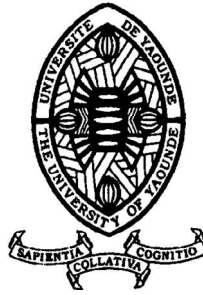


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The dialectics of "self" and "others" in John Nkemngong Nkengasong's across the Mongolo

A Dissertation submitted in partial Fulfilment of the requirements for the
award of D.I.P.E.S II in English

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ABSTRACT

This work, entitled “The Dialectics of the Self and Other in Nkemngong Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo*,” examines the extent to which the “self” and “other” binaries breed discord from the historical and contemporary context in which they originate. This study highlights the author’s dissatisfaction towards the repugnant and immoral discrimination that characterize Kamangola. By upholding this attitude, Nkengasong seeks to neutralize the boundaries that exist between the “self” and “other” in favour of growth and harmony in a nation with diverse cultural affinities. It explores the injustices, challenges and the author’s vision towards the neutralization of the boundaries between the “self” and “other” A stylistic perspective of the text is handled in the work to illustrate the pedagogic significance of issues raised in relation to “self” and “other” binaries. Critically examined from a New Historicist and Postcolonial perspective, the work questions the notion of national unity, national integration and nationhood in John Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo*. The analysis reveal that most of those considered as the “other” create various forms of resistance as survival mechanisms.

RESUME

Cette recherche intitulée “The Dialectics of the Self and Other in Nkemngong Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo*,” explore dans quelle mesure la dualité « moi » et « autrui » engendre la discorde depuis le contexte historique et contemporain d’où ils émanent. Ce travail analyse donc les cas d’injustice, les difficultés et la vision que l’auteur se fait de la neutralisation des limites entre le « moi » et « autrui ». A l’aide des théories du nouvel historicisme et du post-colonialisme, cette étude s’interroge sur les notions de l’unité nationale, l’intégration nationale et le statut de nation indépendante dans *Across the Mongolo*, un roman rédigé par John Nkengasong. Une étude stylistique est aussi conduite afin d’illustrer l’implication pédagogique des questions qui ont trait à la dualité « moi » et « autrui ». Il s’en déduit donc de notre analyse que la majorité de ceux qui sont considérés « autrui » créent de différentes formes de résistance pour un mécanisme de survie. Cette étude souligne l’insatisfaction de l’auteur vis-à-vis de la discrimination répugnante et immorale qui caractérise Kamangola. Nkemngong affiche une telle attitude pour neutraliser les barrières qui existent entre le « moi » et « autrui » afin de promouvoir l’harmonie dans une nation pleine de diverses affinités culturelles.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to

My Son Karlson Ntunyu Njinchuki

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this work, entitled “The Dialectics of the Self and Other in John Nkemngong Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo*” submitted in partial fulfilment for the award of a Postgraduate Teacher’s Diploma (DIPES II) at the Higher Teacher Training College Yaounde, was carried out by Bianca Muke Njeba.

Signature.....

Date.....

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

“Self” and “Other” binary is a fundamental concept that characterises human existence. These notions, according to Eugene Long in *Self and Other: Essays in Continental Philosophy*, enhance the philosophic differences that exist between history and experience; that is, the difference between “those who think of experience as mediating divine reality, and those who think of divine reality as interrupting or disrupting human experience”(2). It is this trend of thought that opened debates on themes of “self” and “other” even from Plato. However, European philosophers and existentialists like Martin Buber, Kierkegaard, Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche have laid emphasis on the asymmetrical relationship between the “self” and the “other”. From another perspective, Micheal Purcell in “On Hesitation before the Other,” relates the “self” to self-complacency and self-contentment, creating a situation of responsibility in which the self is no longer for itself but for the “other” (3). Therefore, it is this self -complacency and self-contentment that creates disparity; a situation where the self relies on the other, while the other envies the self or feels subjugated to a peripheral position.

Self Complacency and Self-contentment is described by interlocutor Maurice Blanchot in his *The Madness of the Day* as the anonymous “I”. This personal pronoun reflects egoism and the exclusion from ordinary commerce which has an engagement or attachment to alterity or Otherness (10). That said, the struggle for self-complacency and self-contentment have characterised European colonisation of Africa. The advent of the white man to Africa was pushed or influenced by his perception of himself as the European or superior “self” and the desire to control the inferior “other”. That is why he, the European, claimed to be on a civilizing mission. The Cameroonian historians like Mphoweh Jude Nzembayie and Futonge Nzemabyie Kisito in state that in the year 1884, various European nationals appeared in Cameroon and started calling on their home governments to annex the territory (par 2). Contact between Cameroonians and their colonial masters exposed the latter to three European languages, attitudes and cultures. Because the colonial masters regarded themselves as the “self” and believed that the Cameroonians had no mode of governance, they decided to govern the natives using policies like the indirect rule and assimilation (par 4).

In literature, as will be illustrated in this work John Nkemngong Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo*, literary discourses, especially from the 1950s attempt to reconstitute and reconstruct the image of Africa tainted by the colonial master as uncivilised, primitive and in need of humanitarian assistance. This European misrepresentation from the colonial period has led to persistent scepticism, counter discursive undertones in postcolonial literature as an approach to resist imperialism. This is done to re-assert and reform the broken image of the "self" and "other", binary which has created the dialectics of a collective consciousness in the Africans' minds. In heterogeneous societies like Cameroon, postcolonial discourse continuous to be a process of hostilities towards poorly executed reforms because Cameroon is a neo-colonial nation and still suffering from colonial domination. As a society consisting of many different ethnic groups, social classes, languages and/or dialects, and cultural traditions, writers like Nkengasong often try to reassign new ethnic and cultural meanings to the groups of people that are treated as insignificant "other" in the society in which they belong. The aim sometimes is to advocate the neutralisation of "self" and "other" binaries which can only be attained if cultural differences, individualism, greed, tribalism, discrimination, are put aside in order to overcome the pain of losing one's identity and cultural heritage.

As a writer who is committed to his postcolonial Cameroonian society, Nkengasong in *Across the Mongolo* addresses the complex self/other dynamics that exist in his society. It is a binary that originated right from reunification in 1961 when the French and the geographical English speaking parts of Cameroon reunited after their separation in 1919 as a result of the defeat of Germany in the First World War. He depicts a society where the French speaking citizens perceive themselves as the more privileged, civilized and intelligent "self" and the English speaking Cameroonians as the strange, stupid, backward "other". This superiority complex is what Chimamanda holds in her novel *Americanah*, as the sense of false superiority instilled in francophone Africans by the policy of assimilation (69). In the context of Cameroon, it has led to what many people in Cameroon have tagged as the Anglophone problem.

In his fictional representation of power relations within the Republic of Kamangola, the citizens of Besaadi see themselves as more privileged than those from the other side of the Mongo. This self-consciousness leads to marginalization, stigmatisation, exploitation and oppression of Anglophones, not without severe psychological, political and socio-economic consequences to the modern Cameroonian society. Just as the goal of the first generation

postcolonial theorists and writers was to liberate the postcolonial from the fetters of colonial domination, by placing his main character Ngwe on a messianic mission, Nkengasong's goal is "that of liberating his people from slavery in a faraway land" (Atatah par 9), by neutralizing the boundaries between self and other.

This work, therefore, attempts to examine how the dialectics of self/other binary is represented in Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo*. Through the agency of history, it accounts or interrogates the construction of the self and other binary, as well as their literary representation in the text. It also examines the various processes by which the "self" is used in constructing "otherness" and the psychological, political and socio-economic effects thereof. The work further suggests how these ideological shifts, in the text under study, can be taught in secondary schools so that young Cameroonians can begin to understand how the dialectics of self and other can lead to disharmony and total disregard for justice, peace and development.

On the basis of the foregoing problems observed and objectives, the following hypothetical questions are framed:

- How can we relocate *Across the Mongolo* within its historical and ideological context?
- In what ways does the "self" consolidate superiority and how does this affect the "other"?
- How does Nkengasong represent the "self/other" relations in *Across the Mongolo*?
- How can the teaching of *Across the Mongolo* in Cameroonian classrooms help to eliminate discord in order to build a society based on virtues of tolerance, justice, peace and development?

This work operates on the premise that in an attempt to neutralize the boundaries between the "self" and the "other", John Nkemngong Nkengasong in *Across the Mongolo* questions the notion of national unity, national integration and nationhood. To Nkengasong, neutralising the self and other binaries can only enhance the elimination of individualism, greed, tribalism, discrimination and corruption in favour of justice, peace and development in the nation.

The study is significant in that it addresses one of the most serious problems that threatens unity and development in the modern Cameroonian nation. It highlights the dangers of

injustice and marginalisation and how such ills can cause social unrest, terrorist retaliation, and economic retrogression especially in emerging nations like Cameroon. By exploring the problematic historical origins as well as the philosophical bases of self/other ideologies, this work ridicules and castigates those who promote such binaries. Finally, the work is significant because by virtue of the context where it is written, suggestions are made how through education, especially in Cameroon secondary schools, the self/other concept can be neutralised.

It is important to note here that even though this work focuses on John Nkemngong Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo*, time and again, some ideas will be drawn from other texts and critical writings in relation to the topic under study to substantiate a point.

In order to provide proper orientation in this work, the following key terms are defined: *dialectics*, *self* and *other*. Such terms are very controversial and have been defined variously. However, this work focuses solely on the definitions which are related to their use in this work.

The *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines Dialectics as a method of examining and discussing opposing ideas in order to find the truth. The term is further defined as "a discussion and reasoning by dialogue as a method of intellectual investigation". This implies that, dialectics uses the Hegelian process of consciousness and savagery to give a rational insight and not just the accumulation of facts that possess the mind. The notion of the "truth" in this definition seems ambiguous as it explores Hegel's belief that mankind is made up of a series of philosophical conflicts, which arrive at diverse universal truths.

In a similar vein, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines dialectics as, "an art form of reasoning, especially the procedure of seeking truth through debate or discussion; the reasoning or logical structure that holds together a continuous argument or exposition, and an interplay of contradictory principles as opposed to forces as understood in the European tradition of philosophy influenced by G. W. F. Hegel and including Marx and Engels."

The idea of conflicting ideologies is underscored by Alan Woods and Ted Grant in *Reason in Revolt: Dialectical Philosophy and Modern Science* define dialectics as logic of contradiction. They state that dialectics is a way of thinking and interpreting our constantly changing world. Dialectics also "explains that change and motion involve contradiction and can only take place through contradictions" (39). This implies that all change and development in the society and in nature have taken place through contradictions that are harnessed by critical minds to arrive at some basic truths. This view contradicts Hegel's law of an "Absolute Idea" giving way to multiple interpretations to life's developmental process.

In this work, dialectics as defined by Alan Woods and Ted Grant signifies a method or strategy of examining contradictory or conflicting notions about the self/other binary in order to find or propose solutions to psychosocial malaise. Dialectics is therefore used as a logic of reasoning whereby ideologies that create conflicts in the society are questioned and possibly redefined. Therefore, faulty bases of “truth” will be exposed based on logical, historical and scientific evidence exposed in the text.

Psychologist and philosopher, Deborah Teasley in an article entitled “Sense of Self in Psychology: Definition and Development” defines the self as “the way a person thinks about and views his or her traits, beliefs and purpose within the world” (par 2). This concept of the self is extremely peculiar because it covers the “inner” (psychological) and “outer” (physical) self. Questions like “how do you define you, or who defines you?” play a huge role in identifying the self. It means that the other is implicated in the definition of the self and does not indicate any hierarchical relation between the self and the other.

The *other*, according to Eugene Thomas in *Self and Other: Essays in Continual Philosophy of Religion*, “appears to be a less relation than equal. Their alterity or otherness stems from both human and divine perspective whereby one denies his or her “self” to become “other” (9). In simple terms, the “other” to Thomas is a relation between two people, where the “other” relation is less than the “self”. The “other”, in this definition, is extremely significant as it exposes the disequilibrium that exists in many societies which is also evident in the work under study.

Furthermore, Ashcroft in *Key Terms in Postcolonial Studies*, portrays the “other” in terms of periphery as “the periphery are colonies that are constructed to the metropolitan centre” (138). This illustrates peripheral entities under the mercy of the metropolitan or dominant territories. In this definition, the geological position seems to be of great necessity than cultural, economic and political surface. The periphery then becomes the less privileged or the restrained one who takes orders from those who consider themselves as free. This definition is very significant to the work under study because geographical positioning seems to be of great necessity than cultural, economic and political surface. The periphery then becomes less privileged or the restrained one who takes orders from those who consider themselves as free.

In this work therefore the “self” is employed to denote the centre, the metropole and the master in a postcolonial society. The “self” is represented by the colonial master, the rulers and the majority. On the other hand, the “other” is employed as the periphery, the oppressed or the

anti-theses of the “self”. In this context, it is the colonised subject, or the minority group represented in *Across the Mongolo* through Ngwe.

The dialectics of self and other therefore refers to a method of interrogating the historical and scientific basis of the notions of self and other in order to find or propose solutions to psychosocial malaise.

Since this work seeks to examine the dialectics self and other, it is relevant to use concepts from the postcolonial theory and New Historicism. According to Bill Ashcroft in *The Empire Writes Back*, Postcolonial Literature is writing which has been “affected by imperial process from the moment of colonialism to present day” (2). Such writings have different inclinations to different nations as they all have different colonial experiences. Postcolonial criticism in its sense is the idea of deconstructing the old fashioned beliefs and perceptions of the West that were adopted during the colonial era. It covers a very wide range of writings from countries that were once colonies or dependencies of the European powers.

Initially the idea of Postcolonialism came up after the Indian independence in 1947 in what was known then, as the third world countries. It really became an ideology in the 1980’s as a category of its own in Commonwealth Literature. According to Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooke in *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, Postcolonialism, was marked by decenteredness and brings into limelight the awareness of the existing power relation between the western world and the third world countries (218). It was influenced by proponents like Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Chinua Achebe, Homi Bhabha, Robert Young, Ania Loomba, Bill Ashcroft just to name a few. Its main aim or objective is to undermine and further deconstruct universalist claims of western superiority in cultural, social, economic, regional and national domains. Though propagated by Spivak, its ancestry can be traced to Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961. Through Peter Barry’s *Beginning Theory*, he argued that colonized people can only find a voice and identity of their own by reclaiming their own past (192), which had been devalued or misrepresented by the colonial masters.

Postcolonialism seeks to explore cultural diversity and difference as well as celebrate hybridity and cultural polyvalence. It tries to develop a perspective whereby states of marginality, plurality and perceived “otherness” are sources of energy and potential change (199). Such a perspective is doubly relevant to our analysis of *Across the Mongolo* as the author

can be said to illustrate the marginality and perceived “otherness” of the protagonist “Ngwe” who is placed at the periphery in his own country.

There are various concepts which govern the Postcolonial theory including hybridity, Orientalism, Abrogation, Appropriation, subaltern, metropolis, self and otherness, to name a few. For the purpose of this study, appropriation, self and other, (or otherness) are used in analyzing the text.

In postcolonial criticism, *appropriation* deals with the necessary reactions to the inability of colonial and postcolonial governance to adapt to local and regional socio-economic circumstances. Governance needs to collaborate with the local population to implement modifications that address the needs of the people. The term therefore refers to both an adjustment and a defined intention. It is this intention which will determine the level of participation of the local people with the state actors “not only in pursuing their interests, but also in keeping sovereign government actions or the one-sided implementation of state interests at bay” (Rinke et al., par 2). From this perspective, it is difficult to separate appropriation from resistance.

According to Ashcroft et al., the term appropriation accounts for the ways in which postcolonial societies incorporate aspects of the dominant culture such as language, forms of writing, film, theatre, even modes of thought and argument in order to articulate their own social and cultural identities. They add that appropriation is sometimes used to describe “the strategy by which the dominant imperial power incorporates as it owns the territory or culture that it surveys and invades” (15). This implies that it involves a takeover by both the dominant and dominated parties of something that originally belonged to the other. Ashcroft et al., however reiterate that the thrust of postcolonial theory is to explore the strategies that the dominated culture uses to resist the political and cultural control of the dominant. This is evident in Nkemngong’s *Across the Mongolo*, where the dominated are forced to incorporate cultures of the dominant power as a survival mechanism.

Self is a pivotal concept that is discussed in this study. According to Ashcroft et al., the “self” is considered as the metropole or centre in relation to a colonial periphery. This metropolis in colonial thought constitutes the seat of culture, and its meaning is readily transferred to the imperial/colonial relationship (123). The binarism of self goes beyond the colonial periphery to a fantasy of being in total control. According to Andrew Duncan in *Centre and Periphery in*

Modern British Poetry, “self” emanates from a group which is acoustically or psychologically on the edge of safety within. Thus, anyone out of this group is considered as an outsider (54).

Daniel R. Ames in *Other Minds: How Humans Bridge The Divide Between The Self and Others* compares the projection of the “self” with general knowledge structures, like stereotypes, and the circumstances in which one or the other tool is used. This implies the “self” is viewed as the universal source of information or knowledge. Josef Perner and Anton Kuhberger go beyond the “self” as a source of information, illustrating the “self” as a process that can deliver certain answers to certain questions (20). The “self” is considered as absolute because of its psychological perception of superiority. The presumption that the “self” is more privileged than the “other” be it in white/black, male/female, European/African, Christian/Muslim, majority/minority and human/animal relations, just to name a few, is used as a corpus of this study to account for the societal ills provoked by such binary in Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo*.

Otherness/alterity is the next concept to be considered in the analysis of this work. According to Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and Robert J. C. Young, the “other” sometimes known as threat, enemy, enigma, alter ego to and of the self has preoccupied western thought for a long time (20). Postcolonial theory, therefore, seeks to give ear and voice to the other that has been silent or effaced by the self for long. Among other things, postcolonial theory tries to find out who the other is both historically and symbolically and whether self and other translate inevitably into “us” and “them”. There exists a global phenomenon whereby every country in the world exercises some form of dominance, sidelining others to the periphery or margin. One may be tempted to say that the desire to dominate others is inherent in human nature. The construction of the other has created self-awareness and ideas of identity which is projected through cultural subjects. Bill Ashcroft in *Key Concepts to Post Colonial Studies* characterizes the other through discourses like primitivism, and cannibalism, representing the colonizer and the colonized (155). This ideology is said to have created tension and conflicts in multiple societies, where some ethnic groups believe themselves to be superior to others as the case of Anglophone marginalization by the francophone in *Across the Mongolo*. The concept puts the superiority complex of the Francophones into perspective, historically and philosophically.

The second theory used in this study is New Historicism. This theory developed in the 1980’s through the works of critic and Harvard English professor, Stephen Greenblatt. It only

gained widespread influence in the 1990's. Scholars who propagated this theory alongside Greenblatt included Micheal Foucault, Fredrick Crews, George Watson and Catherine Gallagher. These critics concerned themselves with revealing the historically specific model of truth reflected in any given work, but the question is: what is the real conception of the truth? Literature, or most literary texts had always been treated like ethereal entities or simply strictly formalistic. Thus to these critics, literary works should tell its viewers about factual aspects of the world which emerge from history. These critics also believed there should be a link between history and literature, that is, in other words, every work of art should have a historical context, culture and intellectual history from which it emanates.

