

Araştırma-İnceleme

**THE AMBIGUITY OF IDENTITY AND THE AMBIGUITY
OF FORMATION IN *AMBIGUOUS ADVENTURE* BY
CHEIKH HAMIDOU KANE AS A POSTCOLONIAL
BILDUNGSROMAN**

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Abstract: One of the most important literary outcomes of the postmodern period, the postcolonial novel reifies many of its principles and views, such as the idea of the fall of contemporary culture and the doubts concerning cultural advancement; the revaluation of values; the relativity of meaning; the crisis of representation; the lack of originality; intertextuality; the individual as subjected to discourses, power, desire; various binary oppositions, including West and East, center and margin, self and other; rejection or deconstruction of dominant, Western attitudes; and others. The literary pattern of the Bildungsroman or novel of formation is adopted by the postcolonial writers particularly from Africa and other colonized countries to deal with the problems of the subjugated peoples and their transformation into hybrid identities. The concern of the postcolonial Bildungsroman emerges as the formation of the main character in a colonial environment, who faces the difficulties and crisis caused by his alienation from his native identity and culture, while also physically growing up. Cheikh Hamidou Kane's novel *Ambiguous Adventure* reflects and follows the main principles of the postcolonial Bildungsroman and our aim is to identify and analyse these principles in relation to the formation process of the protagonist Samba Diallo in an environment of cultural ambiguity and colonial system, in which he is transformed into a hybrid individual and experiences an identity crisis.

Keywords: Hybridity, Identity Crisis, Postcolonial Bildungsroman, Ambiguity, Formation.

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**CHEIKH HAMIDOU KANE'İN KOLONİLEŞME SONRASI
BİLDUNGSROMANI *BELİRSİZ SERÜVEN*'DE OLGUNLAŞMA
VE KİMLİK KARMAŞASI**

Öz: Postmodern dönemin en önemli oluşumlarından biri olan sömürgecilik sonrası edebiyatı çağdaş kültürün çöküşü ve kültürel ilerlemedeki belirsizlik fikriyle; anlam göreceliği, temsiliyet çatışması, özgünlük eksikliği, metinlerarasılık, söylemlere maruz kalan birey, güç, arzu, çeşitli ikili karşıtlıklar, Batı-Doğu, merkez-kenar, baskın olanın reddi ya da yeniden yapılandırılması, ve Batı'nın bakış açısı gibi kavramlarla postmodern dönemin temel ilkelerini edebiyat çerçevesi içinde somut hale getirir. Bildungsroman edebi geleneği ya da diğer adıyla gelişim romanı özellikle Afrika ve diğer sömürge ülkelerindeki sömürgecilik sonrası yazarları tarafından koloni toplumların hibrid kimliklere dönüşümünü yansıtmak amacıyla kabul görmüş ve kullanılmıştır. Sömürge sonrası Bildungsroman geleneği ana karakterin fiziksel gelişiminin yanı sıra sömürge ortamında karşılaştığı zorlukları ve yerli kimliğine ve kültürüne yabancılaşmasından kaynaklanan kişilik krizlerini ortaya koyar. Cheikh Hamidou Kane'in *Belirsiz Serüven* (*Ambiguous Adventure*) adlı romanı sömürgecilik sonrası Bildungsroman geleneğinin temel ilke ve özelliklerini yansıtır ve bizim bu çalışmadaki amacımız bu ilkeleri ana karakter Samba Diallo'nun hibrid bir kişiliğe büründüğü kültürel belirsizlik ve kolonileşme ortamındaki gelişim süreciyle bağlantılı olarak tespit ve analiz etmektir. Paris'e eğitimini tamamlamak için giden Samba'nın Batı kültürüne alışma çabaları ve bunun sonunda kendi kimliğini koruma çabasıyla birlikte kendini bir belirsizlik içerisinde bulması yaşadığı kimlik çatışmasının ve psikolojik çöküşünün temel sebebini oluşturur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Hibridite, Kimlik Çatışması, Sömürgecilik Sonrası Bildungsroman, Belirsizlik, Gelişim.

