

Ama Ata Aidoo And The Akan Culture: A Critique Of *The Dilemma Of A Ghost And Anowa*

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ABSTRACT: The paper focuses on the relationship that exists between literature and culture through a critical analysis of Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost and Anowa*. This exercise has become necessary due to the misconception that some people usually have about literature and the way it relates to our lives. Thus there is sometimes the misconceived idea that literature is only imaginative, fictional, and creative but does not address issues related to everyday life. The paper corrects this misunderstanding about literature by exploring the literary qualities and cultural issues that have been highlighted by Aidoo in her two plays as well as relating such issues of mores and ethos to the Akan living culture.

Index Terms: culture, literature, feminism, marriage, extended family, child bearing

1 Introduction

To be able to come out with a convincing argument about how *literature* and *culture* are intertwined and how they affect every aspect of our lives, an effort has been made to look at the definitions of the two words first. The close relationship that exists between literature and culture has also been examined. The body of the paper is then devoted to an analysis of the forms of the two plays and the themes of culture and feminism. The discussion of the themes in the order in which they are mentioned above brings out aspects of Akan culture such as marriage in traditional Akan society, the importance of children in traditional Akan marriage, the role of the extended family system in traditional Akan setup, and the need for respect for the elderly in traditional Akan society. These aspects of Akan culture and their definitions as well as the way in which they are handled by the playwright in the two plays have been discussed in the order in which they are mentioned above. Finally, based on the cultural issues raised in the two plays and how they are handled by the dramatist, a conclusion has been drawn on how literature can be used as a medium for cultural expression, cultural change, and cultural identity. In his *Keywords*, Raymond Williams observes that culture is a word that is of a Latin origin. The immediate forerunner of the word is *cultura* which is derived from the root word *colere*, meaning "inhabit, cultivate, protect, honour, with worship." (Williams, 1983:87) *Colere* is a word that has gone through a lot of mutations in meaning and in writing in different languages since its creation. In modern social science, the dominant meaning of culture as given by Williams is:

(i) The independent and abstract noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development (ii) the independent noun, whether used generally or specifically, which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group or humanity in general and (iii) the independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. This seems often now the most widespread use: culture is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film. A Ministry of Culture refers to these specific activities, sometimes with the addition of philosophy, scholarship and history (Williams, 1983:90).

In *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold raises a lot of pertinent issues on the meaning, the scope, and benefit of culture to man. To Arnold, culture can be defined as:

A pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically, vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically (Arnold, 1932: 6).

To Arnold therefore, culture is simply "a study of perfection" (Arnold, 1932: 11) or a scientific passion for pure knowledge and the moral and social passion for doing good so as to make reason and the will of God prevail. Culture is related to religion in the sense that it seeks to make the will of God prevail just as religion seeks to do but is broader than religion since it does not contain the imperfections of religion such as fanaticism. Culture is also dynamic and not static since, according to Arnold, it is "debarred by a rigid invincible exclusion of whatever is new from getting acceptance for its ideas simply because they are new." (Arnold, 1932:46) The benefit of culture is to "make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely – nourished and not bound by them" (Arnold, 1932:70). In *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of Ghanaian Culture*, Peter Sarpong observes that culture is:

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The integrated sum-total of behavior traits that have been learned, and have not only been manifested and shared by members of a society, but have been passed on from one generation to another in an uninterrupted succession. It is important to note that culture is learned and that it does not depend on inborn instincts or flexes or any other biologically inherited forms (Sarpong, 1974: viii).