New Historicism came as a reaction to formalistic criticism which strictly focused on the form of the text. It insisted that in order to understand a literary piece or work of art, one must understand the author's biography, the social background, the time and cultural domain. Stephen Greenblatt places emphasis on the necessity of historical and cultural background in literary works in his essay "Resonance and Wonder" when he states, "the misinterpretation of New Historicism denies human beings the agency to resist and or transform the circumstances portraying characters, authors etc. as the helpless dupes of historical determinism" (41). This implies that New Historicists do not accept historical accounts as sources of authentic truth. Rather, they regard them with suspicion and consider them as constructs or subjective accounts that need to be investigated before arriving at the truth.

In this light, D. G. Myers sets a task in his article "The New Historicism in Literary Studies" calling to question the traditional view of literature as an autonomous realm of discourse to dissolve the literary text into social and political context from which it is issued. The question of history as context is ever so present in the concept of New Historicism. These two critics share the same view in the misinterpretation of theory basing attention solely on static past that cannot be altered or transformed. Characters tend to hide behind history which is not the case with the theory as its past is used to inform the present status quo paving way for future adjustments.

Inspired by Michel Foucault's concepts of Discourse and Power, New historicism also attempts to show how literary works affect or infect the power relations of their time. These historical works play a great role as a reflection of any coherent world view, that is, it is a continuous remaking of meaning of the world. Reemphasizing the concept of power and political struggle in New Historicism, Catherine Gallagher in her article "Marxism and the New

Historicism”- states that there is no mystery about why New Historicism politics should attract speculation. Although there has been a certain amount of controversy over what New Historicism is, what most of its adherents and opponents would probably agree is that it entails reading literary and non-literary texts as constituents of historical discourses that are both inside and outside of texts; that “its practitioners generally posit no fixed hierarchy of cause and effect... as it traces connections among texts, discourse, power and constitution of subjectivity” (37).

The question of subjectivity also comes up in Gallagher’s essay emphasizing that literary texts can be read from different perspectives, following multiple causes and effects bringing into light the further concept of no hierarchy in text interpretation when it concerns history. The idea of truth and “man” is brought to light in Stephen Greenblatts definition of New Historicism. He believes that “men and women who find themselves making concrete choices in given circumstances at a particular time are transformed into something called man... this being cannot significantly intervene in the processes at work in history” (74). To understand New Historicism, Greenblatt believes the term “man” should be avoided as man’s interests lies “not in the abstract universal, but in particular contingent cases... fashioned and acting according to the generative rules and conflicts of a given culture” (74). This means man is not created from space in literary works. Man is neither a puppet to history but created according to the rules and cultures of a particular society and culture.

This theory is used in this work to examine how the author’s life experiences and the history of his society combined inspire the writing. It should be noted that there are many parallels as well as dissimilarities between the author’s life and that of the protagonist. New Historicism helps us to investigate the extent to which the author can be said to have fictionalised his experiences in the novel and also to assess how faithful he has stayed to the truth. This theory complements Postcolonial theory in that it helps to expose the faulty historical base that has informed dominant francophone thought in the Cameroonian society.

For a successful study of a work of this nature, it is imperative to review works of other critics in order to access what has been done or left undone in relation to the dialectics of Self/Other dynamics in Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo* and other works.

In a society plagued by excruciating poverty, marginalization, dictatorship and other traumatic experiences, John Nkemngong Nkengasong stands out as a revolutionary writer who highlights the problems between the individual, socio-cultural, political and economic values of a

post colony. His categorical tone and the historical dimension in *Across the Mongolo* have drawn the attention of several critics.

Oscar Labang in *Riot in the Mind: A Critical Study of J. N. Nkengasong*, believes “Nkengasong’s concern with historical realism cuts across all his works through an aesthetic dimension” (143). He avers that Nkengasong probes into political history as a means of expression through his novel *Across the Mongolo*. Labang further comments on the author’s representation of the Plebiscite as the source of many problems in present day Cameroon. He views the protagonist Ngwe as one who has traced the metamorphosis from a federated state to the United Republic with all the accompanying dissatisfaction (144). He concludes by stating that the author uses this text to reflect on the animosity existing as a result of the merging of two nations with contrary cultures.

Similar to Labang, Eunice Ngongkum in her review-article, “John Nkemngong Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo: A Review*,” observes that Nkengasong handles the situation of a marginalized fraction of a country which unsuspectingly surrenders its freedom, traditions and overall way of life to the oppressor brother (1). She stresses on the novel being a representation of a world on its own where two uneasy bedfellows are unfortunately tied together through the ironies of history. She however contends that the author lashes out at the ironies and cruelty using a suitable style to his theme as one which grasps profound historical events through its character Ngwe.

Contrary to Ngongkum and Labang, Ali Pechu in his article “*Across the Mongolo: The essay that Won*”, focuses on the oral traditional nature of the novel as a mode or medium used to illustrate the socio-political ills in the society. He believes that besides history, the novel “combines a socio-political cultural piece which goes in unity in awakening the consciousness of Anglophone Cameroon literature” (par 3). He believes that it fictionalizes reality in traditional literature and its focus on the oral tradition in the novel goes back to adorn the African and Cameroonian heritage which has at some point been forgotten. His inspiration is the traditional *idibia* or healer, which to him foreshadows a future traditional healing of the land (par 3). The idea of reinventing history through oral and traditional literature is significant eventhough this study does not focus entirely on oral or traditional culture but on the sociopolitical discrepancies fictionalized in a post independent society.

A couple of writers have also written elaborately on the self/other dynamics in postcolonial discourse. Sami Schalk’s in “Self, Other and Other-Self: Going beyond Self-Other

Binary in Contemporary Consciousness,” postulates that the binaries of self and other allows the possibility of recognition of the self, as a result of the existence of the other. He argues that the modern man can only understand who he is by identifying who he/she is not. He further argues that exposure to mass media has given insight to these identities. Because of this influence of mass media, individuals have therefore created relational and comparative understanding of these ideologies. He goes further to quote Niklas Luhmann’s example in *The Reality of Mass Media* where two women are spotted in a mall and because one of them (his mother) has a relation with the author, he sees no need to connect with the one that is not his mother (5). This creates another concept of second other observation as the individual refuses to connect with the one who is not his mother (198). His take therefore is that there are spaces between the self/other binary that could be analysed. However, while Schalk examines the self and other from a perspective of extensive media exposure, probing into the relational and comparative self and other binaries, this work isolates the concepts and projects them as an instrument of chaos in a post-independent society (Cameroon).

Similarly, S. R. Moosavinia, et al, in “Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and the Study of the Self and Other in Orwell’s *Burmese Days*,” examine the concept of self/other as one which is affiliated to Orientalism, with the representation of the self as the occident and the other as the orient. The self is said to be more privileged and can define and reconstruct the passive, silent and weak other. The occident and orient are represented more in a geographical sense of the East and West, colonized and colonizer, them and us, west and the rest, vocal and silent, proper self and savage (109). The above writers also focus on the dynamics of self and other in postcolonial India.

That notwithstanding, this study deviates from the foregoing critical ideas in that it highlights the ideologies of the “self” and “other” from a Cameroonian perspective, examining arguments on the historical and Postcolonial situation in Cameroon. It focuses on Nkengasong’s peculiar images of a society where equality, fairness and justice are yet to be implemented. Therefore, we can conclude that when ideologies of superiority are created in a nation, strife is never too far away.

The above discussions on Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo* reveal diverse views of other critics. As examined, critics like Nkongkum and Labang look at the novel from a Post independent perspective. They also explore the historical context of the novel. Their view on history and society concurs with this study, because this work aims at investigating the historical

context of the novel from a new historicist perspective. This work also enhances an argument in the sense that, it examines the dialectics of the self and other as ideological differences that create angst and unrest between citizens of a bilingual postcolony.

This work comprises of an Introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The introduction is made up of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, definition of key terms, the aims and objectives of the study, the theoretical framework, and review of related literature. Chapter One is entitled “The Dialectics of Self as an Agent of Identity” analyses the classification of the Self in Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo* as a means of identifying with power and superiority.

Chapter Two focuses on “The Appropriation and Resistance Mechanisms.” It studies the attitudes of those side-lined to the periphery and how they are treated in the author’s society. Chapter Three explores “The Neutralization of the Self and other Dynamics.” It examines the moral or ethical grounds on which the self/other binary is based and explores the possibility of an alternative and more viable politics within the postcolonial society of *Across the Mongolo*.

In Chapter Four, “Bridging Gaps in a literature classroom” is examined. Here emphasis is laid on bridging ideological gaps historically and psychologically expressed in Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo* in a Literature in English classroom.

The conclusion summarises the entire work and states some findings from the investigations. It also makes suggestions with regard to how these gaps can be destroyed or avoided to foster peace and unity.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DIALECTICS OF THE SELF AS AN AGENT OF IDENTITY

This chapter investigates the role of the dominant “self” in constructing the identity of the *other*. It examines the link between domination and construction of otherness in Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo*. There is a general consensus through the postcolonial world that colonialism was an evil that had to be stopped and that neo-colonialism is an invisible and perhaps a more vicious foe that must be aggressively combated. The colonial masters are gone and the responsibility of moving the modern postcolony to a state of harmony, development and prosperity, lies in the hands of the formerly colonised people themselves. Ironically, what is noticed is that the postcolonial nation-states such as Cameroon have not transcended the experience of colonialism. They have remained psychologically, culturally and intellectually colonised. The same Western philosophies or concepts such as self/other binary that were used to separate and oppress them are the same ones that used to oppress fellow citizens who may look or speak differently from them. This, as Nkengasong shows in *Across the Mongolo*, has caused division and untold suffering in a country which is said to uphold values of peace and unity.

This implies that social representation is to a large extent influenced by social identities and that these social identities are constructed by self-other relations. In *Across the Mongolo*, it is the dominant French speaking citizens who define their English speaking counterparts as inferior, stupid and undeserving of equal treatment. In light of the above, this chapter is subdivided into “Dialectics of self in Historicity” and “Constructing Otherness”. The former analyses the historical background of self/binary in the postcolonial society depicted in the aforementioned novel while the latter explores the various ways by which the self imputes inferiority or subordination on the other in order to maintain the self/other binary.

The construction of the identity of the colonial masters, rulers or dominant ethnic group as the self needs to be interrogated since as earlier mentioned most of these constructions are based on faulty historical and scientific concepts. Nkengasong’s novel which falls under the category of what Evrim Doğan and other theorists refer to as New historical novel is therefore a useful tool to do this. This is because new historical novels represent the ideology of the culture through texts and suggest the historicity of texts and textuality of history (77). Evrin states that in order to understand and interpret a text, the complete recovery of meaning in a diverse historical outlook is considered necessary (79). Therefore, it is important to note that a literary text cannot

be isolated from the society it is produced in because such a society aids in reshaping and reconstructing cultural and social constructs.

In one of his reviews on Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo*, Tazoacha Asonganyi avers that Nkengasong's novel echoed the history of Southern Cameroons and hoped it would "awaken the conscience of the rulers of this country" (par 3). Nkengasong himself states in an interview conducted by Charles Teke, entitled *Postcolonial Innovative Creativity and Transformational Politics* that

Life in the present is a continuum of past experience; thus, a clearer vision of the future must of necessity require a thoughtful revision and or recreation of history. Therefore a writer's reliance on history is not just the result of his/her inability to extricate himself from the past but that of the inability of society as a whole to disentangle itself from its history... Historical references in a work are drawn from society's history but they may also serve as symbols for universal experiences. Literature has the potential of wielding past histories, contemporary histories and future histories together more than history as a subject can do.

Thus great literature deals with historically informed myths. (Par 1)

The above assertion exposes Nkengasong's view that because history is subjective, literature can either be used as an alternative source of historical verity or as an interpretive tool to arrive at the truth. It is quite significant, when a people are offered only a truncated or inaccurate view of history. Thus, via the strategy of knowledge construction, the "self" subjects the other to an inferior position. In this wise, Eleni Andreouli asserts that "it is the quality of self-other relations that shapes knowledge construction" (4). In explaining, the relation between knowledge and identity, Andreouli states that people are always located within the realm of discourse and that "identity and the self are discursively produced in the course of communication" (4). It is therefore within this realm that the binary of self/other is produced and then communicated to the society through various channels such as in bars, schools and the media. In Nkengasong's Cameroonian society which has many similarities with the one in *Across the Mongolo*, alternative versions of the history of the nation exists. It should be noted that it is narrative that is propagated by the "self" that ends up being the tool that is used to identify the Anglophones.

Because a people's world view, desires and identities are constructed and or shaped by their past and the society they live in, their sense of identity becomes confused when that past is hidden from them or disfigured by the dominant power. Evrim Doğan in *New Historicism and Renaissance Culture* believes that

Identity is fashioned by social institutions. Literature is another form of social construct, which is produced by the society and in return is active in reshaping the culture of that society. Literature is a cultural creation constructed by more than one consciousness. Therefore social, political, religious, and economic factors of a given society determine the literature it produces. (77)

This excerpt reveals that social, political economic, religious factors viewed in every society participate in creating a literary work of art. This implies, literature is created by the society it comes from. In view with previous thought, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1976) observes that "Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; but is given impetus, shape, direction and even an area of concern by political, social and economic forces (xv). In view of the above, we can immediately see that Nkengasong's novel exposes this distortion of historical verity by providing an alternative version of the nation's history which if deeply explored will influence the way the other is viewed in the society. Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo* claims that Anglophones were tricked at the Plebiscite. This is illustrated in the text where Anglophone citizens of Kamangola blame ancestors for having committed a disastrous crime by accepting reunification when they say:

[I]s it not the same case with our Premier his Excellency, Achiangu Ncha? Was he not responsible for the mess today so-called unitary state? Wasn't it his greed and his treachery? Or, as he claims he was tricked at the Fombala Congress? History shall judge these people! (124)

This statement made by one of the passengers in the bus reignite feelings of regret, disgust and disappointment of having been cheated of their rights of equal citizenship in a nation they think is theirs. Recalling the rebellious nature of the protagonist, Ngwe Nkemasaah, in *Across the*

Mongolo, Asonganyi Tazoacha further states that thousands of Anglophone youths are feeling that way and most would decide to take the Anglophone cause as a messianic mission, just like the fictional Ngwe (par 4). This discontent arises in the novel when the people realize that despite the reunification which was to be a binding factor, it soon became obvious that the cultural, social and political differences between the two linguistic groups became more fundamental and difficult to bridge than the initial aspirations of the nationalists.

However, official accounts that can be read in official school textbooks state that the story of Cameroon dates right back to scramble, annexation, colonial rule and independence. Contact between Cameroonians and colonial masters exposed them to new cultures, languages and consequently new attitudes. The country was divided into two sections: one ruled by the French and the other by British colonizers. They used policies of Indirect Rule and Assimilation to govern the people. These Cameroonians became indebted to the Europeans who they believed to be superior and civilized. After the independence of Cameroon, Cameroon had its status changed from trusteeship under the United Nations, to The United Republic of Cameroon.

Verkijika Fanso in *Anglophone Francophone Nationalisms in Cameroon* provides another source of information about Cameroon History. In this book, Fanso points out that the reunification of Cameroon was an act conjured by the people of the Southern Cameroons. They believed that uniting with their brothers on the other side will foster nation building and create a stronger, populous and richer nation (283). Such a view gives the impression that the Anglophone Cameroonians unanimously yearned to be part of Eastern Cameroon. This thus creates a sense of superiority in the Francophones because they feel that Anglophone Cameroonians joined them out of desperation or admiration of their superior culture. Critic and political analyst Susungi Nfor in his *The Crisis of Unity Democracy in Cameroon*, however, states that most of the British Cameroonians proposed merger with Nigeria but a strong minority preferred joining their Francophone brothers and sisters (63).

On the official Cameroon government websites designed for foreigners who want to visit Cameroon, www.cameroon.tour.com, Mphoweh Jude Nzembayie and Futonge Nzemabyie Kisito write in “The Creation of Cameroon” that:

At the UN supervised Plebiscites of 11th February 1961, Southern
British Cameroons voted to reunify with the Republic of Cameroun

while the Northern British Cameroons voted to unite with Nigeria. The reunification of Cameroon was therefore an act solely of the people of Southern Cameroons. They thus expressed overwhelmingly their belief in the reconstitution of a larger, stronger, populous and richer Cameroon nation such as was bequeathed by German colonization. Northern British Cameroons was lost to Nigeria. (Par 17)

Kisito and Mphoweh compare this voting to what happened in the late 1950s when British Togoland voted to join Ghana. They further state that a series of meetings were held between John Ngu Foncha and President Ahmadou Ahidjo of the Republic of Cameroun to decide on the nature that unification should take. This finally culminated at an enlarged constitutional conference in Foumban in July 1961. According to them, it was during that conference that a framework of a constitution was mutually worked out by government and opposition leaders of Southern Cameroons on the one hand and leaders of the Republic of Cameroun on the other hand. They conclude that Ahidjo was determined and succeeded to force the acceptance of a strong federal government with weak federated state governments and that after the agreement in August 1961 on the constitution of the federal republic of Cameroon, reunification was formally consummated at Buea on 1st October 1961 (par 17-19).

We are bound to believe Nkemngong more than the above sources because he is actually writing from an eye-witness point of view. He actually witnessed and experienced some of the things that Anglophones experience in the Francophone regions of Cameroon. His biography attests to the fact that he has actually experienced most of the things that are represented in the text. Consequently, his account is more authentic than official accounts which are sponsored by the state to serve political purposes. His biography shows that he is one of Anglophone Cameroon most prolific novelists, playwrights, poets and critics. He is also a native of the Nweh tribe in Lebialem division in the South West Region of Cameroon who studied at a Roman Catholic Primary school and the Seat of Wisdom College. This parallels Ngwe's story who also attend Roman Catholic School, Attah and Wysdom College. In the novel, he says, "I went with my father to Memfi where I completed the primary school, then to Wysdom College" (22). Just like Ngwe, he attended the University of Yaounde I, after having left the Lebialem and crossed the Mungo river. It should be noted that Ngola is another name for Yaounde in Cameroon Pidgin English. Just as Ngwe, it is alleged, he was President of the "Anglophone Student Movement".

This notion of the “self” is further illustrated in the family unit in Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo* where Ngwe’s father, as the head of the family is represented as the “self” and Ngwe and his mother as the “other”. By this, every decision he makes must be carried out to the letter. This is illustrated in the text when he has a discussion with his son Ngwe, where he says,

Ngwe, sit on the chair here... I have seen that if I don’t come into this matter, your mother will spoil you... you will not continue to stay in your mother’s house and lick pots and if I turn my eyes one day and find you sitting again in your mother’s house idly, I will break your back... my father’s role on the other hand was to give instructions and assign work to be done, and beat when the work was not properly done.

(8)

Dating as far back as the creation of man, as most religious narratives such as the Bible and Koran narrate, man was first created and ordained by God to be the head of every family unit. So, historically, most Christian and Muslim societies are patriarchal. Nkengasong illustrates this phenomenon by using the metaphor of “licking pots” to indicate the subservient and inferior position of the woman in the family unit. That is being a hardworking and breadwinner of the family. Such an ideology is common in the author’s African society and also the world at large. “Self” here is identified by strength and achievements which is measured through hard work.

