



Tracing the Modernist Influence on the Post-Colonial Fiction: Using Polyphony as a Device for Resistance in Ayi Kwei Armah's Fragments

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Abstract:

This article examines how Modernist literary devices influenced postcolonial fiction by closely examining Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments*, with emphasis on the use of polyphony as a tool for resistance. The study considers how Armah appropriates and modifies Modernist narrative techniques to subvert colonial and neocolonial discourses, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of polyphony and placing it within postcolonial theoretical frameworks. The article uses a qualitative textual analysis to show how the novel's many independent voices work to undermine dominant colonial narratives, highlight under-represented viewpoints, and express a shared fight for identity and agency in postcolonial Ghana. This study adds to larger conversations on the connections between Modernism and postcolonial literature by demonstrating how polyphony serves as ideological contestation and cultural resistance, underscoring the literary form's enduring importance as a tool for political participation and decolonisation.

Keywords: Bakhtin; Modernism; Narrative Resistance; Point of view; Polyphony; Postcolonial Fiction

I. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between modernist literary techniques and post-colonial fiction has led to a lot of academic research that looks at the story-telling methods and ideological frameworks that are built into post-colonial texts. Modernism, with its experimental forms, broken structures, and focus on multiple points of view, has had a big impact on post-colonial writers who are looking for new ways to talk about the complexities of identity, resistance, and historical memory in the years after colonialism. Polyphony, which is the presence of multiple, distinct voices in a story, is one of the most powerful tools for undermining colonial powers and expressing resistance. This essay looks at how modernism has affected post-colonial fiction by looking at polyphony as a way to resist in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments*. Armah's novel takes place in Ghana after it became independent and deals with the disillusionment of the newly independent African states with their politics and society. It uses polyphony to break up single-minded stories and bring out diverse voices that challenge dominant discourses. Armah not only takes from Western modernism's tradition of experimentation, but he also adapts it to fit the needs of post-colonial critique and resistance by using modernist polyphonic narrative structures.

The importance of looking into modernist influence in post-colonial literature is that it helps us understand how post-colonial writers use inherited literary forms to create counter-hegemonic discourses that deal with colonial legacies and the difficulties of life after independence. Polyphony as a narrative strategy lets you show fragmented identities, contested histories, and multiple truths that don't fit into the single stories that colonial authority and nationalist rhetoric try to impose on everyone. Armah's *Fragments* is a good example of this dynamic because it uses multiple voices to show the broken sociopolitical landscape of Ghana and speak out against widespread corruption and moral decay. This essay puts Armah's use of polyphony in a larger modernist-postcolonial context, showing how modernist techniques are not just copied but changed to serve postcolonial goals, mainly the expression of resistance. This study shows through close reading that Armah's polyphonic narrative breaks up linear historiography and ideological monoliths, creating a dialogic space where different points of view challenge and redefine ideas about identity, sovereignty, and resistance. By using modernist-inspired polyphony as a new way to give power to the stories of colonialism and the hopes for freedom after colonialism, *Fragments* adds to the post-colonial literary landscape.

The intersection of modernist influences and polyphonic narrative techniques in post-colonial African literature has been the subject of extensive scholarly investigation, with particular attention to how these techniques function as devices of resistance against colonial hegemonies. Bonsu and Nkansah (2024) conducted a comprehensive corpus stylistic analysis of Armah's *Fragments*, demonstrating how the novel alternates between homodiegetic narrative in character dialogues and monologues, which dominate the heterodiegetic discourse narration, revealing a complex polyphonic structure that challenges traditional narrative authority¹. Their findings illuminate how Armah's narrative technique captures the immediacy of historical and instantaneous present experiences while projecting possible continuity of events in Ghana and Africa, thereby serving as a vehicle for cultural resistance. Similarly, Petersen (1979) examined the novel's fragmented narrative structure, arguing that the broken time sequence in *Fragments* provides crucial insight into the significance of the book's central metaphor, where the circular movement represented by traditional African worldviews contrasts with the linear Western outlook, creating a dialogic tension that mirrors the broader cultural conflicts of post-colonial Ghana. This structural analysis reveals how Armah employs modernist techniques of temporal disruption to articulate resistance to colonial temporality and epistemology.

