Rethinking Development in Africa: A Postcolonial Reading of Jacob's Ladder (1987) by John A. Williams and The Resolutionaries (2013) by Ayi K. Armah

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Abstract

In an intertextual assessment of *Jacob's Ladder* (1987) and *The Resolutionaries* (2013), I conduct a postcolonial analysis whose aim is to show that the pot-colonisation systems of sociopolitical and economic organisation in African countries has no other objective but the spoliation and subjugation of African economies to western countries. These two writers, and especially Armah, consider the international meetings held by world leaders in Africa and elsewhere as purely "bloody ritual" meetings, organised to ensure the continued functioning of the system of pillage. This work aims to show how Williams and Armah make use of the power of imagination to open the way for development in Africa, specifically by shaping a new African leadership which is ready to challenge the devil plan of western hegemonic powers with defiant programs, such as Fasseke's nuclear project in *Jacob's Ladder* (1987) and Nefert's plan of unified linguistic construction in *The Resolutionaries* (2013).

Keywords: colonialism, conferences, development, independence, and spoliation.

Introduction

Africa's development has long been a focus of attention within the intellectual community. Treated predominantly as a concern for the specialist-economist and politician, it has now become an item of literature, in *Jacob's Ladder* (1987) by the African American writer John Alfred Williams and in *The Resolutionaries* (2013) by the Ghanaian novelist Ayi Kwei Armah[1]. Both writers lead the reader to discover a new mode of tackling the question, notably in calling upon the power of literary imagination. While Williams examines the situation through the portrayal of a defiant, anti-colonial relationship between the previously-colonized and the colonizer in *Jacob's Ladder* (1987), Armah, in *The Resolutionaries* (2013), explores among other things, the potentiality of a unified linguistic construction in Africa.

For the researcher, the complex issue of development in Africa, particularly the collision between literature and the representation of a new type of post-independence African intellectual and nationalist is extremely interesting and fosters curiosity, raising the question: How can Africa's development be stimulated, and in what way can the art of fiction writing help achieve this objective? In this paper, I present this question as an investigation of new possibilities in the decolonial agenda. Put differently, I suggest that an analysis of this question enriches decoloniality and its approaches by drawing on what can conceptually be construed as a literary critique surfacing the political dimensions of the aesthetic.

In an article published in *New York Herald Tribune Book Week* in 1974, Williams had argued that the novel was a necessary alternative to historical works if the latter failed to report historical truth[2]. More than 40 years later, Armah presents a slightly nuanced reaffirmation of this claim, choosing the medium of the novel for its potentiality to "[offer] the possibility of a conversation between author and reader" (Armah 2013: iv). Whether as an alternative form in recovering truth, or as a platform for intellectual collaboration, the fiction writing seems to play a crucial role in Williams and Armah's critical reflection of Africa's situation in the process of building progress on the continent. This is because fiction writing appears to offer the opportunity to revisit some of mankind's most pressing problems, such as the age-old issue of development in Africa. To better understand their visions, I have decided to conduct a critical assessment of their narratives on an intertextual basis, analysing the interdependence of ideas developed in each[3]. This intertextual perspective is combined with postcolonial criticism to probe the anti-colonial discourses of these

two texts, with the final objective of charting out the attachment of each of their African heroes to self-destiny.

PARNERS OF A CRIMINAL SYSTEM

In both *Jacob's Ladder* (1987) and *The Resolutionaries* (2013), the issue of Africa's future and the progress of its people is of great interest. Due to the American origin of Williams, one may consider it strange that *Jacob's Ladder* (1987) is set in Africa. However, its conditions of production and precisely the main theme from which that story derives easily convince the reader about its pertinence as an African work. Afro-centric in accent and tone, this American fiction indeed embraces the issue of independence and the effort of African nationalists to liberate their countries from colonial domination.[1] Also Afro-centric, *The Resolutionaries* (2013) focuses, almost thirty years after independences, on the same question, placing a specific emphasis on development.

