

The Anglophone - Francophone Divide And A Third Space In John Nkemngong Nkengasong's *Across The Mongolo*

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a binary divide between the Anglophone and the Francophone sub systems in Kamangola as purported in John Nkengasong's *Across the Mongolo*. The article attempts a deconstruction of the binary opposition of characters in the novel through third spacing. The aim is to envisage characters a third space to see how traumatic experiences could be averted. The Third Space theory as propounded by Homi Bhabha breaks down binary opposition between Anglophone and Francophone in the novel because third spaces provide therapeutic solutions to domination and in particular, questions and dismantles the Francophone structure. According to Bhabha, the third space denotes a resistance to binarism and predetermined identities. It is a liminal and intersection position that is fluid and shifting, where hegemony is redefined and negotiated. Therefore, the third space could be psychological, a venue, it could be a character and it can be gotten from the authorial point of view. The hypothesis therefore contends that if characters in *Across the Mongolo*, place themselves within the confines of the third space, they will certainly find a comfortable place for themselves in the society by negotiating and celebrating an in-between identity. Consequently, if they are not positioned in the overlapping circles of the third space, the effects would be traumatic.

Keywords: Anglophone, Francophone, binary, identity, third space and trauma.

BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Cameroon was annexed by Germany in 1884. After being defeated by the Allied forces in the First World War, Cameroon was apportioned to Britain and France. Subsequently, it became British and French Cameroon which were administered differently by their new colonial masters. With decolonisation becoming the order of the day in the mid century, both Cameroons also fought for independence. French Cameroon gained her independence in 1960 while politicians in the British Cameroons had different points of view. The first school of thought proposed her to join the Federal Republic of Nigeria while the second school of thought wanted her to join La Republique du Cameroun. In October 1961, British Cameroon attained independence by joining the French Cameroon to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. And years later with the evolution of ideas and politics, Cameroonians voted for a unitary state with a unitary constitution on the 20th of May 1972.

Consequently, the “Anglophone problem” was created with the Anglophones being the minority of the nation. Francis Nyamnjoh and Piet Konings argue that “reunification with Francophone Cameroon in 1961 has led to a growing marginalisation of the Anglophone minority in the nation-state project controlled by the Francophone political elite, endangering its cultural heritage and identity” (2). Julius Victor Ngoh does not dismiss the idea of the “Anglophone problem” but he rather posits that it is hard to define. Nyamnjoh and Konings propound that, “gradually, Anglophones felt they were being recolonised and marginalised in all spheres of public life and were becoming second-class citizens in their own country” (11).

Across the Mongolo has a historical touch having a precise façade to the events of Cameroon which form the foundation of the Kamangolan situation. In the novel, John Nkemngong Nkengasong presents two States Kama and Ngola (metaphorically English and French Cameroons) merged together after colonialism to form the unitary Federal Republic of Kamangola. It is therefore, a kind of colonisation which Michael Hechter describes as, “internal colonialism.” In the novel, this is reflected in the attitude of the hegemonic Francophone Ngola which subjects the pariah State of Anglophone Kama.

The metaphor of the River Mongolo is one of the most powerful metaphors that Nkengasong uses in the novel. “The River Mongolo. It is the Great River, the boundary between the English colony of Kama and the French colony of Ngola, the two federated states that gave birth to the Federal Republic of Kamangola” (35-36).

THEORETICAL FRAME

Key to this paper is the postcolonial theory that will focus on hybridity and the third space which is deconstructive in nature. More specifically, the concept of internal colonialism is utilised to portray the division of the core and periphery within the nation state of Kamangola.

However, internal colonialism is a more specific concept in the analysis of *Across the Mongolo*. Its origin is not very obvious but the prime accredited use of the expression was by Leo Marquard's *South Africa's Colonial Policy*. Michael Hechter elaborately uses the term in his work *Internal Colonialism, the Celtic Fringe in British National Development*. Demonstrating and drawing inspiration from the United Kingdom, he labels a core-periphery relationship between Britain and the Celtic Fringe. He uses Scotland as an example to illustrate that modernisation and capitalism can generate a “cultural division of labour” whereby the overriding ethnic group or region consigns those of other groups to sub-standard and peripheral locations. Michael Hechter presents a situation which involves domination by a culturally conquering group imposed in the name of a dogmatically asserted cultural superiority to a materially inferior indigenous people.

