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**The Islamic Aspects in Aboulela's *Coloured Lights*  
*The Museum and Visitors***

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English  
as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
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# DEDICATION

To the realization of this work I am sincerely thankful to many people. I owe great dept of gratitude and respect to my dear parents, for their support, encouragement, and constant love have sustained me throughout my life.

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to my brother “*Amin*” whose encouragement and optimistic outlook helped a lot. and my sister “*Bouchra*” and her little angel “*Khadija*”.

And all my family especially my lovely grandmother.

To all my uncles and aunts and their children.

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I offer this fruit to all my friends especially “*Siham*” and “*Karima*” to whom I wish all the best.

*Moulay Nadjat*

# DEDICATION

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# General Introduction

## **General Introduction**

Africa is a vast continent, the most diverse in term of language and tradition, its people experienced centuries of exploitation and oppression under the European tyranny. From slavery to colonialism, two racist processes. This people found no way but struggle to get their right of independence and freedom.

Oral and written literature in Africa is mainly associated with these issues, of slavery and colonialism, and the search for a common identity. Both throughout the continent, but unfortunately female writers contributed in the development of this literature marginalization and criticism from their male counterpart.

The term African literature carries with it a particular ambiguity of reference in its present and common usage. There is a symbolic relationship between language, culture and literature in Africa. The cultural aspects in African literature are associated with time, family structure, marriage , names and religion.

Women have made a significant and distinctive contribution to the development of English writing in Africa. Though early critical accounts often overlooked their work, or misread it with a masculinist bias.

Sudanese women writers are victims of this marginalization as women in a male dominated society. They have less literary production compared to male writers and these women, usually, stop writing after completing their higher education and certainly after marriage. The scene in Sudan is not so favorable for the development of literary production produced by women and to a lesser extent by men, which led many of these writers to leave the country.

Leila Aboulela is one of those writers who found in the west (Scotland) the opportunity to write and express her nostalgic feeling towards her country. She wrote two novels *The Translator* (1999), *Minaret* (2005), and a collection of short stories entitled *Coloured lights* (2001). In this collection Aboulela, through her characters,



## ***General Introduction***

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mainly women, treated different themes related to womanhood, marriage, women's generosity in homeland, and the life of Muslim woman experienced in the west.

In this thesis two short stories from this collection had been chosen, *The Museum* and *Visitors*, in order to see whether Aboulela's characters present the real images of Muslims at home or in a foreign country, by showing the Islamic aspects in the two short stories. Also, to see if the nostalgic feeling or the presence in a foreign country made Aboulela shift to writing and does she writes for the western audiences or for the people of Sudan.

This work is divided into two chapters, The first one provides a broad vision about the African literature and how this later developed from an oral tradition to a written form in both African and European languages. As for the second chapter, it treats the issues of African women writers and their struggle within their societies in order to make their voice heard, and portrays the success of the Sudanese Leila Aboulela in her career as a writer through the analyses of two short stories namely, *Visitors* and *The Museum*

# Chapter One:

## **African History and Literature**

## **1.1. Introduction**

Africa is an entire continent; it is the world's most diverse in terms of language and culture, stretching from the southern shores of the Mediterranean to the cape of Good Hope and today comprising over 50 separate nations. It is the cradle of mankind, where humans first evolved and from where they fanned out to settle the earth. Africa also possesses a recoverable history stretching back millennium to the earliest of the world's ancient civilizations, that of pharaoh Egypt.

Living conditions and political circumstances have paved the way for the development of a myriad of literary works, for example, those that were written as responses to subjugation. Colonization gives the continent the medium by which they could put into writing and document their art, culture and circumstance. Most of those that were written were response to racism and the African struggle for freedom and independence.

This chapter gives a broad vision about both history and literature of the black continent Africa. It also treats the oral and the written literature in both African and European language. Then, the most frequent themes in African literature which are colonialism, corruption and disillusionment due to its great effect on the society. This part offers some African cultural aspects, in which there is a description of the lives of traditional Africans and their culture.

## **1.2. Historical Background**

Our knowledge of African history is based on combination of African oral traditions and the reports given by early travelers. Recently, this information has been augmented by the discourses of archaeologists. In the fourteenth century, European economy was based on trade to gain money and power. After the discovery of the American continent Europeans thought about bringing Africans to the new world in the seventeenth century, across the Atlantic in a process called the slave trade in order to work there. In this respect, Ball (2000) says:

This migration, along with the confusing African migration is the method east and North Africa, was distinct from major modern migrations in its involuntary nature, and the high rates of mortality and social dislocation caused by the method of capture and transportation. A related migratory pattern, the capture and setting of millions of slaves within Africa, grew up in eighteenth and nineteenth century Africa as a consequence of the two patterns of overseas slave trade (p. 6)

After three centuries of slave trade, Europeans decided to stop it. By the end of the nineteenth century Europeans colonized most of Africa. The scramble for Africa (1880, 1900) was a period of rapid colonization of the African continent. By the beginning of 1880s just a little piece of Africa was under European rule. In 1814 the British took the Dutch province in South Africa. In 1830 the French pervaded Algeria. However colonization became serious only in the late nineteenth century when Europeans cut up Africa. In 1884 the Germans attained Namibia, Togo and Cameroon and in 1885 they invaded Tanzania. In 1885 Belgium assumed control on what is now Democratic Republic of Congo. The French took Madagascar in 1896. They additionally expended their empire in Northern Africa. In 1912, they took Morocco and Italy took Libya. In 1914 the British had the control over Egypt.

By then, all of Africa was under the European power aside from Liberia and Ethiopia; the Italians attacked Ethiopia in 1896. However, they were crushed by the Ethiopians. Further south, the British invaded Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Uganda and Kenya. Angola and Mozambique remained Portuguese (Iliffe, 2007). “The period that saw the conquest and occupation of virtually the whole continent of Africa by the imperial powers and the establishment of the colonial system”(AduBoahen, 1985, p.1).

As a result of colonization and imperialism, Africa suffered long term effects, such as the loss of important natural resources like gold and rubber, economic destruction, cultural confusion, geopolitical division and political

subjugation. “The Europeans often justified this using the concept of the white Man’s Burden, an obligation to “civilize” the people of Africa” (Birmingham,1995, p.1)

However, in the early twentieth century disposition to colonialism started to change in Europe. Moreover in Africa, churches gave schools and expanding numbers of Africans became educated. They became fretful for freedom; thus, the movements for Africans independence became unstoppable and in the late 1950s, and 1968s most Africans nations became free.

### **1.3. The African Literature**

Africa is a wide continent, made up of more than fifty countries and hundreds of languages and ethnic groups. There is a large production of literature and oral traditions in African-language , which is largely unknown and ignored by those outside the continent. In fact, oral as well as, verbal artistic traditions are used in Africa years ago. Ages before European colonialism and the introduction of European languages, there were poets and story tellers, bards , scribes, and writers in languages such as Kiswahili and Amharic. African literature, in fact, is one of the main currents of world literature, stretching continuously and directly back to ancient history (Eileen,p.1).

The term African literature carries with it a particular ambiguity in its present and common usage. In first place, the use of the term is posited upon a disjunction between language and literature. “Language is the fundamental unit of literature. It can be said that language makes literature” (Ansari,1992, p. 2). The association between language and literature can be said to be natural in so far as language constitutes the grounding structure of all literary expression, so that the unity of a body of literature is most readily perceived in terms of its language of expression rather than by any other criterion. For historical reasons, the term African literature does not obey this convention. The corpus is in fact multilingual. The consideration of the range of literatures in Africa, according to Gerard: “The phrase African Literature refers to three distinct fields of creativeness and scholarship each

of which is characterized by its own bewildering diversity”(Gerard,1980, p. 67)

These literatures fall into three broad categories: the traditional oral literature, the new written literature in the African languages, and the written literature in languages not indigenous to Africa, in particular the three European languages of English, French, and Portuguese.

### **1.3.1. The Traditional Oral Literature**

Oral literatures have flourished in Africa for many centuries and take a variety of forms including, the folk tales, myths, epics, funeral dirges, praise poems and proverbs. “It exists in the hundreds of languages and dialects which are spoken on the black continent” (Gerard, 1980, p. 67). Oral traditions can be divided stylistically into those transmitted in a stereotypical way and those transmitted freely, changing with differences of time, place, and individual speakers.