Introduction and Background

The present study attempts to disclose the ways in which the novel *Ambiguous Adventure* (1962) by Cheikh Hamidou Kane reifies the postmodern principle that identity is a cultural product, where, in the case of our character Samba Diallo being in-between two cultures, his constructed identity emerges as ambiguous. In order to show the ambiguity of identity of the protagonist, our approach to the novel follows a thematological analysis with regards to our consideration of the novel as a postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. The starting point of our study is that the novel follows the main elements of a typical *Bildungsroman* literary pattern, and the novel's thematic framework reveals and proves eventually that the ambiguity of identity equals the ambiguity of formation. The second premises on which our study relies is that the novel both assumes and expresses the most important ideas and elements of the postcolonial theory, as to mention just "hybridity," "mimicry", "unhomed" individual, and various binary oppositions.

Together with magical realism, metafiction, historiographic metafiction, and others, the postcolonial novel is a major type of fiction of the postmodern

period, focusing primarily on individual subject as subjected to discourses of power and whose building of personality is socially and culturally determined. Also, the postcolonial novel textualizes various binary oppositions, namely West and East, Europe and Orient, center and margin, self and other, and rejects and/or deconstructs Western conventions and attitudes. In this respect, it is correct to include postcolonial fiction, as Peter Zima does (2010, pp. 151-152) in presenting the postmodern textual typology, in the framework of ideological writing as a reaction, along with feminist and ecological works, to the problematic of indifference which invites dualistic responses.

In matters of character representation strategies, the postcolonial writing maintains the concern with individual experience in relation to social existence, relies on the principle of determinism, often emphasizes the individual psychological, subjective complexity, and proves the famous statement that “the assertion of identity through difference and specificity is a constant in postmodern thought” (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 59).

This is a constant in postmodern thought and postmodern fiction in general as declared by Linda Hutcheon, just as Bran Nicol – relying on the formalist Jakobson’s concept of “the dominant” which determines and rules the other components, guarantees the integrity of the system/structure, and changes over literary history – identifies three elements or features which are mostly important, or the dominants, in the postmodern fiction:

- (1) a self-reflexive acknowledgement of a text’s own status as constructed, aesthetic artefact
- (2) an implicit (or sometimes explicit) critique of realist approaches both to narrative and to representing a fictional ‘world’
- (3) a tendency to draw the reader’s attention to his or her own process of interpretation as s/he reads the text (Nicol, 2009, p. xvi)

Another important aspect of the postmodern attitude that finds its expression in postcolonial novel is its “doubleness”, suggestive of the contradictory nature of postmodern thought and writing, including with regards to the representation of individual personality, as to mention just W. E. B. Du Bois’ concept of “double-consciousness” as the condition of black people in America, and those of “mimicry” and “hybridity” by Homi K. Bhabha. The latter scholar, in particular, focuses on the relationship between colonizer and colonized to argue about their interdependence and the mutual construction of their subjectivities and identities in the context of binary oppositions between Europeans and the others, between Western and Eastern/Non-Western people as “self and other” and “centre and margin”.

The “postcolonial” is a very complex term used “to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2001, p. 2), and the postcolonial studies focus on history, culture, mentality, beliefs, practices, including art and literature, of those areas of the world that experienced colonialism.

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With regards to the postcolonial literary practice, it would reveal, in most cases, a character displaying, like in Modernism, an acute sense of frustration and alienation emerging from the impossibility to harmonize internal and external factors, East and West, native culture and values with those of the colonizer, personal values and demands with those of the milieu, but yet expressing and proving the idea that colonialism has both negative and positive consequences, since it is a threat to identity but also a means of emancipation, and, above all, to follow Bhabha (1994) again, the cultures do not have unchangeable features, are not static and standard, but are unsettled and fluctuating, because they are susceptible to influences, pressures, and impacts coming from other cultures, which eventually leads to cultural mixture, multiculturalism, to cultural development and vitality.

