THE MAKING OF A GENDERED NATION IN POSTCOLONIAL WEST AFRICAN VIDEO, FILM, AND LITERATURES

by

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ABSTRACT

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The Making of a Gendered Nation in Postcolonial West African Video, Film and Literatures represents the first attempt to produce a book-length study of the video industry in Ghana and aims to trace how the Ghanaian nation is produced in popular cultural forms such as film, video and literature. Through a comparative analysis of Ghanaian video, film and literature, the dissertation argues that video films produce national subjects in ways markedly different from those employed by written, realist texts and narrative films. It examines how the video apparatus acts on spectator-subjects for whom ideologies about the nation, the family and gender become normalized, demonstrating that nationalist discourse always hails its subjects as men or women.

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Introduction

The Making of a Gendered Nation

My dissertation, *The Making of a Gendered Nation in Postcolonial West African Video, Film and Literatures* represents the first attempt to produce a book-length study of the video industry in Ghana and aims to trace how the Ghanaian nation is produced in popular cultural forms such as film, video and literature. I query Benedict Anderson's argument that the nation is a community produced in the linear, empty, "real," time constructed by the novel and newspaper. Through a comparative analysis of Ghanaian video, film and literature, I argue that video films produce national subjects in ways markedly different from those employed by written, realist texts and narrative films. I examine how the video apparatus acts on spectator-subjects for whom ideologies about the nation, the family and gender become normalized, demonstrating that nationalist discourse always hails its subjects as men or women, thereby refuting Anderson's assumption that the imagined nation is gender-less.

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson argues that more than any other cultural product, print-literacy "made possible the imagined community" of the nation (116). Through print media, primarily the newspaper, an "imagined linkage" derived from two sources: the first Anderson calls "calendrical coincidence," defined as a phenomenon resulting from "the date on the top of the newspaper, the single most important element on it" which provides an "essential connection" among members of the invented community, "the steady onward clocking of homogenous time" (33). Peoples of a nation, who read from dated news sources, felt that they participated in the movement of chronology alongside their fellow citizens. Linear time guaranteed that

events progressed at the same pace, in the same symbolic realm, for all. Print media, then, placed members of a nation in a homogenous time frame. The second source of the linkage is credited to the market itself, which assured the reader that the ceremony of reading the paper "is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion" (35). Advances in print technologies and the rapid and stable dissemination of printed knowledge served to "give print allies before unavailable" (134). Printed materials gave language a "new-fixity" which further helped to construct the nation as a historical artifact. Anderson also touches on how bilingualism, educational systems and policies, as well as administrative and educational pilgrimages buttress the imagined nation, although the weight of his argument focuses on his claim that "print-language is what invents nationalism" (134).

The significance allotted to print in the production of nationalism in Anderson's analysis has been challenged by several scholars. Philip Schlesinger finds it "exceedingly odd that Anderson does not push the argument further to take account of later, post-Gutenberg media technologies, and to try to examine their implications for the consciousness of nationhood" (164). Anne McClintock argues that "spectacle" and not print media produces a sense of "national collectivity" (102). She writes: "More often than not, nationalism takes shape through the visible, ritual organization of fetish objects (flags, uniforms, airplane logos, maps, anthems, national flowers, national cuisines and national architectures) as well as through the organization of collective fetish spectacle (in team sports, military displays, mass rallies, the myriad forms of popular culture, and so on)" (102). Displayed as objects in television advertisements, on posters and billboards and at the theaters and video centers where the videos are projected, and

experienced as spectacle in their viewing, Ghanaian video films offer the chance to examine the production of national identities through non-print technologies.

Anderson defines a nation as "an imagined political community .... It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). The nation is an imagined *community* "because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is the *fraternity* that makes it possible" (italics mine) (Anderson 7). The use of the word "fraternity" describes the nation as a community of men. Although, as Parker, Russo, Sommer and Yaeger point out, Anderson "has relatively little to say about gender and sexuality" (4), the universal citizen-subject is male. Anderson does observe that "in the modern world everyone can, should, will 'have,' a nationality as he or she 'has' a gender" (qtd. in Parker et. al. 5). This comparison recognizes "that - like gender - nationality is a relational term whose identity derives from its inherence in a system of differences. In the same way that 'man' and 'woman' define themselves reciprocally...national identity is determined not on the basis of its own intrinsic properties but as a function of what it (presumably) is not" (5). In my dissertation, I attend to the exclusion of gender from Anderson's description of the production of the nation, and I draw on his insight that the citizen's national identity, like the subject's gendered identity, is shored up by setting itself against an Other. The subject, always "looking for his certainty" (Lacan 4), is constituted in the Symbolic not as a totality, not as "self-determining and integrative" but in relation to "an 'other' which produces only the illusion of wholeness" (Waugh 54). As the nation marks its borders through difference, so does the subject achieve its autonomy. Subject and nation,

universalized as male, align themselves against the figure of woman; the figure of woman guarantees and threatens. In this dissertation, I intend to illustrate that the citizen subjects of the Ghanaian nation, produced in film, video and literature, are hailed as gendered subjects that are haunted by the difference against and through which they come into being as subjects.

African Film and Video Film

I first learned of West African video film during the Women's Caucus Luncheon at the 1997 Annual Conference of the African Literature Association. The conference, significant because it was the first under the auspices of the ALA dedicated to African film, brought together filmmakers, writers and scholars from Africa, Europe and the Americas. Appropriately, the luncheon speaker was Tsitsi Dangaremba, Zimbabwean author and filmmaker whose works are among those in the canon of African literature and film. During the question and answer session at the luncheon, an audience member who had recently been to West Africa mentioned the video films found in abundance there. Her opinion of the films was extremely negative. She described the stereotypical representations of women found in the films as frightening and dangerous and reached out to the audience with a sense of urgency, calling out to other feminist critics to pay attention to this local cultural product. My colleague's pejorative description of video film piqued my interest, but I was equally curious about the silence surrounding what seemed to be a thriving popular film industry in Anglophone Africa. At a conference on African film, not one paper was presented nor one panel organized around video. In the margins of the main event, video film represented little more than a notation.

The objects of study and instruction that have come to be recognized as African

films are films frequently produced by former colonial governments or international funding agencies, and often these films play to limited audiences within Africa, if they are exhibited in Africa at all. Scholarship on African cinema focuses almost exclusively on what Jonathan Haynes and Onookome Okome call "art cinema," celluloid films created by "educated, self-conscious artists, often with political or social motivations" that is reliant on international funding sources and distribution (106). In Francophone and Anglophone West Africa, the impossibility of devoting government revenue to film production has created a situation where the lack of production structures, the reliance on post-production equipment in France or England, and the dilapidated condition of the few cinemas that exist tie African filmmakers to foreign funding sources, equipment, expertise, and audiences. In Francophone West Africa, film production relies on French camera operators and processing labs, and the content of the films, if not in part determined by the French producer of the film, might be shaped to appeal to non-African audiences. African films compete with foreign films and videos dumped into the market at low costs for audiences that have little money to spend. Elizabeth Mermin explains that African films, exhibited in Europe and America at festivals, art houses, and in academic or intellectual circles, provide producers with American and European markets large enough that an African film can make money, and so it is to these audiences that the films speak. The relationship between the African filmmaker and his foreign producers is one of dependency, and it is the foreign producer and target audience, she concludes, who "dictate the boundaries" that define and "constrain" African film (206). In the words of Emmanuel Sama, "African films are foreigners in their own countries" (148).

In Ghana and Nigeria, however, a video revolution dramatically altered film

production and the local cultural landscape. High production costs and the difficulties associated with obtaining funding, the decline of the film production infrastructure, and the privatization of the national film corporations contributed to the rapid decline of Anglophone West Africa's most successful celluloid film industries. As Manthia Diawara has shown, the British Colonial Film Unit's "technological paternalism" crippled the nascent film industries in both Ghana and Nigeria (Diawara 5). Although Nkrumah created a sophisticated film production infrastructure, most Ghanaian films were co-productions directed or produced by European filmmakers and were distributed outside of the country. Independent filmmakers, like Kwah Ansah, have found local and international sources of funding, but since Ansah's *Heritage Africa,* released in 1988, no Ghanaian filmmaker has produced a feature film on celluloid. Afolabi Adesanya suggests that the rapid decline of Nigerian film production is due "to the lack of proper marketing (distribution/exhibition) channels to guarantee the probability of breaking even at the box office" (15). Nigeria has the material infrastructure to produce 16mm film entirely in-country, but the declining value of the naira and the high costs of production seem to have suffocated any attempts to make films in this format (Haynes 1995, 2).

In Ghana in 1985, video filmmakers, with no prior film training or experience, exploited the availability of inexpensive and easy-to-operate video technology and began making feature films with video cameras. No longer were Hollywood, Bollywood, and kung-fu films the only options available to Ghanaian film audiences. Video films written, produced, exhibited, and distributed by Ghanaians were projected in major theatres and in the numerous small video centers scattered throughout the country. Nigerian filmmakers, facing similar financial constraints and an equally dilapidated celluloid infrastructure, followed the video trend and began producing film on video and exporting

the videos to Ghana. Today, Ghanaians find video films from Ghana and Nigeria projected in major theatres and in the numerous small video centers scattered throughout the country. All of the television stations in Ghana feature weekly broadcasts of Ghanaian and Nigerian videos and street vendors throughout the major urban centers sell more copies of local video films than they sell of pirated American films. It is estimated that two feature videos, in English, are released in Ghana each month (Korley 67), and in Nigeria, video films are produced at the rate of about one a day (Haynes 1999, 9). Unlike Ghanaian and Nigerian celluloid films, video films circulate rapidly and in large numbers in Ghana and Nigeria.[1] Numerous distribution centers in Ghana and Nigeria advertise and sell videos, and African video outlets in London and Texas specialize in Ghanaian and Nigerian video films, in English and Yoruba, and cater to Africans living abroad.[2] Furthermore, video films are easily, and widely, pirated and exchanged among friends and family members. Although censorship mechanisms exist in both Nigeria and Ghana, many video films are sold without the censorship boards' knowledge or approval. Video, independent of international funding and foreign audiences and not reliant on

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It is also important to remember that video-films circulate within urban setting marked by a history of migration and cultural exchange between Ghana and Nigeria. In 1969, the largest group of immigrant traders in Accra were Yoruba traders from Nigeria (Eades 1), and after the nullification of the Aliens Compliance Order of 1969, Yoruba immigrants began to resettle in Ghana in large numbers (Aluko 257). Ghanaian Concert Party performances traveled to Lagos and Yoruba Travelling Theatre troupes toured Southeastern Ghana. Indeed, Hubert Ogunde, the founder of Yourba Travelling Theatre, was criticized by his contemporaries for adopting aspects of the Ghanaian Concert Party and contaminating the purity of a Yoruba art form (Clark 56).

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In fact, I was fortunate enough to discover that the Nigerian Student's Association at Michigan State University had its own video archive of films purchased by the club for the use of its members.

government owned film stock, equipment, or government funding, flourishes.

Video features are shot with one camera. In the early years of the industry, the first video filmmakers used VHS, Super VHS and then U-Matic cameras to shoot their films. Now, almost every filmmaker in Ghana shoots with a Sony Betacam. The film crew usually consists of a director, camera operator, sound technician, light operator, and one or two production assistants, and most films are shot in an average of ten to fifteen days. The equipment, camera, lights and microphones, are rented on a daily schedule. While I was in Ghana, the camera rental fee was 400,000 cedis per day. Other production costs include transportation (40,000 cedis per day), lodging (if the producer shoots outside of Accra) catering (300,000 cedis per day), and costumes (400,000 cedis). Actors negotiate with the producer for their fees. Some of the highest paid actors in Ghana earn as much as 1million cedis per production while the lowest paid may receive as little as 150,000 cedis for an appearance in one scene, and the cast is comprised of between eight and fifteen members.[3]

Alexiboat, Inc, owned and operated by Alex Boateng, is the largest and most successful video duplication and distribution outlet in the country. Producers print video jackets or sleeves and bring the sleeves to Boateng, who then copies the cassettes and stocks them in his store. It is the producers' responsibility to call on Boateng and inquire about the number of cassettes sold, and this is determined by counting the number of sleeves that remain. No other bookkeeping method is employed, and so producers must trust that Boateng will inventory their cassettes honestly and accurately. The producer

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The figures cited in this cost breakdown were obtained in a survey I compiled while completing research for the dissertation. At the time that I collected the information, the exchange rate was 3,000 cedis to one US dollar.

receives only 40% of the money the consumer pays for the cassette, and only 40% of the revenue of total tickets sales when the video film is exhibited at a film theater. In addition to all expenses incurred in the production and editing of the film, the producer absorbs the costs of printing the cassette sleeves and advertising. Advertising usually entails radio and television advertisements, posters and banners, and often a producer will sponsor a float or announcing van. The van, decorated in film posters and equipped with an announcing system, travels through the city broadcasting the film's release. A producer might also work with the film's distributor to arrange for cassette vendors to follow the van, clad in film poster t-shirts, selling the cassettes along the way. Video film production, post-production, duplication, distribution and exhibition occur, primarily, in Accra, although facilities also exist in Kumasi. In Accra, approximately five independent post-production facilities with analog equipment, and one with digital capabilities, compete for the business of about twenty active film producers. Most producers use the facilities at Ghana/Malaysia Film Company (GAMA), the former Ghana Films Industry Corporation.

Every filmmaker I spoke with cited money as his/her primary constraint. In Ghana, the government provides no financial assistance to filmmakers, and banks refuse to loan money to film producers. The producer finances his own films and is therefore entirely dependent on film sales, not only to make a living but finance the next production. This situation necessitates an elaborate network among those in the industry of borrow and repayment. Money is always in short supply, it seems. I witnessed many conversations between actors and producers, directors and producers, video distributors and producers and so on where one requested money, or an extension, or a line of credit from the other. In Ghana, the owner of the main video distribution outlet also owns a

Betacam, and so a filmmaker might ask to use his camera for ten days in exchange for the money the distributor owes him from sales of the video release of his last film. An actor who may have taken a loan from a film producer will agree to appear in the producer's production in exchange for a part of his artist's fee. If a film producer is well established, he can secure his equipment from a private individual or GAMA films without payment and settle his account when profits from film exhibition allow him. He will also be in a position to negotiate with his actors, and, rather than pay them up front, before the shooting of the film, he might give them half of their fees before the production and pay the remainder later. Clearly, the industry favors those who are a part of it, making it difficult for a new filmmaker to break in. I find this ironic given that the pioneers of this very industry confronted, and overcame, barriers erected by those who considered themselves "professionals" and therefore gatekeepers of the film industry. The industry is fast building its own walls and gates although video filmmakers like Akuffo and Safo still define themselves against the "professionals" who refused to regard them as little more than amateurs playing with cameras.

In order to keep budgets low, filmmakers strive to keep the number of days one must pay for the equipment low. This requires that the film crew and actors work long days, sometimes from 8 a.m. until the early hours of the morning. This situation in itself accounts for some of the technical and aesthetic weaknesses of the films. Asking an actor to perform her best or a cameraman to hold the camera steady after they have been on location for ten hours is asking for the impossible. Film reviewers in the Ghanaian press regularly remark on the technical shortcomings of the films, and in almost every conversation I had with Ghanaians on video film, the other person would comment on the low production quality of the films. Compared to the many Hollywood films that can be

found on the shelves of any video store, Ghanaian video films are of low production quality although the films have improved dramatically since 1987.

Video film culture is a ubiquitous presence in urban life. Video film centers are found everywhere. Video film posters and advertisements color walls and building fronts. As more and more Ghanaians, and especially those living in urban areas, own their own televisions sets, or live in compounds where neighbors have sets, or frequent local drinking spots with televisions, more people have access to the films. Video films are produced in English. Only one film producer, Kofi Owusu, has sponsored two attempts to make films in Twi, one of the languages spoken in Ghana. The films, *Sika Sunsum* and *Kananna*, were successful, but not as profitable as English language films, which reach a wider audience in and out of Ghana. All of the cinemas in Accra including the Ghana Film Theatres, Sid Theatre, Vision 66, Plaza Cinema and Leon Cinema have been converted to video projection theaters, and five theaters in Kumasi exhibit video films only. Hundreds of small video centers in the urban and rural areas show Ghanaian and Nigerian video films. The videos are available for rental and can be purchased at video distribution outlets or from the street vendors who work at busy intersections throughout the cities. The audience for video films, in its size and heterogenity, more closely resembles that of popular music than literature. Of course, video does not require a literate audience, and the fee charged at the entrance of a video center is far, far less than the cost of even a locally printed book. Locating this audience is difficult, if not impossible, because, as Barber notes, "Modern popular arts have the capacity to transcend geographical, ethnic, and even national boundaries" (1987, 15). She calls the audience "volatile and scattered" (48). Yet, Barber suggests, this large number of "unknown" consumers of popular culture, "have latent values and experiences in

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common: the experience of living in a society undergoing rapid change and dislocation in which they, the majority, are in increasing danger of being trampled down" (48).

African Popular Culture

Although many filmmakers and film scholars have explored the challenges confronting African filmmakers by analyzing the conditions of production and distribution, rarely has video been seriously considered as a viable alternative to celluloid, and even more rarely have film critics treated video films as cultural products worthy of critical attention. Jonathan Haynes' study of Nigerian video films is an exception. Typically, when discussing video film in Africa, scholars, artists, and journalists downgrade video as an inferior filmic form because its use demands no specialized training or knowledge. In his recently published book on African cinema, Olivier Barlet refers to video as a "monster" (238) and criticizes the technique and direction of the films. Wole Ogundele reads Yoruba video film as a degraded reincarnation of the Yoruba popular theater, a popular art form transformed by "contact with a superior and seductive technology" (46). Video film has "effectively supplanted" the traveling theater and instead of representing a continuity of this Yoruba popular tradition, Ogundele describes video film as "a transformation so radical as to amount to a total severance of roots" (51).[4] Because video film perpetuates a "vulgarization of

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[4] From its inception, however, the Yoruba theatre was a hybrid form, an amalgamation of the traditional and the modern, the secular and the spiritual. Herbert Ogunde, the founder of the first Yoruba Travelling Theatre Troupe, was an active member of the The Church of the Lord at Ebute-Metta and his theatre was established emerged under the aegises of Aladura church. Ogunde's early plays reflect religious, not traditional "Yoruba," themes and the company initially supported itself by performing for churches. The "traditional" theater Ogundele describes was not simply the result of Ogunde's desire to produce something of "pure" Yoruba form and content, but that the

Yoruba practices" (58) , Ogundele ends his article with a plea to "Yoruba playwrights," asking them to enter video production in order to "transform the medium and put the technology properly at the service of cultural renewal and growth" (70). Likewise, trained filmmakers in Ghana dismiss the films as garbage produced by amateurs and bemoan the idea that any person can rent a VHS camera, make a film and call himself a filmmaker. In the 1980s and early 90s, Ghanaian journalists and film critics refused to acknowledge video film; indeed Nanabanyin Dadson, the Arts and Entertainment writer for *The Mirror*, Ghana's most popular entertainment newspaper, told me that he hoped that if he waited long enough before reviewing video films, the trend would end.[5]

The scarcity of attention paid to African video film at a literature and film conference and the ease with which the medium and the filmmakers who use it are dismissed, speaks, in part, to its status as a popular cultural product. The study of popular cultural production, including popular literatures, music, art and video, in Africa has been predominantly an anthropological endeavor. Even when their study is undertaken by literature scholars, popular cultural texts are often treated as windows into a culture. Indeed, critics allege that its immediacy, presence, and availability are what distinguish popular from elite literature and require the critic, as Berneth Lindfors explains, not to

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theater was founded out of at least two traditions: the Yoruba and the Christian. Indeed, to speak of *the* Yoruba theater is misleading. The Yoruba Traveling Theatre is a multifaceted tradition distinctly local in character and is therefore best understood within the specific towns from which it comes at particular historical moments, and where it is being shaped by, and actively shaping, the localized contexts in which it is produced. J.D.Y. Peel has demonstrated that although historically the "pull to generalize at a pan-Yoruba level has been strong" (9), a single entity called "the Yoruba" does not exist. The Yoruba language, Yoruba settlement patterns, Yoruba religions and the Yoruba theater are marked by locally specific histories and cultures.

5 Personal interview, 29 March 2000, Accra, Ghana.

analyze the popular text as he would a literary text, but "to set it in a context that will make its reverberations more meaningful. He should function as an amplifier of what is plain rather than as an interpreter of what is imagined to be concealed" (1991, 2). Emmanuel Obiechina makes a similar distinction between "intellectual" literature and its authors and the Onitsha pamphlets and their authors in his book *Literature for the Masses*:

> The pamphlet authors concern themselves with surface appearances while the intellectual authors tend to dig into underlying causes and explanations. A comparison of works by the two groups of authors shows that in terms of their reflection of things as they actually are, we are likely to find the pamphleteers much neared to the experience of most ordinary people than the sophisticated authors. They reflect the problems of contemporary life in their rawness. (81)

The rawness of the pamphlets, and the simplicity of their authors, assures that they simply reflect reality. The same assumption is made by Richard Priebe, who finds in popular Ghanaian literature a "reflection of life" (81).

Haynes' analyses of Nigerian video films reproduce this logic of presence, conceptualizing the films as reflections of the contexts from which they emerge. Haynes and Okome argue that the very popularity of Nigerian video films, the volume at which they are produced and the variety of forms they take, means that the films provide us with "an image of the Nigerian nation" (106). By analyzing the video films of Nigeria, they suggest, we can glean a sense of the "productive forces of the nation, economic and cultural" (106). In this paradigm, the video text is a repository of information tapped by the critic; the video film is conceptualized as a mirror "reflecting" the culture from which it comes, and the critic reads "culture" through the artifact. Although Haynes and Okome do not treat the videos as realist narratives, they do assume that an examination of the

preoccupations of the videos tells us something about the ethnic groups who are creating them. Their study finds that Igbo videos reflect an Igbo sensibility and ethic. Not only does this analysis reinforce ethnic stereotypes, and disregard the fact that most videos result from the collaborative efforts of producers, writers, directors, and actors (who often improvise during the filming of the script) from a diversity of ethnic groups, it ignores the ways the videos themselves, and Haynes reading of them, participate in the performance of the ethnic, and national, identities Haynes assumes are simply "out there" as a part of the background against which the content of the films is set. Yoruba video film, one might argue, as did the Yoruba Traveling Theatre before it, names and acts out a Yoruba identity. As Bhabha suggests in *Nation and Narration*, the "people" reside in "a contested conceptual territory" where they are simultaneously the *objects* of the study of the nation, or in this case, ethnic group, of which they are considered members, while they are also *subjects* "of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as contemporaneity" (145). In other words, they stand precariously between the past and the present as objects positioned historically and as subjects acting out an identity. It is through this "double-time" that national identity and ethnic identity are "redeemed and iterated as a productive process" (145). For Bhabha, "the subject of cultural discourse - the agency of a people - is split in the discursive ambivalence that emerges in the contest of narrative authority between the pedagogical and the performative" (Bhabha 148). Haynes and Okome, on the other hand, adopt a positivist understanding of the self and language. The "Yoruba" or "Igbo" people are construed as monolithic entities, the selves which comprise "the people" are homogenous and seemingly autonomous, and language is described as a transparent and coherent system.

Their approach does not account for the ways video film might produce ethnic identity, not merely represent it. Nor do they recognize that by reading the films as reflections of particular ethnic traits, the authors participate in the creation of those homogenous, and reified, ethnic identities they label and describe.

Karen Barber and Stephanie Newell seem to offer a more sophisticated way of understanding and analyzing Africa popular cultural production. In Barber's well known article "Popular Arts in Africa,"she complicates the idea that the popular text, or popular art form, is transparent, merely offering a view of its context. Barber argues that an analysis of a popular text must account for the conditions of its production which, in part, determine its form and content. Furthermore, she acknowledges that any meaning made of a popular text is derived from, not only the intent of the author, but the audience's interaction with the text. Meaning is thus unpredictable and heterogeneous. Newell, similarly, conceptualizes the popular cultural text not as a window into a culture, but as a force that acts on the culture. She asks how popular cultural texts respond to the settings from which they come and understands the text as a force which strives to shape the norms of the culture where it is an active participant. Newell argues that women are "rewritten constantly in the popular media, often appearing in negative and stereotypical forms" (Newell 1997, 6), and suggests that West African popular literature "anxiously re-invents and re-presents women to a male audience, adapting old gender models to maintain control of changing social and cultural formations" (Newell 1996,10). But, implicit in the analyses of Barber and Newell, is a divide between the context and its literature. In *Yoruba Popular Theatre*, Barber reads three plays by the Adejobi Theatre Troupe against "the backdrop of, and partly in response to, actual changes in Nigerian society and economy" (23). Newell, in arguing that the popular text acts on the real,

merely switches the terms of the debate, but maintains the exclusive divide between text and reality.

These approaches to popular culture resemble what Althusser, in *Reading Capital*, describes as empiricist historicism. For the empiricist historian, "knowledge ... is completely inscribed in the structure of the real object ... knowledge is therefore already really present in the real object it has to know" (130). Popular cultural texts, like video film or novels, are objects that contain the real, or act on the real. The object, or text, is ideological and the real is self evident, immediately present. This is "to reduce theory to reflection" and to assume that one's reading of the text, the theory one produces about the text, "will only recognize and repeat an essential pre-existent" reality (Crosby 134). This represents "the vicious circle of the mirror reflection of ideological reflection" (Althusser qtd. in Crosby 133). To find meaning about the real in one's analysis of the text that reflects or acts on the real, is to locate only one half of the equation in ideology. The text is ideological, a part of the Symbolic, but the context from which it comes is in the Real, outside of ideology. This conceptualization is wholly Imaginary, trapped within the circularity of ideology. The epistemology that underwrites Barber's and Newell's conceptions of popular art insists on an extra-ideological reality that is then ideologized, or re-presented, in the popular text. In this framework, the popular is less contrived, less theoretical than the literary text. It is closer to the real than the work of art, defined as a work of art in its explicit recreation, and thus position outside of, reality. (Even realism is recognized as realism by its ability to produce what is perceived to be a replica of reality.) This supposition serves to reify and naturalize the entirely imaginary notion that the real is fully present and able to be captured – artistically or immediately - by textualty. And it is at this moment, when we attempt to isolate reality from ideology, that

"we find ourselves knee-deep in the already ... obscure domain in which reality is indistinguishable from ideology" (Žižek 15). Referring to Lacan, Žižek writes: "Reality is not the 'thing itself,' it is always-already symbolized, constituted, structured by symbolic mechanisms – and the problem resides in the fact that symbolization ultimately always fails, that it never succeeds in fully 'covering' the real, that is always involves some unsettled, unredeemed symbolic debt" (21).

The Limits of History Writing

One of my aims in writing this dissertation was to produce a history of the film and video industries in Ghana in order to historicize and contextualize my readings of the films and literatures. Several problems complicate this seemingly straightforward intellectual task. The first problem concerns the production of historical knowledge, and more specifically, the construction of a historical context set against the texts that emerge from it. Implicit in this alignment of history and text resides the assumption that history is present in the archives or revealed in oral interviews, transparent, waiting to be recovered and described. Text, on the other hand, requires analysis and interpretation, the work of the critic to make it meaningful. Much like Haynes, Barber and Newell, I adopted what Michel-Rolph Trouillot calls a "positivist" view of history in which "the role of the historian is to reveal the past, to discover or, at least, approximate the truth" (5). History, as the work of Trouillot and theorists such as Michel Foucault and Michel de Certeau have shown, is always the result of acts of interpretation and "is always produced in a specific historical context" (Trouillot 22). The challenge becomes not to align context against text, to imply that the former is the real that the later merely describes. The challenge is to present "context" as the product of an act of interpretation,

of a reading of the historical record, that is itself a product of history.

The second problem concerns history-production in a global context. Clearly, my location as a First World reader of Third World texts requires an engagement with history and context. I am compelled to confront the problems associated with historicization because gaps of space and information separate my location as a doctoral candidate in an American university from the location of the objects of my study, video films from Anglophone West Africa. The knowledge I produce about video films will circulate in institutional settings far removed from Accra or Lagos. Consequently, I need to fill in the blanks and provide background information for my readers who know little about film and video production in Ghana. The demand for historicization and contextualization weighs, perhaps, on the literary scholar of African texts in ways that my colleagues in American studies or British literature escape, and the load is heaviest if that scholar is an "outsider," one not privy to the "insider" knowledge drawn from life experience, native fluency, or cultural identification. The temptation is to prove one's "almost insider-ness"; to fortify one's authorizing power by documenting and demonstrating the knowledge of the other and the other's history, culture and language. But this maneuver is, at the very least dishonest, and at most, a reiteration of a power/knowledge relation, that, in the words of Gyatri Spivak, "fetishizes" the concrete and erases the Western investigator's institutional location and privilege within a global power network (2000, 232) . The critic acts as an operative in what Arjun Appadurai calls "the aesthetics of decontextualization" through which " value ... is enhanced by placing objects or things in unlikely contexts" (1986, 28). The video film acquires value as an object of study in a dissertation produced by an American graduate student much as a Dinka basket acquires value as an art object in an American museum. The diversion

from the contexts in which they were produced enhances the value of the objects. But essential to this equation are the critic and the art expert, the First World scholars who Arif Dirlik refers to as the "global intelligentsia" (315). To ignore their location in the production of knowledge is to conceal "one's own class position in global capitalism" (Dirlik 315). The critic contextualizes, authenticates and produces meaning from the text she reads. Her reading not only assigns value or meaning to the texts she analyzes, but defines her as a source of knowledge. From this position, she wins grants, publishes her dissertation, and is awarded tenure. And, as Spivak notes, this process re-produces a global power relation between the developed and developing worlds and reifies an "international division of labor" (1999, 255); the global scholar extracts primary source materials, as if they were gold or ground nuts, from the Third World, processes and makes them meaningful in the First, and packages and exports this knowledge at a profit.

I turn at this point to Spivak because she offers me a vocabulary for talking through the problems associated with the writing of history, and of doing so in a global context. She acknowledges that she works within a "double bind" (1999, 199), a recognition that the presentation of history is "as much a recovery as it is a loss" (198). In other words, that compiling a history or a context entails a gesture toward recovering the "real" although that recovery is never complete. She attempts to write a history "that can attend to the details of the putting together" (238), to not simply mine the archive for the information it houses on the lives of the subaltern, but to recognize "the fabrication of representations of so-called historical reality" (244). This self-reflexive history writing brings the institutional location of the historian into the production of history. Spivak, for example, writes herself, as a subject of knowledge located within the institution of the Western academy, into her history, in this way, "calling the place of the investigator into

question" (247), de-naturalizing history and revealing the limits of "history-writing" (236).[1] Spivak places her act of reading between two positions. She reads the archive to reveal what it erases, ignores, fabricates or misnames, in order to map the "limits of knowing" (242), and she simultaneously uses the archive to trace the silhouette of the history, and the lives, imperfectly contained within its discourses. Such a reading does not deny the importance of history and culture in understanding a cultural text. To suggest that the subaltern does not speak, a suggestion for which Spivak has been incorrectly criticized, is not to suggest that endeavoring to "recover" the subaltern is not worth while. It does acknowledge that any such recovery must recognize the limits of what can be known and that what is known is always already marked by the location of the subject who produced it.[6]

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In a chapter entitled "History," in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Spivak attends to the putting together of history by mapping the "fadeout points" (239) within archival documents at which point she traces an "emergent heterogeneity" (314) repressed in the production of a historical narrative. Michel de Certeau, similarly, describes the "repressed dimension" of the historical text, a dimension that, for Certeau, as for Spivak, "returns endlessly in its labors" (12). To locate the signs of heterogeneity is to de-naturalize History and reveal its limits. Spivak returns to the archival documents from which the history of the Rani of Sirmur has been compiled. She aims to unearth the "ghosts" of the chroniclers of history, the colonial officials who wrote the accounts that historians have mined in the construction of subaltern history. Spivak reads these documents and compiles a history under erasure, one that foregrounds the subject position of the colonial chronicler, one that lays bare the assumptions, silences, and deletions of the archival document. Yet, Spivak's method produces its own silences and questions. For example, how do we understand these fade points? Is it enough to locate the silences and assumptions on which an authoritative account relies? Or might we need to consider how to write histories in ways that theorize its silences? For Spivak, it is the archon who is "the custodian of truth" (Spivak 205), but I want to suggest that the writing of a text that is then read as a historical document is only one "site of desire" (207) at which the "facts" are "dissimulated in the official historical record" (226). The pen of Captain Geoffrey Birch is, undoubtedly, one reference point for the insertion of the Rani into history. But as Spivak's own method makes plain, the historian authorizes this knowledge by writing it into the historical record, and before that, the archivist legitimates the letter as a source of history by cataloguing the letter and creating from it an artifact or archival document. Spivak's deconstructive writing of history remains in the archive, focused on a document and its author, and is limited in this way because it is Spivak, the

Of course, I occupy an uncertain space, the space of the "double bind," at once questioning the truth claims of history and producing a historical narrative that manifests its own claim to know, and inevitably produces its own silences. Of some of these silences, or fade-out points, I am aware. Briefly, I will foreground these limits and sketch the points of uncertainty that "sound the precariousness of my position," although, like Spivak, I recognize that "such gestures can never suffice" (248). I perform this self-reflexive move to combine " within [my] practice the 'other' that moves and misleads" (de Certeau 12) and hence to make plain the fabrication of my history.[7] As a researcher in Ghana, I participated in the making of historical sources. I used oral interviews to assembly a sense of the film and video industries, audio and video-taped these interviews, transcribed them, and used them as sources in my analysis. I also worked in the industry as a consultant and, with Socrate Safo, co-produced and co-directed a video documentary on the video film industry in Ghana.

My reading of the history and culture of the video film industry is shaped by what I saw and was told, and the barriers preventing access to information were many. I posses functional competency in Twi but do not speak or understand Ga. Twi and Ga are the first languages of many of the filmmakers in the industry and the languages in which they frequently communicated with one another, and I often missed a great deal of what was being said. The absence of archival sources on film and video undoubtedly has limited

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critic, who is also the historian.

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This gesture is not to be mistaken for the writing of a "self," for, in Spivak's word, the "nostalgic investigation of the lost roots of my own identity" (209). Spivak accounts for her position as a subject in an institutional context. She cautions against the "nostalgia entertained by academics in the self-imposed exile of eurocentric economic migration" (209).

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what I can know and write about Ghana's film and video history. Many of the first video films produced by Ghanaian video filmmakers were taped over, lost or destroyed. I left Ghana without being able to see many of the first video films. Instead, I rely on film reviews published in the newspapers, summaries and descriptions given to me orally by script writers and film directors, or copies of the scripts or outlines on which the film was based. Additionally, many of the titles listed in the records of the censorship board were of films that were no longer available for purchase. Films that do not sell are removed from the shelves of the video distributors and essentially disappear. Likewise, those filmmakers who entered the industry but were not able to succeed after one or two films have left filmmaking. Another factor limiting what I could learn about the industry was the scarcity of written records and accounts. Few exhibition outlets in Ghana, whether a film theatre, a video center or video distributor, keeps written records of the ticket or cassette sales generated by each film. Most of the small video centers scattered throughout the country simply collect a small fee from patrons without giving them tickets.[8]

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[8] This situation not only complicates the job of the researcher, but it severally handicaps the film producer's ability to collect his profits. The film producer must accompany the film to the theatre or video center and count the number of people in the audience to insure that he collects the correct amount of money from the showing. This consumes a great deal of time, energy, and money and demands a fait amount of trust. One person is unable to follow his/her film to all of the exhibition centers where it will be shown during one evening and so hires several exhibition assistants to follow the film to other centers. The producer must rely on the assistant to take the cassette to the center, count patrons as they enter and collect the money and, eventually, the cassette and return them to the producer. Without a written record of ticket sales, the producer must trust that the assistant will bring him the entire amount collected from the exhibition and take his percentage from the producer. Most producers know, however, that the reality is that the assistants "chop" a bit of the revenue before giving it to the producer. If a producer suspects that his assistant is taking too much off the top, he will have to arrange to follow the assistant to an exhibition and check up on him/her.