The first category consists of traditions that work in ritual and worship, such as invocations, incantations, funeral dirges, praise songs, etc. Language in this class is highly stylized, and every word is loaded with a special force. The second category encompass stories and legends of the provenance of man’s institutions as well as stories told for educational aim and for entertainment. Myths and legends are concepts and beliefs about the prime history of a course, or discussion of natural events, such as the seasons, made from ancient time. Oral histories, myths, furthermore proverbs help to recall full communities of their past, and the precedents for their costumes and traditions(Gikandi,2003)

Many people throughout the world especially where history and traditions are still carried more through speech than in writing. Every African born on the African land has gained of these oral traditions. Oral literature has flourished in Africa between generations for many centuries and have a variety of styles contained the folktales, myths, epics, praise poems and proverbs. Oral literature is accomplished and created by women and men. Such creative are globalized and

tried to reduce the pressure which becoming more involved on public (Twin,2012).According to Ngugi's way of seeing, one can not " study African literatures without studying the Particular cultures and oral traditions from which Africans draw their plots, styles and metaphors" (Ngugi, 1986, p. 16).

Oral literature may be prose or verse. The prose is often historical and can include tales of the trickster character. Storytellers in Africa sometimes use call-and-response techniques to tell their stories. Poetry, often sung, includes: narrative epic, occupational verse ritual verse, praise poems to rulers and other prominent people. Praise singers, bards sometimes known as "griots" , tell their stories with music- Also recited, often sung, are love songs, work songs, children's songs, along with epigrams, proverbs, this is present in the many proverbs told in Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*(1958) (Gallagher,1997).for instance:

Proverbs seems to occur almost everywhere in Africa, in apparent contrast with other areas of the world such as aboriginal America and Polynesia. Relatively easy to record, they have been exceedingly popular with collectors. The literary relevance of these short saying is clear. Proverbs are a rich source of imagery and succinct expression on which more elaborate forms can draw (Finnengan, 2012, p. 379)

Society stories from Africa are an essential piece of African oral literature and were traditionally passed down across generations. Folk tales are prevalent stories established in individual's psyches, with topics that may range from the foundation, individuals association with the universe, the provenance of sickness, wizardry, marriage, and family, and the relationship between human and animals. stories are critical on the grounds that they give supportive direction on mental comprehension of the groups that make them. The art of storytelling is such a major aspect of African life that most companies have an animal character as the appointed teller of tales. Among the Akan in West Africa

the traditional story teller is Anansi the Spider; among the Chewa in central Africa it is Nadzikam the Chameleon; and among the Zulu in South Africa it is Fudukazi the Tortoise. Usually the stories are designed to prepare young people for life, and so give a lesson or moral (Gikandi,2003)

### **1.3.2. Written Literature in African Languages**

Both language and literature have been regarded as fundamental assign of national identity. In addition, the nationality of any literature is, fully partly, controlled by the language in which it is created. African literature nowadays includes an age-old oral tradition that makes use of the continent's numerous native languages and amore recent tradition of written works. Many of which are occurred in the original European languages and others, in which Africans have adopted. But some voices like Ngugi Wa Thiong's and others, have come to say that literature produced in languages other than African language is not African literature (Menang, 2001).

Ngugi maintains that writing in African language is an essential step about cultural identity and independence from centuries of European exploitation, however, the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe chose not to write or translate *Things Fall Apart* into "*union Igbo*", because he used the "*weapon*" of the English language to accomplish in *Things Fall Apart* (Ngugi, 67). He stated: "It does not matter what language you write in, as long as what you write is good". Achebe fully recognizes that English is symbolically and politically connected with the despoiler of traditional culture with intolerance and bigotry, "language is a weapon, and we use it"; he argued. (Cited in Gallather, 1997, p. 260)

It is said by many critics and writers such as, Ngugi Wa Thiong's (1990) that all African literature should be written in the African dialect and they gave many reasons to support their ideas.

20 years earlier Obi emphasized the idea that African literature should produced with the "African Language" to show the aspects of the African culture and social classes. Ngugi supported Obi's Idea saying that writers should use it



when addressing the African people and to show their refusal to the white culture and interference. "Wider imperialist domination" (Ngugi, 1981, p.74)

Somewhere else, Ngugi Wa Thiong's commends the benefits of African national languages, saying that he would like to see them convey a literature reflecting not just the rhythms of a kid's talked expression. But also his struggle with nature and his social nature"(1990,p.74). Ngugi actually puts African languages at the highest point of the progression of languages for the African when he adds:

With that harmony between himself. His language and his environment as a starting point, he can learn other languages and his even enjoy the positive humanistic, democratic and revolutionary elements in other people's literatures and cultures , without any complex about his own languages, his own self, his environment (Ngugi, 1990, p. 72)

Ngugi Wa Thiong's is indeed quite categorical about all the works African writers have produced in English or in any other European language, they are not African literature of these works produced in European languages. He asserts that "what we have created in another hybrid tradition, a tradition, in transition, a minority tradition that can only be termed as afro-European literature that is literature written by Africans in European languages"(Ngugi, 1990, p. 73)

Different writers have put up a strong case for African languages in the domain of artistic innovativeness, as well as in other circle of national life. Towa (1955) requires the advancement and utilization of indigenous African languages because the exclusive use of European language in government and politics happens progress since the masses who do not master the so-called official language remain divorced from the leaders. Discussing the issues confronted the African translator, Nama (1989) focuses on different limitations that exist when the interpreter uses an outside language. He closes: "from a nationalistic standpoint, there is a tinge of

artistic and cultural betrayal in covering the experiences of a particular society in the oppressor's tongue..."(Nama, 1989, p. 22)

The various writers continue to view the European languages. Which some of them use with so much dexterity as languages that will forever be alien to Africans. After the colonial experience, such an attitude seems justified. Yet, it may be based on preconceptions or on an inaccurate vision of Africa.

### **1.3.3. Written Literature in European Languages**

African literature in European languages is a literary tradition that began with the historical meeting with the western world. European languages as part of colonial heritage in Africa have hit a huge impact on the methods of communication, feeling with, and once in a while moving local languages in matters of literacy and intercultural communication. The voltage between European languages and native languages is obviously evident in the field of creative writing. It has been submitted that African literature should ideally use African languages as its means of expression. Nevertheless; European colonial languages are now part of the linguistic landscape of Africa, with many African writers demanding the right to use them for their artistic expression (Bandia, 2003). This claim was eloquently expressed by the Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe, in a speech entitled *The African writer and the English language* when he said:

Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling but for me there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it. [...] I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communication with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings (Achebe, 1975, p. 59)

It is a basic event of the history of the so-called new African nations that most of the literacy works written by citizens of these centuries before and even after independence were written in languages of the European colonial powers. This is not remarkable as these colonial powers advanced literacy in their languages. Often to the detriment of African languages. Thereby many African writers inclusive Ngugi Wa Thiong's and others who today serve to refuse European languages, produced their early works in European languages. When, however, some of them thought that it would be more "African" to write in African languages and called for a rejection of European languages. Other, like Chinua Achebe, Ezekiel Mphahlele and Timothy Wangusa, did not heed the call. They believed that English, or any European language that was well mastered by the writer, could also be employed by the African writer (Menang, 2001).

Writers who encourage the proceed use of European languages advance other reasons for their choice: many African languages are still widely spoken and cannot at this step be used in the production of written works. In addition, most African literature nowadays are literate in European languages and not in African languages. Moreover, the use of a European language also offers the writers access to a wider word audience (Menang, 2001).

While some of these reasons have been dismissed by certain advocates of African languages (Abiola, 1981, Nama, 1989), one point still needs to be made about this language controversy. Apart from expressing the fear that the exclusive use of African languages might, on account of the considerable linguistic diversity of African nations, give rise to ethnic literatures rather than national literatures, writers who support the use of European languages have hardly condemned the use of African languages they have simply found it more expedient to use a European languages.

Omole (1985, 26) aptly describes this dilemma faced by African writers who are led by circumstances to use a European language as "a clash between a desirable ideal and compelling reality". The desirable ideal, according to Omole (1985, 33), is

“the expected social functions of literature to inform entertain and reform...”. While the compelling reality resides largely in Africa’s linguistic complexities and the unpreparedness of many of the numerous African languages to immediately serve the writer’s purpose. The virtues of these African languages thus appear to the acknowledged by most writers and critics.(Menang, 2001)

#### **1.4. Themes and Trends of African Literature**

African literature is wide and diverse, it can be separated into three precise classes: Pre-colonial literature frequently results the type of Oral accounts that are sometimes joined by music and based on the figure of trickster. Colonial literature examines the horrors of subjugation and the slave exchange rebelling against colonialism and drawing motivation from Africa’s past. Postcolonial literature concentrates on the struggle between indigenous and pioneer cultures, expressing hope for Africa’s future. And most African writers focus on colonialism, corruption and disillusionment, because of its expansion in the continent.