If the issue of development is treated with so much interest, it is because it is the cause of a feeling of deception in the African opinion, a deception, which is clearly perceptible in both texts.

If the issue of development is of such interest, it is because it raises feelings of deception in the African opinion—a deception which is clearly perceptible in both texts. Both texts take issue with the notion of deception, as it has played out on the continent over the decades of *liberation* and *freedom* that began in the 20th century, and address this phenomenon with chilling clarity, as will be showcased through my analysis in this paper.

In reading *Jacob's Ladder* (1987) and *The Resolutionaries* (2013) everyone, indeed, quickly notices a growing pessimism, which generally suggests that the dominant impression that in the structure of the socioeconomic organization described in each of these two books, nothing has been implemented to stimulate the development of African economies. On the contrary everything is planned to make African countries participate in a colonial system which is premised on criminality and violence. In *Jacob's Ladder* (1987), this *de facto* alienation of African economies is perceptible

1 The notion of Afro-centrism is used in contrast of Euro-centrism to refer to the necessity of planning every item concerning Africa from the stand point of Africans and to the benefit of Africans. This perspective challenges the traditional dominant Western/European position in connection with everything concerning Africa.

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from the early stage of the story. Describing an imaginary African country called Pandemi, administered over 119 years of independence by descendants of former slaves originating from America, the attention of the reader is goaded to the structuring of economic activities in the capital:

> *Pandemi had been independent for 119 years. These other nations […] had only to look at Pandemi and see how this western-style "independence" worked when it was handed over by someone else, not won in the heat of battle, the flash of fire […] The generations had witnessed their American attitudes of cast and class, their making of English language into the official language. […] Independence meant nothing to them.* (Williams 1987: 26)

Although Pandemi has been independent for 119 years, it does not reflect the ideals of a truly free country. For one thing, this country did not win its independence out of battle, and for another, the first authorities –"the Francklins" as they are called— who ruled the country were only committed to shaping it in the image of western countries, and, thus, went for the gadgetry of the western world: "fokkers", "caravelles" or "VC-10s", and so forth. (Williams 1987: 10). These materials are certainly the products of western industry and attest to the consumerism of Pandemi's economy and its subordination to former colonial powers. This means that instead of producing locally to satisfy the demands of their peoples, the different sectors of this economy are built and dependant on manufactured products originating predominantly from foreign industries.

The sense of subordination that is notoriously palpable in *Jacob's Ladder* (1987) is also noticeable in *The Resolutionaries* (2013) but more so. On a morning of September, the start of a new working year, the main protagonist of the book, Nefert Lihamba, a young lady who is introduced as a "freelance language expert", is overwhelmed by a combined feeling of "threat" and "nausea" which set her questioning: "Why then did I feel such dread?" (Armah 2013: 1); a question that can be understood as fuelling the feeling of dread and nausea raised by Nefert's uneasiness about her job. In a discourse through which her corporation is put in accusation, Nefert reveals this malaise:

> *As translators and interpreters, we do our work in a good-natured style dating back to the gin-moistened palavers of the slave trade. Needless to say since those days our craft has moved beyond gin to the champagne toast of global*

> *collaboration. […] Across language barriers fortified by Europeans, we help African collaborators reassure owners of the global economy that their system will not change, that year after year, we shall reapply formulae designed to maintain Africa as a resource bin for Europe and America.* (Armah 2013: 1-2)

