

“Which Justice Is Rough?: Conflict Resolution and Legal/Pristine Justice in Richard Wright’s *Native Son* and Shadrach Ambanasom’s *Son of the Native Soil*”

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ABSTRACT: At crossroads between literature and the Conflict and Peace Studies, this article probes into the dynamics involved in conflicts as depicted in Richard Wright’s *Native Son* and Shadrach Ambanasom’s *Son of the Native Soil* respectively, and in the mechanics each author proposes for conflict resolution using legal and pristine justice respectively. I argue in this paper that, contrary to colonialist claims of the Black’s inferiority in order to justify Western imperialism and domination, Ambanasom’s representation of conflict resolution in a primeval rural Cameroonian setting, with its pristine justice, is much nobler, fairer and effective than the inhumane and ghoulish judicial machinery presented by Wright in an urban American city. The postcolonial theory and the conflict and peace theories are the theoretical frameworks on which the paper hinges. While the first establishes the Western/African binary and shows how the presumed Western superiority is deconstructed as a result of Ambanasom’s fairer means of conflict resolution, the peace and conflict theories offer an x-ray of the conflicts portrayed in the novels and the machinery of conflict resolution the writers present.

KEY WORDS: legal justice/pristine justice, rough justice, conflict, conflict resolution, *Native Son*, *Son of the Native Soil*.

I. INTRODUCTION

Pfeifer Michael alludes to the legitimisation of the unfair treatment of Blacks by the American legal system in Richard Wright’s *Native Son* in *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947* when he observes that rough justice was no longer enacted through lynching, but through legal executions. He adds that these legal executions combined legal forms, symbolically charged and arbitrary retributive justice, white supremacy, as well as racially motivated and lethally excessive urban policing [my emphasis] (150). Pfeifer’s observation here underpins Wright’s interest and representation of his nation’s justice system, a vital way in which conflict is managed and resolved in any civilization. Unfortunately, despite America’s alleged primacy in the world as a superpower and as one of the world’s best democracies (even at the time Wright published his novel in 1940), his depiction of the American justice machinery is most pitiable. Unfair justice is meted out to America’s black sons, who remain her native sons all the same. Meanwhile it is obvious that, as an African American, Wright is particularly concerned with the workings of the judiciary, and this concern emerges from his consciousness as a writer. Once more, in his non-fictional work, *Black Power*, published in 1954, Wright introduces a certain Justice Thomas of the Nigerian Supreme Court whom he presents in the book as the descendent of a slave of the West Indies who had found his way back to Africa and had settled in Freetown (Fraile 82). The penchant Wright shows for the judicial system has prompted this investigation that lumps together his *Native Son* with Ambanasom’s *Son of the Native Soil*.

Reference is equally made to Shadrach Ambanasom’s interest in the recourse made to justice as a means of conflict resolution in *Son of the Native Soil*. In “An Eclectic Survey of Ambanasom’s Pristine Judicial System in *Son of the Native Soil*,” Christopher Ntoh Ngi is quoted as evoking the primeval nature of the judicial system the author depicts in this book when he refers to the squirrel as the age-honoured impartial judge of the people (qtd in Mawoube 12). Kenneth Usongo, on his part, looks at the two major characters involved in a dissension in Ambanasom’s novel as rhetors who use African rhetorics to each sway the people in their favour as the community seeks a headway in the conflict that opposes Akan to Anjong in the Dudum clan. While in the first case an animal, a symbol of the primeval, interferes in human affairs; in the second, untainted forms of African oratory are resorted to in the process of conflict resolution. It is the scrutiny of the way these two authors present conflict resolution by the different judicial systems they delineate that is the focus of this paper.

The paper aims at examining the conflicts depicted by Wright and Ambanasom in the selected novels, and at probing into how the judicial systems these writers present set out to resolve these conflicts. It equally seeks to evaluate which of these judicial systems is more efficacious and equitable in its approach to conflict resolution. To achieve these aims, the study attempts to answer the following questions: What are the conflicts depicted in Wright’s *Native Son* and Ambanasom’s *Son of the Native Soil*? How do the judicial systems the authors delineate in their respective novels proceed to resolve the conflicts and how is the judicial system proposed by Ambanasom better than Wright’s despite colonialist claims of Western superiority? In view of these interrogations, this paper is based on the premise that, contrary to colonialist claims of Western superiority, the pristine justice presented in Shadrach Ambanasom’s *Son of the Native Soil* is more efficacious and equitable in its attempts at conflict resolution than the legal justice depicted in Wright’s *Native Son*. The postcolonial theory and the conflict and peace theories are used to analyse Wright’s and Ambanasom’s works. The postcolonial theory both eases the portrayal of the Western/African binary and shows how Ambanasom’s fairer judicial system subverts the alleged Western superiority while the conflict and peace theories highlight how each author handles conflict and conflict resolution in their works.

II. CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

As a corollary of the postcolonial theory, racism is an enduring ideology invented by human societies. It has fostered inequality and discrimination against presumed inferior races or even ethnic groups through genetically differentiating features. Perceptible in Europe where institutionalised racism and racial beliefs have been considered the norm over time, racism and ethnic discrimination in the United States has been a major issue since the era of slavery. In the first case, racism accounted for the Berlin Conference of 1884 when European powers sat and arbitrarily established the boundaries of African nations which they shared amongst themselves. In the second case, it accounted for the Slave Trade that lasted for 3 centuries and for the fact that some legally or socially sanctioned privileges and rights, that were not given to Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic and Latino Americans, were given to white Americans (particularly White Anglo-Saxon Protestants). These European Americans have enjoyed exclusive privileges in matters of education, immigration, voting rights, citizenship, land acquisition, and criminal procedure from the 17th century till date, though in varying degrees as underprivileged groups have clamoured for and have been granted more rights in these different areas over time. It is worth noting that Western discourses about Blacks (all people of African descent on the continent and elsewhere) justify all injustices perpetrated against Blacks all over the globe. Western mainstream depictions of Blacks have presented them as a primitive, homogeneous people who are under-developed in every way. Black inferiority has been the result, not of objective observation, but of the need for self-definition. In order to pose as civilized, advanced and superior, Western discourse must endlessly reify the Black as its binary opposite.

According to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in *Philosophy of History*, the world is governed by reason and the only geographical region that is propelled and dominated by reason is Europe (Hegel 7-15). Hegel adds that only reason enables man to come to sentience and those who do not live in the moral whole – the state, which is Europe – cannot be considered as being subjects. As such, they are in bondage (chains). Without this structure, man remains in or reverts to his primary animal existence. Thus, those who live outside the “moral whole” of the state are inferior to those who live within the state. The former lacks consciousness and all those qualities that would make them subjects. These qualities are morality, intelligence, the awareness of the transcendental principles that guide and make analytical history. According to Western norms, the subject can only be produced in the West because only they have the capacity to reason. Reason here is synonymous to European values and standards and, consequently, that which he determines as irrational is simultaneously determined as non-European (ibid). In line with this reasoning, Hegel considered Africans as being inferior to Europeans because they did not have a well-organised state. He stressed the fact that the African mentality was still imprisoned in nature: they lived in harsh environments and could not come to full consciousness. Hence, they could not make both spiritual and economic progress. Furthermore, he opined that Africans showed no signs of progress. That is, they showed no signs of becoming like Europeans. In view of this, this critic noted that the only possible way to free Africans from this animal existence (backwardness, primitivity, barbarism, poverty) was to enslave or colonize them.