Soon after I started interviewing filmmakers, I learned that my interlocutors often inflated or deflated profits, salaries or expenditures to cast themselves in the best possible light, and many filmmakers were reluctant to discuss any issues involving money. Hence, my estimates of how much a filmmaker might make, or lose, from a film are suspect . Actors didn't like to discuss their artist's fees. Some filmmakers hesitated to describe specific expenditures for a particular film and preferred to give me averages and estimates. Producers worried that if I learned how much they paid their lead actors, I would leak the information and inspire a revolt among the actors who received far less for their film appearances. Several directors and producers, after learning that I was using part of my research grant to co-produce a film with another Ghanaian filmmaker, viewed me as a potential investor, and my attempts to interview them for "information" became opportunities for them to pitch their ideas to me. As I choose to work closely with Socrate Safo, many people in the industry assumed that I would tell him everything I learned about what other filmmakers were doing. I often sensed that a disgruntled actor or editor who Safo had disappointed, or failed to pay at some point in the past, might be sending message to Safo through me. My position as a researcher was never erased from the information I obtained, no matter how much of an insider I might like to imagine I became.

Overview of Chapters

In Chapter One, I sketch the history and culture of the video industry in Ghana and suggest that Third Cinema discourse, far from being irrelevant, is replicated in the narratives I collected in the piecing together of this history. During the Post-Revolutionary period in Ghana (1987-1992), definitions about what constitutes a film,

and what films best represent, or speak to, Ghanaian culture and the Ghanaian nation, are hotly contested, in part because video technology operates outside the control of the state, producing content unregulated by the established standards of professionalism and artistry and promoting as filmmakers individuals with no connections to state sponsored filmmaking or training. This situation pits the "artists," the first generation of celluloid filmmakers, whose training at foreign film schools and subsequent "nationalist" film projects were sponsored by the state, against the "entrepreneurs," the untrained amateurs who leaped from exhibition into production with the advent of easy-to-use video technology. Within the binary between the artists and the entrepreneurs, Third Cinema discourse is fractured and reassembled, justifying the artists' calls for the promotion of artistry over consumerism and the entrepreneurs' proclamations that their films represent a popular, and authentic, Ghanaian cinema.

In Chapter Two, I examine the space of the nation, revisiting the opposition between the village and the city as imagined and imaged in the film *The Boy Kumasenu* and the video film *Expectations*. I trace the projection of nationhood onto the landscape in *The Boy Kumasenu* (1952), a film produced by the Gold Coast Film Unit five years before Ghanaian independence from British colonial rule. In this film, the village and urban landscapes underwrite what Anne McClintock has described as "Britain's emergent national narrative" which, she continues, "took shape increasingly around the image of the evolutionary family of men. The family offered an indispensable metaphoric figure by which national difference could be shaped into a single historical genesis narrative" (99). The evolutionary national narrative, as presented in *The Boy Kumasenu*, maps time onto space and places the village in a backward African past of fetish priests and extended family relations. The city, alternatively, is progress, a metonymy for the

modern nation, and the conjugal family lodged there, the model on which the new nation will stand. The second part of this chapter examines the recently produced, Ghanaian video film *Expectations* (1999). In this text, the landscapes of the village and the city are not merely representative of tradition (read Africa) and modernity (read the West), but are tropes deployed in the video film to articulate a position in current and national debates about gender and marital relations. Far from intending to represent life as it is, the film aims to set out what should be. It conceals an ideological investment in normalizing the conjugal family within a familiar West African narrative about the juxtaposition of life in the village and the city. Space is deployed as a site in which particular marital and family, and by implication gender, relations are imposed and normalized.

Narratives that understand the "present" as marking the beginning of a new, modern age in the national history of Ghana abound in the video films produced during the nascent years of the industry's development and in novels published during the same period. A rhetoric of newness, modernity and revolution facilitated, and was perpetuated by, the 1981, 31st December Revolution, ushered in by Flt. Lt. JJ Rawlings and the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). In the discourse disseminated by advocates of the Revolution in political speeches, news items in the state-owned media, and laws passed by the PNDC as well as in more recent historical accounts and political analyses of the Rawlings regime, the Revolution is represented as marking a shift in the narrative of Ghanaian history. The signs of the new era can be read, among other places, in the new roles women have assumed. Women are characterized as at once enemies of the Revolution, the hoarders and smugglers of a pre-Revolutionary temporality that must be eradicated, and, simultaneously, as "partners" in the Revolution. In the PNDC's

rhetoric, women mark the limits of the temporality of the modern, signifying the corruption of the pre-Revolutionary and the possibility of the achievement of a utopian nation where men and women are equal partners in the Revolutionary struggle. In Chapter Three, I attempt to understand how the video film *Zinabu* (1986) the locally published novels of Akosua Gyamfuaa-Fofie, *The Tested Love* (1989) and *Because She was a Woman* (1990), and Amma Darko's novel *The Housegirl* (1990), published by Heinemann and distributed internationally, re-present this national narrative of newness and modernity.

In Chapter Four, I examine three Nigerian video films, *Hostages*, *Dust to Dust* and *True Confessions*. Each of these three films describes the corruption and greed endemic to the Nigerian nation and, through its depiction of the pain and suffering corrupt politicians, police officers, jail warders, lawyers, parents, and spouses inflict on innocent victims, offers a critique of political and personal immorality in Nigeria. The video films tell stories of the ways political corruption impinges on the private, domestic lives of its victims, or, conversely, describes the damage domestic upheaval wrecks on political ambitions. The political and the domestic and the public and the private are arranged as complements within the form and content of the films, and consequently, the lives of men, who are positioned within political and public spaces, are juxtaposed to the lives of women, placed primarily in the home. In the anti-nationalist rhetoric of the Nigerian video films, the ideology that naturalizes the divide between women as reproducers of the nation and men as its protectors and avengers is reiterated even as the films criticize the exclusions on which the nation stands.

R. Radhakrishnan, in his reading of Partha Chatterjee's analysis of Indian nationalism, argues that nationalism "deploys with telling effect" the very same

"dichotomy of the inside/outside"(83), and both Chatterjee and Radhakrishnan observe "the strategic and differentiated use of this dichotomous structure within nationalism" (83). Their insightful analyses of nationalism facilitate this chapter in which I trace the inside/outside structure as it is produced within insider feminist discourse and feminist studies of African literature, film and culture. Thus far, this dissertation has been concerned with reading the nation and nationalism through the lens of feminist critique and theory, but here, as a means of conclusion, I examine feminism's complicity in perpetuating what Alarcón, Kaplan and Moaleem call "the discursive cosmos of colonial power relations" (4). I suggest that the insider/outsider dichotomy, far from describing the state of Africanist feminist literary studies, is a meta-narrative of sorts offered by feminist literary critics who have an investment in the humanistic self and the experiential dimensions of that selfhood. The self-proclaimed insider feminists affirm the centrality of lived experience to the critic's understanding of novels by African women and set out to recover, record and affirm an African feminist voice that has been ignored by literary critics or supplanted by theoretical approaches more concerned with "theory" than context. The so-called outsider, or "Western," feminist position becomes a signifier for the erasures, the limits, and the abject against which the African insider identity defines itself. This chapter, then, looks critically at the insider/outsider dichotomy, examines how the binary is described and reproduced within this discursive field and maps its contradictions and exclusions. Finally, I suggest that two short stories by Ama Ata Aidoo begin to outline an alternative model for postcolonial Africanist feminism and, more importantly, describe the institutional and class locations that make possible the Insider feminist position. Aidoo positions the insider feminist critique in ways the insiders themselves do not.

Chapter One: Artists, Entrepreneurs and Third Cinema in Ghana

Introduction

Video film might have been received as the solution to the almost insurmountable problems faced by the Ghanaian film industry. The dumping of Hollywood and Bollywood films into the market, the simultaneous decay of celluloid equipment, and an economy increasingly starved for the foreign currency needed to purchase film stock made the production of local, celluloid films financially untenable. Local video productions, films made by Ghanaians for Ghanaians, seemed to offer a viable alternative. Indeed, video, in the revolutionary and democratic spirit of Third Cinema, exploded "the myth of irreplaceable technicians" (Solanas and Gettino 44) and removed the wall between the spectator and the filmmaker. Untrained filmmakers invigorated a dying film industry and produced a popular art enthusiastically welcomed by Ghanaians. Video seemed "an authentically revolutionary cinema"(Espinosa 52). But video was not embraced by all. In fact, the first generation of celluloid filmmakers and their supporters actively worked to suppress the proliferation of video technology and to stifle an industry that they regarded as unprofessional and amateur. The "artists" accused the video filmmakers of seeking profit instead of using film to celebrate Ghanaian culture. The video filmmakers, according to the "artists," were anything but revolutionary. They were "entrepreneurs" producing a neo-colonial and bourgeois cinema.

The references, above, to the work of Solanas and Gettino and Espinosa raise questions about the relevance of Third Cinema theory to Ghanaian video films more than thirty years after the publication of "Towards a Third Cinema"and "For an Imperfect

Cinema." Jonathan Haynes, in his critique of Teshome Gabriel's "Towards a Critical Theory of Third World Films" argues that African film criticism, reliant on the Third Cinema ideals of Solanas and Gettino and Espinosa, cannot speak to video films produced in Anglophone West Africa because the two "are not well suited to one another: the videos are not what is wanted by the criticism, and the criticism lacks many of the tools necessary to make sense of the videos" (1999, 13). Yet, in the debate between the artists and the entrepreneurs in Ghana, the language of Third Cinema is recycled by both sides. If one focuses only on the content of the video films, as Haynes' does, his argument is convincing. An examination of the Ghanaian video industry – its history and current condition – illustrates the contrary.

In this chapter, I sketch the history and culture of the video industry in Ghana and suggest that Third Cinema discourse, far from being irrelevant, is replicated in the narratives I collected in the piecing together of this history. During the Post-Revolutionary period in Ghana (1987-1992), definitions about what constitutes a film, and what films best represent, or speak to, Ghanaian culture and the Ghanaian nation, are hotly contested, in part because video technology operates outside the control of the state, producing content unregulated by the established standards of professionalism and artistry and promoting as filmmakers individuals with no connections to state sponsored filmmaking or training. This situation pits the "artists," the first generation of celluloid filmmakers, whose training at foreign film schools and subsequent "nationalist" film projects were sponsored by the state, against the "entrepreneurs," the untrained amateurs who leaped from exhibition into production with the advent of easy-to-use video technology. Within the binary between the artists and the entrepreneurs, Third Cinema

discourse is fractured and reassembled, justifying the artists' calls for the promotion of artistry over consumerism and the entrepreneurs' proclamations that their films represent a popular, and authentic, Ghanaian cinema. This fragmentation of Third Cinema ideals points toward fundamental contradictions within Third Cinema, contradictions mirrored in the nation-state itself.

Film, Video and the Nation

Film entered the Gold Coast as a mechanism for the promotion and naturalization of colonialism. As George Pearson, the Director-in-Chief of the Colonial Film Unit explained, film in the colonial state was intended "to avail the Gold Coasters of British Civilization" (*Advance* 13). The Colonial Film Unit, established by the British in 1939, distributed war propaganda and educational films in the British colonies. A cinema van, imported from London, toured towns and villages to inform the people of the Gold Coast of the war effort with *The British Empire at War* series and short documentaries such as *Burma: West African Troops Cross the Maturahari River*. In the following years, more vans, visiting more places, exhibited films about, among other topics, hygiene, development, and road safety. After World War II, in an effort to create a market-base for film exhibition, the Unit turned toward the production of films in the colonies in an attempt to more easily produce films that would attract an African film-going audience. The British filmmaker John Grierson, reported to UNESCO in 1944, "I believe that we'll resolve the problem of cinema in the Colonies not by projecting films from the West, but by colonial people's making film inside the colonies for themselves" (qtd. in Diawara 3). To achieve this goal, a four-person team left England and came to Accra to begin a tour

of West Africa in 1946. This marked the inception of the Gold Coast Film Unit and film school, which was directed by Sean Graham, a student of Greirson. Two years later, six Africans, Ghanaians Sam Aryeetey, RO Fenuku, and Bob Okanta and Nigerians Awuni Haruna, RF Otigba and F. Fajemism joined the film unit and received training, and within seven years, under Graham's direction, it had become one of the best-equipped film units in Africa capable of shooting celluloid films and completing post-production editing and sound recording. Only film processing had to be completed in England. Between 1949 and 1956, the Unit made 44 films,[1] most of which were documentaries and newsreels that reflected the Griersonian, British documentary style (Diawara 118), a style adopted by many Latin American Third Cinema filmmakers.

Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the independent Ghanaian nation, understood film as a tool for striking back against colonialism and promoting national consciousness. For Nkrumah, the nation would foster and project the culture of the colonized, a culture devalued and distorted by colonialism: the nation, in words written by Fanon, was conceived of as "the condition of culture, its fruitfulness, its continuous renewal, and its deepening. It is also a necessity" (Fanon 244). Nkrumah inherited the facilities, traditions, and his conception of the function of film from the Gold Coast Film Unit and Greirson and Graham whose visions directed it. Film facilitated the state's production of, first colonial, and later, national subjects. To this end, the postcolonial nation-state exercised complete control over the film industry. Between 1957 and 1966, Nkrumah nationalized film production and distribution, allocating resources to improve

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[1] This historical overview is based on a series of articles published, weekly, in *The Mirror* between 29 July 1995 and 26 August 1995. The articles were written by Nanabanyin Dadson.

the film infrastructure and construct the most complete film company in all of Africa. The State Films Industry Corporation purchased the private exhibition company West African Pictures Limited, giving the state a significant degree of control over exhibition. The Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC), as The State Films Industry was re-named, owned the filmmaking equipment and controlled the importation of film stock. It trained all filmmakers working in the country, selected and supported those who would travel to European film schools, censored foreign films brought into the country, and controlled all film exhibition. As John Mahama, Minister of Communication explained, Nkrumah used film as a vehicle for promoting Ghanaian nationalism and the African Personality and for confronting stereotypical representations of Africa and Africans by replacing them with the "real" Africa.[2] Indeed according to the founding principles of GFIC, the film company existed not simply to entertain but to "stimulate qualitative growth and change in all spheres of our national life"; to "promote the ethical state, personality and culture of the Africa and to give him wide international exposure"; "to help remedy the harm the western media, particularly film, has done and continues to do to the African through the presentation of distorted picture and information about him and the manipulation of his mind"; and "to protect the consciousness of the Ghanaian from the onslaught of foreign values and their manifestation of obscenity, violence and vulgarity" (qtd. in Sakyi 2). As this extensive excerpt demonstrates, for Nkrumah, Ghanaian nationalism was antithetical to foreign or imported values and images. The nation of Ghana was conceptualized as the defender of Ghanaian culture against cultural imperialism. Like the practitioners of Third Cinema, Nkrumah aligned the nation and

[2] Personal Interview, Accra, Ghana, June 1999.

the films it would sponsor and set both against the remnants of colonialism. Yet, this nationalism, and its means of dissemination through film, reified the state structure established under colonial rule. The subject of the films that were produced by GFIC changed, but their Greirsonian documentary style, and the national model they intended to implant, remained the same as those projected in films produced by the colonial film unit.

Despite Nkrumah's initial investments in film production and his desire to use film to promote nationalism, until the late 1980s, more than 95% of all films shown in Ghana were foreign films imported into the country by private exhibitors because very few Ghanaian feature films were being produced. GFIC produced, during the 48 years of its existence, over 200 documentaries and approximately 385 newsreels, but few feature films. By 1956, only one feature film, *The Boy Kumasenu*, had been produced in Ghana, and between 1960 and 1979, GFIC produced only 10 feature films. At the same time that GFIC maintained a monopoly over production, the exhibition and distribution of films increasingly became organized through private companies. Salim Captan and his brother, who took over Ocansey's cinemas in 1942, showed films from the US, UK, India and China. Ghanaians found themselves visiting theatres that featured stories from other countries and cultures, and rarely a Ghanaian film. After Nkrumah's initial efforts to create a film industry, no money had been allocated for either film production or exhibition in post-independence Ghana by subsequent governments. Indeed, the deteriorating celluloid industry marks the weakening of the Ghanaian nation-state. The 31st December 1981 Revolution, the military coup that crowned Flt Lt. Jerry John Rawlings head of state, did nothing to maintain film production. In fact, many in the

industry argue that Rawlings killed an ailing, but salvageable, industry. The curfew imposed from 1982 until 1986 restricted cinema showings, and revenues from film exhibition dropped dramatically.[3] The structural adjustment policies implemented in 1984 by Rawlings allocated no new investment in film equipment, and the Economic Recovery Package of 1984, developed in consultation with international loaning agencies, eroded national authority over, and support of, the film industry. A severe drought and the repatriation of 1.5 million Ghanaians from Nigeria worsened an already ailing economy. As Munir Captan, the current owner of the Globe cinema in Accra, son of the late Salim Captan, noted, "The government could not justify importing film stock when it was more important to import rice and sugar for the people."[4]

As the state-owned celluloid film industry folded under global and national financial pressures, the importation of video cameras and video cassette recorders enabled the development of an alternative, video film industry. The proliferation of video technology and the rapid growth in video production is not simply a transition from one form of filmmaking to another, but as Brain Larkin explains, represents "a distinctly new media arena" (219), one organized "in arenas outside state intervention" (211). Video films, unlike celluloid films, were imported, copied, produced, distributed and exhibited outside of the purview of the state and disrupted the control the nation-state maintained over film distribution and production. This represented a major shift in media culture in Ghana. Unlike celluloid films, video cassettes were easily carried into the country and

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[3] Personal interview with Nick Teye, July 31, 2000, Accra, Ghana. Teye is now an independent film director. Between 1979-1988, Teye was responsible for obtaining films for exhibition and arranging film exhibition for GFIC.

[4] Personal interview, May 25, 2001, Accra, Ghana.

duplicated privately and therefore subverted censorship boards and import regulations. Video recorders and decks, smaller, more readily available and far less expensive than celluloid film projectors and cameras, could be purchased in local shops or carried into the country. Consequently, before the production of local, Ghanaian films on video which began in 1987, entrepreneurs had built a video exhibition and distribution infrastructure in the late 1970s and throughout the 80s.[5] Ghanaian entrepreneurs exhibited pirated video copies of Hollywood and Bollywood movies on 24'' television screens and charged patrons nominal fees to huddle around privately owned small sets in their homes or compounds. In 1979, Nii Atua who was running a small restaurant in Accra was given a video projector by an American friend who owed him money, converted his restaurant into a video center, and established the first video center where video films were projected onto a screen, Coconut Grove Video Centre. In the early eighties, video centers popped up all over Accra. Indeed, in 1987, the Minister of Information estimated that there were over 300 video centers in Accra alone. Video clubs like ESN (Education, Entertainment, Sports and News) offered their members video copies of CNN News, American movies, and sports events. Churches rented video centers for what they called "Christian Video Ministries," special exhibition of films like *Battle of Armageddon* or *All of Satan's Apples Have Worms.*

The sudden transition from state-regulated distribution and exhibition to the almost ubiquitous independent, and often illegal, video exhibition of foreign films

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[5] Those who have written about video film in Ghana have described its emergence as a "video boom," but this label is misleading. See Korley. An explosion of films made on video did not suddenly discharge in Ghana in 1987 as my analysis shows. The production of Ghanaian feature films on video happened gradually, and in spite of resistance from government officials, professional filmmakers and GFIC .

throughout the city of Accra, the capital of Ghana, created an uproar in *The Mirror*, a Ghanaian weekly news magazine published by the government owned Graphic Corporation.[6] Many Ghanaians who wrote columns in and editorials to newspapers called for the complete prohibition of video exhibition, regarding video as a new and an unregulated, neo-colonial technology that promoted foreign values and improper behavior. They implied that the Ghanaian nation and its culture were increasingly threatened by what might be called globalization. Manthia Diawara makes note of a similar response to increased globalization after independence in Francophone West Africa. He writes, "Some people perceived it as the new colonialism of cultural forms of life" (2000, 111). The letters and columns in *The Mirror* testify to the nation-state's slow dissolution as it strives to control video as a new, global media. The earliest complaints concerned the fact that video centers were opening all over Accra without any government regulation. Any building, no matter how unstable, "wretched and poorly organized" could be converted into a video center, and any person with a television and video cassette recorder could charge Ghanaians to watch any films he happened to have on video (*The Mirror*, October 8, 1988, p.8). Although Ghanaian theaters had been screening foreign films for decades, the films were few in number compared to the onslaught of foreign films on video cassettes that were exhibited in the growing number of video centers. *The Mirror* published many letters, columns, and articles that criticized the structural instability of the buildings, the failure of most of the owners of the centers

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[6] *The Mirror* is similar to an America tabloid, and often includes reprinted articles from American and European tabloid newspapers. *The Mirror* regularly features advice columns, stories on Ghanaian celebrities, fashion segments, short stories, and columnists who write on sundry topics including politics, traffic in Accra, AIDS, greed, education, love, and so on.

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to register with the Minister of Information, and therefore ability to avoid paying taxes on revenues. In this discourse, parents complained that their children skipped school in order to attend the afternoon showings. In a weekly forum on the topic: "Commercial Video Operation: What the People Say," respondents complained of "the lack of decency" in the "operations" of the centers. The video "menace" was having "negative effects on our children," alleged another Ghanaian. A respondent wondered "what contributions these video centers make towards rebuilding the nation."

In the press, video technology, associated with foreign influence, and video films, most of which were pirated copies of American films, were regarded as threats to the nation and to Ghanaian culture. Parents worried that the foreign films their children were exposed to featured violent scenes and vulgar language. A commentator in *The Mirror* accused all video operators in Ghana of "thieving as well as corrupting the youth." Another remarked, "The manner in which the monitoring of films which the youth watch has been ignored in this country is a sad reflection of the direction of our morality" and warned that Ghanaian youth "the biggest patrons of public video have been witnesses to all the violence, sex, drugs and indecencies usually associated with imported films" (April 16, 1988, p.11). An editorial column called "My Turn" featured in *The Mirror* reminds readers: "Our society is still developing, and while we might want to catch up with advanced countries, we should be mindful of our culture. Sitting under trees and listening to Ananse stories sound a bit way out and old fashioned .... But really is there an alternative to that?" (July 16, 1988, p.11). Another commentator warns, "We need to be firm with video operators so that or children, our future leaders, our future assets, do not become nuisances within the community" (Oct., 8, 1988, p.8). Although video as a

technology and industry was distinct from and not contained by the regulations of the nation-state, Ghanaians, as represented in *The Mirror* columns and editorials, wanted video to function as film had functioned. It should be a mechanism over which the state maintained control and through which the nation and its culture would be strengthened in its resistance to the foreign values carried into Ghana by foreign films.

As video films and video centers were associated with moral corruption and cultural contamination, calls were made for the government to eradicate this public nuisance. The author of an article called, "Who's Kidding with Video Centres," explains that since the "video boom" when "more and more people were bringing in video sets and cassettes," the government and the police were "overtaken by the speed and sheer numbers of video operators" and "lost control" (*The Mirror*, April 16, 1988, p11). The first law passed by the Rawlings and the Provisional National defense Council (PNDC) government, in an effort to discourage children from skipping school, prohibited center owners from showing films during school-going hours. In October 1988, the Ghanaian government revoked all the licenses of video center owners in the country, but the action had little effect. A letter printed in *The Mirror* bemoaned the fact that despite the efforts of the Minister of Information to rein in the video centers, "all video centers again are in brisk business"(October 8, 1988, p.15).[7] Ghanaians wrote to the paper to urge the Ministry of Information to impose strict censorship measures, to establish standards for

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[7] A striking parallel to this situation is found in the response of many Americans, especially those of the middle and upper classes, to the nickelodeons theaters that emerged in American cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and attracted many immigrants and working class Americans. Progressives and social reformers feared that the nickelodeons would have negative effects on their patrons. See Eileen Bower, *The Transformation of Cinema, 1907-1915*, New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1990.

the operation of video centers, and to collect all fees and taxes that the centers were required by law. One commentator went as far as to suggest that the government should hold the film policy of the colonial governor of the Gold Coast as an example of an effective measure implemented to protect Ghanaians from the "anti-social effect" of imported films (*The Mirror*, April 16, 1988, p11). The editorials in the *Mirror*, by delineating the types of films and behaviors that fail to uphold the nation, in effect contribute to the production of a national consciousness. Furthermore, the complaints against the video film centers and their proprietors provide the nation-state with the opportunity to assert itself against neocolonialism and the anti-social practices it promotes. Calls for government control over anti-nation popular culture products refers to a Ghanaian nation that it, in effect, produces. In this way, the ambivalence of Third World nationalism is also reproduced. As the last quote makes clear, it is to the colonial state that the postcolonial nation looks for its model, naturalizing that which it defines itself against.

Producing Film History

The ambivalence surrounding the postcolonial nation in its strident efforts to oppose that which is Western, or foreign, and, hence, inauthentic is mirrored in African film criticism that reflects a Third Cinema perspective. As Paul Willeman explains, "Third Cinema is ... defined in terms of its difference from Euro-American cinema, thus implicitly using Hollywood and its national-industrial rivals as the yardstick against which to measure the other's otherness" (189). Stephen Zacks illustrates that in searching for authentic African culture in film, African film critics such as Teshome

Gabriel "continue to return us to the site of colonial conflict, with its nearly exhausted colonial oppositions" (17). He explains:

> All bear the unmistakable imprint of the Africanist imperative, like Said's Orientalist who began with a mythological conception of the difference between the Occident to the Orient: not to confuse Third World and African cinema with Western, Hollywood, or capitalist cinema, to maintain an essential distinction without bothering to reveal how the difference was introduced in the first place. (15)

Zacks' insight is important, but I do not want to repeat it here. Instead, I pose a slightly different question. I am not concerned simply with tracing another series of articulations of "colonial oppositions," but in understanding how such oppositions function at a specific historical moment and in response to contests for power and resources. This period of economic uncertainty, rapid globalization and the dissolution of the nation-state, dramatically changes how, and by whom, films are produced in Ghana and unleashes a private, amateur media culture that threatens not only Ghanaians whose children skip school to watch videos, but the first generation of celluloid filmmakers who were reliant on the state for employment and opportunity. In the next two sections of this chapter, I am interested in mapping how, within this climate, the binary between the authentic and the inauthentic is deployed. I also consider how, in the creation of film history, this struggle for power must be accounted for. As Trouillot remarks, "power does not enter the story once and for all, but at different times and from different angles. It precedes the narrative proper, contributes to its creation and interpretation" (28-29).

The outcry against video centers and foreign films dissipates in the late 80s and 90s, perhaps because Ghanaian filmmakers begin to produce local films on video cassette and in effect appropriate this "foreign" technology. The anti-video rhetoric,

however, does not disappear but takes another shape. The Arts and Entertainment column in *The Mirror*, which regularly ran columns and articles on the state of film production in the country became a forum that called on the nation-state to invest money in a color processing lab, theater refurbishment, and funding for film production.[8] If the Ghanaian state regulated video technology and video film through the closure of video centers and the imposition of censorship laws, the discourse of the film review repressed knowledge about video film in its promotion of those films deemed to be representative of "authentic" Ghanaian culture.

Dadson's Arts and Entertainment column posited 1987 as a pivotal year for film and video production. It was the first year since the founding of the FESPACO African Film Festival, according to Dadson, that "Ghanaian entries ... could not win a prize - a fact that must violently jerk the government and all persons concerned with the fortunes of filmmaking in this country to sit up and show more concern" (*The Mirror*, March 7, 1987, p.11). As if responding to this lament, in 1987 Kwaw Ansah, an independent filmmaker, produced his award-winning film *Heritage Africa*. This was also the year William Akuffo, an entrepreneur who imported and distributed celluloid films in Ghana, premiered his first video film, *Zinabu*, to large and enthusiastic crowds at the Globe Cinema.

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[8] Filmmaker Asamoah-Okae pleads with the PNDC "to consider seriously the building of a colour laboratory as this will boost filmmaking by cutting down drastically the amount of foreign currency a producer requires to produce a film" and to establish a film fund(*The Mirror*, Jan 3, 1987). *The Mirror*, Jan 24, 1987 reports that Secretary of Information, Mr. Kofi Totobi Qakyi, announces that plans are in the works "to organize a consortium of financial institutions to fund film production and processing."

In Dadson's column, Kwah Ansah's film is represented as a new start for film production in Ghana, and Ansah is the embodiment of a solution to a national crises in film production. Dadson devoted extensive coverage to Ansah and his film, featuring, during the shooting of the film, weekly updates. The following year, *Heritage* premiered and Ansah "dedicates it to mothers of Africa" (*The Mirror*, 29 Oct 1988, 11). Dadson applauds the film's content and the difficult questions it raises, "... whether we as sons of the motherland are being fair to her against the background of our abandonment of her values, the giving away of her treasures, and the total assimilation of western ways." An article on November 12th provides a detailed summary of the film. On December 3rd, Dadson reports that the film traveled to Harare and Cairo and was watched by African leaders and artists, such as President and Mrs Mugabe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, respectively. On February 11th, Dadson reports that the film was "off to Berlin," and on the 18th, informs readers that the film is headed "towards Ouagadougou" to compete in the bi-annual film festival, FESPACO. On March 11th, readers learn that *Heritage* wins the Grand Prix, the first English language film to take the prestigious award. On May 6th, a guest columnist writes a special feature in the Arts and Entertainment column, a tribute to Kwaw Ansah whose film "has been what one would call a savior" to "the film industry in Ghana." The film was celebrated a Ghanaian film, one that could represent the people of Ghana to Africa and the world and that had valuable lessons to teach about the preservation of authentic Ghanaian values against the threat of standardization posed by "western ways." The column reports on the film and promotes it, and, as a source of historical knowledge produces film history as both "knowledge and narrative" (Trouillot 23).

As Ansah prepared to leave Accra for London to complete post-production work on the film, Dadson reports that Ansah "has dropped a hint that he might quit filmmaking" because he "has had enough problems making others, especially funding institutions, see the importance of film in a developing country like Ghana" (11). Ansah's struggles to make his film and re-pay the lending agencies that funded the project became a part of the history of the film and the historical record of filmmaking in Ghana because Dadson was presenting a larger argument: the Ghanaian government must invest in film production.[9] What Dadson neglects to mention is that one of the reasons Ansah's film had difficulty recouping its costs was that local, Ghanaian audiences, were not as impressed by the film as the FESPACO judges or Berlin art-film audiences. Box-office returns for the film were low; nevertheless, while Ansah's film and its international exhibition and acclaim received extensive coverage, Akuffo's *Zinabu*, appearing to packed theaters and video centers throughout the country was erased from the historical record. Although not the first Ghanaian film made on video, *Zinabu* was the first to be promoted, locally, as a Ghanaian film and featured in one of Accra's largest theatres.[10] Indeed, the film was so successful that The Globe ran showings three

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[9] On January 28th, 1987 Dadson returns to the theme of finance and reports that "in some parts of the country a little over 30 million cedis has been realized out of which 21 million cedis has gone into taxes, hiring of theatres and operational expenses. Ansah, Dadson continues, "was optimistic that when the film begins to be shown outside the country, its revenue will contribute greatly towards paying back the loan graciously offered by the Social Security Bank, Ghana Commercial Bank, and National Investment Bank" (*The Mirror*, 11). Dadson writes that the film is scheduled to open in Nigeria on April 8th, and on the 29th, he reports that the film is "back at the Film Theatre," the main film theatre in Ghana, owned by GFIC and located on the grounds of the film company.

[10] This oral history, compiled from interviews I did while I was in Ghana, produces its own ambiguities. For example, Akuffo's claim to being the first video filmmaker in Ghana is contested. Prior to Akuffo's *Zinabu*, Alan Jima, operator of Video City, made a video film, in Twi, called *Abyssinia*, but the video was shown only in his theatre. Sidiku

times a day for over a week to meet viewer demand and the film played at local theatres for months after its initial release.[11] Despite the local success of *Zinabu*, *The Mirror* ran only one story announcing its release and reviewing it. In the article, Dadson refuses to refer to *Zinabu* as a video or a film. He describes it as "*a project* born out of enthusiasm, determination and dogged effort" and commends the "the idea behind *the project*," proclaiming that "Akuffo's *aim* is a laudable one" that could "revolutionize the film industry in Ghana as regards the great number of films that could be turned out"(italics mine)(Mirror, August 1, 1987, p.11). The review comments on the filmic qualities of *Zinabu* in one line. Dadson writes, "The story is hardly plausible and the technicalities are not perfect." And after the tremendous success of the film in Ghanaian theatres, however, no mention is made of *Zinabu* again.

The production of silences around Ghanaian video film enabled the construction of another historical narrative, one that privileged the professional, celluloid filmmakers whose "art" films re-presented authentic Ghana culture to international audiences. For Dadson, it is the international success of the film that qualifies it to be demonstrative of the government's need to revive the film industry. Faced with this new and seemingly

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Buari, another of the pioneers of the video industry, contends that he produced the first Ghanaian video film, *Ayalolo*. He claims that only after *Zinabu*'s success did he decide to show his film. Socrate Safo told me that he was filmming his film *Phobia Girl* when he first learned that Akuffo was editing a video film. Despite this debate, most filmmakers in Ghana refer to Akuffo as the first to use video to make a film.

[11] The Globe was not Akuffo's first choice for exhibiting his film. After shooting and editing the film, he approached GFIC and proposed to show the film in its theatres. But GFIC refused to consider exhibiting *Zinabu*. It wanted nothing to do with video exhibition, nor with an "amateur" filmmaker. Akuffo then went to The Globe, a private cinema. The manager declined Akuffo's request because she feared that Ghanaian audiences, accustomed to watching celluloid films, would reject a film made on video. Akuffo agreed to rent the theatre up front in order to premiere his film. His investment proved a profitable one.

unhinged video culture that precipitated the erosion of national control over, and investment in, the film industry, Dadson and other reviewers for *The Mirror* participate in the creation of standards of professionalism and aesthetic criteria that function to exclude the less-educated, private video producers from the historical record. Reviews published in *The Mirror* highlighted films produced by professionally trained celluloid filmmakers who attended film schools in Europe and North America. The GFIC, Reinery Films of Germany co-production, *Juju*, directed by King Ampaw, is released in Ghana in 1987, and the reviewer recommends the film because it "... has many parallels in our traditional society today" (*The Mirror*, 3 January 1987, p.11). The successful re-release of the GFIC film *I Told You So*, a film based on a Ghanaian concert party performance, according to Dadson, offered "a few tips for our filmmakers. First, it suggests that one does not need to crack one's brain to concoct a story for a film just because the film world is putting its heros in airplanes and skyscrapers. Ours is right there on the ground with an inexhaustible store of traditions and folklore to take inspiration from" (*The Mirror*, May 14, 1988, p.11). The films, produced by "professional" filmmakers with investment from the government, are deemed representative of authentic Ghanaian culture while, as the reference to the video filmmakers, accused of imitating the Western "film world," makes plain, video films were "inauthentic" because they disregarded Ghanaian "traditions and folklore."

