Adapting to life in "Strange England": Interrogating identity and ideology from S.A.T. Taylor's 1937 Travelogue; "An African In An English School"

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Abstract

This article is based on the premise that African authored travel writing about European socio-cultural spaces during the colonial period has the potential to interrogate notions about contemporary African identity while contributing to the collective ideological construction of the wider African society. Recent studies in African thought and ideology have provoked research into African-authored travel writing and the extent to which such travelogues have influenced discussions about the opinions and ideas, as well as a collective self-examination of African identities. These African-authored travelogues do not only represent a critical mass of source materials that highlight the racial discriminatory practices which many Africans encountered and still grapple with as sojourners and travellers to the British (Western) metropolises, but they also serve as a means of reimagining the diverse ways which Africans negotiate the identity quandaries they find themselves in within the context of a hegemonic milieu. The article focuses on the broader issues of identity and thematic ideological categories, using close reading strategies within a multidisciplinary context in analysing an African authored travelogue, "An African in an English School," which was published in the December, 1937 edition of *The West African Review* magazine, and written by S.A.T. Taylor. Taylor writes about his impressions of the British educational system and difference, while simultaneously highlighting stereotypical perceptions about Africans by Europeans or the people of England.

Keywords: African-authored, adaptation, acculturation, identity, ideology, West Africa, travelogue

Introduction

In her book of autobiographical essays titled *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now* (1993), Maya Angelou makes a statement which epitomises the reality of the African travel writer who is writing from the journey location of the colonial metropolis. She posits:

> Perhaps travel cannot prevent bigotry, but by demonstrating that all peoples cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try and understand each other, we may even become friends.[1](p. 12)

This statement reflects the purpose of Black/African authored travel writing during the colonial period, which is not infused with the clear objective of seeking new terrains to conduct trade, and to control or to exploit the resources of such terrains. Rather, the expectation of most Africans who travelled or sojourned in the European metropolis during this period was to build better relationships and cooperation with their European counterparts. The African travel writer who travels through or sojourns in the European or western metropolis is probably left with no other preoccupation than to try and adapt to the eccentricities of human relations and cultural expression which exist within such hegemonic socio-cultural terrains. Thus, although they may be faced with issues of bigotry, their only consolation lies in the fact that, after all, Europeans are as human as Africans are, just by the sheer magnitude of emotions and actions which ensue on day to day basis. Thus, it is significant to note that most Africans who travelled to the metropolitan centres of Europe during the colonial, pre-independence period did so in the expectation of obtaining an improvement in their lives and lifestyles largely through colonial education, and through

1 Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now. This 1993 publication by Maya Angelou has largely been hailed by critics as a work of spiritual proportions that delve into the soul's journey to a life-changing reality.

commerce, just as Kadushin (2004) posits, "we are always leaving home because we're partly looking for something else." Despite the queer focus of Kadushin's collection of travel essays, there is an ultimate truism that people seek new terrains in order to fulfil what they cannot achieve in their existing location. Thus, in the first place, colonial education was a necessity for most Africans because it enabled them to get jobs and positions in the colonial administrations of the various individual African colonies in anticipation of a transition from the colonial government to self-determination by the Africans.

One could also mention some of the earliest African narratives of Western sojourning and travels, which tell of the experiences of individual African authors either through the fictional style or through a combination of autobiography and travel writing referred to as "autotravography" — a term used by Afejukua (1993) to refer to the style of J. P. Clark's travel narrative *America, Their America* (1964). Earlier examples of "autotravographies" mainly depicted the daily interactions of Africans and Europeans in the colonial centres, as well as African authors' perceptions and observations of the lifestyles of the diversity of Africans and the Europeans whom they interacted with on a daily basis during their sojourn and travels. Some of the earlier African authors who wrote such "autotravographies" were: J. E. Casely Hayford, who authored *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Relations* (1911), Kobina Sekyi's *The Anglo Fanti* (1918), and John E. Ocansey's *African Trading; or The Trial of William Narh Ocansey of Addah, West Coast of Africa, River Volta* (1881).

This paper, accordingly, explores S.A. Taylor's travelogue, "An African in an English School," which was published in the December, 1937 edition of *The West African Review* magazine.[2] Taylor's travelogue can be categorised as

2 The West African Review (hence to be referred to as TWAR) magazine was circulated throughout West Africa (French, British, Portuguese territories) and even in the Belgian Congo. Although, it was not indigenously owned and published by Africans, it became a mouthpiece for moderated and non-politically charged writings from African intellectuals. The magazine was also the centre-piece for official information about the British crown colonies and its industrial holdings. The magazine was first published in 1922 as *The Elder Dempster Magazine*, later as *Elder's Review*, and was finally named *The West African Review* magazine.

