

Beyond Fiction: Historical, Sociological and Ideological perspectives on Kwakuvi Azasu's *The Slave Raiders*

ADJEI, Mawuli

Department of English,
University of Ghana,
P.O. Box LG129,
Legon, Ghana
Email: sogbo_lisa@hotmail.com

Abstract

*In many of his creative works, Ghanaian writer Kwakuvi Azasu's background as historian, cultural anthropologist and Pan-Africanist comes through forcefully. In particular, he engages with the subject of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade at many levels, and does so from a position of a thorough grasp of his native Anlo history and culture. In this paper, *The Slave Raiders*, his most ambitious work to date, is critically examined from historical, sociological and ideological perspectives. It is argued that, by and large, the text is engineered to deconstruct established hegemonies and to re-write the script of slavery, through fiction, from an Afrocentric point of view.*

Keywords: slave, raiders, sociological, ideological, historical, racism, negation

1.0 Introduction

The predominance of the slave experience as a theme in Ghanaian literature, especially from the 1960s (Aidoo 1965, 1970; Armah 1973, 1995; Awoonor 1992; Anyidoho 1993; Brew 1995; Opoku-Agyemang 1996 etc.), indicates how central it is to the country's literary tradition and identity. In *The Slave Raiders*, a story that has a dual setting and alternates between Anloland and England, Azasu explores a wide array of themes that undergird the relationship between Europe and Africa within the framework of the slave experience. As the title of the novel suggests, the greater focus is on England—the “slave raiders.” And implicit in the title is a strong reference to the subject of slavery as a “raid,” both denotatively and connotatively, rather than a “trade,” which for ages has been the operative word in the discourse relating to the trans-Atlantic dealing in human beings as commodities of exchange. In the ensuing pages, a historical, sociological and ideological approach will be adopted in the criticism of text and author.

In critiquing the text, the focus will be on certain aspects of narratology—frequency, focalization, iteration and point of view. The narrative technique identified in the novel is a combination of ‘telling’ and ‘showing.’ Both reveal character, society and historicity, and impinge strongly on the impressions the reader forms as the story unfolds, through what characters do and say and, in particular, how the author

manipulates and subtly shifts the centres of the narrative. The many voices of the novel in terms of narration, commentary and dialogue will be closely followed and analysed. The justification for this approach is based on Bakhtin's position that:

[T]he decisive and distinctive importance of the novel as a genre [is that] the human being in the novel is first, foremost and always a speaking human being; the novel requires speaking persons bringing with them their own ideological discourses, their own language (1981:32).

What this means, according to Hawthorn (2001:110), is that “novels tend to have not one centre of authority—the narrator's or author's voice—but many such centres, centres which typically are in conflict with one another.” Hawthorn further explains that, for Bakhtin, “it will be perceived, a voice is not just a mechanical means whereby thoughts are broadcast, it has an ideological dimension” and that different voices in the novel “represent and disseminate different points of view, different perspectives.” Moreover, for Bakhtin, “different voices can be isolated even in a narrator's or a single character's words: when we speak, our utterances contain a range of different voices [...], such that an utterance can represent a veritable war of different viewpoints and perspectives.”

2.0 Historical Perspective: The Text in the Context of Time and Place

The *Slave Raiders* is a cross between fiction and history. It deals with a piece of world history and, therefore, its larger referential frame is historical in content and context. The novel is set in a particular historical period; the second half of the nineteenth century, at the peak of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. It deals with England's involvement in the Slave Trade on the Guinea Coast (West Africa), particularly the south-eastern enclave of the then Gold Coast inhabited by the Anlo, a subset of the Ewe. The story alternates between Anloland and England. In both settings, history is reconstructed with a view to drawing the reader into the critical historical events that defined and continue to define the Slave Trade between Europe and Africa. Individual figures, institutions, symbols and ideologies of the time are projected in the context of the roles they played in the Slave Trade. In all, it is an exploration of power relations; an encounter between slavers and the enslaved, profiteers and victims of exploitation.

A literary work set in a historical period tells us about prevailing ways of thinking at the time, such as ideas of social organization, worldview, values etc. It is in this connection that new historicist criticism becomes pertinent. As Di Yanni (1995:24) points out:

An important feature of new historicist criticism is its concern with examining the power relations of rulers and subjects. A guiding assumption and among new historicist critics is that texts, not only literary works but also documents, diaries, records, even institutions such as hospitals and prisons, are ideological products culturally constructed from the prevailing power structures that dominate particular societies. Reading a literary work from a new historicist perspective becomes an exercise in uncovering the conflicting and subversive perspectives of the marginalized and suppressed.