Despite the availability of inexpensive video technology in the country, GFIC refused to purchase video equipment. It regarded video as an inferior, and unacceptable, alternative to celluloid. After the remarkable success of *Zinabu* and the video films that followed it, some of the producers and directors employed at the film company

approached the board of directors and suggested that it consider video production. GFIC refused. GFIC's first video production, in fact, was a fluke and was not released until 1992, almost ten years after the first, independent video production. The film *Dede* (1992), shot in black and white (because GFIC did not have a color laboratory nor the foreign currency to import color stock and send the film overseas for processing) was one of the last attempts to salvage state-sponsored, celluloid film production. The film's director, Tom Ribero, who was also the assistant managing director at GFIC, brought along a video camera and a video camera operator to work alongside the 35mm crew. Ribero wanted to be able to check his shots on location and to study his rushes between shoots. The GFIC labs were so run down that the black and white film was never processed. Ribero edited the video version of the film and GFIC agreed to exhibit it. The success of *Dede*, and the realization that the Rawlings government had no intention of investing in film production, led GFIC to turn, slowly and reluctantly, to video as a last resort. Yet, it is three years later that Dadson, finally, begins to include reviews of video films in his column.

Between 29 July 1995 and 23 September 1995 , a series of articles written by Nanabanyin Dadson were published in weekly installments in his Arts and Entertainment column in *The Mirror*. 1995 was an eventful year for film and video production in Ghana. This was the year the Rawlings government sold 70% of its holdings in GFIC to a Malaysian investor, and the state film company became GAMA Film Company. The same company founded TV3, the first independent television station in Ghana, and television was, and continues to be, the top priority of GAMA. The sale of GFIC was carried out secretly, and only after the divestiture had taken place were employees of

GFIC notified. Yet, ironically, 1995 was also the year the Minister of Information sponsored a week-long program of film showing and lectures to celebrate the centenary of cinema. Dadson's series of columns on film in Ghana must be read within this context. At a time when celluloid film production in Ghana no longer existed and the state owned film company had been privatized and sold to a foreign investor, Dadson's history of film in Ghana was an exercise in nostalgia and a concession to the realities of the present. His re-construction of Ghana's grand filmmaking past responded to the present crisis in celluloid filmmaking. The last installment of the series, entitled "Thanks to Video Producers," described the video industry and its emergence in the wake of the end of celluloid film production in the country. Dadson commends video producers for stepping in to fill a void in film production and calls on the "professionals" to work with the "amateurs" to save film production in Ghana. Although, as Dadson acknowledges in the article, over 100 video films had been produced in Ghana at the time of publication, this article was only one of a very few that Dadson had written on Ghanaian video film, and the first time he had attempted to describe it as anything more than the clumsy efforts of a bunch of amateurs. Dadson's history slips at this point and its present moment of articulation is revealed. Here the unsaid disrupts the seemingly seamless flow of events and "the fragile and necessary boundary between a past object and a current praxis begins to waver" (de Certeau 37). Dadson's serialized history of Ghana's film industry, in acknowledging the proliferation of video films in Ghana and his silence about those films, calls attention to the absences produced by his writings on film in the Arts and Entertainment column.

Artists vs. Entrepreneurs

The description of the video industry as a battle between the artists and the entrepreneurs re-appears in the interviews I conducted while in Ghana. The professionally trained filmmakers who work in television and broadcasting derided the video films for their lack of artistic merit and criticized the filmmakers for exchanging African themes and storylines for racy, Hollywood plots that equal profits. Wallace Bampoe-Addo and Kofi Boateng, Ghanaian filmmakers who refuse to make films on video, complained because the desire for profit has usurped African aesthetics and artistry. Chris Hesse, who was trained in Poland and at the Sorbonne and worked as Nkrumah's camera operator, went so far as to compare the video filmmakers to members of "the colonial regime" who were "telling us blacks what we were supposed to be." He explained, "The early video makers were trying to follow the same pattern by shooting films on juju, nakedness, hunger, pain, suffering, what the whites were thinking that we were" in order to run a profit. Filmmaking in Ghana is no longer an art form that reflects tradition, but a profit making venture.[12] Paradoxically, the filmmakers who made charges against the video filmmakers similar to these, such as Chris Hesse, King Ampaw, Ato Yanney, Lambert Hama, and Sam Ayeetey, among others, received film training from British filmmakers in the Gold Coast FilmUnit or attended film schools in Europe. In interviews with these filmmakers, they cited as their sources of inspiration European and American film directors, such as Hitchcock, Goddart, and Spielberg, and they refered, again and again, to the West as the location to which they look for models and recognition.

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[12] Personal interviews, July 15, 1998, Accra, Ghana.

Seth Ashong-Katai, a second generation video filmmaker who was trained at The National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI), the film school established by Nkrumah, invoked the same narrative about art and excellence. In distinguishing popularly successful from award-winning films, he stated: "You know when we are looking at awarding of films we are talking about excellence. We have to know that to say I like this film and to say this film is good are two different things. You know there may be films that people like, like kung-fu films, which a lot of times you find artistically bankrupt." His point of reference for excellence was "Oscar films in Hollywood." Lambert Hama, who trained in Paris as an employee of GFIC and who now works for GAMA Films, compared video to photography. With the proliferation of still cameras, he explained "everybody now was a still photographer. This is exactly what video is doing now. So everybody takes the video camera and wants to be a filmmaker. This, I think, does not auger well for the industry." He calls for the streamlining of the industry: "What I learned [in film school] is that you can't go to America and take a camera and say okay I am shooting. There are rules and regulations there. The same thing applies to Britain." The accuracy of his claim is not significant to my analysis. What is significant is his deferral to international film policies as the norms that validate his argument. Kofi Nartey, who produced *Back Home Again* on celluloid, favors celluloid because "to be able to reach an international audience, to be able to acquire international clout as a filmmaker" one needs to make films on celluloid.

Periodically, Dadson published letters written by the "professionals" that pleaded for government investment or criticized the "unprofessionalism" of the video filmmakers. Ato Yanney in a column called, "To Be or Not To Be a Filmmaker" writes:

"Since auto mechanics, circumcisers, lotto receivers, etc started to make crowd-pleasing motion pictures in Ghana, a misleading impression has been created that one does not have to go to film school to be in a position to make films" (*The Mirror*, 22 Aug 1988, p.11). This is troubling to Yanney because "as a developing country, we, the present generation, are laying foundations in all areas of human endeavor." His search for foundations turns to Western authorities on film. Quoting a source called "The Work of the Film Director" by Ray Nertson, Yanney argues that " 'The goals of directing are achieved through the measurable and tangible means of mechanics, optics, electronics, and chemistry'" and therefore requires professional education and training. He complains because "filmmaking, unlike medicine and other professions which are strictly out of bounds to the unqualified, has no restrictive rules because it is an art." What remains a "hobby" in the "developed world" is a danger in the Ghana that must be subjected to government regulation. The standards upheld by Yanney do not exist outside of the global flows that carried video recorders and cassettes of foreign films to Ghana. For Yanney, the West is the norm against which the Ghanaian film industry falls short.

The "artists," who allegedly stand for the protection of Ghanaian traditions against cultural imperialism, rely on Western standards to determine what is artistic and traditional. In response to this, video filmmakers claimed to speak for the people, the average Ghanaians who pay to see and rent "their" video films. Long criticized in print and broadcast media in Ghana as hacks, the video filmmakers did not deny the differences between themselves and the generation that preceded them. Indeed, they took this binary and reproduced it in their own rhetoric and embraced the fact that they were not members of the neo-colonial elite who attended foreign film schools and looked to

the government to sponsor and promote their products. Socrate Safo celebrates his amateur status, and time and time again tells newspaper reporters who interview him when he releases a new film that he was in school to be an auto mechanic when he decided to become a filmmaker. In fact, this is the story he first told me when I met him during my first trip to Ghana in 1998, and he repeated it when I returned the following year and interviewed him again. The video filmmakers see themselves as revolutionaries; they represent the voice of the Ghanaian people, who cast their votes in favor of video by purchasing tickets and cassettes. In the interviews, they alleged that they have given Ghanaians images of themselves at a time when the nationalist-culturalist film industry failed to do so, and instead of being tainted by their ties to consumer capitalism, argued that consumption of their commodities fuels their mission. William Akuffo explains that Ghanaians spend their money on video films because within them are "stories people can identify with and our stories actually come from our neighborhoods. Things I have heard happened next door, or in my village. People can relate to our stories."[13]

The video filmmakers, however, fail to acknowledge that the tastes of their audiences, and their own conceptions of filmmaking, have been shaped by the imported films and television programs readily available in Ghana. The first video filmmakers were not involved in film production and were not employees of GFIC or graduates of NAFTI. Instead, they were connected to private film and video exhibition, and therefore the content of their films has been influenced by the films they watched. William Akuffo imported and distributed celluloid films, and after the success of *Zinabu*, purchased the

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[13] Personal Interview, March 2000.

Globe Cinema. Socrate Safo, who is credited with producing the second Ghanaian video film, *Phobia Girl*, worked at Sam Bea's Video Centre. And Sam Bea, whose video center was the third to open in Accra, made a video film called *Deliverance* soon after the release of Safo's *Phobia Girl*. Video technology attracted these "amateurs" to filmmaking and made it possible for them to produce films. Socrate Safo explains that he first saw a video camera when Sam Bea, his boss, hired a video camera and operator to tape the naming ceremony he hosted for his twins. Sam Bea then showed the film in his video center, and people who lived in his neighborhood, who attended the ceremony, paid to see themselves. Safo explains that immediately he knew he could use video to become a filmmaker. The following year, he wrote a story outline, organized a few friends, rented a VHS camera and shot *Phobia Girl*. Indeed, consciously or otherwise, these self-taught video filmmakers adopt the technics and themes of Indian films, American and Brazilian soap operas featured on TV, pirated copies of Hollywood action films sold as cassettes in video stores, and the Nigerian video films that are tremendously popular in Ghana.

The debate surrounding which text best speak for Ghanaian culture and the Ghanaian nation parallels a recent debate within globalization studies. In a recently published essay entitled "Globalization as Philosophical Issue" Fredric Jameson identifies two "visions" of globalization (56) predominant in literature on the topic: the cultural and the economic. According to the cultural vision, globalization is "a postmodern celebration of difference and differentiation" and "a celebration of the emergence of a whole immense range of groups, races, genders, ethnicities, into the speech of the public sphere" (56-57). On the other hand, the economic vision understands

globalization as "the rapid assimilation of hitherto autonomous national markets and productive zones into a single sphere ... a picture of standardization on an unparalleled new scale" (57). The cultural vision might be aligned with the position adopted by the video filmmakers, who defend their videos against accusations of being non-professional and neo-colonial and argue that their videos allow for the stories of the ordinary Ghanaian to be told. The filmmakers, on the other hand, call for the standardization and regulation of filmmaking in an effort to prevent the "amateur" video filmmakers from producing films and to initiate government investment in the film industry. They believe that their films best represent Ghanaian culture and cite the recognition bestowed on those films by international audiences as proof of the value of their films.

What Jameson posits, initially, as a debate between the two opposing positions on globalization, he comes to understand as "...the abstract opposition of Identity and Difference with a specific content of unity versus multiplicity" (73). He writes:

> ...I propose the following hypothesis: that these differences do not have to do with Difference so much as with where it is located or positioned ....everything depends on the level at which a malign and standardizing or despotic identity is discerned. If this is to be found in the existence of the State itself, as a national entity, then to be sure, a more micropolitical form of difference, in markets and culture, will be affirmed over against it as a force for the resistance of uniformity and power .... However, when one positions the threats of Identity at a higher level globally, then everything changes: at this upper range, it is not national state power that is the enemy of difference, but rather the transnational system itself, Americanization and the standardized products of a henceforth uniform and standardized ideology and practice of consumption. (74)

This is where the comparison breaks down. Both the video filmmakers and the first generation filmmakers defend their own difference, the uniqueness of Ghanaian culture as reflected in their videos and films, against the onslaught of foreign films and values, against what Jameson might describe as sameness, or standardization. The debate is

about which films carry "authentic" Ghanaian culture. Is it the elites who know what is best representative of Ghanaian culture, even if Ghanaian film goers are not interested in these films? Or is it the popular filmmakers, whose film raise the hackles of the Western-educated cultural-nationalist filmmakers? Significantly, each side of this debate, while defining itself against neocultural values and images, invoke stylistic and thematic elements that derive from "outside " and look to the West for validation.

Chapter Two: Urban Wives and Village Witches: The Re-making of the Family in *The Boy Kumasenu*, and *Expectations*

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the space of the nation, revisiting the opposition between the village and the city as imagined and imaged in the film *The Boy Kumasenu* and the video film *Expectations*. I trace the projection of nationhood onto the landscape in *The Boy Kumasenu* (1952), a film produced by the Gold Coast Film Unit five years before Ghanaian independence from British colonial rule. In this film, the village and urban landscapes underwrite what Anne McClintock has described as "Britain's emergent national narrative" which, she continues, "took shape increasingly around the image of the evolutionary family of men. The family offered an indispensable metaphoric figure by which national difference could be shaped into a single historical genesis narrative" (99). The evolutionary national narrative, as presented in *The Boy Kumasenu*, maps time onto space and places the village in a backward African past of fetish priests and extended family relations. The city, alternatively, is progress, a metonymy for the modern nation, and the conjugal family lodged there, the model on which the new nation will stand. The second part of this chapter examines the recently produced, Ghanaian video film *Expectations* (1999). In this text, the landscapes of the village and the city are not merely representative of tradition (read Africa) and modernity (read the West), but are tropes deployed in the video film to articulate a position in current and national debates about gender and marital relations. The village houses the extended family, or the kin group, set not in the past, but confronting the economic and

social pressures of contemporary life in Ghana. The cityscape, on the other hand, supports the husband and wife, or conjugal family. Here, couples joined by romantic love and Christianity are free of the demands of the extended family. Far from intending to represent life as it is, the film aims to set out what should be. It conceals an ideological investment in normalizing the conjugal family within a familiar West African narrative about the juxtaposition of life in the village and the city. Space is deployed as a site in which particular marital and family, and by implication gender, relations are imposed and normalized.

Defining Family

Anne McClintock has written extensively on the gendered character of the nation-state, arguing that "nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalization of gender *difference*" (1997, 89). One institution that reproduces gender difference is the conjugal, nuclear family. According to McClintock, the family offers a "'natural' figure for sanctioning national hierarchy" (1997, 91). In this chapter, I am interested in looking at disputes about the meaning of family played out in two nationalist narratives prominent at two different moments in Ghanaian history: those active during the transition from colonial state to independent nation-state and during the post-colonial, post-revolution administration of President J.J.Rawlings and the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). A great deal of recent scholarship by historians and anthropologists documents the dramatic shift in the meaning of marriage and family that occurred in Ghana as a result of colonialism, the imposition of a cash economy, the increase of private property ownership, the expanding cocoa market and

increased missionary activity.[1] Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian, in their excellent book *"I Will Not Eat Stone": A Women's History of Colonial Asante* (2000), argue convincingly that the dramatic changes initiated by British colonialism produced "nothing short of widespread gender chaos" (75) that the colonial state sought to control and legislate directly and indirectly through its empowerment of traditional chiefs and tribal courts. In very general language, one can say that prior to the rupture brought about by colonialism, marriage among several Ghanaian ethnic groups, but most notably among the Asante, the largest ethnic group in present-day Ghana, was not understood as a static and monolithic state-of-being, but a process, and a process that varied considerably among families and kin networks. Marriage was "open to the interpretations of the parties involved at a particular moment in time," and it was couples and their families, not the state, that "retained the power to define the status of any known conjugal relationship" (Allman and Tashjian 57).

Dorothy Dee Vellenga suggests that because of the flexibility and diversity of Asante marital forms, the British "were continually perplexed" by "the lack of a common budget between husband and wife, and inheritance of property by matrikin rather than the widowed spouse" (145). Both husband and wife came into the marriage with their own

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[1] See Christine Oppong, *Marriage Among a Matrilinial Elite: A Family Study of Ghanaian Senior Civil Servants*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1974. Dorothy Dee Vellenga, "Who is a Wife? Legal Expressions of Heterosexual Conflicts in Ghana" and Katherine Abu, "The Separateness of Spouses: Conjugal Resources in an Ashanti Town," in *Female and Male in West Africa*, Christine Oppong, ed. London: George Allen, 1983. Garcia Clark, "Negotiating Asante Family Survival in Kumasi, Ghana." *Africa* 69.1 (1999): 66-85. Several studies also explore changing marital relationships in other West African countries. See Kristin Mann, *Marrying Well: Marriage, Status and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980 and Barbara Harrell-Bond, *Modern Marriage in Sierra Leone: A Study of the Professional Group*. The Hague: Mouton, 1975.

property and retained possession of it after the marriage was dissolved. Prior to the introduction of a cash crop economy, husbands and wives worked together on family farms fulfilling "reciprocal obligations" (Allman and Tashjian 61). Married women and men helped each other cultivate and harvest their plots on family properties. As both husband and wife owned family property and "benefitted equally from conjugal labor" disputes over marital assets, after divorce or the death of a spouse, were rare (61). Divorce was accepted as one possible outcome of marriage; it was common and easily obtained, and "men and women alike were free to end a marriage at any time, for any or no reason, even against the wishes of their spouse" (59). Reciprocal relations between husband and wife eroded as the cocoa economy expanded. The cash cropping of cocoa drew many men away from subsistence farming, and as more and more men went into cocoa farming in order to benefit from the high price garnered for the cash crop, the land available for cultivation diminished and married couples had to migrate away from family properties to find land. Allman and Tashjian note that in the early 1900s travel shifted the balance of conjugal labor from one of reciprocal relations between husband and wife to one in which the husband obtained the rights to the newly purchased land and exploited his wife's labor to make it profitable. For women, the consequences of this were grave. The wife who moved to a new farm with her husband was distanced from her family and "from family land that might provide alternative economic security, and from female kin who could share childcare responsibilities" (Allman and Tashjian 65). She abandoned her family properties, of which she was part owner, leaving behind the income the properties might provide her, and she became the dependent of her husband, farming land over which she maintained no use-rights. As a wife's financial autonomy

dwindled, the system of reciprocal obligations collapsed (64).

The above is one example of the way the cash crop economy, according to Allman and Tashjian, produced the "monetization of marriage" (68) in Ghana, which in turn, over several decades, changed marriage rituals dramatically. "Money, even in small amounts, became central to the rituals between a man and a woman's family" (70), and hence divorce proceedings and inheritance became increasingly monetized. As marriage became more monetized and as women lost their ties to their matrikin, divorce and inheritance became disputes over property and money that pitted "traditional," or customary marriage practices against "legal," conjugal relations. Vellenga notes that the British and the native courts it organized enforced legislation "aimed at clearly defining and strengthening the marital bond in opposition to the lineage bond" (145). According to Allman and Tashjian, "the conjugal chaos set in motion by cash and cocoa did not and could not remain a family affair. The presence of the native courts, particularly after 1924, meant that defining marriage was also an affair of the colonial state, as mediated by the evolving structures of indirect rule" (75). The exchange of monies and drinks, something that prior to the interference of native and colonial courts was not essential to the formalization of marriage, became the determining factor of whether or not a marriage was legal. Ironically, it is the exchange of monies and the legal disputes that resulted after monetary exchange was codified in colonial law as the defining feature of a "legal" marriage that are stigmatized as "customary" practices inappropriate to "modern" marriage and romantic love in disputes over marriage and inheritance during the tenure of Rawlings in post-Revolutionary Ghana. In fact, what becomes recognized as "customary" marriage is a definition of marriage derived largely from the imposition of

colonialism and cash cropping at a specific historical juncture. The label "customary" is attached to this type of marriage to present it as a pre-colonial, pre-historical and therefore barbaric institution not suitable to the "modern" nation. I will return to this discussion later in the chapter.

By the 1930s, women, too, were able to take advantage of the thriving cash cocoa economy to earn income. They purchased their own cocoa farms, and as men left small-scale trading for more lucrative occupations in waged work in urban areas, entered the profession of trading in the rapidly expanding urban centers in large numbers (Clark, 1994, 381; Allman and Tashjian 13). In the 1940s and 50s, the Africanization of the civil service and business sectors removed men from lower-level government positions as clerks and typists, enabling women to take these jobs as urbanization and the expanding economy continued to create demands for traders.[2] According to Allman and Tashjian, many women during these years opted out of marriage in order to secure financial independence and security for themselves, and it was these efforts to re-gain economic autonomy that "sparked the creation or reformulation of measures to control women's productive and reproductive power" (169). Native courts increasingly placed marriage within the public realm, legislating against adultery (Native Jurisdiction Ordinace of 1924) and requiring women married under customary law to declare their loyalty to their husbands in court (Wives' Fidelity Declaration Order of 1949). Mission societies and self help organizations functioned, beside the structures of indirect rule, "to address the gender chaos ... sparked in no part by the movement of women into the cash economy" (208) by educating women in how to be wives and mothers within the conjugal family

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[2] See Clark, *Onions Are my Husband*, 1995, Chapter Eight, "Multiple Indentities."

arrangement. Organizations such as the Methodist Women's Fellowship Group and schools administered by the Methodist church promoted "Christian colonial motherhood" (201) and taught "western nuclear family values and parental responsibility" (205).

Although primarily interested in the ways British colonialism impacted the productive and reproductive lives of women, Allman and Tashjian also describe the forging of the connection between the ideological terrain of the family and the emergent nation-state. The "gender crises" described above intensified during the last decades of colonialism, and during this period, the colonial state "with a centralized and increasingly hegemonic" state apparatus asserted control over "wayward women" by establishing "a colonial moral order" (183) that placed marriage within its purview. The conjugal, nuclear family became the model against which adultery was defined and on which efforts to educate Asante women in becoming wives and mothers was based. In the next section, I read *The Boy Kumasenu* as an articulation of the colonial discourse that yoked the nuclear family to the nation. The film casts the nuclear family as the foundation of and hope for the modern nation and demonstrates that the naturalization of the nuclear family model was bound up with discourses about, not only motherhood and family, but male subjectivity and national identity. Significantly, it is Kumasenu, a boy who grows to be a man, whose emergent subjectivity signifies the emergent nationalism the film intends to produce. The male subject achieves his place as a member of the nation by displacing deviant desire for extended family members or independent women and entering the regulated realm of the nuclear family.

The Boy Kumasenu

Produced on the eve of Ghanaian independence, *The Boy Kumasenu* was intended to be a documentary on the causes of juvenile delinquency, but Sean Graham, the director of the film and founder of the Gold Coast Film Unit, decided to produce a feature film instead (Adjokatcher 2). The film retells a familiar West African tale about the treacherous journey from the village to the city, but re-formulates the tale as a colonial narrative about the inevitability of modernity and the dangers it brings. Kumasenu, a young boy who grows up in what the narrator describes as "the simple fishing village of his ancestors" longs to leave the village and follow his cousin Egbo to the city of Accra "where everything is new."[3] During his migration from the village to the city, Kumasenu escapes jail and avoids delinquency only because Dr. Tamakole, a member of the Ghanaian elite, welcomes Kumasenu into his nuclear family. The film presents the conjugal family, comprised of patriarchal father, devoted mother, and child, as the foundation of the nation, and this colonial, national narrative is wholly reliant on gender difference. Kumasenu, the male citizen-subject, journeys to adulthood (manhood) on a path on which women operate as signposts. He leaves the village and his extended family, where he has neither mother nor father, passes through the temptation of the unattached and licentious urban market woman, and into the maternal embrace of Grace, the wife of Dr. Tamakole.

In the opening sequence of *The Boy Kumasenu* the spectator looks upon a group

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[3] Initially, Kumasenu's uncle refuses to let him go because he wants the boy to grow up to become a leader among their people. A poor fish harvest, however, convinces Uncle Fiawoo that Kumasenu's "restlessness" is scaring off the fish and that it is best if he allows him to leave, "to know what is beyond, to read and write, and find out why iron cars go as swift as the shark."

of Ghanaian men dancing in a drinking spot to the film's theme song, "Nora." The spectator is "inside" the world of the film, positioned by the camera as one of the Ghanaian men leaning against a wall of the club, watching and listening. The film cuts to a long take of a compacted and busy African city street, and the spectator hears the voice of a narrator, projected from somewhere "outside" of the film: "This is the story of the old and the new, where the changeless ways of uncounted centuries collide with the changing ways of our own." The voice of the omnipotent, British male narrator addresses the audience throughout the entire film, translating Twi into English, explaining customs and behaviors, and interpreting the actions and thoughts of characters. The intrusion of an extra-diegetic interpreter, who inserts phrases such as "our own," suggests that the film hails an audience positioned in the "modern," European world of change and newness. The oscillation between the inside and outside of the film narrative characterizes the way the film positions its audience. The spectator is outside of the film narrative in the village sequences, but in the later, city segments, the spectator is inserted into the world of the film. The film appears to shift between two objects of address, at points hailing Ghanaians and at others spectators in the metropole. This may simply suggest that the Gold Coast Film Unit attempted to make a film that would appeal to audiences in Ghana and England, where the film was exhibited (Diawara, 1992, 5). However, a more compelling argument understands the camera's migrating focus as representative of the place occupied by the Ghanaian elite at the time of the film's production. This class of Ghanaians, most of whom were men, were educated in the West and returned to Ghana to live in the urban areas and work as professionals. They were envisioned, by the colonial government and themselves, as the class that would assume

command of the nation-state at independence. The coming of age story of a village boy, Kumasenu, analogizes the coming of age story of Ghana and offers a paternalistic warning to the soon-to-be independent nation and its guardians. In the final scene of the film, the narrator summarizes this warning: "...sail boldly into the new but let the wake of your craft be gentle. Let your past remain upright and proud until we build our ships of the same timber."

Although the distance of framing and shot duration vary throughout the film, long takes and slow pans dominate the scenes of the village, producing a greater spatial and temporal distance between the film's representation of village life and the film audience. Extreme long takes and slow pans of the fishermen dragging in their nets, for example, represent village life for the audience. In the village sequence Kumasenu is shot as if he were a feature of the landscape. He frolics in the waves of the ocean, climbs a coconut tree for coconuts, walks along the shore and sits on the beach, dreaming of the city, while the disembodied, ethnographic gaze of the camera observes this exotic place untouched by time. The omnipotent narrative voice and extra-diegetic music overtake the sounds of the village, and the audience is further displaced from its space and time. The sounds of the village landscape and the voices of the villagers are overlaid by the voice of the narrator. The technique is not quite a dubbing of the sound, but a translation of it. The spectator might see the mouths of Kumasenu and his Uncle moving, but hears the narrator's summary and explication of their speech. The narrator, assuming the role of the anthropologist, speaks over the villagers and explains who they are, and how they think for the "outsider," and in this way reinforces the sense that the African village is not a part of the modern world. This use of ethnographic film technique consolidates the

narrator's hold on the meaning derived from the film. The colonial voice and gaze contain the colonized and align the spectator with the observing eye and interpreting voice of the camera. The peoples of the Gold Coast are artifacts to be observed and studied by an audience detached from the place and time of the film. The spectator sits in the location and time of the "modern" world and watches events unfold in another, primitive, time and place.

As Kumasenu moves from the changeless time and space of the village to the "outside world" of the "modern" city, the camera re-positions the spectator and effectively conceals its gaze. The spectator leaves the villagescape where she/he was positioned as an outside observer and where the act of looking at and analyzing the strange and exotic was foregrounded. In the city, the spectator enters the time and space of the narrative of the film, where the act of looking is concealed by continuity editing that simulates "real" time and creates what Teresa de Lauretis refers to as "the achieved coherence of a 'narrative space' which holds, binds, entertains the spectator at the apex of the representational triangle as the subject of vision" (de Lauretis, 1984, 27). Long takes and slow pans of the village landscape give way to close-ups, mid-takes and shot-reverse-shot sequences in the store and city. In presenting Kumasenu at work in the store where he "first met the twentieth century," the frame of the camera narrows considerably, replacing the expansive village landscape at which the spectator looked from a distance with the intimate and immediate interior of the store. At this point in the film, the sound occurring within the diegesis seeps into the space of the spectator, erasing the border between the outside and inside of the film narrative. The voiceover, yields, in fragments, to the sounds of people speaking Twi and Pidgin English. Pidgin is a language

that the narrator describes as "a blend of the old and the new," aligning the languages teleologically and placing the "familiar" language closer to the time/space of the modern. As the space of the city is imagined as occupying a temporality closer to the modern, the audience enters into the city without the guidance of the narrator. The first close-up in the film appears here, as Kumasenu discovers the joy of listening to a record on the gramophone while the men who have come to the store to buy beer dance.[4] Kumasenu moves into the city, and the camera looks with him, not at him. The spectator is focalized through Kumasenu's perspective as he travels through the congested streets of Accra, navigating its joys and temptations.

The juxtaposition of city and village, achieved in part through the shift in the location of the spectator, contributes to the normalization of a narrative of progress in which the primitive and backward ways of the African village evolve into those of the modern city. The film's narrative reiterates this teleology by presenting two very different constructions of the family: the "traditional" family or kin network, lodged in the space/time of the village, and the modern nuclear or conjugal family of the good doctor Tamakole and his generous wife, Grace. While in the village, the narrator emphasizes that Kumasenu is "an orphan," alone, without a mother, and left under the supervision of his uncle and aunt, who are portrayed as little more than figurines in the exotic village. Uncle Fiawoo, who clings to the "old ways," fearful of the anger of the ancestors, and his wife, the unnamed aunt, who turns to the fetish priest for counsel because she is worried about her nephew's restlessness, stand in sharp contrast to the

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[4] In this scene, Kumasenu marvels at this strange and wonderful technology. The civilizing mission has begun and native boy discovers European music.

man of science and his dutiful wife. Dr. and Mrs. Tamakole exemplify the elite class of Ghanaians charged with running the country after the end of colonial rule and are portrayed as models of fatherhood and motherhood. The Doctor is "a man trained to take his place in the complicated life of the city, " a gentleman, educated in science and art, and charitable, the benevolent patriarch of his nuclear household. His academic prowess is emphasized as the camera pauses at the sign posted at his front door listing his numerous university degrees. The audience first encounters the Doctor as he is sculpting, and his wife comes upon him. She has been doing the monthly accounts, and gently scolds him for not charging his clients more money for his services. He responds, earnestly, "If I turned them away because of their poverty, it would be on my conscience. If they don't pay me when they can afford to, that's on their conscience." His speech, authoritative and sprinkled with platitudes, resembles that of the narrator. Dr. Tamakole speaks for himself, and the narrative provides only commentary about what he says. Uncle Fiawoo does not voice his own speech. His speech is rendered to the audience in translation by the narrator, in a broken and choppy, almost childlike, English that represents Uncle Fiawoo as primitive or unintelligent. Grace Tamkole also speaks within the diegesis of the film, in perfect English. In contrast, Kumasenu's aunt is completely silent in the film, leaving no visual signs of her speech, unlike Uncle Fiawo, who the spectator sees speaking although his voice is not heard . The narrator's voice does not seem to be translating the aunt's words, but inserting them.

Kumasenu's journey from the village to the city is his coming-of-age story. Kumasenu, literally, grows into a man as the film's narrative progresses and his skinny boyish frame becomes tall and strong and his smooth face becomes shaded by facial hair.

He embodies the emergent nation of Ghana, approaching independence at the meeting of the old and the new. Dr. Tamakole finds himself entranced with the face of Kumasenu. The narrator remarks: "As a sculptor, he saw in it the youth of his country, swiftly emerging from its ancient tranquility into the confusion of the present age. In Kumasenu he saw a boy on a bridge, uncertainly and unhappily making his way from one world to another." The journey to the city and to adulthood represent Kumasenu as a subject-in-process, and his subjectivity occurs only through the regulation of desire for the love of his cousin Egbo, for the adventures of the city, and for Adobia, the sexualized and financially independent woman who befriends Kumasenu. The film implies that the Ghanaian nation will emerge only through the regulated heterosexual economy of the conjugal family.

Kumasenu displaces his admiration and love for his cousin Egbo by transforming this desire into hatred. The film demonstrates that Kumasenu's attachment to this member of the extended family is inappropriate because each of his attempts to please and impress Egbo creates trouble. Egbo represents a threat to the Tamakole family and Kumasenu's place in it. Kumasenu's happiness, first, is interrupted when the troublesome cousin Egbo shows up, in wing-tipped shoes and a wide-collared shirt, dressed like a gangster in the American films popular during this time, at the store where Kumasenu's uncle has found him a job, before venturing to Accra. Egbo captivates Kumasenu with wild tales of city life, and Kumasenu, in an attempt to please his cousin, shows him where the storekeeper hides his money. That evening, Egbo returns to the bar and steals the storekeeper's stash. The following morning, he "dashes" Kumasenu ten pounds and excitedly tells him to leave for Accra while he still can. The naive Kumasenu

follows his cousin's orders, not realizing that his cousin has in fact framed him for a crime that he committed. The narrator explains that "the Boy Kumasenu forgot his consciousness and rode to the big city to savor the good life of which Egbo has spoken so often." The desire for achieving the "good life," as fabricated by Egbo, and Kumsenu's desire to please and impress his cousin lead him toward the city of Accra.

While in the city and living happily with Doctor Tamakole and his family, Egbo again appears and convinces Kumasenu that the police have been hunting for him because they believe that he stole the storekeeper's money. He threatens to turn Kumasenu over to the police if he does not unlock the door to the doctor's examination room, where the doctor keeps the drugs that Egbo and his friends want to steal. Kumasenu refuses and is beaten by Egbo and his gang. One evening, when Mrs. Tamakole is out of town and the doctor out of the house calling on a patient, Egbo and the gang of boys break into the doctor's surgery. The narrator solemnly proclaims, "At that moment, Kumasenu became of age. The child became a man." Kumasenu alerts the police and, after a long chase and struggle with a knife, apprehends Egbo. "Kumasenu the hunted had become Kumasenu the hunter." Within the logic of the film, the admiration of the young boy for his delinquent cousin must be displaced in order for the boy to enter manhood, to become a member of the Tamakole family, and a productive member of the nation. Only when he comes to know Egbo, the narrator surmises, for what he is, "an enemy of all those who observe the simple laws that allow men to work and enjoy their lives without fear" can he defeat his cousin in an act of physical violence that validates his manhood and his place in modern Ghana.

