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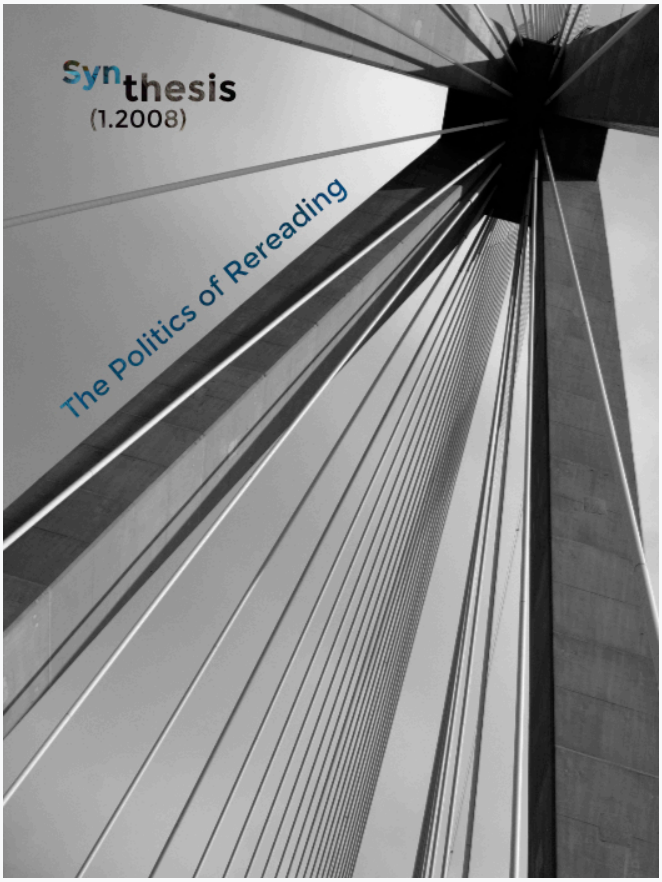

Towards a 'Theatre of Impossible Forgiveness': Ama Ata Aidoo and the Dilemma of Slavery

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Towards a 'Theatre of Impossible Forgiveness': Ama Ata Aidoo and the *Dilemma* of Slavery

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> ...what haunts are not the dead, but the gaps within us by the secrets of others.
> —N. Abraham & M. Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*
> a forgiveness without power... since the hypothesis of this unspeakable task announces itself, be it as a dream for thought, this madness is perhaps not so mad.—Jacques Derrida, "On Forgiveness"

In "Cape Coast Castle: The Edifice and the Metaphor," Kwadwo Opoku-Agyemang, a Ghanaian poet and essayist, returns imaginatively back to the years of transatlantic slavery, and freezes his narrative in a symbolic moment: when Olaudah Equiano's mother returns home to find her children missing.[1] The renowned biography of her son, who, having survived the horror of the transatlantic trade, offers an early example of a slave narrative that details the "agonies of enslavement lived from within" (26), is juxtaposed with her untold story. As Opoku-Agyemang notes, we "do not know her story. Nobody knows the story of her grief," and along with hers, the stories of the surviving kinsfolk, who were left behind mourning over "graves without bodies" of the captured Africans (26). These silent stories create a void where the absence of representation voices a traumatic memory, and they haunt, even nowadays, the site of colonial modernity that has reduced their stories to ghostly footnotes in the grand narratives of history. At the same time, they symbolize the remains of the most enduring and impossible legacy of the European slave trade in Africa and the Diaspora: the recovery of an unforgivable history, whose horror, guilt, and shame fractures the politics of memory and representation. Thus, these spectral voices emanate from the fissures of History to articulate "what is not spoken but haunts the speaking in this age" (Karavanta, "Rethinking the Spectre" 108), problematizing the act of listening and representation not only for us, the "represented ones," but also for those in the Diaspora, and those who have remained in their native African communities. Yet, if "the effect of enslavement has lasted this long because of the silence that surrounds its history" (Opoku-Agyemang 27), then it becomes imperative to listen to the deafening silence of these voices.

