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**Corruption and Social Dysfunction in University Enrollment:  
A Study of Ama Ata Aidoo's "Feely-Feely"**

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**Abstract**

This study examines the ravages of corruption on the university performance and excellence as well as on the society as a whole. Based on sociocriticism, specifically new historicism, the study raises issues of unethical practices such as favoritism in the admission process that have been understudied. It equally questions this practice which breaks down families and demeans the university. The study has found that using corruption to achieve one's objective is detrimental to interfamily harmony. It has also been found that laying emphasis on excellence is always rewarding.

**Keywords :** Corruption, destiny, ethics, injustice, university.

**Résumé**

Cette étude examine les ravages de la corruption sur la performance et l'excellence universitaires ainsi que sur la société dans son ensemble. Basée sur la sociocritique, en particulier le nouvel historicisme, l'étude soulève des questions de pratiques contraires à l'éthique telles que le favoritisme dans le processus d'admission qui ont été sous-étudiées et remet en question cette pratique qui brise les familles et rabaisse l'université. Les résultats révèlent que l'utilisation de la corruption pour atteindre son objectif est préjudiciable à l'harmonie interfamiliale. Il a également été constaté que mettre l'accent sur l'excellence est toujours gratifiant.

**Mots-clés :** Corruption, destin, éthique, injustice, université.

**Introduction**

Corruption is "the unlawful use of official power or influence by an official of the government either to enrich himself or further his course

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and/or any other person at the expense of the public, in contravention of his oath of office and/or contrary to the conventions or laws that are in force” (Ekiyor as quoted by Iyanda 38). It branches into unethical practices that are condemned by society and on the whole connotes the offering or taking of bribes to gain undeserved favors or get rich quickly and illegally. Given the context of university, corruption is a sum total of negative practices such as favoritism in admissions, academic dishonesty, fabrication of credentials, funds mismanagements, cheating, etc. which hamper the ethical growth of the administration. Even though the theme of corruption is discussed in African literature, both fiction and criticism, it is a fact that there is a glaring dearth about it in the university institution which paradoxically hosts most social and literary critics. In other words, there is a glaring lack of critical attention towards the corruption in the process of admission to university contrary to the process of entry into the civil service for instance. Even where there is a flashlight on the university in creative writing, as in Chukwuemeka Ike’s *The Naked Gods*, *Expo 77* and *The Bottled Leopard*, the emphasis is on academic corruption which includes “academic dishonesty, cheating, leaking exam questions, plagiarism, favoritism” (Seniwoliba and Boahene 81) and many more and there unfortunately ensues a lack of critical echo. So, a special emphasis needs to be laid on the administrative corruption that comprises “admissions, procurement, leadership influence, recruitment, promotions and appointment”. (Ibid.)

It is in this framework that I have chosen to scrutinize Ama Ata Aidoo’s short story, “Feely-Feely” which is about the admission to such higher educational institutions. But this admission is characterized by massive fraudulent admissions that threaten the very credibility of the entire system and beyond, impact the family ties. Here, the hiatus is that the corruption takes place already at the threshold of the university. The quality of university enrolment processes speaks volumes about the functioning of the university itself. The corruption that prevails in this process of enrollment at the university in Aidoo’s created world foreshadows the different problems that beset the university. Aidoo has thus used a metaphor, a synecdoche which takes a part for a whole, in order to help debunk the institution which is the university. In other words, the corruption in the admission process is actually the smoke that signals the existence of the fire within the institution. But this fire does

havoc to the whole society, for “all social institutions exist in some state of symbiosis with the society of which they are a part” (Shapiro xii). And it is precisely because corruption has tremendous negative consequences on the society as a whole that it is worthy of a special consideration.