From the above discussion, it can be deduced that Nkengasong’s novel can serve as an alternative source of historical verity which casts doubts over official versions of history, subsequently challenging notions of self and other. It is worth noting, that as a result of the neocolonial nature of most African states, where leaders continue to serve the interest of the colonial masters, history is usually falsified. As a result, people turn to other sources such as historical fiction for authentic accounts. As Betty Kushen observes, sometimes novelists, for example, Virginia Woolf, “suffer from a chronic incapacity to distinguish reality from fantasy” (qtd in Angel Hague 209). This shows that in certain context, like the one in which the novel under study is written, one can turn more to historical fiction than to official versions of history for the truth about past realities.

The “other” has always been categorized by the “self” as being the non-existent, subdued, marginalized and invisible set of individuals. David Richards and Shirley Chew in *A Concise*

Companion to Postcolonial Literature, observes that Edward Said in *Orientalism* and Franz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* clearly show that it is through concepts of “race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality - categories which are not fixed and rooted, but . . . products of a world in constant motion . . . that are said to be the solid bedrock upon which we shape a sense of ourselves” (19). This implies that when people look or speak differently from others they are ascribed as the “other” and most often are stigmatized as a result, especially if the person who ascribes (the agent) is of a dominant group. Therefore, it is the contemptuous attitude of the self towards the other that helps to impress feelings of inferiority in the other’s mind. Eugene Thomas Long in *Self and Other Essays in Continental Philosophy* explicates that the self places itself in a situation of self-complacency and responsibility toward the other (9).

These feelings of inferiority are clearly illustrated in Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo* during Ngwe’s trip to the University of Besaadi. Ngwe and a sixty-year-old man are harassed and beaten up because they speak English to the police. Nkengasong illustrates an ironic scene whereby officers of the law, who are supposed to keep law and order in the nation, instead cause suffering. Later, when Ngwe and his friend get to Lewola and are attacked by thieves, even the thieves have a contemptuous attitude towards them when they say “C’est sont les Anglo... ils sont mort (41)” meaning the Anglophones deserve to be molested due to their inability to speak French.

Similarly, in Attah, Ngwe’s village, Monsieur Andre-Marie-Francois-Xavier Manganga who represents the French culture in the village considers himself as the “self” in spite of his bizarre nature and disgusting habits. He feels too superiority towards the English speaking students in their own land. In a flashback, Ngwe reminisces his school days in Government School Miemfi and gives a description of his French teacher Monsieur Francois when he invited students to carry water for him: “if the buckets were not full, he sent the children back for another trip shouting “Mua ndiba fo alunga sote e fullop. Salade...espece de cong.” In brief, his general outlook inflicted pain in my brain whenever French was spoken” (62). This shows how even people of low moral standing and disgusting habits feel superior to people who are better than them just because of the prevailing social attitudes or self/other binary. It also shows that perceptions of superiority are not usually real.

Sami Schalk has pointed out that “this concept of self/other/other-self does imply that reality is highly individualized, not a matter of consensus and therefore more an issue of experience-based perception than fact or inherent truth (208). He concludes that these features of self/other/other-self are evidenced by the amount of weight each group membership have been given in a particular context. In other words the amount of importance or resources allocated to each group shows the self/other dynamics. For example, the French speaking “self”, who identify themselves through the post of responsibility they are given and the language difference, do not in actual fact look like people of the superior class. The description of the “Divisional Officer and the staff at the secretariat rather illustrates aspects of poverty and agony. Nkengasong describes him thus:

He gives the impression that he is of some important status because he is putting on an outer jacket that seemed to have been formerly a coat but the collars, even that of the shirt was grimy with the dirt of an unwashed body, or dust that sweat has consumed... before long a fellow comes along smoking and belching seriously... his coat is also twisted with one or two holes on the sleeves made possibly by rats or cockroaches. (54)

Nkengasong’s diction in this excerpt shows great amount of sarcasm and satire. The “self” who considers himself as the privileged and untainted individual, is physically portrayed through repulsive imagery of dirt, disgust, waste and filth. Despite this grotesque physical appearance, the Divisional Officer still gains a sense of satisfaction and gratification by inflicting pain on others. This shows that he only thinks he is superior by virtue of his ethnic or linguistic background not through any special qualities that he possesses.

The self also acts as an agent of identity when it identifies and neutralises the other-self that is located within the “other”. A “self” within the “other” is someone who though belonging to the minority group stands out by virtue of their intelligence, charisma, talent or wealth. He is an other-self to quote Sami Schalk in “Self, Other and Other-Self: Going beyond the Self/Other Binary in Contemporary Consciousness” who avers that it is the “vulnerability of the self and other, the permeability of our boundaries that allows for the possibility of the other-self” (200).

His argument is that the binary of self and other is not as neatly cut as it seems. He points out that:

other-self can also manifest cognitively as the self behaving as other. In this case, the triangulation occurs not because of an actual third person or image of a person, but via the force of a connection/identity factor which the self sees as a void between the self and other. In this instance, in an attempt to either fill the void for connection or extend the void for protection, the self behaves in a way that feels mentally and physically other than typical self behavior. (201)

Nkengasong also tosses the coin over to the “self” who momentarily assumes the position of the “other”. In this case, it is based on the posts of responsibilities bestowed on them. The “self” here has no other option than to assume the position of the “other” because of his/her status. In the text, the Secretary who is termed as the “rowdy fellow” with collars of his shirt having been “chopped like pieces of bad yam” (54), bows “honorably at the Divisional Officer” saying “Bonjour Monsieur le Prefet!” but the Divisional Officer does not answer. The secretary in this case cognitively takes the position of the “other” and returns to his original “self” once the Divisional Officer is gone.

In the same vein, Sanders Gilman as quoted by Terry Goldie in “The Representation of the Indigene” also suggests that because there is no real line between the “self” and the “other”, an imaginary line must be drawn; and so that the illusion of an absolute difference between “self” and “Other” is never troubled” (qtd in Goldie 233). This implies that the “other” is not inferior, but inferiority is imposed on him by the “self”. Ngwe is intelligent, charismatic and brave – qualities that are universally appreciated. He is therefore a “self” within the “other”. But when he steps foot in the territory of the “self”, his superior qualities are undermined and even destroyed.

We are told that “Ngwe, the gem of the land travelled across the Great River to that faraway land where Babajoro, who owned the country lived” (1). Rather, his selfhood is undermined and he is left in utter disillusionment. At the beginning of the novel, Ngwe is the gem of the clan, the son to M’menyika, who has to go and “learn book” in Bessadi. He has so

much confidence he will emerge another Babajoro of the country but his dreams are dashed leading him to utmost despair. Ngwe sees himself as the “self” within the “other” because he is smarter than many across the Mongo. Because he has performed so well in school his father places him in the position of the “self” which is associated with knowledge. Ndi Nkemassah reminds Ngwe of the amount of power he will be able to wield should he continue to go to school the way he does. He says, “Ngwe, put your head in book and climb, you are the one to shoot many guns at my funeral, when I shall leave this world to join my ancestors in the country of the dead” (23). Ironically, at the end Ngwe is identified as a subversive element, tormented to the point where he loses his sanity.

The “self” also acts as an agent of identity when it inspires mimicry in the “other”. Amardeep Singh defines mimicry as a situation where members of a colonized society imitate the language, dress, politics, or cultural attitude of their colonizers... one copies the person in power, because one hopes to have access to that same power oneself (par 3). He particularly cites the example of Africans or Indians trying to mimic their formerly colonial masters, the British and the French. This is probably because he is trying to explain the concept using Homi Bhaba’s article “Of Mimicry and Man” where the context of postcolonialism is the immediate aftermath of colonialism. The concept can however be extended to address the self-other dynamics that exist in many postcolonial multicultural nations today such as Cameroon.

This implies that the image the “self” projects of itself whether consciously or not helps to define the other. The other therefore admires the “self” and tries to mimic the “self”. It is the impossibility of ever being the “self” or the barriers the “self” places in between them that generally leads to despair and disillusionment. In *Across the Mongolo*, Ngwe’s father defines Babajoro as “ the man who owns the country, he does anything and has everything that no man living in this world can think of, he flies in aeroplanes and goes to the latrine in the Whiteman’s country” (14). Nkengasong’s use of the hyperbole to describe this character shows the great disparity between the self and the other where one (self) lives in affluence and the other in extreme poverty. This is why Ndi Nkemassah wants Ngwe to go to school so he can also be considered as great. This shows the other wishes to reverse roles with the “self” to construct an identity of wealth and comfort.

Also, when Ngwe passes his GCE Advanced Level, he is intimidated by the “fac” guys “who constantly talked about the University of Besaadi which was the only university in the country” (24). This gives Ngwe the impression that in order to be considered like the “fac guys”,

who also represent the other-self, he needs to go to that university. Ngwe comments on their behaviour regarding university life, he says, “according to them anyone who didn’t go to the University belonged to the inferior class. The young men said they made love to women with authority and girls hankered around them for marriage (24). These “fac guys” distinguished themselves as the “self” from the “other” through linguistic or language differences. The fact that they spoke a language that was not entirely understood by everyone made them to be perceived as superior. Ngwe notices them trying to boast of their language acquisition when he says, “they spoke French when the least opportunity offered itself” (24).

Because of this feeling of inferiority, Ngwe tries to place himself in the position of the “self” following the language differences when he says, “I had studied a bit of French in secondary school but I had always considered it the language of people in another country, so I wasn’t interested in it” (25). Now he realises that for him to survive he must mimic the language of the self. With this in mind, Ngwe then desires to learn the language of the “self”.

Another “self” which the other admires and tries to mimic in the text is the white man whom we first meet in Ngwe’s thought. Through the flashback technique, Ngwe praises the white man, whom he believed took them out of darkness and primitivism when he says “I concluded that the work of science and technology was the work of God which he did through the Whiteman. The Whiteman’s belief had brought him close to the gates of heaven, close to God himself...but the black man skill wandered naked, groping in the dark horrifying forests in Nchen to find the initial path to heaven. (74) .With such a perception it is clear that Ngwe values white identity more than his own.

Another means through which the “self” acts as an agent of identity is via rejection, discrimination and exploitation of the other. This impresses a sense of inferiority in the other’s mind. In the text, when Ngwe and Nwofeck go to register into the university, they are treated as second class citizens simply because they cannot express themselves in French. The secretaries says, “les Anglo aiment toujours les annouilles. Sort, monsieur, suivant!” (56). They go further to discredit the language differences by saying, “Parle en Francais, mon type. Je ne comprends pa ton pareitre partois la” (57). This utter rejection and discrimination as the secretaries refuse to attend to them just because they are Anglophones, show that they are inferior and second-class citizens.

Secondly, when Ngwe struggles to book an appointment with the Dean in the faculty of Law concerning the scholarship given to university students, he is sent away time without count because he refuses to give a bribe but when a white gentleman comes, he walks right in without an appointment. Out of utter frustration and dismay, Ngwe asks:

Why didn't he wait his turn, was it because he was white?... curse the day that the white man came to Africa and tore our world apart, brought misery to our lives, brought anguish, pain, sorrow and despair, changed me from a Nweh man to an Anglophone and then subjected me into slavery in the estates of my brothers who were fortunate to be colonized by the French. (122)

This shows that even in his country, foreigners are more privileged than him, not any kind of foreigners, but the same ones who colonised and exploited his country. This does not only make him feel inferior but inspires in him a sense of worthlessness because in this context he is not just an “other” but an “other-other” because of white supremacy and then francophone supremacy.

The self also uses violence and brutality to assert his authority or superiority over the *other*. When Ngwe sets foot in the French speaking land, just across the Mongo, he is bullied and held back because he does not understand what the French-speaking policeman asked of him. This tug of war goes on and on till the police officer is bribed to let him go.

The self also uses misrecognition of the other as a means of devaluing the identity of the other. This is because “identity is also defined as a process which incorporates identifying oneself and being recognised by others. Identity is, therefore, seen here as embedded in social relations and as dynamic, contextual and relational” (Andreouli 1). Writing on this practice of misrecognition, Eleni Andreouli and Caroline Howarth in “National Identity, Citizenship and Immigration: Putting Identity in Context,” observe thus:

. . . groups engage in strategies of social creativity which aim to “correct” misrecognition and advance positive group identities: “Rather than consisting of departures from the ‘norm’, these newly developing criteria reflect attempts to develop a positively valued identity for the group in which its ‘separateness’ is not compounded of various stigmas

of assumed inferiorities.” However, recognition is also bestowed and withheld at the level of institutions. (Par 10-11)

This quote clearly shows that the “self” represented by the dominant group yielding political power, decide not to recognize the strengths, achievements and talents of the other. It is not only Ngwe’s intelligence that is totally undermined in the text, we also have Dr Amboh who has not been promoted because the administration does not recognise the degree or nature of degrees he obtained from British Universities. This proves that the “self” needs to know and recognise the “other” in order for these self/other relations to improve.

Furthermore, the self sometimes uses political manipulation to impose its supremacy over the other. Usually, the self identifies some disloyal or greedy individuals among the other and raises them above their own people. The self then uses them as a tool to impress its superiority on the other. It is a technique that was used by the colonial masters especially the British to administer their colonial subjects (indirect rule). In *Arrow of God*, we see that because Ezeulu is a true and loyal to his people, he refuses the white man’s offer to be made the paramount chief of Umuaru but in *Across the Mongolo*, Minister Wankili is appointed by the “greater self”, and he uses his position to virtually eliminate his brothers and sisters who are considered as the “other”. The narrator tells us that in his speech of appreciation, he claimed that:

He was using the opportunity to thank His Excellency, The Head of State, the President of the republic...he warned that his office was not a gossip house for Anglophones, or a place where he would listen to Anglophone complaints or solve Anglophone problems. Let me make it clear, I am an English-speaking Cameroonian and not an Anglophone, my duty is to serve His Excellency the Head of State ...and not discontented political factions. (121-122)

This clearly shows that he has understood that his role is not to serve the interest of his people but that of his master. He is simply appointed as a political tool with which to mislead the disgruntled “other” and give them the impression that they too matter. But the truth is that in most cases his office holds no real political or administrative powers. This is very evident in the Cameroon society of today where most Anglophones are only appointed to peripheral positions such as minister of external relations, culture, and justice, and or symbolic positions such as the

Prime Minister. The Prime Minister does not have any real political powers like to appoint or sack ministers. He can only install them. That is why many cases of insubordination from ministers have been reported. Most key ministerial positions such as Minister of Finance, Education, Defence and Territorial Administration have never been occupied by an Anglophone Cameroonian in the history of post-independent Cameroon.

The “self” also uses a rhetoric that emphasises the duties of the other while downplaying their rights to impute an inferior identity on the “other”. This means that there is imbalance in the attribution of rights and duties to the “self” and the “other”. In this wise, Andreouli observes that rights and duties provide a more detailed view of the quality of the positions towards the “other” embedded in the self-other relations and that they (rights and duties) can work to legitimise or de-legitimise identity positions. He holds that when there is asymmetry in the allocation of rights and duties of migrants and native populations, it is indicative of power differentials. This will definitely have serious implications for the level of belonging that citizens can claim and for the amount of recognition they receive (9-11).

In conclusion, this chapter has examined the novel *Across the Mongolo* as presenting an alternative source of historical verity in relation to existing official historical accounts. This is all in a bid to question or challenge the historical bases on which the self/other binary is constructed. It has also explored the various ways or strategies that the self uses to maintain its dominance and the inferiority of the other. The chapter has shown that the above binary is based on faulty historical notions and that the self is a vicious or unethical agent of identity as most of its strategies are unethical. The next chapter studies the moral/ethical dimension of the discursive practices of the self and looks at the author’s notion towards a more egalitarian and united society.

CHAPTER TWO

APPROPRIATION AND RESISTANCE MECHANISMS OF THE OTHER

While chapter one discussed the dialectics of the self as an agent of identity, this chapter identifies resistance and appropriation as the main tools employed by the “other” to subvert alterity. The chapter also analyses the relationship between resistance and appropriation as manifested in *Across the Mongolo*. The chapter is subdivided into “Appropriation as Resistance” where appropriation is treated as a form of covert or indirect resistance; and into “Resistance as Revolution” where we look at the attempts by the subjugated self to use violence or rebellion to subvert their oppression. Bill Ashcroft et al states in *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies* that postcolonialism is “the study and analysis of European Territorial conquest, the various institutions of European colonialism, the discursive operations of empire, the subtleties of subject constructions in colonial discourse and the resistance of those subjects” (187). Resistance and appropriation are therefore viewed in this chapter as subversive strategies used by the other against the self.

In postcolonial discourse it is difficult to separate appropriation from resistance. However, it is resistance of a covert or indirect nature. As Stefan Rinke et al. observe, “In reality, forms of resistance and appropriation present themselves as ambivalent and, empirically, are almost inseparable” (5). They also explain that the term appropriation refers to the presence of both an adjustment and a defined intention. On the part of the individual or group that appropriates, this intention gives them grounds to interact with the dominant state or government actors in order to enforce the implementation of state policies (ibid 5). This implies that appropriation is a response of the “other” to the “self’s” unwillingness to implement certain policies.

Language use is usually the most common means by which appropriation is carried out. According to Postcolonial critic Anan Martinez, in an article titled “Postcolonial Literature”, *appropriation* is:

a conscious use of the language and culture ... the natives took English as their language in order to communicate with more people... it was part of their new identity. Natives did it because they wanted to and not because it was imposed

on them...this English is as good as English but only modified to use... it encourages people to speak English their way as opposed to the Eurocentric RP usage that had been imposed before. Appropriation and abrogation indicate a movement of “self” to Otherness, where the English language is described as the self. Appropriation is a process by which language is made to bear the burden of one’s own cultural experience. (Par 3)

It is important to note that the entire novel *Across the Mongolo* is written in the English language which was assimilated by the southern Cameroonians from British imperial power. It is also imperative to note that although the novel is written in the English Language, Nkengasong gives the novel a “local touch” by throwing in names of characters, exclamations and descriptions of places in his native language to illustrate oral tradition and culture. In the text, statements like “lebin ssah’ho Mmenyika mbo’oh”, “ndoh” and names like “Ngwe, Atemangwat, Achiabieuh” (2-3) are used to denote the African heritage which has not disappeared despite the appropriation of the language. The use of the pidgin English also buttresses this point. In the text, statements like “Dat gendarmes dem bi tif people... I show am book correct, I say a don run motuar too much. I don beg’am, e no want hear. Sote two thousand francs don comot for ma kwa,..dis contrey no good-o-o-o-o! Filenchiman don kil’am o-o-o-o (39).

One would even suggest that Nkengasong tries to give an identity to the dominated and alienated citizens of the land via the way they use the English language. Appropriation was the only way through which the colonized felt they could assert themselves. Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo* therefore implies that the colonial language which was at first regarded as a detestable aspect of colonialism acted both as a form of resistance where the other transforms a hegemonic discourse or practice into a new form of resistance.

Nkengasong uses the language of the imperial powers to express the values and norms of his people and society which has almost become inexistent due to the blend of imperial and colonial languages. He falls in line with Gabriel Okara’s argument that we can inject “black bone” into the “rusty joints” (as Leopold Senda Senghor once suggested) (286). By rusty joints he means the old colonial language left behind as a result of colonialism. By this Okara means the lengths individuals will take to reassert themselves through the language of the “Self”. Okara further states that in his opinion the only way to use European languages effectively “is to

translate them almost literally from African languages native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as possible to vernacular expressions. For from a word, group of words, a sentence, and even a name in African language, one can glean to social norms, attitudes and values of the people” (286). This therefore means that if the African cannot use his mother-tongue either because of its limited scope or his limited mastery of it, he can use the English language in a way that defines and asserts his identity.