This essay attends to the silenced, but not silent, stories of the transatlantic slave trade that the West African writers narrate in their consistent attempt to speak to the history of slavery.[2] Using the work of the Ghanaian author Ama Ata Aidoo, and in particular her play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), as a symptomatic instantiation of the problematic of writing silence and narrating a history whose fragments are impossible to fully retrieve, I explore how she re-stages the history of slavery as a question that necessitates the critical revisiting of this international historical event in the contemporary political scene. My discussion will focus on the trope of "silence," deployed in the play as the symbol of the repression of the individual and communal memories of the history of slavery in Ghana and the haunting return of those memories that demand the individual and the community's awareness and attentiveness.

Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* is haunted by the silenced history of slavery, whose unrepresentable horror takes the form of a ghost that lingers at "the junction" between the ethical and the political, silence and voice, memory and forgetting. Its presence has been evoked by the marriage of the African American Eulalie Rush to the young Ghanaian Ato Yawson, and their subsequent return to Ghana, his native land. Upon their settling in Ghana, the play unfolds through a number of conflicts and dilemmas such as Ato's failure to function as the mediator between the two seemingly un-bridged sides: his traditional family and his western educated wife; his family's inability to accept Eulalie—a stranger and descendant of slaves—as their daughter-in-law; and, finally, Eulalie's difficulty to adapt to the society she has entered, and the thwarting of her romantic idea to finally "belong" somewhere. Along with a number of complex and disquieting questions raised in the play regarding issues of gender, identity, and the clash between tradition and the neocolonial present, the staging of the Diaspora's return at the centre of the drama fuels the engagement with the community's role in the history of transatlantic slavery and its irrevocable trauma. Seen in this way, Eulalie's presence confronts the local community with a number of ethical and social dilemmas concerning the Diaspora and its history of silence, forgetting and denial.

The challenges posed by addressing such a controversial theme have been described by Aidoo in her interview with Vincent Theo, where she doesn't only acknowledge the dangerous terrain she has entered by dealing with this highly sensitive issue, but she admits that "Now, I won't have that political courage, you know, to write a play like that" ("Ghana" 2). Her political courage is grounded in her blunt confrontation of the "whole question of Africa and black Americans in those stark terms" (5), especially once placed within the nationalist or pan-Africanist discourse that her country espoused in the Nkrumah years, and after. Against those hegemonic practices that propel the idea of Ghana as an even and homogeneous nation-state that, proud of its past and tradition, is one of the homes of the black Diaspora, Aidoo's play unearths a silenced and repressed event in its history that critically undoes the idea of an even and ideal "home": the event of the "home's" complicity with the slave trade. Resisting the tendencies of nationalistic narratives that attempt to "restore the *same"* and thus safeguard the "interior unity" of the nation (De Certeau 83), Aidoo critically interrupts the homogenizing tendencies of History towards the "othered" aspects of its narrative. She thus approximates the Foucaultian constellation of a counter-history (or genealogy) that dismantles, rather than unifies, and brings to the forefront silenced and forgotten events and constituencies; this kind of history "introduces discontinuity into our very being," since it "unearths the periods of decadence and if it chances upon lofty epochs, it is with suspicion—not vindictive but joyous—of finding a barbarous shameful confusion" (Foucault 88). In a similar vein, Aidoo being suspicious of the fact that "oral tradition can tell you about migrations that happened about thousand years, and yet events that happened two to three hundred years ago are blackened out" ("Ghana," 7), responds to her community's comfortable forgetfulness by unearthing those social and ethical issues that were buried or muted, and invites their inclusion in Ghana's postcolonial heritage.

It is through Aidoo's engagement with the displacement of the history of slavery from Ghana's official cultural and historical narratives and her political praxis to "create absences," to evoke de Certeau's words, that I propose to interpret her repudiation of the "Historian['s]" role ("Ghana," 7). By describing the denial of the lasting effects of enslavement as an "open wound" that threatens to devour the community, Aidoo inscribes slavery's occluded narrative in the scars it has left on the social and cultural fabric: "You can't cover up history. You know it is like a bad wound. You have to open it up and treat it. The scar would be there, but at least it would heal" (7). For Aidoo, the history of slavery erupts and revisits when its lessons are ignored or forgotten. Her attempts at reconstituting its narrative do not put the traumatic event under erasure, for the scars will always be there; they rather expose the indelible causes and persistent damaging effects on/for the individual and her/his community.