Kumasenu's attraction to the sexualized character Adobia also must be repressed in order for him to become a son and citizen. Upon his arrival in the city, Kumasenu confronts crowds, traffic, unfriendliness and congestion. Night falls and he has no place to spend the night until Adobia, speaking to him in Twi, invites him to come home with her, where she feeds him and gives him a mat on which to sleep. Kumasenu stays with Adobia and her boyfriend Yeboa, forming a family of sorts. Adobia, who is a successful trader, hires Kumasenu to work for her, and all is well, until Mr Mensah, the rich lawyer whose "protection" Adobia enjoys, discovers that Yeboa, who happens to be Mr. Mensah's chauffeur, is spending time with Adobia, his girlfriend. Mr. Mensah files a false report at the police station, and the police arrest Adobia and Yeboa for assault, and once again Kumasenu is left to walk the streets.

Kumasenu's affection for Adobia wavers between the sexual and maternal. Filmically, Adobia, whom the narrator describes as "a friend to many men but faithful to none," is presented as an object of desire before the gaze of the spectator and the gaze of Kumasenu. When Kumasenu first encounters her, he gazes up at her figure, illuminated by soft backlighting and clad in a tight, Western style dress. For the spectator and Kumasenu, Adobia's image is sexualized. On his first night sleeping outside and below her window, he follows the form of her figure behind the closed curtain as she dances with Mr. Mensah to the song "Nora," the very song that played the first time he heard the gramophone, and he smiles. The light switches off and the music dies, and a shot of Kumasenu's face in close-up reveals anxiety and worry. Kumasenu wears the same anxious look when he sees Adobia dancing with Yeboa, and singing a love song in his ear. In this scene, Adobia is the object of multiple gazes: those of Yeboa, Kumasenu, the

other dancers on the floor and men at the bar, the spectator, and the film's narrator, who doesn't speak during the sequence but seems to watch and listen to the song she sings in Yeboa's ear. She is a woman "displayed," as described by Laura Mulvey, existing "as an erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as an erotic object for the spectator (19). The spectacle of woman is the point of suture at which "the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined" (19).[5] The cinematic apparatus produces a gendered division of labor. Adobia provides the active, male, spectator-subject with "direct scopophilic contact with the female form displayed for his enjoyment" (Mulvey 21) and "a satisfying sense of omnipotence" (20). Thus producing a masculinized spectator-space as the spectator, sutured to the male protagonist, "projects his look onto that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look" (Mulvey 20). The active male viewer exists as such in his relation to the passive female object of his gaze.

The film sets up a comparison between the two female figures whom Kumasenu encounters in the city and implies that Kumasenu leaves one in order to find the other. Indeed, when Kumasenu meets the doctor and his wife, the narrator comments that he "found new friends to take the place of Adobia." If these two female characters are examined within the context of the debates outlined in the beginning of this chapter

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[5] A tension, however, exists between the gaze of Kumasenu upon Adobia and the narrator's interpretation of the look. The voice-over purges the gaze of any sexual connotation, describing their relationship as one of work and friendship. Yet, when Yaboa and Adobia leave the bar, Yaboah tells Kumanseu to "shove off," and the narrator adds, with a hint of irony, "Three is a crowd in any country." For the first and only time, the narrator articulates his suspicion of Kumasenu's attachment to Adobia.

concerning the colonial state's attempts to exert control over what was perceived as women's uncontrolled and dangerous sexuality and their economic independence, the film can be read as a reiteration of the colonial state's institutionalization of the conjugal, nuclear family. The rigid heterosexual regime that underwrites this construction of the family prescribes, as natural and normal, different cultural roles for men and women. Men, like Kumasenu and Dr. Tamkole, belong to the public world. They are active subjects. "Normal" women are mothers and wives, while sexually licentious and economically independent, unmarried women are regarded as aberrations of or threats to the family and the nation. The film equates Adobia's independence with sexual promiscuity. The narrator informs the spectator that she is "a successful trader by day" and "by night enjoyed the protection of a wealthy lawyer," Mr. Mensah. Because she cannot be faithful to one man and takes Yaboa as a lover, Mr. Mensah's anger is justified by the film. The implication is that she, and not he who fabricated charges against her, is to blame for her arrest. And she disappears from the film, a necessary deletion in the narrative of Kumsenu's journey to subjectivity.

Grace Tamakole, on the other hand, is not sexualized by the gaze of the camera. She epitomizes maternal affection and devotion to her husband, never appearing before the camera without the Doctor, or Kumasenu, or her daughter Ama at her side. Upon seeing Kumsenu when he first enters her home and hearing his story, "her heart ached." She asks her husband, "If our Ama, at that boy's age, were alone and friendless, and fell among thieves, and a man came by who could help her, what would you expect of that man?" It is her heartfelt, motherly appeal that convinces the Doctor to assist the boy and guide him toward manhood. The suggestion is that the stability of the new nation

depends on the stability of the family unit, and the security of the family relies on a mother who fulfills her duty as mother instead of, like Adobia, searching for economic gain or freedom. Benedict Anderson writes, "The nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (16). Parker et al suggest that the fraternity of the nation enacts an "idealization of motherhood" and "the exclusion of all non-reproductively oriented sexualities from the discourse of the nation" (6). The treatment of Grace and Adobia seems to verify this conclusion.

The Nation-State and Marriage

Jerry John Rawlings and the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) came to power after the 31 December 1981 Revolution, a military coup that toppled the democratically elected Limann government, and remained until December 2001, when his second term as an elected President expired. The Revolution aimed to bring about "major and fundamental changes" in the body politic and the ideologies of the past (Amamoo 4) and included among its objectives the fight for women's rights (Manuh 162). After what Edzodzinam Tsikata describes as an "apolitical phase" in the formation and activism of women's organization in Ghana from 1966 until 1981, the post-Revolutionary period facilitated a new focus on women's issues, including the launching of the 31st December Women's Movement (DWM) in 1980 by First Lady Nana Konadu Rawlings, which initiated a series of pro-women social, economic and political programs in Ghana (Manuh 123).

The Rawlings PNDC government defined as one of its most important initiatives the promotion and passage of the Law on Intestate Succession. The law was described as a law to protect and improve the lot of women and children in Ghana. It "seeks to make the surviving spouse and children the inheriting group as against the wider family in matrilineal systems of succession and to grant definite rights in property both real and personal to them" (Manuh 122). The campaign to gain public support for the law re-activated a public debate on marriage and family that had been dormant since the 1950s. The Law on Intestate Succession was described as the nation-state's attempt to use legislation to eradicate a "traditional practice that was oppressive to women" (Dolphyne 28).[6] It set out to use legal discourse to define "modern" marriage and, as a perusal of Ghanaian newspapers from the period shows, ignited a debate constructed around an opposition between the traditional and the modern. Proponents of the Law regarded customary marriage, a marriage marked by the exchange of gifts, money, or drinks between families, but not verified by the state or a church, as a relic of the past that was oppressive to women, and therefore applauded the state's efforts to intervene on behalf of women. It was argued that extended family obligations drew resources away from the nuclear family, and represented "the most serious threat" after a husband's death (Oppong1974,101). If a marriage was not sanctioned by the State by being registered as a legal marriage, a wife risked the loss of everything if her husband's matrikin, claiming their traditional rights, laid claim to the dead man's property. Those who opposed the law, however, "felt that any law that made provision for children to inherit their father's

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[6] The PNDC also promoted the Customary Marriage and Divorce Registration Law "to facilitate the ascertainment of who a spouse is in the event of the application of the Intestate Succession Law" (PNDC L.111).

property would be an imposition of the patrilineal system on the matrilineal one" and would therefore "undermine the cultural basis of the matrilineal society" (Dolphyne 28). Finally, in 1985, to coincide with the end of the United Nations Decade for women, the PNDC government succeeded in passing the Law on Intestate Succession.

The naming of matrilineal inheritance as a traditional, and implicitly backward, practice exemplifies what Jean-Loup Amselle calls the "feedback phenomenon," (160) or the re-appropriation of colonial discourse by Africans in a closed circle where the "objects" of the "civilizing mission" have become its "emitters" (18). Rawlings, and the supporters of the Law on Intestate Succession, referred back to the colonial discourse that named as "traditional" that which it had participated in the creation of in order to isolate it as a marker of cultural difference.[7] "Customary" or "traditional" marriage functioned as a cultural "point of reference" (Amselle 41) that was appropriated by the state to defend its position. As Amselle so cogently argues, no cultural "referent" remain[s] identical throughout the course of history" (41). Labeling as "customary"or "traditional" marital practices that came about as a result of historical change, and more specifically colonialism, is to freeze the "traditional" and remove it from the history that created it. In this way, the traditional becomes something easily stigmatized and devalued by the nation-state. In the next chapter, I illustrate that Expectations reiterates this discourse of cultural difference.[8]

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[7] One point that needs further attention concerns the Intestate Law which was supported by international feminist and women's groups. The passage of Law was linked to Ghana's participation in the UN as a modern, African nation. Ghana's commitment to women's rights signified its emergent modernity.

[8] This, of course, is not to deny that the Law has improved the lives of women and children who otherwise might have found themselves homeless after the death of a spouse, but to point out as has Ato Quayson that these competing systems of inheritance

Expectations

The video film *Expectations* (1999), starring the most recognized actors in the Ghanaian video film industry, was a box office hit in Ghana. The producer, HM Films, sponsored an extensive marketing campaign featuring television advertisements, posters, and an announcing van that wove through the narrow streets of Accra and Kumasi broadcasting the film's premiere. Advertised as was one of the first Ghanaian films to incorporate special effects achieved with digital editing, the effects for which Nigerian video films are known and admired by Ghanaians, the film drew large numbers of patrons to the theatres before its release on video.[9] Produced decades after independence, the video film does not invoke a Ghanaian nationalist agenda as does *The Boy Kumasenu*, but the central conflict of the film derives from turmoil and uncertainty within the Asante nation. The spectator sees this when in the opening scene of *Expectations*, Nana's mother has come to the city of Kumasi, the capital city of the Asante region, to congratulate her son and daughter-in-law on their pregnancy and to remind them of its importance. Nana and Gifty's unborn son is the next in-line to inherit the Asante stool, the "traditional" Asante symbol of power.[10] The stability and security

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set women against women, when, upon the death of a spouse and brother, his sister and her children expect that property, to which the wife feels entitled, will pass onto them. In this conflict between values systems, it is "women from both sides that are caught betwixt and between" (Quayson 121).

[9] Interview with A. Akwetey-Kanyi, the film's director, December 1999.

[10] Within the boundaries of the Ghanaian nation-state, the Asante nation functions as a conterminous entity. The guardian of the stool would act as the Asantehene, or Asante king or chief, and in this capacity would maintain considerable power to arbitrate property, marital and family disputes. The Asantehene wields political influence as a representative of the Asante people and is frequently courted by politicians and NGOs to gain support for their programs, and the Asantehene also oversees the wealth of the Asante.

of the Asante nation is threatened by a group of evil witches, who, from their residence in the village, conspire to kill Gifty's unborn child and destroy her marriage, thereby preventing the transfer of the stool to Nana's house. The witches devise their scheme out of fear that the new chief might "ruin" their evil "kingdom."

The video film binds the future of the Asante nation to Gifty and Nana's marriage and the viability of their nuclear family, defining their marriage in its difference from the extended family network. The extended families of both Nana and Gifty jeopardize their marriage and the transfer of the stool. Nana's mother, under pressure from the kingmakers to produce an heir before another family must be selected to receive the stool and the powers it carries, becomes infuriated when Gifty cannot get pregnant one year after her miscarriage and begs her son to take a second wife. While Nana is away on a business trip, she removes Gifty from her own home, sending her back to the village (the very village that houses the witches) to live with her family. Upon his return, Nana attempts to bring his wife back to the city of Kumasi, but Gifty's sister Dufie, who, unknown to her family, is a witch, refuses to allow her sister to go and uses her evil powers to foil Nana's attempts to rescue his wife. Dufie convinces Gifty that Nana has forgotten her, and, in the city, Nana's mother arranges for her son to meet women who can give him a child and the family a son.

The video film travels, continuously, back and forth between the village and the city, never remaining in one location for more than one or two scenes. Quick cuts between the locations create the illusion that the spectator is in both places at once, watching events unfold simultaneously. The repetition of establishing shots of the city and village landscapes and frequent shots of cars moving along unpaved roads produce a

sense that the distance between the two is expansive and traveled with effort. The two worlds seem far apart and opposed, not aligned in a chronological continuum like in *The Boy Kumasenu*. Yet it is gender that most notably marks and separates the spaces. The village, dangerous and harmful, is a space absent of men and occupied by women who dabble in the occult, implying that the pronounced absence of men allows for the reign of evil forces. The only male presence in the rural space is Gifty's drunkard Uncle, who stumbles, staggers and speaks incoherently of dreams and unseen dangers. Although ignored and ridiculed by the women, he is the only character who recognizes that evil forces are interfering in Gifty's life, but is too intoxicated to be effective against them. Ironically, the dirty drunkard understands more of the truth than either Gifty or her mother and attempts to warn them, but is ignored. The village family of unmarried, independent women is juxtaposed to Gifty and Nana's companionate, and decidedly patriarchal, union that is sanctioned and protected by the prayers of the Christian Pastor and his wife, ubiquitous figures in the lives of the couple. The wealth and beauty of Gifty and Nana's life in the city is celebrated in the film, treated as the result of hard work and a Christian lifestyle. Conversely, the poverty of the village women reflects their evil labors. The city is a safe place, Nana tells his wife, because he, the Pastor and the doctor, the male characters who control Gifty's life, "are within easy reach."

Gifty, abandoned by her husband, remains in the village for six years. During this time, the witches conspire to keep her and Nana apart to prevent the "prophecy," the birth of the heir to the stool by Gifty and Nana, from being fulfilled. One of the witches, transformed into a beautiful and seductive woman, called Lucy, visits Nana at his office and casts a spell upon him by blowing dust into his eyes. He falls instantly in love with

her, and soon after takes her as his wife. Lucy gives him a son. Occupied with his new wife and family, and absent the spiritual advice of his pastor, who has left the country, Nana abandons Gifty in the village. Six years later, the pastor and his wife return and learn of Nana and Gifty's situation. Immediately, they set off for the village to retrieve Gifty in order that the prophecy might be fulfilled. Once in the city, Gifty returns to her husband's home, where Lucy lives with her son and mother-in-law. Gifty frequently visits the pastor, who advises her to be an obedient and a patient wife. He asks if her husband comes to see her at night, and when she says yes, instructs her she should go see a doctor. Predictably, Gifty and Nana go to the hospital and learn that she is pregnant. Lucy, sent into a fury by the news, visits the shrine of a fetish priest, who performs "juju" on a chicken and yam that she intends to prepare for Gifty, who will eat them and die. But Gifty has become a devout Christian under the Pastor's care, and because she prays over the food before she eats it, does not die. Unfortunately, Nana and Lucy's son, who asks to share in Gifty's food, does not know how to pray because his mother has not taught him. He eats from Gifty's bowl, becomes sick and dies. Lucy alleges that Gifty has used "witchcraft" to kill Lucy's son. Gifty is charged with murder, tried, found guilty and taken to prison. Only the pastor refuses to doubt Gifty, and through the intervention of prayer, eventually secures her release. He organizes a prayer service, and as the entire congregation prays for Gifty, blisters and hives burst through the skins of the witches, who scream and writhe in pain. A very pregnant Gifty is released from prison and returns home to give birth to a baby boy. In the final scene, Nana and Gifty embrace, and order is restored.

The Pastor is the hero of the film, assuring the survival of the Asante nation and Nana and Gifty's family. The Asante nation, in a sense, is "modernized" by the film. The matrikin system, that which is recognized as the foundation of Asante culture, is denounced by the film. In order to validate the sanctity of Christian marriage, the film vilifies extended family connections and obligations. Nana justifies his choice to keep two wives by reminding them that "we are in an African society where a man is entitled to one or more wives." The film reveals the error of such thinking, rather dogmatically. The matrilineal kin, represented by Nana's mother and the extended family, cause the break-up of Gifty and Nana's marriage. Nana's decision to take a second wife, to exercise his power as an "African man," interferes with the Christian prophecy that Gifty should be the mother of the next king. The film proclaims that because the rightful heir to the stool is born to Gifty and Nana, the future of the nation is secure, and in this way, the video displaces what it represents as "African tradition" with Christian values.

Clearly, the film participates in a Christian discourse about the sanctity of the companionate marriage and the complimentary duties of husband and wife within the household. The benevolent patriarch rules the nuclear family and his wife is his docile helpmate. In the film, every assertion for independence or freedom made by a woman is met with horrific consequences or functions to signify the woman's wickedness. When Gifty tells her husband that she wants to go to the village to spend time with her mother before the first baby is born, he resists, warning her that "My Spirit tells me you should stay here," near to the pastor and the doctor. Gifty ignores his advice, goes to the village and fails to remember her prayers, and consequently loses her baby. If she had prayed over the food laced with poison, the pastor tells her as she lies in bed after miscarrying

the baby, she could have saved her unborn son. Lucy, the witch, is the wife who talks back to her husband and demands her rights as the mother of his son, but her assertion of independence functions to signify her evilness. Her mother-in-law berates her, telling her that she must obey by Nana's wishes: "He is a man. He says what he likes ... you as a woman have to accept it." Gifty, the helpmate, who refuses to challenge her husband's authority, who waits patiently for him to take her back, and who forgives him after leaves her in the village for six years and then watches her being hauled off to jail without protest, is the heroine of the film. She is rewarded in the end by when the prophecy is fulfilled and she gives birth to a male heir.

The "naturalness" of companionate marriage is continually reasserted by the film. Dufie's abhorrence of men and determination not to marry signify her unnatural and wicked nature. She tells Gifty, "No husband. No trouble," encouraging her to leave her husband and return permanently to the village. Gifty's mother advises her daughter that "a woman needs a husband." Her Uncle tells her she must return to her husband, the place where she is supposed to be. Gifty herself scolds her sister for not respecting her uncle, who is "the head of the family." The Pastor advises Gifty to be obedient to her husband. The film unequivocally supports this proposition. Only when Gifty is reinstated as the wife of her household, and mother of the heir to the throne, is harmony restored.

In an article on popular Ghanaian cinema in Ghana, Birgit Meyer turns to the work of Emmanuel Akyeampong to theorize the relationship between popular culture and the state. Meyer reads *Expectations* through the lens of this work, arguing that since Nkrumah's efforts to yoke popular cultural products to his political platform, "there has been no similar attempts on the part of political leaders to appropriate popular culture"

while "popular culture has oriented itself to critique - more or less openly and straightforwardly- the socio-political order" (1). Meyer contends that "the liberalization of the media" in the 1990s in Ghana freed video from state control and influence. Popular video film, she contends, "feeds immediately on what goes on in society and is thus part and parcel of public debates" (5). In this way, "oppositional views" made their way into this "new public sphere" (Meyer 10), and she references this film as an example. Meyer argues that *Expectations* is critical of the use of occult forces to gain wealth, and therefore, she contends, the film is critical of the state and its politicians, many of whom have been rumored to have used occult power to become powerful and wealthy. The questionable logic of this argument aside, it assumes that video film, an "independent" media, has enabled "the full separation of the symbiotic relationship of media and the state" (10). Yet, ideology is not so easily contained by either media or discourse, or for that matter by the State. As Althusser points out, the very division between the State sphere and the independent or private sphere is an effect, and not a cause, of the operation of ideology through Ideological State Apparatuses. He writes, "The State, which is the State of the ruling class, is neither public nor private; on the contrary, it is the precondition for any distinction between public and private" (144). The private video industry, I allege, might function as what Althusser describes as one of many State Ideological Apparatuses, and consequently, "It is unimportant whether the institutions in which they are realized are 'public' or 'private.' What matters is how they function" (Althusser 144).

A crucial question remains unexamined in Meyer's analysis and that concerns how the video apparatus works on its audience in order to conceal its ideological

investments and interpellate "concrete individuals as concrete subjects" (Althusser 173). Discussing only the narrative, or content, of video films ignores how the material circumstances of viewing video film constitute the spectator-subject in ideology. Film and video work on their audiences in ways unique to each medium, and this is what Meyer overlooks when she treats the film as a visual narrative. Simply turning to film theory is also not sufficient; the video apparatus is a signifying system unlike the filmic apparatus. The circumstances of production, exhibition, and engagement of film and video are different, and so in understanding how video hails its spectator-subjects, one has to account for video as video. Some very exciting work describing soap opera, television and video as unique signifying systems has been done, and I draw on this work in the following discussion, but it is also important to note that much of this literature addresses these mediums as they exist in the US and Europe. Video in Ghana affords me the chance to explore the usefulness of this literature and re-consider many of its assumptions.

The spectator of *Expectations* moves rapidly and continually through very short scenes and that seem haphazardly stitched together. The following breakdown typifies the duration and arrangement of scenes:

1. Gifty's Uncle, in the village at a drinking spot, buying a drink (49 seconds).
2. The doctor, in the city, at Gifty's bedside, telling her that she can be released (19 seconds).
3. YaaYaa and Bossman at Gifty's house coming from the bathroom (18 seconds).
4. Gifty's family at her bedside (58 seconds).

Each of these segments, composed of several shots, lasts less than one minute before cutting, suddenly, to the next, locating the spectator in an entirely new narrative space,

and producing a sense of dislocation which is heightened by the conditions of production of Ghanaian video. The video features are shot with one camera, and as a result, the editing is never seamless. A new take of a scene cannot replicate that which came before or might come after. Slight disruptions created by shifts in an actor's position or in the placement of the light or camera, for example, mar the continuity-effect in sequences pieced together from re-takes of the same scene. US soap operas, similarly, produce a fractured spectator perspective through the continuous re-definition of space. Typically, a soap opera production works among three cameras, shooting each scene from a different position. Although the scenes are then edited together to present the illusion of a stable time and space, the editing cannot conceal that "two shots of the same scene of a soap opera are almost never exactly from the same camera position" (Flitterman-Lewis 229). Hence, "what the viewer of the soap opera sees is a scene in constant flux" (230).

Within this fractured and fluctuating space, the specatator's position, too, shifts. The video refuses to anchor the spectator to a stable perspective. *Expectations* produces what Flitterman-Lewis describes as "a fragmented subjectivity dispersed across numerous views" (231). The camera never lingers long or consistently enough to focalize the spectator through one character, but relies on multiple and shifting point-of-view shots to move among and through the characters in the video film. For example, when the Pastor, Nana and Gifty's mother come to Gifty's bedside after she has lost the baby, the camera seems to float above and among them, identifying with neither Gifty's sadness, nor the Pastor's paternalistic response, nor with Nana's worry. The camera is more like a spectator of the scene before it than a participant in it, and, likewise, the viewer is positioned as if she were a disembodied observer, not a character in the world

of the film.

The constraints that very, very limited budgets place on video filmmakers in Ghana exacerbate the technological limitations already imposed by the use of video equipment and contribute to the shifting and multiple space and spectator relations organized by the video apparatus. Most Ghanaian video filmmakers, for instance, attempt to work at a 4-to-1-take ratio. Consequently, if a filmmaker is not able to capture a scene effectively from the perspective of each character or at the best angle in four re-takes of the scene, he makes do with what he has when he gets to the editing room. Additionally, the narrow frame of the video camera makes filming movement extremely difficult. If a filmmaker is attempting to capture a scene with very few re-takes, he might accept a shot in which an actor walks in front of the camera or the composition appears cluttered or awkward. Such movement, fracture and awkwardness make the spectator aware of the camera, again distinguishing the spectator-image relationship of video from that of film. Metz, writing of cinema, explains that the camera represents the point of interface between the spectator and the film and its absence secures cinematic pleasure: "When I say that 'I see' a film, I mean thereby a unique mixture of two contrary currents: the film is what I receive, and it is also what I release, since it does not pre-exist my entering the auditorium and I need only close my eyes to supress it. Releasing it, I am the projector, receiving it, I am the screen; in both these figures together, I am the camera pointed yet recording" (415). Although the camera fixes the spectator to the film, it does so through its absence. To become a body seeing and receiving the film, the viewer must forget the camera as working apparatus and function as "a pure act of perception" (413). Video precludes this forgetting and purity. This pure perception, according to Mulvey, is the

source of film's pleasure. Cinema's "conscious aim ... to eliminate intrusive camera presence and prevent a distancing awareness in the audience" (Mulvey 25) enables the pleasurable looking derived from film's portrayal of "a hermetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience" (17). Within this world, the spectator experiences the "temporary loss of ego while simultaneously reinforcing it" as he re-enacts the mirror phase and enters the symbolic as an "I." (18). In this way, cinema satisfies desires for looking (scopophilia) and identification (narcissism). This satisfaction, or fulfillment of desire, relies on the very things that video cannot provide its spectator - a smooth surface behind which the apparatus is concealed and a focalized point-of-view through which to enter the filmic world.

This is not to suggest that video does not afford its audiences pleasure. The success of the video films in Ghana testifies to the tremendous pleasures they do offer. Indeed I want to argue that the pleasures video film affords its spectator are the same pleasures offered by film. It is the method of suture that seems to be different as it is not reliant on an absent apparatus nor a stable point of identification, but instead derived from the very presence of the apparatus and the shifting perspectives it produces.[11]

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[11] This discussion has assumed that the viewer is watching the video as it is projected in a video center or theatre. Of course, video films are broadcast into the homes of viewers, and this raises another series of theoretical considerations that I can only sketch here. Heath suggests that the televisual mode of transmission produces "the impression of reality" (53). He writes, "...the television image itself is effectively "live," very different in this to that of film. Where the later depends on the immobility of the frame, the former, electronic and not photographic, in an image in perpetual motion, the movement of a continually scanning beam; whatever the status of the material transmitted, the image as a series of electric impulses is necessarily "as it happens" (53). The viewing experience of television occurs in the home and might be a feature of everyday life or a highly ritualized occurrence set apart from the routine of living, and certainly cultural and socio-economic differences make generalizing about the viewing experience impossible. A television is a luxury item in Ghana, and so television watching

Robert Stam suggests that the television image, projecting a view of "a world" that the viewer "oversee[s]," encourages "a kind of narcissistic voyeurism" (364). The viewer observes a world over which he is in control. The video film image, made available to viewers via television broadcasts and distorted projections from video tape players to movie screens, invites a similar pleasure. The "low-definition image" produced by the projection of videotape joined to the characteristics described above, presents its world as if it were present, real and available. Heath and Skirrow argue that the mode of transmission of the television image imparts this "impression of reality"; "a permanently alive view on the world; the generalized fantasy of the television institution of the image is exactly that it is direct, and direct for me" (54). The marks the apparatus leaves on the image, in effect, verify the immediacy of the reality that stands behind it. The deteriorated and distorted signified assures the certainty of the referent and its availability for its spectator, gratifying desire, producing the pleasure of "taking people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze" (Mulvey 16).

The discussion thus far leaves unexamined the issue of gendered identification. Stam speculates that the multiple looks and positions presented to the spectator of video affords "pleasures even more multiform and varied than those afforded by cinema, for the viewer identifies with an even wider array of cameras and looks" (Stam 362). E. Anne Kaplan, in a discussion of Madonna's MTV music videos, describes a similar multiplicity of gazes in gendered terms, thus formulating questions crucial to feminist

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is not a part of the quotidian for most Ghanaians. Families who own sets might invite neighbors in to watch with them, and frequently the television is at the center of the household in its location and the attention it commands, not, as might be true of American households, ubiquitous in its ordinariness.

analyses of film and video. She asks if the apparatus produces "a wide range of gazes with different gender implications? Are women necessarily addressed differently by the apparatus, as was argued for the classical Hollywood film? Is there something inherent in the televisual apparatus that addresses woman's special positioning as absence or lack, as was also the case with Hollywood film?"(269). Although her concern is with music videos that are broadcast on television, Kaplan raises important questions about the gendering of spectators, and, importantly, the feminist potential presented by the video apparatus. Kaplan, like Mulvey, calls for an alternative cinema "which is radical in both a political and an aesthetic sense and challenges the basic assumptions of the mainstream film" (Mulvey 15). For Kaplan, Madonna's video *Express Yourself* speaks to the feminist possibilities afforded by the "decentered" and "genderless" subject of address of the apparatus (269). She writes:

> ...the power of the video comes from the incredible series of images, edited to produce a rapidly moving, radically decentered, destabilizing experience. The destabilization results both from the violation of normal time/space relations, produced by the rapid-fire, nonclassical editing and from the multiple subject positions through which the heroine (and 'star' Madonna) moves during the course of the video. The spectator is unable to locate any secure position within the world of the video. (274)

Madonna's transgendered narrative and spectator present a "challenge to the dominant gender sign-system" (272), and to watch and enjoy the video is to participate in its challenge.

Unlike Kaplan, however, Mulvey supports a feminist critical and filmmaking practice that calls attention to and dismantles pleasure as produced by narrative film in order "to make room for a total negation of the ease and plentitude of the narrative fiction film" (16). The scopophilic and narcissistic pleasures offered by film align the

spectator with a desiring, masculine subject position. The spectator identifies with the gaze of the active male subject who looks and acts upon the female object, and in this way, the narrative and structure of viewing enforce a "heterosexual division of labor" (20). Mulvey writes: "The man controls the film fantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralize the extra-diegetic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle" (20). For Kaplan, the shifting and multiple spectator positions made available by the video apparatus reiterate the multiple gender identities offered in the narrative of the music video, therefore enacting and representing "transgressions" to "the system" (273). "The video asks us to rethink the gender signs we repeat daily" (Kaplan 273). If, as Mulvey argues, scopophilic and narcissitic pleasures aim to satisfy desires always already inflected by gender, does Kaplan's shifting subject inherently present a feminist practice or point-of-view? The MTV video, as described, produces and satisfies and produces again the same pleasures as are produced by film – pleasures of looking and being, pleasures achieved through the illusory fulfillment of the Lacanian lack. The MTV video, and the Ghanaian video film, employ different methods, as has been described in detail in this chapter, but in hailing their spectator-subjects constitute them as gendered subjects. The pleasures themselves are already gendered. As Mulvey shows, it is to new pleasures that we must turn for radical feminist practice, and Kaplan simply locates different versions of the same.

In a telling erasure, Kaplan alludes to "Madonna's complex relationship to consumerism" at the article's conclusion, explaining that such a complicated issue will have to be "followed up elsewhere" (276). But by extricating consumerism from her

discussion of desire, pleasure and feminism, Kaplan buries questions crucial to the kind of feminism she advocates: one that celebrates choice and multiplicity. Is such a feminism compromised if that choice is expressed through the consumption of images and commodities? Madonna's feminism, like her compact discs, books and videos, is for sale, and celebration of her feminist image entails celebration of the commercial success that has enabled it. One might speculate that instead of presenting the radical potential of ungendered feminist politics, the shifting –spectator subject addressed by the video-film may represent the possibility of the endless re-production of desire for the video as commodity and for the lifestyles narrated therein and the fleeting and illusory satisfaction of that desire by the pleasures outlined here. The video film *Expectations* offers a gaze into a world that celebrates wealth and equates its acquisition with Christian values. The narrative normalizes patriarchal ideology and consumer culture and offers both as the organizing ideologies of the Ghanaian nation. The apparatus, in its presentation of images and subject positions, hails the spectator as a consumer who can select among a multitude of looks, identities and commodities. If it was an elite, male citizen-subject to whom the colonial film *The Boy Kumasenu* spoke, then it is a Ghanaian consumer to whom the video film *Expectations* looks, and that it produces.

Chapter Three: Revolutionary Women and the Modern Nation

Introduction

Murder at Sunset (1991), a novel written by Akosua Gyamfuaa-Fofie, opens in the living room of General Osei Bonsu "the Ghanaian Military Head of State," who bears a striking resemblance to Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, the head of State in Ghana from 1981 until 2001. In the episode, the General and his wife discuss a front-page story in the Ghanaian Times that announces the arrest of a woman for "duping an accountant of ¢7,000,000" (1). The first lady tells her husband that the article explains that an "investigation revealed that the lady in question came from a respectable home. The father died a professor and the mother a graduate teacher" (1). She questions her husband about why this should be the case, why would "an off-spring from such a respectable home" end up a criminal? The General replies,

> I think our womenfolk need more education. Parenting should be seen as a professional job and only qualified people should aspire to [it] ... It's because parents do not involve their children in their everyday lives. It's alright for both parents to work but they shouldn't do so at the expense of the development of their children. Many parents can't honestly claim to know their children very well in this age and time when mothers are more concerned with being glamourous women first and mothers next instead of the other way around. (3)

Modern "interest in money," the first lady suggests, comes at "a great cost of negligence" to children, who "grow up without tasting any parental love" and therefore "return their parents non-affection" causing the break down of "the primary social unit, the family" (3). The General advises his wife, because "the bulk of these responsibilities lie with you women," to "see the president of the Women's Affairs Commission and discuss how best such problems should be solved" (4). This episode marks out a new

time, a modern age recognizable in the roles women have assumed and the trouble this causes for their children. The signs of modernity are revealed through women: the woman who steals from her employer and ends up in jail, the glamorous career woman who puts her desires for money before her responsibilities as a mother, and the existence of a Woman's Commission, a political organization established to improve the lives of women.

Narratives that understand the "present" as marking the beginning of a new, modern age in the national history of Ghana abound in the video films produced during the nascent years of the industry's development and in novels published during the same period. A rhetoric of newness, modernity and revolution facilitated, and was perpetuated by, the 1981, 31st December Revolution, ushered in by Flt. Lt. JJ Rawlings and the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). In the discourse disseminated by advocates of the Revolution in political speeches, news items in the state-owned media, and laws passed by the PNDC as well as in more recent historical accounts and political analyses of the Rawlings regime, the Revolution is represented as marking a shift in the narrative of Ghanaian history. The signs of the new era can be read, among other places, in the new roles women have assumed. Women are characterized as at once enemies of the Revolution, the hoarders and smugglers of a pre-Revolutionary temporality that must be eradicated, and, simultaneously, as "partners" in the Revolution. Indeed, the struggle to "advance the process of emancipation of our women" was part of the Revolutionary platform.[1] In the PNDC's rhetoric, women mark the limits of the temporality of the

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[1] Phrase quoted from a speech given by Rawlings entitled "Revolutionary Potentials of PDCs," May 1, 1982.

modern, signifying the corruption of the pre-Revolutionary and the possibility of the achievement of a utopian nation where men and women are equal partners in the Revolutionary struggle. In this chapter, I attempt to understand how the video film *Zinabu* (1986) the locally published novels of Akosua Gyamfuaa-Fofie, *The Tested Love* (1989) and *Because She was a Woman* (1990), and Amma Darko's novel *The Housegirl* (1990), published by Heinemann and distributed internationally, re-present this national narrative of newness and modernity.

The 31st December Revolution

On December 31, 1981, Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings ousted the democratically elected president Hilla Limann, whose brief tenure as head of state was rife with corruption, and orchestrated a coup that brought the PNDC and its "Revolutionary" mandate to the forefront. This coup followed the earlier coup of June 4, 1979 when Rawlings and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) overthrew the military government of General Akuffo in order to enable the election that made Limann president. This tumultuous political climate followed, by only a few decades, the euphoria of Ghanaian independence in 1957 and the prosperity of the cocoa boom. In the 1970s, state mismanagement of agriculture and industry led to shortages of goods in the market and to an economic situation where corruption and connections seemed to be the only methods for obtaining scarce commodities that could be hoarded and sold at exorbitant prices. A new word entered into the public discourse, *kabule*, which referred to "profiteering, either by manipulation of the state machinery or merely by evasion of official control" (Nugent 27). Consequently, throughout this period, "the working

assumption was that larger merchants were hoarders and smugglers; that contractors were almost certainly bogus; and that the senior managers of state corporations were by definition corrupt" (Nugent 28). The wealth of a class of senior military officers and elite politicians, who proudly displayed its opulence, contrasted starkly and "was contemporaneously taking place with the existence of abject poverty and deprivation in the vast majority of the country" (Amamoo 163). The newly rich were regarded as kalabule profiteers who "had access to Ghana's hidden stores of wealth" and described as enemies of the Revolution because "rather than converting this currency into socially acceptable investments, they were believed to be hiding their stores from the rest of society" (Newell 125).