In a similar vein, we see that the *other* uses the language of the *self* as a means of survival in the novel. This is better explained by Franz Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Masks*, when he postulates that:

[T]here is a fact: white men consider themselves superior to the black men. There is another fact: Black men want to prove to the whites, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect ... however painful it may be for me to accept this conclusion, for the black man there is only one destiny and it is white. (30)

According to Fanon, the black man wants to appropriate the white man’s way of living in order to survive and by doing so, he must use the language and culture to prove to the colonial masters that they too had a civilization and a culture of their own.

In *Across the Mongolo*, we are introduced to Ngwe’s pathetic life in his desire to become the next Babajoro of the nation. The circumstances of life in a French-speaking town force him to appropriate the French language in order to survive. When Ngwe loses his fees, he also loses his pride and his identity to those who consider him as an “other” because of his language difference. A glaring instance is when Ngwe and Nwofeck go to the Ministry of Education to inquire about a scholarship and hear that Mr Kwenti, an Anglophone, is the person in charge of this. Upon getting this information, they feel excited that their fellow brother would understand their plight. Ironically, “he (Mr Kwenti) answers with a twitch of snobbishness ‘Yes Yes... I do not give scholarships... Go and see the Minister if you want to’, he said, we tried to plead. Kwenti shouted us down and ordered us to leave his office this time speaking in French” (93). This is significant in that Mr Kwenti demonstrates the fact that in order to be heard and recognized in Kamangola, you must appropriate the French language.

Ngwe's predicament confirms Fanon's view that the only destiny is to be white in order to be identified with the self. But in this context, it can be rephrased into "the only destiny is to be Francophone". Kwenti has accepted it and has survived but as for Ngwe he is still to come to terms with it. That is why he is in a state of total shock. He expresses his despair thus:

My Brother, Kwenti had disowned me because I spoke the language of pariah and I was probably going to contaminate him with the vapour of the English Language. My brother, Kwenti, who travelled like me across the Great River from Kama had disowned me in the middle of the stream. These thought ached my mind as we descended the University slope towards the Resto ... I was unable to reconcile myself with the struggle for survival when every attempt in struggle rejected me. (93)

Mr Kwenti has appropriated the French language as a means of scaring away Anglophone brothers and sisters from Kama who think he can favour simply by dint of their common language.

It is worth nothing that with time Ngwe soon comes to realize for himself that for one to survive in Kama, he must realize the curse of being an Anglophone and do everything to speak French. Out of mere frustration, Ngwe regrets the fact that he is an Anglophone where he states, "curse the day that the Whiteman first came to Africa ... changed me from a Nweh to an Anglophone and subjected me into slavery in estates of my brothers who were fortunate to be colonized by the French (112-113). The fact that he considers his brothers as fortunate to be colonized by the French indicates his wish to become a francophone which is associated to all good things existing in this society. He also willingly appropriates the French mode of thinking by downgrading his own heritage where he says, "I was the Anglo, the pariah, the slave that had no voice in the high decent life across the Great River. Why had I to ask a question in English when my masters, my assimilationists masters forced me to speak their language?" (61).

Another incident that necessitates linguistic appropriation in *Across the Mongolo* is where Ngwe and Nwolefeck move around trying to have their documents certified for registrations. At the secretariat, they meet a lady who upon realising that she has to serve Anglophones, hisses "Ne m'annouille pas, Je ne suis pas la pour les Anglo" (53). They are not only rejected by this lady but are also yelled at by a nonchalant looking fellow who does little or

no work at the office. He says, “Il Faut repasser, monsieur. Enh!” (54). By this time, the helpless Anglophones must realize that it is either you speak French or you perish.

Later on, when they hand over the certified documents for registration and Ngwe does not understand what the man at the admission office says, his documents are “flung” at him (Ngwe) causing him to get on his knees begging. This is similar to Fanon’s encounter with a white child in *Black Skin, White Masks* where his “Black Body” terrifies the latter and causes it to scream. Just as Fanon’s black body denotes otherness, Ngwe’s language symbolizes otherness. Just as Fanon is screamed at, so too is Ngwe and his friends yelled at. Upon such a sight, one would expect some degree of pity coming from the other students who are standing around; rather they jeer and mock Ngwe saying “pauvre Anglo! Anglo for Koromba. Tu ne pouvez pas rester chez vous a koromba, Anglo!” Ngwe says that “the more I pleaded, the more he became offended, he pulled his leg violently, made a move to kick me, and then waved me out of the office” (57). The “other” is treated more or less like an animal for having committed no crime at all. The man, in this excerpt, went further to say “les Anglo sont des idiot” to show the amount of hatred he possessed for the minority. Because of this, the “other” (Ngwe) is forced to speak and act like them in order to survive thus losing touch with his own identity.

Also, Ngwe tries to ask a question in class in English and is completely ridiculed. Those like Ngwe, who even try to reassert themselves by asking questions in class are mocked or booed thus: “Anglo!, Anglofou, Anglobete!” Ngwe is even forced as he says:

go into my shell in order to avoid speaking English in public places during lectures or on campus. I did not want to be recognized all the time as the second-class citizen... I was the Anglo, the pariah, the slave that had no voice in the high decent life across the Great River. At all cost, I had to learn the language of my masters, and talk to them and write my examinations in the language. In short, I had to appear and speak like them at all cost. Why had I to ask a question in English when my masters, my assimilationist masters forced me to speak their own language? (61).

Ngwe therefore adopts silence as a form of resistance but realizes that it is not enough. He must learn to speak French in order to survive and succeed in his society.

Another instance illustrating the unwilling appropriation of language is seen when Ngwe is captured and imprisoned for simply being at the wrong place at the wrong time due to the strike action, and just because he is identified as an Anglophone, he undergoes a great deal of torments from the police officers who call him a leader of the strike. They say,

‘Element Subversif! Tu bouge je tire’, said the policeman... ‘Please Sir, I know nothing. I speak the truth, my God! I pleaded’...Mon dieu! Un Anglo, Un esclave? Ill est finit... parle en Français, idiot! Est que je comprends ton patois la ? shouted the senior murderer. I tried to mumble a few words in french to please him but I wondered whether the words made any sense. “allez-y’ he said to the policemen, making a motion with his head. Before he finished the last word, the two blood-thirsty looking policemen were already pounding on my neck, pounding on me with the most savage brutality than I had ever faced.
(100-103)

It is rather unfortunate that even when Ngwe is practically forced to appropriate the language of his “masters” the attempt lead him into more trouble. This is because of the misconstrued conception the police officers have of the Anglophones in general as the dominated therefore they could never be classified or identified among the “self” even if they tried. We can only see that it is when the officers thought Ngwe was a name of an important personality that they decided to let him go after the brutal treatment. “I was taken out of my hole and questioned by a superior military officer... he asked me if I was the son of the Secreatry General Monsieur Gwe Salo. I didn’t know who he meant but I answered in the affirmative. He picked the phone, dialed and ordered that I should be taken back to the *Cinquieme* where my dresses and identification papers were given back to me” (106). In this little except, appropriation of a name probably a francophone is the only means of survival. This helps him get out of jail. This shows that Ngwe must worker harder to speak French more fluently in a way that he might pass for a Francophone.

Furthermore, we can also see the case of the “fac guys” who distinguish themselves from the others through linguistic or language differences. They have appropriated the French language as a means of lording it over and intimidating their fellow Anglophone brothers. Ngwe

notices them trying to boast of their language acquisition when he says “they spoke French when the least opportunity offered itself” (24). The fact that they speak a language that is not only unintelligible to their fellow brothers, but is associated with those at the center shows their appropriation of the language as a means of inflating their egos or gaining certain advantages.

Appropriation however does not solely depend on language as a means of describing rejection of hegemonic influence or dominance, but a great range of political activities, film, theatre, writing of history, political organization, modes of thought and argument are other factors (Ashcroft et al 15).

That said, another important form of appropriation is intellectual. This is evident when we see the “other” pursuing or adopting the educational system of the “self” in order to challenge the self. When Ngwe passes his GCE advanced levels, he is intimidated by the “fac” guys “who constantly talked about the University of Besaadi which was the only university in the country” (24). This gives Ngwe the impression that in order to be or considered like the “fac” guys, he needs to go to that university. This idea is further illustrated in the text when Ngwe comments on their behaviour regarding university life: “according to them anyone who didn’t go to the University belonged to the inferior class. The young men said they made love to women with authority and girls hankered around them for marriage (24). Ngwe therefore decides to go to the university in order to become the next Babayaro of the land. This indicates that his reason for going there is to prove his intellectual and leadership skills to the dominant self.

Moreover, this system of education causes a lot of frustration to Anglophone students like Ngwe and Nwofeck. They get to the city of Besaadi with high hopes of achieving a great deal but these hopes are dashed by the system. They are forced to appropriate by translating notes, reading in a language that is not common to them and answering questions in this same language. Nwofeck confirms this when he says “you cannot blame an Anglophone if he doesn’t succeed here. It is the system. Not that we didn’t work hard. We do not know French. How do you expect us to succeed? We have no choice. We have to survive the system. We have to carry all the filth of our brothers and suffer their humiliation until one day we will find our way” (92). It is almost impossible for them to interpret questions which cause them to repeat the first year. This system classifies them under the “other” and leads to their failure and depression as a consequence. They acknowledge they are being held down by the “self” but have no choice but to abide.

At the political level, it is seen that in order for Anglophone politicians to maintain their privileged positions, they must appropriate the political rhetoric prevalent in their society or that satisfies their francophone bosses. They must appear - even if not genuinely - not to support the Anglophone cause since they know that they are not appointed to better the lot of their people but just as political tools to help maintain the self's grip on power. That is why in the text, Mr Wankili who has just been appointed Minister of special affairs invites his fellow Anglophones to his house just to tell them that:

[H]is office was not a gossip house for Anglophones, or a place where he would listen to Anglophone complaints or solve Anglophone problems. Let me make it clear, I am an English-speaking Cameroonian and not an Anglophone, my duty is to serve His Excellency the Head of State ...and not discontented political factions. (121-122)

It is important to note here that the sincerity of the above remark is questionable. This is because if he did not really care about his people, he would not invite them to his residence for a celebration party. However, he must also not give the impressions to those in authority that he is on the side of the other. It is true that Mr Wankili's declaration prompts a lot of discontent from the Anglophone community in Kamangola. He is accused of being indifferent to the Anglophones' predicament in Kamangola. The people complain thus:

'You see Chief', said the other. 'I have often said our Anglophone brothers lobby for political posts simply to enrich their wives' pot of soup.' Do you hear what a minister would invite his people to his house and say to them?... We can't really get out of this muddle with this mentality... francophone government uses our Anglophone brothers to destroy us, ruin our heritage, to assimilate us, to clearly wipe out Anglophone traditions from the face of this country. (123)

This clearly shows their discontent which is natural because they are judging him based on a literal interpretation of his speech. Knowledge of appropriation could help them realize that he may just be playing to the gallery.

Still at the political sphere of appropriation, one would have to look through another character in the story, Dr Amboh, who is a qualified lecturer but is forced to appropriate the French system which has limited and stripped him off all rights as a full flesh lecturer because the university system simply does not understand his certificates. His disillusionment springs from being an English speaking lecturer in a French government. He says, “he regretted the fact that the country did not use him effectively because he was English speaking. He told us that since it was government policy to eliminate the Anglophone culture in the country using the university as one of its weapons, we had no choice but to give into complete assimilation into the francophone culture”(60). The other is oppressed at all levels and forced to succumb to the demands of the “self” in order to be recognised in a hostile society where English and French are said to be the official languages.

Looking at appropriation in the domain of modes of thought, one finds this as an evident theme in this text. It can be suggested that the English speaking citizen is forced to adopt and adapt all French modes of thoughts in order to survive. Upon Ngwe’s journey to Besaadi, he is harassed at the Mongo by French speaking policemen who need to be bribed in order to let the passengers go freely. This is strange to Ngwe and Nwolefeck who were brought up in a corrupt free environment at Wysdom College. This time around, his identification papers pose a great problem which only a bribe can solve. When Ngwe’s identification papers are presented as demanded and the gendarmes are told that he is a student, they rather threatened him . The driver has to come and whisper in Ngwe’s ears that he should give them two hundred francs in order to avoid more problems. Ngwe says: “I didn’t move. Why should I move? What crime did I commit? And I had to give money to be released? (39). Because Ngwe does not believe in bribery and corruption, he hesitates but is soon to understand through the explanation of the driver that in order to survive in this part of the country one has to adopt their mode of thinking. The driver explains thus:

Dat gendarmes dem bi tif pipi,’ the driver said as he wheeled the car into the road and sped off. ‘a show’am book, book correct, I say a don run motuar too much. I don beg’am, e no want hear. Sote two thousand francs don comot for ma kwa,’ he lamented. ‘Dis contrey no good-o-o-o-o! Filenchiman don kill’am o-o-o-o!’ (39)

This shows that one has to conform to the dominant way of thinking not because one believes it is right but because one has to move on.

So far, we have discovered the various appropriation strategies that the other employs in order to subvert his otherness. We have identified language use, intellectual practice, use of political rhetoric and adopting dominant codes as all means of appropriation. It can be seen that appropriation as a means of resistance has taken several dimensions but has not been termed as successful for the Anglophone “other”. There is therefore the need to use a more overt strategy to counter or dismantle their subjection as the will be discussed below.

When resistance moves from being indirect to direct formal or overt, it most often takes the form of revolution. Sometimes when all other forms of resistance have failed, resistance in the form of revolution is employed by the “self” in order to subvert the self/other binary in the society. This form of resistance in Postcolonial discourse can therefore be seen as signifying “any opposition to or subversion of colonial authority making postcolonialism a project of resistance itself (Jefferess 5). David Jefferes further alludes to Franz Fanons *Black Skin, White Masks* whose notion of liberation can only emerge after a violent political revolution is constructed in oppositional terms. This states that liberation requires not only a transformation of economic and political structures marked by dominance but the transformation of discursive structures of power establishing and maintaining colonial identities (9).

In this wise, Nagesh Rao in his article titled “Resistance and Representation: Postcolonial Fiction of Nations in Crisis” postulates thus:

The postcolonial novel is to be seen as a site of resistance (in its ideological positioning within cultural institutions), its material referent and its condition of production is the postcolonial nation. Yet, the (postcolonial) nation is neither unitary nor homogenous, but is actually the stage on which the social contradictions of class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and language are played out. Analogously, the world of the postcolonial novel is itself a radically fractured space, where different social groups contend for power and control, both of their world and of the narrative itself. Postcolonial novels thus often highlight the contradictions inherent in the national imaginary. (Par 6)

In *Across the Mongolo* when we refer to Nagesh view of resistance as a contention for power and control by different social groups, Ngwe's creation of the Young Anglophone Movement illustrates that point. Discontented by the way his fellow brothers and sisters from the other side of the Mongo are being treated, he decides to stand up for himself and "either be a man, a full man or nothing, a full citizen and not an assistant citizen" (129). Ngwe's plan of reclaiming his identity as a citizen with full rights as any other shows that he wished to transform political structures marked by dominance. He alludes to colonization as a means to appealing to his fellow brothers and sisters from the English speaking section when he states:

I told them that we, Anglophones of the state of Kama were undergoing the fifth colonization, the first colonization being the Germans, the second by the British, the third by the Awaras, the fourth by the French and the fifth by the Francophones of the Republic of Kamangola. I told them that the fifth colonization we were undergoing was the most humiliating and excruciating kind. A French colony colonizing a British colony...there is a need to fight back, to restore our prestigious Anglo-saxon heritage, which the British had inculcated in us...we had the right to be full citizens and not second class citizens, to be full Ministers and Directors and not second class Ministers and Directors. (130)

This clearly indicates that Ngwe is calling on his fellow citizens to stand up and fight against their colonization. They must realize that they no longer suffer colonization at the hands of the western colonial masters, it now at the hands of their fellow citizens who are French speaking.

Another instance of open resistance seen in Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo* is seen where Ngwe decides to fight Monsieur Abeso for Shirila, the love of his life. Monsieur Abeso sees himself as the self who takes what he wants at will with no concern as to who may own it. Monsieur Abeso is seen as the self due to his riches which he uses to buy his way into Shirila's heart. This is seen where Shirila states "Please Ngwe allow me to say what I want to say. 'put yourself in my situation, Ngwe,' she said 'I am a girl, a big girl. And you know that you have never helped me in terms of school needs, not to talk of buy me a dress...But what has fooled me to this man is the material assistance he gives me. He supplies most of the things you find around me now... (166). We see Ngwe trying to reassert himself in front of Monsieur Abeso when he discovers his warning to Shirila became futile:

At the door of Shirila's room, I tapped gently opened...she was sitting on her bed near Monsieur Abeso, their elbows and knees touching. She wore a very transparent nightie...When I had eaten to my fill, I left the table, went to the wardrobe, opened it, removed my shirt, my trousers and shoes, hung them in the wardrobe and took a luxurious lounge robe that I suspected Monsieur Abeso had recently bought for her. I put it on, tied the belt round my waist ... climbed behind Monsieur Abeso into the bed and started turning over the pages. (176)

The excerpt above shows that Ngwe has decided to stand up for what he believes rightfully belongs to him. Ngwe tries to prove that although he is indeed a "Pria" and an "other," he can prove to the "self" that he has a place in the world. Although this attempt of self assertion fails, because he loses Shirila in the end, it gives him a sense of accomplishment and makes Ngwe understand that he is as human as the "self" and deserves to be treated in that respect.

At the end, Ngwe uses flight as a form of resistance. In resistance or revolution, flight does not usually spell failure but just a regrouping in order to plan out better strategies. Despite the fact that the first attempt to save the Anglophone community fails, as many involved in this movement are caught and imprisoned, many face grievous consequences like slaughtering. The protagonists alongside others are even forced to go on self-exile. This is seen in the text where Ngwe states:

While I was still contemplating, Andas, a close ally on the YAM front, sneaked in and hinted that it was hot out there and that it was necessary for me to escape. He told me of some of the students arrested had been severely tortured and forced to reveal that I conceived the idea and had rallied the students and indoctrinated them to revolt. It was clear that Babajoro's men wanted my head at all cost. I had to leave for the village that same day before I was fished out and slaughtered. (132)

The fact that the author chooses not to let Ngwe be captured and killed shows that there is still hope that one day the Anglophones will be free or be free to fight a cause.