For the purpose of this paper, emphasis has been laid on the second meaning of culture as given by Raymond Williams which is "a particular way of life of a people". Akan culture in this context will therefore mean a particular way of life of Akans in Ghana. Having settled on the definition of culture to be used in this paper, we will discuss the meaning of literature in the following paragraphs. In his *Literary Theory: An introduction*, Terry Eagleton examined the validity of different definitions of literature as given by difference critics at different times. His examination of the various definitions are only limited to aspects of literature and do not define literature entirely. The rest of his book is then devoted to discussions on aspects of literature such as psychoanalysis, structuralism and so on. It is interesting to note that Eagleton also provides reasons for rejecting some of the definitions of literature that he discusses in his book. The first definition he discusses is literature as "imaginative, creative or fictional writing." (Eagleton, 1983:1) To him, this definition is not valid because other disciplines such as philosophy, history, and natural science are equally creative and imaginative. The argument that literature is a purely fictional writing does not also hold because there are texts which are not completely fictional but are included in the literary canon. They include personal letters from critics or writers to their friends. Based on these arguments, Eagleton maintains that literature encompasses something more than imaginative, creative, or fictional writing. The next definition he examines is the one given by the Formalists. To them, "literature is a special kind of language in contrast to the ordinary language we commonly use." (Eagleton, 1983:4) This is due to the fact that they apply linguistics to the study of literature and therefore consider literature as a kind of "linguistic violence" on ordinary language. (Eagleton, 1983:4) The violence committed on ordinary language is due to the estrangement of language as a result of the use of literary devices. The preceding definition, however, seems woefully inadequate to Eagleton because language that may appear special today may not be so tomorrow or language that may appear estranged to one class of people may not necessarily appear so to another group of people. Besides, estrangement of language does not necessarily result in the production of literature. This, therefore, convinces Eagleton that what the Formalists try to do is to define the "literariness" of language and not literature. The third definition which Eagleton discusses in his book is the claim that literature is "non-pragmatic discourse" which has no "immediate practical purpose but is taken as referring to the general state of affairs. Sometimes, though not always, it may employ peculiar language as though to make this fact obvious to signal that what is at stake is a way of talking about a woman, rather than any particular real-life woman" (Eagleton 1983:7-8). Eagleton, however, raises some reservations about the validity of this definition. This definition seeks to put the style of literary works on a higher pedestal while it seeks to

relegate the content of such works to the background. The practical value and "truth-value" of such works are, however, important to the overall effect of literary works. The other objection Eagleton raises about the preceding definition is that if we accept that literature is a non-pragmatic discourse, then it follows that literature cannot be defined objectively for "it leaves the definition of literature up to how somebody decides to read, not to the nature of what is written" (Eagleton, 1983: 8). Perhaps, the definition of literature that may seem apt for the discussion of issues in this paper is the one given by Mathew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* and by Kofi Agyekum in his *Introduction to Literature*. To Arnold, literature is "a criticism of life." (Arnold, 1932: xvii) This therefore means that literature criticizes every aspect of man's life. The criticism should be true to life so that we are able to understand man in his entirety. Indeed, Agyekum observes that literature is "a representation of life experience and reality of the world through linguistic creativity and imagination." (Agyekum, 2007:2) From Agyekum's definition, literature is not simply about imagination and creativity but it also deals with the realities of this life. From these definitions of literature and culture, it is clear that the two disciplines are closely related. Thus, if culture is a way of life of a people and literature also criticizes this particular way of life, then it is evident that the common denominator of the two disciplines is life. While culture deals with the way in which life is lived, literature criticizes how life is lived with the ultimate aim of giving man an insight into himself and the way he relates to other human beings, the world, and to his God. To illustrate further the argument advanced so far, an effort has been made to give the synopses of the two plays and their themes. From the synopses, cultural issues that are common to the two plays and have been mentioned at the beginning of the paper have been analyzed with emphasis on how the playwright criticizes those cultural aspects. This leads us to a point where a safe conclusion has been drawn on the type of relationship that exists between literature and culture.