The 31st December Revolution aimed to bring about "major and fundamental changes" in the body politic and the ideologies of the past (Amamoo 4). Most historical analyses of the period suggest that in the early years of the Revolution, Ghanaians were focused and engaged in public discussions on politics and involved in protest actions and strikes in record numbers. Ghanaians were "engaging in more intensive mass political agitation and organization" than had been thought possible (Tsikata 162). As one Ghanaian filmmaker told me, "We felt like we owned the world. We felt like we could do anything." The political demonstrations for workers' rights and true democracy were two among many public debates about the future development of the country, the duties of the Ghanaian citizen, and the just allocation of resources. In political speeches, public statements, newspaper photographs and government produced documentaries, the PNDC set itself in opposition to former governments and the ruling elite. Rawlings crafted an image of himself and the PNDC as the arm of the people, reaching out to take back what

had been squandered away by "the old and oppressive order."[2] The organizing concept of the Revolution was "people's power," placing power, resources, revenues, and control of the nation back into the hands of the people.

To this end, the PNDC instituted changes in the structure of authority by establishing a network of investigative committees and bodies whose task it was to uncover kalabule and empower the people against whom the crimes had been committed. People's (PDC) and Worker's Defense Committees (WDC) became the mechanisms through which Ghanaians would "take over the destiny" of the country and "shap[e] the society along the lines [they] desire" (Rawlings qtd. in Nugent 49). Rawlings described the task of the PDCs as "defending this Revolution and ensuring the exposure of saboteurs."[3] The PDC, he explained in another speech, "have asserted the right of the people to have a democratic voice in national life. They have exposed counter-revolutionaries, smugglers, hoarders, as well as corruption, inefficiency and waste."[4] Like the PDCs, the WDCs identified anti-revolutionary practices in the workplace. A National Investigation Committee (NIC) was organized and authorized to investigate any person with a bank account containing more than 50,000 cedis (Nugent 57). Citizens Vetting Committees (CVC) were "given the authority to investigate people whose lifestyles exceeded their known incomes. The presumption was that anyone who could not account for the disparity between the two had been engaged in unlawful activity and should therefore forfeit his or her assets to the state" (Nugent 57). Public tribunals tried those accused of anti-revolutionary activities and had the power to sentence those found

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2 JJ Rawlings, Radio Broadcast, December 16, 1982.

3 JJ Rawlings, Radio Broadcast, January 5, 1982.

4 JJ Rawlings, Radio Broadcast, May 1, 1982.

guilty.

These investigation networks were not merely means by which power was placed with the people, but mechanisms that instituted a culture of surveillance. Detecting anti-revolutionary behavior meant *seeing* the physical and corporeal evidence of profiteering, smuggling, or embezzlement. Fat bodies, expensive cars, and large houses were read as evidence of accumulation, and all accumulation was suspect. The crime of kalabule, which was carried out clandestinely, could be detected through the physical evidence it left behind, "whether in the form of surplus weight around the midriff or an abundance of material possessions" (Nugent 79). Nugent argues that an ideological shift had occurred within Ghanaian popular consciousness. A culture that for centuries had valued and rewarded wealth and accumulation came to regard "all forms of accumulation" as suspect (28). The wealthy of previous generations "would publicly distribute cash and consumer goods. Through these 'social investments,' they sought social recognition and support, vital requirements in the maintenance of their status" (Newell 124).[5] In the late 1960s and 70s, as workers and traders struggled to survive, ostentatious displays of wealth were no longer celebrated, but viewed suspiciously. A residual ideology that called for and normalized the ostentatious display of wealth overlapped with an emergent narrative that equated wealth and corruption. Joseph Amamoo's history of Ghanaian politics traces the culture of corruption that emerged in Ghana long before the coup that toppled Nkrumah in 1966:

> ...it was well-known that a number of ministers and prominent

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[5] Newell, in making this statement, draws from the work of Ivor Wilkes and Terry MacCaskie.

> party officials, who previously were people of modest means at best or sometimes, of rather limited means, had suddenly become affluent. They and their wives often had become not only opulent but also quite corpulent. The dramatic increase in girth, the sprouting of homes and buildings in top areas of Accra, the conspicuous display of affluence and wealth, in a land of poverty and deprivation, could not be explained in any other way but the obvious. (33)

The wealthy were viewed as thieves who had stolen from the Nation and caused the suffering and poverty of the "people." Nugent writes: "Across the country, 'big men' who had grown used to flaunting their wealth woke up to discover that conspicuous consumption attracted hostile scrutiny rather than admiration. Worst of all, they were now forced to account for their lifestyles in front of people whom they would otherwise have regarded as of no real account" (58). The physical signs of accumulation, according to this logic, reference, and embody, the reality of corruption. To detect kalabule is to see its visual signs.

In his first radio broadcast to the nation, Rawlings began to articulate the features of his Revolution, both symbolically and literally. He stated: "Fellow citizens of Ghana, as you would have noticed we are not playing the National Anthem. In other words this is not a coup. I ask for nothing less than a revolution. Something that would transform the social and economic order of this country."[6] The Revolution, distinguished from a coup symbolically by the absence of the National Anthem, promised, literally, to institute a new social order. From the inception of the Revolution, its discourse of newness continually referred back to what it had defeated and looked forward to what it would become. The staging of this revolutionary moment in the history of the nation required

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[6] Radio Broadcast, December 31, 1981.

the re-production of a past and a future from which it set itself apart. The discourse of revolution conceived of its present as a stage in a narrative shored up by its differentiation from its past, the remnants of which had to be destroyed. Rawlings insisted that "old, counter-productive habits" had to be "cast away."[7] Detecting representatives of the old, corrupt order, those who had engaged in kalabule and therefore had perpetuated "long years of oppression, human degradation and exploitation"[8] was of central importance to the revolutionary mandate and aligned with the goal of putting power back into the hands of the people.

Significantly, it is the figure of woman around which this "double-time" (Bhabha 145) of the nation was organized. Within the discourse on Revolution, women functioned as the trope through which the past and future were identifiable. "Good time girls" and "Makola Queens"(market women) embodied a history of corruption, greed and ill-gotten wealth that had to be identified and eradicated. Market women became *visible symbols* of the *illicit* acquisition of wealth frequently accused of being "'clients' of politicians and soldiers" (152). Emmanuel Akyeampong argues that the worsening economy of the 1970s and 80s pushed women into the workforce and marketplace suddenly and in large numbers. The phrase *fa woto begye Golf* (bring your backside for a golf) demonstrates the belief that women were receiving cars and other expensive gifts only because they were the mistresses of rich men. Market traders, the large majority of which are women, were "signaled out as 'enemies of the people'" (Manuh 116), and their very physicality as women used to justify the violence and harassment perpetuated against them by

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7 JJ Rawlings, Address, November 3, 1984.

8 JJ Rawlings, Radio Broadcast, November 6, 1982.

soldiers and militiamen in defense of the Revolution.[9] The rhetoric culminated in two periods of intense violence against women. In 1979, on the day of the first coup of Rawlings and the AFRC, the Makola Number One Market, the center of trading activity in Accra, was looted and demolished (blown up with dynamite) by soldiers, and female traders accused of price control offenses "were officially beaten, caned, and flogged naked" (Clark 383). In 1982, after the 31st December Revolution, another eruption of violence occurred. The pages of the Daily Graphic in 1982 recount incident after incident of the disciplining of market women. The paper reports that on May 10, 1982, soldiers in Takoradi invaded the Central market and closed it down because traders had refused lower their prices (*Daily Graphic*, May 11, 1982). In another reported incident, traders' tables and kiosks were also destroyed at the Kumasi Market (*Daily Graphic*, Jan.14, p.3) On January 21st, the property of sellers was burned (*Daily Graphic*, Jan. 23, p.1). Sellers were locked out of the market at Somariya by the members of the Boy Scouts and warned to lower prices "before the full force of the revolution was brought to bear on them" (*Daily Graphic*, Jan. 29, 1982). A letter written by SK Agyare accused "Makola Mummies" of increasing the prices of their commodities and foodstuffs and appealed to "the PNDC to bring back the gallant soldiers to town for I believe that Ghanaians prefer their type of discipline."[10] A story published on April 9th with the headline "Market Women Warned" called on "market women at the Swedru market to heed the call to reduce the prices of their commodities or face revolutionary discipline" (*Daily Graphic*,

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[9] Garcia Clark remarks that "official media condemned wealthy traders because they were insubordinate women insisting on earning as much as men" (419).

[10] Daily Graphic, July 3, 1982, p3.

pg 5). [11]

The discourse that villanized women and sanctioned state sponsored violence against them competed with a discourse that represented women as partners in the Revolution and presented equality for women as one of its goals. Women represented both the corruption of the past and the promise of the future. As Manuh notes, the goals of the Revolution were linked with women's rights, and "there was a tendency to feel that the declaration of a revolution meant that women had instantly been liberated" (162). From 1975 to 1985, the press coverage allocated to women and women's issues in the *Daily Graphic*, increased substantially (Zwennes). Along side articles calling for corrupt market women to be disciplined, The *Daily Graphic* ran stories about the need for women to participate in the Revolutionary struggles. After what Edzodzinam Tsikata describes as an "apolitical phase" in the formation and activism of women's organization in Ghana from 1966 until 1981, the post-Revolutionary period facilitated a new focus on women's issues. The launching of the 31st December Women's Movement (DWM) in 1980 by First Lady Nana Konadu Rawlings initiated a series of pro-women social, economic and political programs in Ghana (Manuh 123), and according to Miss Yawa Amoah, a member of the organizing committee of the 31st December Woman's Movement, all of the Movement's members "should have as their guiding principle the vow to defend and die for their motherland alongside their men counterparts who are in the forefront of the current revolutionary struggle."[12] When President Rawlings addressed

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[11] Manuh understands the hostility toward market women demonstrated in the demolition of Makola market in 1982 and the enforcement of restrictive trade laws as indicative of a state-sponsored "anti-women ideology" (120).

[12] *Ghana Daily Graphic*, June 28, 1982, pg. 1

an inauguration ceremony of a branch of the 31st December Woman's Movement he asked the women in attendance "to get involved in the revolution because 'there is no way there will be a successful social change in the country without their effective participation.'"[13] The newspaper featured stories advising women not to "not leave defense committee matter in the hands of men"[14] and reminding women that they "have a part to play in the revolution"[15]

According to the rhetoric of newness disseminated by the Ghanaian nation-state, the time of the modern nation is marked by gender. Women at once embodied the evils of the past that the revolution sought to stamp out, and represented the potentials of the revolution, the future it promised, where men and women would stand side-by-side as equals in Ghana. As Alanón, Kaplan and Moallem have noted of the figure of women within nationalist discourse, they represent "the simultaneous denial and universalization of difference" that is the "core of the modern nation-state" (2). While denying difference and embracing women as partners in the Revolution, the nation-state defined itself in opposition to those women who embodied the evil past. Women occupied the place that Bhabha assigns to the people in the narrative of the nation, at once "constituted historical origin in the past" and "living principles of the people as contemporaneity" (145). Like the people, women "are neither the beginning or the end of the national narrative; they represent the cutting edge between the totalizing powers of the 'social' as homogenous, consensual, community, and the forces that signify the more specific address to contentions, unequal interest and identities within the population" (146). This highly

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13 *Ghana Daily Graphic*, August 2, 1982, pg. 1

14 *Ghana Daily Graphic*, September 10, 1982, pg. 1.

15 *Ghana Daily Graphic*, August 30, 1982, pg. 4.

ambivalent figure of woman, both inside and outside of the modern nation, might be read as the focus of the video film *Zinabu*.[16] *Zinabu*, the first film made on video in Ghana, reiterates a modern present constructed through gender difference, employs an economy of image that collapses the contradictory meanings attached to women by the official discourse of the nation-state. Zinabu, the character for whom the film is titled, embodies the ill-gotten wealth of a tainted past and the independence and empowerment of women of a new time. The chronology of revolution is condensed and projected onto her body, revealing an anxiety and ambivalence about women's wealth, independence, and sexuality.

Zinabu

Zinabu opens in a mechanic's yard, where three mechanics, Kofi, Joe and Mark debate the possibility of love between a rich woman and a poor man. Kofi's recent encounter with Zinabu, a beautiful, and rich, woman with whom he alleges he has fallen in love, initiates the debate. He explains that he spied her while she was driving, and complains that when he tried to wave her down, he was shoved aside by a well-dressed and richer man, who then got into the car with her. His friends insist that he is wasting

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16 The film cited as the first film made on video in Ghana is William Akuffo and Richard Quartey's *Zinabu*, released in 1986, the film was a phenomenal success. During its initial run, it showed three times a day to crowded theatres, and it continued to be exhibited for years after its release. In 2000, Akuffo and Richard Quartey re-made the film, using the same camera operator and editor, and following the same script. Their goal was to recreate the first film using different actors and setting the film in contemporary Accra. I was unable to obtain a copy of the original film, and base this chapter on the 2000 remake of the film and information about the original video film attained in interviews with Akuffo and Quartey.

his time because a rich woman will not love him, a poor mechanic dressed in greasy clothes. "Can you eat love?" Joe demands. "Small monkey play with small monkey, and big monkey with big monkey." Kofi argues adamantly that his love is pure and has nothing to do with money and declares that his poverty will not be an obstacle to his love. Kofi argues for the possibility of romantic love, a love not influenced by wealth or poverty. Joe and Mark, on the other hand, insist that in Ghana such a love does not exist. They suggest that romance is an illusion and that love and desire are determined by class position. Not only will a rich woman refuse to love a poor man, but Kofi's imagined love cannot be separated from his desire for the wealth that beauty signifies. In the aftermath of the December 31st Revolution, and at a time when the Ghanaian economy was stagnating, which made affording the basic food necessities difficult for most Ghanaians, the film represents the boundaries between the rich and the poor as impenetrable. Kofi, in the course of the film, crosses this line and suffers as a result.

The next day Kofi sees the beautiful woman's car and runs after her. She stops and offers him a ride and while in the car driving to her house, he professes his love to her. Kofi explains to Zinabu that he was prevented from meeting her previously by another, richer, man, who pushed him out of the way and caught her attention instead. He tells her that he saw a photograph in the newspaper of this very man, and the paper reported that he was killed in an automobile accident. Zinabu replies, "He disobeyed and paid dearly. People shouldn't break the rules without impunity." As the narrative unwinds, the spectator understands that Zinabu offered the man the very deal she offers to Kofi. He can be "the master of her house and her" and share in her wealth if he can abide by two simple rules. First, he must not sleep with any other woman, and second, he

cannot have sex with her.

Kofi accepts Zinabu's proposal, and the film becomes a study of one man's unsuccessful struggle to repress his sexual appetite. Kofi sacrifices sex, "his manhood," to satiate his greed for money, but he cannot adhere to Zinabu's stipulations and, hence, trades his wealth for an illicit pleasure that leads to his death. The video film chronicles the events that befall Kofi after he decides to give up sexual relations with all women for wealth and, subsequently, struggles against the temptations which women present. He and his two friends frequent restaurants, clubs, and beaches, spending Zinabu's money on food, drink and women. Kofi meets women, seduces them, but the moment before he succumbs, the video cuts to an image of Zinabu that seems to be appearing before his eyes. Neither the spectator nor Kofi is certain if Kofi is experiencing a flashback, or if Zinabu is haunting him. The image is edited into the film from an earlier segment, the segment where Zinabu first explains the stipulations by which Kofi must abide if he accepts her wealth. In the scene, the camera zooms in and out on a body shot of Zinabu, bringing her image to and away from Kofi rapidly, as if replicating his attraction to and repulsion for her beautiful, yet wicked figure. Each time he confronts this specter, Kofi heeds the warning and pushes the woman roughly away.

This strange and atypical behavior arouses the curiosity of his friends who cannot understand why a man who has been a womanizer his whole life is suddenly refusing women, and his friends wonder if his money was obtained honestly. They accuse him of being bewitched by Zinabu, who has turned him into a woman. The insults of his friends and the scorned women and the journey of temptation and denial finally proves too much for Kofi. After sitting in a bar and drinking one evening, he goes home and has sex with a

woman. He wakes the next morning relieved that he has broken his promise, proven that he is a man, and survived. But he has not escaped danger. On the way home, the car spins out of control and he finds himself locked inside as the car fills with smoke and chokes him. Intercut with scenes of Kofi pounding on the windows of the car as he tries to escape are scenes of Zinabu performing a ritual. Her face, painted in black stripes, contorts as she strangles a chicken and pours its blood over a figurine of Kofi. As the chicken dies, Kofi dies. The final scene replays the zooming image of Zinabu, warning him that if he breaks the rules, he will pay dearly.

At the most general level, one can say that the video film represents women in a stereotypical manner. Women are nothing more than the temptations that challenge Kofi's resolve, and it is his arduous trek through this road of temptations that creates the drama and humor of the narrative. Zinabu's voluptuous body, heavily made-up face, and stylish clothes signify the wealth that the poor mechanic, who comes to her house without even a pair of shoes, desires. Her beauty and riches, of course, cannot be resisted or repressed. But the bargain Kofi makes is an unnatural and unholy one, the video suggests. The exchange of money for sex is equated with the crime of kalabule, and like the crime of kalabule that has dibilitated the Ghanaian nation, Kofi's undisciplined behavior results in his demise. Kofi is the male citizen-subject, and the lesson his death offers is that succumbing to one's desire for wealth, and sex, results in disaster. Within this narrative of the modern nation, women function to prescribe its outside limits by signifying the deeds and behaviors that threaten the nation's survival.

At another level, Zinabu might be read as the embodiment of the tension and ambivalence produced by the nation-state's competing narratives about women: she is a

"new" woman who manages her own affairs without husband, watchman or houseboy and enjoys the luxuries of a modern lifestyle. The film makes this point emphatically when, as she and Kofi arrive at her beautiful mansion, and he asks her why she does not have a houseboy, watchman, or maid, she replies that she is alone, without a husband, and is "capable" of taking care of "my own home." But her economic independence and the power derived from it are monstrous, abnormal and frightening. Additionally, her wealth is not shared, nor was it obtained, honestly. She is the ultimate dissembler, presenting her self as a "real" woman and enticing men to fall in love with her, when, as the final scene in the film reveals, she is not real at all, but is of another world, one inhabited by witches and evil-doers who use their powers to interfere with reality, and history and progress. As Joe says, she is a "deceiver." The film can be read as a warning against powerful women and as a lesson about ill-gotten wealth and the repercussions one suffers for obtaining wealth by dishonest means. It re-presents the rhetoric of the Revolution, describing wealth, in the form of woman, as corrupt and dangerous. All wealth is ill-gotten, whether embezzled from the National coffers or bestowed by evil forces. And those who seek wealth regardless of the cost at which it comes, and who lie to secure it, are punished.

Although the narrative of the video film punishes Kofi for the choice he made, it simultaneously produces desire for wealth and for its embodiment, Zinabu. The camera allows the spectator to become a voyeur, gazing upon a world far removed from his/her own. The well-furnished house that Zinabu lives in, the new car she drives, the beautiful clothes she wears are admired by the camera, and presumably by the audience. This film, much as most Ghanaian video films, offers a narrative that criticizes the evil deeds

capitalism and greed provoke; yet, filmically, it creates an intense desire for the commodities and lifestyles wealth buys. In the video films, certain signs reappear in film after film and, thorough this reiteration, have come to signal meanings easily recognized by audiences. A typical series of shots indicate the wealth of an individual or family. Long takes and slow pans of the exteriors of grand houses and interior shots of elaborately furnished rooms signal wealth, and invite audiences to look into and imagine the privileges and comforts wealth affords. Again and again in the films, men and women who can afford to enjoy the good life take meals at Accra restaurants, go dancing at nightclubs or sip drinks at cafés. The camera invariably lingers over plates heaped with chicken and rice, considered by most Ghanaians an expensive and relatively fancy meal. These shots, or sequence of shots, rarely include dialogue important to the plot of the story, and instead tracks of American popular music or Ghanaian highlife music serve to emphasize the imaging. This visualization of wealth restricts the audience's response to what is seen. Although the moral of the narrative is that wealth is evil, desire for money and the pleasures it offers motivates the gaze of the camera.

Zinabu, like the icons of wealth, is gazed upon by the camera, and at these two moments (during the long and lingering takes of luxury items and the in and out zoom shots of Zinabu) the linear time of the narrative stands still. The video offers both as spectacles, taking the spectator into "a no man's land outside of time and space" (Mulvey 20). This "fetishistic scopophilia" exists "outside of linear time as the erotic instinct is focused on the look alone" (Mulvey 22). Zinabu represents a gendered personification of greed and wealth and of the limits of, and obstacles impeding the fulfillment of, desire, for wealth, for sex, for admiration. She is at once desire fulfilled and the lack produced

by desire, what Laura Mulvey calls the "perfect and beautiful contradiction" of women in narrative film, and in patriarchal culture (25). Within the world of the film, Zinabu represents the threat of castration (Kofi marries her and loses his manhood) and is a fetish that conceals this threat (she offers his wealth to full the lack left by the missing phallus). Her image is ambivalent: "the female image as castration threat constantly endangers the unity of diegesis and bursts through the world of illusion as an intrusive, static, one-dimensional figure" (Mulvey 26). As castration and fetish, lack and fulfillment, she "stands as linchpin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence, it is her desire to make good the lack that the phallus signifies" (Mulvey 14). Not only is the place of woman in narrative film an analogy for the position of woman in patriarchal culture, as Mulvey illustrates. Zinabu might also represent the place of woman within the nation. She, at once, embodies its ideals and the abject against which it defines itself. To call attention to this contradiction, to woman as the "linchpin" within the paradigm that silences her, is perhaps, in a very small way, to destabilize it.

Of Mimicry and Men: The Novels of Akosua Gyamfuaa-Fofie and Amma Darko

The novels of Akosua Gyamfuaa-Fofie and Amma Darko might be read as responses to the anti-woman ideologies and practices of the state and to the portrayals of women in video films. They might also be read as texts of mimicry, and I use the concept as employed Homi Bhabha in "Of Mimicry and Man." In mimicing the official discourse of the nation-state, the novels produce "its slippage, its excess, its difference" (Bhabha 86). Bhabha writes:

> Under cover of camouflage, mimicry, like the fetish, is a part-object that radically revalues the normative knowledges .... For the festish mimes the forms of authority at the point at which it deauthorizes them. Similarly, mimicry rearticulates presence in terms of its 'otherness,' that which it disavows. (91)

These novels examine the places occupied by women in the nation, and although advocating or accepting the state's organization of the nation and woman's place it, they do so imperfectly, enabling a sort of "strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (86). This "double vision," Bhabha argues, "disrupts" the authority of the official discourse, and it is to this disruption that I now turn.

Akosua Gyamfuaa-Fofie is a Ghanaian writer whose novels are published in Accra and circulate within Ghana, primarily in the urban areas. Gyamfuaa-Fofie has written over twelve books, and is one of the most prolific popular writers in Ghana. In many of her novels, as if commenting on the culture of surveillance instituted by the PNDC, she warns against misreading what one sees. For Gyamfuaa Fofie, the modern present brings with it a disjuncture between signs and referents, surface and interior, and reality and representation.: things are not always what they appear to be, and interpretations of situations, emotions and visual signs are often mis-readings of true meanings. Instances of mis-reading create the drama and suspense of her novels, and resolution comes about when signs and referents are re-aligned.

The struggle of lovers Akosua Boahemaa and Kwaku Boakye Yiadom to maintain a relationship despite the impediments of modern life in Ghana creates the dramatic tension of Akosua Gyamfuaa Fofie's novel, *The Tested Love.* In the first chapter of the novel, Akosua weeps as she reads a letter from Boakye in which he explains that he no longer cares for her because he believes that she has deceived him by reuniting with her

former husband. He writes, "All along, I thought I was the only man in your life. You never gave me the cause to think that you were planning to go back to your former husband" (3). Boakye believes that the truth he has been living is a lie, but he is mistaken. Upon finding Akosua and her husband together, he misreads the scene before him, interpreting their mutual affection not as friendship, which, the narrator assures us, is what it really is, but as a love affair. His eyes deceive him, and Boakye's incorrect interpretation leads him to jilt Akosua, who sends him a letter in return, proclaiming her innocence with "God as [her] witness" and admonishing him for not believing her: "I have already told you nothing but the absolute truth. If you love me, believe me" (5).

The difficulty of deciphering true love from false love, sincerity from manipulation, truth from lie, and the real from a false representation obstructs the couple from achieving what the novel suggests is the natural outcome of their love, marriage. Boayke's "coursegirl" shows up in his room after he has proposed marriage to Boahemma. A coursegirl, the novel explains, is an uneducated woman from Boakye's hometown, with whom he had an affair, although he "had no intention of marrying" her (17). The narrator assures the reader that Boakye's error is not one of deception because he "had made it clear that their friendship would not lead to marriage" (19). But Boahemma is not convinced, and she leaves the room upset that Boakye "had been able to hide [his affair] from her without her being suspicious" (19). The dilemma emerges out of Boahemma's perceived misreading of Boakye and her suspicion that he actively deceived her by concealing the truth behind a facade of genuine love and affection.

Through its use of protagonists who read representation as reality and make the wrong choices, the text explores ways of reading behaviors, situations and bodies,

physical texts that must be visualized to be analyzed. Indeed, the novel creates an unresolved tension about sight and seeing. It both implies that what one sees is true, that meaning is found on bodies and in physical realities, and queries sight. Sight is deceiving and enables bad intentions, illegal activities, and unfaithfulness to be concealed. Sight is presented as unmediated and absolute. When, for example, Boakye *sees* Boahemma, it is her beauty that attracts him, and when he tells her how lovely she is, "she couldn't know what to do with this powerful emotion that was trying to overcome her so she looked down lest Boakye could read something in her eyes" (10). After Boahemma leaves Boakye, the sight of his body reveals the authenticity of his anguish. When his sister sees him "she became convinced that he meant what he was saying. He had grown very lean and her heart went to him" (26). She assures Boahemma of Boakye's remorse, which has put him in "such a pitiable state," telling her, "if you see him you'll know that I am speaking the truth" (29). And when Boahemma does see him, she recognizes the sincerity of his suffering because he looks "so thin and pale," and she therefore forgives him (30). Boahemma's evil kidnappers have a "look" that she does not like (40); the men who guard the house where she is kept "were all evil-looking men with bloodshot eyes" (41). The man with whom she planned her escape "looked at her for along time and then decided that he could trust her" (54). When Boakye gets another woman pregnant and marries her, his mother comes to give Boahemma the bad news, and "from Eno Adwoa's looks, Boahemaa knew she was a carrier of bad news" (74).

The narrative that equates sight with reality is undermined by a narrative that represents sight as misleading, questionable, and deceptive. The villain, Kofi Jackson, a rich and corrupt business man who kidnaps Boahemma because she refuses to be his

wife, is dangerous and evil because, "he was able to give a gentle outward appearance so much so that it was impossible to believe that he could even hurt a fly," when, in reality "he was one of the most dangerous and ruthless people who did not take no for an answer" (44). Upon her release Boahemma explains her plight to her uncle who could not accept "that Kofi Jackson, who looked so gentle and calm could behave in such an uncivilized manner " (66). Because "seeing is believing" they take him to Kumasi, where he buys a newspaper and sees Kofi Jackson's picture on the front page. The image confirms Boahemma's story, and her Uncle remarks, "Shakespeare was right when he said that appearances are deceptive. Truly its difficult to know the mind's construction on the face" (67). Simultaneously sight (what he sees in the newspaper) convinces Boahemma's uncle of what really happened and sight (Jackson's physical appearance) causes him to doubt Jackson's criminality.

Akosua Gyamfuaa-Fofie clearly intends to provide audiences with examples of strong and capable women, to educate women and men readers about the rights of women and to enable women "to bury every difference and form a united front with shared goals, transforming an unpleasant and exploitative past into a productive and meaningful future" (Gyamfuaa-Fofie, "Women's Role" 44). Gyamfuaa-Fofie, according to Newell, uses "creative writing to intercede in the formation of opinions about women, working from within to create a heroine that repels 'masculinist' texts" (42). Whereas the video films stigmatize women's desire for independence, equality and respect as synonymous with her struggle to obtain wealth by any means, Gyamfuaa-Fofie represents women's fight for equality in love and politics as an indication of the progress of the nation and ties women's liberation to her place in the nation and the family. In this way,

Gyamfuaa-Fofie reiterates and mimics the discourse of the nation by naturalizing it and its analog, the family. Yet, at every utterance, her act of mimicry functions as a menace. In describing the utopian future that has not been achieved, she calls the reader's attention to the failures of the 31st December Revolution and the nation-state.

Abena Afriyie is the modern woman and heroine of *Because She was a Woman* who dedicates her life to the fight to end discrimination against women "in order to make the country a good place" to live (9). Abena's struggle for equal rights begins when she is a child and her father refuses to allow her to go to school. Her mother sends her to school despite her husband's protests, and causes the break-up of the marriage. Her "task" in life, she realizes, is "proving her father, nay, the whole world wrong and her mother right; the task of telling the world that women are also capable and if given the chance they could use their minds to the maximum capacity and help mankind" (2). The narrator remarks that "Most people thought of her stand on having an education at all cost to the displeasure of her father as a foolish adventurism but she thought that there was a mistake in society in which she lived and there must be someone to change the situation and make corrections" (3). Abena goes to school and founds the "All Ladies Movement ... to create awareness among women" (8). She travels abroad to get an education and returns to Ghana and runs for president as the candidate for the PPP party. She wins the election and vows to bring men and women together "to build a prosperous nation for posterity to write our names in gold" (82).

The novel weaves together characteristics of a melodramatic romance and a mystery when Kofi is kidnaped by Mr. Kwame Tuffour, "a very successful businessman and a popular politician" (41) who wants Kofi to leave Abena and become a part of his

political campaign. Kofi refuses, defending Abena who "has done for the country what the so called wealthy men have not been able to do" (44). At the end of the novel, peace is restored. Abena wins the election, Kofi shows up and explains his ordeal to her, and Abena is able to reunite with her father, who after her inauguration "advised all men to respect their women and give them the chance to participate in decisions that effect their family for he had seen that women, if given the chance, could contribute more than caring for the children and working" (85). *Because She Was a Woman* couples Abena's political ambitions with her struggle to find love and happiness with Kofi Kusi, and implicitly aligns the security of the modern nation with equality between men and women in politics and love. The love between the two blossoms when Abena convinces him that "as human beings, women are capable of using their minds to the maximum capacity to achieve things that are beneficial to themselves and the societies they live in" (18). Kofi, in turn, becomes a supporter of Abena's political ambitions, suffering the criticisms of and ostracism by his friends and family. Abena comforts him by reminding him that "no revolution is won without painful deprivations" (33). Gyamfuaa-Fofie's argument is that only when women are embraced as equal partners in love and politics will the nation thrive. The position is summarized in a speech given by Abena's teacher at her graduation ceremony:

> The time has come for us to prove to our male counterparts that we are capable and have minds of our own. We have to fight for equal rights with our menfolk. A right that would eliminate discrimination and inferiority; a right that will eliminate male domination in all fields in this country; a right that will make man accept his wife as his partner in progress but not as a slave or one of the many decorations in his home. (9)

Gyamfuaa-Fofie links the home to the nation, reaffirming the family as its "natural" foundation. For women, the past represents a time of oppression, discrimination and

unfair treatment, Abena and the women of her movement, struggle to create a utopian future where men and women are equal partners in politics and love. In the novel, Abena's father, Mr. Tuffour and Kofi's mother represent the old and patriarchal ways of the past. Kofi's mother disowns her son and accuses Abena of being a witch because she " would never understand. She has been trained to be obedient and submissive to her husband and the manhood in general .... To her, this world belongs to men and women were here just to stay and perform their obedient and humble duties" (39). By the conclusion of the novel, these figures become absorbed into the novel's rhetoric. Mr. Tuffour, the corrupt and wealthy politician has been put into jail while Kofi's mother and Abena's father have become convinced of the legitimacy of Abena's struggle. In *Because She Was a Woman*, as in the rhetoric of Revolution, the present is a time of transition between an oppressive past and a promising future. It is not, however, women's anti-revolutionary behavior that marks the past, but the discrimination that women confront. The ill treatment of women defines the "old ways" of a "superstitious society" and necessitates Abena's foray into politics (44). As another member of the movement reminds the crowd at Abena's commencement ceremony, "... even if the present offers nothing, we must allow the hope of the future to keep us on" (10).

In imagining Revolution, and the contours of the utopian future it promises for the nation, Gyamfuaa-Fofie calls attention to the failures of the "real" 31st December Revolution and the government it instituted. The final chapter of *Because She Was a Woman* makes this apparent. Abena's government, according to the narrator, "achieved success which no other government had been able to achieve in the past" (83). Schools were built, the foreign debt eradicated and "food was in abundance" (83). As Kofi Kusi

says, "She has done for this country what the so called wealthy men have not been able to do. Now we have female scholars and there are many who are studying in the universities and elementary schools" (44). Every articulation about Abena's revolution and the new nation it ushers into existence is double-edged, a mimic and menace, at once reifying the ideology of the family and the nation, and, simultaneously, gesturing toward its failures.

The Housemaid

> In Ghana, if you come into the world a she, acquire the habit of praying. And master it. Because you will need it, desperately, as old age pursues you, and mother nature's hand approaches you with a wry smile, paint and brush at the ready, to daub you with wrinkles.
>
> If, on top of this, your children, waging a desperate war of their own for economic survival, find themselves having too little time for you, count you among the forsaken and the forgotten; and if, crowning it all, cash, fine sweet cash, decides it doesn't really fancy your looks and eludes you in all nooks, crooks and crannies, then know for sure that you are on route to qualifying grandly as a witch. (*The Housemaid* 3)

Amma Darko's novel *The Housemaid*, the opening paragraphs of which are quoted above, posits a discursive correspondence between gendered bodies and the Ghanaian nation. For women without economic power and the protection of their families, the Ghanaian nation is a threatening place, offering few prospects for happiness and presenting many dangers, dangers that manifest themselves on women's bodies. Within the 107 pages of the novel, an old women is declared a witch, a young unmarried girl gives birth to a Downs Syndrome girl child, the child dies, the young mother is pursued as a murderer, and a woman has an abortion which leaves her barren. Both rich and poor women exchange sex for money, business contracts and places to sleep at

various points in the text. The novel continually sets these occurrences in Ghana, in this way suggesting that this is a narrative intended to be read as a national narrative, and one centered on how women experience the space of the nation. The novel is told almost entirely through the dialogue among and the thoughts of its female characters, and the gaze and voice of the novel's narrator aligns not with the male characters in the novel, but with the women. Unlike Gyamfuaa-Fofie, Darko holds little hope for the nation. Instead of offering the promise to guard the rights of women, the nation-state has contributed to the hardships suffered by women.