Adopting intertextuality, the relationship between different texts, and the dialogue of cultures, as well as the views that the meaning of a text is shaped by another text and that texts refer to other ones rather than to external reality, the postcolonial novelists accept and use various literary traditions and established patterns of writing, and modify them according to their own concerns and points of view to be expressed.

Magical realism has become the literary language of the emergent postcolonial world, is the famous claim by Bhabha, to which we should add the literary system of the Bildungsroman, as Salman Rushdie showed with his *Midnight's Children* and, as we will see in the following, Cheikh Hamidou Kane did with his *Ambiguous Adventure*.

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1. The Author and His Work

Having experienced the great destructive influence of the imperialist power on his country, Cheikh Hamidou Kane, as a Senegalese, intends to reflect through his protagonist Samba Diallo the condition of the African man who is trying to preserve his own identity within the inevitable dominance of the European force which creates a confrontation of two cultures and identities. The author effectively applies postcolonial notions and their outcomes to his novel within the framework of the process of identity formation of the main character and his psychological turbulences. Kane divides his novel into two parts which enables him to exhibit the two different worlds and their conflicted cultures: Part One includes Samba Diallo's life in his native country and his religious education, and Part Two displays his young adult years and getting modern education in Paris.

As a child, Samba Diallo receives a religious education at a Koranic school in his country of Diallobé where Islamic tradition and aristocracy rules the society. Like other colonized countries of Africa, Diallobé experiences the arrival of the French and is forced to adapt to their own system. Then a dispute emerges among the citizens of Diallobé whether to send the children to the new foreign school in which they could get a modern European education, or to the religious school where they could maintain their traditional education. The Most Royal

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Lady, a prestigious woman from the ruling family of the country and Samba Diallo's aunt, suggests that they should send their children to the French school because they need to learn architecture for the welfare of their country, although she is aware of the danger of losing them:

The school in which I would place our children will kill in them what today we love and rightly conserve with care. Perhaps the very memory of us will die in them. When they return from the school, there may be those who will not recognize us. What I am proposing is that we should agree to die in our children's hearts and that the foreigners who have defeated us should fill the place, wholly, which we shall have left free (Kane, 1963, p. 46).

The Most Royal Lady's attitude can be interpreted as a pragmatic approach, for she is conscious of the power of the colonizers and their dominance over her country in the present time; however, she is acting by considering the future of their country which will be able to fight back if they take advantage of the present conditions by sending the children to their school. Samba is first introduced to foreign institution when he is sent to the local French school, and the hints of his formation into hybridity are revealed. The novel gets denser in Part Two when Samba goes to Paris to get his degree of philosophy, and faces the cultural and traditional distinctions between his country and France in real terms. He begins to realize that he is losing something in himself and he is not the person as he was before, although he struggles to preserve his own native identity; and eventually he finds himself in an ambiguous identity, which leads him to his tragic end. By demonstrating the state of Samba Diallo, the author proves the impossibility of acquiring a standard identity in a foreign culture unless the former one is abandoned, which means becoming a "mimic man". Because identity is a cultural product, the simultaneous existence of two cultures generates an ambiguous identity as in the case of Samba Diallo.

Postcolonial literature, especially the African literature, has a special significance in terms of reflecting a different perspective of Eastern or colonized peoples' cultures, their battle for national independence and struggle to perpetuate their identity. While the postcolonial writers focus on the colonization process in their works, they also externalize the ideology of the colonizers, which principally identifies the East as the "other" by applying the theories and ideas of prominent Orientalists to their novels. Therefore, it is necessary to touch upon Kane's effective use of binary oppositions as a postcolonial term in his novel to exhibit the clash between the cultures of Diallobé and France under the broad title of East versus West. From the very beginning of the novel, Kane puts forward the opposition of the schools as traditional and modern, Glowing Hearth and French school. The conversation between Samba Diallo's father and Paul Lacroix presents another example of binary opposition between science and religion, which leads to the distinction between external and internal existence, which the novel strongly emphasize, and the West's scientific advancement and the East's religious and spiritual richness. As Wehrs asserts, "For the Islamic master, as for Samba's father and