2 Synopses, Themes and Form of the Two Plays

The *Dilemma of a Ghost* is a short play that was written in the sixties. It tells the story of Ato Yawson, a young Ghanaian who goes to America to study and returns home with an Afro-American, Eulallie, as his wife without the extended family having an inkling of Ato's marriage. This scenario sets the tone for the theme of conflict of cultures in the play since Eulalie is from a different country and a different continent with a distinct culture. She expects that her way of life should be respected by Ato's relations once she finds herself in Ghana. Her way of life, however, contravenes the norms of Ato's people and there seems to be a constant friction between the two cultures. This friction could have been avoided if Ato had played his role effectively as a bridge between cultures by sincerely educating Eulalie on his people's customs and by explaining aspects of the American culture to his people. Ato's failure to carry out this role efficiently leads to the crisis that culminates in the beating of his wife. On another level, this conflict of cultures could be regarded as a conflict between modernity and tradition. The other theme which can be derived from the synopsis of the play is the theme of feminism. Eulalie, who is Ato's wife, has to fight for her rights as a woman so that such rights can be respected by Ato and his people. She does not understand why she always has to consider the opinion of Ato and his people in whatever she does and says while they, on

the other hand, never considered her as an individual who is entitled to her privacy and personal opinion on certain issues. After all, she is Ato's wife and not his slave. These themes are acted out in a tragi-comic vein in the play. It is true that we do not only have humour in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* but other aspects of tragicomedy such as witty speech and a happy ending exist in the play. The First and Second Women are noted for their witty utterances on issues raised in the play, especially on the importance of children in Akan traditional marriage and the financial situation of Esi Kom after the return of Ato from America. The fact that Eulalie recognizes Esi Kom as a mother-in-law who can be relied on in times of crisis means that there is likely to be a better understanding between her and Ato's relations. And like the synthesis of Hegelian philosophy which seeks to explain that there can be a connection between two opposing phenomena, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* seeks to reconcile the good aspects of two opposites – tragedy and comedy – while avoiding the extremes and shortcomings of both genres. This aspect of tragicomedy is what Giambattista refers to in *The Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry* when he observes that:

For tragicomedy is able to include all the good qualities of dramatic poetry and to reject all the bad ones, it can delight all dispositions, all ages, and all tastes – something that is not true of the other two, tragedy and comedy, which are at fault because they go to the excess. (Giambattista, 1940:513)

In *Anowa*, the issue of marriage is raised again by Ama Ata Aidoo. In this play, however, the play does not concentrate on the conflict of cultures as a main problem in the failure of the marriage between Anowa and Kofi Ako. Aidoo rather considers Anowa's refusal to listen to her mother's advice not to marry Ako as the main source of the problems associated with the marriage. *Anowa* is a play which was written five years after publication of *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. It tells the story of Anowa, the daughter of Badua and Osam, who decides to marry Kofi Ako despite her mother's opposition to the marriage. The dominant theme of *Anowa* is feminism. Anowa's effort and attitude in the play single her out as a woman who is not ready to be relegated to the background. She chooses her own husband without her mother's consent and she demands to be given the chance to express her opinion on all matters concerning the marriage between her and Ako. When Ako sacks her, she refuses to go without the former providing tangible reasons as to why he, unilaterally, decides to terminate their marriage. Anowa's fight for her rights as a woman leads her to a situation where she is branded by the conservatives such as Ako and Old Woman as a wife who contravenes societal norms concerning the submissive role of women in traditional Akan marriage. The theme of feminism is handled in the play in such a way that marriage and other aspects of Akan culture are brought to the fore in the discussion of issues. The theme of the play is acted out in the form of tragedy. To some extent, one can argue that there are both peripety and recognition in *Anowa*. There is peripety in the sense that Ako thinks money will bring happiness and prosperity to their marriage. He is prepared to sacrifice everything for wealth. It, however, turns out that this same wealth is the cause of the sad end of Ako and Anowa. Recognition takes place when Anowa comes to know that the

man she has been married to might be impotent or might have traded his manhood for riches. Ako himself also realises that his wealth cannot buy them happiness and peace. The presence of both peripety and recognition in the plot of *Anowa* and the change of fortune that accompanies them make the plot a complex one since according to Aristotle, a complex plot comes about when "the change of fortune is accompanied by recognition or peripety or both (Aristotle 1940:38). Besides, Aidoo gives more preference to action than characterization in *Anowa*. It is true that characterisation is important in tragedy but characterisation comes next to action or plot. The events in the plot of *Anowa* are arranged in such a way that one even gets terrified by listening to just a narration of them. One needs not see such events acted out in order to get horrified. Ako and Anowa are also not saints or villains. They occupy the position between saints and villains and their death excites pity and fear from us since we can easily identify ourselves with them.