At the out-set of the story in *The Resolutionaries* (2013), Armah's female protagonist reveals that the structure of the society in which she lives is not simply shaped as a copy of western societies, but it has been structured as a provider of resource for western economies. Just as the structure of African economies are built to serve as a "resource bin", so are their main fields of activities in which translating and interpreting hold great significance. Here, although the job of the translator and interpreter is well paid and offers a good social status, it is not presented as a job that one should be proud of. Because (s)he works in the circles of African authorities and plays a crucial role in great conferences and panels, the translator and interpreter is considered a "witness manager" (p.72). With this status, the translator and interpreter ought to benefit from respect and consideration. But for Nefert, this position is rather a source of anxiety, because she is seen as being an accomplice, serving the interest of Europe and America and not those of her own continent. This is what causes her feeling of dread and nausea. Metaphorically this sensation of dread and nausea encapsulates Nefert's disgust. In feeling nausea and dread, Nefert shows how hard it is for her to continue to work in conditions that make her a collaborator of a criminal system set up by western colonial powers. This idea of collaboration is untenable to Nefert, hence, the nausea. As a whole, the sentiment of malaise expressed in Williams' and Armah's texts are embedded in a discursive interdependence that does not go unnoticed. For the reader of these two texts, thus, *The Resolutionaries* (2013) perpetuates the anti-colonial vision developed in *Jacob's Ladder* (1987). This vision bases its analysis on the fundamental assumption that supposed superiority of the coloniser is as invalid as the supposed inferiority of indigenous values and culture, a concept that the colonised has been prepared to accept. On this precise case of alienation of the African economy to western industry, the principles of this anti-colonial vision demand that African leadership should work to set up an economic organisation that serves their own interests, and then facilitates the building of a safe and prosperous future.

Cynicism and absurdity at work

What a resolution represent when it is never put into action and how a vision serve the needs of a community when there is no hope? One important impression that *Jacob's Ladder* (1987) and *The Resolutionaries* (2013) create in the reader is a form of dead-end, a relentless and irreversible idea that all the effort Africans make to get out of domination and backwardness is doomed to fail. This failure is attributed to outside influences, represented in Williams' and Armah's fiction(s) by colonial and local forces alike, who are engaged in subversive actions against African development initiatives. In *Jacob's Ladder* (1987), one aspect of this subversive action is the lack of a real program of development, a lack of initiative which is noticeable from the early times of the Francklins government. As the narrator reveals, "New schools, to be placed strategically around the country to satisfy all the groups, were still on the drawing board |…] It took almost as much time to transport crops from the South by truck as it did when [Fasseke] was a boy" (Williams 1987: 11). Even when this colonial leadership is replaced by that of the native son, the nationalist "son of a long line of Ironsmiths" (Williams 1987: 17), certain basic services remain unachieved. This lack of a plan vis-a-vis development makes the government the target of criticism from Nmadi Ouro, one of Fasseke's old mates, and icon of the African intellectual in Williams' fiction. One day while he is waiting in a government office to be welcomed by the president, who has summoned him for his virulent writings against his administration, Ouro's thoughts confirm the failure of the authorities in providing for vital services to the population:

> *Of course after the Francklins, Fasseke had had to [nationalze] the foreign companies, that was expected. And he had to make deals, but hardly anyone seemed to know which kind. […] But Ouro reflected, Fasseke had let grass grow in his compound, something no good chief ever allowed to happen. Expectations small or great had vanished as a gust of wind. There were always excuses. Pandemi stagnated.* (Williams 1987: 17)

While most basic needs of the people are unsatisfied, Fasseke launches a nuclear project, a totally disproportionate ambition for Ouro, whose answer to Fasseke's project is ostensibly expresses surprise and reprobation: "A bomb? Bombs?", "Are we ready for this?" (Williams 1987: 24). Because of the threat presented by nuclear

power, this scepticism towards Fasseke's nuclear project expressed by his former school mate is also shared by the American authorities, especially when the waste products are used in the field of military armament. Knowing that the nuclear technology in Pandemi will strengthen the position of this small African country and its authorities in issues concerning world power, American officials initially try to persuade Fasseke to abandon the plant. It is the US Ambassador to Pandemi who initiates this exercise of persuasion when he encounters Fasseke. The following extract details this encounter:

> *Fasseke thought of the earlier [meeting] with Fullerton. The old man had been intense with his pledge of the U.S. friendship and a level of aid that would surpass the combined levels of every Black country on the continent, except, perhaps, Temian's. Fasseke found the timing of Fullerton's pledge curious […]The U.S. had its own iron –which it was finding cheaper not to dig up, since it could get quality ore from abroad more cheaply. It didn't want the gold, because the reefs in South Africa seemed inexhaustible. It didn't want crops. It simply wanted Pandemi not to have what it had just built.* (Williams1987: 145)

With the US's experience in developing nuclear technology, American authorities are aware of the great possibilities this technology confers in terms of hegemonic power in global relations. Given America's firm attachment to hegemony, it is not surprising that they persuade Pandemi authorities to abandon their nuclear project. From the point of view of postcolonial criticism, this persuasion is motivated by the idea of "othering" which crystalises westerners' feeling of superiority over their colonised subjects[4]. In asking Pandemi not to develop nuclear technology, the US want this African country and the other nations in the world to know that nuclear power must remain an American monopoly. It is a technology that re-affirms America's 'proper self' as a dominant nation over all the other nations in the world.

This idea of domination and the sentiment of sabotage of Africa's future is also articulated in Armah's *The Resolutionaries* (2013), where they become particularly significant when we consider the ridiculous atmosphere that prevails in the narrative. The reader discovers that the conferences that are organized with the view of building plans for Africa's development are nothing but scenes of comedy organised for rather cynical purposes. One of these hidden agendas is to legitimate the spoliation of

Africa's resources with with the help of various accomplices, including corrupted African leaders, international functionaries, and western diplomats disguised as businessmen. "Lebw", "Tuti", "Gan", "Nwnw", and so on, are all African capitals where such conferences are held. The conference held in Lebw, for example, highlights comic sequences in which Armah's protagonist witnesses a clear experience of cynicism from the actors of the pillage of African economies. Organised on the theme of "Free and Fair Elections", the first of these series of conferences is, in fact, the representation of the spoliation of democratic process in Africa. Here, the incompetence and cynicism of these actors of the spoliation find expression in the ridiculous discourse articulated by the representative of the host president:

> *ex-cerrencies… Ray-dies … and Gen-tremen … As the honorable minister just said, we are here to talk about an issue of rife and death, the issue of free and fair erections. It is a matter of the greatest importance that we ensure the organization of free and fair erections.* (Armah2013: 49)

The keynote speaker's level of English, evidenced by his inability to make coherent grammatical and orthographic sentences relating to the issue at stake in this conference, alludes not only to the type of leader we have in Africa, but also to the nature of conferences held on this continent. As a top authority, the keynote speaker embodies incompetent African leaders who confiscate political power with the help of colonial forces determined to protect their interests. As for the conference itself, it epitomises the form of laboratory meetings wherein African politicians gather with their western 'collaborators' to think about everything but the right solutions for issues in connection with Africa's development. Here, this conference about "Free and Fair Elections" is a clear indictment of the sabotage of electoral processes in Africa, an indictment expressed by Armah's protagonist in the following statement:

> *There were moments when I tried to persuade myself that these sentences were meaningless. But each phrase drilled its meaning into my brain. It said I was officiating as a minor priestess at a bloody ritual sacrifice of an entire society. The few benefiting from the sacrifice of millions had arranged to meet regularly to admire the consequences of our behavior. Seeing the damage done, the rulers were pledging, in resolutions, to make amends, only not right now. They were ready to promise not to waste the substance of a continent*

> *while leaving its children in ill health, its youth jobless, its adults in structured penury. But they did not want to keep these promises just yet. Because they must live. And the only way they knew to live was to sell a people's future for chaff. And I was hired to facilitate the exchange* (Armah 2013: 55).

The disruption of electoral processes, like all the other subversive actions undertaken by African leaders helped by their western partners, is a serious worry for Nefert the representative of the African intellectual in Armah's *The Resolutionaries* (2013). As a language expert who is aware of her responsibility as a 'witness manager', Nefert first feels guilty of complicity in the campaign of sabotage of Africa's future, and then decides to engage in an activity of rehabilitation of Africa and its peoples. What does this rehabilitation consist in? How can the African elite in Williams' and Armah's books help shape the development of Africa? These questions will be helpful in the treatment that follows in the next section of this argument.