The aim of this paper is to identify forms of corruption and show how it works in the admission process to destroy the individuals, the image of the university and the society as a whole. Further, this injustice creates misunderstanding and conflicts in families as can be seen in Aidoo’s “Feely-Feely.”<sup>4</sup> Textual analysis is used in this study. Excerpts from the short story under consideration serve as the basis of analysis, interpretation and illustration. Considering the fact that there are close relationships between literature and society, Sociocriticism, especially new historicism, is the theoretical framework that underpins the analyses in this paper. Abiola Irele, as quoted by Oguzie, contends:

the direction of [African] literature as I see it is towards a comprehensive social vision, derived from close attachment of our lives and lies in their exploration of the vicissitudes of our corporate existence. It is no exaggeration to say that every work of art is in some way or other a testimony to the inner realities of the social processes at work among us and to the tensions these have set up in our collective consciousness. (10)

In other words, a text is somehow and someway about the “realities” of a particular society from which the writer comes and which he or she reflects consciously or unconsciously in his or her fictional works. In other words,

Sociocriticism aims to bring out the relations existing between the structures of literary (or cultural) work and the structures of the society in which this work is deeply rooted. This theory claims that the encounter with ideological traces and with antagonistic tensions between social classes is central to any reading of texts. (Cros)

As a consequence, the analysis of Ama Ata Aidoo’s short story, “Feely-Feely”, falls into the scope of sociocriticism, for it brings to

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<sup>4</sup> Ama Ata Aidoo’s “Feely-Feely.” In Ivor, Agyeman-Duah (ed.) (2016). *All the Good Things Around Us : An Anthology of African Short Stories*. Oxfordshire : Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited : 110-116. The subsequent references will be made to this edition and will be marked parenthetically in the text as (FF) followed by the page number.

limelight the unethical practices in the higher education and thus inscribes them in the collective memory of the society and the world at large.

The arguments in this paper are framed around three sections, the first of which discusses the intellectuals' inability to rise above corruption in the process of students' admission in the national universities of Ama Ata Aidoo's created world. The second section examines corruption as the cause of the disintegration of Moses' family. The last section explores Cobbie's success abroad as a form of the writer's mediation for justice in her fictional society.

## **1. Corruption in University Admission Processes in Ama Ata Aidoo's "Feely-Feely"**

This section opens with B.E.C. Oguzie's opinion that: "The university is perceived [...] as the citadel of knowledge and enlightenment; it is such a revered institution that men and women in it should be above prejudices [...]" (11-12)

Oguzie's perception of university seems to be shared by many scholars and critics such as Jora et al (312) who argue that, "traditionally, the university is understood to be a custodian/depositary of common values, knowledge and inheritance of human cultures and civilization." But unfortunately, in Aidoo's fictional world, it is a fact that the admission to university has openly become a matter of corruption to the point of involving the pretty young ones. But what is corruption at all? Corruption can be defined as "the behavior of persons entrusted with public or private responsibilities, who neglect their duties to achieve unjustified benefits" (Deliversky 141). According to Hallak and Poisson (17), corruption in the education sector is known as "the systematic use of public office for private benefit, whose impact is significant on the availability and quality of educational goods and services, and, as a consequence on access, quality or equity in education." The common point in these definitions is injustice and a form of theft involving mature stakeholders. It is therefore ironical that the youth, such as Cobbie, in Ama Ata Aidoo's fictional world, who should foster integrity and good conduct, lapse into corruption. The admission processes are marred by corruption. As Cobbie says, "these days, whether you do brilliantly in the exams or fail outright, someone has to see somebody on your behalf..." (111) In this context, quality and excellence expected from the university performance cannot be achieved.

It is clearly ironical that the university, which should be the embodiment of integrity and justice, indulges in the worst form of corruption, corruption in the higher education.

It is not farfetched, therefore, to conclude that what is going on at university is symptomatic of what is going on at the national level, for the “development of the university as a social microcosm has been guided in most places by the view [...] that there should be available within the walls of the academy the full range of experiences available [...] outside” (Richter 97). The fact of being brilliant is not enough. One must show his/ her capacity to corrupt before one gets admission to a university which is the highest institution of learning where integrity and ethics should reign.