Unraveling the “conflicting and subversive perspectives of the marginalized and suppressed” is what this paper seeks to explore. *The Slave Raiders* pits the Anlo against the English in a long-drawn battle for survival; the former fiercely resisting attempts by the English to usurp their land, turn their institutions upside down and enslave them, the latter using every available means, including military might, to maximize profit from the trade in slaves from the Guinea Coast. The novel emphasizes the role of institutions, individuals and symbols in the contest. On the side of the English, it involves Her Majesty's Government, the Royal African Company, the Duke of York, John Hawkins, the man around whom the whole slave-

mercantile complex revolves, as well as the military might of England, symbolized by Fort Singelenburgh, situated at Keta. On the Anlo side, it involves the the Awomefia (Paramount Chief of the Anlo State), Mama Hundolo (the Queen), the “bokowo” (the diviners) and the entire Anlo state apparatus. The author recreates a milieu in which the principal actors are resurrected from history and vested with power, platforms and voices to articulate positions, beliefs and values and to act out roles. One significant platform, on the English side, is the shareholders’ meeting of the Royal African Company in London. That platform, in the universe of the text, represents institutional memory as far as England’s role in the Slave Trade is concerned.

At that meeting, graced by the Duke of York himself, Hawkins, the protagonist and anti-hero of the story, in his best element, boasts of how well he knows the Guinea Coast, the “savages” and, above all, the trade in negroes and why eleven more cargo vessels must be added to Her Majesty’s merchant fleet. The Duke so appreciates Hawkins’ and the Guinea Coast’s contribution to the wealth of England that he inaugurates a new currency denomination named “guinea,” in honour of the Guinea Coast “from where gold, in form of negroes, was procured to mint them” (p.99). The most flowery homily, however, is reserved for Hawkins: “Thanks particularly to Captain John Hawkins and his crew of brave English seamen who introduced our great country to *the most lucrative trade in the civilized world ever engaged in...*” (italics mine) (p.99).

Thereafter, the Duke goes into a long tirade about the economies of scale of the trade, hammering official/state support and logistics, and calling for expansion and competitive edge over other nations engaged in the trade namely, the Portuguese, the Spaniards, the Dutch, the Danes and the Arabs. For this reason, he charges the Royal African Company to redouble its efforts: “New jungles should be explored, new plains scoured and fresh highlands charted for the black cargoes” (p.100). He confesses that the prosperity of London, Dover, Leeds and Liverpool hinges entirely on the Slave Trade. The above point is buttressed by Hawkins:

This same trade...has created many job opportunities for our young men. Our factories and industries have multiplied several folds since we engaged in this trade. It’s quite clear that our prosperity as a nation totally depends on this self-same business...(pp.103-4).

Here, even though the event is captured in singulative frequency (narrated only once), its import is quite pervasive and revelatory of the worldview, culture and conduct of the people involved in the Slave Trade. On the English side. Clearly, the narrative above, well crafted to define and re-define England within the operative historical context, helps to connect Azasu’s fiction to historical reality. Odotei (2002:12) notes that “from the closing stages of the 15th century to the 19th century, the Gold Coast witnessed intensive commercial activities.” She further states that the arrival of the Portuguese on the shores of the Gold Coast in 1471 led to the arrival of other European countries: “In the 17th century other European nations joined the Portuguese on the coast...the Dutch, who later ousted the Portuguese, the British, the Swedes, Danes, Brandenburgers and the French” (12). Commenting on the articles of trade, Odotei further relates that, from the beginning, gold and ivory were the principal export exchange for alcoholic drinks, textiles, utensils and knives; “with the discovery of America, the establishment of plantains and the need for labour, slaves became the principal export commodity from the Gold Coast” (12).

Thus, this segment of the story, with its emphasis on the plundering of Africa by way of cheap slave labour, and its economic mapping and historical realism, is a narrative technique which allows the perpetrators to, as it were, own up to their own ‘transgressions’ from an official and institutional position.