Re-inventing a future for Africa

During one of the conferences organized in the city of Tuti in Armah's *The Resolutionaries* (2013), the narrator reports a statement made by the representative of an American private security company. Referring to the availability of technical materials in border security matters, this senior technician said that "his brief was to bring African security authorities to understand that they did not have to reinvent the wheel" (Armah 2013: 120). Although this statement concerns security issues, it is evocative of the possibilities given to Africa to achieve development prospects in the short term. Through the metaphor about the uselessness of "reinventing the wheel", the technician clearly means that the relevant technical materials exist and are available to help solve Africa's border security problems, and, by extension, all the problems of development. And yet, when we consider the reality of everyday life, with the difficulties denounced during these conferences, we realise how far the continent is from the objective of development. In these conditions, the responsibility of the African elite becomes crucial, a responsibility that can be articulated by considering a question put forward by Jehwty Lu, one of Armah's language experts: What can the translator and interpreter do about the challenges of Africa's development, 'apart from continuing to translate and interpret'? (Armah 2013: 179).

In response to this question, Nefert and her colleagues set up a language

association for translators and interpreters called AATI, but commonly referred to as 'TransInter'. Committed to protecting corporate interests like wages, this association is the expression of Armah's opposition to the use of European languages by translators and interpreters in their job, given the fact that these languages serve as tools of spoliation and division of Africans. For him, the language expert should work for the "emergence of a common working language" for the benefit of Africa. (Armah 2013: i) The Ghanaian writer considers the creation of a common African language as a positive achievement because it is a potential instrument for development. According to him, a common African language could not only contribute to "the intelligent processing and use of the continent resources", but could also, importantly, help achieve the prospects of unification. In making his protagonist and her friends engage in a linguistic activism, the writer of *Fragments* (1970) appoints the translator and interpreter as real alternative contributors in the building process of Africa's development. Given their proximity to top politicians and their awareness of the real socioeconomic agenda in governmental circles, translators are called upon to replace traditional African politicians, who do nothing but confiscate the resources of their communities instead of working for their progress. Nefert unequivocally echoes this call for change in African leadership in a telephone call with Shaka Forman, the father of her son:

> *Shaka dear, remember how back at the university we worried about the African ruling Elite? We saw them as individuals and families that missed every historical chance to connect productively with our people. Imagine selling humans instead of getting together with them to do the social work that would make the future ours. Imagine taking gold, diamonds, or fuel, and selling it to adventurers for bags of useless cowries, or paper money, instead of creating useful industrial wealth with it. We were determined to grow away from that elite, into something new, intelligent, creative. That dream looks impossible now. But I haven't changed.* (Armah 2013: 100)

This statement teaches the reader about the pattern of Nefert's indefatigable commitment to their early promises. It is also indicative of the type of personality Shaka Forman represents in the circle of African intellectuals. Initially determined to work for the interest of the community, Shaka has now grown to become the typical egocentric elite, obsessed with individual interest. This change is linked to the nature

of the current global system, whichtolerates survival but not resistance. In their telephone conversation, Shaka tries to dissuade Nefert from any idea of resistance.

African poverty, he says, is good for global business. Industrialisation would quietly end this poverty, but the current system would crash if African poverty ended. What would happen to Europe if Africa, like China, became an industrial society? See? African conferences solve a European problem. They highlight poverty as a problem but channel thought and funds away from industrial solutions. (Armah 2013: 99) In an attempt to shatter his beloved's illusions, Shaka almost cuts her short: "Nefert, we're talking about a system, already in place, and working. That's power, strong as a natural force. Do I agree with hurricanes or earthquakes? I prepare to survive them, and to make the best of my life in their teeth." (p.100).