##### **1.4.1. Colonialism**

Colonialism has been one of the most persistent themes in African literature, and the colonial circumstance has influenced the creation and change of literary culture on the mainland for several centuries. In the 1950s and 1960s, as countries around the mainland moved pretty much gradually to accomplish decolonization, numerous Africans took up the pen. There were to be sure African imaginative scholars, and also writers and polemicists, who wrote in European languages well before this time “Writers struggled to correct false images, to rewrite fictionally and poetically the history of pre-colonial Africa, and to affirm African perspectives” (Eileen, 2010, p. 297). The aim behind the post-colonial African literature is to give homage to the African people and give a truthful image about them instead of the false image given by the colonizer (Eileen, 2010).

Many writers wrote about the African population and among them Chinua Achebe published his novel in (1959) entitled *Things fall apart and the arrow of god*

to present the African culture and real life. He is one of the major pillars in the African literature his novels seek to denounce the unfairness and injustice of the colonization and it bring to the light the real African history unlike what was said by British and European writers (Achebe,2013). Similar process took place, and still happen within other traditions throughout the continent. The condemnation of colonial domination and the determination to bear witness are more urgent in the Portuguese language poetry of Agostinho (Eileen,2010).

During this period the man Ngugi became an excited speaker against cruelty executed by the Kenyan government against its people within the situation of colonialism. The novel *A Grain of Wheat* suggests, furthermore, the coalescing of lives and forces in the manufacturing of historical events.

Anti-colonialist is a concept that affects the French language in the body of poetry due manifestations. This latter argues African colonialist to get rid of their native traditions and cultures for they have been imposed by the French one, in addition to the pre-colonialism of Britain over them Being put in the middle of the two, African culture that is neither French nor British (Achebe,2013). The poetry of *negritude* grew out of this need to reaffirm “African values” and an African identity. The tone and themes of *négritude* poetry shift from poet to poet. (Eileen, 2010)

Birago Diop’s majestic *Souffles* (spirits) appears to proceed self-assuredly from West African oral conventions and village culture, as it contendstraditional beliefs in the repetitive nature of life and in the perpetually standing vicinitythe ancestors. David Diop, then again, vehemently and passionately denounces slavery and colonial mastery. He expressededin his poem:

Let us answer “present” at the rebirth of the world  
As white flour, cannot rise without the leaven.  
Who else will teach rhythm to the world?  
Deadened by machines and cannons?  
Who will sound the shout of joy at daybreak  
to wake orphans and the dead?

Tell me, who will bring back the memory of life  
To the man of cotton, coffee, and oil  
They call us men of death.  
But we are men of dance, whose feet get stronger  
As we pound upon firm ground. (Cited in Eileen, 2010, p. 298)

There is also a tradition of anti-colonialist satire. Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy* and *The Old Man and the Medal* (1956) and Mongo Beti's, *The Poor Christ of Bomba* (1956) present harsh pictures of the hypocritical and mediocre French colonial masters who are would-be holders of Civilization.

#### **1.4.2. Corruption and Disillusionment**

With the advent of official independence across the African continent, the critical issues of foreign domination under colonialism gradually code centre stage to the disillusionment of independence and the critique of unfair power and corruption. The critique of post-independence regimes is accomplished by a change in literary form, which Ngugi proposes in his controversial essay *Decolonization the Mind* (1986). He points out:

How does a writer, a novelist, shock his readers by telling them that these [heads of state who collaborate with imperialist powers] are neo-slaves when they themselves, the neo-slaves, are openly announcing the fact on the rooftops? How do you shock your readers by pointing out that these are mass murderers, looters, robbers, thieves, when they the perpetrators of these anti-people crimes, are not even attempting to hide the fact? (Cited in Eileen, 2010, p. 299)

African writers have an enduring tendency for social and political engagement. Their lyrics mainly reflect the socio-political events in their societies. Initially, African literature was an instrument to celebrate the heroic majesty

of the African past; later it was used for anti-colonial disillusionment in African nation (Olowomni, 2008, p. 55)

Armah (1968), sets out the corruption in high places as one of the outcomes of abrogation of cultural values in any society. Thus, having turned the trend of cultural values which are significant to it, Africa, as represented by Ghana in the novel falls into corruption is:

Woven deep into the fabric of everyday life. From the bottle of whisky slipped under the counter to speed a traveler's way through customs, to the presidents and ex-presidents living way beyond their declared means, it results in assumption that no business will ever get done without a present changing hands. (Cited in Udunna, 2011, p. 79)

Aki Kwei Armah's novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1969), presents a harsh and uncompromising picture of corruption and disillusionment which many Ghanaians experienced by the late 1960s with the Nkrumah government. The forms of corruption which are expanded in this novel manifest themselves in swindling activities of business owners, giving and accepting of bribes, in the lackadaisical manner with which people conduct public business, and in the amassing of public wealth exhibited by government officials. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* captures the decay and collapse that characterized post-independence Ghana. Being set in Ghana does not take away the fact that the situation described in the book does exist in all the post-independence countries of Africa. On this note (Adunna, 2011), Adeoti comments that the problem was not peculiar to Ghana. He mentions that:

Ghana, in this case, is a metaphor for many ex-colonies of Africa. The situations and events depicted in the novel are, to a large extent, true of post-independence Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Uganda and so on. For instance, popular disaffection with the post-independence civilian administration laid the

foundation for the emergence as heads of state through coups d'état, of Mathew Kerekou (Benin). GnassingbeEyadema (Togo) and Idi Amin (Uganda), among others.(Adeoti, 2005, 14)

African writers link the failure of the post-independence African states to colonialism, and the nature of the political independence given to African countries. In *Kill Me Quick*, Mwagi's thematic focus centres on the portrayal of the terrifying, the painful, and the common insistence on postcolonial disillusionment. He exposes his society's filth, decay, contradictions and conflicts with a view to presenting a true picture of it. His extremental vision of the society is similar to that of Armah in his novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1969) and DeboKotun in his *Abiku* (1998). Nwagi, simply depicts his society in the way it is without suggesting how to change the situation. His literary agenda is to present life in all its details, free of any preconceived notions of its meaning. The issues of disillusionment and pain, which are found in Mwagi's *Kill Me Quick*, the novel which he takes up the fact that conflicts is unavoidable in human society, and shows what happens when one engages in social conflict with one's society (Kehendi, 2004).

In Achebe's *A Man of The People* (1966), a strong disillusionment with post-independence politics is apparent. In this later novel people worship materialism and have thrown away spirituality. The country, Nigeria is corrupt, thus independence countries. He is suggesting that the legacy of colonialism is apparent in post-colonial African leadership. *A Man of The People* ironically represents a man of the people who detaches himself from the society and seeks to meet individual interests. The leaders had wielded power and had been misusing it by pursuing personal interests (Mcheka, 2012).

In East African Ngugi's novel *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) celebrates the freedom fighters of the Mau Mau liberation struggle, But it also records the disillusionment which mars the struggle, even before the independence celebration with which the novel ends. A decade later, in *Petals of Blood*



(1977) the theme of corruption and betrayal in *A Grain of Wheat*, has become the dominant theme of Ngugi's work. (Adunna, 2011)

### **1.5. Cultural Aspects in African Literature**

There is an integration relationship between language, culture and literature in Africa. Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of every human society and all social groups, including a the totality of attitude, behaviors believes, language, religion and world views. In other words, it is that "complex pattern of behavior and material achievement which are produced, learned and shared by members of a community." (Ameh, 2002, p. 165)

African literature therefore tries to project the challenge facing Africa from the pre-colonial past, to the colonial era, right to the present post-colonial age. It portrays the lives of traditional Africans, their practice, ethos and mores, analyses the impacts that colonialism have created in the system and discusses the crises underpinning the modern states of Africa. The essence of this effort by the literary artists is the representation of Africans as peoples, like other peoples of the world, with their own dreams, values, customs and weaknesses (Adedimeji, 2008).

African Written Literature, which developed through colonialism from African Oral Literature, is affected with reviewing the past, evaluating the present and projecting a better future for Africa. It educates, informs, entertains and documents Africans as they change with the changing world.

The cultural Aspects in African literature are associated with: Time, Family Structure, Marriage, Name, Religion, etc.

#### **1.5.1. Time**

The concept of time is not alien to African experience. Time markers are the sun and the moon, for days and months respectively. Twelve moons make a year and four market days make a week. In Achebe's *Arrow of God*, "Cock-crow" signals the beginning of day and nightfall comes by "sunset" They symbolize the four seasons by: planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall time. Cosmic bodies (the sun and the moon)

and birds help in determining time. (Achebe,1964, p.16-18). In this respect Adedimeji confirms that:“Achebe succeeds in underscoring the fact that Africans had their means of tracking time before the invention of clocks and the contact with the Europeans”(Adedimeji, 2008,P. 6), because Achebe shows the cultural African tool to know about time before any inventions.