According to E. Allan Farnsworth in *An Introduction to the Legal System of the United States*, American law has two distinctive ingredients: a singular variety of federalism and a common law tradition (3). Federalism here proceeds from the fact that the colonies came together in a series of Continental Congresses to react against the unpopular British Acts, before and during the Revolutionary War.

This union was later preserved and the first constitution, signed in September 1787, was submitted to Congress for adoption if accepted by two-thirds of the states. The first Congress proposed the first 10 amendments to the constitution, popularly known as the Bill of Rights, many of which were concerned with the rights of the individual against the Federal government. Concomitant to this Federal Law was the law of the colonies which were given the power to legislate at their founding. Initially, this colonial justice lacked English legal technicality and was generally based on a sense of right as derived from the Bible and the law of nature (Farnsworth 10). However, the beginning of the Eighteenth Century saw the considerable refinement of colonial law and the concurrent increase of English case law. By the time of the Revolution, English law had come to be generally well regarded and each colony had a bar of trained, able, and respected professionals, capable of working with a refined and technical system. And though the influence of English law on American law subsided over time, vestiges of English law are still evident in the American legal system hence the colonialist dimension of the term “legal justice.” The term refers here to the mechanism put in place by the American federal government and states to regulate individual and other actions for the common good, the violation of which are duly sanctioned. “Legal” here connotes a colonialist creation that poses as a symbol of civilised and this is diametrically to “pristine justice.”

The “pristine” refers to the pure, the uncorrupted, the unsullied, the primitive or that which relates to the earliest period. Pristine justice therefore refers to systems of jurisprudence that existed in traditional African societies (the Cameroonian society in this case), and that were untainted by colonialist structures and institutions. One of the main effects of colonialism, which the postcolonial theory establishes, is the profanation of the pure through the invasion of the colonial master. This has led to hybridity as the culture of the colonised is no longer pure but stained with that of the colonisers. Homi Bhabha establishes this in his book, *Location of Culture*, as he posits that cultural identity always emerges in an ambivalent space within which there can be no claim of a pure culture. In as much as this dilution of native culture and system of justice is identifiable in Ambanasom’s novel in the attempts made by the Divisional Officer to resolve the conflict at Dudum, I contend here that the author celebrates the unprofaned justice of the traditional society at the expense of the ambivalence and hybridity the D.O. and characters like Abaago incarnate. In the binary legal justice/pristine justice therefore, the colonialist hierarchy is reversed as this paper proves that Ambanasom’s primeval justice is fairer than Wright’s legal justice.

Hence, binarity is central to the postcolonial theory. According to Ashcroft, Tiffin and Griffiths,

Colonialism could only exist at all by postulating that there existed a binary opposition into which the world was divided. The gradual establishment of an empire depended upon a stable hierarchical relationship in which the colonized existed as the other of the colonizing culture. Thus, the idea of the savage could occur only if there was a concept of the civilized to oppose it. (*Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 32)

This implies that, one way in which colonialism was justified was by establishing these binaries that established Western superiority. And central to this established hierarchy was the binary Self/Other whereby the West was the Self while and Other were the presumed “primitive” people of Africa, America (non-European Americans), Asia and elsewhere. And this Self/Other dichotomy variously affects the signification of “native son” for Wright and Ambanasom.

Incidentally, the terms “native” and “son” feature in the titles of the two selected works. While in Wright’s case, nativity is directly related to sonship as the adjective “native” describes the noun “son,” in Ambanasom’s *Son of the Native Soil*, “native” connects to “son” via the intermediary “soil” which “native” directly describes. It is the son’s connection to his native land that makes him a native son. Viewed from this perspective, Wright’s apprehension of the term “native son” can be ascribed several meanings. As Wright is quoted as noting in “How ‘Bigger’ Was Born,” Bigger is an American because he is a native son (quoted in Fraile 120). In other words, Bigger is “deeply grounded in the American context and its racial construction” (Fraile 135). Hence, Wright’s protagonist incarnates the bitter and frustrated Black who is born of the injustices of a society that marginalises Blacks and relegates them to the status of second-class citizens. Thus, in the binary European American/African American, Bigger— as the descendant of a slave and an epitome of the Black— is inferior to his white counterpart. It is this definition of Bigger’s nativity that draws him close to his African roots. In “Native Identity and Alienation in Richard Wright’s *Native Son* and Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart: A Cross-Cultural Analysis*,” Jogo Sengova establishes this link when he avers that “as historical prototypes, Bigger and Okonkwo seem to share the same genesis” which is their African ancestry (quoted in Fraile 77). This association of Bigger

with Africa lumps Bigger and Ambanasom’s African characters together as the supposed underdogs as opposed to Wright’s privileged white characters. “Native” here connotes the local, the uncivilised.

But Bigger’s sonship is also representative of his Americanness. “Native son” here is the typically American; a person not just born American, but one also rooted in the American soil whose values, culture and civilisation he incarnates. Wright hammers on this fact in *12 Million Black Voices* when he opines that “what we want, what we represent, what we endure is what America is. If we black folk perish, America will perish too” (240). Wright thus uses Bigger here to appeal to the consciences of Americans. He is not writing back to the centre in the traditional postcolonial sense but, choosing to neither speak from the margins of European American discourse nor from outside African American discourse, he speaks from the very centre of both rhetorical traditions (Werner 141). As such, as a native son, Bigger breaks free of the White/Black dichotomy. He is simply American and his nativity here simply expresses his sense of belonging to his fatherland. It is this same connotation that Ambanasom’s native son has in *Son of the Native Soil*.

In “On the Tarmac of Nationhood: Dismantling Caste and Tribal Loyalty in Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger* and Shadrach Ambanasom’s *Son of the Native Soil*,” Gilbert T. Fai states that “To Ambanasom, a son of the native soil is not one born in a particular tribe, region or section of Cameroon but one who sees himself simply as a Cameroonian and consequently works for its unity and development” (*Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 1130). Thus, “native” connotes patriotism this time around; attachment to one’s roots. Considering Cameroon as a macrocosm, and anglophones and francophones as microcosms, “native” here is above the anglophone/francophone dichotomy. Thus, as is the case with Wright’s protagonist, Ambanasom’s hero’s nativity pertains to the nation as a whole, and not to the anglophone linguistic sub-group to which he belongs.