This state of affairs is injustice in its highest form “because for every student who doesn’t pass too well but is taken, some student who’s done very well loses a place. Because as we all know, enrolment into our universities is severely limited” (FF 111). And because there is such a generalized practice, Cobbie urges his father to do something in order to secure him a place at the university. He rationalizes his inquiry by trying to convince his father in the following terms:

Dad, [...] if the system was open and depended only on grades, of course, there would be no problem. In fact, the choice for the universities is not necessarily between applicants who did well in the exams and those who didn’t do that well. Dad, we hear that these days, it’s more often a question of who gets in from among so many BRILLIANT candidates. (Ibid)

From Cobbie’s plea, one can easily perceive his desperation about the way things are done in the admission processes. He does not choose to indulge into corruption for the sake of doing so but he opines that “if bribery is wrong, people still do it and you too must learn to bribe [...]” (FF 114). Cobbie’s suggestion to his father is mainly due to the fact that, in spite of the widespread corruption in the university admission processes, no one ever seems to talk about punishing the people involved in this practice. Nevertheless, encouraging corruption is a shocking thing to Moses. It destroys equity and moral values and nothing should justify it. The country whose university is corrupt cannot expect to do better in the sense that the most deserving students who are the future leaders are left aside, to the detriment of the less deserving ones whose parents or

tutors appear to have more economic means to impact the decision of the university admission committee members. However, at this level, it needs to be noted that not all parents with economic means would choose to corrupt; the fact is that even though Moses was not very rich, he could afford to put money into the envelope for Cobbie but he has simply chosen not to. Normally, the role of the said committee is to select the best students for the higher education, since everybody cannot have access to the university due to the limited number of places available. Here, Achebe makes a similar observation in his book, *The Education of a British Protected Child*, when he opines that

be that as it may, the universities and other elite centers with deep knowledge of national and world issues can play a role somewhat analogous to that undertaken by kingmakers of the past, not in selecting the king themselves but by spreading in advance general enlightenment and a desire for excellence in the entire constituency of the nation, including those who will aspire to national leadership. (92)

For Achebe, the university should instill into the population the “desire for excellence” which should guide all their actions. To corroborate this, Ayeni submits that

The [...] higher educational system is designed to provide accessible, relevant and holistic education by constantly attracting, developing and graduating competent, knowledgeable, talented and morally upright individuals capable of enhancing [...] economic growth and global competitiveness. Higher education is known to provide people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical, social, economic, cultural and moral issues facing humanity. Its products are to proffer sustainable solution to various problems facing the world through dissemination of knowledge in areas of their specialization. (49)

In other words, meritocracy, justice, competence, talent and moral uprightness should be the cardinal virtues of a university. It is pertinent to know that Ayeni does not just lay emphasis on the degree awarded by the higher education but most importantly on the moral propensities of the graduates and their usefulness to their communities and the humanity in general. Unfortunately, both those who have done well and those who have done poorly must queue and see somebody before getting admission to university. Cobbie’s statement illustrates this point: “Dad, [...] even if

I'd made A-plus grades in all my subjects, you would still have to go and see somebody at the university to secure my place" (FF 112). This functions as a form of corruption whereby the good student is reduced to the same value as a bad one. As a consequence, meritocracy is unfortunately sacrificed on the altar of mediocrity and corruption, plunging the whole country into a complete chaos.

However, Cobbie's insistence has not succeeded in bending his father to his (Cobbie) own will. Moses remains upright in spite of his son's pressure. If younger ones such as Cobbie talk about corruption without shame, it is because it has become so common that almost everyone ignores it. The passive involvement of Cobbie in the vast corruption at the university is worrying because he is a mere adolescent who should not be initiated into this world of corruption. Moreover, the fact that it is the son who encourages the perpetuation of corruption by trying to engage his father into the practice rather than the other way round is a sign that their society does not change for the better. The situation is rather worsening.

Ama Ata Aidoo has addressed the thorny issue of corruption in the admission process without involving directly the key actors of the institution concerned. The reader learns everything through Cobbie and his father's discussions. This fact is symbolical of the delicacy of the topic even within the academia. The university is generally a much-revered institution and people, such as Moses, think highly about it and do not dare criticize its activities openly.