### **1.5.2. Marriage**

Marriage is a sacred institution in Africa and Ibo land in particular. It is for this reason that divorce is a kind of taboo, and if there is one, all efforts are made to re-unit the couple. Marriage has special benefits and rituals that the wife’s new life is secured and insured. A new bride is accompanied by family and friends to her husband’s house with a lot of gifts, mostly cooking utensils, cloths and food items (Achebe, 1964, p. 118, p. 120). In Africa the bride should be a virgin before the actual wedding, pregnancy outside of marriage is considered shameful. Polygamy marriages are legal but they have though become less common in today’s Nigeria. Marriage is not a trivial matter left in the hands of the couple alone.(Achebe,1964)

### **1.5.3. Name**

Naming is highly significant in Africa. The Yoruba, for instance, say “We consider the home situation first before we name a child” and “names influence personality”. The Ibo also reflected this belief and Achebe makes use of the names and epithets in driving home his themes. Captain Winterbottom is code-named Destroyer of Guns and the day of Dr.Savage’s surgical operations is the Day of cutting Open of the Bowels. A verse native doctor or *dibia* is known as The Bow that shoots at the Sky (Achebe,1964, p.157).

Achebe also reduces foreign names: rather than call John his name, he is always referred to as Nwodika’s son, his first name reduced to a genre of anathema (Achebe, 1964, p.165-167). Achebe successfully deprives him of identity as a way of repudiating his English and Christian name. That Achebe does this on purpose is evidenced by his own rejection of his

christened name Albert, which he dropped as a University undergraduate, and as Africans were said to be savages, a medical doctor's name is Dr. Savage (Achebe, 1988).

#### **1.5.4. Religion**

There is the concept of god in African belief and atheism is foreign to African religious philosophy. Communal life revolves around religious rituals and sacrifices. Religion in Africa is multifaceted and has been a major influence on art, culture and philosophy. Today, the continent's various populations and individuals are mostly adherents of Christianity, Islam, and to a lesser extent Traditional African religion (Adedimiji, 2008)

The response to the question what is religion? Is usually exposes more about the one giving the definition than about religion itself. Our perspective defines our theory or definition of religion. A sociologist would give a determination founded on a various psychological perspective. This would also apply to culturally determined definitions: a Westerner would supply a definition influenced by European thought and an African would formulate the answer according to African philosophy (Sundermeier, 1999).

There are numerous traps making a course for characterizing religion. A definition that will be too broad a greatest definition would incorporate components not typically related with religion. One that will be too tight a negligible definition would avoid those components that will be components that will be ordinarily acknowledged as religion. On the likelihood of characterizing religion, there are the individuals who feel that religion is belief system parse. (Heever, 2001, p. 2)

Religion is socially constructed. Humans form religion by way of making choices and selection ( Heever, 2001, p.3). Religion is the human way of representing reality (Heever, 2001, p. 4). It is therefore quite logical that there will be a multitude of interpretations of what reality looks like. Religion is not seen as something related to a specific phenomenon (Heever, 2001, p. 3). Religion is universal, religion is expressed contextually according to local culture.

#### **1.5.4.1. Islam**

Through passages in the peninsula and trades Islam spread in the African continent, it became the most known and practiced religion. The spread of Islam and Christianity in Africa has continued to generate interesting insights that relate to the character of each faiths, both confessions have a long and distinguished history in Africa. The two religions have engendered passionate piety and yet have maintained their unique character and form (Goldstein,2010). As Sanneh has argued it is important to:

Assess the respective impact of Christianity and Islam through the eyes of African religions, and in so doing release these two missionary faiths from the fixed, motionless time-frame in which they have been frozen and submit them to the animated surge of history where nothing stands still. (Sanneh, 1983, p. xvi)

Islam is the dominant religion in North Africa and the Horn of Africa, and it is also the predominant and historical religion the West African interior and the far west coast of the continent as well as the coast of East Africa. Throughout history, there were various Muslim empires in Western Africa who exerted considerable influence notably the Mali Empire, which flourished for divers centuries and the Songhai Empire, under the leadership of Sonni Ali and Askia Mohammed(Goldenstein,2010).

Islam continued a rapid spread into the twenty-first centuries. Islam values are seen to have much in common with traditional African life, its emphases on communal living , its clear roles for men and women, its tolerance of polygamy (Ibsanoglu, 2003). “The Muslim pioneers showed respect to other cultures and tolerance towards other human being, regardless of religion”(Ibsanoglu,2003,p.23). According to the *New York Times*, Christianity was foreign to most Africans. Nowadays, Muslims have augmented achievement in proselytizing, with a growth rate, by some estimates, that is twice as fast as Christianity in Africa. A notable example includes Rwanda where, according to reports, the percentage of Muslims in Rwanda has

doubled or tripled since the genocide, due to Muslim protection of Tutsis and to Hutus wanting to distance themselves from those who committed genocide. Islam initially accepted more willingly because it was tolerant of traditional religious. However, Christianity spread during colonialism (Goldstein,2010).

### **1.6. Conclusion**

This chapter treated the issues of African literature, where there is a broad vision about the African history and the European colonization. In which this struggle between Africa and Europe gives birth to various themes in African literature. The major themes in Africa are colonialism, corruption and disillusionment, because of its great affection on the African society, also the creation and transformation of literary culture on the continent for several centuries.

The African writer has continued to show deep concern for his continent in his writings. He is irked by the various problems that bedevil the continent. The writer in Africa assumes a special responsibility as the voice of the people.

At the end of this chapter there is a broad vision about the influence of Islamic civilization and its domination in the African continent.

# Chapter Two :

## **A Women's Voice from Sudan**

## **2.1. Introduction**

African women writers are just starting to come into their own, despite they are confronting many obstacles along the way. They have made great strides and they were hardly recognized and concerned as important and real writers. Lately, their works have been rising successfully in quality and quantity(Ampadu,2006)

This chapter gives a broad vision about Sudan and its literature. It examines Aboulela's tenor of Islamic spirituality in "The Museum" and "Visitors" as well as the conflict between east and west societies, religious, and cultures about the spiritual faith of an ordinary Muslim woman one in homeland and the other in western society, grasping with emotional and psychological grief. Using diverse recent theories on Islamic feminism, and emphasizing an appreciation of those aspects of Islam that translate Muslim's daily life on a spiritual level.

## **2.2. African Women Writers**

African women writers engage in several different discourses, which give voice to their many realities. They are conscious of neocolonialism and are interested in fighting through their works for a greater genuine independence for Africa. They are against the exploitation of women. African women explore what is useful and what is dangerous to them as women in traditional cultures. At the same time, they examine which influences from the West or from countries such as the former Soviet Union and Japan are positive or negative in their environment. They write of realities in ways male African writers do not.

### **2.2.1. Flora Nwapa**

Flora Nwapa and Grace Ogot were pivotal writers in the 1960s, the writing of women of this generation, which was educated in colonial schools and came to maturity at about the time of Independence and early post-independence in their various countries, has received much less attention than that of men. Texts such as Nwapa's *Efuru*(1966),Ogot's *The Promised Land*(1966)and *Land Without Thunder*(1968) were clearly important, their work never received proper critical attention in comparison to the attention given to male writers of comparable achievement (Owomoyela, 1993, p.316)

In 1966, Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and *the Concubine* were published. Whereas the former presents a water maid as a model for a woman trying to find a place for herself within traditional society as a single woman without children. Storytelling is in many African societies a woman's genre, often used to instill morality in the young and for a variety of other aesthetic and functional reasons. Beginning writers, drawing on a tradition of women narrating, can therefore cross over from oral to written literature fairly easily. Flora Nwapa says the story of *Efuru* came to her while she was driving to her brother's house and that she wrote the novel within weeks. Yet the move is not continuously simple. For one thing, writing in European languages can create difficulties in expression for writers whose mother tongues are African languages. (Owomoyela, 1993, p.319)

It is not easy to write a novel and undertake it, its sheer length requires skill, time and space. Many African women write about social and political issues, and about women's domestic and personal lives. Being a woman often involves being both emotional and analytical, physical and intellectual, and this duality comes across in the way African women write about the experience. Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* tells the central character's story through details of her personal relations, motherhood, bereavements, and business ventures in short, from a whole life, private and public. Nwapa followed *Efuru* with the novel *Idu* (1970). Significantly, Nwapa did not publish another major work until (1981) Nwapa's novel *one is enough* is not sure of her choices, or of herself, but painfully aware of her restrictions and contradictions. Her uncertainty often comes across in the writing. (Owomoyela, 1993, p.324)