Rajani (2017) looked into the bigger idea of polyphonic narrative as resistance. She says that polyphonic narratives in post-colonial literature are powerful ways to reclaim voice and identity, push back against Western literary norms, and show how complicated post-colonial life can be. This research shows that narrative multiplicity is not just a new way of writing; it is also a key way to challenge dominant colonial discourses and give voice to perspectives that are often ignored. Bouhadiba's (2020) in-depth study of cultural retrieval and revolutionary didacticism in Armah's and Ngugi's novels also shows how these authors used modernist techniques for post-colonial purposes, especially in their fight against neo-colonialism and cultural depersonalisation through their call for a "return to the source." This study shows the important link between formal modernist innovations and their use as tools of cultural and political resistance. It shows how post-colonial writers like Armah have strategically used Western literary techniques to express African ways of knowing and stories of resistance.

1. Point of View in Modernist Fiction

Narrative point of view underwent a significant metamorphosis as a result of modernism, which mirrored changes in both the outside world and personal perception. New representational techniques were required to depict reality as it grew more complex. Literal modernism adopted a similar diversity of viewpoints as Cubist painters, who portrayed reality as a fractured, multifaceted composition made up of disparate elements rearranged across multiple dimensions. Instead of a single, cohesive perspective, the world was viewed as a "cube," with many sides that each needed a unique perspective to fully represent the whole eliot

Several points of view coexist in stories that are designed to resemble cubes, with each character providing their own subjective account of what happened. The narrative truth arises from the dynamic interaction of these various voices rather than from favouring one "correct" viewpoint (Fludernik, 2009). Thus, narrative uses multiple narrators and a variety of points of view to convey this plurality. Readers are encouraged to negotiate conflicting interpretations and evaluate the relative merits of various textual readings, turning them into active participants. Since conflicting accounts cast doubt on the idea of an absolute truth, this engagement encourages interpretative involvement. Flaubert introduced "perspectival relativism," which rejected the authoritarian omniscient narrator in favour of multiple, relativistic perspectives that undermine any one authoritative version of reality. This marked a significant departure from traditional storytelling conventions in early modernism.

1.1. Types of Point of View

1.1.1. First Person Point of View

In first-person narratives, the storyteller uses the pronoun "I," signifying that this subject actively engages with the story world, or diegesis, which includes the events and settings described (Genette, 1980). This point of view limits the narrative's scope to the narrator's own observations, comprehensions, and experiences (Abrams, 1999). The narrating "I" may or may not be involved in the events that are taking place, though. The narrator may simply be an observer who narrates events, play a supporting role in the plot, or even be the main character. "Internal focalisation" is the term used to describe these various roles (Genette, 1980). The channelling of the story's perspective, known as focalisation, can be either external, where the narrator is outside the story world, or internal, where it is filtered through a character in the narrative. The storyteller uses self-reference to describe characters, settings, and incidents in the first person. The interior monologue technique, which directly conveys a character's inner thoughts, is comparable to this narrative approach (Chatman, 1980). One of the main advantages of this mode is that it gives readers close access to the narrator's inner world, which frequently manifests as an unbroken stream of consciousness and includes their feelings, memories, and impromptu thoughts. This strengthens empathy and emotional engagement by forging a strong bond between the reader and the narrative voice (Childs & Fowler, 2006).

1.1.2. Third Person Point of View

As an outside observer who is disengaged from the events and characters they are describing, a third-person narrator exists outside the boundaries of the narrative world (Fludernik, 2009). Instead of speaking in the first person, this narrator uses impersonal pronouns like "he," "she," or "they" to refer to story participants. This method is categorised as having a "external" focalisation since it does not take place from any character's point of view but rather looks onto the characters (Genette, 1980). Thus, the narrative is filtered through a single narrator, who may be limited to the experience of a single character or may have full knowledge of all the characters and events in the story. Homer's *Iliad*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Tolstoy's *War and Peace* are just a few of the classic epics and novels that have made extensive use of this narrative style throughout literary history (Childs & Fowler, 2006; Fludernik, 2009). Depending on how the narrative perspective engages with the story and characters, two main modes can be identified within the more general category of third-person narration.