In sum, this chapter has explored some of the resistance and appropriation mechanisms or strategies that are adopted by the characters in *Across the Mongolo* to subvert their otherness. The chapter identifies appropriation and revolution as the two main ways employed by the other to resist or subvert oppression and marginalization. It identifies many forms of appropriation viz linguistic, political, and intellectual as well as different dimensions or manifestations of revolutions under the two subsections. We found out that despite the various modes of appropriation and revolution, resistance is futile at the physically level. However, it is not a hopeless defeat because it gives the protagonists a self of satisfaction and can also inspire future resistance. Though Ngwe ends up disillusioned and disappointed, he fuels the hearts and minds of others still struggling to succeed in a difficult state.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEUTRALIZATION OF SELF AND OTHER DYNAMICS

While the previous chapter examined how the “other” appropriates or acculturates the ideals of the “self” as a survival mechanism, this chapter focuses on how the author exposes dissatisfaction to the repugnant and immoral discrimination. The “self” and “other” dynamics in this chapter reveal the detrimental effects to the progress, peace and unity of a democratic nation like Kamangola. The chapter also probes into the secondary options, the author posits, on how to merge these binaries of “self” and “other” dichotomy through the bridging of frontiers that are affiliated to self-perceptions of identity. The presentation of the “other” throughout Nkengasong’s work illustrates a destroyed or disassembled identity. This implies the “other” is more or less considered as an underdog or an inexistent entity at the mercy of the “self”. Thus, in order to deconstruct these false identities conjured by the “self”, this chapter is subdivided into morality and possibility and shifting frontiers.

This subsection assesses the moral compass of the “self’s” subjugation and domination of the “other” and proceeds to explore the possibilities for growth and harmony in a polity in which problematic “self” and “other” binaries have been neutralised. It is tempting to put the blame on the colonial masters who invaded such a nation creating these disparities. But, according to David Jefferes, who alludes to Christopher F. Kamlongera and Wales B in “Confronting the Lion of Empire: The Little Bird Titi, John Chilembwe and the Postcolonial ‘Story’” Chilembwe (the protagonist) seeks not “victory” but to illuminate the immorality of colonialism in order to foster transformation (6). This is typical of Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo* which exposes the plight and despair of the citizens at the University of Besaadi, brought by colonialism, which is detrimental to the peace and harmony of the nation.

Nkengasong shows in his novel that valuable human resources are wasted as a result of the “self’s” discrimination and marginalization of the “other”. We can see in the text that Ngwe is an extremely intelligent student with great potential right from primary school. Teacher Marewe testifies to this potential so much so that he wants to help Ngwe to further his education. He states:

‘Ngwe has been doing well in school’

‘[t]hat is what I am told. Do I know book? He shows me that thing which they scratch their sorcery. Can I tell what it means...’

‘I have seen all his report cards. He came first in his class to go to class five. His teacher told me he would be a bright boy if good care is taken of him. That is, if he is not spoilt by village life.’ Said Teacher Marewe....’

‘[m]other I have agreed with father ... that I will take Ngwe to live with me in miemfi so that I can follow up his education.’ (18-19)

We can see that with this sense of self accomplishment associated with praise from teachers and parents, Ngwe is determined to work harder than ever to prove he can be the next Babajoro, the great intelligent man who owned all of Kamangola:

‘He is the man who owns this country. He does everything and has everything that no man living in this world can think of. He flies in aeroplanes, and goes to the latrine in the white man’s country. All this because of what? Book. So put your head in your book as you are doing and become like Babajoro one day’. My father said. I tried to fancy who such a great man would look like. (14)

Ngwe creates images of being the next great man in a country like Kamangola only to have his dream deferred due to the immoral and disgusting treatment he receives immediately he crosses the “Mongo”.

The novel also shows the senselessness and cruelty of “self’s” oppression of the “other”. This can be seen in the instance where Ngwe is molested by a policeman simply because he does not understand French, the dominant language. The policeman who halts the bus to check the identity cards of all the passengers realizes that Ngwe’s names on his identity card have been inverted and this causes him to molest the poor boy as though it was his fault. In utter shock, Ngwe’s responds to such awkward behavior thus: “They were the same names but their order was different in both documents. I had never had any cause to think that they were a problem on the other side of the Great River” (39). This clearly shows that feelings of injustice and

oppression are already being implanted in this young man – which feelings are detrimental to the stability and development of the young nation-state of Kamangola. However, this traumatic first experience after crossing the Mongolo is not enough to deter Ngwe from achieving his objectives of being the “next Babajoro” when he gets to the University of Besaadi.

Moreover, oppression breeds retrospection which can inhibit patriotism and unity. This is because in most national histories, the past is often fraught with stories of deception, inequality and oppression which the political regime most often always tries to hide. There is always a big tension between the past and the present and the central government usually tries to manipulate historical verity in order to hide their bloody and shady past. In this light, Lynn Meskell observes that:

The materiality of the past has long-term consequences in the life of many generations, extending beyond a heuristic enterprise. Inequalities get reproduced, be they based on sexuality, religion, ethnicity or other axes of difference. And it is the very tangibility and longevity of our data that are often at the source of the process. (24)

In the context of *Across the Mongolo*, we can assume that tangibility and longevity of data are enhanced by oppression and subjugation. This is because we see that the characters revisit and dredge up the injustices of the past just because of their oppression. The molestation that Ngwe and his fellow passengers suffer at the hands of the French speaking policemen instills in them thoughts of reconsideration, regret, and disillusionment. This is evident when one of the passengers says:

‘It was a tricky thing, that thing called the Plebiscite,’ said the man sitting in front of me. ‘It could never have been the will of the people. It was a commodity arrangement between the English and the French Colonial masters’. He paused... ‘O my God! Look at how we have been tricked into unification!’... He sighed, adjusted and went on: ‘Who said the porcupine and the cutting grass could share the same hole without eating up the other; that the viper and the scorpion can parade on the same floor without exchanging jets of venom?’ (40)

The animal imagery of the porcupine and the grass cutter (“cutting grass”) shows that the oppressed Anglophones have been made to realize that despite their common history they are not the same people. The author uses these words to appeal to the readers’ senses, with aims of triggering emotions such as humor and disillusionment. However, if the minority or sin Kama were treated as equal citizens to those on the other side of the Great River, with equal rights and responsibilities, instead of being reduced to slaves and commodities, such feelings would not exist and such a nation will only grow stronger in social, political and economic development.

The author also shows that the injustice against the “other” is an excuse for inertia. It is a sign of ineffectiveness and the ineffective running of the administration. This will definitely have an adverse effect on the development of the nation. A good example in the novel is at the *Prefecture* (Divisional Office) where Ngwe goes to have his documents certified for enrollment at the University of Besaadi. It is important to note that the “self” in this instance is recognized as one who is in a position of power because he has to certify the others’ certificates. This “self” possesses an indifferent attitude to the responsibilities bestowed on him and instead of using the job to serve citizens, he rather frustrates them. When Ngwe goes to the secretariat, he notices that:

At the Prefecture, it was a ceremony of idleness and laissez faire. There was no sense of seriousness or consideration for fellow human beings. You go there early in the morning, knowing that that day your documents must be signed because they have been lying at the prefecture for too long. You step into the secretariat and ask for them. A bad tempered woman, who from a distance you think is a gentle lady, hisses like a short viper ‘Ne M’annouille pas! Je ne suis pas la pour les Anglo.’... you turn around to interrupt a rowdy fellow... the rowdy fellow turns and tells you nonchalantly - ‘il faut repasser, monsieur. Ehh!... the fellow announces the arrival of the man so honorably saying ‘Bonjour Monsieur le prefet... You are made to understand that Monsieur le prefet is supposed to have the status of the D.O, Divisional Officer on the other side of the great river where Anglo-Saxons traditions are planted and cultivated and while you think that Monsieur le Prefet could use his high office and goodwill to serve the desperate humanity, at least sign the documents that made the people go to his office for the same purpose... the talking fellow stops briefly, calls out three names...and announces

‘Monsieur Le Prefet has a sceance de travail and is soon going out for midi repassez Demain’. (53-55)

This excerpt from the text does not only illustrates the indifferent attitudes the “self” holds when given a post of responsibility, but it also examines an essential theme that runs throughout the text which is appearance versus reality. The irony of the “gentle woman” who does not only hiss at him, but throws a racial slang “Anglos” is grim and quite telling of the extent to which the francophone state workers abuse their positions of power and responsibility. They lack any sense of professional ethics and morality. The other co-workers also illustrate a lack of seriousness with the jobs handed to them by the nation. Even the Divisional Officer abuses his high office by causing the poor students come to his office severally to have their papers signed but to no avail. The author also uses contrast to show that things are done differently and more efficiently on the other side of the “Great River”. By this, he tries to show that if the “self” could actually do their jobs properly and efficiently without holding or creating discriminatory barriers among themselves and with others, the nations could become stronger and better. The contrast therefore points to the possibility for improvement and efficiency in the running of the state administration.

Moreover, Nkengasong also lampoons the insensitivity existing in his society due to the “self” and “other” binaries. He does this through the use of language in the society. In the text French is the dominant language and it is the basis on which the binary of self and other is constructed. In school lectures are delivered in the French language and the Anglophone students are forced to either adapt or perish. Ngwe, the Protagonist, struggles to assimilate the French language in order to survive in such a hostile environment. Instead of being encouraged, he is ridiculed to the extent that he hardly attends French classes any longer. He recounts his experiences thus:

On one occasion, I gathered courage to ask to be explained a notion in constitutional law, which I did not understand. As soon as I uttered the first words in English, the lecture hall broke into a tremor of booing and jeering ‘Anglo! Anglofou! Anglobete!’ cat calls and screaming came out from all directions, twisted papers and assorted objects flew from every direction and landed on me... ‘L’Anglo est malade’ shouted someone in my ears amidst the

deafening noise of the lecture hall... the fellow who shouted in my ears leant over towards me. ‘Anglo, comment t’aller vous?’ He asked observing me studiously. ‘Je t’allez bien,’ I said. ‘Mup dey ! C’est le français ça? (60-69)

Ngwe is not only ridiculed because he is an Anglophone, but even when he tries to associate and speak in the language of the self, he is mocked at for not being able to use the correct form in French. One would wonder if this error could not be corrected. We see Ngwe struggling to belong in this hostile environment but despite all his efforts, his language barrier is still a driving factor to these binaries which the author frowns on. Because of this, Ngwe loses all confidence in himself and detests his cultural heritage, he says: “I felt my head reeling inside with pain, shame and dejection. The stench of my impurity filled my senses. And so I kept a low profile for the rest of the year, avoiding any language confrontation with any of my superior brothers with the most conscious consideration (68). This clearly shows that there is a possibility for national integration and greater unity. This is evident in the fact that if the “self” could have encouraged the other instead of insulting him, they (the other) would have been open to learning the language and vice versa, which bring enormous benefits to the society and also enables the “self” to benefit from the potential of Ngwe. Pathetically, Ngwe descends into a state of depression and disillusionment throughout his stay in the University of Besaadi.

In the same vein, the immoral and discriminatory attitudes existing in the author’s society brought on by “self” and “other” binaries deprive the society from benefitting from the high level of expertise and scholarship of Anglophone intellectuals. This is seen in the story of Anglophone lecturer Dr Amboh. He is a widely-read lecturer in the domain of law but whose intelligence and talents are restricted due to the “self” and “other” binaries. His encounter with Ngwe brought about recognition of the growing plight of the Anglophone students in the University of Besaadi. In the course of his discussion with Ngwe, he laments about the system which has put him in his present predicament:

He noticed my growing concern about the Anglophone plight in the university and befriended me. In frank discussions with me, Dr Amboh told me about the stress he was going through in the university. He could not be given main courses to teach or get promoted because the administration did not understand the nature of the degrees he had obtained in British Universities. What made him

grieve more was the ministerial order requesting those who had done the PhD program abroad to enrol for and defend the Doctorat d'Etat before they were considered for a promotion. (115)

This excerpt vividly examines a dysfunctional system that favours only the French speaking and limits the English speaking citizens in Kamangola despite their qualifications. A professional like Dr Amboh should have been given the chance to exhibit his know-how thereby contributing knowledge and development to the nation but he is tied down by his ethnic differences. This leads him to frustration and little or no job satisfaction. Because of this, his mind goes back to the plebiscite and he laments at what the country has become when he says:

‘Why did it have to happen this way?’ Dr Amboh lamented. ‘Why did it happen that two states with two distinct colonial heritage and antithetical cultures were brought together, one the minority state subdued to a lout majority? Was it the design of the colonial masters to put the viper and the porcupine in one cage for their amusement, or to see whether they could give birth to a crocodile?’ (115)

In response to this Ngwe says that he was beginning to understand that his ordeal was not a personal one. It was universal. Even those he considered as accomplished men grieved equally. He sympathises with Dr Amboh despite his own grief. Ngwe admits that Dr Amboh was one of the most intelligent, knowledgeable, well organised, hardworking, and inspiring persons he had ever encountered in his life. It is rather unfortunate that at the university, all these qualities are not exploited. By this the author is indirectly pointing to the possibility of an alternative politics that could lead the nation in the right direction.

It is important to note that even the single ministerial post that is held by an Anglophone, Mr Wankili, is a useless post that is simply created as a tool of political manipulation. Here, we see that ministerial posts are created not for the sake of nation building but simply to maintain political dominance. This is not only immoral but it is a waste of human, economic and political resources. This is seen in the case of Mr Wankili. After all his educational accomplishments in Britain alongside Dr Amboh, he is appointed Minister of Special Affairs not because he is expected to serve the nation but because the authorities need spies who would inform on the activities of the Anglophone activism or nationalism. In the text, he is seen as a waste and a

liability to the Anglophone community. To this effect, the narrator reports a conversation some Anglophones have concerning him thus:

‘Sheer rubbish,’ said the one called Doctor. ‘And what is in the ministerial post? Minister in charge of Special Duties - what are special duties apart from acting as a spy against the Anglophone patriotism, monitoring Anglophone quest for self government, to slander their leaders to its Francophone masters, to destroy the Anglophone heritage planted by the British colonial masters for so many years? What is his portfolio as a minister? Has he any voice in the Presidency apart from selling out the Anglophones, apart from auctioning Anglophones to maintain his post of Special duties? And where will he be when he is dumped, when his post of special duties come to an end? (123)

As earlier mentioned, the quote above clearly indicates that Wankili’s serves as a tool to betray his fellow anglophones thus reinforcing the “self’s” stronghold on the “other”. Mr Wankili’s Anglophone visitors are appalled at the way they are treated at the reception following Mr Wankili’s speech. He is not only placed in a position he does not deserve, but he is forced to use such a position to spy and even insult his own brothers and sisters. This is also categorised as a loss of his own identity to the self.

The above instances and analyses show that Nkengasong is not just a satirist or social critic for the sake of tearing down or deconstructing an already existing social fabric. He castigates social ills in a way that offers a possibility for change and reform. Embedded in his satire, are clear possibilities for a greater nation with political stability. If Mr Wankili, for example, were offered a befitting post, the nation would enjoy unity and harmony among his own fellow brothers from the same side of the river. Ironically, it is the contrary that is true – it rather breeds rancour and strife among the Anglophone people who believe they are being betrayed by their own brother.

The aspect of shifting frontiers in this context is simply the author’s attempt to neutralise or reconcile the binaries which have caused untold misery in the society as depicted in *Across the Mongolo*. According to David Jefferees in *Changing the Story, Postcolonial Studies and Resistance*, “self” and “other” can learn to live with each other with mutual understanding when he states:

I am deeply uneasy with the categories of the self and other assumed within such an argument... through the examples of Gandhian ahimsa and South African initiatives towards reconciliation, I will argue that “resistance” in these formulations does not challenge the authority or the power of the colonizer or deconstruct such an antagonistic conflict between colonizer and colonized by postulating a hybrid subject. Rather, they challenge the structure of power assumed within colonial discourse by fostering an order in which the relationship between the self and other is one of mutual interdependence rather than antagonism. (12)

Jefferys has pointed out the relevance of resistance but emphasises that it does not change the authorities of the self. He rather advocates a situation where there is mutual interdependence, that is when each side depends on each other in one way or the other. It is therefore imperative, that these binaries learn to live with each other and put aside their differences of superiority and inferiority.

Nkemngong Nkengasong tries to reconcile these binaries in *Across the Mongolo* through characters like Ngwe and other students in the University of Besaadi. Ngwe believes the disparity between the Anglophones and Francophones weigh on him more than anyone else, but the author exposes a nation that tends to frustrate all its citizens due to the system of government. Shirila helps Ngwe understand he is not alone in the fight, that it is more of the system of administration, than an ethnic fight altogether, when she states:

‘No, Ngwe . . . you have been too hard on yourself. You are not the only one suffering in this place. That is the general plight of the Anglophones. Even the Frogs (Francophones) do suffer as well; their own system discredits them, although they are already used to it. Have you not heard of students, particularly Anglophone students who have spent eleven years in this University? Four years in the Faculty of Science, four years in the faculty of law, three years in Arts where they finally succeeded to have a degree? A Bachelors degree! And you say you have lost hopes?. . . Ngwe, it is gambling in this university . . . success in this university and in the whole country depends on gambling and not merit. (154-55)

Although it is rather evident that the Anglophone minority suffers a great loss in such a horrid system of government where one has to gamble to survive, one cannot entirely blame the French speaking brothers who suffer the same fate despite the superiority complex they exhibit on the other. What this means is that, according to the author all the problems that Anglophones decry are not as a result of their Anglophone nature but also as a result of the ineffective administration and system of government that was inherited from the colonial masters and perpetrated by the neo-colonialist stooges they put in place to replace them. This therefore indicates that the postcoloniality of this nation is partly responsible for what its citizens go through.

Another instance which illustrates that despite the immoral nature of Kamngola, there is still hope is seen through the characters Ngwe and Shirila again. Ngwe peers through Shirila's photographs on the wall and breathes an air of hope after reading what is written in bold print on the wall:

As she peeled some oranges, I looked at the pictures and some photographs on the wall ... my eyes fell on one of the writings on a paper on the wall, so beautifully written in embroidered print. The heading was bold and assuring – ‘DESIDERATA’ I read through it, almost reading aloud statements like ‘... always, there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself [...], speak your truth quietly and clearly ..., You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here’ (152)

This Desiderata Ngwe sees on Shirila's wall serves as a symbol of hope in a state of despair. It assures Ngwe that despite the turmoil he faces, he is going to make it. It is also to let him understand that no matter what he is going through he has a natural right to his own part of the world and nobody even the self can deny him of this inalienable right. This assurance serves as a medium of dismissing the effects of such binaries to Ngwe, thus looking forward to a brighter day.

Another instance illustrating the concept of neutralisation in Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo* is the incident where a post of responsibility is given to an Anglophone citizen. Despite the “self” and “other” binaries existing in the text, the author exposes possibilities of a harmonious society if people of different nations and heritage can join hands and work together despite how minute the post is. The way Mr Wankili expresses appreciation through his thank

your speech suggests he had obtained political fulfilment in a nation fraught with so many difficulties. This is seen in the text where Ngwe states:

Mr Wankili, accompanied by his wife then made an introductory speech. He thanked everyone who had honoured his invitation for the dinner. To him, he said, the appointment was a dream come true and he could not realise this dream without inviting his friends to share with the reality. He said he was using the opportunity to thank His Excellency the Head of State, the President of the Republic, President Babajoro for the exacting task and confidence bestowed on him. He promised to do his best in his new capacity in the service of his Excellency. (121)

This shows that even with the difficulty in the system, an Anglophone can also succeed in such an administration. This is why Ngwe affirms “I think he has succeeded” (117). Thus, there is still hope for all Anglophones in such a society. Even though this position carries no real privileges, and is used as a ploy to check any dissent among the Anglophone community, it can still be seen as a step in the right direction. This can just be an opportunity for the Anglophone minister to prove his worth to his Francophone masters by performing beyond what is expected of him.