Mostly commonly referred to, internal colonialism represents the notion of structural, social, political and economic inequalities between regions within a nation-state to which Robert Hind hypothesizes that “the colonising and the colonised subjects live in the same country” (552). The concept of internal colonialism is appropriate in this study because it addresses the state of Kama as a sub colony in the postcolonial nation of Kamangola.

Looking at internal colonialism, there is a symbiotic bond with the common general variations of colonialism and postcolonialism. Robert Hind elucidates these points of convergence between

both models which include, “political subjection, economic exploitation, cultural domination and racial conflict” (552). So, in the course of this paper, both concepts will overlap to support or buttress the arguments raised.

Hybridity is a postcolonial concept expressly allied with Homi Bhabha, who is an influential figure in postcolonial studies. In *The Location of Culture*, he makes use of the terms hybridity and third space. In this paper, hybridity and the third space can be treated as synonyms. Because he posits that hybridity is an in-between space which most often is referred to as the third space of enunciation or the hybrid third space. In an interview with Jonathan Rutherford, Bhabha says “hybridity is the third space [...]” (221).

In this third hybrid space, Bhabha postulates that pure cultures no longer exist. Rather, they are in a constant process of redefinition and hybridity. He further notes that it is not important to trace two original moments from which a third space emerges but we can recognise a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself which may demand that you translate principles, rethink them and extend them.

The third space therefore is a metaphor for the space in which cultures meet and intermingle and hybrid identities are created. For Bhabha it is a blend of two cultures to form a new one which does not really belong to any. He refers to it as the interstices between clashing cultures. In this in-between space, new cultural identities are formed, reformed and constantly in the process of becoming.

ANGLO- FRANCO DIVIDE

Looking at the Cameroonian situation, Francis Nyamnjoh and Piet Konings trace the Anglophone-Francophone divide from the unequal partition between Britain and France, “separate colonial state formation and the development of territorial differences in languages and cultural legacies laid the spatial and historical foundation for the construction of Anglophone and Francophone identities” (10). Despite the reunification of both Cameroons, it is obvious that they had different cultural orientations and were therefore bound to portray aspects of binarism. They expand that Anglophone associations often tend to stress the insurmountable gap between Anglophones and Francophones on the basis of their different colonial legacies and Francophone hegemonic and assimilative tendencies in the post-colonial state. (11)

Bearing in mind the apt semblance of Cameroon and Kamangola, the Anglophone –Francophone divide in *Across the Mongolo* is very glaring in terms of language, culture and identity. Nyamnjoh and Konings argue that “Anglophones felt they were being recolonised and marginalised in all spheres of public life and were becoming second-class citizens in their own country” (11).

FRANCOPHONE DISCOURSE OF COLONIALISM POWER

Kamangola is characterised by the binary opposition of Francophones and Anglophones, professed in terms of core and periphery. There is unequal power relationship between the two and Ngola being the authoritative space is the seat of government where Babajoro the tyrant rules. The gap is widened in terms of power. The Anglophone minority almost give up on themselves and become victims of their own inferiority as depicted by Ngwe who says, we “were the minority

English colony that now shared one nation with the majority French colony” (114). And so wonders, “why did it happen that two States with two distinctly contrasting colonial heritage and antithetical cultures were brought together, one the minority State subdued to a lout majority?” (115) It is important to note that the Anglophone feeling of minority and subalternism developed Francophone superiority and imperialism. The latter maintains himself in the core and ruling while the former takes the periphery. While the majority voice dominates, the inferiority complex is a weakness on the part of the minority. This widens the Manichean gap in the novel and such a division marks perpetual tension and division of labour to between both sides.

In the course of the novel, Ngwe describes the State of Kama as a colony under Ngola, which is the fifth colonisation for them:

How much have we suffered from this business of colonisation? It was first the Germans, then the English, followed by the Awaras, then the French, now the most humiliating kind from our Francophone brothers who are themselves a French colony. In order words, a colony colonising another colony means we have been reduced to real pariahs, to sub-humans without any real identity because of the excesses of colonisation. (124)

Grounding on Michael Hechter’s description of internal colonialism, there is domination of core and periphery within the nation State of Kamangola. The core is seen to dominate the periphery politically and to exploit it maternally. There’s asymmetrical division of power which gives rise to the severe stratification of core and periphery. To be colonised means to be detached from all the coloniser’s advantages. This colonial relationship between Francophone and Anglophone is found between this hypothetical structure of division of labour. The core-periphery concept is therefore applicable to the Francophone- Anglophone situation in Kamangola, similar to colonial discourse which is described by critics as “Othering” according to Gayatri Spivak.