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the other pious men of the novel, true freedom is found not in the technological manipulation of nature to satisfy material needs, but in the domination of nature through an education in submitting the body to the uncompromising demands of the spirit” (Wehrs, 1992, p. 1003). Rebecca Masterton indicates a similar approach to the thematic level of the novel by saying that “[t]he entire point of *Ambiguous Adventure* is that material reality is not *the* reality. Of course Samba Diallo cannot accept the version of reality with which he is presented: this is because he knows that, ultimately, it is not real. Therefore, he does not flee from unreality into religious mysticism, but from *unreality* into *actual reality*” (Masterton, 2009, p. 31).

The novel also embodies the notion of hybridity defined by Homi Bhabha as a postcolonial term which leads to a state of in-betweenness in the identity formation of the individual, who is neither able to adopt the dominant culture nor could give up his previous identity. He refers to these hybrid identities as “unhomed” individuals who fail to establish themselves with a stable accommodation in terms of belonging to a specific culture:

The negating activity is, indeed, the intervention of the ‘beyond’ that establishes a boundary: a bridge, where ‘presencing’ begins because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home, and the world – the unhomeliness – that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations. To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the ‘unhomely’ be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres. The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow and suddenly you find yourself with Henry James’s Isabel Archer, in *The Portrait of a Lady*, taking the measure of your dwelling in a state of ‘incredulous terror’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 9).

Samba Diallo’s gradual alienation from his indigenous identity drags him into a traumatic psychology, for he is aware of the fact that it is impossible for him to maintain his own culture and to find the happiness he used to feel in his homeland. The “unhomness” that he lives through entails his state of in-betweenness and creates his ambiguous identity.

2. The Postcolonial Context and the Bildungsroman Thematic Pattern of *Ambiguous Adventure*

Bildungsroman, also known as the “novel of formation,” which appeared in English literature in the nineteenth century, generally deals with the story of a male character, usually an orphan, from his childhood to adulthood by exhibiting his mental, physical, and psychological maturation and formation. The story begins with his departure from his ordinary environment, which is mostly a village, a small-scaled community, to search for a job, to be in conflict with the environment, to follow personal desires and dreams, to get an education, or to engage in a love affair, and he becomes a part of a larger society in a city. While the protagonist is gradually growing up, he experiences a process of psychological conflicts, crisis, and ambiguity until he finds his true self and completes his formation, which includes a sentimental relationship

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along with professional and social advancement. Another point that should be considered in the *Bildungsroman* literary pattern is the reflection of the author's life throughout the novel, which enables the critical tradition to call it as "autobiographical".

Subjectivity and individuality as main modes of thinking of Modernism of the twentieth century provided changes in the literary pattern of the novel of formation. The modernist writers' repudiation of the nineteenth century realist type of fiction shows itself in the innovative version of the *Bildungsroman* which can be now categorized as part of the modernist literature. While adopting the tradition of the novel of formation, the modernists maintain many of the thematic components, such as the formation of a character, education, leaving for a bigger society, travel, growing up, and the final stage of spiritual crisis and epiphany, but they alter the essence of the components according to their modernist perspective. The social concern is replaced by the concern with individual experience that is related to the experimental novel's representation of the complexity of inner existence of the character by innovating point of view and other structural devices and strategies. Subjects such as individual experience, aestheticism, freedom, and ordinariness are applied as themes of the modernist novel of formation besides other sustained or modified thematic elements of the traditional *Bildungsroman*.