1.1.3. The Omniscient Point of View

An all-knowing narrator is fully aware of every character's inner life in addition to the events of the story. Such a narrator can disclose personal psychological insights because they have unmatched access to thoughts, feelings, and motivations (Abrams, 1999; Chatman, 1980). Additionally, this narrator effortlessly navigates time and space, alternating between past, present, and future events

within the narrative universe. Because of this omnipresence, the narrator has almost divine control over the story world (Chatman, 1980). But having complete knowledge does not mean telling the audience everything. To differentiate the act of storytelling from the possession of knowledge, the storyteller uses discretion in deciding what to reveal and what to keep hidden: "Knowing all, of course, need not mean telling all" (Chatman, 1980, p. 212). Furthermore, the all-knowing narrator has control over narrative time; they can compress long events, lengthen short ones, or abruptly switch between consecutive or simultaneous episodes (Chatman, 1980; Fludernik, 2009).

Depending on the narrator's level of control and involvement, two different types of third-person narration can be distinguished within the larger category:

- a. By giving in-depth descriptions and revealing intimate details about the characters' thoughts, the "interventionist narrator" overtly interrupts the story. In order to influence readers' interpretations, this narrator frequently offers commentary and assessments on the actions of the characters. They belong to the tradition of classic storytelling, which was particularly common in earlier literary eras, because of their commanding presence and evaluative voice (Leech and Short, 2007; Abrams, 1999). It is crucial to make clear that the author's personal voice and the narrator's authoritative stance are two distinct narrative techniques; mixing the two can result in misconceptions regarding narrative authority (Fludernik, 2009).
- b. The "detached narrator" avoids passing judgement or offering an interpretation. Rather than exploring inner thoughts or emotions, this narrator merely recounts events from the outside world and character interactions. This approach strives for objectivity by omitting subjective commentary, providing a straightforward narrative that is significantly less traditional than the interventionist model. Flaubert, Hemingway, and Robbe-Grillet are notable examples of this technique; their stories frequently omit psychological exposition, leaving motives and inner states unsaid (Abrams, 1999).

The narrator has broad authority and a plethora of information to impart due to the all-knowing viewpoint (Fludernik, 2009). However, it may also distance readers from the story's emotional core by portraying them as merely passive information consumers (Fludernik, 2009). Reader engagement may be limited by the omniscient narrator's external viewpoint, as they observe from above and beyond the fictional world. Philosophical questions concerning the nature of omniscience in fiction are raised by some critics who contend that portraying the narrator as a godlike figure infringes on religious authority (Sartre as cited in Childs and Fowler, 2006). Conventional ideas of narrative reality are challenged by the paradox of standing outside of the story world while simultaneously inhabiting its interior awareness (Genette, 1980). Alternative narrative modes that address the limitations of complete omniscience have been sparked by these criticisms.

1.1.4. The Limited Point of View

Although it has a much smaller scope, this narrative style is similar to the omniscient mode in that it uses the third-person framework. The narrator restricts themselves to the experiences and consciousness of one character—or sometimes a small number of characters—instead of having unrestricted access to all minds and moments. The "restricted" or "limited" viewpoint is defined by this focus reduction (Chatman, 1980). This framework shapes how story events and other characters are presented by filtering all thoughts, feelings, memories, and perceptions through the perspective of one character (Abrams, 1999). This narrative lens, which centres on a single person's mental and emotional world, is referred to as the "centre of consciousness" (Abrams, 1999, p. 233).