In the novel, the myth of a unified nation is dispelled and the nation is portrayed as a space of contestation and competition. No national community exists. Ghana houses a multiplicity of voices inflected by the gender and class positions of their speakers which often contradict one another. The murder of the girl child brings all of these conflicts into the open. At the market and the taxi station, two of the busiest locations in the city, men and women dispute the meaning of the body, and their interpretations vary dramatically depending on their gender. The men chastise the mother and suggest that when she is caught "her womb should be removed, cut in two, and given to her to swallow by the count of three" (6). The women, on the other hand, sympathize with "the poor baby's mother" and criticize "the irresponsible man who impregnated the poor woman" (6). Disputes about how to interpret the body occur in the newspaper; one headline reads "Find the Mother! Hang Her!' and another "Why Did she Do It?" (5).

The homogenous time and space of the nation is disrupted in the novel, and Ghana is a nation in two parts: the city and the village, and the movement back and forth between these locations (the cities of Accra and Kumasi and the villages of Braha and

Kataso) fuels the plot. In the village of Braha, an "old widow" who was "formally pronounced a witch" (3) finds the decomposing body of a newborn baby girl. The dead body of the girl child becomes the mystery that the novel intends to solve, a mystery mapped onto the landscape of Ghana. From the discovery of the body in the village, the narrative jumps to the city of Kumasi, where the story of the dead and abandoned baby and "the name of an unknown eastern village was on the lips of every Ghanaian" (6). The mystery unravels as it is pulled between the village and the city. Like location, time, too, oscillates in the novel. Upon establishing the frame in which the novel is set, the narrator takes the reader into the "once upon a time" (3) world of the story and the discovery of the body. These events, with which the novel begins and ends, articulate the present of the novel and frame its telling. In Part Two, the narrative turns back to the events that lead up to the discovery of the decomposing body in the bushes. The reader navigates temporal shifts from the present in which the story is being told, to the past that preceded its telling and from the present occupied by the characters in story to the memories and reminiscences that explain their motivations. In this way, movement itself is central to the novel, continually relocating the plot, or story, and repositioning the reader in relation to the text, and it is movement that strings the episodes of the novel, and the locations in which they occur, together.

The reader, carried along by the narrative, enters the lives of Mami Korkor and her daughter Bibio when the two young boys, whom Bibio baby-sits while her mother is at the market, bring her a bundle of bloody cloths from the dump to wash and salvage. Mami Kokor is a fish hawker "helplessly wishing she could have afforded a better life" for her daughter, who resents her mother for the poverty in which they live. The narrator

wonders: "But how could she change things? She has to hawk fish from dawn to dusk to earn enough to feed herself and her four children. They all depended on her. Not a pesewa came from their father" (11). Mami Korkor suspects that the clothes are those worn by the mother of the dead baby, and so she takes them to the police station, where she meets Akua, the woman who reported to the police that her "very pregnant" friend Efia had been wearing these clothes before she disappeared (13). This episode concludes Part One.

The sudden shift into Part Two, initiated by the mention of Efia, sets the narrative in the past and moves into the life of Tika, a life vastly different from that lived by Mami Korkor and Bibio. While Bibio resents her mother for having so many children without the means to care for them properly, Tika worries that she is "single and childless at the ripe age of thirty-five" (17). Tika concerns herself not with affording food to feed her family, but the lack of fun afforded by "living only with Efia, her maid, in a two-room estate house, and travelling frequently all over Africa to scout for goods to sell in Ghana" (17). Tika, estranged from her mother, whom she blames for causing the death of her father and the end of her romance with Owuraku, lives independent of family or husband, engaging in sexual relations with several men in order to insure the success of her business. An abortion leaves her without a womb and unable to have children. Without a family of her own, she decides to share her wealth with her father's family. Tika decides that she wants a housemaid, someone from her father's village, Kataso. She seeks the assistance of Teacher, a woman who was born in Kataso but resides in Accra and who maintains a connection with the village by finding employment and education opportunities in the city for young girls. Efia's family, her mother, father, grandmother,

and grandfather, accept Tika's offer of four years of employment in exchange for Efia's enrollment as a seamstress apprentice, a sewing machine, and cash. But Efia's grandmother and her father, an abusive drunkard, devise a plan to get Tika's wealth for themselves. After all, her father argues, "Didn't we take care of her up to this stage? And if we hadn't fed her up to now, would she have grown strong enough to be able to serve [Tika]?" (Darko 44).

Efia's father and grandmother convince themselves that the ancestors of Tika's father, angry at the treatment he received from her mother, have selected their family for this opportunity to get revenge and make themselves wealthy. The grandmother asks, "Of all the extended family members, why did Teacher settles on us?.... Because the ghost chose someone who could hear and understand his distant voice - me. Through your husband. The way that evil wife hurried Tika's father so prematurely to his grave, I tell you, his ghost will never find rest till he settles his score" (45). Efia's father and her grandmother instruct Efia to work for Tika and get herself pregnant, and because Tika is a "wasted woman," with "no womb at all," they are certain that she will agree to adopt the baby. Upon Tika's death, the grandmother explains, "Our task will be to make sure that the child never forgets who her real mother is. That way, the wealth will also belong to Efia, and therefore to us all. And we will let it trickle down and spread. We will transform Kataso. The village will hold us in great estimation" (48).

Efia gets herself pregnant by a local, and unnamed, "guy," (55) but instead of Tika agreeing to adopt the child, she asks Teacher to find her another housemaid. Word travels fast to the village, and when Efia's extended family learns of Tika's plan, they panic. Seduced by Tika's "city food" (60) and "elegant furnishings" (60) they decide to

allege that one of Tika's lovers, and business associates, Mr. Nsorhwe, is the culprit and convince him to support Efia and the child. Unknown to Efia and her scheming family, but known to Tika, Nsorhwe is impotent. When the family comes from the village to demand that Nsorhwe pay up, he, forewarned of their ploy by Tika, insists that Efia first have a paternity test. If indeed he is the father, he promises to pay. Realizing that the plan is spoiled, Efia steals a bag of money from Tika and runs away, finding her friend Akua, who left Kataso to work as a petty hawker. Efia stays with Akua, until she gives birth to a Downs Syndrome baby, who dies. Efia wants to take the baby back to the village to be buried, and so she dumps her bloody clothes in the dump and wraps the baby is a bag, and grabs a bus to the village. Here, she dumps the baby in the bushes when the passengers on the bus become suspicious of her. This is the body found by the "witch" at the beginning of the novel.

Although the village and the city are linked in the novel, the two locations maintain their separate identities through a juxtaposition of the lives of the women who live there and the familial relationships found there. The grandmother's pouring of libations and belief in the ancestors and ghosts, features of Kataso, are foiled by Nsorhwe's insistence on a scientific and "modern" blood test. Efia's family's decision to use Efia's pregnancy as a way to acquire wealth is set against Tika's decision to abort an unwanted pregnancy to maintain her freedom and independence. In the village of Kataso, Efia's life is decided by her extended family. She has no voice, silenced by her family, and by the novel. It is not until the end of the book, after she has given birth and come to Teacher for help, that the reader enters her thoughts and learns that she did not kill her baby nor did she intend to simply drop its body in the bushes. Efia reminds teacher of the

story of Maame Yefunbon who gave birth to a "bad child" (102). The child also suffered from Downs Syndrome and "was the first of its kind in Kataso, and the village was thrown into pandemonium. Accusing fingers were pointed, and the three old ladies ended up being declared witches. They were driven out of Kataso (102). Efia worries that Tika had "cursed" her family "because of all the bad things I and my people did ... or that the gods and ancestors were showing their disapproval at what we had done" (103), and she explains that she knew that therefore she had "to return with the body to my people so that the necessary rituals could be performed to clear the curse" (103).

A taxi driver in the novel refers to Tika as one of the "market mummies" who are "taking over the country. They dazzle you with their monkey humility, wheedle all your money out of you, then aim for your power" (Darko 52). But this characterization is refuted by the narrative voice and the events that transpire in the novel. Tika is not an unsympathetic character, but a modern woman whose sense of dislocation and dissatisfaction with her life stems from her birth "in a hospital in the city" where her umbilical cord was "flushed down into the sewerage system with countless others" (35). For Tika, Kataso represents family and community, the very things that she longs for. She recollects her father telling her of the village, "That is where my umbilical cord was buried" (29), and, therefore, wants her housemaid "to be from my father's extended family....Because I consider it my obligation that if I am fortunate enough to find myself in the position of bettering someone's life, then that person ought to be from my father's bloodline" (37). Yet, the village and the kin relations found there provide neither solace nor support for Tika. The romantic image of the village she holds is soon spoiled by the events that transpire there. Her father's kin set out to manipulate her and scheme to gain

access to her wealth, using the matrilinial "traditional" network to inherit Tika's wealth. Her nostalgia is further dispelled by the narrator, who explains that Kataso "a village in the eastern hills, had no flowing water, no electricity, no entertainment centre, nothing. Only the chief owned a television set – old, black, and white, and 100 percent out of order. There would have been no power to run it, even if it had worked. It stood in the palace for decoration" (29). Kataso is a place from which the young men flee "when they could no longer stand this bland, grey life" and from where young girls are taken to the cities "to work as housemaids and babysitters, though many eventually ended up as iced-water sellers and prostitutes" (30).

In *The Housemaid*, the modern nation is not celebrated as that which holds the hope for women's equality or even survival. Instead, modernity and nationalism bring to the village and the city economic hardships and demands that strain family and conjugal relationships and make life particularly difficult for women. *The Housemaid* insists that prosperity be understood in relation to poverty, and that poverty limits the options available to men and women, who struggle for survival in modern Ghana. Wealth, for example, comes to Tika at a great cost; she sells her body to maintain her standard of living. The dead body of the disfigured baby girl that haunts the novel perhaps symbolizes the sacrifices women are forced to accept as citizens of Ghana. Tika's womb-less body, as aberration, embodies the unnatural construction that the nation is.

I would suggest, however, that despite the compelling feminist critique of the nation articulated in the novel, *The Housegirl* deploys this critique by employing women's bodies as signifiers for the nation's failures and re-presenting the trope of woman-as-mother-of-the-nation. The failures of mothers stand for the failure of the

nation, and implicitly, then, the novel naturalizes motherhood, much as Gyamfuaa-Fofie naturalizes the family. As my discussion of the narrative indicates, each of the struggles faced by the women in novel centers on her failure as a mother. The novel implies that Tika's mother loved money more than her daughter and, therefore, is responsible for her daughter's failures as a mother, and as a woman. Mami Kokor is poor and because she must work long hours, leaves her children in the care of her young daughter, Bibio who resents her mother for her poverty and cannot prevent her siblings from playing in the filth of the dump. Efie's mother and grandmother are wicked village women who use their daughter to obtain money. It is this re-production of the trope of woman, even within a text that intends to menace the nation, that allows us to understand what distinguishes the text that mimics from that which "does not simply confront the pedagogical, or powerful master-discourse with a contradictory or negating referent" but that "interrogates its object" (155). This power of interrogation, this ability to "redefine the symbolic process" (153) Bhabha finds in the writings of Fanon and Kristeva. Darko, and Gyamfuaa-Fofie, to my mind, remain within the symbolic universe of the nation as narrated by Rawlings and the video film *Zinabu*. Although they menace the nation, revealing how it has failed women, the texts do not disrupt the ideological constructions of gender on which the nation depends.

Chapter Four: The Masculinist Critique of the Nigerian Nation-State

Introduction

Since the inauguration of the "Ethical Revolution" under the Second Civilian Republic of Shehu Shagari (1979-83), Nigerians have been subjected to a series of campaigns aimed to instruct ordinary citizens, civil servants and politicians on how to behave in order to produce an ethical and a strong nation. Muhammadu Buhari, for instance, initiated the War Against Indicipline (WAI) (1984-85), and Ibrahim Babangida founded the Mass Mobilization of Self Reliance, Social Justice, and Economic Recovery (1985-93). Each of these campaigns represented the state's attempt to define and enforce the development of an ethical and a moral populace, not by enforcing laws that mandated "correct" behavior, but by defining the problems threatening the Nigerian nation-state, the causes of and solutions to those problems. In effect, a discourse that normalized certain behaviors and stigmatizes others emerged in Nigeria at this time, a discourse that distinguished between the ethical and unethical and, in effect, Same and Other. What is remarkable is the gendered tenor of this national discourse on ethics and discipline. According to its "truths," the "modern" family is a model on which the nation-state is based, and the "proper" roles for women and men within the family reflect their proper roles within nation. A masculinist model of the Nigerian nation and family is invoked, and within this model, the nuclear family, presented as the locus of both modern and traditional African values, forms the foundation of the nation-state.[1] Disciplined or

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[1] See McClintock, Brown, and Dennis.

ethical women are mothers and caretakers, whose duty it is to raise the future citizens of the nation. Ethical men manage the political realm, and when necessary, ward off the seductive spells cast by wanton women.

The very act of defining proper or patriotic actions differently for men and women through a discourse on national ethics represents the state's attempts to control roles appropriate for women, and as Carolyne Dennis demonstrates, women suffer the repercussions of not abiding by the roles assigned them. In analyzing the economic crises that Nigeria experienced under the Federal Military Government in the 1980s, Dennis notes that the government blamed Nigeria's economic instability on those who exhibited "indiscipline" (Dennis 13). Among the groups accused of indiscipline were the following categories of women: "Wives and mothers who failed to devote their time to the upbringing of their children; single women who provided a source of temptation to men, and petty traders who hoarded essential goods and congested urban centers" (Dennis 13). The "uncontrolled" sexuality, and the economic independence, of women are read as threats to the order of the nation, and hence, must be controlled. Dennis argues that instances of soldiers beating Nigerian market women illustrate that violence can become one means of gaining control over women (20).

Debates about ethics and morals occur simultaneously with political campaigns organized for greater political, economic and social freedoms for women.[2] The past

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In the later 1970s through the 1980s, Nigerian newspapers *The Guardian*, *Punch*, *Daily Sketch*, *The Nigerian Standard*, and *Standard* feature numerous articles and editorials devoted to discussions of women's rights. *Punch*, for instance, offered two columns that specifically discussed women's issues. *Woman to Woman* included articles like "Recipe for a Lasting Marriage," November 22, 1985 and another column called *Yours Sincerely* highlighted pieces like "Give Women Their Due," October 28,

decade in Nigeria brought with it advocates who spoke out publically on behalf of women and political organizations devoted to defending women's rights. Maryam Babangida was the first Nigerian first lady to assume a public role by initiating the Better Life Program, and Maryam Abacha followed in her path, inaugurating the Family Support Program. The National Council for Women's Societies (NCWS) and the Nigeria Army Officers Wives Association (NAOWA), composed primarily of the wives of military officers and senior politicians, have echoed the first ladies' calls for greater freedoms for women. Many scholars, however, regard these organizations with scepticism. Ihonvbere and Shaw describe them as elitist initiatives which do little to change the lives of rural or poor urban women (150). Ogunjimi Bayo contends that the "First Ladies Syndrome" buttresses the "power of the patriarchy" by "perpetuating military rule in Nigeria without offering a feminist challenge" (38). The militarized state presents itself as pro-women through the political personalities of its wives, and yet, in its very essence it is the ultimate representation of the "masculinization of the state apparatus" (Bayo 29). So although a public debate centered on feminist concerns existed, it did not dispute or contradict the masculinist tone of the discourses on ethics and morals. Indeed, the public display of the first lady as the female counterpart to her husband, the military ruler, re-enacts the family model which the discourse on ethics continually re-visits. The first lady defends the domestic front while her husband concerns himself with the problems of the nation.

Participants in the debates concerning women's proper place within an upright government and citizenry were not limited to military men and their wives, but came

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1985.

from many segments of Nigerian society. In 1983, the Annual Religious Studies Conference of the University of Ibadan was devoted to the theme "Religion and Ethical Revolution in Nigeria." Commentators in the Nigerian Press have contributed to discussions on ethics and morality, and most recently, Nigerian video filmmakers have entered into the arena. At a time when the proper roles for women are being contested in Nigeria, the video-boom has created what Brain Larkin calls "the emergence of a new public sphere in Nigeria" (107). Larkin suggests that the oil boom of the 1970s, along with requirements enforced through the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Program, initiated the development of decentralized and privatized small media in Nigeria. Hence, "cultural and political spaces of communication that are outside of the control of the State and corporation" appear in large numbers in the 1980s and 90s (Larkin 111). Video film emerges as one of the most prominent forms of small media, carving a space where debates about, among other things, gender roles play themselves out.[3] At a time when the State's control over small media in Nigeria decreases, a flourishing regime of discourses on ethics censors behaviors labeled illicit or undisciplined. Nigerian video films, much like government proclamations urging Nigerians to be disciplined and self-reliant, put forth a gendered discourse on ethics, representing the family as an analog of the state and situating men and women in the roles established for them within the family matrix. Women belong within the domestic

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Before the advent of video-film in Nigeria, women's access to cinema was limited as cinema-going in Nigeria is a predominantly male pastime (Haynes 32). Video cassettes, sold and rented for home use, allow for female viewership. Video technology has also enabled women filmmakers, conspicuously absent from celluloid film production in West Africa, to make films in Nigeria (Haynes 32).

realm while men reside in the political world. The video films suggest simultaneously that the family perpetuates the causes and suffers the consequences of unethical and undisciplined behavior, and therefore, this discourse both punishes women who fail to abide by the "natural" roles subscribed to them as mothers and dutiful daughters and constructs women as the victims who suffer when male family members act in unethical or indisciplined ways.

In his groundbreaking volume on Nigerian video film, Jonathon Haynes argues that from the "optic of African film criticism" Nigerian video filmmakers are "disappointingly" and "overwhelmingly commercially oriented, studiously apolitical, and non-confrontational" (Haynes, 2000, 9). The lens of the African film critic, filtered by Third Cinema and Third World Cinema ideologies, looks for a cinema that is politically engaged, embarked on "some sort of cultural nationalist project, designed to repair the damage done by colonialism and neocolonialism" (Haynes, 2000, 6). In this chapter, I challenge this evaluation of Nigerian video film, arguing that, indeed, many of the films attempt to be oppositional, to participate in the nationalist project by portraying greed and corruption as forces detrimental to the health of nation-state. Yet, the oppositional stances against corrupt businessmen and ministers erected in these Nigerian video films are extremely limited and problematic. Not simply because the filmmakers must package their politics in order to sell them, as Haynes suggests, but because the video films that set out to be oppositional do so only by being decidedly anti-woman and in this way reproducing the gendered logic of the failed nation-state they set out to oppose. In this essay I examine three English language video films, *Hostages*, *Dust to Dust* and *True Confessions*. Each of these three films describes the corruption and greed

endemic to the Nigerian nation and, through its depiction of the pain and suffering corrupt politicians, police officers, jail warders, lawyers, parents, and spouses inflict on innocent victims, offers a critique of political and personal immorality in Nigeria. The melodramas tell stories of the ways political corruption impinges on the private, domestic lives of its victims, or, conversely, describes the damage domestic upheaval wrecks on political ambitions. The political and the domestic and the public and the private are arranged as complements within the form and content of the films, and consequently, the lives of men, who are positioned within political and public spaces, are juxtaposed to the lives of women, placed primarily in the home.

Whether portrayed as helpless objects acted on by others, or autonomous agents shaping their own futures, women don't fare well in the video melodramas examined here. *Hostages* and *Dust to Dust* tell the stories of male protagonists, and the content of each film chronicles the events of the men's lives and use mothers, sisters and girlfriends as props in the central figure's story. The political problems perpetuated by the nation-state, against which the male protagonists act, produce disastrous results in the domestic arena, in the home, in the family, or in romantic affairs. The domestic is the text where the political leaves its signs and women signify disorder in a discourse about political and moral corruption. Furthermore, the filmic form eclipses the distance between the camera and the male protagonist. A male gaze and male voice direct the audience's access to the stories contained in the films and the meanings assigned to them. In *Hostages* and *Dust to Dust*, women are doubly framed, both within the diegesis of the film and by the male gaze through which the spectator sees.

True Confessions, at first glance, appears to offer an alternative female

subjectivity from that presented in the other films. Mabel, the female protagonist, guides the audience through the story of her past, and, for most of the film, her vision controls what we see. Furthermore, the formula of the previous films seems inverted. Here, family turmoil creates problems for Mabel's son, Moses, who is an honest politician committed to faithfully representing his party and constituents. The relationship between the domestic and the political is reiterated, the immorality of one realm acting on the other, but the terms are reversed. The domestic is positioned as the cause of the effects experienced in the political. Mabel is then central to the story in ways the women in the other films are not, but Mabel, the ambitious and independent urban woman, is also an evil wife and a vengeful mother. Her autonomy is the source of her wickedness, and in equating female agency with deviancy, the film implies that a woman who does not accept her "natural" lot as dutiful wife and unobtrusive mother-in-law can only be a monster. The film opposes Mabel's amorality with the noble aims of Moses and suggests that female deviancy reflects a more fundamental immorality pervasive within modern culture. Mabel's character embodies the immorality her son aims to eradicate, and within the film, the urgency of the political critique Moses symbolizes depends on Mabel and the corruption she represents. If what Ogunjimi describes as "masculinist state apparatus" produces negative and stereotypical constructions of womanhood, then it is worth noting that discourses attempting to speak out against the corrupt Nigerian state reproduce these gender divisions, compromising the social critiques put forth in these films.

Since the publication of George L. Mosse's *Nationalism and Sexuality* (1985), the interaction between the nation and its gendered logic has been the focus of several book-

length studies and numerous articles.[4] In this literature, the place and function of women within nationalist discourse has been widely studied, and generally, it is argued that woman are deployed as "symbols of the nation" (Mosse 90) and as markers of the constitutive difference by which the nation is bounded. The "trope of the nation-as-woman" naturalizes the image of woman "as chaste, dutiful, daughterly or maternal" (Parker et al 6) and the image of man as the defender of the nation's territory (10). Those subjectivities and sexualities that fall outside of this rigid heterosexual matrix are labeled as Other and pushed outside of the national boundary. In this way, a nation "can consolidate its identity by projecting beyond its own borders the sexual practices or gender behaviors it deems abhorrent" (Parket et al 10). These analyses tend to focus on anticolonial nationalisms or other nationalist discourses, but rarely is gender in anti-nation or anti-state discourses examined. I this chapter, I begin to address the question raised by such an exclusion and conclude that in anti-nationalist discourse, as represented by Nigerian video films, women function similarly, and therefore the ideology that naturalizes the divide between women as reproducers of the nation and men as its protectors and avengers is reiterated even in those texts which aim to criticize the exclusions on which nation stands.

The Ethical Nation-State

In January, 1986, Major-General Ibrahim B. Babangida established the Political

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Some of the books consulted in this dissertation include *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, edited by Andrew parker, et al; *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: sexing the nation*, edited by Tamar Mayer; *Mapping the Nation*, edited by Gopal Balakrishnan; *Between Woman and Nation*, edited by Caren Kapln et.al.

Bureau, a committee assigned the task of conducting "a national debate on the political future of our country" (3). One year later, the Political Bureau presented a report to the President in hopes that "the findings, observations and recommendations in this report will be of some assistance to your administration in its plans for this great nation of ours" (3). The Report of the Political Bureau, March 1987, addresses its recommendations to politicians, civil servants, and civilians and offers suggestions for the improvement of government services, for conducting open and fair elections, and for the development of democratic political processes. Chapter twelve of the Report is labeled "A New Political Orientation for Nigeria," and section three of this chapter discusses the causes of, and offers solutions for, corruption and indiscipline. The Committee cites several reasons for the prevalence of corruption in Nigerian society:

> ... our failure to uphold the traditional values of our society; our imbibing of foreign values, especially as a result of our colonial experience; and our failure to uphold our religious norms and tenets. Some contributors perceive corruption within the Nigerian society to be essentially a product of the excessive materialism generated by our individualized capitalist order, which emphasizes the struggle to acquire wealth by individuals without regard to the collective interests and welfare of the larger society. (213)

Here, the essential is equated with the traditional and is the source of the inner strength of the nation that must be unearthed and protected. Nigerian culture stands on a split between an inside and outside, an essential Nigerian interiority buried by materialism and foreign influence. The stability of the culture and nation depend on the repression of the illicit and the re-emergence of the traditional. In the discourse on ethics and morality, women represent the illicit and unforbidden. They are the modern contaminating the traditional and the unrestrained sexuality jeopardizing order. For instance, *The Nigerian*

Ethical Revolution: 1981-2000 AD (1981), published by a member of Nigerian President Shagari's National Ethical Re-Orientation Committee, Mazi Kanu Oji, is dedicated to the newly elected president with the intention of furthering "the Nigerian Ethical revolution" (13), and as the title suggests, attempts to chart a fresh course for a country marred by a military coup and military rule. The book is comprised of a series of papers and reports presented, on various occasions, to members of government. The first policy paper, "The Task Ahead" recommends that in order to combat indiscipline within the culture, civil servants must emanate high ethical standards and "radiate good leadership" (33). No longer will the nation tolerate "the kind of ugly spectacle of the early 1960s when the flamboyance of the Parliamentarians and Ministers and their unmarried high society lady friends evoked envy and raised public eyebrows" (33). Here, although the recommendation is not directed explicitly at men, a generic political leader is gendered as male while women are the distractions that lure him from his public responsibilities and seduce him into unethical and undisciplined behaviors. Her "unmarried" status places her outside of her sanctioned place as wife and position her as that something Other against which the Normal, or ethical, is defined. The ungendered ethical subject referred to, and constructed by, this tract is constituted as male. The tract performs a double gesture in its articulations: it attempts to describe a universal and an ungendered subject while, at points of slippage, reveals that this "neutral" subject is, in fact, a male subject who defines himself in opposition to that which is woman, that which is "radically Other" (Lacan SXX, 75). Wendy Brown argues that liberal and nationalist discourse operates in the same way, disavowing gender difference through the use of neutral language and essentializing gender as difference. In describing a "neutral,"

ethical subject, the female subject is inscribed as what the male subject is not. Maleness and femaleness, Same and Other are aligned as a binary in which "one is one's gender to the extent that one is not the other gender, a formulation that presupposes and enforces the restriction of gender within that binary pair" (Butler, 1990, 22). To be a man and act other than male, or to be a woman and act other than female is to be abnormal, or unethical. Furthermore, if the universal subject is predicated on maleness, the femaleness is often associated with abnormality, dysfunction or immorality.

According to Michel Foucault, "Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (Foucault, 1995, 170). Disciplinary power operates through 'normalizing judgement[s]" through which "the Normal is established as a principal of coercion" (184). In the Nigerian discourse on ethics and morality, ethical judgement functions similarly, validating certain behaviors and condemning others. The normal, or the ethical, however, can be named only by specifying the abnormal, or the unethical. Discursively, the normal is linked inextricably to what is articulated as its opposite. In order to define what is normal, the abnormal is continually invoked in a binary relation that joins sameness and the difference. Foucault notes, "The power of normalization imposes homogeneity, but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities, and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another" (184). Disciplined subjects are gendered subjects, and the difference on which the construction of an ethical subject stands is gender difference. Hence, the discourse on ethics generates, and institutionalizes, definitions of femaleness and maleness.

In the discourse on ethics, the nuclear family re-emerges again and again as a model of, and symbol for, the Nigerian nation. *The Report of the Political Bureau, March 1987* defines Indiscipline as "closely related to corruption" (214), and one of the main causes of its within Nigerian society is "the breakdown of the family institution" (214). In a corrupt society, "many parents no longer see their roles as that of guardians of the youth. The atmosphere in many homes is no longer conducive to the proper bringing up of children. *The average family is the psychic agency of society, and by adjusting himself to his family, the child acquires the character which later determines the way he is able to fit into this wider social environment*" (italics mine) (214). The family, then, provides the environment in which the child's character is molded, and hence the family unit is responsible for producing a corrupt, or a just, society. Although in this passage the family is glossed as an ungendered and a natural arrangement, the trope of the nuclear family constructs men and women differently, institutionalizing a heterosexual matrix and regulating women to their role within the household. A rigid heterosexual regime underwrites this family arrangement in which "the internal coherence or unity of either gender, man or woman, thereby requires both a stable and an oppositional heterosexuality" (Butler,1990, 22). The enactment of heterosexual desire within a nuclear family prescribes, as natural and normal, different cultural roles for men and women. "Normal" women are positioned as mothers, wives and obedient daughters, while sexually licentious women, economically independent women, and unmarried women are treated as aberrations of or threats to the family and society. This is exemplified in the "Tract on Education" from *The Nigerian Ethical Revolution: 1981-2000 AD* (1981) by Mazi Kanu Oji. Oji posits the breakdown of the family as the cause

of indiscipline among young people and implicitly places women within the domestic realm, her "natural" abode, and in the role of mother. The author argues, "Wives leave their little kids with helpless husbands the moment they see a chance of economic independence or more luxurious living potential with some corrupting tycoons, while supposedly responsible fathers and heads of households furnish flats here and abroad for butterfly girlfriends" (97). Women, labeled as "wives" act inappropriately by pursuing economic independence or abandoning their families for "luxurious living." Men who sponsor "butterfly" mistresses are accused of immoral behavior, too, but, again, men are placed outside the home and act in an undisciplined manner when tempted by female sexuality. Desires or economic aspirations that fail to subscribe to the patriarchal order of the nuclear family prevent children from becoming ethical citizens and are, therefore, called immoral.

Throughout the texts examined here, women's work, that activity which takes women away from their role as mothers, is labeled as illegitimate or is criminalized. In a letter written to the House of Representatives Committee on Veteran Affairs and Social Welfare presented to the House as a response to its public inquiry into juvenile delinquency, Oji addresses the problem of juvenile delinquency. He contends

> ... a little teenage girl who helps her mother to hawk her smuggled contraband handbags and baby dresses in the go-slow bound streets of Lagos can hardly be expected to regard smuggling or other forms of beating the law for the ease of living, as criminal; more so when she sees that some of her won clothes and other necessaries of life are earned through smuggling – her mother's nefarious business. (137)

Oji criticizes the "changing pattern of the modern family unit, which allows for working mothers; increasing incidence of broken marriages; imported films and imported social habits heavily drenched in violence, immorality, and pornography" (138). Again,

working mothers are stigmatized and blamed for the downfall of society. The suggestion is that the stability of the nation-state depends on the stability of the family unit, and the security of the family relies on a mother who fulfills her duty as a mother instead of searching for economic gain or sexual freedom, and a father who assumes his place as patriarch. As Haleh Afshar remarks, "repeated references to working women as symbols of corruption and agents of moral disintegration" in a nationalist discourse reveals a "strong ideological fear of women who are not clearly confined to the sphere of domesticity" (4).

In 1980, Major General T.B. Ogundeko directed a series of seminars for students at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies in the Senior Executive Course. *The Proceedings of the Concluding Seminars on Selected National Policy Matters of the Senior Executive Course* devotes a section of their report to "National Indiscipline" and finds that "most children who are indisciplined are so because they lack parental care and protection" (183). The report concludes: "Therefore indiscipline and disorderly behavior usually start from the homes and cracks in the family eventually reflect in wider cracks in the community. It is natural that a wayward mother would produce loose daughters and recalcitrant sons. The consequence for the family and the Nation cannot be ignored" (183). Women, again, are reproached for denouncing their natural roles as mother, and the nation therefore suffers. The report notes, "The women of earlier generations showed greater loyalty to their husbands than is the position today even when more men maintain their wives and children. Promiscuous living, sexual laxity and divorce by married people and abortion by spinsters are practiced at a level never known before" (184). For this reason, the authors conclude, an education in morals must be

administered by Nigerian schools. Morality, in the examples discussed here, serves not only as "an important mechanism for disciplining and regulating the social" (Alexander 133), but as a discourse through which maleness and femaleness are constituted. Women represent otherness; they are disloyal, promiscuous and sexually lax, and abortion is read as a sign that ethics, morals and traditional values are severely lacking in contemporary Nigeria. Women function as the other against which the ethical male subject is defined. The discourse on ethics and morality in Nigeria stands on "an ontology of masculine sameness, an ontology that produces a formally masculine standard insofar as it is premised upon its *differentiation from women*" (Brown 153).

Nigerian Videos in Ghana

Several sources incorrectly have credited Nigerian video filmmakers with igniting the video boom in Anglophone West Africa.[5] In fact, Nigeria produced its first video film in 1988, one year after the exhibition of Willaim Akuffo's *Zinabu* in Ghana. Although Ghanaian filmmakers might have been the first to produce feature films with video technology, Nigerian video filmmakers have created an industry that produces more films, with far larger budgets, than their West African counterparts. I don't think it would be inaccurate to say that Ghanaians love Nigerian video film. The films are featured on Ghanaian television, shown in video centers throughout the country, and sold on video cassettes in greater numbers than Ghanaian videos.[6] When Nigerian films

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[5] See Haynes' *Nigerian Video Films* and Korley.

[6] Executive Officer of D'Joh Mediacraft and Nigerian Godwin Ifeanyi Onyeabor have collaborated on several productions including *The Visitor*, *Asimo*, *Lost Hope* and

entered the Ghanaian market in 1995, sales of Ghanaian videos dropped dramatically and resulted in many producers leaving the industry. This generalization was repeated to me in almost every interview I conducted with film producers and distributors and is further verified by the censorship records which reveal a dramatic decrease in the number of films presented to the censorship board after 1995. The reason for this is quite simple: Nigerian video filmmakers sell far more copies of their video cassettes because they have a much larger market. Nigeria's population of 120 million inhabitants is far larger than Ghana's population of 24 million, and therefore Nigerian video filmmakers have budgets far larger than the average Ghanaian filmmaker (2 million naira, approximately $20,000). Nigerian directors pay their actors and technical people more and can afford elaborate sets and the technical expertise needed to create special effects. Nigerians also export their films throughout West Africa, while not even Nigeria imports Ghanaian films because, distributors allege, Nigerians don't like Ghanaian films because they are not as good as Nigerian films. The National Film and Video censors Board (NFVCB) calculates that the turnover of home video industry in 2000 was close to 6.45 billion naira ($65 million). Sales of cassettes abroad in Benin, Togo, Ghana, Zambia and South Africa are

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Time. In the co-productions, Onyeabor absorbed all expenses involved in hiring Nigerian artists and technicians, while Nanor assumed the costs of paying Ghanaian artists and crew members. Each producer then marketed the film in his respective country. For Ghanaian filmmakers, the benefits of collaborating with Nigerian filmmakers are obvious. The popularity of Nigerian video films in Ghana guaranteed that the co-productions would be profitable, which they were, and Nanor also stated that he hoped such collaborations would make Ghanaian films more appealing to Nigerian audiences. For Nigerians, the collaborations present the opportunity to expand their Ghanaian market base.

estimated at 80 million naira ($800,000). A total of approximately 650 video films were released in Nigeria in 2000, and 10,000 to 20,000 copies of each film were sold.[7]

In Nigeria, as in Ghana, early film production in the colony occurred under the auspices of the Gold Coast Colonial Film Unit. After independence, the Federal Film Unit assumed control over film production, but like its predecessor, focused primarily on the production of documentaries and newsreels. In 1979, the Nigerian Film Corporation was founded with the intention of sparking film production in the country, but to no avail. Although television production was managed by the state, celluloid film production remained a private endeavor organized by the filmmakers themselves.[8] Francis Oladele established Calpenny Nigeria, Ltd and produced two feature films *Kongi's Harvest* and *Bullfrog in the Sun* (Balagoun 41). Ola Balogun founded Afrocult Foundation Ltd; Eddie Ugbomah set up Edifosa Film Enterprises; Ade Afolayan founded Friendship Motion Pictures; Hubert Ogunde established Ogunde Pictures Company, and Moses Olaiya Adejumo created Alawada Film Company. Through these independent film productions emerged a unique Yoruba cinema that drew inspiration from, and reproduced many of the plays of, the Yoruba traveling theatre troupes of which many of

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This information comes from a report produced by Mr. Thomas Milon, audiovisual attaché at the department of Cooperation and Cultural Activities, Embassy of France in Nigeria, February 2001.