### **2.2.2. Ama Ata Aidoo**

The Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo is one of the most influential and enduring of the early women writers. Ama Ata Aidoo of Ghana is a prominent playwright who has utilized both orator and contemporary realities to propose directions for human relations in Africa. Likewise a lady writer, her innovative drive interrogates the limits about force and frailty and their impact on the African female, both in the traditional and modern setting. Her first play, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965) introduced her into the African literary scene *Wife, Eulalie*. Ata vacillates between the two cultures which



the playwright symbolizes through the old homestead the place where the ignorant parts of the crew carry on with the same time the new house is involved eventually Tom's perusing by Ato and his wife. Aidoo presents a confrontation between the African family, the African-American wife, and their American educated son, in which it is the women who finally resolve the tensions and not the ghost of a husband. The use of language registers in this play conveys the spectrum of usage from traditional, indigenous language to modern American English Non verbal symbolic languages is also important in the play (Owomoyela, 1993, p.331)

In her second play *Anowa* (1970), Aidoo makes an explicit statement on gender relations previously, Africa through the reach of feminist issues which she raises in this hazardous drama on the challenges of female assertion within a cultural framework. (Imenyi, 2013)

*Anowa*, though a play set in Ghana of the nineteenth century is basically a drama of revolt, against consensus behavior both in the protagonist's insistence on marrying the man of her choice and the decision to elope with him. Aidoo's feminism begins with a Western position because the type of revolt which characterizes *Anowa's* rebellious spirit is fundamental to Western feminism. According to Berg, "feminism is the woman's freedom to decide her own destiny, freedom from sex determined role, freedom from society's oppression and restrictions, freedom to express her thoughts fully and to convert them freely into action..." (cited in Imenyi, 2013, p.70). The protagonist's individualistic approach to self-definition dislocates her from the basis of group behavior and transforms her into a wayfarer in the process of time. This dislocation is in itself a step in self-expatriation, which necessitates the choice of an alternative lifestyle or culture because nobody lives in a vacuum. Human life, as it is shown in Emenyi's Social Determinism should reflect the realities of its world because the human person is to a large extent, the product of his/her world. (Imenyi, 2013)

Aidoo's protagonist rejects the Suffocation of the female voice which is synonymous with powerlessness. In the process, she explores one of the biggest myths in Africa which has made infertility a female problem. (Imenyi, 2013)

Ama Ata Aidoo's *In the Cutting of a Drink* (1970) is a moving tale of a brother who is sent to find his sister in the city and discovers that she is a prostitute; it expresses a concern for the dilemma of the woman in the city coupled with an original perspective on male-female (sister-brother) relations. Aidoo's *Certain Winds from the South* (1970) has her characteristic use of dialogue, a natural quick interchange that creates a sense of character and place, and that derives from her ear for women's talk. She often uses repetition, patterns of formal greeting, and conversational interjections and expressions. (Owomoyela, 1993, p.327)

Ama Ata Aidoo, in her early collection of short stories and sketches *No Sweetness Here* (1971), gives voice to women's concerns as they face problems of urbanization and standards of beauty, the absence of husbands and fathers prostitution. Clashing values and expectations, Ama Ata Aidoo in *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977), is the account of an African woman student in Europe. The final section of the book, *A Love Letter* is written to a male friend. It is not a love letter in traditional terms but rather an excursion into a number of issues African and European slavery, African women's traditional assertiveness, the reality of loneliness in Western culture, motherhood, exile, male-female relationships many of which she treats thematically in the rest of the novel (Owomoyela, 1993).

In her most recent novel, *Changes* (1992) explores the meaning of friendship, love, marriage and family for young women in contemporary West Africa. (Julien, 2010, p.301)

### **2.2.3. Zulu Sofola**

Zulu Sofola is another early woman writer. Her work, like Efuwa Sutherland, is almost exclusively in drama. Her plays which include *Wedlock of the Gods* (1972), her problematical choice, particularly the place the distinct will be set against the community, anyhow memories in the moonlights comment decision likewise variable methodology to women's self-definition. *The Sweet Trap* (1977) unravels the negative effect for Western progress of African ladies same time melody of a lady and the Wizard from claiming law uncover those lesson insolvency of the African elites who

are disengaged starting with those root from claiming assembly encounter. (Imenyi, 2013)

Zulu Sofola's reaction to the African woman's quest for self-advancement forms the thesis of her article entitled *Feminism and African Womanhood*. The place she surveys the double sex framework from claiming ruler ship over Africa preceding her contact for European What's more Bedouin societies those existing socio-political force imparting equation distinguished womanhood Concerning illustration those divine equivalent about mamoncillo to essence, Similarly as An daughter, as a mother, Concerning illustration An wife. This may be the reason Sofola bemoans the destined from claiming present day african ladies who done their introduction with Western training have a tendency will receive modes for assertion, which decrease African womanhood. (Imenyi, 2013, p. 73)

Although she admits that tradition has not been fair to women as it is illustrated in *Old Wines are Tasty*, she also acknowledges that women cannot single handedly correct the injustice in the society as Ogwoma does in *Wedlock of the God's*. (Imenyi, 2013, p.75)

Despite those different perspectives African ladies need embraced towards self-assertion, those compelling reason to manage agreement Furthermore preserve human pride in the pop culture ought further bolstering make adjusted with self-affirmation in light it may be main in term that An lady might and her significant characters would ladies whose searches for human right are characterized inside African social limits. Therefore, Zulu Sofola may be a non-conformist feminist. (Imenyi, 2013, p. 80) Violet name distributed a volume for Zulu short stories previously, (1935) Also a novel previously, (1936) the life histories from claiming these ladies propose that they were and only educated support composing groups. (Owomoyela, 1993, p. 316)

Zulu Sofola, for example, uses the domestic drama and the symbolic, poetic play *Reveries in the Moonlight* (1977) and *Omu Ako of Isele-Oligbo* and has included some Igbo and Edo in her most recent English-language work. Sofola argues that modern women lose twice over, because they do not understand the advantages in traditional

culture, where men and women respect each other and maintain a balance of power, and because modern relations between men and women are inadequate and produce bad behavior on both sides. Education misleads women, she argues, placing the blame on feminist influence from the West. (Owomoyela, 1993, p. 342)

A few of her plays include *The Disturbed Peace of Christmas* (1971), *Wedlock of the God*(1972), *King Emene*(1974), *The Wizard of Law*(1975), *The Sweet Trap*(1977) and *Old Wines are Tasty*(1981). (Solank, 2013, p.118)

#### **2.2.4. Mariama Ba**

The Senegalese Mariama Ba, another African woman writer, did not emerge until after her strong involvement with the feminist movement there. Her first novel, *So Long a Letter* (1981), appeared after she was fifty. (Owomoyela, 1993, p.317)

It is in the form of an extended letter written by Ramatoulaye to her friend Aissatou. Letter writing functions as a catharsis for Ramatoulaye, who can reveal all the hurt and joy she experienced throughout the various phases of her growing from girlhood to womanhood, and the many steps along the way that both she and Aissatou took together as girls and women (Owomoyela, 1993, p.323).

Varying circumstances within different regions of Africa dispose women to differing priorities in their writing. Southern African women have struggled most urgently against racial oppression not only Black writers such as Amelia House, Miriam Tlali, Fatima Dike, and Laretta Engcobo, but also white writers such as Nadine Gordimer and the white contributors to *lip from Southern African Women*. Black women in South Africa must fight for the freedom to live and develop so that their literary creativity can flourish. (Owomoyela, 1993, p.318)

AlifaRifaat's *Distant View of a Minaret* (1983) is powerful a powerful what??precisely because it gives us this balancing, a vision of a dissident womanhood within Islam that nevertheless intends to remain within that culture. (Omoyowela, 1993, p.319)

SekaiNzenza's Zimbabwean woman *My Own Story* (1988), by contrast, offers a specific grounding in a cultural context of women as bearers of tradition. Tainted by

negative colonial values, though, she learns to hate herself and her blackness. Nevertheless, through the telling of her life she reconstructs herself with dignity. (Owomoyela, 1993, p.322)

African women writers pay particular attention to the insider-outsider dichotomy, because they are often aware of participating in their societies but not always being part of the contemporary political decision-making structures. Because of these varied challenges, African women writers bring specific perspectives to the evaluation of their social orders. They turned barely specialists as well as pathfinders to new relations the middle of men, women, and Youngsters.