As the reader may notice, *The Resolutionaries* (2013) describes the cupidity and dangerousness of a system inherited from western colonisation, a system which offers no alternative to "survival". This is where the title of Armah's book takes its most important significance. Retrospectively it reads as an allusion to early African revolutionaries who made good resolutions for their communities but were reduced to silence under the destructive actions of colonial forces. Replying to Benga, who spoke about one of his friends working for the United Nations and drafting conference resolutions, Nefert ironically used the new word "resolutionary" (Armah 2013: 395) to refer to this friend of Benga, a word the latter accepted with helpless protest: "such a sad word […] It's about the way things have changed for us. Gone bad." (p.395).

It is this dangerous system that Nefert and her colleagues want to challenge by creating their association of translators and interpreters. Through this organisation, they are determined to engage a pioneer initiative: provide Africa with a common working language which is meant to help African elites in the building process of Africa's development.

In a similar effort to federate African development initiative, Williams' protagonist engages in a joint project, the creation of a nuclear plant, with Shaguri, the president of Pandemi's neighbouring country, Temian. As we saw above, President Fasseke's disclosure of the project to his compatriot Nmadi Ouro, the poet, alludes to its scope:

> *Nmadi, we have begun operation of a fast breeder nuclear reactor […] we have every intention to convert the waste product into materials for nuclear weapons […] It is a nuclear-powered plant, conceived to be the first in a network of such plants designed to create power for the industry*

> *this continent needs and will develop. We will become a giant among giants* (Williams 1987: 23; 174)

For the nationalist authorities of Pandemi, the nuclear plant is, for sure, an ambitious project, as it will guarantee an energy supply sificient for the needs of the country and its development. More importantly, it is also a good achievement for the defence of Pandemi's independence, an independence for which Williams' Afro-centric protagonist wouldn't make any compromise, in spite of the threat of destabilisation from hegemonic nations like America. The question of development and the future of Africa become, thus, a serious issue and the focal point of literary production for the African American writer and his African counterpart. In addition to stimulating debates, literature becomes a platform through which the African intellectual can devote his skills to the appropriate solutions for the development of Africa, where traditional specialists and politicians have failed. In the case of Williams' *Jacob's Ladder* (1987), Chuma Fasseke, the president of Pandemi, is the "African intellectual", identified as a "thinker" by Nmadi Ouro in acknowledgement of his strong attachment to the destiny of his country and people. Literary imagination becomes, in the final analysis, the two representatives of African and African American fiction's favoured instrument for deciphering alternative solutions to the problems of development in Africa.

Literary imagination's ability to compensate for the defects of traditional specialists is clearly articulated in both Williams' and Armah's visions.For example, in case of false historical reporting, Williams considers the resources of the novel an appropriate alternative. In an article published in 1974 in *New York Herald Tribune*, he insisted on the necessity to resort to the resources of the novel in the following terms:

> *Novelists would do well to remember that when the works of the scholar-historians create doubt in the researcher's mind, the researcher then turns to literature as a primary source for confirmation or correction. If the truth of a time, a people, a state is not available anywhere else, let it be in the novel* (William 1974: 2).

While Williams, in *Jacob's Ladder* (1987), presents the novel as the most efficient instrument for an alternative quest for historical truth, Armah, in *The Resolutionaries*

(2013), presents the novel as the appropriate instrument for inquiry and exchange of rich "conceptual and strategic resources" in the building process of a better future for Africa. As Armah writes in the introductory section of his book, he has decided to present the results of his inquiries in the form of a novel because "a novel offers the possibility of a conversation between author and reader in the kind of "heterarchical relationship",rather than taking on the form of "academic" or hierophantic "releasing divine truth" (Armah 2013: iv). In other words, the novel represents, for Armah, a platform for productive debate rather than an opportunity to teach in the tradition of the preacher.