In sum, this chapter has explored the ethical or moral dimension of *Across the Mongolo*. It explores Nkengasong’s style of satire and concludes that it is satire that is embedded with possibilities for reform and progress. The chapter also highlights a couple of instances where Nkengasong falls short of painting a completely grim picture of the postcolonial society he depicts in a bid to show that despite the dark politics of the day, there is hope for the future. The next chapter is going to illustrate how the ESL classroom can be used as a forum to dissolve self-other dynamics since a typical classroom in Yaounde is representative of the bi-cultural nature of the country.

CHAPTER FOUR

BRIDGING THE GAPS IN A LITERATURE IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

This chapter attempts to show how discourse, as an aspect of style, in Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo* can be taught to students of lower and upper sixth form in secondary schools. The emphasis is on pedagogic applicability and importance of bridging the "self" and "other" binaries in a Literature in English classroom. Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo* has already been introduced in the Literature in English syllabus by the Ministry of Secondary Education to the Advanced Level students, that is, Lower and Upper Sixth Arts.

The novel under study distinguishes itself through its engagement with contemporary thematic preoccupations existing in African countries. Nkengasong has portrayed the waywardness of postcolonial nations who have adopted the colonizers positions and become worse than the colonial masters they so much feared. This, Nkengasong has done by revealing the flaws of African leaders, administrators and citizens, that exist in his fictional "democratic" Republic nation called Kamangola.

The prevalence of such ills like discrimination, corruption, nepotism perpetrated through "self" and "other" binaries have been represented through characters like Ngwe, Nwolefeck, Monsieur Abeso, and Mr Wankili. Ngwe stands for the marginalized minority who despite their efforts to reassert themselves in a hostile environment, they end up disillusioned and traumatized because they do not belong in a nation they called their own. The students will thus be taught dialogue/discourse as an aspect of style through which they will be able to understand the effects of the "self" and "other" binaries in a nation like Cameroon in particular, Africa in general, and the world at large. They will also be exposed to other elements of fiction like plot, characterization, themes, and setting. Zita Felicie Maachou Kouatang of the University of Yaounde I conducted a research investigating "The Attitudes and Motivation of Francophone Students of the Faculty of Science of the University of Yaounde I Towards the Learning of English" and came up with the following results concerning language disparities which are closely linked to Self and Other binarism, and could somewhat resemble Nkengasong's society in Kamangola. She states that "30% of the correspondents have negative opinions about English speakers in general. 15% attributed to the fact that Anglophones in general are selfish and tribal; 12% said Anglophones are stupid and do not behave like human beings; 3% believe

Anglophones in general are impolite” (68). Like Nkemngong Nkengasong’s “Kamangola” the language differences have created an imaginary line dividing the nation building binaries of “self” and “other” giving rights to the same presentation of the English speaking citizens like the one carried out in Kouotang’s research. An in-depth interpretation and analysis of this text will also increase the students’ understanding of life and help them to be aware of issues like discrimination related to “self” and “other” binaries.

Because this text is already in the school program for the advanced level students, it is imperative to reinforce certain considerations regarding the method of teaching this text. Gillian Lazar in *Literature and Language Teaching* states there are four major points to consider when selecting a text: the students’ cultural background, the student’s linguistic proficiency, the students’ literary background and the availability of the text. Due to the fact that the text is already being used in the program the cultural background of the students will be examined. To Lazar, every teacher is called upon to “think about how far the students’ cultural background and their social and political experiences will help or hinder their understanding of the text... you will also need to consider how much background you need to describe for the students to have at least a basic understanding of the text” (53). This is important in the analysis of any literary piece which should be taught to any level. Thus, in this case, it is safe to say that the text chosen is close to the student’s cultural, political, socio-economic background because it is set in Africa in a nation similar to the students’ nation, the bilingual Cameroon.

This study further seeks to use a Cameroonian classroom context, through the teaching of Literature in English, to eliminate the “self” and “other” binaries in efforts to build a more culture tolerant society which harbors justice, peace and development. It delves into corresponding negative attributes, seen in Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo*’s society and the author’s society as a whole, like discrimination, marginalization and sexist dialogue. An in depth study-interpretation and analysis will amplify the student’s understanding of life and help them to be more conscious of issues like oppression as a general human condition. Arguments here will be based on statistics taken from a study carried out by the researcher from three Government Bilingual High Schools in Yaounde, Cameroon, who have either been introduced to, or have studied Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo*.

Alongside Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo*, there are other texts which have been implemented by the ministry of secondary education to the second cycle students. These include Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times*, William Congreve’s *The Way of the*

world, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, Wole Soyinka's *Poems of Black Africa*, and William Blake's selected poems. Most of these works slightly relate to the students cultural background because they are written in and about Africa of which every student will be able to relate with in one way or the other. It is important to note that although some of these books in the program do not reflect the Cameroonian students cultural background, they appeal more to the students' literary background which is also imperative in selected texts according to Lazar who states:

[W]e should not only look at the grading of the language in the text, but at its specific literary qualities and whether our students can navigate their own way through these. A writer often cited in this regard is Ernest Hemmingway - while his texts often appear to be linguistically simple, students may need guidance in making sense of their deeper meanings. (54)

Lazar believes that selected texts should not only focus on the students' cultural background because the ability to decipher a deeper meaning of a text exposes the student's literary and language competence.

It should be noted that among these text, there is one common factor that seems to be the most prevalent. This includes the "self" and "other" binaries. Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* may not exude African cultural heritage that should appeal to African students, but it does expose this common factor of superior and inferior complex. Characters like Gradgrind and Bounderby find it rather appalling that their children and future wife could be interested or captivated by the sight of Coketown's circus. He places himself and his children at the position of the "sophisticated" "self" who should not associate with the unrefined "other". This is the reason he blames his Children's classmate Sissy Jupe, the daughter of a circus performer. Sissy's unexpected turnout, that is her ability to prove that she can triumph at the end, reiterates the need to destroy these binaries and vouch for equal rights and opportunities for everyone. The "self" and "other" binaries in this context are not illustrated in the Postcolonial perspective, but through the Marxist theory, which exposes the class stratification of the superstructure and Proletariat. The students may have studied thematic preoccupations through the Marxist perspective but the notion of the "self" and "other" is more palpable in a postcolonial context.

Another text which slightly exemplifies the self and other Binaries is Ola Rotimi's *My Husband Has Gone Mad Again*. This text is a metaphor which depicts an African, Nigerian society which shows leaders using brute force to achieve their political ambitions. Rotimi writes this story using a satiric tone to illustrate a Marxist society whereby the rich only get richer and the poor get poorer. The "self" and "other" binary that exist in this text could be seen through Lekoja's nasty and unconventional ways of gaining his political position thereby trampling those he could consider "other" to hoard the position of the self. William Congreve's *The Way of the World* exposes the concepts of "self" and "other" seen between the aristocratic class and those of the countryside. It takes more of a geographical inclination than philosophical. Like the title suggests, *The Way of the World* examines the world which is plagued with different perspectives of viewing one another. In other words, it takes a more orientalist postcolonial context exposing the East and West.

E. A. Thomas defines Discourse in "Postcolonial African Novel as a Counter-Discourse" as "dialogue in its various forms. It comprises of all forms of written and verbal communication. It is also symbolic communication through dress, pageantry, spectacle, rite, ritual, art, edifice, etc. In short, whatever signifies as a part of discourse. Discourse, therefore is a network of meaning" (1). Discourse and dialogue can be perceived differently according to the societies and people it is created from. Michel Foucault in *Archeology of Knowledge* states that societies have certain procedures to control discourse and by this he means:

In every society, the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality. (216)

This means discourse is not free, it is regulated but it changes from time to time, place to place and person to person depending on how he or she interprets what is brought to him or her. This simply means that language discourse gains its power in relation to the listener. When analyzing language in Literature in English, it is important to note that language does not make meaning simply in the words it uses, but what lies behind these words. Michel Pecheux in *Language Semantics and Ideology: Stating the Obvious* believes, "that it is not language that determines meaning of words. Meanings are neutral. It is the position of the speaker that determines the

meaning of the words [...] words, expression, propositions, etc, change their meaning according to the positions held by those who use them (qtd in Thomas 2). Because discourse exposes a network of meaning, this is enough reason as to why dialogue is important to teach the students so they can understand how to fight physical and psychological abuse through derogatory use of language.

To address the research questions on how to eliminate the “self” and “other” binaries in a classroom context, a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods were used in collecting data to find out if students have heard of the concepts of “self” and “other”, or experienced some sort of oppression due to these binaries. According to Juliana E. Raffaghelli in “Qualitative Research and E-Research: New Landscapes, Perspectives: a Researcher’s Competences in the Field of International Cooperation”, the qualitative researcher,

[L]ooks for many things and ask many questions, but the foundation upon which the analysis of qualitative research rest in its concepts. Qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. The qualitative method investigates the why and how of decision making, not just what, where, when. Hence, smaller but focused samples are more often needed. (4-6)

She goes further to explain quantitative methods as a “phenomena of eliciting and categorizing responses to questions” (22). Therefore in order to make the work more feasible, since it focuses on human emotions and intuition, a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative methods will be used. This will include: 1) an anonymous questionnaire with students and 2) a semi-structured interview with other students who felt more comfortable to discuss these issues aloud than to write. In order to enable this research have an equal representation, three schools were chosen namely: Government Bilingual High School Etoug Ebe, Government Bilingual High School Mendong and Government Bilingual High School Essos.

In government Bilingual High School Etoug Ebe, a quota sampling was conducted with a main focus on a particular class. The sample populations selected for this research are the Lower and Upper sixth Arts students. This is because their maturity, experiences in the society and honesty will lead to reasonable findings unlike the junior students who are less exposed to the superiority and inferiority complex, nor can they understand them. These classes are A1, A3 and

A5 for both Upper and Lower Sixths. The Upper Sixth students who participated in the survey summed up to 59 students with 39 girls, and 20 boys. With the Upper Sixth class, none of them felt uncomfortable with the questionnaire. The upper sixth students had an average age of 17 to 18 years. In the Lower sixth class, there were a total of 50 students with 41 girls and 9 boys, while 10 other girls of the 50 students preferred the oral/ semi interview than the questionnaire. The Lower Sixth had an average age of 16 year olds.

Government Bilingual High school Essos took a similar perspective. The sampling had as the main, the Upper and Lower Sixth students. The Upper Sixth students summed up to a total of 32 students with 25 girls and 7 boys. Their ages ranged from 17-21 year olds. The Lower Sixth students were 60 in total with 40 girls and 20 boys whose ages range from 16-18 years. Unlike Etoug Ebe, Essos had more of filling in of the questionnaire than oral interviews.

Government Bilingual High School Mendong had only the Lower sixth section because the school is a new establishment which has not been in existence for more than ten years. The Lower Sixth students summed up to 16 with 3 boys and 13 girls with an age range from 16-17 year olds. Here are the results of the data collected in these schools:

Table 01: GBHS Etoug Ebe statistics – Lower Sixth

Questionnaires		Yes	No	Literature	Language	Des Idiots	Pauvre Anglo	Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Condition	Ola Rotimi's Our Husband has Gone mad Again	Men/women	Rich/Poor	Equality	Dialogue
	Have you heard of the concept "self and other"?	40	0										
Lower Sixth (40 students participated)	Do you know the meaning?	10	30										
	How did you hear about the concept?			30	10								
	Which of the words affects you most?					10	10						
	Apart from Charles Dickens Hard Times, pick out two other texts in which self and other are exposed?							10	15				
	From which perspective do you think such concepts are illustrated?									20	20		
	Have you ever been put in an inferior position?	30	10										
	Can it be avoided?	30	10										
	How can inferiority be avoided?												20

The table 01 portrays that in Government Bilingual High School Etoug Ebe, in the Lower sixth Class of 40 students, 40 students are said to have heard of the concepts “self” and “other” but only 10 students knew what it meant while 30 did not. 30 students had heard of these concepts in a Literature in English Classroom while 10 heard of it in an English Language Classroom. Out of 40 students, the most derogatory words which appealed most to the students, from the list provided in the questionnaire, were “Des Idiots”, with 10 students and “pauvre Anglo” with 10 students as well. When asked to select two other texts in which “self” and other are exposed, the two prominent were Ola Rotimi’s *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* which 15 students selected and Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Condition*, which 10 students chose. 20 students believed out of the texts chosen, the self and other is represented through men and women while 20 believed it is amongst the rich and poor. 30 students have been placed in an inferior position while 10 say they have never been put in an inferior position. 30 students believed these binaries can be avoided, while 10 think it cannot. Out of the many

suggestions students made about how “self” and “other” can be avoided, the most prominent suggestions were fighting for equality which had 20 student supporters and dialogue which had 10 advocates.

Table 02: GBHS Etoug Ebe statistics - Upper Sixth

Questionnaires		Yes	No	Literature	Language	Des Idiots	Pauvre Anglo	Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Condition	Ola Rotimi's Our Husband has Gone mad Again	Men/women	Rich/Poor	Sensitisation	Dialogue
	Have you heard of the concept "self and other"?	50	9										
Upper Sixth (59 students participate d)	Do you know the meaning?	9	50										
	How did you hear about the concept?			48	11								
	Which of the words affects you most?					29	19						
	Apart from Charles Dickens Hard Times, pick out two other texts in which self and other are exposed?							29	19				
	From which perspective do you think such concepts are illustrated?									28	20		
	Have you ever been put in an inferior position?	59	0										
	Can it be avoided?	26	32										
	How can inferiority be avoided?												20

The table 02 portrays that in Government Bilingual High School Etoug Ebe, in the Upper sixth Class of 59 students, 50 students are said to have heard of the concepts “self” and “other” but only 9 students knew what it meant while the other 50 did not. 48 students had heard of these concepts in a Literature in English Classroom while 11 heard of it in an English Language Classroom. Out of 59 students, the most derogatory words which appealed most to the students, from the list provided in the questionnaire, were “Des Idiots”, with 29 students and “pauvre Anglo” with 19 students as well. When asked to select two other texts in which “self” and other are exposed, the two prominent were Ola Rotimi’s Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again which 19 students selected and Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Condition, which 29 students chose. 28 students believed out of the texts chosen, the “self” and “other” is represented through men and women while 20 believed it is amongst the rich and poor. All 59 students have been put in an inferior position. 26 students believed these binaries can be avoided, while 32 think it cannot. Out of the many suggestions students made

about how “self” and “other” can be avoided, the most prominent suggestions were: Sensitization which had 29 student supporters and Dialogue which had 20 students.

Table 03: GBHS Essos statistics - Lower Sixth

Questionnaires		Yes	No	Literature	Language	Des Idiots	Les Anglos	Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Condition	Hamlet By Shakespeare	Men/women	Rich/Poor	Equality	Hardwork
	Have you heard of the concept "self and other"?	52	8										
Lower Sixth (60 students participated)	Do you know the meaning?	33	27										
	How did you hear about the concept?			40	20								
	Which of the words affects you most?					50	10						
	Apart from Charles Dickens Hard Times, pick out two other texts in which self and other are exposed?							25	30				
	From which perspective do you think such concepts are illustrated?									25	35		
	Have you ever been put in an inferior position?	60	0										
	Can it be avoided?	40	20										
How can inferiority be avoided?												20	30

The table 03 portrays that in Government Bilingual High School Essos, in the Lower sixth Class of 60 students, 52 students are said to have heard of the concepts “self” and “other” and 08 had not. Only 33 students knew what it meant while 27 did not. 40 students had heard of these concepts in a Literature in English Classroom while 20 heard of it in an English Language Classroom. Out of 60 students, the most derogatory words which appealed most to the students, out from the list provided in the questionnaire, were “Des Idiots”, with 50 students and “pauvre Anglo” with 10 students as well. When asked to select two other texts in which “self” and other are exposed, the two prominent were Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* which 30 students selected and Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Condition*, which 25 students chose. 25 students believed out of the texts chosen, believed the “self” and “other” is represented through men and women while 35 believed it is amongst the Rich and Poor. All 60 students have been placed in an inferior position.

40 students believed these binaries can be avoided, while 20 think it cannot. Out of the many suggestions students made about how “self” and “other” can be avoided, the most prominent suggestions were fighting for equality which had 20 student supporters and Hard work which 30 students chose.

Table 04: GBHS Essos statistics - Upper Sixth

Questionnaires		Yes	No	Literature	Language	Pauvre Anglos	Les Anglos	Tsitsi Dangarembga 's Nervous Condition	Hamlet By Shakespeare	Men/women	Rich/Poor	Equality	Revolution
	Have you heard of the concept "self and other"?	28	4										
	Do you know the meaning?	8	24										
	How did you hear about the concept?			24	8								
	Which of the words affects you most?					10	8						
	Apart from Charles Dickens Hard Times, pick out two other texts in which self and other are exposed?							16	8				
	From which perspective do you think such concepts are illustrated?									9	14		
	Have you ever been put in an inferior position?	24	8										
	Can it be avoided?	24	8										
	How can inferiority be avoided?											8	10

The table 04 portrays that in Government Bilingual High School Essos, in the Upper sixth Class of 32 students, 28 students are said to have heard of the concepts “self” and “other” and 04 do know what it means. 08 students knew what it meant while 24 did not. 24 students had heard of these concepts in a Literature in English Classroom while 08 heard of it in an English Language Classroom. Out of 32 students, the most derogatory words which appealed most to the students, out from the list provided in the questionnaire, were “Les Anglos”, with 08 students and “pauvre Anglo” with 10 students as well. When asked to select two other texts in which “self” and other are exposed, the two prominent were Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* which 08 students selected and Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Condition*, which 16 students chose. 09 students believed out of the texts chosen, the self and other is represented through

men and women while 14 believed it is amongst the Rich and Poor. 24 students have been placed in an inferior position while 08 say they have never been put in an inferior position. 24 students believed these binaries can be avoided, while 08 think it cannot. Out of the many suggestions students made about how “self” and “other” can be avoided, the most prominent suggestions were fighting for equality which had 08 student supporters and revolution which had 10 advocates.

Table 05: GBHS Mendong statistics - Lower Sixth

Questionnaires		Yes	No	Literature	Language	Pauvre Anglo	Des Idiots	Hamlet By Shakespeare	William Congreve's The way of the World By	Men/women	Rich/Poor	Equality	Revolution
Lower Sixth (16 students participat ed)	Have you heard of the concept "self and other"?	7	9										
	Do you know the meaning?	3	13										
	How did you hear about the concept?			14	2								
	Which of the words affects you most?					4	6						
	Apart from Charles Dickens Hard Times, pick out two other texts in which self and other are exposed?								8	5			
	From which perspective do you think such concepts are illustrated?									12	4		
	Have you ever been put in an inferior position?	12	4										
	Can it be avoided?	8	8										
How can inferiority be avoided?											3	10	

It is important to note that Government Bilingual High School Mendong has only the Lower sixth section for Advance levels thus this data collected was done solely in one class. The table Figure 05 portrays that in Government Bilingual High School Mendong, in the Lower sixth Class of 16 students, 07 students are said to have heard of the concepts “self” and “other” and 09 have never heard of these concepts. Only 03 students knew what it meant while 13 did not. 14 students had heard of these concepts in a Literature in English Classroom while 02 heard of it in an English Language Classroom. Out of 16 students, the most derogatory words which appealed most to the students, out from the list provided in the questionnaire, were “Des Idiots”, with 06 students and

“pauvre Anglo” with 04 students as well. When asked to select two other texts in which “self” and other are exposed, the two prominent were Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* which 08 students selected and William Congreve’s *The Way of the World*, which 05 students chose. 12 students believed out of the texts chosen, the self and other is represented through men and women while 04 believed it is amongst the rich and poor. 12 students have been placed in an inferior position while 04 say they have never worn the shoes of inferiority. 08 students believed these binaries can be avoided, while 08 think it cannot. Out of the many suggestions students made about how “self” and “other” can be avoided, the most prominent suggestions were fighting for equality which had 03 student supporters and revolution which had 10 advocates.