This technique was developed by early pioneers like Henry James, who then incorporated it into stream-of-consciousness narration, which captures the ongoing flow of a character's inner experience (Abrams, 1999; Chatman, 1980). By strengthening the reader-character bond, this personal viewpoint increases empathy and immediacy (Chatman, 1980). This method avoids author-narrator confusion by limiting narrative authority and avoiding overt authorial voice, which improves the authenticity of the viewpoint being expressed.

However, this method has drawbacks of its own. A fragmented or biased narrative may result from limiting presentation to one mind, which leaves out the rich inner lives of other characters (Childs and Fowler, 2006). Authors frequently take advantage of this limitation to produce irony or ambiguity by purposefully making the thoughts of other characters mysterious and unreachable.

Moreover, narrators occasionally omit or conceal information, even within a single consciousness (Chatman, 1980). As demonstrated by writers like Faulkner, who uses selective disclosure to influence the reader's experience, these narrative silences enhance the complexity of storytelling.

All things considered, the limited point of view counteracts the omniscient narrator's totalising control. Limiting understanding to particular characters expands the range of storytelling techniques that authors can employ and creates new opportunities for narrative subtlety and creativity (Chatman, 1980).

II. Methodology and Theoretical Underpinning

Using close reading techniques and a qualitative textual analysis methodology, this study examines how polyphony is used as a narrative device and as a form of resistance in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments*. In light of the research questions, a hermeneutic approach is used to frame the analysis, which explores the ways in which various narrative voices interact within the text to challenge colonial and postcolonial hegemonies. By addressing both the novel's macro-level thematic issues and micro-level linguistic features, this method improves comprehension of narrative multiplicity.

Fragments was chosen because of its rich narrative complexity and its groundbreaking position in Ghanaian postcolonial literature, where Armah challenges prevailing colonial discourses through the use of multiple perspectives and fragmented temporalities. In order to clarify the connections and innovations Armah accomplishes, the methodology also entails placing the text within postcolonial theory and modernist literary frameworks. The primary method of gathering data is a thorough analysis of the novel's language, voice, and narrative structure in addition to comparative references to secondary sources that address postcolonial and modernist narrative techniques. This makes it possible to thoroughly examine how polyphony functions as resistance within the sociopolitical setting of the book.

Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of polyphony—the existence and interaction of several independent voices, each with its own viewpoint and worldview—forms the theoretical basis of this work (Bakhtin, 1984). By disrupting hegemonic monologic discourse, polyphony facilitates a dialogic engagement in which subaltern and marginalised voices can assert agency. This idea is especially powerful in the postcolonial context because it supports the effort to challenge Eurocentric narratives by dismantling colonial authority and pluralising viewpoints (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013). Thus, Armah's narrative techniques in *Fragments* can be critically examined through the lens of Bakhtin's theory.

The framework also integrates modernist literary theory, which emphasises methods such as fragmented temporality, stream-of-consciousness, and narrative experimentation as means of expressing subjective realities and socio-political upheaval (Bradbury & McFarlane, 1978). By embracing linguistic and structural complexity and upending linear narrative, Armah's work demonstrates this modernist influence. Putting Armah's book in the historical and political context of colonialism's aftermath and highlighting literature's function as a platform for cultural resistance and ideological struggle, postcolonial theory enhances this even more (Said, 1978). When combined, these frameworks show how *Fragments* uses polyphony as a literary device and as a means of resistance to colonial and neocolonial power structures.

2. Post-Colonial Fiction's Modernist Influences

Post-colonial fiction was greatly influenced by modernist literary techniques, which offered novel narrative tools that questioned established storytelling conventions and authoritative voices. Key modernist features such as fragmentation, stream-of-consciousness, and narrative ambiguity have been appropriated by post-colonial authors to articulate the complexities of colonial histories, fragmented identities, and cultural hybridity (Bradbury & McFarlane, 1978). In particular, the modernist emphasis on multiple perspectives and the destabilization of fixed meanings resonates strongly with post-colonial narratives that seek to contest dominant colonial epistemologies and recuperate marginalized viewpoints (Ashcroft et al., 2013). Ayi Kwei Armah, in *Fragments*, adopts and transforms these modernist strategies to reflect the fractured realities produced by colonialism and to explore forms of resistance in a postcolonial Ghanaian context.