an African authored travelogue of a western European journey location and socio-cultural space. The paper also intends to demonstrate the fundamental impetus that characterise the travel narratives of African sojourners in Europe or the West and how their travel observations consider issues of identity, perspectives about the European other, opinions about racial discrimination and racial tolerance, and the persisting ideological perspectives on colonial education. While Taylor's travelogue may concentrate on educational issues as an ideological category, it also focuses on the challenges which most African travellers and sojourners were confronted with in terms of their identities within the European metropolis. Again, one major motif that seems to be present in this travelogue is a subtle validation that the British metropolis and its advancement in terms of education and technology should become the blueprint that Africa should emulate in order to hasten its modernity – a situation which has inadvertently contributed to the identity quandary which many Africans find themselves in, due to the unintended disadvantages for the adoption of some European cultural practices. This situation is best exemplified in the analysis of the travelogue of John Ocansey in Korang (2003): *Writing Ghana, Imagining Africa*, in which Korang describes Ocansey's travel narrative as:

> …a been-to-travel narrative – a work ***in which*** the author's defective analyses of self and world, [represents] a key illustration of the consequences of Africa's emptying into a colonialist modernity. (p. 192) [emphasis mine]

From Korang's (2003) description, one can deduce that there was, certainly, a high propensity for African authors within the colonial period to be taken in by the fascination and seeming orderliness of life in the colonial metropolis.

It is also important to note once again that a basic limitation of this paper rests in the fact that finding extra

information about the author, S.A.T. Taylor, has been a difficult hurdle to surmount. Frequent visits to archives have yielded almost no biographical information about the author. As a result, the analysis of the travelogue, "An African in an English School" is done without the context of the writer's biography. However, although it is sometimes expedient to include the biography of an author within the context of analysis, reader response theories of criticism have certainly maintained that what is written in a text only lends itself to interpretation based on communities' understanding of the issues raised in the text.

Thus, it is significant to note that in this paper the interrogation of Taylor's travelogue is done through a methodical perusal of the text while also engaging with the text in an interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary approach. The multidisciplinary approach in the analyses of the travel text is evident in the fact that that there is a cross-hatching of multiple thematic issues in Taylor's travelogue which borders on broader discourse areas such as history, social anthropology, postcolonial studies etc. which contribute to making a cogent reading of the travel text. The art of methodically perusing a text is also known as close, critical, or analytic reading, and as suggested by Paul and Elder (2008), close reading emphasises an engagement with a text of sufficient complexity directly, and a quest to probe for meaning thoroughly and methodically.

Colonial period African-authored travel writing in perspective

Research on African-authored travel writing which existed in the colonial period has been gaining some attention in postcolonial discourse and African intellectual history circles with researchers such as Kwaku Larbi Korang of the Ohio State University, Rebecca Jones of Birmingham University and Aedin Ni Loingsigh of the University of Stirling who have researched and published on the African colonial period archived

travelogues.

Larbi Korang (2003), as mentioned early on, illustrates and attributes an indigenous intellectual movement and nationalist self-assertion among West African thinkers, as he cites and scrutinises two extant travel accounts written by two inhabitants of the Gold Coast (currently Ghana). Korang (2003), who while illustrating and attributing an indigenous intellectual movement and nationalist self-assertion among West African thinkers, discusses two extant travel accounts written by two natives of the Gold Coast (currently Ghana). The first one can be tagged as travel within Africa, as it recounts an expedition in the Gold Coast colony and territories by George Ekem Ferguson (excellent surveyor and great civil servant of the colonial service). The second travel account is by John E. Ocansey, a merchant from 'Addah' (currently Ada) in the then Gold Coast, and now in the Eastern Region of Ghana. This second travelogue is an account of a journey to the British metropolis, and thus lends some analytical foundations to understanding S.A.T. Taylor's travelogue. For instance, Korang (2003) mentions that:

> In Ocansey, we encounter the native reformed into representing an existent 'past' to himself as a backward and spent force. Ocansey –and many others before him – reveals how this could and did leave the educated native, newly produced at the problematic confluence of the colonial and modern (Achebe's "crossroads") at the mercy of an exorbitant power (p. 202).

This sentiment which Ocansey exhibits reflects the distress that many African sojourners in Europe experience. These sojourners are ordinarily torn between their 'nativeness' and their transcultured reality. Such a situation may arise largely as a result of the systematic erosion of the sense of self of the people of the West African coast, instigated by the dogma of

western missionary and colonial education. It is this form of education which over the years has created in the indigenous people a divided self-perception, and as a result the people have lost their original culture and embraced the culture of the 'Mother Country'.[3] Although Korang (2003) tends to analyse the issues of ideology and identity within a plural analytical context, the work (book) does not focus on African authored travel accounts alone, but rather relies on the two travel accounts as part of a larger source of nationalist writings by Africans.