LANGUAGE

Michael Hechter observes that between the core and periphery, “language and religion were the most visible of these differentiae” (109). With both the Anglophones and the Francophones living in the same community in *Across the Mongolo*, language serves as a distinguishing factor in the roles of domination and resistance when the French language adopts a supremacist stance against the unprivileged English language. Nyamnjoh and Konings argue that, “the populations of each sphere came to see themselves as distinct communities, defined by differences in language” (24). This linguistic condition makes the Kamangolan situation to reflect a Manichean world of binary opposition. The citizens of Ngola see their Kama brothers as Other and different thereby synonymous to slaves and pariahs.

Language is one of the major tools that Nkengasong uses to illustrate how the Manichean dichotomy manifests in the novel. In the intellectual sphere of the Besaadi university, “none of the Francophone lectures seemed to have any interest in the English language” (60). They are very conscious of the score that the French language is the language of power and domination. The situation even becomes worse when Ngwe attempts to speak in English:

As soon as I uttered the first words in English, the lecture hall broke into tremor of booing and jeering, ‘Anglo! ‘Anglofou!’Anglobete!’ cat-calls and screaming came out

from all directions. Twisted papers and assorted objects flew from every direction and landed on me.... I was the Anglo, the pariah the slave that had no voice in the high and decent life across the Great River. At all cost, I had to learn the language of my masters.... my assimilationist masters, forced me to speak their own language....I was not going to contaminate my masters with the language of low birth.... the mouth that fed on rot should be permanently shut in public for the convenience of the decent society in which I now found myself. (60-61)

This passage marks the height of the Manichean binarism for which two very salient aspects stand out. Firstly, Ngwe is forced to learn the language of the coloniser or secondly remain muted like the Spivakian subaltern.

The ability to speak freely in French is an important metaphor used by Nkengasong. Captivatingly, Kamangola is a country with an official bilingual status of English and French in which both Francophones and Anglophones are supposed to have equal status, (24) but it is not so. French is the dominant language which is an imposition of colonial culture. English is seen as the language of the slave or pariah (93).

Language in colonialism is an important metaphor associated to domination. In *Across the Mongolo*, French takes the upper hand and the Anglophones are expected to renounce their own language and embrace the French language. Franz Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks* argues that “to speak means [...] above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of civilization” (8). Typical of French colonial discourse, by renouncing English language, Anglophones are consequently assimilated into the French culture. The Francophone colonisers do not understand the language of the pariah and sees it as a defiance of the better language they were all meant to speak. French therefore represents the language of the core or master.

The notion of language is highlighted throughout *Across the Mongolo* and how French as the dominant language affects the personal identity of some characters. When Kwenti crosses the Great River to Ngola to work in the Ministry of Education, he relinquishes English and speaks only French and therefore becomes a surrogate Francophone. This condition is best described by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* as a reflection of “the native intellectual (who) comes back to his people by way of cultural achievements, (and) behaves in fact like a foreigner”(223). It is shocking to the other Anglophones that Kwenti being the chief of service of scholarship refuses to serve his brothers Mwolefack and Ngwe and instead, “shouted us down and ordered us to leave his office, this time speaking in French” (93). Ngwe laments that, “my brother Kwenti had disowned me because I spoke the language of the pariah and I was probably going to contaminate him with the vapour of the English language” (93) is thus a testimony of Kwenti’s brainwashed mind. When he travels across the Mongolo, he assimilates fully into the dominant culture through the French language, that is, he consents to be incorporated fully and grows to scorn English and all that it represents. He submits willingly to French domination and assists the Francophone to implement his ideology. This stamps an indelible mark on his personal identity.

Elleke Boehmer postulates that colonialism was predominantly “an imposition of power, of language, of ideology” (90). By imposing a new language, which is French in this case to the Anglophones, Anglophones after high school education go to the only State University in Besaadi

which reflects French ideology, not only to learn their language but to be assimilated into their culture. French becomes the language which colonial education manifests.