Apart from the postcolonial theory, theories related to conflict and peace studies are handy for the analysis of the selected works. The conflict theories involve the parsonian conflict theory, the fight-flight response theory and the elite conflict theory; while the transcend, communication-based and realist approaches to conflict resolution shed light on ways in which the conflicts depicted in *Native Son* and *Son of the Native Soil* are resolved. Some prominent proponents of these theories and approaches are Ralph Dahrendorf, Walter B. Canon, Wright Mills, John Gaultan and Fen Osler Hampson. According to *A Glossary of Terms and Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies*, the term “conflict” derives from the latin word “conflictus” which means to clash or engage in a fight; a confrontation between one and more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends (Miller 22). The terms “clash,” “incompatible means” and “competitive ends” are suggestive of dispute, disagreement and even rivalry. Miller adds that conflicts may either be latent or recognizable through actions or behaviours, and this latent conflict builds up into systems or institutional arrangements such as governments, corporations or even civil society (ibid). Meanwhile, conflict resolution is the act of getting two or more parties at loggerheads to reconcile with each other thereby bringing an end to the dispute. It involves the transformation of intense or lingering ill-feelings that two or more parties in conflict nurse for each other into feelings of acceptance and even forgiveness (Miller 66). This might sometimes involve resorting to justice as is the case with the two novels examined in this paper.

According to Dahrendorf, in *Innovative Issues and Approaches in Social Sciences*, sociological theories should be subdivided into two: those that concentrate on issues of consensus and those that concentrate on issues of conflict (1). As such, conflict is part and parcel of every society. In effect, proponents of the Parsonian conflict theory contend that conflict is part of human nature and most conflicts occur because of differences between social classes and groups. In a context where resources are limited, every class or group has to struggle with other existing classes or groups in order to protect its interest. Consequently, there is always conflict in every society, irrespective of how small it is. This perception of conflict as a collective experience is the standpoint of the elite conflict theory. Apart from discussing authority (that is, legitimate power) and compliance (getting people to do as commanded), Wright Mills distinguishes the elites from the masses and examines what causes the masses to rebel and to struggle for their independence from the authority of the elites. In *The Power Elite*, Mills identifies the elites as those who have power as a result of their location in three linked institutions in society: the political, dominated by the executive power of the Federal Government; the economic, dominated by a few hundred corporations, and the military (84). The masses are the subjugated people who oppose the authority of the elite. Thus, this theory has to do with the system of governance. Rather than democratically administering the masses, the elite manipulate the masses and take decisions for them. This theory is most glaring in Wright’s *Native Son* where white capitalists like Mr. Dalton can be identified as the elite while Blacks like Bigger and his family and friends are the masses.

Unlike the first two strands of the conflict theory, the fight-flight theory targets an organism's respond to conflict. This theory is otherwise called the hyper arousal or the acute stress response theory. Walter Bradford Cannon opines in connection to it that It is a psychological reaction that occurs in response to a perceived harmful event, attack, or threat to survival. It is also a syndrome of psychological responses of an organism confronted with a situation that evokes fear, pain or anger (7). Hence, in the face of an attack or an event that threatens an organism's survival, the organism's senses are mobilised to prepare the organism to fight back or to flee. The organism's stress response is thus regulated by the secretion of adrenaline and norepinephrine. It is worth noting that the threat to an organism is not always external. It might sometimes take complex and subtle forms such as worrying which is internal. In such a case, the organism's reaction is not necessarily fighting or fleeing.

In order to find peaceful and lasting solutions to these conflicts, peace studies propose means of conflict resolution that seeks 'victory' for all the parties involved in the conflict. One of such approaches is the transcend method. Here, transformation is used to resolve conflict. Transformation involves transcending the goals of the conflicting parties by defining new goals, it is disembedding the conflict from its original situation and embedding it in a more promising place (Gaultan 2). Hence, through dialogue that proceeds from empathy, non-violence and joint creativity, the conflicting parties can mend their differences. Sometimes, this warrants the intervention of a third party. The mediator meets the parties one-on-one, dialogues with them and searches for new realities that would accommodate conflict transformation. The transcend approach to conflict resolution seeks to help parties to come together in a self-sustaining process.

Also relevant is the communication-based approaches that seek to resolve conflict through understanding. According to *The Sage Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, these approaches “typically stress the importance of negotiation as a vehicle or means of changing the parties' perceptions in a conflict so that they learn to trust each other to the point where they are prepared to engage in a reciprocal exchange of concessions” (14). Third-party interveners ease the negotiation by establishing communication channels between groups in society; initiating discussions of frameworks for the solutions to problems of mutual concern and identifying steps for breaking impasses. These mediators are also expected to establish new norms and create an understanding of the kinds of decision-making processes that can lead parties out of conflict. The third party plays a neutral and facilitating role here. He/she neither influences nor directs the parties. Rather, he/she enables and encourages a mutual learning process that favours acceptable approaches to problem-solving. To end, the realist approach to conflict resolution explains how inter-group hostility can arise as a result of conflicting goals. It also attempts to find explanations for the feelings of prejudice and discrimination that ensue. Moreover, the method explains why competition over limited resources such as land can have potential harmful consequences. It examines these harmful consequences of competition and differences in ideology. For this approach to be successful, there must be cooperation. Without cooperation, peaceful resolution will not be possible. The section that follows examines what causes conflict in Wright's and Ambanasom's works and looks at how these conflicts are made manifest.

III. SONS IN CONFLICT: CAUSES AND MANIFESTATIONS

In both Wright's *Native Son* and Ambanasom's *Son of the Native Soil*, there are four types of conflict that correspond to the 4 existing categories of conflicts: interpersonal conflict, intrapersonal conflict, intergroup conflict and intragroup conflict. However, the novelists variously craft the different conflicts they present such that these conflicts are interwoven and form a coherent whole. As such, in the two novels, the intergroup conflict leaps to the fore and overshadows the other conflict types which are equally quite distinct at closer range. These different conflicts result from competition over available, and sometimes, scarce resources; differences in values and ideas; ideological and personality differences; the quest for supremacy, and even misunderstandings. Classified from the perspective of their causes, conflicts can otherwise be categorised as value conflict, policy conflict, pseudo conflict and real arguments or ego conflict. The section looks at the different conflict categories depicted by Wright and Ambanasom in *Native Son* and *Son of the Native Soil*. It also investigates how these different conflict types relate with each other.

In *Native Son*, the most prominent conflict is the intergroup conflict that opposes Blacks and the Whites. This conflict stems from the discriminatory treatment of Blacks by Whites and accounts for the racist overtones of the novel. Bigger refers to the unfair treatment of Blacks by Whites when he observes that “They draw a line and say for you to stay on your side of the line. They don't care if there is no bread on your side or if you die” (Wright 774). The “side” here refers both to the fact that Blacks are assigned distinct physical spaces beyond which they should not go; activities they cannot do, as well as moral and psychological moulds they are expected to fit in. For instance, they are expected to live in the South Side of Chicago in overcrowded, rat-

infested rooms which they rent at eight dollars a week. When questioned during the inquest, Mr. Dalton admits the fact that he cannot let out houses to Blacks in any other part of the city. The living conditions of the Blacks are, of course, diametrically opposed to that of Whites who live in quiet and spacious parts of the city; in huge, luxurious and well-lit houses as is the case of the Daltons who live in Drexel boulevard. Furthermore, Bigger goes to school only till eighth grade. He would like to become a pilot but cannot because he is black. He does not get enlisted into the army or the navy either because the only tasks reserved for Blacks there is to dig ditches or to wash dishes and scrub floors in line with the Jim Crow laws. In effect, no White believes that Bigger did not rape Mary Dalton before killing her. As far as the Whites are concerned, Bigger is a black ape who cannot resist Mary's white beauty. He rapes her, murders her and burns her corpse to wipe off the traces of the rape.