Similarly, Jones (2014), follows up on her dissertation on pre-independence Nigerian travel writing with a publication which focuses on a century of Nigerian domestic travel writing in both Yoruba and English, from 1914-2014. The work reflects on a wide range of local Yoruba and English language literary forms, including newspaper travelogues, town histories, novels, autobiography and internet-based memoirs. Jones' work is a critical study of the multifarious ways Nigerians have represented the heterogeneity of Nigeria to themselves and to the world. It particularly discusses the relationship between travel and local cosmopolitanisms, narrative, knowledge, texts, genre, translation, migration and the growth of a local Yoruba-English print culture, especially the Lagosian newspapers, and how Lagosians perceive themselves in relation to their depictions of difference and similarities of the Nigerian people "…within the Yoruba-speaking region, or the perceived exoticism of south-eastern or northern Nigeria." (Jones 2014, p. 14).

Likewise, Ni Loingsigh (2016) also throws light on three serialised travel accounts of Damouré Zika who describes his journey with a filming mission of acclaimed French ethnographic filmmaker Jean Rauch, during the colonial period in three West African countries: Niger, Togo, and the Gold Coast. Zika's travel accounts, as described by Ni Loingsigh are written in "unselfconsciously non-standard French." These travel accounts were published in the Paris based literary magazine,

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3 "Mother Country": Used in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks: The Experiences of a Black Man in a White World* (1967) Translated edition.

La Nouvelle Revue, as "La Journal de Route" (Travel Journal 1956). She decries the situation whereby African authored travel texts are not given the sort of attention, which is given the European authored ones, when she realised that Zika's travel accounts had received no attention from French literary scholars. Nonetheless, although Ni Loingsigh (2016) and Jones (2014) draw attention to the archived travel texts of African authorship and the comparative representations of its European antecedents, translation and migration, they do not focus on the issues which relate to identity crises and ideology as products of the process of representation, and neither do they focus on African authored travelogues that recount journeys embarked outside Africa to European metropolises. Although, I may be inclined to agree with both Ni Loingsigh and Jones in, there is the need, however, for a systematic perusal of these identified extant archived travel narratives of African authorship using interdisciplinary analytical approaches to exhaustively look at the issues which are represented in these travel texts.

In a recently published article that also focuses on an African authored travelogue during the colonial period, Osei-Poku (2018) analyses the travelogue of a returnee soldier, Moses Danquah[4], who writes about the burgeoning Port City of Takoradi in the 1940s on his arrival from the South East Asian front of the Second World War. The peculiar thing about Danquah's travelogue is the fact that he is writing about a location which he is already familiar with, but noticing the massive transformation of the city after his tour of duty to the South East Asian front, he writes about his observations and experiences of some of the positive and negative characteristics that are normally associated with nascent urbanized spaces such as Takoradi was during the 1940s. Osei-Poku (2018) also applies close reading and an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of the travelogue and is able to emphasize diverse issues of ideological interest and issues of identity. For instance, he discusses the American

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4 Moses Danquah's travelogue was also published in the October 1947 edition of *The West African Review* magazine .

popular cultural influences in the city and highlights the Krio influences on the coastal cities, especially Takoradi, and other towns on the West African coast.

Overall, these African authored travelogues focus largely on locations within the African continent. Work done by Jones (2014), Ni Loingsigh (2016), and Osei-Poku (2018) reflect on travelogues written about various locations in Africa by Africans. On the other hand, Korang (2003) in his discussion of John E. Ocansey's account of his travel to England, shifts the gaze from the African authored travel writing of the African space to the African authored travel writing of European or Western metropolises. Finally, in the light of Korang's analysis of John E. Ocansey's travelogue, this paper also seeks to discuss and bring to bear the ideological issues and identity quandaries as observed and written by S.A.T. Taylor in his travelogue, "An African in an English School."

Experiences of colonial English lifestyles in an English school

The author of this travelogue (S.A.T. Taylor) does not write about his African background nor provide specific dates in order to help contextualize the period and the situation within which he is writing his travel narrative. Nevertheless, the observations of S.A.T. Taylor, an African student in England, will aid in demonstrating the postcolonial context as well as issues of identity and ideology that complicate the appreciation of this travelogue. Again, this travelogue provides an insight into some of the positive notions about racial difference, and also highlights some of the stereotypical perceptions about Africans by Europeans or the people of England.