COLONIAL EDUCATION

Amos Saakana advocates that “when slavery was abolished, under the persistent destruction of rebellion, a new form of control was insistent: education” (102). Bill Ashcroft *et al* in *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Literature* say that colonial education is an effective element in the spread of colonialism. Bearing in mind the present context of colonialism in *Across the Mongolo* which is internal colonialism, the Francophone being the colonizer and the core, dominate the only State University and the Anglophones who go there are viewed and treated as second class citizens.

Education plays a prevailing role in *Across the Mongolo*. First of all, it is related to liberation; Ngwe’s means of breaking the subaltern role and becoming the Babajoro of Kamangola but simultaneously it implies the imposition of Francophone ideology because there is a challenge when that educational system is one inundated with French ideas and influences.

University education is associated with emancipation and progress and Ndi Nkemasaah urges his son Ngwe to attain the highest level to “become Babajoro, the president of the Republic of Kamangola one day” (7). Ngwe becomes wildly exhilarated with the idea, “to travel to Besaadi to register at the University of Besaadi, the place which was said to be the zenith of learning. Anyone who left the institution was equal to Babajoro, the man who gave life and took it away again at will” (25-26). University education therefore helps Ngwe to be aware of the discrimination in this society and how to challenge it as he observes, “anyone who did not go the university belonged to the inferior class” (24). Although he is frustrated by the system, Ngwe ironically learns new strategies of liberation or equality.

It is interesting to know that university education is used as an ideological instrument to spread Francophone ideology. According to the Francophones, education at Besaadi was meant to brainwash and assimilate the Anglophone into the dominant cultural frame by producing citizens who would accept their ways and thoughts. Under the control system of educational grants and scholarship in the university, a select Anglophones are given a chance that ultimately will help assimilate them to become more like the Francophone. According to Ngwe, “this is clear evidence that the Francophone government uses our Anglophone brothers to destroy us, to ruin our heritage, to assimilate us, to clearly wipe our Anglophone traditions from the face of this country” (123). Moreover, through the eyes of Dr. Amboh who in spite of his rich educational background from Britain, is not allowed to impose his influence of students, we learn that, “it was the government policy to eliminate the Anglophone culture in the country using the university as one of its weapons, we had no choice but to give in to complete assimilation into the Francophone culture” (60).

With an increasing critical awareness, Ngwe begins to guard himself against the possibility of assimilation and alienation thus challenging the concessions of his Anglophone elite such as Dr. Amboh. Ngwe challenges the Manichean dichotomy whose aim is to empower the Francophones against the apparently powerless Anglophones.

COUNTER DISCOURSE

Nyamnjoh and Konings argue that hegemonic and assimilative tendencies of the Francophone-dominated state were strongly resented by the majority of the Anglophone population, leading to the development of an Anglophone consciousness with the feeling that their territory with a distinct colonial legacy was being subjected to marginalisation, exploitation and assimilation by the Francophone-dominated state and even by the Francophone population as a whole (74).

By posing a challenge to the dominant ideology, Ngwe personifies a counter discourse in the words of Richard Terdiman, that a counter-discourse is counter-discourse because it presupposes the hegemony of the Other. Counter-discourse tries to represent reality differently and counters the strategy of the dominant discourse which regulates the understanding of social reality. Counter-discourse challenges colonial discourse and dismantles the Manichean opposition. Ngwe comes to understand this subtlety, asserts the hegemony of the other and finally refuses to claim positions of marginality. He challenges the supremacy of Francophone mentality and one begins to discern the possibility of power shift with the creation of the Young Anglophone Movement (YAM). This coheres with Hechter's view that "the persistence of peripheral culture suggests a pattern of resistance to assimilation, A resistance so virile that powerful behavioral management techniques cannot overcome it" (27).

The climax of the counter Francophone discourse comes with the creation of the Young Anglophone movement (YAM) an association which serves as the only medium for Anglophones students to express their grievances against the system and fight for their rights and merits as seen in the quotation below:

There was need to fight back, to restore our prestigious Anglo-Saxon heritage, which the British had inculcated in us.... We had the right to be full citizens and not second-class citizens....we needed Anglo-Saxon Universities. Every word I spoke was greeted with applause. A protest march to the Prime Minister's office was programmed in two weeks. If no impact was created from the protest march, we were going to disrupt the mid-year exams....(130)

Ngwe thus paves the way and awakens the awareness in young Anglophones like Andas and the other followers of the YAM. Through such militant activities, his consciousness evolves and he breaks the chain of subalternism and thus, he breaks the silence that denotes a new form of colonialism. According to Michael Hechter's "there is always the possibility that the disadvantaged group in time will reactively assert its own culture as equal to or superior to that of the advantaged group" (38). Violence becomes an alternative in the struggle against subjugation. The Anglophones are able to violate the order of Kamangola by attempting a march. YAM functions as a force that would challenge the Francophone system and liberate the Anglophones. Ngwe regains a voice which he had lost when he occupied the peripheral position of a pariah.