In fidelity to the facts of history with regard to resistance to the Slave Trade, *The Slave Raiders* also re-enacts scenarios of wars and well-coordinated resistance by the Anlo to the English agenda. Of historical importance is the final battle in the third segment of the novel, which is an ingenious re-creation of the series of Anlo wars of resistance against the English, Danes and Dutch which are well documented in Ewe historian Francis Agbodeka's *A Handbook of Eweland* (1997) and Thorkild Hansen's *The Coast of Slaves* (2002). In particular, Boko Agozi's plot, which succeeds in getting Hawkins to part with a large consignment of his dreaded arms and ammunition, is based on a ploy in which, historically, Biorn, the Danish Governor of Christiansborg Castle in Accra, was deceived into arming the Anlo with 6,000 rigsdaler. This led to The Battle of Dzenunyekope between the Danes, aided by the Akwamu, and the Anlo on February 24, 1792 (Agbodeka 1977: 20-21). In this battle, the Anlo were completely defeated. However, Azasu turns this story around, by crowning the Anlo effort with victory. The difference between the actual historical account and Azasu's fiction is that the latter turns history into a tool of nationalist propaganda and an allegory in which virtue, embodied in the simple, rural and militarily disadvantaged Anlo, triumphs over vice, embodied in the wicked, exploitative, greedy, devious and militarily powerful English. It is also a fable, or a trickster tale, in which the vulnerable and the weak employ intelligence, guile, cunning and subterfuge to outwit their powerful enemies. The Anlo depend on their intelligence, the Creator God (Mawu Segbo-Lisa) and the lesser gods to fight their war against the Hawkins military-commercial complex, located in Fort Singelenburg.

In reality, Fort Singelenburg represents Fort Prinzenstein at Keta. Here, Azasu taps into the importance of forts in the history of slavery and the history of Ghana and Africa. According to Dantzig (introduction to *Forts and Castles in Ghana*, 1999, p.vii), within three centuries "more than sixty castles, forts and lodges were built along a stretch of coast less than 300 miles (500km) long" and whether ruined or intact, they must be seen as "a *collective historical monument* unique in the world." With regard to the significance of the slave castle in Ghanaian and Pan-African literature, Anyidoho (2000:11) is of the view that the castle be seen as one of the key "defining metaphors." Elsewhere, he establishes the pre-eminence of the castle in the Pan-African culture and consciousness:

The slave castle is no ordinary inscription in the material and spiritual world of African people. [...] But in the complex politics of place and cultural change, the proud, even arrogant location of the slave castles is a key to the final unlocking of those monumental gates we once locked and sealed to keep the storms of history from sweeping us into oblivion (Anyidoho, 1986: 26).

The importance Azasu attaches to Fort Singelenburgh (Fort Prinzenstein) cannot be overstated. The fort, thematically, must be seen as straddling image and symbol, incarnating the brutish dominance of England on the Anlo coast by its very gargantuan structural presence. As image, it evokes fear on account of its predatory physical or concrete qualities; as symbol, it stands for something other than itself—not a mere edifice. In this sense, it is a covert theme, which, technically, is "discovered by the reader/critic as an element in the novel of which perhaps even the author was unaware" (Hawthorn 2001:106).

As in Opoku-Agyemang's anthology *Cape Coast Castle*, Fort Singelenburgh functions as a separate and, at the same time, complementary narrative; it functions as what Vansina (1985) terms "iconography"—a concrete relic of history embedded with stories. Opoku-Agyemang describes the castle as "edifice and metaphor" (Introduction to *Cape Coast Castle*, p.1), as "full of discrepancies and confused codes" (p.1) and as a "means to grasp the full range and significance of the single most traumatic experience in all our known history" (p.1). He personifies the castle and vests it with mnemonic power and a voice to recall and tell its

own horror stories pertaining to the Slave Trade. Similarly, in *The Slave Raiders*, the author-narrator makes Fort Singelenburg a vital link between the perpetrator and victim divide and, like Opoku-Agyemang, projects the fort not only as a relic of history but also an accessory and therefore complicit in the Slave Trade. There is, however, some ambivalence about its role—the fort is also, by some paradoxical twist of history, a liberatory symbol, for it is deep within the dungeons of the fort that the Anlo captives plot and consummate their war of attrition against the English.