S.A.T. Taylor's "An African in an English School" is a narrative of sojourning in England told from the personal perspective of the author as part autobiography and part travelogue – a description which has been mentioned earlier as 'autotravography'. He talks of his adaptation to life in the

English school, considering his African background, and also expresses his loneliness in the initial stages of his arrival at school. Taylor describes the location of his school to highlight his lonesomeness, and not surprisingly, a description of the terrible cold climate as will be the lamentation of any African from a tropical climate to a colder climate. He reveals as follows:

> My school was situated in the heart of old England. East Anglia, as the Eastern counties of Norfolk and Suffolk are still called, is full of the historical associations which go to the very roots of English life. The town of Bury St. Edmunds, with its ancient Monastery of St. Edmunds, which is so fully described by Thomas Carlyle in *Past and Present*, was only two miles away… However the dry climate is inclined to be cold, especially, when the east wind blows from Siberia across the land surface and spell of the North Sea, which is not deep enough to warm the wind. Fortunately for me, I went to Bury St. Edmunds at the beginning of the summer, so that I was more or less hardened when the winter came. (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 27)

As the narrative reveals, it seems Taylor is the only African student in an unnamed East Anglia, Bury St. Edmunds school in England.[5] during the colonial period find themselves in. One major identity question is whether there are advantages

5 Bury St Edmunds is a popular market town in Suffolk, within East Anglia, England. Bury is the seat of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, with the episcopal see at St Edmundsbury Cathedral. The town is renowned for brewing and malting processes for beer as well as sugar processing. https://www.uniquewebsites.co.uk. Retrieved 22 September 2015. "[ARCHIVED CONTENT] UK Government Web Archive – The National Archives". Ons.gov.uk. 2014-05-13. Retrieved 2016-11-15

East Anglia is an area in the Eastern parts of England. The name derives from the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of the East Angles, a tribe that originated in Angeln, a small peninsula which is part of the larger Jutland peninsula in northern Germany. "Jade Goody and the many faces of East Anglia – BBC News". https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-36130219. 2016-05-15. Retrieved 2016-11-15.

This situation represents the ideological issue of interracial education, which Taylor sees as a means of promoting interracial understanding, and remedy to racial stereotyping and discrimination. There are other issues which are described in the travelogue, which cut across the educational curriculum and paternalistic posture of the educational system in England. Besides, Taylor's travelogue also raises certain fundamental questions about the identity quandary which most Africans travelling to and sojourning in the European metropolis to cultural hybridity, as Taylor's narrative almost certainly depicts that it serves the African student better to get educated in England, where he/she gets a first-hand approach to assimilate European values than in the colonies.

The idea of getting better education in the European metropolises during the colonial period is best represented by two characters from two seminal narratives produced by J. E. Casely-Hayford (*Ethiopia Unbound*) and Kobina Sekyi (*The Anglo Fanti: A Short Story*)[6]. The two characters from these two narratives, Kwamankra, and Kwesi Onyidzin respectively express the general expectation of Gold Coasters to send their children across the sea to pursue higher education. One important extract from *The Anglo Fanti* encapsulates this expectation. When Kwesi Onyidzin is about to embark on his journey to England, the narrator describes the solemn atmosphere of parting, stating that:

> Kwesi's mother keenly feels the parting; but she would not place obstacles in the way of her son's advancement. The boy, too, is not without his feelings; but in his case the feelings are overborne by his elation at the opportunity of going to England

6 See: Casely Hayford, J. E. (1911). Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation. 1911. 2nd Ed. London. Frank Cass. & Sekyi, Kobina. (1974[1918]). The Anglo-Fanti: A Short Story. Oxford: Heinemann. These two books talk about the sojourning of African young men in England and the eventual disillusionment they suffer due to issues of discrimination, racism and negative stereotyping.

for a profession (Sekyi, 1974, p. 226)

However, in the case of Kwesi Onyidzin and Kwamankra, the elation turns into disillusionment eventually – an outcome which is in stark contrast to the experiences narrated by S.A.T. Taylor.

In S.A.T. Taylor's case, his travel narrative starts with him revealing his feeling of loneliness, which perhaps is akin to the general feeling exhibited by anyone who has moved from a familiar habitation to a new location, especially a place far away from home and among complete strangers. He describes this situation as follows:

> The feeling of loneliness which is perhaps the commonest of human experience comes on each one of us at one time or another during life. The most usual time seems to be when one is away from home and placed in entirely new surroundings among complete strangers. Mine came early in life – on my being sent to school in England, where I found myself a stranger among some two hundred noisy, laughing and chattering English youngsters. My first feeling, on arrival, was one of utter isolation and strangeness, which was further intensified by my defective knowledge of the language. (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 26)

Considering the effort it takes for a young person to be able to adapt to a foreign culture and the subsequent strife of attempting to speak the language of that foreign culture, one would not begrudge Taylor for receding into himself in such solitude. Sojourning in a strange land without one's parents or kith and kin, can be the worst experience any young person may wish to endure. However, during the colonial period, well-to-do African families were sending off their sons (unaccompanied)

to boarding schools in the European metropolises, especially Britain. This situation is what is clearly evidenced by Kobina Sekyi's uncanny doppelganger, Kwesi Onyidzin, in *The Anglo-Fanti* (1918). Correspondingly, the result of this loneliness for Taylor is for him to be nonchalant about his 'present' situation of being in a new school and as such he is not able to make friends during the initial weeks of school. He writes:

> Perhaps at that very moment there were other "new boys" among the crowd who were subject to much the same feelings of boyish misery as I was. Only I had no time to notice them, for all my will and concentration were necessary to maintain the attitude of cool reserve which I deemed appropriate to the occasion. Perhaps it was this mask of indifference which accounted for my failure to make any friends during the first two to three weeks. (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 26)

From these extracts, it is quite significant to note that the genre of travel writing come with certain tropes which serve to emphasise the process of individuation which the author has to experience in order to align himself with his inner sentiments and external observations in writing his travelogue – a true reflection of a body of writing which comprises autobiography and travelogue as stated earlier. Zilcosky (2004) has observed that one of the foremost motifs of travel writing should comprise losing one's way only to reorientate oneself and thereby discover a more robust sense of selfhood (p. 103). In this light, Taylor's sense of loneliness and resultant individuation could be seen as a process of losing one's way in order to find oneself.

It is an undeniable fact that an African who found her/himself in the European metropolis during the colonial period would definitely stand out in relation to their race or the colour of their skin, and Taylor finds himself in this predicament in

the form of the inordinate attention directed at him from some of his British colleagues in the school. On the other hand, such attention on him prevented him from undergoing the usual hazing or bullying that goes on among many boys in secondary school. Taylor describes this situation in the following extract from his travelogue as follows:

> I did not even make any "enemies" during that time, for the normal ragging and bullying which new boys usually have to suffer from older ones in the first term was withheld from me – no doubt out of school boy notions of hospitality due to a guest from a country as far away as Africa. Curiously enough, even the negative blessing of being free from the attentions of "bullies" only served to increase my sense of loneliness. (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 26)

Taylor tries to rationalise the curiosity on him from the other boys in the school as he says:

> What had struck me at first as the staring curiosity of the other boys, now appeared as boyish overtures of friendliness – overtures which I was only too glad to accept. (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 26)

Transitioning from his loneliness, Taylor is welcoming of all the curious attention he is receiving and at that particular moment, all he needs as a boy in a "strange land" is to make friends. Besides, being able to make friends ultimately facilitates the adaptation process for him and as he himself is even surprised at the ease with which he had "become merged into the school environment with a completeness which was constantly taking [him] by surprise" (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 26). Cultural adjustment for Taylor in his school was dependent on assurance of amity from the other boys in the school.

Eventually, Taylor comes to a realisation that the colour of his skin or his African background made it easier for some of the boys to speak to him freely. As someone who was considered an outsider, the downtrodden within the status quo of life in the boys' school, could easily identify with him. He recounts an incident which occurred almost at the end of his first term in the school. He narrates:

> I happened to be returning to school one afternoon after games, when I came upon one of the smaller boys lying on the ground. He was behind one of the sports dressing sheds, sobbing and weeping bitterly. I recognized him as a youngster who had arrived at the school on the same day as I did. The scene brought back to me forcible memories of that first day at school. I went back to this lad and spoke to him. Perhaps because I was an African, he talked to me rather more freely than he might have done to the others. (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 26)

The apparent ease with which Taylor is able to communicate with and calm the nerves of the crying boy, perhaps, portrays Taylor as the 'friendly stranger'– a type of racial stereotyping where most of the time, the stranger who is normally of a different race is known to be a source of succour or comfort for a person who is from a hegemonic culture. Confiding one's thoughts or feelings in this 'friendly stranger' largely occurs not on the whims of the stranger but the person from the controlling culture. And gradually, through these kinds of relationships, and under such circumstances as the above-stated incident, Taylor eventually adapts to life in the school, as he writes:

> The African youth coming straight from an African home into the atmosphere of an English public school,

had evidently achieved the necessary adaptation in less time and with far less emotional stress than at least one, perhaps oversensitive, English boy. How could this phenomenon be explained? (*TWAR*,1937, pp. 26-27)

As earlier suggested, considering the difference of race and the negative perceptions as well as the stereotyping of Africans in the western metropolises by Europeans in the colonial period, one would have thought it probable that S.A.T. Taylor, would have had a problematic adaptation to the school life of England. The contrary, however, becomes true as with regard to the colour of his skin, he rather finds that adapting to English lifestyles in school presented a less difficult approach than hitherto imagined. He continues his "autotravography" by maintaining that:

I think that the difference of race, which might have been expected to increase the difficulties of adaptation, actually helped its accomplishment. Once the ice was broken between me and my school-fellow, my colour made me the centre of attraction in all of the school activities in which I took part. It happened also that my personal preferences ran in the direction of games rather than in books, a choice which was in the purest tradition of the English public school. I also found among my school fellows a lively curiosity about Africa, evidenced by the keenness displayed in listening to the exciting tales I was forced to invent about life in the African Jungle. Incidentally, I found their knowledge of Africa was restricted, almost entirely, to vague impressions of an unbearable climate and the lists of principal products derived from the teaching imparted in the class-room. (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 27)

This extract from Taylor's travel account represents the overall debate about the identity quandary of the African student sojourning in or travelling to the European metropolitan centres. One realises that for most individuals who originate from the colonial metropolises and suburbs, there is a pervasive fascination with the idea of Africa as a wild and an untamed territory. This prevalent misconception of Africa, which Taylor detects, prods him into telling fib tales about Africa as a wilderness, conceivably, so he would feel accepted in the school. Taylor can be described as having undergone a process of transculturation as he does not confront the misconception of Africa, which he observes, but rather chooses to use and associate with the status quo of the generally known stereotypical description of Africa as an untamed wilderness. As to why this type of transculturation occurs, one possible answer is that Taylor's transcultured reality is meant to evade possible hostility to himself and probable antagonism to the knowledge of an Africa that is more developed and socially relevant than perceived by the students and perhaps the teachers in the boys' school of a dominant European metropolitan culture. In view of this phenomenon, Pratt (1992) posits that the term transculturation, which is basically an anthropological term, is explained by:

> …how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture. While subjugated peoples cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own and what they use it for. Transculturation is a phenomenon of the contact zone. (p. 6)

The transculturation that Taylor experiences occurs at a time when Great Britain as a world hegemony, is one of the largest contact zones as a result of its colonial enterprise

and civilisation missions, bringing a lot of people from the peripheries to engage either in commerce or gain an education. Hence, the transcultured reality of Taylor instigates a major shift in his personal identity, perhaps, unintentionally and becomes a coping mechanism for him to avoid any obvious ideological conflict which may arise due to the insistence on showing Africa for what it really was during his sojourn in the English School.

It is a trite yet a racial discriminatory perception that people of African orientation tend to be more adept at sports than other ethnicities or races. Unfortunately, Taylor seems to have accepted this stereotypical perception, as he underscores it in his narrative. Taylor refers to the fact that his preference for sports instead of academics was something that was expected of him in the school. This may go to buttress ideas about the flexibility of the English educational curriculum during his time in school. He observes that,

> It happened also that my personal preferences ran in the direction of games rather than in books, a choice which was in the purest tradition of the English public school (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 27)

However, this particular reflection may also be a regurgitation of a negative stereotype or this may also seek to reinforce the negative racial stereotype of the African who is basically not fit for mental exertions, but only good for physical labour. Undoubtedly, there are times victims of cultural subjugations may inadvertently reinscribe, make utterances of, or depict some of the negative stereotypes that allude to them in their regular activities.

Subsequently, and of key significance, is the issue of paternalistic democracy in the school system of England, which Taylor observed during his stay at the school. This paternalistic democracy in Taylor's view was the idea that the Head Master or Teacher of the school took to his responsibilities in the

school as a pseudo family of which he was the leader handling the administrative and educational aspects whilst his wife took care of the domestic issues which affected the students. Taylor observes the following:

> The school itself was a little "imperium in imperio" set away in its own grounds, with its own sanatorium, workshop, tuckshop and playing fields.[7] The headmaster, assisted by a capable band of teachers who had graduated in the various Universities of the United Kingdom, ruled over the little kingdom. The domestic arrangements were directly under the care of his wife, assisted by a matron who was a qualified nurse. But nothing impressed me in English school life more than the typically English way in which the autocratic powers of the Head had become modified by custom and by the delegation of authority throughout the whole system. There was not a single unit in the school, down to the smallest boy, without some responsibility for maintaining and ensuring the continuance of the repute and tradition of the school. It was not a democracy in any ordinary sense of the word. The discipline was paternal, with the Head as the fountain and origin of everything good; and the Junior Masters, the Matron, the Prefects and the Sixth Formers down to the lowest forms, all in their various spheres exerted their hallowed authority in his name. (*TWAR,* 1937, p. 27)

This type of paternalistic or parental leadership is an administrative approach which normally involves a central authority figure who takes on the role of a patriarch or matriarch and treats employees and subordinates as though they were members of a large, extended family. The authority figure usually

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7 Imperium in imperio: 'A state within a state' or literarily 'an empire within an empire'.

expects loyalty and trust, as well as obedience from employees and subordinates. This phenomenon of parental leadership was quite observable in the general education system of British colonies in West Africa, mostly in secondary schools and training colleges. Not only does paternalistic leadership work in the educational system, it has also been found to work well in entrepreneurial ventures. Farh and Cheng (2000) identified paternalistic leadership as a leadership style that "combined strong discipline and authority with fatherly benevolence and moral integrity" (p. 84). They came to this understanding while reviewing extensive literature on overseas Chinese entrepreneurship. It is therefore important to note that parental or paternalistic democratic leadership, as observed by Taylor and practiced in the unnamed Bury St. Edmunds school, may emphasize the development of certain key character traits such as selflessness, and the ability to show holistic responsiveness or concern to colleagues and subordinates.