### **2.3. Sudanese Literature**

There are multiple Sudanese literatures: literature in Arabic language, its most famous writer is Tayeb Salih, as well as Sudanese literature in English language: Leila Aboulela and the local languages. In the early 20th century, there was a tendency of transcribing spoken tales, among the categories of stories from the oral tradition are the “*Ahaji*” tales and the “*Madih*”, or praise tales (El-Nour, 1997).

Sudanese folktales, or “*Ahaji*”, have evolved over a long period of time and become a defining feature of the cultural and social scene in wide areas of Northern Sudan. They mirror local traditions and draw from local myths, legends and histories, as well as from scenes of everyday life in villages or towns. Usually narrated to children by older people in the community mainly grandmothers, they are transmitted orally across generations. (El-Nour, 1997, p.08)

In 1960s, according to the social developments in other countries at the time, it was the beginning of the publishing novels dealing with social realist themes. These were encouraged by students returning home from studying in European countries. The matter of the nationalism of Sudanese literature was raised by Sudanese intellectuals who had English culture alongside their Arabic culture, including, Muhammad Ahmed Selah and Yusuf al-Tinay (1909-1969) in *al-Fajr magazine*. The nationalistic feeling that developed amongst the Sudanese was started by a call for

modernism from Hamza al-Malik Tambal (1893-1960). It begun as a political call, under a literary cover, with his book which then called for artistic truth in the feeling of the poet, and in the way he described the environment. He called for a great Sudanese literary entity. He wanted the reader to identify the specific Sudanese spirit and environment when reading Sudanese poetry.(Soghayroon, 2010). He wanted the non-Sudanese to say, when reading Sudanese poetry, this poem was written by a Sudanese poet: this is a Sudanese way of thinking, this landscape is available in the Sudan, this is a Sudanese situation, this beauty belongs to Sudanese women and the plant of this garden or this forest grows in the Sudan(Al Malik,1972)

Jubran Khalil Jubran had a major disagreement with his opponents in the matter of *al-Takhmis WA al-Tashtir*, Abd al-Rahman Ali Taha in his book *The Imitation and Innovation*. Taha noticed that the best example of poetry was that of *al-Banna*. The Sudanese critic Muhammad Ibrahim al-Shish agreed, and he offered *al-Banna's* famous poem, *The Hijri Year*, as a crucial poem between traditional and modern poetry, to show Sudanese literature to the Arab world. The same call was then adopted by the Sudanese poet and critic, Muhammad Ali (1870-1922), Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Majdub (1919-1982), Muhammad al-Makki Ibrahim (1939), Salah Ahmed Ibrahim (1933-1993) and Ga'far Amid al Bashir tried to write purely Sudanese poetry. Some of his poetry could not be anything but Sudanese. He gives documentary aspects of Sudanese life without hard decoration or retouch. Although he is an educated middle class civil servant, he feels no embarrassment about relating his experiences in a native tavern. Native pubs are always found in the slums at the outskirts of the village or the city. His pub is marked by a banner that leads him towards it, as a sail leads travelers. His choice of the subject issue of many of his poems, such as *The Wedding Procession* and *A Moonlit Village* reflects a cultural consciousness (Soghayroon,2010)

In these poems, the subject issue reflects a process of fusion of pagan and Islamic elements. To show these cultural wedding rituals, he creates a third language, i.e., Sudanese-Arabic vernacular. Sudanese poets skillfully portray Sudanese female

beauty. "Although many poets who had the chance to travel abroad admired Western women, most Sudanese male poets love the uniquely Sudanese beauty and wrote a lot of poetry describing Sudanese women." (Soghayroon, 2010, p.109). They wrote about native Sudanese cosmetics and costumes, they admired the way a Sudanese woman wraps herself up in it, covering her body but displaying her posture.

Al Majdub, Salah, Mohy al-Deen Faris and Jaily Abd al-Rahman succeeded in depicting the characters of simple downtrodden Sudanese people and talking about their tragedies. Al-Al-Majdub wrote about the beggar, the shoeblack, the pickpocket, the fortune teller and the peanut seller. In his poem, Salah talks about the character of the Nigerian woman who comes to Sudan to work so as to make money to go on a pilgrimage. The poem describes in precise detail her character: how she looks, talks, dresses and what activities she performs. Other special Sudanese literature is Sudanese Humour and Satire Literature, Sudanese humour poetry is examined by the Sudanese critic al-Amin Ali Madani as a pure Sudanese poetry which contains Sudanese folkloric examples. It is also depicted by the Egyptian writer, Muhammad Hassane in Haikal, as a special Sudanese poetry. (Soghayroon, 2010)

Literature is only a second language for him. It is not his mother or father tongue. He demonstrates his poetry as full of images that seem to be Western or existentialist, but they are actually the admix of the mother tongue which remained silent within him and came out through the second language, the Arabic language. His poetry reflects many of the elements of African culture. He explores the links between the religions in Africa, with special reference to African religious rituals and Sudanese Sufism. Although Sudanese Sufism originated in the East, he believes that all the supernatural truths in Sudan are a production of the forest, the human bond in our existence is the soft motion of the dance, drum and the horn of the forest not the Eastern Sufism. (Soghayroon, 2010)

No literature can survive and contribute to humanity without interaction, diversity, and respect for the laws of change

## **2.4. Leila Aboulela's Coloured Lights**

The Egyptian Sudanese writer Leila Aboulela was born in 1964, to an Egyptian mother and Sudanese father, grew in Khartoum and moved to the U.K in the twenties to study at London school of Economics. Aboulela won the prestigious Cain Prize for African writing in 2000 for her short story *The Museum* and her first novel, *The Translator* was long listed for the Orange Prize and the IMPAC Dublin Award and short listed for the Saltire Prize.

In Sudan Vision Daily, an independent newspaper in 2007, Aboulela said in an interview that she sets out “to show the psychology, the state of mind and the emotions of a person who has faith”, and to evoke for Western readers the “intimacy” of faith. She is aware of concerns expressed in Europe and the U.K about Muslim immigration; she also perceives her writing as different from more conservative narratives that feature Islamic characters. In 2005 she said in an interview:

My characters do not behave necessarily as a good Muslim' should. They are not ideals or role models. They are as I see them to be, ordinary Muslims trying to practice their faith in difficult circumstances. (Hassan, 2008, p.310)

Aboulela tried to portray behaviors and the instinct of Muslims and their tendency to their religion although they live in a western society.

Her beginning in writing stories fruits a collection of short stories entitled *Coloured Lights* (2001). In the beginning of this work, she writes about her brother's death at the day of his wedding, the cause of his death was the coloured lights, as she cites:“It was the lights that killed Taha. The haphazard, worn strings of lights that had been hired out for years to house after wedding house. A bare live wire carelessly touched.” (Aboulela, 2001, p.6)



That is why the title of this collection is *Coloured Lights*. All the stories characters are Muslims, the stories talk about how Muslims live in the west, her way of writing always reflects the Muslim world and Arab culture.

From this collection which includes thirteen short stories, *Visitors* and *the Museum* have been selected. This selection is due to the difference in settings of the two short stories (one in homeland and the other in a western country) and to the international echo of *The Museum* which gain the Cain Prize for African writing.

#### **2.4.1. Muslim Women Representation in “The Museum”**

Aboulela's story *The Museum* is set in Aberdeen, Scotland, and it is narrated by Shadia, a graduate student from Khartoum who travels to Aberdeen for a master degree in statistics. It is a kind of cross-cultural love played out against an atmosphere of mistrust generated by feelings of exclusion, insecurity, and strangeness. In this story, Aboulela depicts the Islamic identity of Muslim women in a western society.

The story begins with Shadia's concentration on the figure of Bryan, a Scottish student, she was fascinated by his appearance: “She had longed for such hair, when she went to paradise she would have hair like that.” (Aboulela, 2001, p.87) Such a feeling mixed with her fear from academic failure, shared by her friends, made her experience a period of weakness translated by her willing to approach Bryan.

This step made by Shadia, constitutes the beginning of friendship between Shadia and Bryan, and perhaps the beginning of a romance. At this juncture, Aboulela illustrates the possibility of forging two different cultures, but this possibility did not find her way when Shadia became aware of that relation. She realizes that Bryan “seems more at ease talking to her.” (Aboulela, 2001, p.94), he tried to be closer when he invited her to share a coffee break at the university. (Aboulela, 2001, p.94) at that moment Shadia felt her mistake: “Then she made a mistake. Perhaps because she had been up last night, she made that mistake. Perhaps

there were other reasons for that mistake of shifting from one level to another. ” (Aboulela, 2001, p.94) another mistake is made when she: “Should have said to Bryan, when they first held their hands and were searching for an empty table, let’s sit with Asafa and the others.” (Aboulela, 2001, p.95) in order to not go deeper in this relation.