Aidoo's position towards slavery's traumatic imprint points to the benefits but also the limitations of psychoanalytic discourse to account for the effects of the historical haunting she explores. If trauma theory can contribute to the "unsilencing" of slavery's history by "permitting *history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not" (Caruth 11), the therapeutic exorcism of the ghost, purported by psychoanalysis, [3] fails to take into consideration ghostly returns that, as Derrida has pointed out in the *Spectres of Marx*, "the worldwide work of mourning cannot get rid of" (126). The traumatic presences of these ghosts are always in excess and they invite "a mourning in fact and by right interminable, without possible normality, without reliable limit, in its reality or its concept, between introjection and incorporation" (Derrida 121). The treatment of these historical ghosts would signify an "impossible and unethical assimilation of otherness" (Khanna 24), in that it would bring a closure to their disquieting presences, "which gives one the most to think about—and to do" (Derrida, *Spectres of Marx* 122).

Aidoo's use of *The Dilemma of the Ghost* as a cultural site that forces the audience to ponder on the trauma of slavery and gradually reconstitute its memory is manifested in the title of the play. The "dilemma" refers to the traditional oral genre of the "dilemma tale," whose contextual qualities are meant to expose "that in human affairs there are often no answers but only difficult choices which call into play conflicting moral values" (Bascom 97). The thematic and structural incorporation of a traditional oral genre within the specificities of the postcolonial era, far from constraining the text within teleological interpretations of "golden ageism" (Kerr qtd. in Quayson 47) that aim to re-produce the lost indigenous ethos, projects theatre as "an intermedium" (Quayson 50), as a dialogical

space between multiple historical and cultural processes. The blurring of a pre-colonial form in the actualities of the present reflects Ghana's position at crossroads between "traditional rural society and urbanization" (Bryan 16), and is employed in the service of re-thinking some crucial issues that have come to occupy the community in relation to identity, history and race. The resistance of the play to comfortable answers to the staged dilemma urges the audience to contemplate the "not-said" of the play's content, namely, what has been implied and suggested, in order to "resolv[e] what is unresolved in the performative, outside the theatre or text" (Odamtten 20). The elusiveness of closure creates a reflective community that will re-visit the plot and re-invent its meaning. The importance of shifting the responsibility for the resolution of the dilemma to the audience is better appreciated once we consider the thematic pre-occupations of the play. Articulating the silence that surrounds the traumatic history of slavery, Aidoo's play and work in general create the conditions for her audiences and their communities to "perpetually initiate rather than conclude the argument so that every new generation may visit it to quarry its lessons" (Opoku- Agyemang 28). To break the haunting silence just once is not to speak at all. Aidoo is aware that the recovery of trauma is a painstaking work that takes time, repetition and continuous engagement.

The issues that have to be rethought, but remain conspicuously "un-said," are suggested in the prelude of the *Dilemma* through the narrator's opening address to the audience.

I am the Bird on the Wayside—
The sudden scampering in the undergrowth,
Or the trunkless head
Of the shadow in the corner.
I am an asthmatic old hag
Eternally breaking the nuts
Whose soup, alas,
Nourished a bundle of whitened bones—
Or a pair of women, your neighbours
Chattering their lives away. (7)

The narrator's ambivalent identity, both in terms of time and belonging, becomes suggestive of her tale's complexities. On the one hand, in identifying herself as the "bird on the wayside," she assumes the role of a historical subject that has borne witness to a number of events. Her familiarity with the past that has inscribed the community and nurtured the ancestors is coupled with her simultaneous identity as a "pair of women" preoccupied with their everydayness; hence, her story is old and new, forgotten and still present in a latent but persistent way in everyday life. However complex the narrative of the story of her play is, the narrator urges the audience to be attentive to her story, "For the mouth must not tell everything" (7). Her disclaimer of competence to narrate all the stories in the story paves the path for her exhorting utterance that "Sometimes the eye can see/ And the ear should hear" (7), thus inciting the audience to bear witness to the meaningful silences that lurk in the play. These silences become apparent when the narrative voice fades away from the stage, having first transferred the audience to the other side of the Atlantic on a "University Campus" (8). The snapshots of Ato and Eulalie's conversation about their pending return to Ghana function as the platform upon which the play's dilemma will be displayed, paving the way for the unexpected developments that will surround the unravelling of the return of the "been-to" one.[4] For in Aidoo's play, Ato Yawson will not simply return back home informed by the ideological and cultural baggage of the West but also accompanied by a "radical" guest, whose presence will lay claim upon a long history of silence, whose story is yet to be told.