Interestingly, the paternal democratic leadership system as exhibited in the school is a system which Taylor seems to be quite conversant with. It reminds him of the patriarchal style of leadership in African societies.

> The Head reminded one very much of our old African idea of a family head, and the obedience of the younger boys to the older ones in school affairs accorded well with my Native ideas of respect for elders. It was, therefore, not difficult for me to fit into the disciplinary system of the school. (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 27)

Thus, with regard to the discipline as well as the stringent acquisition of moral values of the students or younger ones, Taylor views the African system of socialization as being adequate in helping him adapt to the English school system, especially, in relation to his respect for elders as well as his

colleagues.

After his observation and description of the leadership structure of the school, S.A.T. Taylor continues to express his predilection for the British educational system in terms of the varied curriculum it comes with as well as the effective convergence of sports and academic work. It is a well-known fact that the British educational system has undergone numerous vicissitudes for as long as education in the British Isles has existed. Nevertheless, according to the Spens Report of 1938, the educational system of the United Kingdom during the late 1930s, at the secondary levels, catered more for the elitist class which possibly comprised students from very rich or well-to-do middle-class families, as well as students who were on full scholarships for exemplary studentship. Apart from the Spens Report of 1938, there already existed the Hadow Report of 1926 which focused on the education of adolescents. One of the recommendations of the Hadow Report was to push for greater freedom in the curriculum of high school boys and girls, for more time for pupils – especially senior girls – to develop their own individual interests. The report also advocated for more flexibility in advanced courses and for the lessening of some university matriculation requirements. The report also indicates that some non-selective secondary schools were to lay much emphasis on practical work.[8] Thus stated, it comes as no surprise as to the representation of the intricate school curriculum which is applied in Taylor's school as he describes it. The curriculum is such that it prepares the boys in the school to proceed to the universities or place them in gainful professions. He narrates his observation of the English educational system, stating that:

> The curriculum was very wide, so wide, in fact that one boy could not possibly cover it all. Consequently, he had to decide whether he would join the classical side, where Latin and Greek were taught; the science

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8 Non-selective Secondary Schools also known as Comprehensive schools were secondary schools which took on all standards of students regardless of aptitude.

side, where chemistry, physics and biology were the chief subjects; or the modern side, where French and German were the special features. All these subjects were taught with the object of preparing the pupils for entrance to the Universities or professions. Those boys who obtained their School Certificate or Matriculation went up into the form, where they continued their studies for the Higher School Certificate or scholarship to the University. (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 27)

It is worth making a few general points here. First, the idea of an extensive educational curriculum is worth adopting by any nation, but the content is what matters, especially with regard to the   socio-cultural realities of the individual nations. Second, in as much as the Eurocentric education is the norm in modern times, borne out of the Western domination over many regions of the world, it is incumbent on the various subjugated cultures and nations of the world to re-emphasize their history, subjective realities and cultural values in an educational system which would eventually be a hybrid mix of all their encounters with subjugating cultures. Taylor, on the other hand, in his youthful exuberance and his sense of privilege of being fortunate to be educated in the heart of the colonial metropolis, seems to wholly esteem the English educational system as he continues the narration of his observations, arguing that,

…the whole machinery of the school was arranged to fit in with the University and professional, schools, which carry on from the point where the public school leaves off. This was, I think, the principal advantage which I enjoyed over the average African boy at school in the Colonies, where the school system must necessarily pay more attention to the background in which they are set, than to the

entrance requirements of the English University. (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 27)

Here too is a description which explicitly contrasts the English educational system with the colonial educational system, reveals a truism about education in the British colonies which was only meant to make African colonials fit to work within the colonial system in their colonies, but not suitable enough to fit into the British employment system in the British metropolis; in other words, the so called 'elevation of the savage to civilised people' but who were not as civilised as the European benefactor. Taylor continues to enumerate the advantages of receiving an education in the British metropolis as he declares that,

> …besides giving him [the student] a more direct and effective preparation for the University career for which he is probably destined, it enables him to form personal friendships and to enter English home life in a way that would not be possible if he came to England later. Further, it enables English boys at an impressionable age to learn to appreciate the qualities of Africans in a way that makes for inter-racial understanding. (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 27)

Taylor's stance on the merits of acquiring education in the British metropolis does not come as a surprise, as it appears that Taylor is in full acceptance of his colonialist reality. Similarly, as Korang (2003) proposes that this type of self-representation, with regard to Taylor, "registers… a marked psycho affective dependency" (p. 192) that seems to have "…resulted in the native's loss of self-accountable power as it fell under colonial subjection" (p. 192). This goes to buttress the point that with the onset of colonialism in Africa and its attendant utilisation of privilege, some Africans gradually adapted to the colonial system and became comfortable with the European modes,

a situation earlier referred to in this chapter as a process of "Africa's emptying into [its] colonialist modernity," (Korang, 2003, p. 192).