Satire as an aspect of style is a prevailing counter discursive approach that Ngwe uses to deflate the Manichean pyramid and instead Anglophone becomes superior to Francophone. Mockingly, he paints a vivid picture of the University of Besaadi and its students as embodiments of a dirty slum as opposed to Wysdom college:

At the university,...wild bushes surrounded the halls and the amphitheaters. Some vegetation found shelter in some verandas or leaned on the windows of the halls. Grass coiled or crept on the banisters of the staircases and pillars. Where the vegetation was scarce, old rubbish heaps with assorted ordure rose indiscriminately in varied sizes, filled with waste papers and diverse objects that had been left in the rain for months until they had become mouldy green. (50-51)

Francophone superiority is not only staged in language but also in (collapsed) morals and other values. On the other hand, dirtiness is one of the notions ascribed to the periphery but Ngwe's observation overturns this perception as seen below:

Multitudes of young men and women could be seen moving about briskly or sitting or standing idly on the pavements in clusters conversing in French.... some of them might have gone for months without bathing: their odd manners and battered footwears and tattered, stinking dresses gave them a repulsive look, and most offensive, if any of them opened his mouth a little close to your nose, the smell hit you frontally. The smell hit your senses like hammer. The stench invaded your nostrils like the mouth of a pit latrine. (51)

It is interesting to know that these are the people who constitute the future Babajoros of Kamangola! Whereas in Wysdom College, all is clean and pure, with "the decent table manners ... the decent students and mutual respect between the staff and the student" (72). Ngwe's reaction to French colonial discourse or the Francophone mentality is consequently very fierce. He retaliates not only by emphasising on Anglophone unique qualities but also puts them at the centre of the conflicting emotions in order to reclaim Anglophone essence and dignity.

Most often in the novel, Kama and Ngola are described along binary lines. Ngwe the main character portrays Kama as a State where "merit and respect for public interest were supreme" (111) and he wears a coat of "civility and discipline with which we were brought up in the State of Kama." (70). Contrasting Ngola where bribery is the order of the day upholding a "tradition, giving extra motivation for people who were duly paid a salary" (111). He reverses the Manichean opposition believing that Kama is more civil.

THE THIRD SPACE

The consequences of integration between Kama and Ngola are enormous because it disrupts the identity of both regions especially that of the Anglophones. It is complex attempting to negotiate an identity after the integration. Sometimes, characters struggle to find their way back to the times preceding integration but the new ties are prevailing and not easily broken; as represented by the Mongolo bridge "which seemed to chain two pieces of land," (37) because it challenged the quest for identity.

The previous passages have been concerned with the notion of distinction and dichotomy between Anglophone and Francophone. In an attempt to resolve this problem, characters evolve towards a third space and embrace the hybrid identity as Homi Bhabha proposes in *The Location of Culture* where the hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation. What is interesting about *Across the Mongolo* is that Nkengasong presents some characters travelling

across the Great River and plotting a route to the third space to become flexible persons who navigate between the Anglophone and Francophone cultures without any conflict.

Mwolefack is one of the few characters in the novel who stands out as a third space character. He blurs Anglophone –Francophone boundaries and navigates proficiently between both worlds. He does not join his very close friends to advocate for the YAM which rebels against their Francophone brothers despite his consciousness of being an Anglophone. He does not negate the Anglophone culture neither does he castigate the Francophones overtly, rather he enables a cultural identity that has a future in Kamangola because integration of Kama and Ngola is irreversible.

As a third space character who celebrates his in-betweenness very skilfully, he believes, “we have to survive in the system...one day we will find our way” (92). With this philosophy, no doubt he endures, “Mwolefack was one of the few Anglophones whose names appeared on the scholarship list. He was also lucky to be given accommodation in the Cite Universitaire” (69). It is interesting to note that Ngwe thinks of Mwolefack’s survival in the system as pure luck instead of his ability to negotiate the various spaces he occupies. However, he survives in the system because he does not separate Kamangola along binary lines but rather, has one foot in each world and conducts himself without conflict in either way when any situation arises.