The academics, quite on the contrary, feel so free and keen on exposing the corruption in other institutions such as the government, the church, the hospital, the Supreme Court, to mention but these. The university, like the army, is a great mute and most people misunderstand its true functioning apart from a few scientific publications the outside world meet here and there.

Beyond the disappointment in Cobbie's attitude, "one of the things" that is

more disappointing is the realization that education had not done to most of the university people what I thought it could do to them, to inculcate a sense of humility, a sense of objectivity in them. One found people who were behaving as if all the academic qualifications they had obtained had not done them what these qualifications ought to have done for them. (Ohaeto 20)



Ike deplores the dehumanized immorality among the academics despite their high level of education. In Aidoo's fictional world, the professors in charge of the admission process show no shame in using corruption in order to reach their aim, which is making money illegally. However, when it thrives at the university which is the last rampart against mediocrity, corruption becomes hideous. It becomes a norm when those who are being trained for the different sectors of the country's life have to earn admission to a university through corrupt processes.

Also important,

anti-corruption education cannot work in isolation. The environment in which children study and grow up has a decisive effect in shaping their attitudes. Ethics education must therefore be part of a broader effort to change the attitudes and behaviour of the education profession (in particular of teachers), improve governance and build social control of the managers of the education sector. [...] it is crucial that a virtuous triangle be built if any attempt to combat corruption in education is to be successful. This triangle should include a learning environment that values integrity, well-designed governance with effective, transparent and accountable management, and a proper system of social control of the way the sector operates and consumes resources. (Hallak and Poisson 24-25)

Unfortunately, in Ama Ata Aidoo's fictional world, only Moses cares about ethics. Not even his late wife seemed to educate Cobbie and Edum, their children, to value integrity above material wealth. Since the family environment and the university do not connive to give a better education to the youth, it is not surprising to witness a vicious circle at university. In other words, students who have benefited from corruption at university will only but be corrupt when they become lecturers.

In addition, one can suspect inductively that the recruitment of the personnel, both the lecturers and the administrative and technical staff is done on the basis of corruption and this overall corruption will only but lead to mediocrity, nepotism and ethnocentrism which are antithetical to the holistic development that should be induced by university. Also, given that the admission process is flawed, the different stakeholders, especially students, will not hesitate to have recourse to the very corruption thanks to which they have been enrolled in order to have better marks or qualify for an eventual scholarship. Consequently, the university authorities risk



delivering fake diplomas to their students who are ready to offer bribes. At this level of the discussion, it is relevant to raise the question of the validity of the degrees in such corrupt institutions. Alluding to the consequences of the dysfunction of the educational system, a South African lecturer allegedly placed the following message at the entrance of a college:

Destroying any nation does not require the use of atomic bombs or the use of long range missiles. It only requires lowering the quality of education and allowing cheating in the examinations by the students.

Patients die at the hands of such doctors

Buildings collapse at the hands of such Engineers

Money is lost at the hands of such economists and accountants.

Humanity dies at the hands of such religious scholars

Justice is lost at the hands of such judges

The collapse of education is the collapse of a nation. (as quoted by Dzitse)

Enrolling the less brilliant students who offer bribes to the detriment of the most brilliant ones is a form of cheating and this cheating, as the above quotation highlights it, has tremendous effects on the very functioning of the society in all its composition. According to this quote, every dysfunction in the society has its roots in the failure of education. Shapiro has a similar view when he opines that

we must remember, however, that the university experience of many of our nation's future leaders will influence their moral development and, thus, their ethical judgments and their behavior as leaders. Such judgments will in turn affect all aspects of both their public and private lives. We cannot escape the reality that all of us share a moral universe with those who exercise leadership and power. Surely our students should learn to appreciate that none of us can escape the anxiety of making ethical choices and judgments, that action of any kind involves an inescapable moment of judgment where we must consider ends, means, consequences, and our particular understanding of virtue. (104)

Incidentally, this corruption, which at first, seems to be going on at university, far from Moses and his family, has great drawbacks on their family relationships.