The presence of slavery's silenced memory is manifested in the first family gathering when Ato announces that he has been married to Eulalie while studying in the United States. The pauses that follow Ato's answers to his family's questions over their new daughter's "roots" break into a silent mourning when he begins his account of her ancestors' "routes": "Eulalie's ancestors were of our ancestors. But [*warming up*] as you all know, the white people came and took some away in ships to be slaves..." (18). Ato's "warming up" before explaining the specificities of Eulalie's background reveals his awareness that the history of slavery is a sensitive issue for his family. Indeed, the mentioning of the word "slaves" brings to the surface a part of the community's history that was buried in silence for many years and has begged its acknowledgement. Yet, besides his pleading with his family and

community to listen to his story—"But no one is prepared to listen to me...," "But you will not listen to me...," "Please I beg you all listen to me ...." (17- 18)—the family's facial expressions of horror and Nana's reaction articulate the impossibility to endorse Eulalie's story in the communal history: "Now, what shall I tell them who are gone? /The daughter of slaves who come from the white man's land. /Someone should advise on how to tell my story" (18).

Although Nana's paralysis to narrate her story is grounded in her role as a messenger to the "Royal Dead" of her clan, the aetiology of her impotence is not offered until after the family gathering comes to an end and the stage is left to her. In a monologue that addresses the audience, Nana discloses what was concealed in her initial reaction, shedding light upon the root cause of her difficulty in transferring the news to the ancestors:

Even when the unmentionable
Came and carried off the children of the house
In shoals like fish,
Nana Kum kept his feet steadfast on the ground
And refused to let any of his nephews
Take a wife from a doubtful stock. (19-20)

This testimony unravels the ways through which slavery has been experienced as traumatic, and has been concealed as a secret, due to the guilt her community bears for its complicity with its history of slavery. As Nana reveals, the ancestors have experienced and survived the irrevocable horror of their children's enslavement. Living under the perpetual threat of captivity, their only defense towards the surviving members of the community is the preservation of a collectivity orchestrated around the illusionary clusters of "sameness" and "racial purity." Their attitude exemplifies what Opoku-Agyemang defines as the "pathogeny" of a "victim society," which, having adapted to the constant danger of capture, assumes "a posture of perpetual defensiveness" (27), to the extent that it "becomes conservative, the people huddle together, furtive, subsisting by cunning, afraid even of the tremor lurking in the light" (27). This precarious mode of living that defines "Africa's culture under siege" (Opoku-Agyemang 26) informs the ontological basis of the community and explains the ways through which trauma has contributed to the silencing of slavery. The ancestors' inability to shield their children and even themselves from being ransacked by the "unmentionable" results in a defensive attitude that renders slavery "unmentionable"; by shutting out all those who come "from a doubtful" stock, they annihilate and silence their history. The history of slavery has been kept safely outside the parameters of the community; and yet, what has remained "inside" to haunt the consciousness of its members is the guilt of forgetting, a guilt that symbolizes all that is repressed within the culture and remains present in its haunting absence: the question of justice and responsibility towards all those who were taken away, who were violently wrenched from the African continent to be shipped to the other side of the Atlantic. This unspoken and unacknowledged history, sealed properly in the collective unconscious of the community, is the communal secret that has passed down to the next generations; in the play, it makes its presence felt when Eulalie returns to claiming the space of which her ancestors were violently deprived. Eulalie's claim for that space stands for her right to represent herself, to question and rethink; the history of silence and exclusion is not performed only in the name of the injustice committed in the past but also in the name of the present and the future.

The return of the traumatic event through which the community is forced to encounter its history and its forgotten stories can be best symbolized by the role of the spectre, namely, the "encrypted presence" or *phantom* that, according to Abraham and Torok, embodies the transgenerational diffusion of silence and the unspeakable. Although their concept of the "transgenerational phantom" emerges from the site of family secrets, it can reveal a larger cultural scale, for it "moves the focus of psychoanalytic inquiry beyond the individual being analyzed because it postulates that some people unwittingly inherit the secret psychic substance of their ancestors' lives ... conflicts, traumas, or secrets" (Rand 166). Similarly, Khanna argues that the *phantom* offers "important insights for the literary critic and particularly for postcolonial studies," in that "the presence of the phantom, that is, the existence of material secrets... that can be carried through generations, has consequences for reading against the grain, reading politically, and for reading for difference in the colonial archive" (254). The *transgenerational phantom* points to the internalization of the gaps and silences created by the "other's" impossibility to articulate a traumatic event, providing a theory of readability for the

"poetics of hiding" (Rand 57); its absent presence enables the interpretation of the processes of cultural "encryptment" constituted by those words and secrets that a culture does not admit to itself, like the complicity with the horror of the slave trade exemplified in Nana's narration.