Bigger establishes the binary opposition between Blacks and Whites when he notes: “We live here and they live there. We black and they white. They got things and we ain't. They do things and we can't” (Wright 463). Bigger's observation thus establishes binary oppositions such as spacious/cramped houses, rich/poor, literate/illiterate, white collar jobs/blue collar jobs between Whites and Blacks. From this, other binaries such as civilised/barbaric, virtuous/vicious and harmless/harmful can be derived. Acculturated by these popular views, it is not surprising that Bigger does not identify with Blacks in Africa when he sees them in movies. Yet, he acknowledges the fact that these Blacks were men and women who were adjusted to their soil and at home in their world, secure from fear and hysteria. They however share the same kinship with Bigger who, alienated in his new nation, is the descendant of slaves. Max notes that the plight of Blacks, that forms the basis of the conflict between Blacks and Whites, started since the era of slavery and has lasted for two centuries and a half. When the colonists came to the coast of America, they were confronted by a wild and harsh country. Consequently, they had to use other men (black slaves) whose will they bent, using them as tools to conquer the land. And although slavery was abolished with the advent of machines, the descendants of these slaves continue to be treated as sub-humans. This treatment has a dehumanising effect on men like Bigger.

The intergroup conflict between Blacks and Whites accounts for the intragroup, interpersonal, as well as intrapersonal conflicts in the book. Two prominent intragroup conflicts are the conflicts that oppose some Blacks to other Blacks, and some Whites to other Whites. In the first case, an intragroup conflict is when Bigger and his gang rob their own people, black businessmen, because it is easier and safer to do so. The resentment Doc shows when he testifies against Bigger in court because the latter cut the cloth of the ping pong table of the Negroes' Club is suggestive of the bitter feelings the victims of the gang nursed against them. Bigger's mother and sister are generally against him because he refuses to work to make the family's lot better and he is not very friendly to them. Only Buddy sides with his elder brother when the others oppose him. Likewise, Capitalist Whites hate Communist Whites for militating for the equality of all races. Mr. Dalton and Mr. Buckley, the State Attorney, initially try to incriminate Jan, first, for kidnapping Mary, then, for killing her. In fact, Bigger initially attempts to make every evidence point to Jan because he knows about the animosity that Capitalists have for Communists. That explains why Max is hated by the crowd when he decides to take up Bigger's defence: his mail is flooded with threats against his life (Wright 806). The hunt of Bigger Thomas gives these capitalists the pretext they need to lash out against every group of people who challenge the status quo. They do not only terrorise Negroes, but also arrest hundreds of Communists, raid labor union headquarters and workers' organisations that are mostly made of Whites.

Hence, the interpersonal conflicts in the work are part of the dynamics of the intergroup and intragroup conflicts discussed thus far. Despised and relegated to the rank of a beast by Whites all his life, Bigger misconstrues the kindness of both Jan and Mary Dalton when they treat him like an equal. As far as he is concerned, they are simply making a jest out of him. The fear and hatred bred in him by the treatment Negroes receive from Whites gets out of proportion and he kills the Dalton heiress, though accidentally. He simulates the dead lady's kidnap after burning her body in the furnace and attempts to get Jan incriminated for his crime. And when the latter accosts him in the street to find out why he is lying about him, he takes out his gun and threatens to shoot Jan. Likewise, he rapes and murders Bessie for not cooperating with him when he wants her to collect the ransom for the dead Mary Dalton whose kidnap he simulates. The certainty that Bessie will report him if she is caught is an additional motive for these crimes. The same overwhelming fear for Whites prompts Bigger to start a fight with Gus, one of his gang members, presumably because Gus is late. The real reason for Bigger's outburst is the paralysing fear he feels at the thought of the burglary of Mr. Blum's delicatessen, a white man's store. He deliberately and successfully starts a fight in order to frustrate their plan. His refusal to believe in the Christian claim of a better life after death pits him against people like his mother and Rev. Hammond, the black preacher. Meanwhile, Max and Buckley are at loggerheads because Max wants Bigger's life to be spared while Buckley wants him to be condemned to death. From an intrapersonal point of view, Bigger is perpetually torn

between fear for the Whites and for what they might do to him if he does not fit in the mould they have defined for him, and hatred for them. The fear is latent in him but erupts from time to time with disastrous consequences. It is that fear that goads him to fight with Gus, as earlier mentioned, as he thinks that doing that is better than facing a white man with a gun. The same fear prompts him to stifle Mary Dalton to death with her pillow in an attempt to stop her from mumbling. The fear that the blind Mrs Dalton will discover that he is in Mary's room and might misinterpret his motives is just as paralysing. And even when the fear he constantly feels remains latent, its gnawing presence is his daily lot. It frays his nerves and plagues his thoughts. And at antipodes with this fear and dread of Whites is the virulent hatred that Bigger has for Whites. Bigger's emphatic cry when Max asks him whether he liked Mary Dalton enough to want to rape her is an expression of his hatred for the whole white race. He emphatically shouts “*Like her? I hated her! So, help me God, I hated her!*” (Wright 772). But, as Max points out, Mary Dalton was just being nice to Bigger. Prejudiced against her because she has a white face, Bigger vents the venom of his hatred for Whites when asked about her. These conflicting feelings may vary in degree but are always there. In the height of his confrontation with Gus, he is gnawed by a “growing and deepening feeling of hysteria” (Wright 471). The author aptly captures the paradoxical feelings that pervade him in these words: “These were the rhythms of his life: indifference and violence; periods of abstract brooding and periods of intense desire; moments of silence and moments of anger— like water ebbing and flowing from the tug of a far away, invisible force” (ibid).

This succession of diametrically opposed feelings: indifference/anger, mild thinking/deep craving and calm/anger plunge the protagonist in a state of psychological agitation. His mind is a constant battlefield and it is not surprising that he vents this turmoil by perpetrating atrocious acts. Worse still, Bigger is obliged to thrust many unappealing realities into his unconscious mind. He refuses to fully feel the shame and misery of their lives because he does not want to be swept by these feelings. To keep afloat, he develops an attitude of iron reserve. Thus, while Bigger is apparently cold and indifferent to his mother and siblings, he is internally subject to these obsessive feelings. The writer refers to this split nature of his protagonist when he notes that there were two Biggers, one was determined to get rest and sleep at all cost, while the other shrank with terror (682). The tension he endures while he is on the run and is seeking refuge in old buildings as a result of his duality is an integral part of his life. Other characters, Blacks and Whites alike, also experience this intrapersonal conflict, but Bigger Thomas epitomizes it most. Presently, the paper probes into the dynamics of conflict types in Ambanansom's *Son of the Native Soil*.