Finally, in reinforcing his point about the benefits of the English educational system, S.A.T. Taylor lauds the manner in which academic work, sports and other pastimes were allotted equitable share of attention, as well as the way the Teachers also involved themselves in such activities. Taylor claims:

> The secret to the success of the combined work and play in the English schools seem to be the fact that many of the masters are as good on the playing field as they are as good in the class-rooms. My school in East Anglia was no exception to this general rule. The fact that the masters, especially the younger ones, who had just come down from the Universities, shared our sports and pastimes, made us feel, when we sat under their instruction that they were human beings, older brothers so to say, who understood our difficulties, and commanded our love and respect at all times. Such a relationship was to be successful on the whole. It may be that not all the boys passed their examinations, but at all events, every boy was trained to play his part in the citizenship of life. (*TWAR*, 1937, p. 27)

Striking a fair balance between sports, academics and other pastimes in school is quite a herculean task. For instance, students on their own may be disproportionately drawn to sports and as a result, there should be supportive entities such as teachers or coaches, who because they are able to participate in such extracurricular activities with the students, are able to help these students to manage their extracurricular and academic responsibilities. As Taylor observes, such student-teacher relationships with regard to sports and other pastimes

enables some form of cordiality which inevitably draws the students to the teachers in an atmosphere of love and respect. In such a situation, being able to participate and equally manage extracurricular activities with academic work would allow these schoolboys to acquire lessons in leadership, teamwork, organisation, analytical thinking, problem solving, time management, and hone their capacity to multitask, which would invariably enable them to realise and develop their talents.

More importantly, the ideological positioning of this observation made by Taylor in his East Anglia school is a reality which is still being practiced in most schools in the world in recent times. Although some schools in some countries tend to emphasize more the academic aspects than the extracurricular or sports in school, it is however rather expedient to have an equitable focus on both categories. In a research review that focused on the links between motivation in academic work and sports/extracurricular activities, Holloway (2002) found out and consequently agreed that pastimes and extracurricular engagements in schools largely appeal to student interests, as well as encourage peer interaction, promote cooperation, build student-adult relationships, provide structure and challenge, and draw students – especially minorities and women – into science education.

As has been noted, narrative representations that come out of travel writing are quite significant for the analyses of ideological issues and the navigation of identity. Besides, it is out of representations that one makes sense of their present reality, and Taylor's use of representations in his travelogue portrays his admiration for and complete capitulation to the English or British ideals and modes, although some of these practices seem quite universal. Regardless of not being able to foreground the background information about the author of this travelogue, the quality of the representations and observations provided in the travelogue is what is essential to understanding some of the identity and cultural issues which Taylor's experience of his

sojourn in the British metropolis has produced.

Conclusion

Summing up, one might consequently argue that based on Taylor's experience, it is very much probable that many Africans, during the colonial period, travelled to and sojourned in the British metropolises in order to access education which invariably was to increase their chances of gaining employment or engaging in commerce in a socio-economic system which was largely dictated by British/European hegemony. On the other hand, there is a realisation that the African, ultimately, did not have a choice in the kind of education that was best suited for him or her, largely as result of the colonial strangle-hold of the European or British.

Equally and importantly, African authored travel writing that depicts journeys and sojourns of the British metropolises, just as Taylor's "An African in an English School," represents a critical source material that highlights the racial prejudice and negative racial stereotyping which many Africans encountered in Britain during the pre-independence/colonial period. In analysing the travelogues of S.A.T. Taylor, one comes to terms with the fact that the British people having ruled and controlled most nations and cultures in the world were steeped in their own pre-conceived notions of superiority which finds its representation in racial discrimination and negative stereotyping of Africans. Nonetheless, this travelogue exemplifies a microcosm of the aspiration of Africans to attain some modicum of respect and equal opportunities and describes how Africans asserted themselves in the advocacy for equal rights and equitable treatment within the colonial hegemony.

Finally, through a critical reading of Taylor's travelogue one can establish that not only was the colonisation of Africa in the appropriation of Africa's lands and natural resources, but in the systematic tutelage of eurocentric ideals which has resulted in Africa's dependence on Europe and the Western nations –

especially where very young formative minds such as Taylor's are educated far away from their socio-cultural sphere and immersed in that of the British metropolis.

Acknowlegdement

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