Figure 1: GBHS Etoug Ebe – Questionnaires administered to Lower & Upper Sixth Students (May 2016)

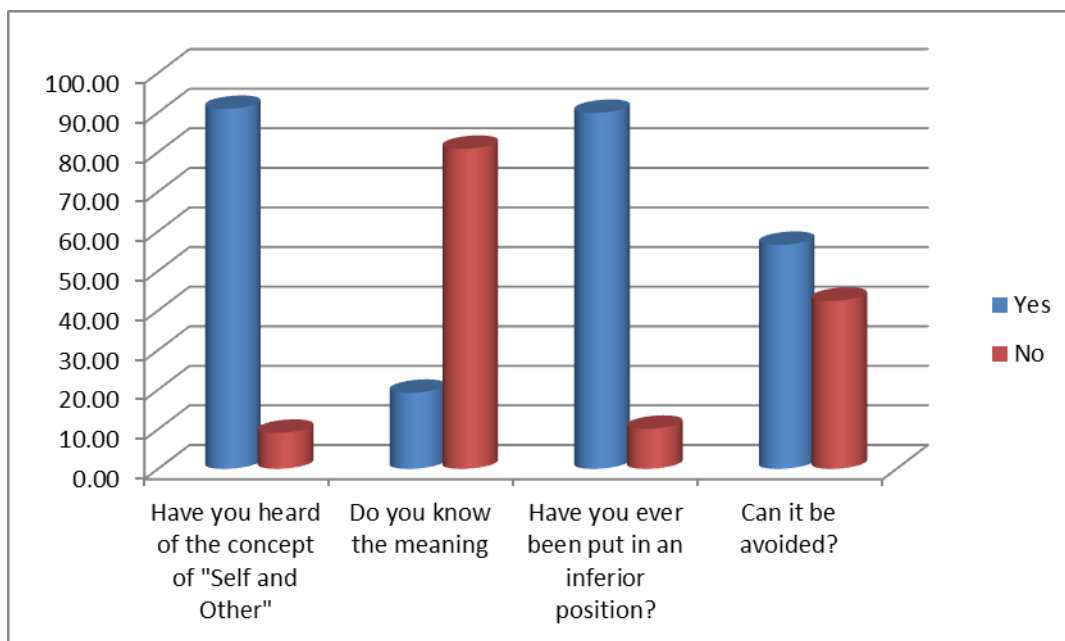
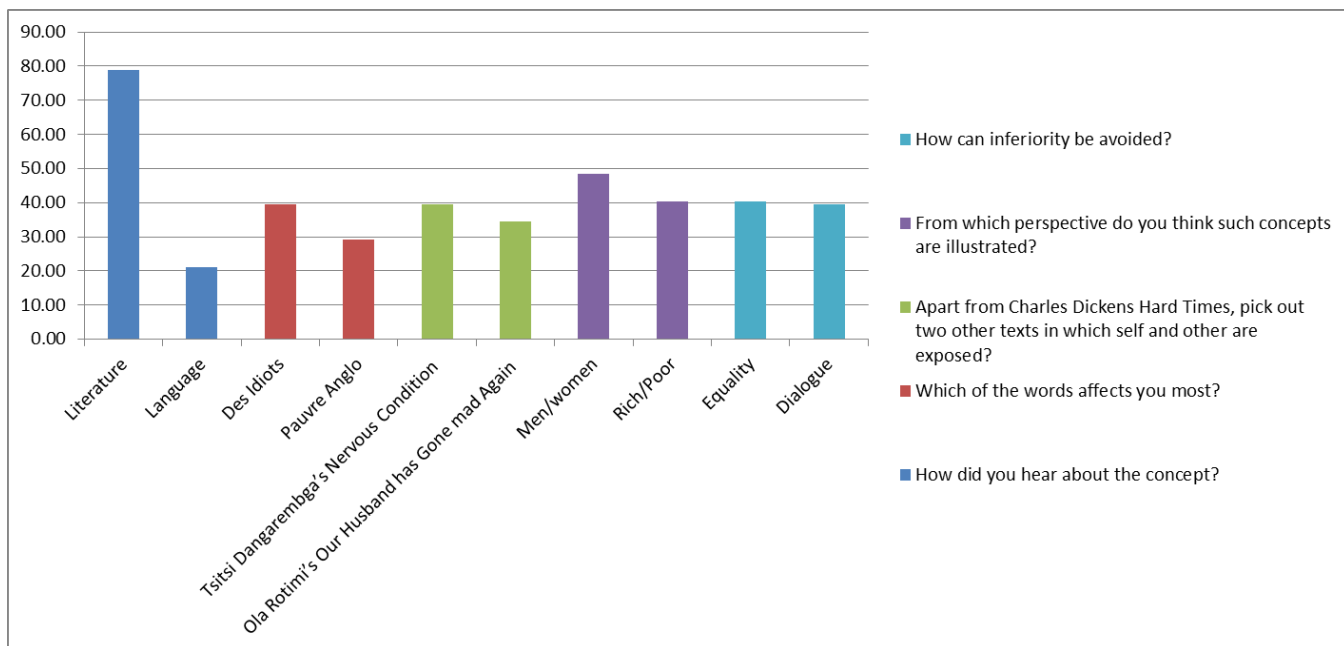
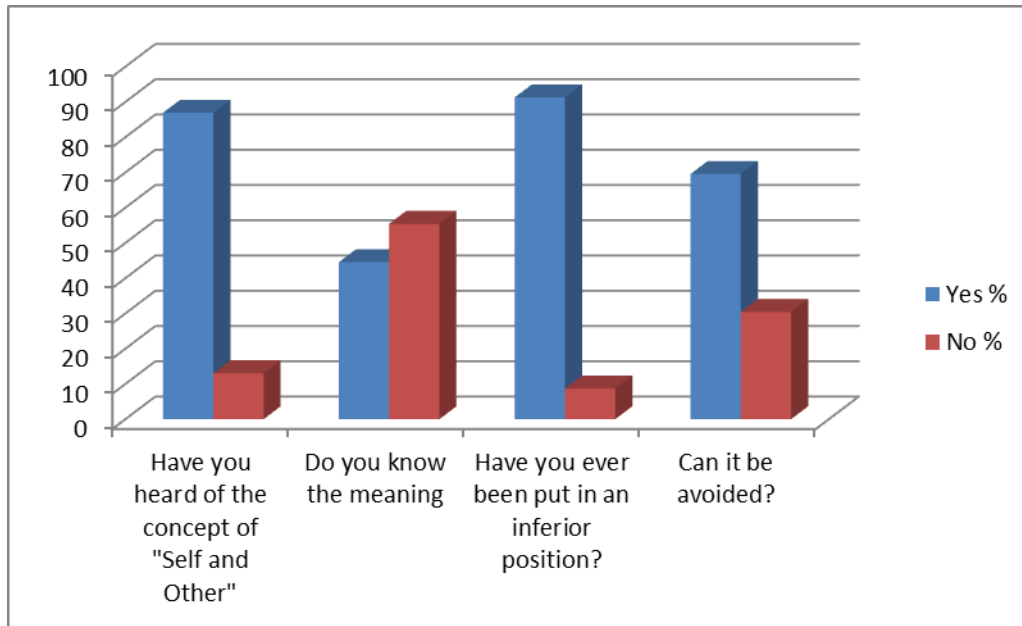


Figure 2: Questionnaires administered to Lower & Upper Sixth students of GBHS Etoug Ebe (May 2016)

From the analysis seen above, it can be said that the combination of the Lower and Upper Sixth students of Government Bilingual High School Etoug ebe give a sum total of 109 students. The percentages have been calculated following this combination. 90% have heard of the concepts “self” and “other” but 80% do not know what it means. 72% have heard of them in a

literature classroom, and about 35% are most offended by the use of the word “des Idiots”. 30% have seen these concepts in other texts studied in class like Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Condition* and Ola Rotimi’s *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* from a male/female perspective and a rich/ poor perspective. Amongst the many solutions proposed by the students regarding how the issues can be solved, dialogue and equal opportunity for everyone were reiterated.

Figure 3: GBHS Essos – Questionnaires administered to Lower & Upper Sixth Students (May 2016)



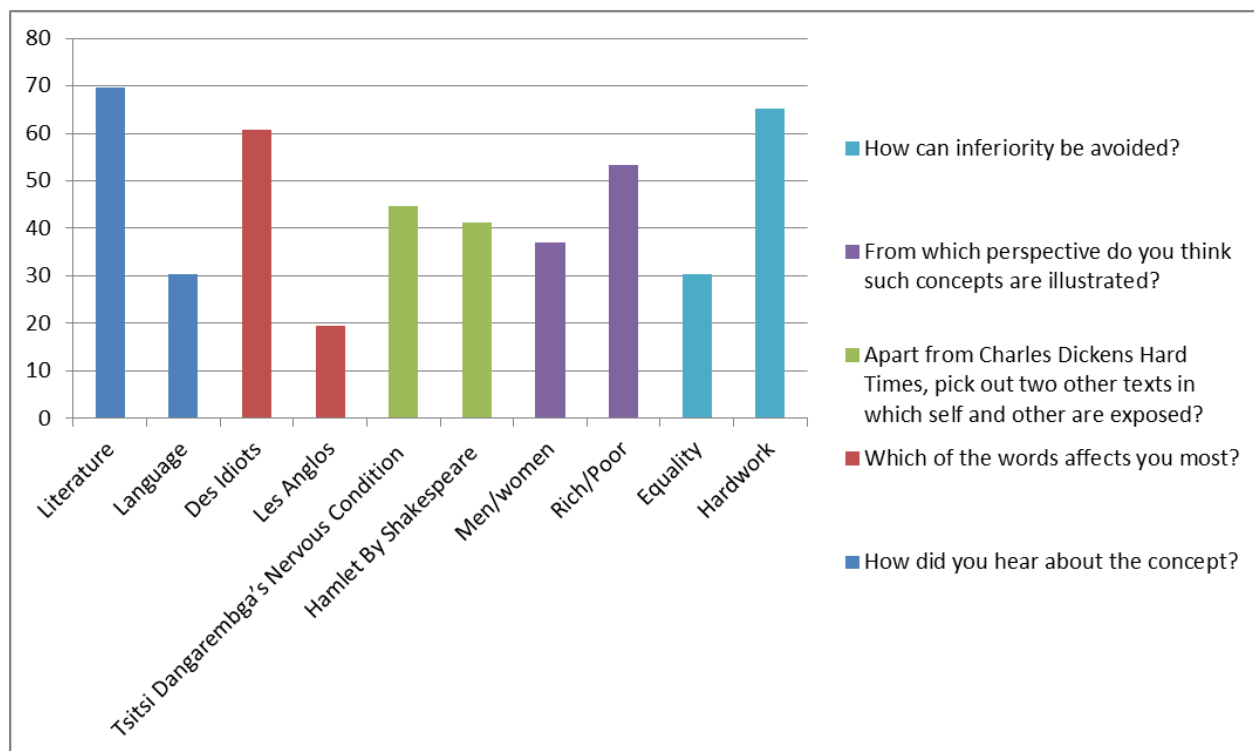


Figure 4: GBHS Essos – Questionnaires administered to Lower & Upper Sixth Students (May 2016)

Government Bilingual High School Essos had a sum total of 92 students with the Lower and Upper sixth students combined. 80% of the students have heard of the concepts “self” and “other but close to 60% do not know what it means. 70% have heard of it in a literature classroom. Like Etoug Ebe where most were most offended by the words “des idiots”, 60% were offended. 40% have seen these concepts in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Condition* and William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* through the Rich/Poor perspective which has 55%, while 38% is seen among the Men/women. As proposed solutions, 65% suggested that hard work can help destroy these concepts, while 30% sought for equal opportunities as a solution.

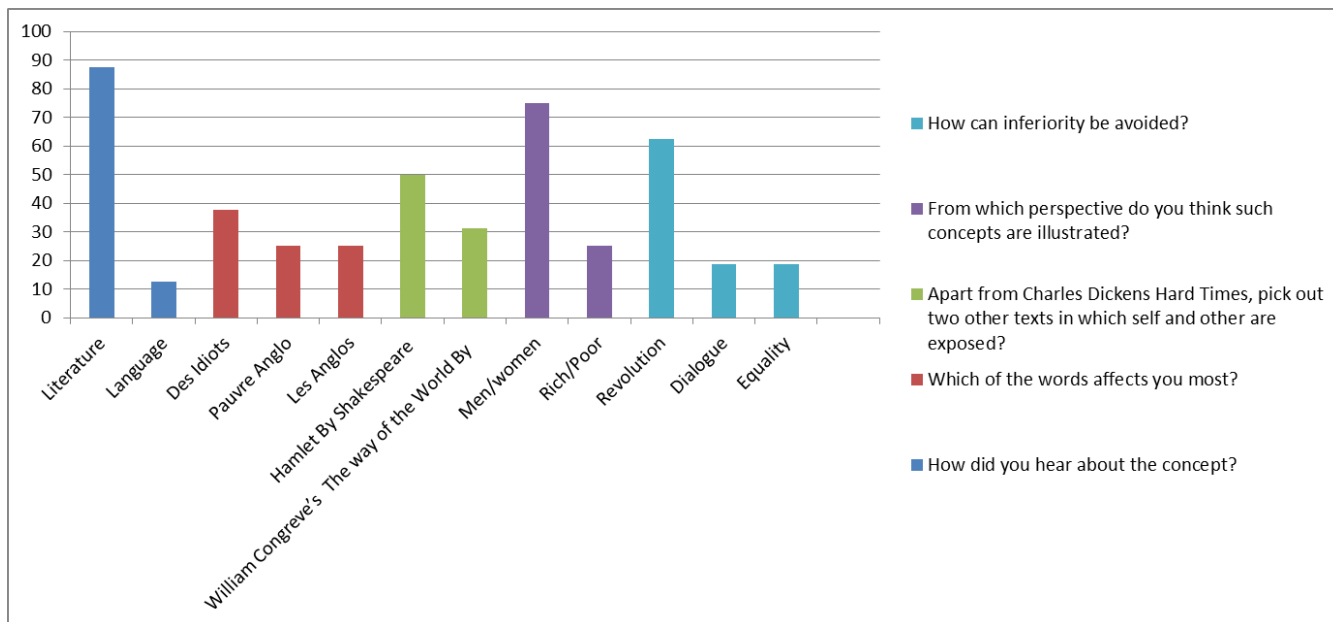


Figure 5: GBHS Mendong – Questionnaires administered to Lower Sixth Students (May 2016)

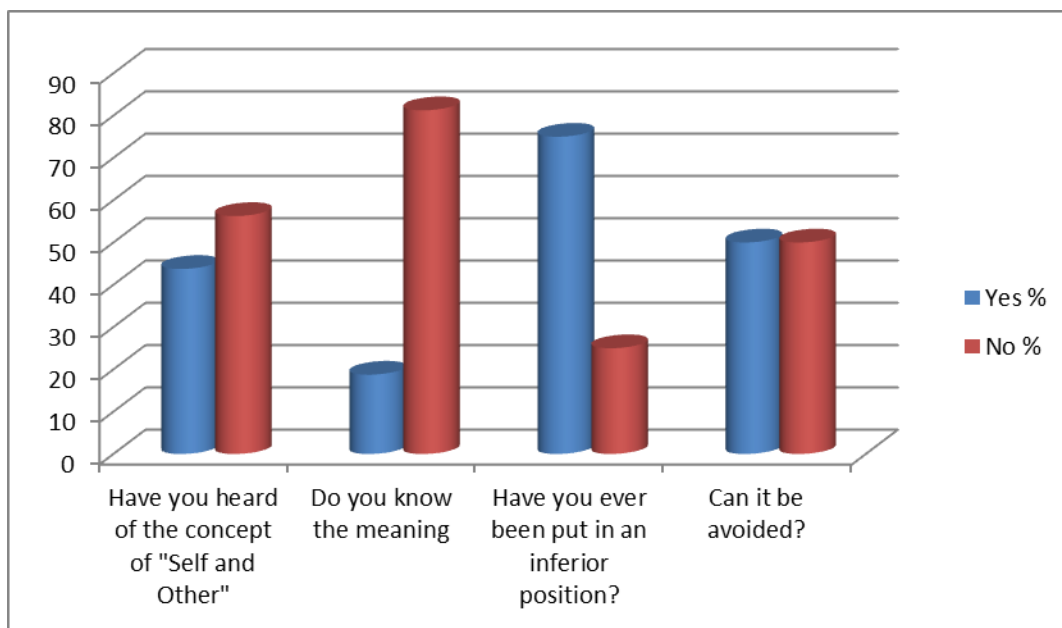


Figure 6: GBHS Mendong – Questionnaires administered to Lower Sixth Students (May 2016)

As mentioned earlier, Government Bilingual High School Mendong has only the Lower Sixth section with 16 students as earlier mentioned. Contrary to the other schools, 55% of the students have never heard of the concepts of the “self” and the “other” and about 15% know what it means. Close to 90% of the students have heard of the concepts in a literature classroom. Like the other schools, 38% were most affected by the use of the words “des idiots” and 50% of

them see such words in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and William Congreve's *The Way of The World*. 75% see it in the male/female perspective while 35% see it between the rich and the poor. As suggested solutions to the problem, 65% suggested revolution, while 20% came in for dialogue and 20% for equal opportunities.

Therefore in a general perspective, after analyzing the graphs The graphs above (1 – 6) portrays that over 80% of the students have heard of the concept “Self” and “Other” in GBHS Etoug Ebe and Essos while just about 40% of the students in GBHS Mendong have heard of it. This can be confirmed as 81% of students in GBHS Mendong do not know the meaning of the concept. In GBHS Essos, 45% of students know the meaning whereas in GBHS Etoug Ebe, curiously over 80% of the students do not know the meaning of the concept, “Self” and “Other” though they have heard about the concept. Over 69.50% of the students from the three schools learnt about the concept of “Self and Other” via literature.

The words that affect the students most in all the three schools are *Des Idiots* followed by *Pauvre Anglo*. In GBHS Essos, over 60% of the students answered that the word *Des Idiots* affected them most. The word *Les Anglos* is another word that students in GBHS Essos and GBHS Mendong mentioned as affecting them most with a score of 19.57% and 25% respectively. The concept of “Self” and “Other” can be better appreciated through these questionnaires. From the statistics above, self is an aspect in the Cameroonian society that needs to be dealt with. It is manifested in various ways such as discrimination, marginalisation, and disrespect.