Mwolefack bridges the gap between Anglophone and Francophone by creating a third space and shows that a free zone exists somewhere beyond the margins. This space or free zone is occupied by the hybrid who is not bound to fixed identity, no doubt Ngwe remarks, “Mwolefack had escaped the grief of the system ” (148). He refuses to give in to the conflicts that plague both spaces if character insists on dividing them along binary lines and the subaltern position thrust on the Anglophone pariah. He deconstructs stereotypes and makes room for possibilities through finding a way out for himself by negotiating a conflict free identity.

The University of Besaadi is one of the most important third space venues in the novel *Across the Mongolo* because it is made up of both Anglophones and Francophones. It is supposed to be a hybrid venue which neutralises the identities and bring the two different discourses into a “conversation” to challenge and reshape fixed identities. Shirila is a student of the University who has also crossed the Great River in pursuit of education in the lone State University. She negotiates her in-betweenness skilfully by having one foot in each world.

In a subtle female voice Shirila calls for a reconciliation between Francophone and Anglophone spaces as seen in her amorous relationship with Ngwe and Monsieur Abeso. She urges them to forget the scourges of the integration and to rethink their cultural development not divorced from their previous life. She does not lament about the plight of the Anglophones but she insists that even the Francophones sometimes suffer and spend endless years just for an undergraduate degree. Her philosophy is to survive in the system by navigating between both spaces. It is a call for history to shape imagination and policies and to forge ahead and build third spaces in the new hybrid Kamangola and no doubt that she is described as having a “hybrid soul” (90).

Her room at the Cite Universite exemplifies a meeting point of cultural plurality and brings together Anglophone and Francophone spaces. It is a neutral zone of equality where both spaces interact in a shared culture. Ngwe and Andas visit Shirila there and “Monsieur Abeso joined them

in a conversation”(174). And Shirila herself “was the central referee and had to decide between the two of us”(165). She however insists in choosing both of them as indispensable to her stay in Besaadi showing her ability to celebrate the third space and negotiate her in-betweeness rather successfully. This hybrid metaphor shapes our understanding of the contemporary Kamangola which inhabits both spaces and is yet in a constant state of flux between them. This is similar to Bhabha’s view that “the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges rather [...] it is the third space which enables other positions to emerge” (Rutherford 211).

In the course of the novel, Shirila persuades Ngwe not to give up his fight to be a graduate from any department that would graduate him off the university, “Shirila seemed to have many ideas about the system”(158). Her philosophy shows her celebration of in-betweeness gives her a higher and privileged position in the society. Ngwe represents the Anglophone space while Monsieur Abeso portrays the French colonial space. By dating both of them, and refusing to choose from the ultimatum of either one of them but both, she prevails in her quest for identity because she negotiates this in-betweeness successfully.

Shirila believes that making choices will not foster the growth of a hybrid identity. “Shirila said the system provided no room for people who were resolute in making choices. It was a question of throwing your net into the river Mongolo and catching what fishes you could feed on” (158). The setting of the Great River is very significant because it places the Anglophone and Francophone spaces in an intersection position. The venue bridges the gap between French and English. The river itself is enormously symbolic because it promises a fresh start and a kind of rebirth to the coexistence of both Anglophone and Francophone. Wilfred Guerin posits that water in Jungian psychology symbolises “death, rebirth” (157) and “resurrection”. In this case, the River Mongolo marks the death of the Anglophone-Francophone binarism which resurrects in the birth of the hybrid identity of the people of Kamangola.

With language being one of the most characteristic markers of the Anglophone- Francophone divide as reflected in the novel, so is bilingualism a typical third space marker. The Vice Dean of the Faculty of Law in the University of Besaadi marks a third space in a more significant way because he is one of the few Francophones in the novel who attempts an understanding of peripheral status. Even though he cannot solve Ngwe’s problem directly, he “at least spoke some English and had enough time to explain a few things to me” (113) unlike the arrogant and conceited Dean. We see a spontaneous attempt the Vice Dean makes to identify to both spaces through the use of both languages. As a Francophone, he does not feel any conflicting pressure to speak the language of the periphery thereby ushering others to a new space of negotiation and production of a new understanding of cultural identity. This situation underscores Bhabha’s assertion that pure cultures do not exist but rather that they are always in the process of hybridity. The Vice Dean promotes bilingualism as a symbol of a hybrid identity and negotiation of in-betweeness. The mastery of both languages makes him a model of cultural integration and hybridity and allows him to mediate between both discourses. Knowing both languages has opened up avenues for negotiating his identity moving beyond unitary, fixed identity and binaries of core and periphery. He negotiates this ambivalence in the third space where Identity is fluid and shifting.