## 2. Corruption and Family Disintegration

The family is generally known as the basic unit of society, and its welfare is an indication of the society's welfare in the sense that families make up society. In Ama Ata Aidoo's short story, the unity of the family is threatened by the corruption at the university. In fact, things literally fall apart in Moses' family. Here, it is plain, therefore, that it is both the university institution on the one hand, and the family institution on the other hand that Aidoo "subjects to [her] fictive lens" (Ohaeto 65).

It is quite ironical and paradoxical that Cobbie's success in school, rather than leading to happiness, engenders misfortune in Moses's family due to corruption at university. As the narrator says,

The next two weeks were pure and simple hell for father and son. They never spoke to one another. Cobbie went on believing that his father "would do something." And initially, so did Moses. But in the end, he couldn't bring himself to go to the campus, or put money in an envelope for Cobbie. (FF 115)

Cobbie and his father have spent two good weeks without speaking to each other. Cobbie's behaviour is a form of protest to his father's refusal to go and see somebody at the university personally or "put money in an envelope for Cobbie" (Ibid) to do the bribing with. Cobbie thinks that his father does not love him; he tells him: "if you love me, you would try." (Ibid). It is quite unfortunate that Cobbie reduces his father's love for him to doing his will regardless of ethics and his father's feelings. The "father was pleading now. 'If I went to the campus and actually met with some people, I still wouldn't know what to say to them'" (FF 112). Indeed, Moses would not really know how to behave "because it's not my nature to know what to say, or do, in such circumstances" (Ibid). Put differently, Moses has never bribed anybody before. He considers this practice as "wrong and I never learned that art" (FF 114).

Unlike Cobbie who thinks that because other people bribe, they too should do it, Moses considers bribery as a practice which should be avoided by all means. If it is generally an admitted fact that "injustice creates frustration which breeds revolutionary violence" (King and Ogunbesan xiii), in Cobbie's case, violence, even though it is a psychological one, is turned against his own father. There seems to be a kind of social tolerance of corruption which takes the colors of an institutional corruption in the sense that everyone is aware of its existence

and its bad influence but at the same time no steps seem to be taken to adequately address this horrible socioeconomic phenomenon. In fact, Cobbie cannot understand why his own father would not do what everyone is doing especially when it involves the welfare of his own son. After all, “corruption is sometimes considered a normal pattern of behavior or as a norm of buying services” (Deliversky 143). However, does the recurrence of corruption make it right? In other words, does this practice become legitimate and ethical because it is widespread? It is probably for the purpose of dispelling this ambiguity that the author crafted Moses to be a mediator between what is and what should be. Moses is used by the writer to show her readers that, even though there is a tradition of corruption in the admission process at university, there should be another option. As a matter of fact, there should be moral uprightness in such a delicate and sensible sector of the administration which involves the life of the entire nation. So, Moses tells his son that unethical practices do not become virtuous overnight on the ground that they have been carried out by many people. By extrapolation, Cobbie is encouraged by his father to remain just even when he is alone. Also, it must be remembered that Moses in the Bible is the leader, the guide of his people, the one that leads them from slavery (here, corruption) to the Promised Land (righteousness, morality, fairness, justice, and meritocracy). So, the choice of the name “Moses” by the author should not be taken for granted, for “in the thinking of the traditional Africans, the name is the man and the man is the name” (Obiechina 82).