CONCLUSION

The issue of Africa's development and the future of its people have always been considered the concerns of specialist-technocrats and politicians who have been trained in the system inherited from colonisation, and still work in the context of that system. The system of thoughts and customs related to this colonial era are, however, notoriously biased, dedicated to the interests of former colonial powers rather than to those of the local populations. For the Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah, and his African American counter-part John Alfred Williams, who focus their literary attentions on this issue in *The Resolutionaries* (2013) and *Jacob's Ladder* (1987), the future of the continent is simply subjected to sabotage and pillage from colonial, hegemonic powers such as Europe and America.

In Jacob's Ladder (1987), these colonial powers are represented by the "Francklins" and a category of leaders descending from American slaves, who ruled Pandemi for 119 years before Fasseke, Williams' nationalist protagonist, came to power. These former leaders had made Pandemi, in the vision of Fasseke, a "western-style" country that stood in total dependence on western industrial gadgetry—"fokkers", "caravelles" or "VC-10s", and so forth. These leaders, Fasseke insisted, 'had merely gone from one form of colonialism to another' (Williams 1987: 10). As for Armah, *The Resolutionaries* (2013) is a pretext indicting the inherited colonial system as criminal-based, because it is a system built for the spoliation of African economies to the benefit of western countries. The agents of this spoliation are presented as a diverse group of accomplices, including corrupted African leaders, international institutions, western diplomats disguised as investors, and some African professionals like translators and interpreters. This last category, to Armah, holds an ambivalent

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responsibility. Symbolised by the female protagonist, Nefert Lihamba and a group of colleagues, the language expert is characterised by a high sense of Afro-centrism that leads her and her colleagues to grow conscious of their roles first as “collaborators” in the criminal colonial system, and then as defenders of Africa’s future and militants of a language association called AATI or “TransInter”. This association is initially committed to protecting corporate interests, but it is chiefly entrusted with exploring Africa’s development from the perspective of a unified linguistic construction. This means, according to Armah, to engage in a collaborative activity based on “the intelligent processing and use of the continent’s resources” (Armah 2013: i).

This study has, thus, given the occasion to examine the extent to which literature and especially the two literary works – *Jacob’s Ladder* (1987) and *The Resolutionaries* (2013) –produced respectively by John A. Williams and Ayi K. Armah, can help shape this perspective of development in Africa, notably by using the novel both as an instrument for unified construction of a better future for Africa, and as a material of quest for Africa’s ‘proper self’, meaning, the expression of authentic existence.

(Endnotes)

1 John Alfred Williams, *Jacob’s Ladder* (1984),Thunder’s Mouth Press, New York, 1987; Ayi Kwei Armah, *The Resolutionaries*, Per Ankh, Senegal, 2013. Subsequent references to these sources will be noted as follows: (Author surname Year: x)

2 The statement by John A. Williams was initially made in the form of an appeal to the writer to take over the role of truth-teller/objective historical reporter which is traditionally devoted to the historian. This appeal reads as follows: “Novelists would do well to remember that when the works of the scholar-historians create doubt in the researcher’s mind, the researcher then turns to literature as a primary source for confirmation or correction. If the truth of a time, a people, a state is not available anywhere else, let it be in the novel”. For further details, see John A. Williams (1974), “Backtracking Pioneers” *New York Herald Tribune Book Week*, 7 June; Gilbert H Muller (1984) *John A. Williams*. Boston: Hall.

3 The notion of interdependence derives from intertextuality as a mode of reading literary texts. In essence, interdependence, according to Julia Kristeva, refers to the degree of relationship or communication between a text and those that have gone before it. For Julia Kristeva, a literary text is not an isolated phenomenon but is made up of a mosaic of quotations, and that any text is the absorption and transformation of another. From this point of view, Armah's *The Resolutionaries* (2013) can be considered as one that echoes Williams' *Jacob's Ladder* (1987) from thematic and discursive stand point. This is, among many things, what justifies a common study of these texts here. For further details on Intertextuality, see, J. A. Cuddon (1999), *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory*, Penguin Books, London, p. 424

4 For further details about the notion of "othering", refer to Lois Tyson (2006), *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, 2nd Edition, Routledge, New York, pp. 419-420; Edward W Said, (1994) *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books

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