Scholarship on Armah's work acknowledges his engagement with modernist aesthetics, situating his novels within the broader trend of African writers who have embraced and reconfigured modernist formal experiments to serve post-colonial ends (Said, 1978). This includes the use of polyphony, which allows the inclusion of divergent voices, memories, and ideologies, reflecting the heterogeneous nature of postcolonial societies. The intertextual dialogue between modernism and postcolonialism is thus a defining feature of *Fragments*, revealing how Armah negotiates literary inheritance to articulate a political and cultural critique.

III. Analysis

3. Polyphony as a Narrative Device in *Fragments*

Polyphony, understood as the coexistence of multiple autonomous voices, serves as a central narrative device in *Fragments*. Armah constructs his novel through a tapestry of voices that vary in social position, ideology, and temporal perspective, thereby resisting monolithic representations of history and identity (Bakhtin, 1984). This multiplicity destabilizes the reader's expectations of a single authoritative narrative and invites an active engagement with the text's dialogic nature. In *Fragments*, the use of homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators, along with shifts in focalization, generates a layered narrative texture that foregrounds contestation and contradiction.

Compared to modernist uses of polyphony, Armah's application is distinct in its explicit political impetus. While, in Bradbury & McFarlane's (1987) words, classic modernist authors used polyphony to explore subjectivity and epistemological uncertainties, Armah leverages this device to foreground collective memory and postcolonial resistance. The novel's fragmented structure mirrors the disjointed experience of postcolonial subjects and challenges readers to piece together a multifaceted truth, making polyphony a strategy for articulating and enacting anti-colonial dissent.

4. Polyphony as Resistance in the Colonial Aftermath

In the aftermath of colonialism, polyphony functions in *Fragments* as a deliberate form of resistance against the lingering colonial narratives that once silenced indigenous voices. The novel challenges the singular colonial discourse that attempted to impose a totalising version of history and identity by embracing a variety of, occasionally contradictory, points of view (Said, 1978). By giving voice to marginalised and subaltern experiences, this narrative technique undermines colonial authority and successfully thwarts authoritarian and neocolonial tendencies in Ghana after independence.

By highlighting the fragmentation and heterogeneity resulting from colonial disruption, the destabilisation of a single-story perspective cultivates a critical consciousness about the multiplicity of realities in postcolonial societies (Ashcroft et al., 2013). Bakhtin's theory that dialogism opposes monologic, oppressive forces by allowing different voices to coexist and negotiate meaning is consistent with this polyphonic resistance (Bakhtin, 1984). This is how *Fragments* enacts a kind of literary activism that challenges prevailing systems of silence and dominance in addition to documenting the postcolonial condition.

The capacity of polyphony to resurrect and elevate suppressed collective memory, which colonial powers frequently attempted to erase or distort, is another crucial component of polyphony as resistance in the post-colonial era. Oral histories, family stories, and marginalised viewpoints are just a few of the voices that are interwoven in postcolonial texts like *Fragment* to create a more comprehensive cultural consciousness that challenges the imposed colonial identity. By challenging imposed colonial narratives and cultural identities, this plurality, according to Hall (1994), restores the stolen voice and dignity of colonised peoples. Additionally, polyphony serves as a kind of cultural activism that envisions alternate futures based on a variety of experiences and histories and opposes the erasure of indigenous knowledge systems. The polyphonic texture of postcolonial narratives is a dynamic site for remembering and resisting colonial domination, as Said (1978) highlights, because this multiplicity amplifies voices that had been marginalised within dominant colonial discourse.