The *phantom* is defined as the imprint of an indigestible experience, a failed mourning that cannot be integrated into the fabric of psychic life.[5] It occupies isolated psychic regions, the crypts or vaults, where it finds refuge being reduced to silence. Beyond the reach of the subject's consciousness, it evades the subject's power to comprehend and articulate it. For Abraham and Torok, it is the psychic *phantom*, the gaps created by the silences surrounding traumatic events, and *not the content of the traumatic event*, that is transferred down from a parent to a child, or from one generation to the other. As they suggest: "the words used by the phantom to carry out its return...do not refer to a source of speech in the parent. Instead, they point to a gap, they refer to the unspeakable" (174). Thus, the unsayable gets transmitted without being articulated, and the child becomes the medium for the return of a parent's unspeakable and unacknowledged trauma. It is the ghost effect's radical heterogeneity, which, as Derrida notes in his forward to *The Wolf Man" Magic Word,* "implies the topography of an other, 'of a corpse buried in the other'" (xxx), that creates the conditions for the "heterocryptic ghost that *returns* from the Unconscious of the other, according to what might be called the law of *another generation* (xxxi). This return, the return of another from *within*, doesn't only raise pressing, political questions about the haunting of silenced histories in the present, but commemorates, and thus betrays, the politics of exclusion that have made the construction of the crypt, and its ghostly inhabitant, possible in the primal foreclosure.

Aidoo further dramatizes the transgenerational haunting of the ancestor's disavowed role in the slave trade in a dream Ato has after he and Eulalie have settled in Ghana, which exemplifies how the silenced and encrypted guilt that surrounds slavery's history continues to haunt the present generation. The dream starts with the appearance of two children on the stage, a boy and a girl, who have a disagreement over what game they should play. Although they decide on the game "Kwaakwaa"—hide and seek—what remains unresolved is who will hide and who will seek. Upon the girl's insistence to be the one who will be found, the boy hits the girl, but he immediately regrets it, and, since their initial disagreement is not resolved, they start rethinking afresh what they should do. Interestingly, the girl's next choice is to sing "the Ghost," a game performed by holding each other's hands, skipping around and singing the following song:

One early morning,
When the moon was up
Shining as the sun,
I went to Elmina Junction
And there and there,
I saw a wretched ghost
Going up and down
Singing to himself
'Shall I go
To Cape Coast,
Or to Elmina
I don't know,
I can't tell.
I don't know,
I can't tell. (28)

The introductory conflict with regards to "what is it to be done" (Odamtten 28) reflects the dilemma Ato and Eulalie—and along with them the community that watches—face in relation to the forgotten story Eulalie here represents: namely, Ghana's responsibility towards the history of slavery. Seen in this way, the girl's demand to be found symbolizes the claim Eulalie, and her story, put upon the community: the acknowledgement, that is, of a long History of silence, and the transatlantic urge to include its painful memory in the present, defying the ruptures or fissures it may cause on the national and communal fabric. Similarly, the little boy's unwillingness to find the girl captures Ato and his community's unwillingness to mobilize themselves towards the quest for her forgotten history; rather, the community is inclined to just hide from the legacy of the past. And as the dream manifests, the community's denial towards the past results in a haunting, as the girl's next choice to play "the ghost"

suggests. Rather than suggesting "communality and gender reconciliation" that becomes paradigmatic to the characters of the play and, to a larger extent, the community that bears witness to the dilemma (Odamtten 28), the little girl's tactful retreat delineates the consequences of denial. The ghost's paralysis at the junction, its eternal wanderings up and down, and its equally puzzling wondering whether to go to Elmina or to Cape Coast, feature the haunting of a forgotten history, whose negatively loaded aspects remain silenced. Both cities were among the biggest hubs on Ghana's coast line for the slave trade. As long as the ghost lingers at the crossroad and is tortured by the impossibility to take a decision—because both places provide it with no possibility—its frustrating motto "I don't know, /I can't tell. /I don't know, /I can't tell" will echo and haunt the community.