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For an overview of Nigerian film history see the following: Fraçoise Balogun, *The Cinema in Nigeria*, Nigeria, Enugu: Delta Publications, 1987. Manthia Diawara, *African Cinema: Politics and Culture.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1992, and Diawara, "The Present Situation of the Film Industry in Anglophone Africa," *African Experiences of Cinema.* Imruh Bakari and Mbye B. Cham, eds. London: BFI Publishing, 1996.

the filmmakers were directors. The 1972 Indigenisation Act "gave exclusive monopoly for distribution and exhibition of feature films to Nigerians" (Diawara, 1996, 106) and enabled the production of several feature films per year in Nigeria in English and Yoruba. The future of film production in Nigerian appeared promising in the 70s as the country enjoyed the economic prosperity of the oil boom. But the declining price of oil in international markets and the implementation of a structural adjustment program in the 1980s brought celluloid film production to a halt in Nigeria.

The alliance between film production and the Yoruba theatre distinguishes film and video production in Ghana from that in Nigeria. Whereas Nigeria feature films were produced privately, Ghanaian film production was, in large part, controlled by the state-owned film company. In Ghana, as was described in Chapter One, entrepreneurs with no formal film training or experience ignited the explosion in video film production. In Nigeria, however, the first films made on video in 1988 were produced by Yoruba Traveling theatre artists who "conceived of video simply as the cheapest possible way of producing audio-visual material for projection to an audience" (Haynes and Okome 55).

These directors had experience and/or training as filmmakers and turned to video as "the culmination of a process of adopting progressively cheaper media as the economy deteriorated" (55). In 1992, Igbo video production was launched by Kenneth Nnebue with the Yoruba language film *Living in Bondage*, and soon after other Igbo-owned production companies followed him. Two years later, Nnebue made the first English language film, *Glamour Girls*, and this trend continued among Yoruba and Igbo filmmakers who sought wider audiences for their films. (Haynes and Okome 64). A video film tradition in Hausa is developing in Northern Nigeria, but these films are rarely

exhibited or sold in other parts of the country (Larkin 230).

The three films discussed in this chapter are English language films that appeared on television while I was in Ghana, and films that are available for purchase in Ghanaian video stores. Other than offering the most superficial statement about the popularity of Nigerian films in Ghana, I cannot speculate on how Ghanaians receive or make sense of Nigerian video films. Indeed, to assume that one can even speak of a Ghanaian response is highly suspect. But one might hypothesize that Ghanaians find in Nigerian video films critiques of state corruption and greed absent from video films produced in their own country.

Hostages

The cover of Tade Ogidan's 1997 video film *Hostages* reads, "He is barely 21. She is 17. The human race misunderstood their passion. Their affair was so fatal, it shook the nation." As the connection between romance and politics in the quote suggests, the story interweaves a temperate critique of police brutality and a legal system corrupted by bribery with a tale of two lovers kept apart by disapproving parents. Tony and Fatima are deeply in love, but Fatima's wealthy and greedy father Chief Camson has arranged for her to marry Nasir Mohammad, the son of a very wealthy man who stands to inherit a large sum of money upon his marriage to Fatima. Tony, in an effort to save Fatima from this marriage, kidnaps her (against her will) and holds her hostage, demanding a ransom of $20,000 for her safe return. Tony never intends for Fatima to go back home. Instead, he plans to deposit the money in an account in Cote D'Ivoire, where he will take her and marry her. Chief Camson, however, has other plans. He calls upon his connections in the

police department, and a cadre of armed officers accompany him to the place designated for the ransom exchange. Tony is arrested and Fatima taken home. While in police custody, Tony is beaten by police officers, threatened with a forged confession, and appointed a crooked lawyer who convinces him to plead guilty to all of the charges brought against him despite the fact that the charges have no validity. Tony is transferred to a maximum security prison where he meets an old schoolmate who secures an office job for him, gives him access to a phone on which he can call Fatima, and helps him plot a successful escape. Part I of the film ends after Tony escapes and finds himself hiding out in the home of Chief Camson.

Although presented as a film about the struggles of the average Nigerian against a corrupt political system, *Hostages* is predicated on a male subject defined against a female object. The film tells Tony's story. It is from his perspective that we experience the film and, most importantly, it is his voice that speaks to the audience in voice-over throughout the film, explaining his motives and justifying his behavior. The film defends Fatima's kidnaping, for instance, as Tony's voice-over explains that he was a victim of "his fate" and was driven by fear of not seeing Fatima to "[take] a bad decision." The audience enters Tony's mind through the use of an extra-diegetic voice-over which places Tony, the male protagonist, in a transcendent position outside of the film. This impression of transcendence is reinforced by the fact that Tony's voice is detached from his body, running over a montage of images that direct what the viewer sees and how she/he is to interpret those images. In the opening of the film, for example, the audience watches black and white footage of a man being taken into police custody. The spectator has not seen Tony, so does not know if she/he is watching his arrest or seeing a part of

the fictional story or news footage cut into the film. The voice the audience hears does not seem to be attached to any of the figures seen in the montage. Close-up shots are not used to lock the spectator's gaze on a protagonist, and so Tony's voice functions as the disembodied voice of an omniscient narrator. The audience hears: "If I stand a chance to live my life over, I wouldn't change a thing for today I stand on the stage of life in the glare of all to share a tale I cannot help or control: the tale of my fate." In this scene and other scenes in the film, Tony is simultaneously directing the events as they happen within the story of the film acting from "outside the spectacle, in a position of discursive control" (Silverman 57). Fatima, unlike Tony, never addresses the spectator in voice-over. Her speech and actions are contained within the diegesis of the film. Tony's voice occupies what Silverman calls "that seemingly transcendental auditory position," which, she suggests, aligns the male protagonist with the apparatus and with discursive control(57). Tony authors and interprets the actions of the film, while Fatima resides within the film's diegesis, as that which is controlled discursively by the male narrator.

Intercut with Tony's adventures against the corrupt Nigerian justice system are episodes of the difficulties Fatima suffers at the hands of her greedy parents and her vile fiancé. Fatima's battles on the domestic front are presented as complements to the political obstacles Tony faces and defeats, and the political is set against the domestic as Tony fights to defend his civil rights, and Fatima wages an unsuccessful war to control her body. Throughout most of the film, she is filmed inside of her parent's house. While Tony moves from a jail cell to freedom, Fatima is confined to domestic or enclosed spaces. After being kidnaped, Tony locks her in his bedroom. In the hostage exchange scene, she is locked in the car. While Tony fights a political battle, Fatima

fights to protect her virginity. We are told in the first scene of the film that Fatima is a virgin, and it is over her virginity that Tony, Nasir and Chief Camson wrangle. Tony pleads with her, begging her to run away with him, and he reminds her that he has "kept and nurtured [her] like a gem" and "cherished" her virginity. Fatima's parents, much like the prison officials, have been corrupted by greed and willingly exchange their virgin daughter for Nasir's wealth, and this point is forcefully made through the repugnant character, Nasir. He insults Fatima's family, makes unsolicited advances to her, and assures her that he cares for her no more than she for him, although, he admits, he is curious to know "what a virgin feels like." As Tony remarks, if her family is willing to marry her off to such a man, "its some kind of lousy blood that runs in your family." After rescuing Fatima from Tony, her father rushes her to a hospital to have a doctor verify that she still has her virginity, and therefore is still a suitable wife for Nasir. He wants proof that the value of his asset has not depreciated.

Fatima represents little more than an object of exchange whose value depends on its purity. In the end, Nasir forces Fatima to trade her virginity for Tony's freedom. She follows Nasir onto his yacht in order to borrow the money (money her mother refuses to give her) that Tony needs for his escape from prison. Nasir lures her into the ship's cabin where he tells her he has hidden the money and rapes her. The rape scene emphasizes the violation Fatima's body experiences. She is placed in the small and enclosed space of the boat's cabin, and while she is raped, three young women, dressed in bikinis, sip drinks and dance to music from a boom box on the deck above. The contrast between these "good-time" girls and Fatima is striking. Fatima wears a dress that hangs below her knees and her hair is pulled away from her face. She is the virgin juxtaposed against the

three women who embody unrestrained sexual and material desire.[9] Before Nasir forces her into the cabin, she sits passively on the deck while the other women dance, laugh and caress Nasir. During the rape, the women look through a small window to the cabin below, and a mid-shot captures them laughing and dancing while watching the events transpiring below them. Fatima's cries for help can be heard over the loud dance music, and the film cuts between shots of her struggling with Nasir and shots of the women on the deck above who offer no assistance, but laugh at her plight, as they peer through the window. The camera recedes from the ship, and we still her Fatima's screams over the dance music as the camera moves farther and farther away.

The film offers us two ways of reading the rape. On one level, it suggests that corruption and greed have ruined Fatima. Her body bears the marks of unrestrained desire, for money and sex. Her family, motivated by greed and exploiting a corrupt legal system, has caused the pain she suffers by forcing her to associate with Nasir and requiring her to turn to him for money. Yet, a spectator might also conclude that by disregarding her parent's order that she not see Tony ever again, Fatima got what she deserved. Whichever reading one selects, the rape stands as a symptom of the immorality that infects modern Nigerian urban culture, where justice can be bought and where young women disobey their parents. And in both analyses, Tony is the film's protagonist, the eyes through which the audience sees. Indeed, the violence of the rape itself is obscured because the event is enclosed in the story of Tony's persecution.

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9 Molara Ogundipe-Leslie argues that two similar stereotypical representations of women appear throughout African literary texts. The first she describes as the "sweet mother." The second is called the "houri" or the eroticized African woman many writers conceive of as "phallic receptacles" (6).

Fatima signifies another of the many violations Tony has suffered because of the greed of others. First, he is prevented from marrying the woman he chooses because he is not wealthy enough; next, his freedom is taken from him by an unjust legal system; finally, the virgin he did not touch is spoiled by another man, a man rich enough to buy the young woman from her father. Fatima becomes a discursive prop used to tell Tony's story. She is equated with the body, while Tony is associated with intellect and will. Her existence in the film is contained within her physicality, her virginity and rape. Tony, however, has depth. It is within his mind that the narrative voice places the audience and through his character that the spectator experiences the actions of the film.

Dust to Dust

In *Dust to Dust*, an English language film written, produced and directed by Fred Amata, a political critique, again, is coupled with a story about romance and family dysfunction. As in *Hostages*, the film proceeds through the perspective of a male protagonist, Niki, whose family is about to be thrown out of its home. The financial uncertainty in which the family finds itself is due to the fact that Niki's father is in a wheelchair and unable to work. He formerly held a post with the civil service and was injured while on the job, but the government refuses to compensate him, and although he was given the house as a part of his retirement package, at the beginning of the film, the family is served with an eviction notice. Throughout the film, we are reminded that the turmoil the family finds itself confronting stems from the father's disability. A family without an able patriarch cannot withstand Nigeria's tumultuous political and moral climate. In one scene, Niki returns from searching, unsuccessfully, for a job. Clearly, he

feels a great deal of pressure to assume the role of head-of-the-household. As his mother reminds him, "If this family is to continue to survive then you have to learn to be the man of the house." Out of frustration, he shouts at his father in anger, blaming him for failing to take care of his family and for being unable to fulfil his paternal duties. Financial disarray is only one obstacle the family confronts. Without a strong father's guidance, traditional values loose their importance. Niki's sister, Reke, has been seeing a man without first receiving her family's approval, and when Basi, the young man, comes to the house, and later in the film, proposes to Reke before obtaining her family's consent, Niki erupts in anger. Ultimate culpability for the family's desperate plight lies with the government. Niki laments over the poor treatment his father receives "after all [he has] suffered for this country." When Niki cannot find an "honest" job to support his family, he considers that he may be "wasting" his time. The suggestion is that honest work does not pay in Nigeria. In another episode, Niki's friend Kris admonishes Niki for failing to accept the "realism" of the country and offers to employ him in his drug smuggling business, asking him, "Want to end up like your old man?"

Political corruption causes the family's downfall, and as in *Hostages*, the disarray in which the family finds itself is played out on the bodies of the women. Tony's sister Reke, ill with asthma, has a severe attack while the family is being evicted and its possessions piled up in the street. She is hospitalized, and because the family cannot afford the operation needed to save her, her condition worsens. Eventually, she is removed from the life support system because there is no money to pay the hospital costs. The family waits helplessly for her to die. In an effort to save his sister, Niki breaks into Chief Egodi's house, and in the course of he robbery, shoots the Chief,

wounding but not killing him. This is not the only unexpected event that transpires during the execution of the crime. Niki discovers his mother in Chief Egodi's bed, and she later tells her son that she went to the Chief to beg for his help to save her daughter and agreed to sleep with him in order to get it. Niki's sister and mother bear a great deal of the costs of the family's, and the nation's, political and economic upheaval. The suffering of Niki is compounded by what his mother and sister experience and what he cannot prevent. Their pain motivates him and excuses his actions. Although he does receive a death sentence for his crimes, the last scene of the film suggests that somehow Niki has been resurrected, and in death he is able to offer his family the guidance he could not provide in life. Reke's last wish was to have her brother as the best man in her wedding. In the final episode of *Dust to Dust*, Reke temporarily gains enough strength to be married, but she refuses to consent to the marriage vows without her brother's blessing. While standing at the alter, Niki enters the church just in time for her to say "I do." After speaking those words, she collapses and dies. Niki's appearance in the final scene of the film marks a peculiar moment. The clock on the wall of the church indicates that Niki's execution, set for noon, has passed, so we know he is dead, and as he stands at the back of the church, white light surrounds him, suggesting perhaps that he has returned from beyond to bless his sister's marriage. Even in death, Niki plays a determining role in Reke's life.

Although *Dust to Dust* does not employ the voice-over as a technique to position the male protagonist outside and in control of the story, it does use a series of dream sequences in a similar fashion. The film opens within one of Niki's dreams: a shot of a preacher standing above a grave is followed by a shot from within the coffin. As dirt

falls unto the top of the coffin, the corpse awakens and begins to scream. The dreamer, Niki, is awoken by his mother and we realize that we have been inside a dream sequence. Niki refuses to tell his mother about the dream, and so the audience and Niki have knowledge that other characters in the film are not privy to. The dreams function like clues to a secret that contains information necessary to the audience's full understanding of the events in the film. The meaning of the film seems concealed within the male protagonist's psyche, and only when he reads his dreams for the audience do we fully understand the truths the film communicates. In another dream sequence, the face of a small girl appears, calling Niki's name, pleading for his help. He awakens suddenly, but again, refuses to describe the dream to his girlfriend. It is only after a third dream that Niki unveils the secret, allowing the film's viewers to grasp fully how the pieces of the film fit neatly together. Niki explains that years ago, before his father's accident, a younger sister, Kasianna, fell into a well, and Niki was unable to save her. He feels responsible for her death, and so is determined that this time he will not let his sister die. Kasianna exists for us only within Niki's guilt-ridden memories and his unconscious. No other character in the film speaks of her. She is a component of the male protagonist's motivations and his interiority, and she is the secret within Niki's mind that he wields over our understanding of the film. The presence of the dead Kasianna functions differently as a component of Niki's character from the way Niki's materialization from the dead, in the final scene of the film, functions in relation to Reke's portrayal. For the spectator of the film, Niki is not a figment of Reke's dreams nor a product of her guilt. He appears, in the flesh, in the chronological "real" time of the film, before Reke, the congregation and the film's audience. Only Niki is allowed an interiority flashed before

the spectator in unintelligible dreams and left undeciphered until the male protagonist decodes their meaning.

At several points in the film, Niki's nostalgic vision of the past interrupts the present. At these moments, the camera centers on a family portrait that hangs on the wall of Niki's home. The portrait captures the family members when they were happy, or as Niki describes it, before his father's accident, before all of their wealth went to save his father's spine, and before the death of his youngest sister, Kassiana. Niki's character is complex; beneath his surface lurks an inner self that longs for the past and contemplates moral decisions about accepting illegal employment or stealing money to save his family. Niki's inner self holds the "truth" about who he is. While the male hero of the film has an inner, secret self concealed from the audience and the other characters' in the film, the women of the film are equated with corporeality. They bear meaning on their bodies, signifying the sickness and violation against which Niki struggles as a young man forced too soon by a corrupt system to be the head of his family. Kassiana is dead. Reke dies of asthma, and Niki's mother is forced to exchange her body for money because the patriarch of the household cannot provide for his family, and it is the government that has emasculated the father, causing the women to suffer. Gender difference dichotomizes maleness and femaleness. To be a man is to have an interiority; a woman's identity, conversely, resides only on the surface.

True Confessions

The English language film *True Confessions* directed by Onu Christain and written by Kenneth Nnebue, is unlike *Hostages* and *Dust to Dust* in that it features a

female protagonist, Mabel. The film is comprised of two stories. The main story is set in the present; it unfolds as the film unfolds, in "real" time, and the secondary story is told through flashback. In the secondary story Mabel recounts her past life, and the film chronicles the events as they unfold for the audience. Mabel's story, then, is framed by the main narrative which focuses on Mabel's son Moses. Moses is a politician, nominated by the fictional political party the FMP to represent the party as its candidate for the governorship. According to the party chairman, Moses is "a man of integrity,"and a man who has "wash[ed] his hands clean." Upon acceptance of the nomination, Moses describes his political ambition as the desire "to bring joy to the heart of the common man." Moses's successful political career is set against the turmoil he confronts at home between his mother and wife, Tessy. Mabel despises Tessy, accusing her of spending her son's hard earned money frivolously and of being disloyal, and questions her womanhood because Tessy has failed to produce an "issue." Mabel continually assaults Tessy verbally and advises her son to take another wife. When Moses becomes angry with Mabel for mistreating Tessy, Mabel plots to remove Tessy from her son's home. Mabel convinces Moses that Tessy holds a strange and evil power over him. According to Mabel, Tessy uses fetishes, charms and her sex appeal to "intoxicate" Moses and distract him from seeing the truth, that Tessy is using him for his money. Moses eventually believes his mother's accusations and throws Tessy into the streets.

Despite his noble intention, Moses's political career is cut short, destroyed by a personal scandal precipitated, it is revealed at the end of the film, by Mabel's deceit. A tabloid paper reports that a man called Ibrahim has come forward and claimed to be the father of the prominent politician. As Moses sees it, his political opponents have

circulated this story in an effort "to assassinate [his] character." He accuses his enemies of "messing up my image in the name of politics" and demands, "Must politics go this way? Must we play politics with bitterness?" The same evening Ibrahim and a news reporter come to Moses's home, and Moses, infuriated by the threat the scandal poses to his career, assaults and kills Ibrahim. The next scene witnesses a meeting among the FMP delegates, when, after much deliberation, the party revokes Moses's nomination. During the debate about Moses's future in the party, the party chairman suggests that the scandal simply be covered up. Only one delegate in the council, who is also the only woman in the council, refuses to conceal the truth. She reminds the men that they are representatives of the people and, therefore, must lead by example, and she criticizes Moses's immoral behavior and his inability to control his temper. The party, she says, needs a mature candidate and therefore calls for Moses's expulsion. Moses immediately confronts her and accuses her of spreading lies against him. She denies this charge, but advises him that he should question his mother. The scene clearly speaks out against political corruption, and, significantly, it is a woman who voices this anti-corruption message and raises Moses's suspicions about his mother. This representation of a woman as the voice of "truth"is not sustained in the remainder of the film. Indeed, this woman is never named. Yet, this "positive" portrayal of a woman is noteworthy only if it cautions one against oversimplification when generalizing about gender representations.

After this incident, Moses suspects that his mother may be responsible for his troubles and orchestrates a suicide attempt to trick Mabel into confessing her evil deeds to him. When Mabel sees the rope hanging from the ceiling, she begs Moses not to end his life, and it is at this point in the film that Mabel admits that the man Ibrahim, who

Moses killed, was indeed his father. She proceeds to recount her past life, full of financial hardships, manipulation, an abortion, and adulterous behaviors. It is her own immoral behavior, she admits, that leads her to scheme against her daughter- in- law. Since Mabel, as a young bride, stole her husband's money and cheated on him, she assumed that Tessy was doing the same. The suggestion seems to be that the sins of the evil mother punish the innocent son and end the career of an honest politician who set out to make a difference.

Within the flashback, which comprises a full hour of the film, Mabel's duplicity is fully revealed to the audience. Joshua, Mabel's husband, does not see Mabel's evil-side, but the audience does. For instance, after Mabel tells Joshua of her pregnancy, she explains that she wants to have an abortion because she does not want to be a pregnant bride. When Joshua refuses to allow her to terminate the pregnancy, Mabel goes and has an abortion despite his prohibition. The audience, placed in the position of an all-seeing eye, is fully aware of her deceitfulness. The abortion itself is filmed in graphic detail, and the camera captures Mabel as she sneaks into bed and feigns illness when Joshua returns from work. Mabel tricks Joshua into believing that she miscarried her baby, but the spectator is in on her secret. Joshua leaves Mabel's room, but the camera remains, watching Mabel laugh wickedly at her own duplicity. The audience learns of her ext extramarital affair, her many trips to her father's house with bags of her husband's money, and her plans to build a home for herself and her lover.

Although the audience sees Mabel's evil and manipulative schemes, Joshua knows nothing of her exploits, and his figurative blindness is represented literally in the film when he wakes one morning and finds himself without sight. Joshua becomes an almost

comic character at this point in the film, stumbling down stairs, fumbling his way around the house, and calling out pathetically for his wife while, under the same roof, Mabel and her boyfriend frolic and make plans for their future. An interesting inversion takes place wherein Joshua becomes feminized, completely helpless and dependent on Mabel, while Mabel assumes a masculine role, taking charge of both her husband's and her father's households and building a home for herself and her boyfriend. When Mabel goes home to her family to solidify the plans for the home she is building and to evaluate how her brothers have invested the money she gave them, upon learning how poorly her brothers' have managed the money Mabel stole from Joshua to give them, Mabel's father tells her, "I wish you were a man. If not for a daughter like you, we would have died of hunger." His sons, he decides, might have been better off sold to slave traders. The film does not celebrate this switching of gender roles, however. In fact, Joshua dies as a result of the illness that has made him blind, and Mabel ends up with nothing. Her lover, infuriated with how Mabel scolds and bosses him, drives away in a van packed with her possessions. Her older brother, whom Mabel asks to live her in new home until she is able to move into it herself, refuses to move after Joshua dies, and the family and community turn against Mabel because she insists on moving into her own home instead of abiding by tradition and mourning her husband for a full year. Mabel's "manliness" and Joshua's "womanliness" are symptomatic of a world in disarray, and both characters suffer for their deviancy. They exemplify how men and women should not act suffer for their deviancy. They exemplify how men and women should not act and construct gender norms similar to those described in *Hostages* and *Dust to Dust*.

Mabel, as noted by Haynes and Okome, embodies "immense frightening power" (40). The film condemns Mabel as a powerful *woman*. The perversion of her "natural" roles as mother and wife signifies her moral degeneracy. Her femininity is equated with the unchecked greed and insatiable desire that has infected Nigerian culture with a rampant immorality, the very immorality Moses hoped to eradicate. Her immorality is set against Moses's integrity, and the formula of the other films is inverted. The honest politician is ruined by the corruption and dishonesty on which his home stands, and Mabel, like the femme fatale of the Hollywood film noir genre, "function[s] as the obstacle to the male quest. The hero's success or not depends on the degree to which he can eradicate himself from the woman's manipulations" (Kaplan 2-3). Mabel's evil female power dashes Moses's political ambitions, but, ultimately, it is he who restores order to his household by fooling Mabel into confessing her dark past and then granting her absolution. In the end, after Mabel recounts all the evil deeds of her past, Moses goes to beg Tessy's forgiveness, and Mabel and Moses welcome Tessy back into their home. The film ends with a shot of Mabel and Moses embracing Tessy upon her return.

As I have attempted to demonstrate, *Hostages* and *Dust to Dust* situate the male protagonist as the character in control of the story. The spectator relies on him and what he discloses to see and to understand the film's narrative. Although the audience sees through his perspective, the male protagonist withholds information from the audience and therefore aligns himself with the camera, in control of what the audience sees and how it is interpreted. In *True Confessions*, on the other hand, it is Mabel's story that unfolds before the audience, and the spectator experiences the narrative through her point of view. Yet, the filmic conventions through which Mabel's secret past is revealed are

markedly different from those employed in *Hostages* and *Dust to Dust*. When Mabel tells her story, the camera has access to everything she says, does, thinks. The spectator, not the female protagonist, is aligned with the camera as an all-knowing eye and, like a voyeur, watches and evaluates Mabel's every move. Once told, Mabel's story is fully visible to the audience. Although she deceives Moses, her son and her husband within the film's diegesis, she is able to conceal nothing from the camera. Niki's dreams, when deciphered, are not visually revealed to the spectator, but remain within him, outside of the spectator's purview. Mabel, on the other hand, performs her story before the camera, and unlike Tony's inner voice, situated outside of the film's narrative, Mabel's story is the story of her past, and it is contained within the diegesis of the film. Mabel is a character who, for *the film audience*, is transparent. Unlike Niki in *Dust to Dust*, Mabel does not conceal her secret, her self, from the audience. In fact, a large portion of the film is dedicated to unveiling Mabel's dark past. Her "truth" is not held in abeyance as the key to unlocking the secret of the film, but comprises most of the film's narrative. Tessy's "truth" is also fully revealed to the spectator. After being forcefully removed from her home, she wanders the streets of Lagos in the darkness, talking to herself and praying to God. The omniscient audience eavesdrops on her private thoughts and prayers. Her unveiling is represented literally in this scene. Tessy disrobes and begs God to judge her in all her nakedness and to help her clear her name. As Silverman points out, in films that rely on the interiority/exteriority antithesis, the female body is often "the absolute limit of female subjectivity" (64). Here, in the act of taking off her clothes and displaying her naked body, Tessy proves that she withholds nothing from God or the spectator. Her body signifies the truth about what she has not done, despite the charges

against her, and about who she is. For the spectator, both women remain wholly in the control of the camera and within the gaze of the spectator.

Tessy, like Fatima and Reke, represents what Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, in her discussion of women in Nigerian television, labels "the long suffering women who shuffle in and out of scenes making a minimal contribution to the production" (128). Mabel, at the other end of the spectrum of stereotypical characterizations of women, is "cast as powerful and dangerous" (Adeleye-Fayemi 128). In this chapter, I have tried to go beyond on a critique of stereotypes in Nigerian video film melodramas. Instead of describing a series of negative portrayals of women and holding them up against the "real" women they intend to represent, I have traced the manner in which the stereotypes work in a system of signification. Gledhill outlines the differences between the two feminist approaches: "Whereas the first approach tends toward the validation of ideology in giving meaning the status of a 'truth,' the latter attempts to locate behind the manifest themes of a film a second order of meaning which lies not in the thematic coherence but rather in the implications of the structural relationships of the text" (8). The distinction is crucial because the political possibilities implied in these feminist approaches differ dramatically. The first assumes that the meaning of the film lies within the text waiting to be revealed by the viewer and then evaluated as being true or false. The film is judged on how accurately it captures reality. The second approach conceptualizes the meanings of any text to be the products of multiple negotiations informed by the cultural contexts and ideological perspectives in which viewers and filmmakers interact. The film is not held up against reality because reality is not understood to be "out there' waiting to be described. Reality is always mediated, and film represents one such mechanism of this

mediation. The critic, and the spectator, participate in the construction of meaning, and so, a feminist analysis might aim to not only to understand but "to transform what it is to be a woman in society" (Davies 28).

Chapter Five: Inside and Out? Feminism, Theory and Authority

Introduction

At the 1997 Conference of the African Literature Association (ALA) at Michigan State University, a plenary session called "Insiders/Outsiders" explored questions about identity and authority. The panelists wondered what authority the identity of the African literary critic confers on the writer's interpretations of literature from Africa. They discussed who is qualified to write about or argue on behalf of Africa and Africans and debated the implications of organizing a politics around or authorizing an analysis by reference to one's African identity. While Obioma Nnaemeka argued vehemently for the importance of an African sensibility, Kwame Anthony Appiah cautioned against generalization and essentialism. While one "insider" panelist stressed the political urgency of asserting an African identity, another "outsider" questioned whether or not it was possible, or desirable, to refer to *an* African identity.

What became apparent during the course of the discussion was that in the disguise of a debate that pitted insiders against outsiders, Africans against non-Africans, the panel opposed two competing theories of identity: one informed by a modernist conception of the unified self and grounded in African experience and the other shaped by a poststructuralist concern with language and representation. The "insiders" spoke from a fixed center of Africanness, defending a homogeneous African experience that existed outside of discursive formations. The critic was responsible, within this model, for giving voice to the African self and the experiential dimensions of that self. The so-called "outsiders" cautioned against the deployment of pre-discursive categories and

warned the critic not to sacrifice complexity and specificity for sweeping, and ultimately meaningless, generalizations about Africa and Africans. Indeed, those who accepted the divide between insiders and outsiders shared the same assumptions about identity. Speaking as African insiders, they argued for the existence of an *Africanness* and spoke to its relevance in relation to reading African literature and film correctly. The "theorists," on the other hand, refused to be yoked to the insider/outsider binary, and instead, scrutinized the supposition that an insider identity exists outside of ideology and textuality, of the Symbolic. Yet, despite the "theorists' " resistance to the very terms of the debate, their theoretical position, according to the confines of the panel, was an outsider's position; to use "theory" was to be aligned with a non-African or a Western perspective. The very naming of the ALA panel misrepresented the terms of a multifaceted debate about theories of identity. The label "Insiders v. Outsiders" not only occluded the complexities of the epistemological positions adopted by scholars who study African film and literature but, defined in this way, positioned Africanists at a theoretical impasse, with one position canceling out the other. The "insiders" ignoring that which they define as un-African, and the "outsiders" dismissing what they perceive as the insider's naive essentailism.

R. Radhakrishnan, in his reading of Partha Chatterjee's analysis of Indian nationalism, argues that nationalism "deploys with telling effect" the very same "dichotomy of the inside/outside"(83), and both Chatterjee and Radhakrishnan observe "the strategic and differentiated use of this dichotomous structure within nationalism" (83). Their insightful analyses of nationalism facilitate this chapter in which I trace the inside/outside structure as it is produced within insider feminist discourse and feminist

studies of African literature, film and culture. Thus far, this dissertation has been concerned with reading the nation and nationalism through the lens of feminist critique and theory, but here, as a means of conclusion, I examine feminism's complicity in perpetuating what Alarcón, Kaplan and Moaleem call "the discursive cosmos of colonial power relations" (4). I suggest that the insider/outsider dichotomy, far from describing the state of Africanist feminist literary studies, is a meta-narrative of sorts offered by feminist literary critics who have an investment in the humanistic self and the experiential dimensions of that selfhood. The self-proclaimed insider feminists affirm the centrality of lived experience to the critic's understanding of novels by African women and set out to recover, record and affirm an African feminist voice that has been ignored by literary critics or supplanted by theoretical approaches more concerned with "theory" than context. The so-called outsider, or "Western," feminist position becomes a signifier for the erasures, the limits, and the abject against which the African insider identity defines itself.[1] This chapter, then, looks critically at the insider/outsider dichotomy, examines how the binary is described and reproduced within this discursive field and maps its contradictions and exclusions. Finally, I suggest that two short stories by Ama Ata Aidoo begin to outline an alternative model for postcolonial Africanist feminism and, more importantly, describe the institutional and class locations that make

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I will use the terms Insider and Outsider throughout this article to signify the categories called upon by self-proclaimed insider feminists to differentiate between what they perceive as two very general feminist positions. My usage of the terms, then, invokes the binary problematically as it is used by insider feminists. The aim of the article is to complicate this over-simplistic polarity; therefore, although I do not place the words in quotes, I do not use the terms as if they label referents, or feminist positions, always already out there waiting to be invoked.

possible the insider feminist position. Aidoo positions the insider feminist critique in ways the insiders themselves do not.

Insiders/Outsiders

Versions of the debate between insiders and outsiders has haunted African literary and filmic study since its inception in the 1970s. Biodun Jeyifo describes it in this way: "What stands at the center of these debates ... is the clearly emergent subsumption of all criticism and scholarship on African literature into two basic, supposedly distinct, polarized camps: first, the foreign, white, European or North American critic or scholar and second, the native, black African 'counterpart'" (162). Yet, as Jeyifo notes, it is the "African critics and scholars for whom the literature is 'theirs.' For them, it 'belongs' to Africans, even when they themselves defend the usefulness and relevance of *their* participation in the criticism of African literature" (163). More recent, and less commented upon, is the feminist articulation of this debate among critics of African literature and film.[2] The insider feminist complaint against *their,* or Western feminists', contributions to African literary studies is exemplified in a recent commentary in *Research in African Literatures by* Opportune Zongo. Zongo, who defines herself throughout the article as "an African woman" (178) admonishes "the critics of African literature who are more interested in citing from Foucault and Jameson to Cixous and Spivak without any serious engagement with the environment that gave

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Although, within the field of African literature and film, debates among insider and outsider feminists occur relatively infrequently, a number of feminist theorists have discussed this debate with a great deal of insight and intelligence. See the work of Françoise Lionnet, Gayatri Spivak, and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan among others.

birth to the African texts" (181). She argues that "the discourse of Western intellectuals that has played a role in Western justifications for invasions, conquests, or eradication of non-Western peoples and their cultures still constitutes a real threat to African literature and culture" (182). For Zongo, to be inside is to be African, an identity which gives one access to specialized knowledge about African women's writing. The outsiders are those who misread because they are not privy to the African clues the African text carries with it. Outsiders favor "theory," glossed here as a Western form of knowledge inappropriate to African texts, and they employ "theory" at the expense of situating African texts within African contexts. Consequently, Zongo suggests Western feminist critics misread African cultural products by eclipsing their Africanness and, in this way, threaten the very existence of African culture.