Sociological Perspective: A Tale of Two Societies

Sociological Criticism, introduced by literary and critical theorist Kenneth Burke, is literary criticism directed to understanding literature in its larger social context; it codifies the literary strategies that are employed to represent social constructs through a sociological methodology. Burke, like the New Critics, avoids affective response and authorial intention, and rather considers literature as systematic reflections of society and societal behavior. Austin Harrington (2004), on the other hand, posits that there are several methods of regarding art from a sociological perspective, and considering the sociological element is essential because art is inevitably full of references and commentaries on the present-day society.

In adopting a sociological perspective on *The Slave Raiders*, it is important to note that the author shuffles between two societies in time and space. This narrative trajectory allows the author to explore both societies and to compare and contrast their worldviews, beliefs systems, values and social organization, and how these are reflected in their respective modes of behavior during the Slave Trade.

The first segment of the novel focuses on Anlo society. It is presented as a well-organised society which is on the threshold of disintegration as a result of its contact with the English. It is a society well balanced between the secular powers and the divinities. These powers are well defined and demarcated. The social contract is driven by adherence to the norms, rules and customs of the people which are founded on the wisdom and good counsel of the forebears. It, therefore, has no room for deviants, nonconformists and outlaws such as the incorrigible Adzoblasu. Such people are dispatched to *Toko Atolia*, a sacred place of capital punishment (See F.K. Fiawoo's play *The Fifth Landing Stage*). It is a democratic society in which there is freedom of expression and respect for human dignity. As the Awomefia, King of the Anlo State, explains, "an expression of opinion is not an abomination" and everyone has the right to express his opinion, no matter how foolish" for as the elders say, "two heads are better than one" (p.19). Above all, the people are proud of their culture and are ready to defend themselves against any power or individual who wants to dominate or subjugate them.

In the second segment of the novel, Azasu concentrates on the English people so as to expose the contradictions on which their claim to civilization rests. This is a society ruled by a morbid fear of witchcraft, where, like the Salem witch-hunt in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, self-appointed witch-hunters pick on innocent citizens and consign them to fire. This is a society in which a bully like John Hawkins, one who is a law unto himself, in spite of his brutish behaviour, becomes a role model and gets knighted simply because he champions the hunting of negroes for the benefit of England.

The moral depravity of English society is also depicted in a celebration on board the *Jesus* prior to Hawkins' return trip to the Guinea Coast. The cream of the society, including the clergy, drink to a level at which the feast turns into one long night of shame:

Thus the drinking went on, and by the time several tots of the strong drinks went round, men and women were reduced to squealing swines. Even Cardinal Wolsey did not know where he was and what he was doing. He stood up, swaying from side to side, "*Gloria in excelsis Deus!*" he chanted in a terrible voice. Then he began to retch and vomit, after which he began to cast devils out of the blessed *Jesus*. Before long, however, he began to vomit again (p.224).

In portraying the defining characteristics of the English society, Azasu casts Hawkins as a larger-than-life representative character who epitomizes the warped values of his people. Hawkins and his wife are creatures and caricatures in the hands of the writer who uses them as mouthpieces of the average English person. Their mindset with regard to Blacks is the mindset of the Western world in general and England in particular. To Hawkins, negroes are divinely suited to be 'hunted' for the good of England. He does not see 'negroes' as human beings but as animals. His wife believes same. When Mrs Hawkins asks the question, "Why do the negroes resist capture, anyway?" (p.93), Hawkins' explanation reduces the issue to the basic 'mammal' instinct in negroes: "why monkeys and other wild animals resist capture" (p.93). For both of them, negroes resisting capture are not resisting the violation of their fundamental human right to freedom but are guilty of spurning a God-sent opportunity to become civilized. According to Mrs Hawkins, "it were better for negroes to give themselves up voluntarily" and they "ought to be grateful for being taken into civilization rather than being left in their jungle tree-tops" (p.93). Indeed, Hawkins's appointment of a veterinary specialist, Dr Savage, to oversee the negro captives is further proof of his belief that negroes are animals: of course, not animals, but lesser animals. For instance, he seems to be more interested in the survival of his horse Blucher than the negroes:

What are a few negroes, compared to a pedigree horse?...negroes are there for the capture on the Guinea Coast. But pedigree horses like Blucher are seen once in a lifetime. Moreover, Blucher is my personal property. The negroes are company property and are for sale. What's more? Provided we don't lose more than two-thirds of the stock, the company will still make a good profit...(p.94).