By these mistakes, Shadia seemed as if going to embrace another different culture. Aboulela shows through the impressions of Shadia’s friends, that she was unconscious about the mistakes she did, one of her friends, the Turkish girl, “raised her perfect eyebrows.” (Aboulela, 2001, p.95) as a sign of condemnation, and another friend, Badr, “Quickly looked away (Aboulela, 2001, p.95) when his eyes and Shadia’s met. She should not approach Bryan because she was engaged to be married.

Soon, Shadia realizes that she must push him away from her, she is Muslim, she is uncertain about her relation to Bryan, this uncertainty is figured by Aboulela’s reference to the subject of statistics and probability, the feelings of misguidance and sin did evoke to Shadia kind of nostalgia for her homeland, a revival of her faith: “Things I should miss I don’t miss. Instead I miss things I didn’t think I would miss the azan. The Muslim call to prayer from the mosque...” (Aboulela, 2001, p.98) This bodily memory of a different place and time suggests a way of inhabiting the world that interrupts the Diaspora existence of Shadia.

Shadia is firmly linked to Sudan, to Farid “she should have told Bryan she was engaged to be married, mentioned it casually.” (Aboulela, 2001, p.99). This link strengthens her; it provides her a kind of protection.

Beside the university the Scottish museum, with its emphasis on the visual, there is another setting in the story. The museum reflects Aboulela’s tendency to criticize the western representation of Africa, and their ideologies towards the African Islamic world.

Once with Bryan at the museum, Shadia denies that racist view on Africa: “Nothing was of her, nothing belonged to her life at home, what she missed. Here was Europe’s vision, the clichés about Africa: “cold and old.” (Aboulela, 2001, p.102)

Shadia criticizes the unfair process of western imperialism in Africa, their ideology to deprive this land from its natural resources to serve the comfort and prosperity of their nations. Shadia unveils another aim of this process, which is the preaching of Christianity as a way to fight the Islamic religion and to efface the Islamic values.

As Shadia wonders through the rooms holding nineteenth century collections of African material culture, she feels diminished by such purportedly objective texts inserted on posters. She rejects these artifacts as they serve the imperialist ideologies and present a looming image of Africa.

Moreover, Aboulela portrayed the western hate of Islam and their longing to deprive Africa from its religious principles and goods: “...here in the West they hate the Islam..., they knew what to take to Africa: Christianity, commerce, civilization. They knew what they wanted to bring back; cotton watered by the Blue Nile, the Zambezi river.” (Aboulela, 2001, p.99:102)

By the end of the story, Aboulela insists on the fact that the universal character of Islam prohibits the dissolution of Shadia in the western culture, pushes Bryan to change his appearances and shows a predisposition to embrace Islam: “Ah wouldnae mind travelling to Mecca; I was keen of that book.” (Aboulela, 2001, p.99)

Shadia’s feelings of love for her country, for her people are other features of the Muslim citizen at home or abroad: “Love my country so much. She should not be here; there was nothing for her here. She wanted to see minarets, boats fragile on the Nile, people like her father.” (Aboulela, 2001, p.103) And not another image of Africa that she do not know. Aboulela’s nostalgic feelings for her country are

translated through the feelings of Shadia in *Museum*. The bad image given about Africa makes Shadia think about her present situation, her presence in this country is meaningless. Shadia's relation with Bryan is no longer possible; she has to make an end to this relation, and in this way the bridge between two different cultures collapses.

#### **2.4.2. Muslim Women Representation in "Visitors"**

The *Visitors* is another short story in the collection *Coloured Lights*. Unlike the *Museum* this story is set in Khartoum (Sudan) and narrated by Amina, a young woman training in orthopedics, who fell in love with her patient, the child Hassan, "in the simple way that young women who have not yet had children sometimes feel." (Aboulela, 2001, p.28)

This story begins with Amina's offering to bring Hassan and his father back home: "I could give you a lift if you wait for me until the clinic is over." (Aboulela, 2001, p.28) Amina's generosity springs out from her special love to Hassan and the feeling of pity towards his old and poor father. Hassan is a serene child, he is special in the manner he answered Amina's inquiry whether he took breakfast or not "Alhamdulillah", he lisped. He never said "yes, Alhamdulillah" as other would do." (Aboulela, 2001:p.28) Hassan, despite his age, shows a tendency towards his religion, the recitation of the Qur'an has a great influence inside his young soul. "Sakeenah thought Hassan was special. Serene unlike other children, When the Quran was recited on the radio, she told Amina; Hassan would leave his play and listen intently." (Aboulela 2001, p.28) The recitation of Quran for him is more important and better than the play he has, the thing which makes Sakeenah surprised about this special child.

Here Aboulela shows the duty of the Muslim family, the Muslim parent, towards their kids, especially in their upbringing on Islamic values and strengthen them with faith and patience in order to overcome any kind of problems in their life.

By the time Amina arrives at Hassan's house she was welcomed by a group of children who were playing in the dirt, their simplicity and curiosity make them crowd around the car. Hassan's father, as he struggles with the door lock, offers her to come in: "Do come in Doctor, you are welcome, do come in." (Aboulela 2001, p.30) despite his poverty and modest house he shows a great generosity towards his guest, a generosity which spring from the high values of an old Muslim man. Amina gives him the deserved respect, the respect of a young Muslim woman: "Not today, Hajj, thank you but I can't today." (Aboulela 2001, p.30), and promised to visit him another day.

A week later, Amina does visit, as promised, Hassan's house: "Laden with gifts for Hassan and his family. The gifts were clothes which she knew they needed and, on a sudden impulse, half her month's salary to the mother. (Aboulela, 2001, p.30)

Amina was generous towards them, as she thought clothes are what they really need, she had a good sense; she knew that from the children in torn and unsuitable clothes she noticed playing in the dirt at her first visit. In addition, money is what the housewife looks for in order to cover the expenses of the house. Amina found the house easily enough, her reception by Zeinab, Hassan's mother, was in the proper sense of the world. She offered her a bottle of Pepsi, which she thought the most suitable to her rank.

Through the character of Zeinab, Aboulela portrays another kind of generosity that of the housewife towards her guests. She also depicts an image of motherhood through the care Zeinab gives to her children.

Weeks later, Zeinab, in a different look reciprocates by bringing Amina a blue plastic bail. Amina did not expect their visit "Self-righteous anger swelled up in her and she surrendered to it." (Aboulela, 2001, p.32) She seated them outside the house; she did not want anyone to know about this relation, especially her fiancé and his mother: "if they saw the ragged Zeinab, there would be a lot of questions she did not

want to answer.” (Aboulela, 2001, p.32) Amina despised Zeinab's gift, she wondered what could be in the pail:

“On the kitchen table she placed the pail, lifted its cover and looked inside. But instead of Zeineb's home-made food that she dreaded there was pounds and pounds of that elusive white substance every household in Khartoum craved: sugar (Aboulela,2001, p.33)

Here Aboulela ends her short story with sugar, in order to show the sweetness and purity of this poor family. Amina discovers that despite of sugar being a scarcity in this city, Zeinab manages to bring some to her to show her generosity. In this short story, Aboulela depicts the love and generosity that African Muslim women share within their own society.