3 Cultural Issues Raised In the Two Plays

Based on the synopses and themes of the two plays, the first cultural issue that is raised in both of them is marriage in Akan traditional society. Marriage as an aspect of culture has been defined by Nukunya as:

Any union in which the couple has gone through all procedures recognized in the society for the purposes of sexual intercourse, raising of a family, or companionship. To be legal, marriage must pass through the laid-down customary stages for the society (Nukunya, 1992:42).

Marriage is an important aspect of the way of life of Africans. In most African societies, marriage is not an option but an obligation in every adult's life. The importance of marriage in African societies is underscored by J. S Mbiti when he observes that:

Therefore, marriage is a duty, a requirement from the corporate society and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Otherwise, he who does not participate in it is not only abnormal but under-human. Failure to in return (Mbiti, 1969:130).

The preceding quotation explains why Badua is worried about Anowa not getting married six years after her puberty rites.

BADUA : Any mother would be concerned if her daughter refused to get married six years after her puberty. If I do not worry about this, what shall I worry about? (Aidoo, 1970:10).

Marriage is so important in the Akan culture that two individuals cannot just meet and decide to marry alone. It is an issue that involves families, clans, communities and so on. This is why in the Akan society, there is a proverb which literally says that "the route to marriage is a long route." It is a long route because marriage in African societies means cementing of ties between families and clans. Such unions are not temporary and cannot be overlooked since there are bound to be children from such marriages. Consequently, there is the need for discretion in selecting the type of family or

clan that one wishes to establish a union with. Commenting on the communal nature of marriage in Ghana, Peter Sarpong observes that:

In Africa as a whole, one may say without risking the accusation of exaggeration, that marriage is not simply an affair between individuals who have fallen in love. It is a matter in which the lineage of the contracting parties is greatly interested. In a way, marriage concerns the whole society in which it takes place, for which reason,...in particular (Sarpong, 1974:77).

Still on the communal nature of marriage in Africa, Mbiti maintains that:

For African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all members of a given community meet; the departed, the living and those yet to be born (Mbiti, 1969:130).

The two preceding references on the communal nature of marriage in Africa and in Akan society in particular explain why in Act One of *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, all the family members are shocked when Ato tells them that he has already married.

Ato: [As if just awake from sleep] Ei, uncle, are you talking of marriage?

Esi: It is nothing; I was only telling your aunt that I have sold your sheep to pay the bride price for you when you make up your mind to marry.

Ato: [Casually] But I am already married, Maame.

All: You are married? Married? Married? (Aidoo, 1965:10)

Nana even expresses disgust about the fact that Ato married without informing or consulting any member of the family on such a social issue when she says:

Nana : [Spitting] My grandchild, so you have married?

Why did you never write to tell us? (Aidoo, 1965:11)

In *Anowa*, when the heroine decides to accept Ako's proposal to marry her, Osam has to ask Kwame to go and call Anowa's uncle to come and be a witness:

Badua: What are you calling him here for?

Osam: To go and call us her uncle and your brother.

Badua: Could we not have waited until this evening or dawn tomorrow? (Aidoo, 1970:16).

It is necessary to call in Anowa's uncle to come and be a witness to the marriage because it is an issue that is communal and not private in traditional Akan society. Anowa's

parents alone could have given out their daughter in marriage but that would have contravened the norms of the society in which they live.