Azasu also delves into the linkages between the Slave Trade and religion, specifically Christianity. In *The Slave Raiders*, religion and racism are intimately conflated. From a sociological perspective, Africans are portrayed as a people intoxicated with religion, which predisposes them to easy exploitation, indoctrination and abuse. This is not lost on the English. According to Hawkins:

Once anything is said in the name of God, the negro believes it. This is why we need people to go into their settlements in the African hinterland and tell them about how religious we also are. It will perhaps be useful...to dress like the negroes' own witch-priests and preach the true gospel to them. Such people must make it a point to differentiate between themselves and the rest of us and make the negro think that we traders are different from themselves, even though we are their compatriots. The real aim, however, must be that they should study the ways of the negro and inform us about them so as to help devise easy ways of capturing them...(p.106).

This explains the presence of many characters from within the ranks of the clergy: Rev Wolsey, Archbishop Lascasas, Father Elias and Father Bond. All these characters imbibe and propagate scriptural dogmas of privileged/chosen and cursed/damned races, especially the story of Noah and his children, Japheth, Shem and Ham (Genesis 9: 20-25). This is extended to the definition of the relationship between the "Aryan race, the descents of Japheth...created to conquer and rule" (p.243), and the negro race, "descendants of the accursed Ham" who have been "condemned to slavery" (p.244). The Hamitic myth is thus employed consistently to justify slavery. However, the flippant manner in which it is invoked reduces the doctrine to a

farcical fixation on the part of its propagators. And, in terms of focalization, the narrative quickly shifts from the Africans to those who exploit their spiritual vulnerability, thereby according the narrator the latitude to dwell extensively, and in a subtly deflationary manner, on the spiritual and moral bankruptcy of the English. In the final analysis, the English clergy are made to concede that they are misapplying religion in the service of the Slave Trade. Father Bond confesses that the clergy are guilty of many evils:

But, perhaps, the most evil of our activities is that we have become errand boys for the princes of the earth! Hence they send us on all sorts of evil errands. We go on missions of espionage in the name of the Gospel!...we the clergy are a contemptible lot. The true message of the Lord is lost...We are merely servants of the world, not the Lord (p.209).

What is important here is that, by comparison, whereas in Anlo society the spiritual heads of the society—the *bokowo*—are the custodians and gatekeepers of public morality, intercessors and links between mortals and the divinities, who themselves must—and do—live beyond reproach, the clergy in English society, judging by their conduct, are anything but spiritual, or morally upright.

By juxtaposing Anlo society against English society in *The Slave Raiders*, and extensively profiling both, Azasu delves deep into the pedestrian racist proclivities of the time, especially among the elite and merchant class in Europe. In the process, he shows utter contempt for English society, portraying it as depraved, pervert and degenerate, a way of deflating Europe's claim to a superior civilization. On the basis of the conduct English, both in England and on the Guinea Coast, in comparison with their African counterparts, the English are portrayed as morally bankrupt, unintelligent, greedy, exploitative and inhuman.

In the author's attempt to capture, in particular, the decadence of English society, he deploys graphic and concrete symbols of filth and excrement, as in Ghanaian writers Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Amu Djoletto's *Money Galore*. Examples of such symbolisms of decadence are: (a) the vomiting spree on board the *Jesus* after the wild revelry of the night; (b) the long and contagious farting jamboree at Westminster Abbey during the funeral mass for the *Jesus* victims and (c) Hawkins' defaecation during an armed robbery episode. Although this has become an over-exploited motif in postcolonial Ghanaian fiction, its deployment in *The Slave Raiders* accentuates the consistent negative portraiture of the English and their institutions.

In the concluding segment of the novel, the ambush and routing of Lt Bulson's army on their way from Dakpa and the final battle in which Hawkins' army is annihilated, culminating in the capture of Hawkins himself, is another example of denigrating England. The final scene in which the dreaded "negro-hunter" is now hunted is symbolic. This reversal of roles and stations is a subversive and demolition and exercise; an inversion of the political, economic and social order created by England. England, personified by Hawkins, on the defensive now, is made to go through the motions of how it feels like being hunted like animals in the jungle.