For instance, as with Stephen Dedalus, the character "comes up against the social, political, and religious institutions that want him to conform, and he rejects them for the artist life" (Bulson, 2006, p. 49), showing that with modernists, in a *Bildungsroman*, the social concern is inferior to individual existence, and that the harmony or balance between internal and external factors is impossible.

With the expansion of imperialism and colonialism in the twentieth century, the *Bildungsroman* tradition is adopted by the postcolonial writers, particularly from Africa and other colonized countries, to deal with the problems of the subjugated peoples and their transformation into hybrid identities. The concern of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* is the formation of the main character in a colonial environment, who faces the difficulties and crisis caused by his alienation from his own identity and culture. Cheikh Hamidou Kane's novel *Ambiguous Adventure* is a postcolonial *Bildungsroman* in which its protagonist Samba Diallo discloses his own formation in an environment of cultural ambiguity and colonial system.

The novel conforms to many of the characteristics of the *Bildungsroman* literary tradition, in particular the one stipulating that the author mirrors some parts of his autobiography throughout the novel. Like Samba Diallo, Cheikh Hamidou Kane was born in Africa, Senegal, and received Islamic education in his country. In his young adulthood, he left his country to be educated in law and philosophy in Paris. He returned to Senegal in 1959 and worked in prestigious positions for the welfare of his country. Admittedly, he reflects his own

experiences and identity crisis he lived through in a foreign culture via the main character, who goes through the same process in his novel *Ambiguous Adventure* which he wrote in 1962.

The childhood and education stages of the protagonist Samba Diallo are covered in the first part of the novel, in which our character is represented as a child of the noble family of Diallobé. The author prefers to expose Samba Diallo living with his father contrary to the traditional pattern of *Bildungsroman* which generally introduces the main character as an orphan; Samba's father possesses an important function in his spiritual and ideological formation. Kane directly introduces the colonial environment of Diallobé country, while presenting the native traditions and religious system of the society. The first chapter begins with a session of Koranic education given by a prestigious teacher called Thierno. Samba Diallo's special distinctness and character as a child in terms of his devotion and adoption of the spiritual existence strikes the readers' attention as well as the teacher, which also will be his shelter that he struggles to preserve in his moments of crisis in the future:

What purity! What a miracle! Truly, this child was a gift from God. In the forty years that he devoted himself to the task – and how meritorious a task it was! – of opening to God the intelligence of the sons of men, the teacher had never encountered anyone who, as much as this child, and in all facets of his character, waited on God with such a spirit (Kane, 1963, p. 7).

Samba Diallo's attachment to the spiritual and internal existence which distinguishes him from other disciples at the Glowing Hearth has a strong relation with his devotion to his teacher and his love for the school, which is clearly revealed when he is found at the cemetery fallen asleep, and he wants to go to the Glowing Hearth instead of home.

As a postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, the novel contains the stage of education, which is a necessary part of this literary tradition, within a colonial atmosphere with the existence of the foreign school in the country by establishing a contradiction and opposition between two cultures. While the traditional school educates the children with a spiritual insight in religious terms, the French school teaches them architecture in a modern sense. A distinction is created as "spiritual versus material perception" of the East and the West. First, the natives are reluctant to send their children to the foreign school, which exposes their determination of protecting their identity against the colonial power; however, the inevitability of their weakness in front of the Westerners makes them question the durability of their resistance: "Our refusal, then, is certain ... The question is disturbing nevertheless. We reject the foreign school in order to remain ourselves, and to preserve for God the place He holds in our hearts. But have we still enough force to resist the school, and enough substance to remain ourselves?" (p. 10). They find themselves in a serious predicament which will have an impact on the future of their country and children, as Kane describes their dramatic situation: "The Diallobé country, helpless, was turning around and around on itself like a thoroughbred horse caught in a fire" (p. 12).