Other novels in which the concept of “Self” and “Other” are seen apart from Charles Dickens *Hard Times*, 39% from GBHS Etoug Ebe and 44.57% students from GBHS Essos mentioned Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Condition*. Meanwhile 41.30% students and 50% of the students from GBHS Essos and GBHS Mendong identified Hamlet by Shakespeare respectively as also having the concept of “Self” and “Other”. Only about 31% of students in GBHS Mendong identified the concept in William Congreve's *The way of the world*.

Answering the question as to which perspective is the concept of “Self” and “other” illustrated, students from all the three schools answered that from the perspective of Men/Women and Rich/Poor.

As to whether the students have ever been subject to any form of inferiority position, 75% of the students answered in affirmation. This is an indication that discrimination exists in

the society and its manifestations are a reality in the Cameroonian context. Majority (70%) of the students in GBHS Essos think inferiority can be avoided in the society while 50% of students GBHS Mendong and 42% of students from and GBHS Essos think it cannot be avoided. Answering the question how inferiority can be avoided, 40.40% of the students from GBHS Etoug Ebe opted for equality in the society while 65.22% of the students from GBHS Essos said hardwork was the means to curb inferiority complex in the society. A good number of the students (62.50%) from GBHS Mendong chose revolution as a means to eliminate inferiority in the society.

In the qualitative / semi interview conducted with some of the students, the “self” and “other” holds various dimensions. They were asked to relate these concepts from the text to their environment. 50% of the students see its existence between the students and the teacher. By this, we mean, because teachers may have particular bias over some students, they indirectly pick favorites in a classroom relegating others to the background which pushes some students feel superior or inferior. 25% saw it from a rich/poor perspective in their classroom. Some students who are from well-to-do backgrounds see themselves as more important than others who are not from these backgrounds, while the other 25 % saw it at the level of intelligence whereby, intelligent students do not associate themselves with the less intelligent as they feared “they could contaminate them.” 100% of these students saw that these concepts have caused a growing feud between a large group of people and they advocated revolution as a solution which will breed the assertiveness of the “other”.

Because the nation Cameroon has been a colonized country, the notion of the “self” and “other” is said to consciously or unconsciously exist among citizens who believe they are less superior to their colonial masters. Even after independence, the nation Cameroon still feels indebted to their colonial masters, like other African countries and post independent nations around the world. Due to this phenomenon, because Cameroon has been partitioned into two separate entities, the English and the French, and is governed by a French ruler, feelings of favoritism, marginalization and oppression are obviously ignited between citizens. This is why mature students were sampled for this investigation because they may have experienced these differences from the national perspective or from the domestic context. Therefore, as Lazar mentioned, the learner’s background is first and foremost the most important in teaching “self” and “other” binaries as it should investigate if learners have lived the experience.

From the sum total of the analysis, it is evident that a great segment of the students in these schools have heard of these concepts but do not know what it means but they see it as a breeding ground for strife. Therefore, it is important these concepts should be taught either a Literature in English classroom or a language classroom.

Education is part of human existence. It deals more with an older and more experience generation passing on knowledge that they have acquired to the younger and inexperienced generation. This can either be knowledge passed on from parents to their children, old to young, and teachers to learners. These mediums through which knowledge is passed on can be termed as the natural/informal context or the formal context which is usually, the classroom. The formal context is one of the most organized form of learning whereby a teacher, who is trained, imparts knowledge on the student or learner. This implies that the classroom is the perfect place to destroy the binaries of the “self” and “other”. The text explored in this work is Nkemngong Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo*.

As far as teaching is concerned, a good teacher cannot teach a literature in English lesson without mastering the text. And given that this is a prose text, to teach such a lesson, a teacher must prepare pre-reading, during reading and post reading questions for the lesson he wishes to teach. A peculiar excerpt can be used in a literature in English classroom to teach diction/dialogue as an aspect of style. As seen from the analysis above, most of the students have heard of the “self” and “other” but have not been taught extensively of the dangers it holds. It is necessary to bring these concepts to life in a classroom context. This excerpt serves not only as a means of getting statistics from the field but it is a brilliant piece exposing these binaries. This excerpt detached from Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo* tells the story of Ngwe, the protagonist’s, registration process in the University of Besaadi, for the first time, as an Anglophone who has been uprooted from the English speaking part of the nation- where everyone spoke in English- to where English is more of a liability than a necessity.

Relevez de notes, Monsieur! He barked. I stared at him blankly, fidgeting in my mind and trying to understand what he meant.

“What, Sir’ I asked again. He sighed and flung the documents at me. The papers in the file rustled and fluttered plaintively in different directions [...] I went on my knees and pleaded.

“Les Anglois aiment toujours les annouilles. Sort monsieur. Suivant,” he said and beckoned on another student to come in. I held his leg and pleaded. The excited students at the door jeered at me. ‘Pauvre Anglo!’ Anglo for Koromba. Tu ne pouvez pas rester chez vous a Koromba, Anglo ?’

[...] ‘les Anglois sont des idiot,’ muttered the man at the door. ‘Le type n’a pas bien arranger ses affaires,’ he went on [...] “ ‘Que-ce que tu as amene’ de chez vous, Anglo?’ asked the man. I started a long story in English concerning the difficulties I faced on the road travelling from Attah, through Mbuerra and Lewola to Besaadi. I told him my money was stolen on a train

“ ‘Parle en française , mon type. Je ne comprend pas ton pareître partois la,’ (56-57)

Before getting into the teaching of this excerpt, it is necessary the teacher does some pre-teaching vocabulary. This is done in order to ease the understanding of new or difficult words found in the text. Words like “Koromba”, “Anglo” are local colors used to classify a particular set of people like the English speaking individuals and their ethnic region of origin. After pre-teaching vocabulary, the teacher dives into reading activities where he/she may identify elements of fiction seen in the extract. Because this text is already on the field, other research questions were asked during the oral interviews with a number of students during the research process as to whether or not these concepts have been taught in class and how it has been taught. Many students admitted that these concepts had seldom been treated as an aspect but rather mentioned under contrast, pathos and irony under style as an element of fiction. Thus for the purpose of this research, these concepts can be taught as another aspect of style through Dialogue.

At this stage of the work, we will show how dialogue can be taught in a literature in English classroom as a means of creating awareness of the “self” and “other” binaries. In the first stage, the teacher will tell a story concerning a student who was falsely accused by his or her teacher and fellow student for cheating during an exam. The teacher then selects one or two students to come ahead. One playing the role of the falsely accused student, and the other of the accuser. The teacher now prompts the students to dialogue, expressing their frustrations about the accusations. While they play the scene, the teacher asks students to comment on the accuser and accused character traits, through his or her use of words. Shortly after this sketch, the teacher

asks the students what dialogue is and the characteristics of dialogue. This is important because it is necessary to get the students to talk about some common features of dialogue.

In the second stage of the lesson, the teacher will then move to the selected excerpt from Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo*, giving the students the time to skim and scan through. Skimming and scanning through the excerpt will show that the students will not only be analyzing dialogue as an aspect of style, but will be also studying vocabulary as a language point. The students will then answer the following questions:

What type of diction does the author use in communicating his ideas? According to Nkemngong Nkengasong's *A Stylistic Guide to Literary Appreciation*, Diction, "refers to word choice dealing with specialized or specific subjects [...] this also gives a hint as to why authors choose a particular style" (74). The teacher has to make learners understand what diction is from this perspective, and what kinds of diction are prevalent in the excerpt. This could include: abstruse words, archaic words, foreign words, clichés, jargons, pejorative expressions, slangs and, simple words. From the excerpt the teacher prompts the students to bring out what kind of ideas the author could be trying to communicate through his diction. By using words like "Les Annouilles, Pareitre Partois la", the author denotes feelings of disgust, minimization and a negative impression towards cultural heritage.

The teacher goes further to ask students to comment on the context and setting within which these words are used to Ngwe. Setting here serves as another characteristic of dialogue. The setting is the University of Besaadi in the French speaking part of Kamangola which is Ngola. Because this is a French speaking part of the nation, it uncommon for students to speak English to the administrative staff, let alone their lecturers. The question to pose here is, in a bilingual nation as Kamangola, why should the English or French language be uncommon to anyone?

The students are further asked to select words, from the extract, which have a superficial or surface and deeper meaning. Words like "chez vous" express ownership meaning that the "anglos" do not own nor do they have the right to live where the Francophones live. This is denotative in the sense that Kamngola is said to be a bilingual and democratic nation, thus segregating one culture from the other through words like "chez Vous" implies the country is not as united as it is said to be.

Like the Sketch acted in the first stage of the lesson, the teacher prompts the students to highlight what some of the words used in the dialogue say about the speaker? Words like *'les Anglos sont des idiot'* express aspects of discrimination from the speaker. *Pauvre Anglo!'* *Anglo for Koromba. Tu ne pouvez pas rester chez vous a Koromba, Anglo ?'* denote arrogance and disrespect for different cultural heritages by the speaker.

The teacher closes this analysis by introducing the “self” and “other” as thematic preoccupations. He or she does this by prompting the students to suggest the themes existing in these excerpts. Because they have studied the “self” and “other” through different perspectives from other texts, a postcolonial explanation of the metropole and periphery is brought to the students' knowledge through phrases used like *Pauvre Anglo!'* *Anglo for Koromba. Tu ne pouvez pas rester chez vous a Koromba, Anglo?'* here, the “self” believes he is more privileged than the “other” because he lives in Ngola.

After illustrating these aspects as a while reading activity, the teacher may ask the students to select other words they feel fit these definitions in the entire text and relate it to their context. He or she may also ask them to take the position of the offender and the offended and predict possible ways of handling these binaries in the text and propose methods of handling them in the society.

To conclude, this chapter has analyzed the existence of the “self” and “other” binaries in many schools and the need to educate the students on how to accept multicultural diversities of individuals existing in their societies. It has also suggested the teaching of dialogue as an aspect of style in presenting these aspects in a literature in English classroom. It has not excluded other elements of fictions they are all characteristics of dialogue. This section has also suggested possible solutions to solving this problem of “self” and “other” which require a collective effort of all Cameroonians.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This work, entitled “The Dialectics of the Self and Other in John Nkemngong Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo*,” examined “self” and “other” dichotomy that exists in post independent nations. The analysis of this work revealed that the notions of the “self” and “other” are mostly predominant in postcolonial or post independent nations like Cameroon. Writers like Nkengasong vehemently expose these concepts through imaginative and fictional representations of towns like Ngola and The University of Besaadi.

The theoretical frameworks chosen for the analysis of the work were Postcolonialism and, New Historicism. In the discussion of Chapter one, it was revealed that official historical accounts have served as pull factors in the identification of the self-complacent and self-contempt “self” which has ultimately lead to the relegation of the “other” to the background. Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo* uses the protagonist Ngwe as an eye witness to the marginalisation and oppression of the “other” as a result of the manipulation and distortion of history.

In order to establish the relationship between the “self” and “other”, it was necessary to examine how the “other” assumes the identity given to them by the “self” in Chapter two. Appropriation was brought out as one of the methods used. After having examined appropriation as a somewhat tool for survival, and a means of creating the “other-self”, this chapter explored the efforts made the oppressed to fight domination in relation to these ideological perspectives of Nkengasong. The use stiff resistance served as a means of reasserting the “other”. Although this resistance proved to be less productive physically, it did give other characters like Nwolefeck and Dr Amboh a reason to go on. This is because it showed that these binaries could be destroyed eventually if the minority joins forces to fight against the “self”.

When all resistance methods fail, the only other means of bridging these gaps is through dialogue. Hence, Chapter three dwelled on the author’s perception of a “self” and “other” free nation through the creation of a cultural tolerant society. Nkengasong exposes the possibilities of accepting the cultural and linguistic differences for the promotion of unity and development.

The need to highlight pedagogic relevance for our findings, led to the development of Chapter four. This chapter focused on bridging the gaps of the “self” and “other in a Literature in English Classroom. The fact that the novel under study is already being used on the field, the researcher had to carry out a study in order to know if these concepts have been treated in

schools. This was done through administering questionnaires and oral discussions to find out whether or not the students had ever heard of these concepts let alone know what it meant. On the field, it was discovered that within the three schools that research was carried out in, The graphs above (1 – 6) portray that over 80% of the students have heard of the concept “Self” and “Other” in GBHS Etoug Ebe and Essos while just about 40% of the students in GBHS Mendong have heard of it. This can be confirmed as 81% of students in GBHS Mendong do not know the meaning of the concept. In GBHS Essos, 45% of students know the meaning whereas in GBHS Etoug Ebe, curiously over 80% of the students do not know the meaning of the concept, “Self” and “Other” though they have heard about the concept. Over 69.50% of the students from the three schools learnt about the concept of “Self and Other” through a literature in English Classroom. From these findings, it was thought that a lesson on dialogue, as an aspect of style will have to be taught which will cause students to bring out derogatory vocabulary, from the characteristics of dialogue, themselves.

After a critical analysis from chapter one to four, the following results were drawn:

Firstly this work has shown that the “self” and “other” binaries are based on faulty historical notions of that the “self” is an unethical agent of identity.

Secondly, despite resistance mechanisms of appropriation and revolution, resistance is futile at the physical level, however, not completely useless at the psychological level. This is because it inspires future resistance.

Thirdly, this research has proven that the binaries of “self” and “other” are only slightly attached to privileges given to the “self”. These binaries have also proven to be more psychologically inclined than physical. It is also worthy to note that the individual perceptions of “self” or “other” are either conscious or unconscious as a result of historical inclinations.

Finally, the struggle to demystify the concepts of “self” and “other” in Nkengasong’s *Across the Mongolo*, concludes that this satire is embedded with possibilities for reformation and progress. This study has also proven the existence of “self” and “other” binaries in secondary schools in Yaounde, and emphasized on the need to educate students to be culturally tolerant.

By way of contributing to literature, this work is a continuation of the long standing debate between the centre and the margin in postcolonial literature, and post independent nations like Nkengasong’s fictional “kamangola”. While this work advocates for the reassertion of the second class citizens known as the “other”, it cautions readers on the physical and psychological

co-existence of these binaries and its effects on the common man. It also suggests these binaries can only be nullified if citizens are ready to accept build a culture tolerant society.

These binaries have, for so long, caused discord in the world and Africa in particular, due to their colonial experience. Therefore, teachers and educational authorities need to revise their course materials so that students are groomed to accept ethnic, linguistic and geographical differences that may exist in their societies. Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo* has exposed marginalization, nepotism, corruption and racism which is present in most African societies and Cameroon in particular. From all indications, this growing discord has affected the educational system as seen through the qualitative methods carried out in this research. This is because of the psychological stratification the students are faced with in school, at home and among peers. In this light, the Cameroon government should revisit the law and place sanctions on sexist and racial discrimination regarding ethnic, geographical and linguistic difference, and the same time, learn to be culture tolerant. Also, heads of school administrations should follow suit and strictly implement these laws in their various institutions so students become cautious of the language to use among peers.

This study has also confirmed the hypothesis that in an attempt to neutralize the boundaries between the "self" and "other", John Nkemngong Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo* questions notions of national unity, national integration and nationhood. This study has also proven that these binaries can only be eliminated by nullification.

Using Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo*, other researchers interested in this domain of research can attempt to critically examine class stratification and subalternism in a bid to show the intersection with postcolonial identity.

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UNIVERSITÉ DE YAOUNDE I

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DÉPARTEMENT D'ANGLAIS

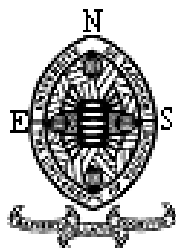
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APPENDIX



Dear Respondent,

I am carrying out a research on the topic "The Dialectics of Self and Other in John Nkemngong Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo* ." Please be assured that the answers you give will not be used for any purpose than pedagogic. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. Please tick in the box with the appropriate answer and fill the blanks where necessary.

Name: _____

Class: _____

Age: _____

Date: _____

Below is an excerpt extracted from John Nkemngong Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo*. Please read it keenly and answer the questions that follow.

Relevez de notes, Monsieur! He barked. I stared at him blankly, fidgeting in my mind and trying to understand what he meant.

"What, Sir' I asked again. He sighed and flung the documents at me. The papers in the file rustled and fluttered plaintively in different directions [...] I went on my knees and pleaded.

'Les Anglo aiment toujours les annouilles. Sort monsieur. Suivant,' he said and beckoned on another student to come in. I held his leg and pleaded. The excited students at the door jeered at me. *'Pauvre Anglo!' Anglo for Koromba. Tu ne pouvez pas rester chez vous a Koromba, Anglo ?'*

[...] *'les Anglo sont des idiot,'* muttered the man at the door. *'Le type n'a pas bien arranger ses affaires,'* he went on [...] *"Que-ce que tu as amene' de chez vous, Anglo?"* asked the man. I started a long story in English concerning the difficulties I faced on the road travelling from Attah, through Mbuerra and Lewola to Besaadi. I told him my money was stolen on a train

"Parle en française , mon type. Je ne comprend pas ton pareître partois la,'. (56-57)

- 1) Have you ever heard of concepts like the "self" and "other"?

Yes

No

- 2) If Yes, do you know what they mean?

Yes

No

Explain: _____

- 3) How did you come across such concepts, in a literature or language classroom?

Literature

Language

- 4) The "Self" in many contexts in literature is considered as being superior to the "other" also considered as inferior. Is there any text you have studied that treats human beings as inferior or superior to others?

_____.

- 5) From the passage you have just read, can you identify any 6 words or expressions which characterize someone as inferior?

- 6) How would you feel if such words are addressed to you?

- 7) Look at the list of words below, which of them affects you most, and why?

- a) *Les Anglos*
- b) *Des Idiot*
- c) *Koromba*
- d) *Annouilles*
- e) *Paurvre Anglo*
- f) *Mon type*
- g) *Pareitre partois*

- 8) Pick out three expressions in the list above. In English, propose better ways of expressing them in order not to offend.

- 9) Are these "self" and "other" concepts expressed in Charles Dickens *Hard Times*?

YES

NO

- 10) If yes, which of the following characters feel superior to Other?

- a) Thomas Gradgrind
- b) Louisa
- c) Thomas Gradgrind Jr
- d) Josiah Bounderby
- e) Cecelia Jupe
- f) Mrs Sparsit
- g) Rachel

- 11) Which of them is made to feel inferior?

- a) Thomas Gradgrind
- b) Louisa
- c) Thomas Gradgrind Jr
- d) Cecilia Jupe
- e) Mrs Sparsit

- f) Josiah Bounderby
g) Rachel
- 12) Apart from Charles Dickens *Hard Times*, pick out two other texts in which self and other are exposed?
- a) *Hamlet* By Shakespeare
b) William Congreve's *The way of the World* By
c) Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Condition*
d) Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband has Gone mad Again*
e) Wole Soyinka's *Poems of Black Africa*
- 13) From which perspective do you think such concepts are illustrated?
- a) Men/Woman
b) Rich/Poor
c) Aristocrat/low class
d) Urban/ Rural
- 14) Have you ever been put in a superior or inferior position?
- Yes No
- 15) How did you feel treated as inferior?
- _____.
- 16) Can the conflict between self and other be avoided?
- 17) How?
- _____.
- 18) Briefly state how in your context/environment you can fight against superiority complex.
- _____.
- 19) Briefly state how in your context/environment you can fight against inferiority complex.

Thanks for your cooperation.