Moses is already suffering the loss of his wife and as if this is not enough, his son has disappeared from home for twenty-eight good years simply because he has not accepted his decision to have him corrupt the university authorities to secure him admission. Cobbie’s choice has added to his father’s existing trauma. In fact, if one could understand Cobbie’s eagerness to study at university, which is legitimate, one could hardly understand his obsession and the persecution he subjected his own father to in spite of the education the latter has given them as children. Moses is deeply disappointed that Cobbie had not been able to internalize all the teachings he, as a father and like the biblical Moses, has given them all those years:

He had thought they understood one another. He had thought he had taken the trouble and the time to make sure of that; that as they were growing up, the boys would

be clear about what to expect from him. That in some respects, he would go to any lengths on their behalf while in others an inch would be too long. (FF 110)

Moses has not imagined that such problems would plague him. He has undermined the power of peer pressure on his children. Even though Moses has survived the temptation of his own son to involve him in a practice he avoided for a long time, he has not been able to resist his unexpected desertion from the house. He unfortunately took to alcohol drinking. As the narrator says, *“they say when he got out of bed that fateful morning, he went straight to the cupboard where he kept his drinks, took a big gulp of some alcohol and could never stop drinking after that...”* (FF 116 Italics in the original). In fact, Moses faces a double drama. On the one hand, “when the dailies came out with the National Lists of Enrolment into State-Accredited Universities” (FF 115), Cobbie’s “name was nowhere” (Ibid). These bad results have proved Moses wrong, for he was expecting the committee of the admission process to select Cobbie because he “did quite well in the exams” (FF 111) while they have proved Cobbie right because he has always been skeptical about the fact that only his “extremely good” grades will earn him admission to a university. On the other hand, the desertion of Cobbie from the house constitutes another big drama that saddens Moses to the point of depression.

He has just realized that he was living with strangers. Cobbie naively thinks his father would just use his mouth. He seems to forget that, or maybe he is too young to think about the ethical dimension his inquiry involves. Moses is an honest father and citizen who is not used to bribing at all. For him, “it is also a question of principle” (FF 114). Nevertheless, the denouement of the story calls for the revisitation of the admission processes in universities and the reinforcement of family teachings in Aiddoo’s created world.

In addition, Cobbie accuses his father, just like his mother did, of being poor. He compares him to other children’s fathers who have a lot of money and “better cars” (FF 113) unlike Moses who even lost the respect owed to him by his own wife and children because of his poverty. Even before Cobbie and Edum’s mother died, Moses was misunderstood. The reader is told explicitly that

There was the day their mother had told Moses, right in front of the boys, that being well-known for his work as a musician was ‘all fine, but not being able to afford a bicycle

for your sons is really disgraceful,’ ‘Shame!’ She had shouted. That was just before they discovered the illness. She died a year later. And Moses knew that he could only miss her on account of the boys who would grow up without her. (Ibid)

Taking into account the above excerpt, Cobbie’s attitude toward his father is now understood when the latter refuses to bribe the university authorities in order to secure him admission. He lacks consideration to his father rightly because their mother had never shown any regard to him, even in front of their children. Cobbie’s behaviour is, therefore, the logical outcome of their mother’s. She had always put material wealth before the integrity of her husband and this had led to the latter’s disappointment. Henceforth, their relationship had withered to the point that he did not really regret her death apart from the fact that their children would miss her. Even though Moses is not rich, he has tremendous moral qualities. Cobbie should inherit honesty, integrity and overall moral rectitude as qualities from his father and add them to his own excellence in studies in order to make him a successful human being.

Moreover, to some extent, it can be argued that there are mainly two reasons that motivate Cobbie’s decision to fight the good symbolized by his father rather than the evil represented by all the candidates for bribery including himself. In the first place, it is easier to combat his father than to combat the whole system that is so rooted in corruption that he and his father’s will alone would be powerless to uproot. In the second place, if he succeeds in convincing his father to bribe the university authorities in charge of the admission process, the outcome will be for his personal gratification. Yet, denouncing the injustice and corruption prevailing at the university is the common good which, unfortunately, is collectively neglected starting with the university authorities.

However, in spite of the fact that Cobbie was denied admission to the state universities, and above all, despite his decision to flee from his father’s house, the writer’s choice to have him succeed in his new country sounds as a strategy to show her readership that those who corrupt or are corrupt are not always those who succeed.