5. Resistance Through the Narrative Technique of Polyphony

Armah's use of unique, independent voices that approach the same content from various angles effectively exemplifies resistance through narrative multiplicity in *Fragments*. This polyphonic structure effectively subverts any singular, colonial-imposed viewpoint by enabling various characters,

including Baako, Modin, and Aimee, to recount common experiences and motifs with distinctive ideological nuances and social contexts (Gillard, 1992). For instance, a recurrent theme involving Aimee's fantasy of a houseboy is first interpreted as her private, solitary experience, then Modin revisits it in light of their shared relationship, and Solo then reevaluates it from a wider, more abstract perspective. By emphasising the plurality and contestation inherent in postcolonial identities and histories, this interaction not only enhances the narrative texture but also challenges prevailing colonial narratives.

A complex counter-discourse against hegemonic power structures is created by the novel's multiple narrative strands, which serve as a dialogic arena where opposing worldviews coexist and inform one another. By dividing the story into distinct threads, each with a unique first-person voice, Armah challenges stereotypes and creates a platform for the expression and validation of marginalised experiences. By undermining the power of a single, totalising narrative that was frequently spread during and after colonial rule, this stratification of voices functions as a form of resistance (Gillard, 1992). The resulting polyphony emphasises a shared quest for meaning and agency while reflecting the fragmented sociopolitical circumstances of postcolonial Ghana.

Furthermore, *Fragment's* use of polyphony pushes the reader to actively engage with the complexities and contradictions of postcolonial realities in addition to highlighting ideological schisms. The diversity of viewpoints undermines dogmatic interpretations and promotes a critical examination of history, identity, and power. By defying closure and promoting continuous discussion, this narrative technique thus turns into a kind of literary resistance, which is crucial to the literary decolonisation process (Gillard, 1992). Armah's book asserts the value of varied voices in reimagining African postcolonial consciousness and enacts a dynamic contestation of colonial legacies through narrative multiplicity.

6. The Interplay of Multiple Point of View and Resistance in *Fragments*

Fragments is Armah's second novel. It deals with the post-independence reality in his native country, Ghana. The story revolves around the return of the protagonist Baako from a five-year sojourn in the US. Moreover, it deals with his conflicts and disillusionment at the macabre situation into which Ghana sank. The grim reality of the place and Baako's reactions to it are related alongside the perspectives of two other main narrators. Naana, Baako's blind grandmother, reveals her dissatisfaction of the current reality and perceives Baako from a positive angle. Juana is Baako's Puerto Rican girlfriend and the only one who shares his concerns and alleviates his stress. Thus, *Fragments* is a narrative introduced via the consciousnesses of these three narrators alongside the contributions of some other witnesses (Ker, 1984). The structure of the novel is designed by the use of multiple narrative perspectives whose locus is the narrator's individual and introspective monologues (Amala, 2005; Benesamane & Riche, n.d).

Point of view is central to *Fragments*. The novel was published in a time when the discussion of point of view was ripe. Ever since Henry James, novelists have demonstrated a growing concern with how to tell their stories (Amala, 2005). This emerged as a reaction to the new context in which reality ceased to be defined in the traditional static terms. In addition, human perception has been conceived of as similarly protean (Ker, 1984). The reality-perception dichotomy has forced novelists to reconsider the manner with which they represent reality. Hence, the shift towards representing mind rather than outer reality has gained prominence. Techniques were innovated and others perfected to help put this new reality into words. Such methods and techniques include stream of consciousness, interior monologue, polyphony, and unreliable narrator. Armah's *Fragments* employ these techniques and the result is a fragmented consciousness-based narrative with shifting perspectives (Amala, 2005).

The narrative of *Fragments* is, as the title suggests, fragmentary and hybrid. Its structure manifests an explicit polyphony (Ker, 1984). Many active and minor voices, who shed their subjective opinions on the narrators and on themselves, can be detected. The use of multiple conflicting accounts sets the readers in a context wherein he/she experiences the narrative from several perspectives (p.3). The reader establishes a relationship with a character by sympathising with his viewpoint, but can form an objective judgement based on the points of view of other characters (Ker, 1984).