In *Changes: A Love Story*, when Ali Kondo and his friend go to Esi Sekyi's parents to ask for the latter's hand in marriage, Nana gets annoyed because Ali Kondo and his friend are both young and cannot represent any family or clan. In such circumstances, they need elders of their families or clans with high moral standing so that should anything go wrong with the marriage in the years to come, such elders can step in and try to address the problems. By bringing their experiences to bear on the marriage, such elders can ensure that the marriage lasts as long as it is supposed to. Another aspect of traditional Akan marriage which has been tackled in both plays is the investigations that usually precede the union of the couple. Thus, the young man's parents and relations have the responsibility of ensuring that their son marries a good woman whose family has no history of diseases such as epilepsy, madness, and so on. In addition to this, the young lady must not come from a family whose members are thieves, murderers, slaves and so forth. These investigations are taken into consideration to avoid social stigma and spill over effects on future offspring of marriages in traditional Akan societies. Just as the young man's relations have to carry out investigations into the history of the lady's family to avoid social stigma, the lady's family and relations also have a responsibility of ensuring that their daughter marries a good, responsible young man. Therefore they also investigate discreetly into the history and conduct of the young man and his family to avoid social stigma and the transfer of diseases to any offspring that may result from the marriage. Writing on the investigations that usually precede marriages in traditional Akan society, Sarpong observes that:

In the meantime, a kind of mutual spying is begun, each group trying to find out if the person in the other group is worthy of their child. Is there no 'bad' disease in that family? Is the girl too lazy, is she respectful? Is there a reasonable... his/hers etc etc? (Sarpong, 1974:81)

This is why the Second Woman expresses her uneasiness about Ato's marriage with Eulalie, a complete stranger to the people in Ato's community.

2ND Woman: And that is the sad-part of it, my sister

He has not taken this girl

Whom we all know and like

But has gone for this

Black-white woman

A stranger and a slave

But that is his and Esi Kom's affair (Aidoo, 1965:17-18).

In *Anowa*, when Badua opposes the female protagonist's marriage to Ako, Osam asks her the following questions on Ako's family history:

Osam: How would I know what he is like. Does he not come from Nsona House? And is not that one of the best Houses that are here in Yebe? Has he an ancestor who has unclothed himself to nakedness, had the unmentionable, killed himself or another man? (Aidoo, 1970:15-16).

To Osam therefore, since Ako's family has no history of communicable diseases or conduct that can bring about social stigma, then Ako can be a good husband to Anowa. Badua, however, thinks that beyond the family history and conduct, one needs to examine Ako's conduct itself, especially his attitude to work. The final aspect of traditional Akan marriage that is discussed in both plays is the fact that it is usually the voice of the maternal uncle of the young man or woman which carries weight when it comes to marriage. It is Anowa's maternal uncle who has the final say in Anowa's marriage to Ako. In much the same way, it would have been Ato's maternal uncle's duty to take all the necessary initiatives aimed at getting a wife for Ato if the latter had not got married to Eulalie before coming to Ghana. This aspect of Akan traditional marriage is a product of their matrilineal system of inheritance. Nukunya makes this observation in *Tradition and Change in Ghana* when he writes:

One important aspect of matrilineity is that it is the mother's brother who performs the functions normally reserved for the father in patrilineal societies. Though the residence may be ideally patrilocal, the fact that father and child do not belong to the same descent group greatly limits the father's role in terms of authority and discipline. As such...many respects. (Nukunya, 1992:35)

This aspect of Akan culture is better expressed by Osam in *Anowa*.

Osam: My wife, do remember I am a man, the son of a woman who also has five sisters. It is a long time since I gave up trying to understand the human female. Besides, if you think well of it, I am not the one to decide finally whom Anowa can marry. Her uncle, your brother is there, is he not? You'd better consult him. Because I know your family: they will say I deliberately married Anowa to a fool to spite them (Aidoo, 1970:16).

The next aspect of the Akan way of life which has been discussed in the two plays is the importance of children in traditional Akan marriage. Ideally, in the Akan society, as in any other society in Africa, marriage is meant for procreation. Marriage is not meant for satisfying fantasies that do not create any chance for procreation. This explains why J. S. Mbiti maintains that "marriage and procreation in African communities are unity: without procreation marriage is incomplete" (Mbiti, 1969:107). Consequently, Ato's family members have every cause to be worried when a year after his marriage with Eulalie, there are still no issues. The

importance of children in marriage also explains why the family members have to prepare a concoction to cleanse Eulalie's womb to enable her conceive during the annual sprinkling of the stools. On several occasions in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, The First Woman expresses the need for children in traditional Akan marriage. On one such occasion, she observes that:

1st Woman: Child bearing is always profitable

For were not our fathers wise

Who looked upon the motion of our lives

And said,

They ask for the people of the house

And not the money in it?