TRAUMA

Journeying to and across the Mongolo is another powerful metaphor Nkengasong uses throughout the novel. When characters at the end of their journey place themselves outside the overlapping circles of the hybrid third space, it attacks the very essence of identity and the result is traumatic. Across the Great River, characters find themselves between both cultural spaces and depend on the ability to navigate their in-betweenness by negotiating a third space identity. Characters who celebrate the difference like Mwolefack, Shirila and the Vice Dean carve out a comfortable place for themselves in the society by asserting a third space identity. Ngwe does not find a comfortable niche in the changing society and consequently becomes traumatised.

Migration becomes traumatic to characters who fail to negotiate the third space identity across the spaces that they travel. Ngwe finds himself automatically in the third space because he imports his Anglo-Saxon culture to the people of Besaadi and he finds himself face to face with the French culture. Instead of understanding the Francophone system, he insists on describing Anglophone and Francophone along binary lines and fails to create a space in which to explore cultural differences beyond both spaces. His failure marks the fall of YAM in the novel.

He becomes fragmented and schizophrenic as he reflects a sense of mental fragmentation and tension, he “had lost his head”(1). He castigates all that is Francophone and ends up refusing to negotiate a third space. He imagines himself as a product of authentic Kama and his consciousness and his identity become impaired. His nervousness and terror result in the quest of an identity between the two dominant “phones” or spaces. His quest for a self becomes abortive and at the end, he does not seem to know who he really is:

Ngwe looked different from the proud brown earth of the land from which he rose. Ngwe child of M'menyika, looked wearily at the kinsmen, saying nothing, dazed and dumb to the world, deaf to the world, blind to the world, absent from the world which looked at him with sorrow in grief of the moment. (3)

It is worthwhile to realise that even though he is welcome in his native land of Attah, he still does not find a comfortable niche for himself to ascribe his identity because his exposure to the Francophone world makes him look and feel different from those “undiluted” people of his kin.

Ngwe dislikes French which represents the Francophone culture, “I loathe French with all my heart” (62). Simon During in an article, “Post Modernism or Post-colonialism Today” posits, “the choice of language is the choice of identity” (126). When Ngwe strictly chooses only English over bilingualism, he fails to fit into the Besaadi society, he easily becomes psychologically traumatised. His world collapses when he realises that he has been marooned in Besaadi; a place he simultaneously despises and idealises. He idealises because he thinks he will be like Babajoro and despises because upright Kama citizens do not accept all Francophone values. The cultural turmoil Ngwe experiences is in fact the genesis of his neurosis.

As a split character, he tries to inscribe his own place in history by insisting on a fixed Anglophone identity instead of embracing the third space culture. Towards the end of the novel, he does not find a comfortable place for himself in the society and slides into a mental abyss. Similarly Fanon

says in *Black Skin White Masks* that colonialism attacks the very essence of identity in its subject peoples by inducing a form of mental illness:

The Negro's behaviour makes him akin to an obsessive neurotic type. Or if one prefers, he puts himself into a complete situational neurosis. In the man of colour there is constant effort to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence. This attitude of black man towards the white or towards his own race often duplicates almost completely a constellation of delirium, frequently bordering on the region of pathology. (60)

In *Across the Mongolo*, Ngwe's actions of schizophrenic behaviour shows that he has no identity in the evolving third space society, "he no longer slept under a roof; that he slept at the roadside; that he picked things to eat from the rubbish heap, like the dog that owns no master. That he wore rags and he was wretched like the dog that sends thunder; dirty like the pig that bathes in mud" (1).

CONCLUSION

The paper has shown that Francophone -Anglophone relationship has gone through a long troubled history in *Across the Mongolo* and different discourses are jostling for attention. Francophone and Anglophone relationship may be cordial in the third space if characters celebrate the in-betweenness. However, for those who ascribe their identities along fixed binary lines, the effect is traumatic.

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