The victors, the Anlo warriors, in the end prove to be more humane in victory. In spite of all the plunder, mayhem and arson visited on Anlo settlements from Lokpodzi, Dzelukope, Vui, Tetevikope all the way to Anloga, they are noble and decorous in victory. The difference between them and the whites is that "under Boko Agozi's priestly guidance, it was decided that the hunt should be totally bloodless" (p.350). Consequently, they treat their prisoners of war, especially the teenage Francis Drake, with compassion. When Awadada suggests they sell them to the "Agudawo" (Arabs) and the "Kpotokuiawo" (Portuguese),

Boko Agozi responds with perhaps the most conciliatory statement ever made by the spiritual head of an oppressed people:

What have we been fighting against? The selling of human beings or what? Moreover, did you not say we should send a message to Yisabeti, the queen of Pinkmanland, to forbid her subjects from coming to hunt us down in our own land? Through whom will you send your message if you sell your prospective messengers? (p.352).

Ideological Perspective: Nationalism or Anti-racist Racism?

Carolyn Betensky, in her article “The Ideological Novel” (1999), defines ideological novels as novels “with clear-cut ideological objectives—that is, novels that leave no doubt that they advocate a particular set of moral, social, political, or religious beliefs and...aim to impart them to their readers”. She cites Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times* (1854), Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* (1960), Nadine Gordimer’s *July’s People* (1981) and George Orwell’s *Burmese Days* (1934) as novels which could be categorized as such. Her main parameter for categorizing these novels as ideological is that they all “decry the situations they describe from a position sympathetic to the victims of oppression,” but, at the same time, she also posits that novels “supporting a conservative or reactionary ideology, as well as those actively promoting the domination the novels above oppose, would qualify equally as ideological novels” (Betensky, 581). Drawing on the works of Althusser (1977), Foucault (1980), Lennard (1987), Eagleton (1991), Suleiman (1983), Marx and Engels (1987) etc., Betensky concedes that the ideological novel is more difficult to characterize than it might appear, for although it overlaps considerably with the political novel, the social novel, the philosophical novel or novel of ideas, and the religious novel, among others, it still does not lend itself easily to categorization.

It is imperative to treat the ideological perspective of *The Slave Raiders* as a distillation of the historical and sociological perspectives. In that context, an ideological criticism of *The Slave Raiders* must be predicated on the contrasting and mutually exclusive ideological stances projected in the text by the author. If *The Slave Raiders* is to a large extent ideological, it is perhaps counter-poised in response to the negative ideas about Africa and Africans which resonate loudly in the words, attitudes and conduct of the English. These, beyond the fictive world of the text, represent Western myths and perceptions regarding the Black race, such as those propagated by the likes of Hegel, Hume, Ellis and others. With particular reference to the author’s ethnic group, the Ewe, Ellis’ *The Ewe-Speaking People of the Slave Coast of West Africa* (1970) is instructive, and may well have shaped Azasu’s subversive project in *The Slave Raiders*. According to Ellis, “The Ewe-speaking peoples of the Slave Coast present the ordinary characteristics of the uncivilized negro,” derived from the general ‘scientific’ observation that, like most inhabitants of the tropics, “the negroes of the Slave Coast have more spontaneity and less application, more intuition and less reasoning power, than the inhabitants of temperate climates. They can imitate but they cannot invent, or even apply” (Ellis 1970:10). At the risk of falling foul of “intentional fallacy,” it is suggested that, perhaps, it is such deprecating racist ideas that the writer and the novel seek to contest and which makes the novel ideological and subversive.

Generally, when a novel projects extreme ideological positions relating to race, critics are quick to designate such a novel as promoting “anti-racist racism.” Anti-racist racism can be defined as an extreme lack of respect, or contempt, for other races which hold the same level of lack of respect or contempt for one’s race. It can also be adapted to one’s race if there exist elements within the racial ethos which elicit contempt—as Azasu demonstrates in his attitude to Africans with regard to their religious overzealousness, or as Jean-Paul Sartre applied in his study of Negritude (Sartre, 1965). Jeanpierre (1965:870) recalls that Sartre, using

Hegelian concepts to analyse Negritude, concluded that “Negritude is the antithesis, the weak beat of a dialectical progression, a moment of negativity in counter-response to the thesis of white supremacy and exists only to destroy itself.” Going by the Hegelian dialectics, white racism equates the “thesis” while Negritude is the “antithesis.” The third phase, or the “synthesis,” is “superior to both and is called *Aufhebung* by Hegel—which means to go beyond, to suppress and to conserve” (Jeanpierre, 870).