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Samba's institutional education starts with his enrolment in the French school in the little town of L., which is also his first encounter with the European culture and education, and his first departure from transcendental and spiritual environment into a material one. With his distinct spiritual character, he attracts the interest of Jean Lacroix and they form a friendship. However, he longs for the teacher, the Glowing Hearth, and his integration with divine state of being when he was together with the teacher. He realizes that he feels the lack of this intensity of emotions in the material atmosphere of the foreign school, and he tries to compensate the emptiness with his connection to nature: "This evening, in this twilight that was so beautiful, he had felt himself swept by a sudden exaltation while he was praying, an exaltation such as he had formerly felt when he was near the teacher" (p. 63). Kane reveals Samba's fondness of the teacher and his questioning of what makes the teacher special for him:

But at the teacher's side Samba Diallo had known something else, which he had learned to love. When he tried to envisage to himself what it was that kept him so attached to the teacher, in spite of his burning faggots and his cruelties, Samba Diallo saw nothing, except perhaps that the reasons for this attraction were not of the same order as those which made him love his father and mother and his home in L (p. 64).

Although he could not find out the reason at that moment, it is apparent that Samba Diallo has associated his spiritual happiness with the teacher, and because of the absence of this happiness he longs for him and his education.

As Samba Diallo gets to know the culture of the colonizers, he begins to comprehend the discrepancies between two cultures, and his recognition causes him to make naïve philosophical approaches to the issue, which also indicates the first hints of his ideological formation. He tries to figure out the relation between believing in God and working, and concludes that they contrast each other even if it appears odd to him.

With [my father], the case is even more clear. When he is in his office, he is less close to God than the teacher is in the fields. My father's work absorbs his thought. Carried to its limit, a work in which a man was completely absorbed would keep him all the time outside God. There is no work, it is true, which completely absorbs the man who is engaged in it. But there are countries where great masses of men have long been alienated from God. Perhaps. ... Perhaps it is work which makes the West more and more atheistic. ... A curious idea. ... (p. 96).

In a typical *Bildungsroman*, the protagonist's departure from his local environment for a larger society, which is triggered by a certain reason, is a significant stage in terms of his formation process as an adult person. The new society and social circumstances generate obstacles and difficulties in the protagonist's path to the achievement of identity, and his success in coping with these ordeals designates the consequence of his journey. In a postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, these social calamities appear as the struggle of the character to protect his identity in a completely foreign country and culture, and as a crisis

of identity. Thus, the outcome of his journey in postcolonial terms can be evaluated regarding that whether he is able to maintain his true identity or not. Samba Diallo enters the threshold of a new and bigger society when he goes to Paris for his college education at the beginning of the second part of the novel. He is a more mature man and more aware of his condition in this foreign land as an African trying to hold on to his roots. He clearly expresses his thoughts in a dinner with Lucienne's family:

It may be that we shall be captured at the end of our itinerary, vanquished by our adventure itself. It suddenly occurs to us that, all along our road, we have not ceased to metamorphose ourselves, and we see ourselves as other than what we were. Sometimes the metamorphosis is not even finished. We have turned ourselves into hybrids, and there we are left. Then we hide ourselves, filled with shame (p. 113).

For Samba, the incomplete metamorphosis is the main reason for the despair and ambiguity of his identity, although he has willingly "chosen the itinerary which is most likely to get [him] lost" (p. 113). A question occurs in the ambiguous case of the indigenous people, which leads to a dilemma, and the reader as well asks the same question upon witnessing Samba's ambiguous adventure: Would it be better to completely abandon the authentic culture and identity and adopt the Western culture in order to live a happier life? Indeed, this query counterbalances the *Bildungsroman* traditional principle concerning the hero's formation within social parameters, which is the hero's pursuit of his own path in the social order depending on his experiences, mistakes, and sufferings. This path, which is guided by social demands and rules, takes him to the success or failure of his formation as the final stage of maturation. While moving along this path, the *Bildungsroman* hero tries to make his life meaningful and to find his place in society. In the postcolonial context, the society that the hero lives in demands him to abide the Eurocentric system and cultural structure to be allowed a place within the society. The hero's quest in completing his formation should be evaluated regarding his success in meeting the social expectations, and Samba Diallo's failure/success at the end of his formation is to be explored considering the postcolonial and social perspectives of the developmental process.