The most perceptible conflict in Ambanansom's novel is the dissension that pits the people of Akan against the people of Anjong. This conflict can be considered as intergroup conflict or intragroup conflict, depending on the perspective from which one looks at it. If each village in conflict is seen as a separate and autonomous entity with a chief at its head (Chief Umeitoh for Akan and Chief Akaya for Anjong), then the conflict that opposes the two villages is an intergroup conflict. But if the villages are perceived as sub-groups of a larger unit, the Dudum clan, then the conflict that opposes them is intragroup conflict. This is because the people of these two villages have the same ancestor, Ngiokum, and are all subjects of the same paramount chief who rules over the clan. They speak the same language, wear the same dresses and eat the same food. Yet they fight over the ownership of Ukob land; disagree on where the headquarters of the Dudum clan should be located; on the village from which the paramount chief of the Dudum clan should come, and on where the hospital should be built by government. Multi-party politics also divides the people. The two major political parties in British Cameroon were the Kamerun People's Party and the Cameroon United Party. These parties respectively have their strongholds in Anjong and Akan. Their different ideologies put Akan and Anjong at loggerheads. Lastly, there is division between Akan and Anjong because, while the Catholics settle in Akan, the Presbyterians settle in Anjong. This results into religious differences.

The two villages express their animosity for each other in diverse ways. An instance is when, claiming the whole land of Ukob, the people of Akan prevent those of Anjong from working on that piece of land. They seize the hoes of the Anjong women and take up arms, go to Anjong village on the day the youths are not around, and mercilessly beat the children, women and elderly people they find there to the point of death. The Anjong people retaliate by refusing to sell their foodstuffs to the people of Akan. They boycott the market day, intent on starving the Akan people to death. In the issue of whether the paramount chief of the Dudum clan should come from Akan or Anjong, the argument between the chiefs of these villages is very heated and the dispute degenerates to the extent that the Divisional Officer uses the forces of law and order to calm down the disputants. Achamba's murder and Abaago's isolation and ultimate suicide are long term effects of this intergroup/intragroup conflict that escalates into interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts. Salient examples of interpersonal conflicts are the dissensions between Achamba and Abaago, Abaago and Ubeno, as well as

between Chief Umeitoh and Chief Akaya. Some of these characters, like Abaago and Achamba (the night before he dies), best incarnate intrapersonal conflict in the novel.

Achamba and Abaago differ over how the dispute between Akan and Anjong can best be resolved. Although both men are from Akan, Achamba would like the dispute between his village and Anjong to be settled in all fairness. He is honest enough to admit that the topography of his village is such that it cannot be suitable for the building of a hospital. With respect to the question of whether the paramount chieftaincy should be located in Akan or Anjong, Achamba decides to go to the National Museum to find out which of the claims were true, those made by Chief Umeitoh of Akan or those made by Chief Akaya of Anjong. Meanwhile, Abaago simply wants his village to win in the dispute against Anjong and it does not matter how they go about it. That is why he incites the youths of Akan to seize the hoes of the Anjong women whom they find at Ukob land and to go to Anjong while the youths are away and beat up the women, old people and children they find there. He attempts to corrupt the Senior Divisional Officer so that the divisional headquarter will be put in Akan. He summons Achamba to the village council and presses false charges against him. To counter Abaago's false claims, Achamba states:

...the village council has overwhelmed me with so many charges...I think I have been as patriotic as any other son of the soil...I have taken part in actively digging the road that links us to Anjong...none of you can justly say that each time I am at home, I have failed to turn up for any group work...not long ago our men were imprisoned in Mbambe, and I was of some help to them. (Ambanasom 153)

This defence put up by Achamba provides evidence of his loyalty to his village and tribe. He thus proves that he has worked for his community's good and has sought the well-being of his people. The fact that he successfully exonerates himself further irks Abaago who finally gets him killed.

This same Abaago finds a formidable opponent in Ubeno, a peer who is from Anjong. The two men constantly clash in the text. The first reason for the strife between them is the fact that they respectively hail from Akan and Anjong. Incidentally, they are amongst the most educated men of their clans and they each try to have a sway over each other. Abaago thinks that the Anjong have everything— fertile and level land, the headquarters of Dudum, the main market— and do not therefore need a share in the Ukob land. Ubeno, for his part, thinks that Abaago is wrong in wanting to seize the Ukob land. As the personal advisors of their respective chiefs, each of them fights for the interest of his village. This further consolidates the faction between them. As stalwarts of their respective villages and kings, these two men perpetuate the conflict that opposes their two chiefs: Chief Umeitoh of Akan and Chief Akaya of Anjong. These two chiefs are in conflict over all the issues that puts their villages at loggerheads. As the leader of the Anjongs, Chief Akaya disapproves of the decision of Chief Umeitoh's people to own the whole of Ukob land. He considers it a violation of their ancestors' decision that each village should own the fraction of the land that is on its own side, thus using River Feg as the boundary between them. He also refutes Chief Umeitoh's claim that the first Dudum headquarter was in Akan.

It is these outward conflicts that plunge Chief Akaya into intrapersonal conflict. As the paramount chief of the Dudum clan, he is robbed of sleep because of the crisis that is dividing his people. The novelist depicts him at the start of the novel as rising early because he cannot sleep. He cannot understand why the Akan people have decided to fight over the Ukob land meanwhile dispute over the land had been settled by their ancestors several years back. He examines himself, wondering if it is his way of governing that poses a problem. Another issue that preoccupies him is whether he should take action against the people of Akan or not. He ponders so much on this question because he is peace-loving and would like to act in the best interest of his people. Because of this internal conflict, Chief Akaya loses sleep for many weeks and so does Abaago towards the end of the novel. He is the antagonist of the novel and his greed and jealousy cause him to kill Achamba, Ambanasom's protagonist. For years later, he is internally tormented by guilt. The fact that he cannot talk about it to anyone makes matters worse. Plagued internally by the pangs of guilt and externally faced with the threat of a horrible death in the hands of the youths of his village, he opts for suicide.

Achamba is another character that epitomises intrapersonal conflict. The night before his death, he is at conflict with himself. He starts off by seeing the image of his death in his mind. Then, he hears his wife crying outside for him to open the door. He next hears his father, then he hears women crying and wailing. But he cannot help them. To end, he sees two unknown, dark figures that kill him. The author captures Achamba's state of unrest on that fateful night in these terms:

As he lay shivering under the blanket, he was convinced he heard, in the midst of the savage sounds outside, people crying or dancing, he thought he heard people screaming for help; he thought he heard women and children wailing; he thought he heard the notes of the ndek beating a mournful funeral message; he thought he heard Echunjei, heavy with pregnancy, drenched to the bones, beating frantically at his door for him to open and let her in... (Ambanasom 186)

All of these are hallucinations that put Achamba’s mind in a turmoil. The chaos he feels inwardly is a combination of external factors (savage sounds outside) and the figment of his imagination— the different thoughts that assail his mind. Both experiences are terrifying as they pertain to the throes of death. The outward shiver of his body is thus the natural outcome of the agitation he is internally subjected to.

In view of the foregoing, both Wright and Ambanasom present a variety of conflicts that accrue from a major conflict, the conflict between Blacks and Whites and the conflict between the people of Ajong and those of Akan respectively. It is obvious from these representations that conflicts are part and parcel of life. This is so because people differ in their long-held beliefs or in their views; they sometimes have to compete over limited resources or for supremacy; they misunderstand each other over an issue (sometimes because of lack of adequate information), or do not have the same sense of value or idea about certain issues. The consequent conflict can be categorised as intergroup conflict, intragroup conflict, interpersonal conflict and intrapersonal conflict as is the case above. Whatever the reason why people are in conflict and whatever type of conflict they might be in, if properly managed, conflict will not only be resolved, but can also have positive consequences on the conflicting parties. The section that follows looks at the suggestions of conflict resolution made by the two authors and assesses which of the two is fairer and more effective at ensuring peace.