There is nothing that can compare with

Being a parent, my sister (Aidoo, 1965:16).

In *Anowa*, the absence of children in the marriage between Anowa and Ako also makes the former uneasy. She does not want to be labelled a barren woman and yearns to have her own children. She therefore tries all she can to know whether it is her supposed barrenness that is the explanation for the absence of children in their marriage or there is something else to it. Indeed, Ako commits suicide once Anowa finds out that he might be impotent and this confirms the fact that Ako is very much aware of the crime he commits by exchanging his manhood for material wealth. It is a crime because no society among the Akans or in Africa will ever endorse such an act. Children are so important in marriage in Africa that when a woman is barren, it means she will not know peace on this earth. It is considered unfruitful in Africa to marry a barren woman. This is why in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, the First Woman observes that:

1st Woman: Barren!

If it is real barrenness

Then, oh stranger-girl

Whom I do not know,

I weep for you.

For I know what it is

To start a marriage with barrenness (Aidoo, 1965:36).

Barrenness is considered a curse in traditional Africa and in Akan society due to the value that is usually placed on children in every marriage. As Derek Wright puts it, "The barren have no face in the other World, runs one Akan proverb, expressing the customary consequences of childlessness" (Wright, 1989: 140). All the preceding references point to the fact that children are valued more than any other thing in traditional Akan society. It is, therefore, not surprising that Ato's failure to convince Eulalie to have children

with him and Ako's exchange of his manhood for wealth lead to serious consequences in both plays. In Ato's case, his action leads to a rift between him and his relations and in Ako's case, his hamartia leads to his death. This shows Aidoo's understanding of her culture and her deftness in using the literary medium to express such cultural values. The third cultural issue that is common to both plays is the role of the extended family in traditional Akan society. Writing on the meaning of the extended family, J. S. Mbiti observes that:

For African peoples the family has much wider circle of members than the word suggests in Europe or North America. In traditional society, the family includes children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children and other immediate relatives. In many areas there are what anthropologists call extended...compound or close to another (Mbiti, 1969:104).

In Africa, and in Akan society, the individual does not exist alone. He derives his essence from the family and the family also derives its essence from the clan. This therefore means that in good times and in bad times, the individual can always count on the support of the extended family or even on the support of the whole community. This is why the extended family's "heirlooms, kentes and gold ornaments, which none of us younger generation had ever seen before were all pawned" in order to send Ato to America (Aidoo, 1965:31). Writing on the important role which the extended family plays in the life of an individual in Africa, J. S. Mbiti explains that:

Just as God made the first man, as God's man, so now man himself makes the individual who becomes the corporate or social man. It is a deeply religious transaction. Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and other people. When he suffers, he does not suffer alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbors and his relatives whether dead or living... This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man (Mbiti, 1969:106).

Much as the extended family provides support for the individual in time of need, it also expects the individual to provide support for other members of the same extended family when the individual has the means. As a result of the investment made in Ato's education by the extended family, they also expect Ato to support the family once he has the means to do so. He has to support his old mother, Esi Kom, who used her tears to convince Ato's "uncles and great uncles" to send him to America. In *Anowa*, the role of the extended family is clearly expressed when Osam says that he alone cannot marry off Anowa to Ako. This is because if he does and anything goes wrong, he cannot count on the support of other members of the family. He cannot expect Anowa's uncle to support him. The interdependent nature of the relationship between the individual and the extended family in traditional African societies is expressed by Fritz H. Pointer when he writes that:

In traditional African life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone; except corporally. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole (Pointer, 1984:22).

