. After all, she is made to believe that Europe is a land of plenty and a space for self-fulfilling existence.. Then, Sissie is seduced by Marija to eat the fruit picked up from the "forbidden tree". After eating the fruit, she "falls from grace" because she is momentarily infatuated with Western commodities. This infatuation stimulates Marija, who suffers from deep loneliness, to have a lesbian relationship with Sissie. However, Sissie restores her moral integrity and hence redeems herself by rejecting violently Marija's sexual embrace. This means that her "fall from grace" is short-lived. After having learned from her pathetic experiences in Europe, she becomes ideologically mature to the point that she can be described as the "killjoy" since she finally condemns the African expatriates who are still infatuated with Western commodities. Rather than remaining victims of the dazzling lures of the Western civilisation, these expatriates are urged to go back to Africa and get involved in the process of its regeneration. Therefore, instead of living in the European "paradise", they are asked to build a "paradise" in Africa. Aidoo in this novel deconstructs the myth of Europe as "paradise" because this myth tempts Africans to denigrate their blackness, and this calls to mind the acts of the devil who makes the evil seem good so that his followers will be tempted and eventually damned. Thus, rather than being portrayed as "paradise", the West in Aidoo's novelistic discourse is identified as the "demonised other" for it is associated with temptation and moral degeneration.

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[2] *Hildegard Hoeller. "Ama Ata Aidoo's Heart of Darkness". Research in African Literatures, Vol. 35, No. 1, Spring 2004, p. 131.*
[3] *for more understanding of the role of African myths in the development of the African writers' utopian views about their continent's future, see Isidore Okpewho. Myth in Africa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.*
[4] *A. S. Kharbe. English Language and Literary Criticism. Discovery Publishing House, 2009, p. 327.*
[5] *See Cumhur Yilmaz Magran. An Archetypal Analysis of E. M. Forster's Fiction. Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2004.*
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[11] *Brenda Cooper. The African Novel in English. London: James Currey, 1998, p. 121.*
[12] *Ibid., p. 121.*
[13] *Yogita Goyal. Romance, Diaspora and Black Atlantic Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 189.*
[14] *Kofi Owusu. "Canons Under Siege: Blackness, Femaleness, and Ama Ata Aidoo's Our Sister Killjoy". Callaloo, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1990, p. 351.*
[15] *James M. Ivory. "Self-Colonization, Loneliness and Racial Identity in Ama Ata Aidoo's Our Sister Killjoy or Reflections from a Black-eyed Squint". Ed. Martin A. Japtok. Postcolonial Perspectives on Women Writers. Lawrenceville: Africa World Press, 2003, p. 263.*
[16] *Yogita Goyal, op.cit., p. 194.*
[17] *Ranu Samantrai "Caught at the Confluence of History: Ama Ata Aidoo's Necessary Nationalism". Research in African Literatures, Vol. 26, No. 2, Summer 1995, p. 143.*

[18] *James M. Ivory, op. cit., p. 263.*
[19] *Ibid., p. 263.*
[20] *Ibid., p. 263.*
[21] *Paula Morgan. "The Risk of (Re)membering my Name: Reading Lucy and Our Sister Killjoy as Travel Narratives". Ed. Ada Uzoamka Azodo & Gay Wilentz. Emerging Perspectives on Ama Ata Aidoo. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1999, p.196.*
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[23] *Ibraheem N. A. Tagaddeen & Aisha Al-Matari. "Counter-discursive Strategies in Postcolonial African Novel: Revisiting the Peripheries in Ama Ata Aidoo's Our Sister Killjoy" El-Andalus Magazine for Social Sciences, Vol. 5, No. 20, December 2012, p. 12.*
[24] *Barbara Mennel. "Germany is Full of Germans Now: Germanness in Ama Ata Aidoo's Our Sister Killjoy and Chantal Akerman's Meeting with Anna". Ed. Magda Mueller & Patricia Herminghouse. Gender and Germanness: Cultural Productions of Nation. Berghahn Books, 1997,p. 241.*

[25] ***Ranu Samantrai "Caught at the Confluence of History: Ama Ata Aidoo's Necessary Nationalism". Research in African Literatures, Vol. 26, No. 2, Summer 1995, p. 143.***
[26] ***Gay Wilentz. "The Politics of Exile: Reflections of a Black-Eyed Squint in Our Sister Killjoy". Ed. Ada Uzoamka Azodo & Gay Wilentz. Emerging Perspectives on Ama Ata Aidoo. Trenton: Africa World Press, 1999, p. 83 .***
[27] ***Chris Dunton. "Wheyting be Dat?" The Treatment of Homosexuality in Africa Literature". Research in African Literatures, Vol. 20, No. 3, Autumn*** 1989, p. 432.

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