IV. EFFECTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION: LEGAL OR PRISTINE JUSTICE?

Conflict resolution is effective when differences are resolved in such a way that the needs of all the parties involved in the conflict are met. According to the Harvard Negotiation Project, the concept of “win-win” resolutions are met by focusing on the parties’ interests rather than their positions. Unlike other means of conflict management, conflict resolution aims at somehow getting to the root causes of conflict and not merely at handling its episodic or symptomatic manifestation which is a particular dispute (Avruch 26). Conflict resolution does not simply get parties in conflict to reach an agreement but attempts to re-establish the strained relationship between parties. The formal legal justice and traditional grassroot systems feature amongst the many means through which conflict can be resolved. These are the two major means Wright and Ambanasom propose in their novels. They are respectively referred to as legal and pristine justice in this paper. The resolution of the major conflict in Wright’s *Native Son* begins with Bigger’s arraignment and involves the whole process of his inculcation till when the verdict is pronounced by the Court of South Chicago. Bigger’s incrimination, judgment and condemnation exposes the workings of the American legal system, a system that epitomises the civilised world. In the same vein, Ambanasom proposes the resolution of the conflict that opposes Akan to Anjong— that metamorphoses into the conflict that opposes Achamba to Abaago— in a pristine justice context. Hence, the way the Council of Elders functions and the procedure for using the squirrel as Chief Judge are made obvious in this section. The two systems of justice are compared in view of establishing which justice is rough.

Having grown in a society that fosters the segregation against Blacks, some Whites like the Daltons think they can resolve the conflict that opposes Blacks and Whites through acts of goodwill and occasional generosity to Blacks. Mr. Dalton is a supporter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), that seeks the emancipation of Blacks, but also clamours for the settlement of these Blacks separately from Whites. He equally tries to help Blacks by employing them, as he does Bigger, so that they can make some money and help their families. In addition to that, he makes donations like the dozen ping pong tables he sends to the South Side Boys’ club. Meanwhile, his wife encourages the negroes that work for them to pursue their education in order to be better employed. But, as Max points out to them, what the Blacks need is a meaningful life. He establishes the Daltons’ hypocrisy in claiming to help the very people they discriminate against and exploit: Mr. Dalton has houses all over Chicago, but lets out only the rat-infested, single-room apartments of the South Side ghettos to Blacks at 8 dollars a week. Rather than solving the conflict by ingratiating him to Blacks, it further embitters Blacks like Bigger Thomas. His gang and he plan the crimes they commit in the club rooms furnished by Whites like the Daltons.

Moreover, it is his proximity to the Daltons following his recruitment as the family driver that favours his accidental murder of Mary Dalton and this fosters the escalation of the conflict between Blacks and Whites. Attempts at solving this new level of conflict begins with efforts made to capture Bigger, the perpetrator of the crime, and to inculcate him in the court of law. Eight thousand white men, armed with guns and gas, hunt him down in the whole of the South Side of Chicago. The newspapers have photographs of him and present him to the public as a dangerous, ape-like Negro on the run. His family is asked to quit the house they are living in and Negroes are terrorised. When they finally locate him, they use icy water to freeze him and oblige him to fall off from his hiding place on the roof of one of the buildings. It is clear from these that the White world is not seeking an appropriate solution to the conflict. Instead of trying to understand what prompted to commit such ghoulish crimes, the Whites (who epitomize the American legal system) rather presumptuously accuse him of a crime he has not committed— Mary Dalton’s rape. Bigger is not even given a fair trial for justice to be properly meted out; the Whites instead seek revenge. Hence, from the time Bigger is arrested and throughout the inquest and his trial, an angry mob of Whites demands his lynching. Assessing the attitude of the crowd that gathers at his inquest, the author notes that Bigger can sense that the people’s attitude towards him has gone beyond hate (Wright 702-703). This shows the intensity of the hatred the crowd has for him. Neither these actions nor feeling foster effective conflict resolution. The Whites are not interested in finding out the real reason for the conflict that opposes Bigger and, by extension, all the Blacks to them. And rather than seeking a “win-win” solution, as earlier pointed out, they want to use Bigger to set an example that will deter other Blacks from committing such atrocious acts.

It is therefore not surprising that Mr. Buckley, the State Attorney, does not hide his hatred for Bigger. His cold gaze and attempts at dissuading Max from defending Bigger give away the prejudice he has for Blacks. In effect, it is obvious that he is bent on inflaming the public against Mary Dalton’s murderer and even argues that the public expects Bigger to be condemned to death in order to sway the jury’s decision. According to him, the longer Bigger stays in jail, the more there is agitation for and against him. In other words, Bigger has to be gotten rid of for public peace to be restored. He shows Bigger a crowd outside the courtroom during the inquest that is ready and eager to lynch him. Meanwhile, the white audience in the courtroom looks at Bigger with “cold, grey and blue eyes, eyes whose tense hate was worse than a shout or a curse” (Wright 741). Such an atmosphere gives Bigger very slim chances of having a fair hearing. Worse still, Mr. Buckley decides to use Bessie’s mutilated and decaying body at the inquest as proof against Bigger to further incense the crowd. And even though Max gets Bigger to plead guilty, Buckley uses 60 witnesses among whom are 15 newspapermen.

Max further enumerates factors that make Bigger’s trial a mock trial as the defence counsel. He notes that the jury during Bigger’s trial is not made of Bigger’s peers, but of an alien and hostile race. Bigger’s trial is a mock trial indeed because Bigger can perceive that they have decided of his death even before he is tried. The writer captures this in these words:

Though he could not have put it into words, he felt that not only had they resolved to put him to death, but that they were determined to make his death mean more than a mere punishment; that they regarded him as a figment of that black world which they feared and were anxious to keep under control. The atmosphere of the crowd told him that they were going to use his death as a bloody symbol of fear to wave before the eyes of that black world. (Wright 703)

To make matters worse, the judge who presides over his trial is also a White, and so is the state coroner who decides to use Bessie Mears’ corpse as evidence against Bigger. In other words, all the people involved in Bigger’s prosecution— from his arrest, through his inculpation, to his final condemnation— are all white. A white race that has determined the inferiority of Blacks for ages and is bent on keeping Blacks in their place as second-class citizens of America. Thus, they stop at nothing to set an example on Bigger, an example that will deter other black men from violating the status quo the way Bigger has. It is presumed that Bigger raped Mary Dalton, then murdered and beheaded her, and burned her in the furnace to destroy the evidence of his crime. And because the penalty for raping a white woman is death, Bigger has to die. Bigger is thus judged and condemned for a crime he has not committed. Although the murder, decapitation and burning of Mary Dalton, as well as the rape and murder of Bessie Mears, deserve the death penalty, Bigger is most especially sentenced to death for raping and killing a white woman. In fact, Mr. Buckley attempts to accuse him of two other crimes he did not commit. He accuses Bigger of raping a woman and choking her to death the fall before and of attacking another by climbing through her window the summer before. As he tells Bigger, since he raped and killed two girls (Mary and Bessie) in two days, no one would believe he did not do same to the two others. And

though he does not insist on pressing charges of the two other crimes on Bigger, the charge of Mary’s rape is maintained against Bigger although nobody can prove that Bigger really raped her.