A similar observation on the role of the extended family in the life of the individual African is made by Derek Wright when he observes that the extended family system, "once a linchpin of the traditional community which acted as a bulwark against social strife by ensuring some share of prosperity for all" is now being undermined in Africa (Wright, 1989:135). The final aspect of the Akan way of life as expressed in both plays is the need for respect for the elderly in the society. The elderly are expected to be respected in Africa due to several reasons. To Sarpong, one of the reasons for respect for the elderly is contained in the following observation:

Old age is sacred as the old person is thought to be in closer proximity to the ancestors – he is likely to die before others - the young. The mysterious and the spiritual acquire their character by reason of their being sacred. Hence it is in relation to the sacred that...spiritual (Sarpong, 1974:65).

Still on the need for respect for the elderly in the traditional Akan society, S.K. Okleme observes that:

In traditional Ghanaian society, the aged are accorded unqualified respect because they are regarded as repositories of wisdom. Indeed, many Ghanaian proverbs attest to this fact. For example, a Dangme proverb which affirms this notion states literally that once a person is older than you, his mouth emits a richer odour than yours (Okleme, 2005:260).

Consequently, in African culture and for that matter Akan culture, the young are taught to respect every elder in the society. Any elder can be considered a mother or a father because in the African context, the proper upbringing of a child is not a responsibility for the child's parents alone. It behoves the whole society to bring up the child properly by ensuring that any elder can act as a surrogate parent for the child. And for the society to succeed in this mission, children are taught to respect elders just as they respect their own parents. Secondly, elders are respected in African society because of their own wisdom and experience about life as pointed out by Okleme. It is their priceless wisdom that makes them command respect from the young ones. The elderly may not be rich, they may not have travelled world wide as the young ones have done or they may not have been educated as the young ones have been educated. Yet, they still have their rich experience about African life. It is something that cannot be taken away from them. In *Anowa*, both Badua and Osam try their best to restrain Anowa from marrying Ako without going through the due process. Badua even makes it clear to Anowa that Ako cannot make a good husband. Ako's family might not have any blemish on their image or in their history, yet, Ako himself is not hardworking enough. And if Ako is not industrious, then how is he going to take care of Anowa once

they get married? This is a piece of advice from a concerned mother and an elder that Anowa should have listened to. Laziness cannot beget material wealth and Ako is bent on making wealth through fair or foul means. The consequence is therefore devastating for Anowa at the end of the play. In the *Dilemma of a Ghost*, Nana is the eldest among Ato's family members. Due to this, she commands a lot of respect from all the other members of the family. In Act One of the play, Mansa apologises to Nana on behalf of Esi Kom, Akyere and herself for making Nana wait for them at a family gathering.

NANA: [With her eyes turned towards the entrance]
I say, what are you doing there?
Why are you doing this thing to me?

MANSA: Old One, it is all right. We won't do this again (Aidoo, 1965:8).

This indicates the extent to which African elders are revered in traditional African society. In some African societies, such as the Sissala, for example, there is a proverb which literally says that "an elder does not tell lies." Whatever comes from an elder's mouth is full of wisdom and an elder worthy of his sort cannot afford to mislead the young.

4 Conclusions

From the analysis of the two plays, it is apparent that literature and culture have a symbiotic relationship. They are both linked to life and one cannot criticise life unless one first talks about how that particular life is lived. Literature and culture will always co-exist and lend weight to each other. It is also evident from the analysis that Aidoo is a dramatist with a clear insight into how people in traditional Akan society live their lives in Ghana. Such modes of living give cognizance to values such as respect for the elderly, the support of the extended family, the importance of children in marriage, and the need to follow laid down procedures in marriage. Some of these cultural values are needed more than ever today in our contemporary societies in order to foster social stability, national unity, and cultural identity. One, however, has to admit that other aspects of these same cultural values do not appeal to the youth in the face of modernity. Such aspects include the argument that man cannot choose to have children at his convenience, that the extended family has every right to intrude in a couple's private life and that the history and conduct of other members of a family should be used as a yardstick in deciding matters of the heart. This therefore goes a long way to confirm Sarpong's observation that "culture is dynamic, never static, and it would be a mistake to suggest or hope that there has not been any deviation from the status quo (Sarpong, 1974: viii).

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