Critics, particularly those belonging to the race being attacked, object to the ideological novel because they regard it as “being dominated by its own argument” and because “they do not share the point of view the novel seems so persistently to express” (Betensky 582). Such is the attitude of Bernth Lindfors to Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons* which he describes as a “negation of negation...a philosophy of paranoia, an anti-racist racism” that reduces human society to a “xenophobic over-simplification” of good and evil, creating “the dangerous kind of lie” that Frantz Fanon used to call a “mystification” (Lindfors, 1992:271).

Laurence Lerner (1998), dilating on history and fiction, as well as text and reality, identifies three contexts to any text: its ideology, its strategies of writing and its social reality. All three work in tandem in *The Slave Raiders*. The “ideological implication,” as Hayden White (1973) outlines with regard to novels that draw on history, is projected by Azasu’s “strategies of writing.” That the narrative voices in *The Slave Raiders* are implicitly, or overtly, bi-polar (‘we’ versus ‘they’) and the narrator-author overly self-conscious and ideologically insular, cannot be disputed. The narrator-ideologue decries the situations he describes and “from a position sympathetic to the victims of oppression.” So, ideologically, could “anti-racist racism” be imputed to *The Slave Raiders*, not necessarily because the reader disagrees with the points of view the novel “seems so persistently to express,” but that it appears manifestly so? Indeed, there is a sense in which Azasu, to parody Lindfors, engages in a conscious “negation of negation,” a reversal of the preconceived negative ideas imbibed and propagated by the practitioners of slavery, since these self-same negative ideas have been used to justify slavery. This is evident in the author’s portrayal of his own (Anlo) society as opposed to the English society that has denigrated, suppressed and exploited the former. Besides the mercantile instinct, which is the fuel for the English society’s involvement in the Slave Trade, racism appears to be what drives the whole project. The author, therefore, projects English racism in all its manifestations, particularly the general prevailing Caucasian attitude to the Black race, and mercilessly demolishes the Caucasian claim to racial superiority. Thus, the author firmly places the text in the thesis-antithesis-synthesis schemata. Below is a diagrammatic summation of Azasu’s ideological narrative re-engineering:

EUROCENTRIC IDEOLOGICAL POSITION

	Europe/England	Africa/Anloland	
	{ Civilized	Un-civilized/savage/barbaric }	
POSITIVE	{ Militarily powerful	Militarily weak }	NEGATIVE
	{ Racially superior	Racially inferior }	

AFROCENTRIC NEGATION OF NEGATION

	Europe/England	Africa/Anloland	
	{ Un-civilized/savage/barbaric	Civilized }	
NEGATIVE	{ Militarily weak	Militarily powerful }	POSITIVE
	{ Racially inferior	Racially superior }	

By the time the story ends, the transpositions on the continuum, along the lines of the three main defining attributes—civilization, power and race—become clearly established. In effect, no longer does the Eurocentric status quo hold; neither will it be ever re-established, having been so thoroughly subverted and demolished through narrative.

Indeed, in the entire text, as earlier noted, one notices the author's manipulative hand behind the narrative; a kind of deictic approach to narrative. Deixis in narrative discourse is the process of analyzing how a story is experienced by the reader. It is approached from many different angles, including philosophy, theoretical and empirical linguistics, psycholinguistics, developmental psychology, literary criticism, and artificial intelligence. Duchan et al. (1995), employing deictic theory, deictic tracking in narrative and subjectivity in narrative, assert (under Deictic Shift Theory) that a narrative is assumed to create a mental model of the "story world" according to the author. Thus, the deictic center of the reader is shifted from the real-world situation to an image of himself or herself at a location within the story world. The reader experiences and interprets the story from this deictic center, which may move as the story unfolds. The author of the narrative can manipulate the deictic center of the reader by writing the story using a certain perspective (for instance, first-person narration, or represented speech).

Therefore, instead of "nationalism," or "anti-racist racism," it is argued that the author uses deictic tools to shift the center(s) of the narrative to suit clearly identifiable ideological perspectives.

Conclusion

In *The Slave Raiders*, Azasu reconstructs and presents the story of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade as a system located deep in a socio-historical matrix involving a large number of individuals, social groups and institutions. The narrative voices function as a paratext, through which the entire story filters. However, at the end of the story, through the author's manipulation of the deictic centre, the reader's accustomed knowledge of the story of slavery, historically, sociologically and ideologically, is radically reshaped in favour of the victim society.