He emphatically concludes his submission by stating that Bigger deserves the highest penalty— the death penalty— because his major crime is Mary’s rape. Ironically, he hammers on the very crime Bigger did not commit when he yells that everything in the case against Bigger points to rape. The fact that his claim is acted upon and Bigger is sent to the electric chair based on this means that Bigger Thomas is killed for a crime he did not commit. Bigger is tortured from the time he is arrested. When he comes out of the daze in which he was, he realises that he has a swollen tongue and has lost the nails of two of his fingers. He is also subjected to emotional and psychological trauma. An angry crowd, that Max refers to as “yelping hounds,” constantly expresses its eagerness to lynch him. Not only can he sense their hate, but he also overhears the insulting slangs they throw at him. At one point, members of the Ku Klux Klan burn a cross which they brandish at him to express their hatred and rage. And during the trial, the State Attorney uses invectives and derogatory terms and words such as “miserable human fiend,” “half human black ape,” “black lizard,” “sly thug,” “black mad dog,” “sub-human killer,” “hardened black thing,” “rapacious beast,” “moron,” “piece of human scum,” “black cur,” “maddened ape,” “infernal monster,” “treacherous beast,” “Negro,” “ghoul,” and “demented savage” to refer to him. Obviously, as far as Mr. Buckley is concerned, Bigger is everything else except human. He dehumanises the protagonist by associating him to the abhuman (fiend, ghoul) and to the subhuman (ape, lizard, dog, thing, beast, monster, savage, moron, cur). And although he does so right in a court of law that ought to enforce the respect of human rights, even a criminal’s, nobody— not even the presiding judge— calls him to order. The venom vented by the State Attorney through these appellations is apparently shared by all the Whites in and outside the court room.

During his defence, Max establishes the monstrous unfairness with which Bigger, and even the whole black race is treated. The hunt gives Whites the pretext to invade Negro homes, assault scores of Negroes on the streets and throw dozens of Negroes out of their jobs and a barrage of lies poured out from every source against Blacks. In other words, racial prejudice causes Whites to consider all Blacks as being guilty of Bigger’s crime. The same prejudice prompts them to inculcate Bigger for killing Mary Dalton, a white girl, and to simply use his murder of Bessie Mears, the black girl, as evidence. As he notes to himself, the prosecution was using his having killed Bessie to kill him for having killed Mary. Considered a subhuman, the prosecution does not think that Bessie’s life is worthy enough for her murderer to be made to pay with his life for killing her. Without scruples nor respect for her mutilated and decaying body, the State Coroner decides to use it as evidence in court. Hence, as Bigger’s lawyer observes, it is “a case in which every conceivable prejudice has been dragged” (Wright 806).

Bigger is indeed judged by men that have already decided that he is guilty. The press, as well as the authorities of the city and the state, deliberately inflame the public mind. The press shows photographs of Bigger on the front pages of their papers as that of a black, apish, and hardened criminal on the loose, whose liberty is a threat to the safety of the white community, especially that of white women. They opine that only Bigger’s arrest and murder can restore peace and security in the city. Meanwhile, the State Attorney, Governor and Mayor incite the crowd for what Max terms “filthy reasons” (Wright 807). And having succeeded in getting the crowd to be so outraged that the people cannot be kept in check without martial law, the State Attorney uses it to manipulate the jury and the judge during his submission. He tells the judge that millions out there are waiting for the judge’s decision, expecting him to execute justice by sentencing Bigger to death. He even adds that in case the judge decides otherwise, he will resign as State Attorney and will tell the people that he can no longer protect them (Wright 834-835). Bigger is sentenced to die by electrocution on the electric chair on or before midnight, on March third, so that the public mind, that has been disturbed by his crimes in an unprecedented way, can have its peace back. It is not surprising that Max’s appeal to the Governor fails.

The inhuman and unfair treatment and judgement Bigger receives sheds doubts on whether he is really a native son of America. Jeanne Segal and Melinda Smith list the inability to recognise and respond to the things that matter to the other person; explosive, angry, hurtful and resentful reactions; the withdrawal of love, resulting into rejection, isolation, shame and abandonment, and the inability to compromise as some characteristics of unhealthy conflict management (par. 7). These are some of the traits that characterise the conflict resolution process by the court of law of Chicago— symbolic of the American legal system— as delineated in the analysis above. Every attempt made by Max and his communist friends to obtain a fair trial for Bigger and, better still, to explore the opportunity created by Bigger’s trial to bridge the longstanding rift between Blacks and Whites fails. The inhuman treatment Bigger receives portrays the “civilised” American legal system as one that metes out “rough” justice indeed. As Pfeifer is initially quoted as noting, the American legal system has legitimised the unfair treatment of Blacks. This is unlike the Council of Elders that finds it impossible to condemn Achamba

because they do not have enough proof of the veracity of Abaago’s claims in Ambanasom’s *Son of the Native Soil*. At this point, this paper further probes into the workings of pristine justice in Ambanasom’s novel.

In the pristine context of *Son of the Native Soil*, Ambanasom uses mediation as a means of conflict resolution. Mediation involves the intervention of a third party to promote reconciliation, settlement or compromise. In *Mediation in International Relations*, Jacob Bercovitch defines mediation as a voluntary form of intervention. This means that the parties in conflict retain their control over the outcome (if not always the process) of their dispute, as well as their freedom to accept or reject mediation or the mediator’s proposal (5). The three categories of mediation— facilitative mediation, evaluative mediation and transformative mediation— are means of conflict resolution in Ambanasom’s novel. Initiated in 1960, facilitative mediation is widely taught and utilised today. In this type of mediation, the mediator assists the parties in conflict by asking questions and, at the same time, by validating and normalising their points of view. It is up to the parties in conflict to arrive at a successful and fair conclusion of the conflict. In facilitative mediation, the mediator avoids making recommendations or giving advice, believing that the role of the mediator is simply to facilitate a resolution. The mediator therefore allows the parties to be totally in control of the outcome of the conflict. In other words, the mediator just presents the facts or evidence to the conflicting parties and allows them to take a final decision. He/She further provides a structure or agenda for discussion for the parties. Achamba acts as a facilitative mediator in the conflict that opposes the Anjong and the Akan over the chieftaincy issue. To ascertain whether the paramount chief was first taken from Anjong or Akan, Achamba goes to the National Archives in Yaoundé to find out the right information. It is there that he finds out the following information:

According to a German report there were already two chiefs in Dudum, namely Atianjoh of Anjong and Atong of Akan. Owing to its strategic location, Anjong became the German headquarters...however, as time went on, Atianjoh became less dynamic and heavy-handed. Atong of Akan, on the other hand, showed greater administrative qualities. Eventually, he replaced Atianjoh, as paramount chief, and Akan, for a period, became the German headquarters in Dudum. (124)