Obioma Nnaemeka, one of the most vociferous critics of Western feminism, re-iterates similar admonitions, accusing Western feminists of mis-reading African texts and contexts because they lack the knowledge of insiders. Throughout her work, Nnaemeka makes reference to the complexity and cultural specificity of African texts and warns feminist critics against what seems to be their proclivity for "selective and one-dimensional readings" (1995, 89). She chides Susan Andrade, Florence Stratton, and Katherine Frank, among others, for misreading African texts because they are outsiders who lack "the keen eye of the insider to decipher the nuanced margins of African literature" (87) and scolds Western feminist readers for their "lack of knowledge of the long and rich history of African literary studies and criticism in Africa" (96). She warns, "So long as feminist critics of African literature insist on substituting high falutin verbiage for serious engagements with the cultural and material conditions that prevail in

African literary texts, they will continue to produce irrelevancies and misrepresentations" (81). Western feminists, she explains, misconstrue African texts in their efforts to wrestle feminist readings, as understood in the West, from African literatures: "A major flaw of feminist attempts to tame and name the feminist spirit in Africa is their failure to define African *on its own terms* rather than in the context of Western feminism" (1998, 6). Her readings of African writers aim to be corrective, "to redeem the creative works of African women writers" from the "distorted interpretations" of Western feminists (1995, 81-82). She highlights the global and political implications of colonizing African texts with Western ideas and charges Western feminists with employing feminism "as a tool of imperialism" that is "aligned with Western ideologies and analytical categories that are embedded in fashionable discourses from Marxism and structuralism to deconstruction and postmodernism" (Nnaemeka 1995, 84). She reprimands Susan Andrade for citing, "Bakhtin, Jameson, Foucault, Cixous, Spivak, and other 'greats' all over Igbo novels without having read Emmanuel Obiechina, Donatus Nwoga, Romanus Egudu, Micheal Echeruo, and Juliet Okonkwo" (96). Andrade's preference for European theory, Nnaemeka reminds her, facilitates the universalization of Western theory at the expense of African realities.[3]

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[3] Another articulation of the insider/outsider debate among Africanist and African feminists is found in Oyeronke Oyewumi *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses.* The monograph was nominated from the prestigious 1998 Herskovits Award, and this fact attests to the importance accorded this debate among Africanists scholars. The text wages one of the most stinging, and troubling, critiques of Western feminism on grounds similar to those articulated by Nnaemeka. Oyewumi argues that Western feminists have universalized the category of gender by reading gender into African situations where gender, in fact, did not exist. She, therefore, contends that Western feminism is nothing but a neo-colonial technology. Among the Yoruba, she writes, "The social categories "man" and "women" were non-existent, and hence no gender system was in place" before colonization (31).

Nnaemeka and Zongo call on feminist critics of African literature to contextualize and historicize their readings and to be attentive to the geo-political implications of their production of knowledge about Africa as Western academics. The charge that feminist writings on third world women often lack any awareness of the historical, cultural or local contexts of the third world texts or situations being analyzed, and therefore contribute to the naturalization and universalization of Western theoretical paradigms, has been well documented. Chandra Talpade Mohanty's well-known essay "Under Western Eyes" is one of the best examples of such a critique. Mohanty makes the case that a particular kind of Western feminist scholarship, one yoked to the humanist agenda, does more than simply produce information on third world women, it in effect produces "the 'third world woman' as a singular monolithic subject" (Mohanty 51). This discursive monolith called the "third world woman," because it "carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourse" (53), occludes its distinction from

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Accordingly, "Gender has become important in Yoruba studies not as an artifact of Yoruba life but because Yoruba life, past and present, has been translated into English to fit Western patterns of body reasoning" (30). Although she analyzes the Yoruba culture of Oyo, Oyewumi extrapolates to suggest that all feminist scholarship on African from Western academics misunderstands what gender signifies in African contexts because it has assumes that Western theories of gender are universal. Western feminist scholarship has not only produced gender divisions where none existed, but, by doing so, participates in neo-colonial relations of power. Western feminism, "exhibits the same ethnocentric and imperialist characteristics of the Western discourses it sought to subvert" (13). Oyewumi's argument leaves little room for any feminist analysis of African culture, and although I fully recognize the urgency of the appeal to re-consider Western feminism's relationship to Africa and Africans, I cannot accept the premise that feminism is nothing but a Western and an imperialist theoretical paradigm whose sole effect is to preserve "the continued Western dominance of the world" (Oyewumi 179). Nor can I agree that colonialism and feminism's imperialist impetus have smothered indigenous ways of organizing the world. Although Oyewumi insists that "indigenous forms did not disappear" (156) after colonialism, her analysis offers little evidence of their existence and instead demonstrates how Western gender norms have displaced the Yoruba seniority system.

the material subjects, from "real" third world women and their "historically specific material realit[ies]" on whose behalf it purports to speak (6). The discursive category "third world woman" erases the complexities and local specificity of the lives of third world women and produces an image of the "third world woman" as a member of a homogenized group of victims, "an always already constituted group, one which has been labeled 'powerless,' 'exploited,' 'sexually harassed,' etc., by feminist science, economic, legal and sociological discourses" (Mohanty 56). The discursive constitution of the fictive "third world woman" is, in Lacanian terms, a mis-recognition created by the "ethnocentric universalism" of Western feminist scholarship (Mohanty 55). The essay, then, calls on Western feminists to recognize the geo-political dimensions of the knowledge they produce about African women.

Although not defined as such, the "Western" feminists Mohanty singles out for critique are feminists aligned, un-apologetically, with a Western humanist tradition, and Mohanty problematizes the modernist epistemology on which, in this instance, Western feminists writing about African women construct their readings, questioning the underlying premise on which each of the feminist writers she critiques relies: the notion that African women are "an already constituted, coherent group" (55).[4] Mohanty turns

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[4] Kenneth Harrow has waged a similar critique against "African" feminists. Harrow distinguishes between two general types of feminist analysis: modernist and postmodernist. He describes a "split" between "post-modern feminist theoretical position, and modernist feminist, reformist cinematic practice" (ix), and although here he refers to the feminisms adopted by African women filmmakers, the same terminology situates his own reading of the films of Safi Faye and Flora Mmbugu-Schelling. Harrow draws a clear distinction, not between insiders and outsiders, but between Western feminism and African feminism: "For the Europeans such issues as the status of the subject, gender identity, gendered language, patriarchy and above all oppositionality predominate; for the Africans, feminism is more a concern over gender equality and social or economic justice. One would overturn the club; the other would

to poststructuralist thinkers as a means of escaping the insider/outsider impasse and of "uncovering of the political interests that underlie the binary logic of humanistic discourse and ideology" (73), a logic that always "involves the necessary recuperation of the 'East' and 'Woman' as Others" (Mohanty71).[5] In referring to the "greats," as Nnaemeka labels them, Mohanty joins Appiah, Derrida, Said, and Spivak, among others, who set out to deconstruct "the millennially cherished excellences of Western metaphysics" (Spivak 1988, 136). Her critique of Western feminism arrives at a conclusion similar to that put forth by Anthony Appiah in a critique of nativism. Appiah demonstrates that nativism ultimately fails as a political response to colonialism, imperialism and Eurocentric ideology because it "organizes its vaunted particularities

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join it" (131). Harrow attempts to heal the split by praising the work of Flora Mmbugu Schelling. Schelling's film, *These Hands*, he contends, joins the African feminist concern for social justice with the Western feminist critique of "realism, representation and voice" (ix). Harrow turns Mohanty's paradigm on its head, placing the modernists not in the West, but in Africa, and directing his critique at the modernist, humanist underpinnings of African feminist filmmaking.

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One might argue that when Mohanty refers to Foucault, Derrida, Kristeva, Deleuze and Guattari and Said within the geo-political frame erected in the earlier sections of her essay, she places the Western thinker back in the Western academy. I would suggest that this points to the weakness of Mohanty's critique. Despite her attempt to discuss the analyses of individual scholars, she generalizes about Western feminism. I agree, then, with Leela Ghandi's comments about Mohanty. Ghandi criticizes Mohanty (and Gayatri Spivak about whom she also writes) for "unself-consciously homogenis[ing] the intentions of all Western feminists/feminisms" (88). It must be noted that under the rubric Western feminism, operates a variety of approaches, and various critics have commented upon these multiplicities of feminisms. Since the publication of Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics*, the vast differences between French and Anglo-American feminism have been widely theorized. Anglo-American feminists such as Judith Butler have looked critically at both Anglo-American and French feminism and, building on the work of Foucault, mapped yet another methodology and practice for feminism. These few examples illustrate that to speak of 'Western feminism' as a monolith is indeed problematic and perhaps more questionable when situated within critiques of the construction of monolithic categories.

into a 'culture' that is, in fact, an artifact of Western modernity. While Western criteria of evalution are challenged, the way which the contest is framed is not. The Eurocentric bias of criticism is scrutinized, but not the way in which its defining subject is constructed" (60). Appiah argues that nativist literary critics build their true "African" approach to African literature on the architecture of Western modernist thought. Hence, they formulate a "reverse discourse" without contesting the terms of their resistance, terms implicated by a history of Western nationalism and colonialism. Both Appiah's critique of nativism and Mohanty's critique of the Western humanist foundations of Western feminism speak to the insider, African feminist position that relies on modernist or humanist conceptions of the self, language and knowledge. In the words of Kenneth Harrow, instead of "overturn[ing] the club" insider feminists "join it" (131). A humanistic feminism that conceives of the African female self as a unified totality whose "empowerment" entails moving from the position of object to that of subject, from the realm of Other to that of the Same, does not dismantle binary logic, but strengthens it.

Moreover, in an effort to historicize and contextualize feminist readings of African texts, many insider feminists have achieved the opposite effect. They have assumed that identity is fixed and homogeneous and have removed the African self from history and culture. As Sara Suleri notes:

> When feminism turns to lived experience as an alternative mode of radical subjectivity, it only rehearses the objectification of its proper subject. While lived experience can hardly be discounted as a critical resource for an apprehension of the gendering of race, neither should such data serve as the evacuating principle for both historical and theoretical contexts alike. 'Radical subjectivity' too frequently translates into a low-grade romanticism that cannot recognize its discursive status as *pre-* rather than *post-*. (Suleri 248)

Nnaemeka alludes to an "African feminist spirit" outside of discursivity and completely removed from historical context or specific material realities. Zongo speaks from the position of an African woman, invoking that identity as if it referenced "a singular monolithic subject" (Mohanty 51). Molare Ogundipe-Leslie defines "one of the commitments of the female writer" as "the correction of ... false images of the woman in Africa. To do this, she herself must know the reality of the African woman, must know the truth about the African woman and womanhood" (8). Indeed, in the discourse of insider feminists, the ontological category *the African woman* is produced as a means of *authorizing* knowledge about Africa, African culture, literature and film. In their attempts to develop alternative feminisms that, as Julianna Nfah-Abbenyi notes, "do not simply reflect Eurocentric tendencies" (19), insider feminists foreground their life experiences as members of a community of African women, with what Jeyifo calls "the proprietary pronoun 'we'" (63). They call upon an Africanness rooted in personal experience that attests to the veracity of their claims about African literature or culture; yet, this Africanness is removed from history, culture, and discourse and, in effect, erases the vast heterogeneity of African culture and history. Abbenyi, for example, sets out to uncover the "indigenous theories" found in African languages and literatures and, seemingly, this project is inextricably linked to her autobiography. In the introduction to her book, she explains that her discussion of African women's subjectivity is grounded in "African women's writing, bringing in my lived experiences as African woman/subject to bear on my discussion" (14). Lived experience justifies her decision to include Anglophone and Francophone authors in the text: "these two languages and the cultures they promote have come together so often in my lived experiences that I can comfortably

place writers from both traditions in one study without seeking to treat them as two distinct categories" (x). She also concedes that " ... in working on this book, some aspects of my African mothers' and my own feminism find themselves written within the text. How else could I as a Beba, Cameroonian, African, 'Third World' cum post-colonial woman-as-subject join in this dialogue with feminist literary criticism and the other theories that weigh down our work?" (x). Nfah-Abbenyi justifies her use of "personal insights" because "African women as scholars and critics have not often had the chance to bring their own voices and experiences to bear on most scholarly research available in print" (21). Telling her story simultaneously unveils and preserves the African woman's point-of-view and verifies her interpretations of novels by African women.

As an African woman and a literary critic in a Western academic setting, Nfah-Abbenyi sets out to locate and name the African theories that inform African women's writing, acting as an interpreter of "the African" for the Western reader. In the writings by Nnaemeka, the articulation of a common African cultural experience between the critic and the author of the text and among African women is coupled with an allusion to a biologically determined, or essentialized, Africanness. Although seemingly pointing to the limits of the insider/outsider paradigm, Nnaemeka's work goes a long way toward reinforcing the polarity between those who are African and those who are not, between those who know the truth about Africa and those who do not. Nnaemeka writes: "While rejecting the spurious dichotomy of the insider that brings cultural understanding and the outsider that brings the theoretical expertise to critical analysis, I argue that a serious feminist critic, or any critic for that matter, of African literature must be an "inoutsider"

who pays equal attention to cultural contexts and critical theory" (Nnaemeka 1995, 81). For Nnaemeka, knowledge is inextricably tied to identity, and identity, in part, is carried within the blood of the African. Indeed, in calling on Western feminists to attend to historical and cultural specificity, Nnaemeka constructs an African identity completely removed from both history and culture. She quotes from an essay written by sixteen year old Ikedigbo Nnaemeka *Why I am Proud to be a Nigerian* in explaining her conception of an African identity:

> [Nigeria] is the world's eighth largest oil producing country in the world, and posses substantial reserves of tin, coal, iron ore and columbite .... How do I know this information to be correct? Most likely because I took it from an encyclopedia; but it also helps to be a Nigeria .... But for me, one thing is certain about being a Nigerian: the hot blood of my ancestors still courses through my veins. (qtd. in Nnaemeka 1995, 85)

This excerpt, for Nnaemeka, distinguishes between two types of rights, a *birthright* and an *empirical* right, and she argues that "... while the insider can lay claim to both the *birthright* and *empirical right*, the outsider has only the *empirical right* available to him or her" (85). Nnaemeka suggests that the excerpt refers to identity (birthright) and research (empirical right) as sources of information about Nigeria that each "right" affords one the privilege of producing knowledge about Nigerian culture. Consequently, she concludes that "to be a Nigerian means not only birthright and geographical location but also geneology and history" (85). The rights to both types of knowledges give one the ability to "unlock cultural productions" (85) and "privileges that can be lost due to aberrant behaviors" (85-86). The reference to blood, Nnaemeka explains, suggests "active, current, new, refreshing, renewal, (re)generize, relevant, crucial, life wire. The blood has to be there for Nnaemeka *to be* and the blood has to be *hot* for Nnaemeka *to be in his becoming*" (86). Birthright is conceptualized as the means to knowledge possessed

by the insider as an insider, while empirical right refers to the "objective" knowledge the outsider can access and bring to her understanding of African literature.

Nnaemeka seems to suggest that birthright, carried by the blood of the African, is a pre-discursive essence expressed through African culture and history and contained by geography. An outsider cannot lay claim to a birthright, but can unearth its traces in historical discourses and hence acquire an empirical right to study African texts. In this, the experiential functions similarly to what Foucault has called an author-function, "the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning" (Foucault 1979, 159). The life of the author is "a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction" (159). The Africanness of the critic guarantees the truth-value of the readings put forth by the insider and renders suspect all other readings. This authenticating function polices knowledge and offers up the insider's African identity as a transcendental signifier, an ontological given which the outsider cannot question. This paradigm arranges knowledge about Africa in a hierarchy, placing the insider as one in possession of an essential, if not biological, "truth" to which the outsider has no claim.

If authenticity protects the power-knowledge position of the insider, it also jeopardizes that power. Implicit in the division erected by Nnaemeka is a binary between an essential and authentic Africanness that exists outside language, culture and history and the representation of that identity in empirical knowledge and theory. By relying on this opposition, insider feminism finds itself in a place similar to that of postcolonial nationalisms as understood by Partha Chatterjee in his compelling book *The Nation and*

Its Fragments. Chatterjee introduces his book as a critique of Benedict's Anderson *Imagined Communities*. He asks of Anderson: "If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?" (216). Chatterjee alleges that "The most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the 'modular' forms of the national society propagated by the modern West" (216). The attempt to produce a different nationalism, one not yoked to the West, results in a split nationalism, one with an inside and an outside. Chatterjee writes:

> By my reading, anti-colonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society ....It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of the 'outside,' of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed....The spiritual, on the other hand, is an 'inner' domain bearing the 'essential' marks of cultural identity. (217)

The inner realm of national culture houses the "real" and authentic India, while the "outer" realm confronts and capitulates to the West. In this way, "The colonial state ... is kept out of the 'inner' domain of national culture" (Chatterjee 217). Insider feminists, aiming to produce their difference from Western feminism, like Indian nationalists, deploy a divide between an authentic or a real Africanness that transcends ideology and, on the other hand, its tainted outside that interacts with the West and to which the West has access. An authentic African reality is opposed to Western theory, over determined by culture, history, and ideology. Of course, this divide between material reality and ideology is always in ideology, and deploying these terms, within a critique of Western

hegemony, is to affirm the logic that the insider feminists aim to dismantle. If Africa is the real, the essential, and the West is theory, and knowledge creation, then "this divide perpetuates the ideology of a dominant common world where the West leads naturally and the East [Africa] follows in an eternal game of catch up" (Radhakrishman 86). Africa is the place without history, while the West houses history and meaning. Insider feminism sits on "a constitutive contradictoriness" and "its daring political agenda is always already depoliticized and recuperated by the very same representational structure that [it] seeks to put in question" (Radhakrishman 87).

Women, as embodiments of the pure essence of national identity, are doubly bound by the insider/outsider opposition, as Chatterjee has shown. Radhakrishnan explains, "By mobilizing the inner/outer distinction against the 'outerness' of the West, nationalist rhetoric makes 'woman' the pure and ahistorical signifier of 'interiority.' In the fight against the enemy from the outside, something within gets even more repressed and 'woman' becomes the mute but necessary allegorical ground for the transactions of nationalist history" (84). Woman becomes representative of "the true self," (Radhakrishnan 84), the authentic interior, or "the name of a vast inner silence not to be broken by the rough and external clamour of material history" (85). Insider discourse aligns African women with essence, authenticity and culture. George Mosse finds the same use of the trope of woman by French and German nationalist discourse in the nineteenth century. Woman is represented as "the custodian of tradition, who kept nostalgia alive in the active world of men" (97). Woman as signifier for cultural interiority can only define herself against man as signifier for active engagement with the outside world. Mosse notes that the woman was to hold society to "its moral goals, while

man was the soldier the heroic figure who translated theory into practice" (96).

The "African woman" produced by insider discourse is, of course, an effect of this discourse. Indeed, the real African woman "can only be the *a posteriori* effect of the narrative process" (Radhakrishman 89). The question that remains asks who will be the real African woman? Whose history will stand in for, and conceal, the heterogeneity subsumed by that term? Cynthia Ward queries the authenticity of insider feminists, those who speak for African women. She asks: "Can this writer speak for the 'Real African Woman' or is she too acculturated, too assimilated, too educated, too literate – in short, too deracinated from what we came to see: her subalternity, her wholly otherness?" (78). Ward's questions brings to light the fundamental contradiction produced by insider feminism. Aiming to represent and protect subalternity from Western imperialism, insider feminism speaks for African women "not in their own name," but in the name of a true feminism, that produces *the* African woman as an effect. Yet, the reality of African women, in an ontological sense, is prior to this articulation, and as Radhakrishnan remarks of nationalism, "The people thus become a necessary means to the superior ends of nationalism" (89). The subject of feminism, like the subject of nationalism, "does not exist. Conceived within this chronic duality, the nationalist subject is doomed to demonstrate the impossibility of its own claim to subjecthood" (Radhakrishnan 91). By defining themselves as insiders, whose function it is to know and translate the "reality" of African womanhood, insider feminists eclipse the subalterity of those for whom they speak, erasing the class conditions that inflect the material and discursive conditions of African women's lives. The appeal "to experience as incontestable evidence and as an originary point of explanation," writes Joan Scott, because it disregards questions about

"how subjects are constituted" and "reproduces rather than contests ideological systems" (Scott 25).

Gayatri Spivak, in the article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" cautions intellectuals, and especially those interested in feminist issues, from adopting positions which erase third-world women, the very subjects about which, and theoretically for whom, the feminist academic discourse is written. Spivak's warning to post-colonial philosophers and literary critics who act as advocates for the rights of Third World women is relevant to insider feminist critics who claim to represent the struggles of, and speak for, Third World women. The first section of Spivak's article discusses a conversation between Michel Foucault and Giles Deleuze. Spivak criticizes the philosophers for ignoring "their own implication in intellectual and economic history" (66). In her reading of their dialogue, Spivak points out that both Foucault and Deleuze differentiate "the workers" from "the intellectuals." She demonstrates that the intellectuals are posited as the readers of the experiences of the workers, and hence, in this binary, it is the intellectual who is the subject speaking for the objects of their discourse, the workers. She writes, "Indeed, the concrete experience that is the guarantor of the political appeal of prisoners, soldiers, and schoolchildren is disclosed through the concrete experience of the intellectual, the one diagnoses the episteme" (69). The intellectual positions himself as the one with the power to understand and make meaningful the discourse of the Other and fails to recognize "that the intellectual within socialized capital, brandishing concrete experience, can help consolidate the international division of labour" (69). In a global economy marred by the unequal distribution of labor, capital and resources, the intellectual in Western institutions, no matter how good his or her intentions, who speaks

for the Third World can buttress the exploitative global system he or she aims to destroy. When Nfah-Abbenyi , Nnaemeka and Ogundipe-Leslie posit the insider, Western educated African feminist as the translator of African experience for the Western academic, they, like Foucault and Deleuze construct the Third World as a monolithic collectivity, erasing its heterogeneity, complexity, and histories.

The Feminist Abject

In critiquing "Western" feminism and naming an alternative critical practice, the insider feminists play upon the dual nature of power as described by Foucault. They have set about *repressing* certain types of knowledge by defining certain types of feminism as Western theoretical constructs and aligning particular feminist readings with an outsider's mis-informed understanding of African culture or literature and *producing*, within their alternative discourses, a discursive African identity, a humanistic identity rooted in the exclusion of difference. The invocation of an African identity and an African feminist position rooted in that identity are delineated through what they are not, and in this way, insider feminists repress or prohibit certain types of readings, policing and controlling knowledge about African literature. This is most clearly illustrated in a exchange sparked by the following statement: "The Feminist novel in Africa is not only alive and well, it is, in general, more radical, even more militant, than its Western counterpart .... of these novels embrace the solution of a world without men: man is the enemy, the exploiter and oppressor" (Frank 15).

This argument, made by Katherine Frank in her essay "Women without Men: The Feminist Novel in Africa," initiated a tumultuous debate among feminist literary critics

who read the writings of women from Africa and the Diaspora. Frank's essay, published in a 1987 edition of *African Literature Today* devoted to African women writers, refers to a novel by Ghanaian author Ama Ata Aidoo called *Our Sister Killjoy.* Frank suggests that Aidoo's novel articulates a radical lesbianism as the solution to the exploitation of women by men. Frank's remarks are reviled by Carolyn Rooney and C.L. Innes in another collection of writings dedicated to African women writers, *Motherlands.* Rooney suggests that Frank completely misses the point of Aidoo's novel which, in her opinion, is a rejection of "the European assimilation of that which is or of those which are not African" (103). Innes claims that instead of embracing feminist separatism, Aidoo in fact "explores the possibility of feminist separatism and rejects it" (142). Reference to Frank's article is found in Nnaemeka's work. She criticizes Frank's radical feminist stance because it "foregrounds sex/gender issues to the detriment of serious engagements with other issues in the literary texts" (1995, 93). Nana Wilson-Tagoe disagrees with "Frank's view of the woman writer's outright repudiation of men" (13).

Among these critics, it is Frank's discussion of lesbianism, coded in language that alludes to "separatism," "repudiation of men," or "radical feminism" that is most troubling. Nnaemeka takes issue with the idea that "Frank posits that the oppressive situations in which African women find themselves will lead them to rebel against their oppressors (men) and create for themselves a unisex world from where men are banished, giving way to the blossoming of lesbianism" (93). In these examples, lesbianism erects a boundary between Western and African feminism, and this dividing line is sustained throughout the insider's feminist discourse. In *Motherism: The Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism*, Catherine Obianuju Acholonu criticizes Alice

Walker's alternative feminism, Womanism, which Acholonu explains comes from "the Black Experience in America" (86). "Walker's womanist is first and foremost a lesbian. Thus Black feminism has become synonymous with lesbianism. This is a negative development, especially for those for whom lesbianism is a taboo" (89). Lesbian signifies an "American" or Western perversion against which the African feminist defines herself. Lesbian delineates what Butler calls a "zone of uninhabitability" which, in the discourse on African feminism, discursively constitutes "the defining limit of the subject's domain" (1994, 3). This zone is occupied by "unthinkable, abject, unlivable bodies" (Butler, 1994, xi) by virtue of which, and against which, "the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life" (3). The domain of the abject functions "as the restrictive specter that constitutes the defining limits of symbolic exchange. Importantly, these are spectres produced by that symbolic as its threatening outside to safeguard its continuing hegemony" (104). What is apparent in this analysis, I think, is that such identifications operate effectively only by repudiating other identifications. An African feminism, in these examples, depends on the degradation of "Western"lesbianism. The African woman is defined by her difference from the other, reiterating the modernist paradigm against which an African feminism should speak. And it is the African woman's body, her sexuality, that contains who she is.

Finding Other Feminisms

In this chapter, I have attempted, first, to trace the humanistic foundations of the insider feminist position and, second, to problematize the insider's invocation of an essential Africanness and a monolithic African experience that relies on binary logic and

that occludes the historicity and geo-political dimensions of its own articulation. Finally, I have attempted to map one of the exclusions through which the insider feminist identity and critical model is defined. I also want to address what Rajeswari Sunder Rajan calls, quoting from Joan Scott and Judith Butler, "... black feminists' anxiety that post-structuralism 'deprives women of the right to be included in a humanist universality' at precisely the point when they are beginning 'to become agents in their own right" (Sunder Rajan 10). The insider feminist project is one firmly rooted in modernism, and contemporary approaches that dismantle the unified self, debunk the myth of presence, problematize "empowerment" as a political solution and deny the existence of any pre-discursive reality, and clearly jeopardize this feminist project. One of the main concerns of Judith Butler's work has been re-invigorating the decentered subject of feminisms. She asks, "How can it be that the subject, taken to be the condition for and instrument of agency, is at the same time the effect of subordination, understood as the deprivation of agency?" (Butler, 1997,10). She opens her book *Bodies the Matter* with a similar question: "But if there is no subject who decides on its gender, and if, on the contrary, gender is part of what decides the subject, how might one formulate a project that preserves gender practices as sites of critical resistance?" (x) Butler demonstrates that the question itself, which opposes free will and a discursively constituted subject, reiterates and reinscribes the system of binary oppositions which inevitably posits women as passive objects and men as active agents. The question relies on the assumption that we are either humanistic selves who are capable of changing the world *or* constructed subjects whose existence is made possible by discourse and hence who cannot act but, instead, are acted upon. We are either subjects *or* objects. By

reducing the debate to such a choice we severely limit the opportunities we have for occupying and problemitzing sites of contestation. The polemic inscribed in the question presumes, on one side, that we can think of the subject as a fixed entity ready to act on the world and decide its fate. Such fixity forecloses the subject's "own complexity" (Butler 115) and operates only by repudiating other identities. The "specificity of identity" severs possible connections between identifications and limits our capacities to "democratize the field" (114). Adherence to a heterosexual identity, for example, purchased at the expense of, constructed by degradation of, lesbianism only rearticulates the inside/outside binary. The same might be said of identifying with a subject position fixed on either race or gender. By conceptualizing identity as the enactment of a choice between either race or gender and demanding the prioritization of one political fight over the other, we not only miss opportunities to imagine "contestatory connections" but reinscribe the binary we seek to dismantle. The presumption of agency, the presumption that one can select an identity from which to act, is not outside of the systems of power it hopes to act upon. It is a rearticulation of those very systems (15). We need to find ways to occupy sites of identity and trace the conditions of their production through discourse. This in no way renders us paralyzed: "To claim that the subject is itself produced in and as a gendered matrix of relations is not to do away with the subject, but only to ask after the conditions of its emergence and operation" (Butler 7). If we simultaneously occupy subject positions and chart the exclusions through which those positions are maintained, we move "in the direction of a more complex coalition frame" (115). The strength of this frame may in fact be rooted in its multiplicity.

Finding Other Feminisms

In her most recent compilation of short stories, *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories*, Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo examines the complexities faced by two urban, educated, middle class African women who, in their roles as intellectuals or activists, shuttle between the First and Third worlds. In "Some Global News: A Short Four-Voice Report" and "Nowhere Cool" Aidoo offers an understanding of subjectivity that is not rooted in an illusory Africanness, nor that is fixed, nor rooted to a geographic origin. Carole Boyce Davies argues that "postmodernist positions or feminist positions are always already articulated by Black women" and that the fragmented subject of postmodernism offers a more effective model for Black women's identity than the unified self of humanism (55). Aidoo's stories illustrate Davies point; they, in part, are explorations of the fluidity, contingency, and multiplicity of the subject positions from which African women speak.

Yaa-yaa, in"Some Global News: A Short Four-Voice Report," is a former university Professor who starts her own NGO called VENTURE 16. The NGO , according to the narrator, is "a small office where young sixteen-year old girls could come for advice about life and how to live it" (Aidoo 32). The complexities of Yaa-yaa's life are many -- she has left her job as a university professor, divorced her husband and has two children who blame themselves for the divorce, and as founder of a successful NGO, Yaa-yaa finds herself confronted with what the narrator describes as "the biggest complication" of all, traveling between Ghana and the United States. The details of Yaa-yaa's life which the narrator provides the reader in the opening pages of the story might lead one to expect a story about the challenges a divorced, career-minded,

Third world woman confronts, but Yaa-yaa's dilemma concerns "struggling to deal with the idea of the global village, so she can discuss it with her friend: where the idea came from, and how people like her are expected to handle it. What she would like to know is, whose village is it, anyway?" (30).

In "Nowhere Cool," Sissie is leaving her husband and children and traveling from Accra to New York because she has won a fellowship to study in the United States. The story is not grounded in either locale, but takes place in the air, between the two destinations, suggesting Sissie's growing awareness of the transitory character of her own identity. While in the air, Sissie contemplates the enormity of her decision and the risks involved and wonders how different things would be if she were a man, or a white woman, or an African slave brought across the Atlantic in bondage. In both stories, travel is a literal reality in the lives of Yaa-Yaa and Sissie and a figurative representation of each woman's migratory subjectivity. The women's freedom and means to travel signify their independence and success, but also produce sensations of dislocation and disorientation. The stories join the questions: "Who am I?" and "Where am I?"

Sissie and Yaa-Yaa, educated, elite women who travel between The West and Ghana, occupy a location similar to that held by the Insider feminist. But the fictional figures respond to this dislocation not by embracing what Stuart Hall calls an "imaginary coherence" (344). Sissie's identity finds neither a center nor foundation in the story. The gesture of reflecting on her life in preparation for the beginning of yet another phase of her life results in only tentative conclusions and contingent certainties about who she is and what she wants. She thinks back to her time at school and "remembers the jokes her male colleagues loved to tell about the position of women in traditional society"

(130) and reaches the conclusion that "what she had come to learn is that being female has never been fun" (130). How would this trip be different if she were a man, like her father who was stationed in eastern Nigeria? Yet, soon after imagining a solidarity among African women as women, she realizes that unlike her father, she worries over losing her husband to another woman and worries over the influence of her mother-in-law, who will be moving into her home while she is away for three years. She imagines the mother of Kobla, her husband, "dropping a few hints here and there about how much better off she always knew he would have been with one of the simple unspoilt girls from the village" (132). Yet, her concerns and fears find no solace in her interactions with a white woman, a mother like herself, next to whom she finds herself seated on the flight to New York. The white woman travels with her two children who fuss throughout the fight. Sissie experiences yet another disjuncture from a fellow "woman": "Back home in Africa, the mother would have felt sure that Sissie would want to help out .... And here? Sissie decided to mind her own business. Because for all she knew the woman was probably feeling uncomfortable in her seat, on top of all her own troubles, because she was sitting next to a black person ..." (135). As the white woman describes her and her husband's lives as a commuter couple, Sissie thinks, "...between her country of origin and her new environment, the differences were so much in many things and yet so few in others, the best thing to do might be never to try to figure anything else out" (144).

The category "black," much like the category "woman," when situated in a global context, provides little fixity for Sissie. At her welcome party in New York, Sissie meets several African-American women: "The sisters looked so charming and so roguish .... And the sisters themselves, where had they come from? This round-faced Yoruba? That

sloe-eyed Fulani? A long-limbed Kalenjin? And the black-lipped Wolof? (137). Once again, however, Sissie's self cannot be contained by this label. As the "sisters" talked, the conversation became "suddenly serious because they had learnt she was from 'The Mother Continent.' For until thing are properly ironed out, pleasure, unalloyed pleasure for so many of us cannot ever last" (137).

The form of each story invokes an oral performance style and plays upon the multi-vocality of discourse. Excerpts from "objective" historical sources, slices of radio broadcasts, fragments of conversations and praise songs, and running, and obtrusive, narrative commentary interrupt any linearity to which the stories subscribe and call attention to the performance, or the construction, of the stories the reader is being told. Aidoo doesn't attempt to harmonize all of these voices, but allows them to run into or contradict each other. In "Some Global News: A Short Four-Voice Report, the "objective" voice of science states, "It is further reported that some eminent team of researchers have discovered that darker-skinned people are attracted to bright clothes, and ..." (43). Yaa-yaa's explanation of her wardrobe dilemmas, however, suggest otherwise. In the course of the story, she tries to explain to her friend that in a "global village," clothes are political. Far from signifying an innate preference for bright colors, Yaa-yaa describes the "norms" of dress she must abide by while in Ghana and contrasts this to the "norms" instituted in the West. Yaa-yaa attempts to assemble a wardrobe that will accommodate a life "divided between [her] home countr[y] and colder places" (37) only to be ridiculed by western colleagues who find bright colors, when worn in the winter, "terribly inappropriate" (40) and African friends who regard dark clothes a "funeral colours!" (43) Language is yet another code whose meanings shift according to

context. The narrator tells us that Yaa-yaa and her friend Kate share a meal of groundnut soup, only to be corrected by another voice, an "African" voice that enters the story unexpectedly: "You mean peanut soup? Or rather peanut broth? The colonizers made sure us people called some ordinary vegetables by different names. One wonders why ... Maybe to help us maintain a little more of our primivity, however well we spoke their language?" (38). The discursive field in which clothes, words, and identities fail to remain static, hence not offering Sissie or Yaa-yaa a fixed center of self or history, is not a neutral field, but one marked by slavery, colonialism, and neo-imperialism. As Kate comes to realize as she listens to Yaa-yaa's troubles, "... they are telling us we live in a global village, but only some of the people are expected to make the necessary adjustments so we can all continue to live in it" (40-41).

I end this chapter with this explication of "Some Global News: A Short Four-Voice Report" and "Nowhere Cool" because I think Aidoo's short fiction provides an alternative to the insider feminism advocated by literary critics such as Nnaemeka, Ogundipe-Leslie and Zongo. The unified African woman on which these "insiders" build a feminist critique is not found in Aidoo's texts. Instead, Aidoo points to what Butler describes as an ambivalent subject, one that "emerges both as the *effect* of a prior power and as the *condition of possibility* for a radically conditioned form of agency" (1997, 15). Within the confines of geo-politics and the strictures of the discourses of the First and Third Worlds, Aidoo's protagonists, in the act of contemplating their subjectivities, assert agency and point to the possibility of articulating a feminist practice that addresses its own contingencies and erasures.

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