## **2.5. Representation Islam in Leila Aboulela's "Colored Lights"**

Aboulela tries to picture Muslim identity through the British perception in an attempt to free Muslim voice in her fiction. When she writes, her experiences relief and satisfaction that what occupies her mind, the message hidden between the lines in the corpus of the story is what makes it legitimate. She is interested in going deep, not just looking at Muslim as a cultural or political identity but something close to the centre, Aboulela goes deeper inside identity in an attempt to belong without neglecting gender and race. (Aboulela,2015)

Aboulela in her short stories from *Colored Lights* supplies samples of feedback, attempting to change the European idea for others. In the narrative of “The Museum” Aboulela talks about the force relations of the remote understudies and their Scottish homologues, demonstrated to the prohibition experienced by the outsiders in the Western city. Aboulela pictures that delicacy even the decently statue position as an outside understudy is looked after effectively. In the same story, Aboulela pictures bigotry in her works when she alludes to the statues of Scotland coordinated to understudies: “Badr, the Malaysian, squinted, whispered, Yesterday our windows got crushed; my wife today is reluctant to go out”. (Aboulela, 2001, p.99)

In this story capacities Mecca as option scene which typifies elective potential outcomes for both characters. Bryan tries to break the ice with Shadia and he attempts to impress by referring to the right practice of Islam at school and the fact that he goes on a trip to Mecca while they share a coffee break at the university: "We did Islam at school", he said: "Ah went on a trip to Mecca". He opened out his palms on the table. (Aboulela, 2001, p.98)

Bryan's enthusiasm for Islam is genuine and Aboulela shows this by his open palms, which surrender it over to Shadia to react the content along these lines proposes a genuine chance to manufacture relationship crosswise over limits. The envisioned outing to Mecca, and all that it would involve for the two characters, is Aboulela's option vision to a reality which captures both characters. In this same discussion, Bryan rehashes once more, "Ah would close see any problems with setting out to Mecca." (Aboulela, 2001, p.110)

He then asks Shadia to go with him to the Africa displayed with the expectation that this will help her with her home disorder. It is in the gallery where the plot disentangles and questions the likelihood of their relationship, the Scottish gallery on Africa works as a site of majestic force, setting Shadia outside the group that yields this force. Aboulela offers a searing investigates of Western historiography, yet interestingly this is adjusted by her not exactly thoughtful depiction of Shadia, who is tricky, amazingly class cognizant and now and again truly merciless. Bryan is the more affable of the two heroes and his readiness to trim his hair, evacuate the 'stud' and find out about Islam can be read as inconspicuous "counter-cultural assimilation". (Nash, 2002, p.30)

This development however is hindered by their visit to the exhibition hall, where the specific recollections and memorabilia spoke to keep any shared opinion on which to assemble a culturally diverse association.

In this short story Aboulela demonstrates the liberality of Allah when Shadia's dad left her mom and Allah repay her with six young ladies, every one lovelier than

the other. (Aboulela, 2001, p.91) They were cunning as well, and all with the best behavior. Aboulela shed light on an awesome Islamic angle which is “prayer”. At the point when Shadia came to the transport stop and afterward understood that she had not petition to God, in light of the fact that in West there is no azan, the Muslim call to request to God as in her nation Sudan.

Another Islamic aspect is the alarm from Allah, when Shadia told her life partner: “Allah is going to punish us for this, it’s not right.”(Aboulela, 2001, p.101), when he suggest for her to purchase gold toilet seats for their home equipment because this is wastefulness. But in fact he means gold-coloured. (Aboulela, 2001)

The most sustained critiques of Orientals discourse are found in the description of the separated objects in the display cabinets iron and copper, little statues the loot from imperial travel to Africa and Shadia understands that nothing was of her; nothing belonged to her life at home, what she missed. This was Europe's vision, the proclaims about Africa: "cool and old." (Aboulela 2001, p.102) Shadia feels embarrassed by the showcases which concentrate on Scottish voyagers who returned rich, weighed down with cotton watered by the Blue Nile and different belonging from Africa in over-streaming trunks. (Aboulela, 2001, p.103) This scene echoes Clifford's contention that exhibition hall shows can expand on and sustain chronicled legacies of royal mistreatment of the individuals spoken to in them. (Clifford, 1997, p.174) Because of the exhibition hall shows, Shadia rejects Bryan as a companion, and Aboulela stresses that their relationship crosswise over societies, which had so much potential, is made inconceivable by a talk that generally rules out arrangement. The force of realm present in the gallery space, and also her own battles with the course and the Scottish environment, thrashing Shadia’s wished to interface with Bryan:

He didn't know it was a steep path she had no strength for. He didn't understand. Many things, years and landscapes gulfs. If she was strong she would have explained and not tired of explaining. She



would have patiently taught him another language, letters curved like the epsilon and gamma he knew from mathematics. If she was not small in the museum, if she was really strong, she would have made his trip to Mecca real (Aboulela, 2001, p.105)

Aboulela not just man oeuvres in the landscape of Western stereotyping, yet she additionally tackles parts of Islamist talk which try to overwhelm and control her female characters. Rather she depicts her characters' deep sense of being as a freeing power, which manages them, the space to develop transnational ways of life as Muslim women. Especially in the depiction of tertiary instruction and job opportunities for her characters, Aboulela studies some of the sex issues characteristic in Islamist talks. Case in point, in 'The Museum' Shadia is permitted to study in Scotland on the grounds that her mom keeps up that a postgraduate degree will secure Shadia the admiration of her in-laws and offer the likelihood of a vocation after the marriage. (Aboulela,2015)

On the other hand, in 'Visitors' Aboulela shed light on another Islamic viewpoint which is Quran, a kid's affection for Quran. Not caring for the other youngsters Hassan leaves his play and listens eagerly when it is presented on the radio. A knowledgeable kid, who is constantly content

Did you eat breakfast, Hassan? She asked. She always asked him that question because she liked the way he answered. "*Alhamdulillah*", he lisped. He never said 'yes, *Alhamdulillah*' as other would do. He always omitted the "yes", so that she was always left not knowing whether he had eaten or not (Aboulela, 2001, p.28)

This short story contains different Islamic words such as: *Alhamdulillah*, *Insha'Allah* and *Hajj* as when Muslims called the old men.

Another strong point of Islamic aspect is generosity, the generosity of Amina towards poor people as she brought to them clothes and money in order to help them

and another kind of generosity that of poor people, from the housewife Zeineb towards her guest. When she offers her “pounds and pounds of that elusive white substance every household in Khartoum craved: sugar.” (Aboulela, 2001, p.33)

Despite the fact that the sugar is seldom in the city, Zeinab conveys little to show Amina that she is liberal. In the ‘Visitors’, Aboulela delineates the affection and liberality that African Muslim women share inside they could call their own general public. (Aboulela, 2001)

## **2.6. Conclusion**

Women have made a significant and distinctive contribution to the development of English writing in Africa. Their works are a witness for their great efforts and continual fighting to prove themselves and make their voices heard in all the world.

Leila Aboulela the Sudanese woman writer is one of these fighting women who believed that writing is an appropriate way to explain and translate her emotions and sensations related to homesickness and give a correct image that befit Islam and Muslims in west countries.

In these two short stories, Aboulela with her characters, male and female, tried to draw and portray behaviors and the instinct in Muslims and their tendency to their religion although they live in a Western society where there is a mixture of religion. Leila Aboulela takes readers to the heart of what it means to have faith in a Western world.

Aboulela is interested in writing about Islam not as an identity but going deeper. Distinguishing between Islam as an identity and as the deeper interior world that is shaped by ‘faith’ allows her to propose, for her female characters in *The Museum* and *Visitors*, that many of the facets that make up the self, such as gender, familial ties, cultural, social and political ties are less important than faith.

# General Conclusion

## General Conclusion

The subject of African literature is very wide and diverse due to the size of Africa as a continent which encompasses different traditions and languages, and to the long period of colonization that Africa experienced. It is home to a wide diversity of languages and cultures, and this colourful variety is reflected in its diverse literature. African literature consists of a body of work in different languages and various genres, ranging from oral literature to literature written in colonial languages.

African women writers made a long way to assert their presence in the literary scene and to overcome the barriers of marginalization and ignorance imposed by their male counterpart. Women writers have dealt with virtually, all the African issues and their presence is ubiquitous in all forms of writing in English. They must bond together to support encourage and validate each other as they continued on their journey to liberate the African women.

Leila Aboulela, the Sudanese writer, from a foreign country, turns to writing to express her nostalgic feelings toward her country and to question through her Muslim female characters the possibility of practicing faith in difficult circumstances and in a society which is unsympathetic to religion. Her characters depict images of faith in a Muslim society and by interacting with a different culture. Aboulela by addressing the western readers she criticizes Europe's racist views towards Africa and the sense of superiority over the Islamic world.

The universality of her address means that, despite her success in analyzing the psychology of her female Muslim characters, Aboulela's significance and focus on Islam is global rather than local. She does not

produce a version of Islam that has been modulated by its experience in Britain. Asserting, instead, different and foreigners, together with what appears to be a somewhat blinkered understanding of British press to promote images of Islam in people's minds.

Aboulela shows a kind of relationship between immigrant women and those in homeland, she provides the characters with an identity with which they can confirm their religious belonging.

Contrary to the perception that Islam is against women and against the European way of life, some Muslim women based in Europe write novels and short stories in which Islam is described as instrument of empowerment in the life of their female characters. No more or not only an element of oppression, religion is portrayed as an element of a new identity for Muslim women who live in Europe. Reading Aboulela's collection of short stories *Coloured Lights*, help to better understand how the re-positioning of religion functions in a women's lives and struggles.

This work's aim is to draw portraits of Muslim women who show the necessity of discussion categories of identity, women's agency, bodily form, political imaginary for better understanding how women can and do empower themselves through Islam in contemporary Europe and elsewhere.

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