Ato's dream concretizes the way through which the community's secret emerges from the repository of the communal unconscious. This is further strengthened when he attempts to interpret his enigmatic dream, and he remembers that he used to sing this song as a child:

> Damn this ghost at the junction. I loved to sing that song....I used to wonder what the ghost was doing there at the junction. And I used to wonder too what it did finally...Did it go to Elmina or Cape Coast? And I used to wonder, oh, I used to wonder about so many things then. But why should I dream about all these things now?...I am going Mad. (29)

Ato's failure to decipher the dream becomes even more significant in the light of the fact that this song is part of the tradition that passes down from one generation to the other unquestioned. And it seems, that as long as the *phantom* does not become a respectable subject of enquiry, it will always return to haunt the present and future generations. But what is the claim that the phantom lays and why does it demand so insistently that the community be attentive to its presence?

The answer to this question has been hinted by Ato's response to the ghost's association with an impossible, "unconditional forgiveness" whose materialization in the empirical world amounts to madness but whose presence is fundamental for the present and future of the community. The possibility of such a pure form of forgiveness has been glossed by Jacques Derrida in "On Forgiveness." Against the global "theatre of forgiveness," in which "the grand scene of repentance...is played out, sincerely or not" (29), and is subjected to calculable or calculated economies of political ends, Derrida projects the ethical and political need for an unconditional forgiveness. This form of forgiveness will not be answerable to the threads of instrumentality, that is, it will not be granted on the basis that it "amount[s] to the therapy of reconciliation" (41), a therapy that sanitizes the discords of the past and unfolds amnesia, bringing a closure to any discussion of memory and responsibility; neither should it be granted "conditionally," that is, only after the condition that the guilty has repented. Rather, for Derrida forgiveness "should remain exceptional and extraordinary, in the face of the impossible: as if it interrupted the ordinary course of historical temporality" (32). To forgive unconditionally the horrors of history is to embrace their radical alterity and learn to live with their torturing haunting in the present. It is a radical gesture of embracing whatever we want to forget or render invisible, and this painful embracing should not be a momentary action, but should always be in a process, perpetually eschewing any "telos" and closure. In short, it is a form of forgiveness that stretches forbearance to its limits, reaching the realm of madness. Yet, even though this,

> forgiveness is *mad, that it must remain a madness* of the impossible, this is certainly *not to exclude or disqualify it*. It is even perhaps the only thing that arrives, that surprises, like a revolution, the ordinary course of history, politics, and law. Because that means that it remains heterogeneous to the order of politics or the juridical as they are ordinarily understood. (39, emphasis added)

This act of forgiveness is enacted at the end of the play, when Esi Kom, Ato's mother, embraces Eulalie and leads her symbolically into the house. The final scene comes after a climactic moment in the play, when Eulalie and Ato's conflict over their fractured marriage comes to represent a number of cultural tensions explored throughout the play, such as the unresolved conflict between traditional and western values, the un-bridged estrangement that the history of Middle Passage has forced between the continental Africans and those in the Diaspora. The conflict begins with Eulalie's reaction towards Ato's people, and particularly the pressure they put on the couple to have children, and culminates with her accusations of Ato's people for only understanding their "own savage customs and standards," to which Ato responds "Shut up, how much does the American Negro know?" (87). Ato

storms out of the house and goes to his mother seeking advice. After listening carefully and probing into the cause of the disagreement, Esi Kom realizes that Eulalie's "otherness," represented by her incomprehensible attitude, was partly fostered by her son's condemnatory attitude towards his community. This realization leads Esi Kom to re-think her stance towards Eulalie and open herself, and quite symbolically "her house," to her. Esi Kom's gesture of forgiveness that introduces a-fresh Eulalie within the communal frame is an act of remembering against forgetting, living against death, and makes possible an act of impossible hospitality that endures the pain of living with the "other" while remembering the history of injustice Eulalie's presence has invoked. Her invitation is predicated on the basis that Eulalie's ancestors are watching: "And we must be careful with your wife," she says to Ato, "You tell us her mother is dead. If she has any tenderness,/ Her ghost must be keeping watching over/ All which happen to her" (52). However, her invitation also acknowledges the history of all those who were "excluded" and silenced throughout the ages and her embrace materializes the impossible act of bearing the weight and shame of this truth in the name of living with each other, in and for the present. Esi Kom's forgiveness does not fully break the silence that has been nourishing and hosting the *phantom* but it does acknowledge it as *a history of silence*. At the end of the play, she fades away from the scene to give room to the haunting and persistent silence of the ghost: "I can't tell/ I can't tell/ I can't tell..." (52- 53). Thus, the praxis of forgiveness enacted in *The Dilemma* does not seal the haunting memory of the past safely in the past; nor does it initiate its exorcism. Its haunting is rather embraced because it will never allow her community to return to the normality of "forgetfulness," "denial" and "amnesia." The ghost at the junction will always be there reminding them of what they try to repress.