For example, Baako, the protagonist of the novel, is witness to the decadent atmosphere of Ghana after he returns from abroad. He is both disgusted and victimised by the new environment (Bensemane & Riche, n.d.). His consciousness is wearied with shock and conflicts as he tries to build any sense from the chaos surrounding him (Ker, 1984). The other source of his distress, other than his country, is his family. Efua and Araba, his mother and sister respectively, harbour grand expectations and dreams for Baako. They expect him to return from the US loaded with “the wealth of the West” so that they can build a decent house, buy a car to relieve Efua’s pained bones, and boast in front of the people (Colmer, 1980). Baako is torn and tormented between his ambitions and his family’s expectations and conflict ensues (p.77). Ghana becomes a hellish place where people strive for material gain and exhibitionism, and where Baako contemplates about his proper role in such a world.

The other characters manifest varying perspectives vis-à-vis Ghana. Naana, the elderly blind woman, whose monologues open and close the novel, is equally estranged by the new circumstances. She is supposedly the last carrier of decaying tradition of ancestors ruined by the new interest in everything coming from abroad. She reprimands her daughter and granddaughter for their anti-tradition behaviours when they expect and demand of Baako to return with the shiny western things. She also manifests her refusal of initiating the “outdooing” ceremony prior to its proper time. The ceremony is held after eighth day of the baby’s birth, but Efua and Araba anticipate it because they wanted to gather more money. Both Naana and her grandson Baako show disgust at the current situation, but while one does that on grounds of tradition, the other does it on grounds of progress. Both Nanna and Juana are sensitive to Baako’s conflict with the society. Naana expects he will overcome after he dies symbolically. Juana, herself estranged and preoccupied with her own conflicts, finds in Baako a person with whom she shares the same worries.

For the other characters, Baako and Ghana are seen differently. Efua is disappointed at her son’s empty-handed return and so is Araba. His mother tells him he is a wall that should be destroyed because he cannot understand their desires. He is ridiculed by Asante Smith, the head of Ghanavision, because he wants to change things. He is looked down at by Brempong at the plane before landing in Ghana, a dandy native with an obsession for foreign goods. He tells Baako that his demeanour looks anything but a “been-to”. Brempong is called by his family and friends the “white man” and his name literally means the “big-one”. His character is symbolic of post-independence Ghanaian obsession with material things. Baako is unable to fit in the “cargo-cult” commodity-based world and hence is perceived as a “freak”, a “misfit”, and a “stranger” (Bensemane & Riche, n.d; Ker 1984; Ennin & Nkansah, 2016). In a striking scene reminiscent of Darl in *As I Lay Dying*, after being labelled crazy, Baako is chased and stoned in town by his own mother and sister and the locals and forced into a mental asylum. Local Ghanaians, like Jefferson’s, amuse in the capture and chatter among themselves:

It was books, they say. And he was clever at school [. . .] Yes and a been-to. We saw him walking to take the bus, every morning so we were not so sure. A graduate all right. Hundred percent. Strange, he didn’t have a car. They could at least have given him a bungalow’. Strange, Strange (*Fragments*, 248 as cited in Ker, 1984).

The community condemned Baako, whose name literally means “the only one”, to the asylum because he was isolated and refused to conform to the new system. He was labelled “insane” since he defied their values and perceived their fragility. Yet, in *Fragments* as is in *As I Lay Dying*, “the insane ones are surely those who are in a hurry ‘to consume things they have taken no trouble to produce’” (Ker, 1984).

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Fragments* demonstrates how polyphony—a narrative technique inherited from Modernism—can be transformed into a powerful tool of resistance in postcolonial fiction. By presenting multiple, conflicting voices, the novel disrupts singular colonial narratives and gives space to marginalized perspectives that challenge hegemonic authority. This multiplicity not only reflects the fractured realities of postcolonial societies but also invites readers to actively engage with the complexities of identity, history, and power. Ultimately, *Fragments* shows that through polyphony, postcolonial literature can resist oppressive histories and contribute to the ongoing project of cultural and political decolonization.

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