### **3. Cobbie’s Success Abroad: Mediation for Fairness**

Having been denied admission in the national universities despite his excellent grades, Cobbie eventually travelled abroad in order to pursue

his university education which is his heartfelt desire. Until then his future was uncertain. However, the writer has him succeed. By having Cobbie succeed abroad, Ama Ata Aidoo shows the reader that there is always an alternative and one's destiny should not be exclusively linked to corruption. In other words, hard work and honesty end up paying off anywhere even when there are millions of temptations to discourage the most brilliant to the detriment of those who offer the best bribe. Had his father forced things to enroll him in the national university system, he would not perhaps have had this great opportunity, first, to study in better conditions in order to graduate as a medical doctor and second, to be appointed the ambassador of his country of adoption to his native one. At this level of the discussion, it is paramount to note that destiny has played a fundamental role in Cobbie's success. He has been destined to become a celebrity no matter what. Therefore, the injustice he has undergone at the level of his university admission has only but thrown him on the road to immigration for the purpose of encountering his success. Cobbie succeeds as an immigrant in his host country, and occupies important positions and even comes back as that country's ambassador to his native country:

*Now we know that Cobbie left the country soon after and went overseas. In his new country, he continued his education, became a doctor, married a daughter of that land, had children, then he became a citizen of that country and even enlisted in the army... And now he is coming back here as that country's ambassador?  
You hear right. (FF 116 Italics in the original)*

The foregoing passage reveals that Cobbie's efforts in his country of adoption, unlike in his native country, have been rewarding. Even though he was a foreigner in his now new country, he was accepted and given the chance to study at university, get the highest degree and become a doctor, a soldier, and above all an ambassador. This is perhaps one of the most important achievements that any youth could ever dream of. Considering the ordeal of Cobbie, one can agree with the Holy Bible which asserts that [The] stone which the builders rejected hath become the head of the corner (*Bible Gateway*, Psalm, 118, verse 22). In other words, Cobbie has turned out to be a very important person in his country of adoption whereas his native country has rejected him through his non admission to university in spite of his merit. Cobbie who has sought for new academic opportunities has "become part of what is now known as

the brain drain” (Mazrui 15). It is important to note that, unlike other people who choose freely to migrate, perhaps lured by the Western model of life, Cobbie has been forced to run away from the injustice in his own country. He has never entertained the idea of studying or living abroad until his enrollment is unjustly turned down by the authorities in charge of the process of admission in the national public universities. Corruption and injustice, therefore, can be major sources of the brain drain and the subsequent backwardness of Ama Ata Aidoo’s fictional country. Even though corruption is harmful to everybody, it is important to stress that

The greatest sufferer is the nation itself which has to contain the legitimate grievance of a wronged citizen; accommodate the incompetence of a favoured citizen and, more important and of greater scope, endure a general decline of morale and subversion of efficiency caused by an erratic system of performance and reward. (Achebe 18)

Achebe concurs that, long after the choice made by some people to favor the less deserving and often incompetent and best bribe giver to the detriment of the most brilliant one, the consequences continue to exist and destroy the fabric of the society as a whole. So, the university’s

role in the moral development of its students is one vehicle through which it can contribute to our national life, especially because many of its students eventually will be in a position to exercise power and influence. At the very least, the university has some role in helping students understand why evil and goodness coexist, how paying greater attention to our moral obligations may help us clarify disagreements, and even how we might avoid the unnecessary initiation of organized violence, including war. (Shapiro 103)

In addition, Cobbie’s experiences amply demonstrate that destiny is faithful whatever the situation. In other words, if one is destined to succeed, he or she will succeed anywhere in spite of the drawbacks. In a new historic rapport, it is worth noting that “the socially conscious writer does not set to work in a vacuum, but urges his society from what it is towards what it might be” (Cook 3). A similar view is held by Killam (11) for whom Aidoo “is a writer who believes that fiction has a social function and should be used” for the purpose of restoring social justice. Na’Allah refers to this social dimension in the writing of fiction when he reflects:

Can one truly fully appreciate any literary or artistic work without looking thoroughly into the realities that gave



birth to such a work? It is always important, in my opinion, to consider the social and the community status of the artistic creators and the socio-cultural settings where the creativity took place, as extrinsic as both might seem to the textual and artistic content. (21)