It is with the memory of the ghost's haunting that the audience is left at the end of the play, encouraged to take the risk of pursuing the questioning of the ghost in the political realm. The dilemma tales eschew closure and seek to initiate rather than conclude the arguments; forgiveness thus remains "unfinalized" (Derrida, "On Forgiveness" 50) and is deferred to be enacted in the community, in the material and contemporary world of the audience. Esi Kom's radical gesture represents Aidoo's "welcoming," in Spivak's words, "the undecidable as the condition of possibility for responsible action" (79), and represents the impossible and yet imperative need to remember and yet live, live in the present with the ghosts of the past. In inviting "the risk of un-concealing [the community's] ambiguities by contextualizing them in a way that its present will be engaged in an agonistic relation with itself, its "sameness" and its "otherness"" (Karavanta, "The Local, the Global and the Spectral" 182), Aidoo departs from concocting utopian realms that could magically accommodate the black diasporic community as a homogeneous group relieved from the haunting spectres of history. Rather, she articulates the conditions of an "inter-active community" that continuously negotiates its position by remembering not to forget the traditional oppositions that have defined, and continue to define its identity as constituting and constituted by the official, pacifying, versions of History and the silenced, disquieting, stories. The inter-action with these oppositional forces does not erase the unevenness of stories and memories in the community that the body of the spectre invokes and recalls; History cannot be fully written, the memory cannot be fully restored, the privileges of men over women, or natives over strangers, will not be eradicated. And yet, this remembering not to forget that the spectre invokes enables a mode of thinking and performing that perpetually interrogates communal history and individual memory from *within* this unequal world.

[1] Two generous Research Awards by Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland and by the Small Project Grants of the University of Edinburgh made possible my research trip to the University of Ghana, Legon, offering me the chance to get acquainted with Opoku-Agyemang's work, and meet personally with Ama Ata Aidoo. I am grateful to both for deeming my project worthy of support.

[2] This essay is part of my PhD thesis tentatively entitled *Breaking the Silence: West-African Authors and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* at the English Department of the University of Edinburgh, under the supervision of Dr. Michelle Keown and Dr. Simon Malpas.

[3] I refer here to Freud's theorization on "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), where mourning comes to an end once the subject has resolved its emotional attachment to the lost one. Although Freud revised this position later on in "The Ego and the Id" (1923), there have been theorists of cultural and literary studies who have taken their cue from the psychoanalytic school and have articulated the need and possibility of a work of mourning in the name of a history of the present. See selectively LaCapra, Kristeva, and Sacks.

[4] The term "been-to" is attributed to a person of African descent who has been-to the Western World either for education or for employment and returns back to the country of his/her origins. The figure of the "been-to" has become a trope in African literature that stands for the critical insights and "re-readings" the complex position of the "been-to" can offer informed as she/he is by conflicting cultures, languages and traditions. For literary trajectories of the "been-to" that problematize the aforementioned conflicts see Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* and Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments*.

[5] For Abraham and Torok, the phantom points to a mis-location produced by the internalization of the gaps and silences created by the "other's" impossibility to articulate a traumatic event. Its recovery is predicated on two processes. The first one is the recognition of the heterogeneity between the subject and the phantom, the realization that the phantom has been created and belongs to someone else. The second entails the articulation of the shameful experience that haunts the subject in the socio-political reality of the present, mediating its initial sin/guilt under a new perspective. In his introduction to their work, Derrida has offered an exemplary reading that acknowledges the political signification of the "phantom" as a concept, but blurs the distinction between these two terms, and, as a consequence, challenges the possibility of the ghost's exorcism (xvii). My drawing on their theory in Aidoo's play is informed by Derrida's re-reading. See also Khanna, who gestures towards a similar use and application of their formulation in her book.

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