The most intense moment that Samba Diallo feels the lack of the soul in the material life of Paris and that he can no longer involve himself into the spiritual beauty of life and faith is when he walks through the streets of Paris:

These streets are bare," he was noticing. "No, they are not empty. One meets objects of flesh in them, as well as objects of metal. Apart from that they are empty. (...) There is nothing, nothing but me, nothing but my body, I mean to say. I touch it. Through the pocket of my trousers I touch my thigh. I think of my right big toe. There is nothing but my right big toe. Otherwise, their street is empty, their time is encumbered, their soul is silted up down there, under my right big toe, and under the events and under the objects of flesh and the objects of metal (pp. 128-129).

He notices that everything around him is mere objects; even his own body is composed of just external organs. Neither the people around him, nor he himself possesses a soul that makes them living creatures; that is why the streets seem to him empty although they exist physically: “Detached from himself internally, he sees a world reduced exclusively to materiality, a materiality that is purely phenomenological, without any meaning” (Masterton, 2009, p. 33). The material world wins over the spiritual existence inside Samba Diallo, and he explicitly reveals his agony upon losing his ability to reach beyond materiality: “Lucienne, that scene, it is a sham! Behind it, there is something a thousand times more beautiful, a thousand times more true! But I can no longer find that world’s pathway” (Kane, 1963, p. 144).

In the middle of his reflections about the material life of Paris when he is walking on the street, he comes across an old black man who introduces himself as Pierre-Louis. With this character, Kane reverses the concept of hybridity and ambiguity that Samba is experiencing. Unlike Samba, Pierre-Louis appears to surrender himself to the European way of life as it can be discerned from his French name, although he is an African. He exhibits a contradictory approach towards the colonial ideology, since he asserts that he fought against the French colonizers in Gabon and Cameroon. However, he does not even know exactly where he is from. The author emphasizes his vivacious mood, as he is always laughing and happy, which is distinguished from Samba’s desperate and anxious situation caused by his identity crisis. Pierre-Louis has completely lost his authentic identity and become one of them, which means that he has nothing to lose and worry about, and he has freed himself from the suffering of having an ambiguous identity. Although he devotes himself to the rights of the subjugated people, he seems not to be aware of his own assimilation. Samba Diallo’s determination to hold on to his own identity makes him more and more miserable while he is falling into an endless hollow and trying to revive the existence of the transcendental source in himself, which he associates with nature: “As for me, I have not yet cut the umbilical cord which makes me one with [nature]” (ibid, 140). Also, concerning the hybridity:

I am not a distinct country of Diallobé facing a distinct Occident, and appreciating with a cool head what I must take from it and what I must leave with it by way of counterbalance. I have become the two. There is not a clear mind deciding between the two factors of a choice. There is a strange nature, in distress over not being two (p. 151).

Although Samba Diallo expresses his feelings and reflections about his alienation many times before, these words are the most striking reflection of his hybridity which epitomize the overall idea of the novel about ambiguous and hybrid identities. He admits that he has become a hybrid, which hosts two distinct identities simultaneously, and eventually is unable to sustain a healthy state of mind.

The author provides an interesting character, the fool, who has an important function particularly at the end of the novel. We are first introduced to him

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towards the end of the first part as a man who has been exposed to the European culture and colonial influence; just as Samba Diallo, he has lived through the same alienation process and lost his spirit within the material life of the West:

I have seen the mechanisms. They are shells. It is a rolled-up expanse, which moves. Well, you know that expanse has nothing inside it; therefore it has nothing to lose. It cannot be wounded, like the form of man, but only unrolled. Also, it has forced back man's form, fearful that it, in being wounded, will lose the internal substance it contains (p. 92).