References

Abrams, M.H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (7th ed). Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Adams, Hazard. (1971). *Critical Theory Since Plato*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

African Holocaust. (1998-2010). Africa before Transatlantic Slave Trade. (http://www.africanholocaust.net/news_ah/africa%20before%20slavery.htm) Retrieved September 10, 2010.

Agbodeka, Francis (Ed.). (1997). *A Handbook of Eweland* (Vol.1). Accra: Woeli Publishing Services.

Aidoo, Ama Ata. (1965). *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. London: Longman.

----- (1970). *Anowa*. London: Longman.

Anyidoho, Kofi. (1986). *Slave Castle, African Historical Landscape and Literary Imagination*, *Drumspeak* 1, 22-38.

- (1993). *Ancestral Logic and Caribbean Blues*. Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press.
- (2000). National Identity and the Language of Metaphor. In Kofi Anyidoho & James Gibbs (Eds.), *FonTomFrom: Contemporary Ghanaian Literature, Theatre and Film*, (Matatu 21-22, pp.12-28), Amsterdam & Atlanta GA: Editions Rodopi.
- Armah, Ayi Kwei. (1968). *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. London: Heinemann.
- (1973). *Two Thousand Seasons*. Nairobi: East African Publishing
- (1974). *Why Are We So Blest?* London: Heinemann.
- (1995). *Osiris Rising*. Popenguine, Senegal: Per Ankh.
- Awoonor, Kofi. (1992). *Comes the Voyager at Last*. Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press.
- Azasu, Kwakuvi. (2002). *The Slave Raiders*. Accra: Yamens Press.
- Biddle, Arthur W. & Toby Fulwiler. (1989). *Reading, Writing, and the Study of Literature*. NY: Random House.
- Betensky, Carolyn. (1999). The Ideological Novel. In Paul Schellinger, Christopher Hudson & Marijke Rijsberman (Eds.), *Encyclopaedia of the Novel* (pp.581-584). Chicago: Fitzroy Dearbon Publishers.
- Brew, Kwesi. 1995. *Return of No Return*. Accra: Woeli Publishing.
- Dantzig, van Albert. (1999). *Forts and Castles of Ghana*. Accra: Sedco Publishing.
- Djoleto, Amu. (1975). *Money Galore*. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Di Yanni, Robert. (1995). *Critical Perspectives: Approaches to Analysis and Interpretation of Literature*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Duchan, Judith F, Gail A. Bruder, & Lynne E. Hewitt (Eds). (1995). Deixis in Narrative: A Cognitive Science Perspective. In *Computational Linguistics*, 22, 3 (State University of New York at Buffalo), Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ellis, A. B. (1970). *The Ewe-Speaking People of the Slave Coast of West Africa*. Ousterhout, Netherlands: Anthropological Publications.
- Fiawoo, F.K. (1943). *The Fifth Landing Stage*. London: Lutterworth,
- Hansen, Torkild. (2002). *The Coast of Slaves*. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers.
- Harrington, Austin. (2004). *Art and Social Theory*. Malden: Polity Press.
- Jeanpierre, W.A. (1965). Sartre's Theory of 'Anti-Racist Racism' in His Study of Negritude. *The Massachusetts Review* 6, 4, 870-872. Available at [http://www.jstor.org/stable\(25087373\)](http://www.jstor.org/stable(25087373)) Accessed October 30, 2012.

Lerner, Laurence. (1988). *The Frontiers of Literature*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Lindfors, Bernth. Armah's Histories, *African Literature Today* 11, 85-96.

Lynn, Steven. (1998). *Texts and Contexts: Writing About Literature with Critical Theory*. (2nd ed.) NY: Longman.

Miller, Arthur. (1981). *The Crucible*. Hammondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Murfin, Ross, & Supryia M. Ray. (1997). *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*. Boston: Bedford Books.

Odotei, Irene. (2002). (quoted in Thorkild Hansen's *Coast of Slavery*, trans. Kari Dako). Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers).

Opoku-Agyemang, Kwadwo. (1996). *Cape Coast Castle*. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers.

Vansina, Jan. (1985). *Oral Tradition as History*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

White, Hayden. (1973). *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.