Tyson follows Na’Allah in arguing that

For new historical literary critics, then, the literary text, through its representation of human experience at a given time and place, is an interpretation of history. As such, the literary text maps the discourses circulating at the time it was written and is, itself, one of those discourses. That is, the literary text shaped and was shaped by the discourses circulating in the culture in which it was produced. Likewise, our interpretations of literature shape and are shaped by the culture in which we live. (92)

Ama Ata Aidoo consciously reflects the socio-cultural realities of the epoch and the place of her writing for the purpose of engendering positive change in the admission process in her society, for “what weaves illusion deliberately, placing its fictional cards on table, can also weave living realities” (Halm 164).

The youth of today being leaders of tomorrow, it is worrying to see people like the immature version of Cobbie accord more importance to material values than the moral and spiritual ones. In fact, a man’s value resides, not in his material belongings but in his humanity and integrity. Corruption discourages the youth and throws them on the road of immigration. Is Ama Ata Aidoo thus suggesting that success lies only outside the borders of her created country? However, not all immigrants make it abroad. Some become failures. Cobbie succeeded in his country of adoption probably not because he has bribed the authorities of his host university but thanks to his hard work and honesty which have also earned him his status of ambassador.

However, Aidoo’s choice by having Cobbie succeed only abroad is problematic. Is she suggesting that corruption should be let alone? Should one simply abandon his or her future in the hands of destiny? Should one not combat corruption by at least denouncing it? Why did she not have Cobbie complain when he was not admitted to university in spite of his excellent grades? Why did she have him choose to go into exile? All these questions arise because

I believe that it is not possible to write about something in a completely impartial and dispassionate way, that is, taking up no personal stance at all with respect to the subject matter ... One must (even if only to engage the interest of one's readers) decide whether one is on the whole an advocate or a critic of the material one is writing about. (Burr vii)

It is strange that Cobbie has been endowed to literally fight his own father for refusing to bribe the university authorities to enroll him while he remains mute against the injustice that he undergoes from the administration in charge of this admission. If Cobbie, like the other students in Chukwuemeka Ike's *Our Children Are Coming*, who "set up their own investigative body [...]" and are able to expose corruption on a vast scale" (Ibid 9) had used half the energy he had used to fight his own father in order to fight for fairness, he would have laid the foundation to change even if it is a long term enterprise. Cobbie would have contributed to avoid other excellent students being victims of the same injustice because, not everybody can leave the country like him. In other words, Cobbie should spread the news of his rejection by the university authorities in order to attract the attention of the outside world about the injustice that thrives in the university, especially now that it is established that he has not been selected and consequently has nothing to lose. To take such action would help remind the "administration and faculty ...that their own behavior may have a significant influence on their students' moral development. Students observe how fairly they are treated and what values are reflected in the university's rules and regulations, in their administration, and in the way that the university treats its employees". (Shapiro 105) Most importantly, there is a need for ethical education and ethics in higher education coupled with "accountability systems [which] are required to check that the rules have been properly complied with and to investigate and sanction potential misbehavior. (Hallak and Poisson 35)

## Conclusion

This research paper has discussed the impact of the corruption that thrives in the admission process on the individuals and the family ties. Through the new historical approach, this paper has shown that academic excellence is no more the sole condition in the university admission process in Ama Ata Aidoo's fictional world. The students who are

excellent at offering better bribes have better chances to be enrolled. This situation creates frustration that echoes in Moses' family with disastrous consequences, notably, Cobbie's flight from home for years.

This study has also shown that the writer mediates for a fair society where excellence and meritocracy should be the order of the day. This study has also found that even when the human society fails to be fair, destiny is always faithful. However, it has been shown that steps need to be taken toward social justice instead of relying passively on destiny. It has finally established that "the denial of merit is a form of social injustice which can hurt not only the individuals directly concerned but ultimately the entire society". (Achebe 19)

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