Kane draws a parallel between the fool and Samba Diallo, since both have lost themselves within the search for their spiritual existence and end up by having ambiguous identities. The fool has completely lost his identity even though he returns to his country, and that is why the author does not provide any name for him by highlighting his lack of self. The fool's excessive attachment for the teacher also exposes his search for internal and transcendental existence which he associates with the teacher.

The last part of the novel, which covers Samba's returning from Paris, has significance in terms of revealing his transformation and his formation outcome as a failure in a postcolonial context. Although he turns back to his homeland where he could find again the spiritual existence that he has lost in Paris, we see him rejecting to go to the mosque to pray, which proves that he has lost even his ambition to reach that happiness he has been searching for. His character development process gets stuck between two distinct identities which generate an ambiguous identity and formation. He completes his physical formation by growing up into an adult; however, his spiritual and psychological formation could not achieve a successful end in terms of having a healthy and stable identity.

Nevertheless, one might view the result of his formation in two different perspectives by considering the individual and social parameters. Within the social structures of both the indigenous and the West, the individual is expected to submit and embrace the entailments of the society that he is living in. In this respect, Samba's formation can be interpreted as a failure, for he neither succeeds in transforming himself into a European by abandoning his original identity completely, nor is he able to maintain his African identity although he returns to Africa at the end. Eventually, he ends up with an ambiguous formation and ambiguous identity. On the other hand, his death at the end of the novel discloses a different attitude towards his formation. The author terminates Samba Diallo's physical existence; however, maintains his spiritual existence by placing him into a mystical and transcendental dimension, in which he gets rid of his ambiguity and sufferings. He hears a voice speaking, whose identity is not revealed, but can be interpreted as Azrael or Samba's consciousness: "You are entering the place where there is no ambiguity. Be attentive, for here, now, you are arriving. You are arriving." And Samba answers: "Hail! I have found again the taste of my mother's milk; my brother who has dwelt in the land of the shadows and of peace, I recognize you. Announcer of the end of exile, I

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salute you” (p. 177). This internal dialogue clearly exhibits Samba’s happiness and peace upon freeing himself from the constraints of ambiguity and alienation, since he is now able to obtain his spiritual existence by gaining a unique identity. In this respect, we suggest that Samba successfully completes his formation by achieving his individual objective and gaining his freedom back.

Conclusion

Throughout the novel, Samba’s physical and psychological process of development from childhood to his young adulthood is reflected within a colonial context, which reveals his transformation into a hybrid and ambiguous identity. Besides the character’s transformation, the author provides the general condition of the subjugated peoples and their struggle for survival in order to protect their own culture against the powerful colonial countries. He also questions the distinction between religious/Islamic education and modern/Western education while emphasizing the two opposite forms of existence as spiritual and material. Samba Diallo gets lost between these distinct entities and ends up with an ambiguous identity, hence an ambiguous formation. He is killed by the fool, who is another person alienated by the Western culture, Kane presenting in this way two distinct victims of the Eurocentric ideology.

The novel investigates and proves that the decision of the natives to send their children to the foreign school to educate themselves in modern sense to be able to defend their country in future results in a failure. They expect a new generation out of the connection between East and West, which they refer to as a “new born child”: “This country awaits a child. But in order that the child may be born the country must give itself” (p. 82).

However, this child is “born” with a defect, which is represented by Samba Diallo. The protagonist of *Ambiguous Adventure* is “born”, that is, in terms of the Bildungsroman, passes through the process of development and acquires formation as an individual personality, with an ambiguity, an ambiguous process of development (that is, an “ambiguous adventure”) and acquiring an ambiguous identity. He is a failure, and his formation seemingly as well; he is a postmodern hero who finds himself in a tragic limbo and could not return his former spiritual state of being as long as he exists in the physical world, and, having almost lost the spiritual one, the formation of personality is itself ambiguous, although the end of the novel suggests re-acquiring of and the reconciliation with the self.

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