The information Achamba gets shows that the first paramount chief was indeed from Anjong, before the chieftaincy was moved to Akan because of the incompetence of this first paramount chief. The information thus confirms the claim of the Anjong and is a disclaimer of the claim of the Akan according to which the paramount chief was from Akan and the chieftaincy was moved to Anjong by the British. Achamba presents his findings to both parties so that they can resolve their dispute. Achamba further provides a structure and agenda for discussion to the Dudum people by creating the Dudum Cultural and Development Association. This provides the whole Dudum community a forum where the people of Dudum can meet and discuss their feelings, freely expressing their themselves. To everybody’s surprise, even the most arch dissenting leaders, turn up. Hence even if the information Achamba brings back from Yaounde further widens the gulf between the Anjong and the Akan, the creation of this forum of discussion has a lasting positive effect in reconciling the Dudum people. In the hall used to this effect, problems are discussed and measures to solve them are taken. This pertains to the second step to reconciliation proposed by David Bloomfield and Teresa Barnes. This second step is empathy which they define as that which derives from “the victims’ willingness to listen to the reasons for the hatred of those who caused their pain and with the offenders’ understanding of the anger and bitterness of those who suffered” (21). The Dudum Hall serves this purpose. For instance, the episode of the Ukob land is brought up and the people of Akan explain why they seized the hoes of the Anjong women and later beat them. They apologise for their actions and both parties decide to work together in future. As such, when the Divisional Officer’s visit to Dudum is imminent, both the Anjong and the Akan unitedly decide to meet him. They meet in the Dudum Hall to plan how they will do so.

Unlike the intergroup conflicts between the Blacks and Whites, as well as the Capitalists and Communists of Chicago City that remain unresolved to the end in Wright’s *Native Son*, the gap between the people of Anjong and the people of Akan is bridged in Ambanasom’s *Son of the Native Soil*. The animosity capitalist Whites feel against Communists is salient during Bigger’s trial and even after his condemnation. During the inquest, the State Attorney portrays his hatred for Jan. He also refers to Max as “Godless Communist” in his submission. The judge and the State Coroner are just as hostile to Max. The Governor, whom Max appeals to after Bigger is condemned to die on the electric chair, is not favourably disposed towards Communists either. As such, the two groups remain two parallel factions by the end of the novel unlike the factions in Ambanasom’s *Son of the Native Soil* that merge to become a single people. The synergy in which the people now act is patent in this quotation:

The executive, headed by Achamba, thanked the people for their support and took the running of the meeting into their hands. The people broke up into working committees, each containing a balanced number of representatives from all parts of Dudum. Among the main committees were Finance, Project...Reconciliation and Resolution committees, each having a president and a secretary. (165)

Led by their newly chosen leaders who hail from all over clan, the Dudum people act as one. They are all part of the different committees, the Anjong and the Akan alike, and are bound by the same goals in their different committees where they work for three days. As the meeting proceeds, they each know what to say and when to say it. It is worth noting that this meeting brings together indigenes from Dudum who are in and out of the country. At the end of the meeting during which both villages reach a compromise, they refer to themselves as “we, the Dudum people” and add that they are leaving that venue a united and reconciled people. And to deter any reversion to their past quarrel, they state that whosoever attempts to revive the past does so at the risk of incurring the curse of Ngiekum, their ancestor (Ambanasom 168). Unlike Max who fails woefully to unite the people of Chicago (Whites and Blacks, Communists and Capitalists alike) by attempting to get them all to share the responsibility of Bigger’s crime and to let Bigger live by sentencing him to life imprisonment, Achamba succeeds in uniting his people.

Bound in purpose and focus from then onward, the Dudum people work together for the development of the whole clan. They thus make recommendations for the construction of inter-village roads, that is, roads that will link Anjong and Akan. They also agree to renovate the community hall where their meetings take place. They likewise envisage the building of a giant-water scheme. Together, they plan on how to work out the reconciliation of their two chiefs— Chief Akaya of Anjong and Chief Umeitoh of Akan. They put it as the major point on the agenda of their future meeting. They even express the wish that the arrival of the new Divisional Officer will further strengthen the bonds between them. It is obvious that the meetings held within the forum of the Dudum Cultural and Development Association has helped the formerly dissenting parties to build trust in each other. They have also accepted each other’s humanity and their kinship. Bloomfield and Barnes note that it is the acknowledgement of the humanity of others that “is the basis of mutual trust and opens the door for the gradual arrival of a sustainable culture of non-violence” (20). The people of Anjong and Akan get to the point where they trust each other, acknowledge each other’s humanity and even their common kindred. Their determination to preserve peace thereafter is therefore logical.

Antipodal to the Honourable Chief Justice Alvin C. Hanley, who presides over Bigger’s trial in Wright’s *Native Son*, is the squirrel in Dudum who is an age honoured, impartial judge. In the Dudum culture, the service of the squirrel as judge is required when the people find it impossible to reach a compromise in a situation of conflict. The people solicit the squirrel’s service simply by organising a squirrel hunt. This is a situation whereby the two conflicting parties choose a day on which they each come out with their dogs and hunters, get into the forest, and use every possible means to catch a squirrel. The party that catches the squirrel first wins the case. This traditional practice provides the people of Dudum with a pacific way of resolving disputes. Also, unlike the case with human judges who can be prejudiced and partial (as is the case of Chief Justice Hanley in *Native Son*), the squirrel is impartial and cannot favour any of the parties. The people of Dudum believe that the party that first finds the squirrel is the party chosen by the ancestors and the gods to win the case and thus feel bound to enforce that divine verdict. Chitra Sankaran and John Nkengasong refer to this intrusion of the supernatural on the physical/natural world via the ecosphere in their article titled “Forests and Ecocultural Disequilibrium in Two Postcolonial Novels from Cameroon and Singapore.” Talking of the perception of the forest in anglophone Cameroon literature, they aver that:

In several works of anglophone Cameroon literature such as Linus Asong’s *The Crown of Thorns* (1990/1995), Nol Alembong’s *Forest Echoes* (2012), Shadrach Ambanasom’s *Son of the Native Soil* (2009a), and Bole Butake’s *Lake God* (1999), forests are perceived as sacred and having symbolic spiritual and cultural values. Human life, for the most part, is depicted as being dependent on the forest.... (46)

In line with this quotation, the spiritual and cultural value of the forest to the Dudum people cannot be overemphasised. It poses as the theatre for the resolution of conflict just as the court room does in Wright’s *Native Son*. Moreover, the life it contains (the squirrel in this case) is relied upon for the solution to the conflict that opposes the Anjong to the Akan. Thus, the forest ceases to be just a physical space and the squirrel ceases to

be just an animal. Both become mystical presences through which supernatural entities intervene in human affairs. It is also obvious that the pristine justice they constitute is one that gives the people fair judgement.

The analysis above shows that both Wright and Ambanasom resort to institutions put in place to enforce the laws of the communities they depict to resolve conflict in their respective works. But while Wright resorts to legal justice (for the most), Ambanasom entrusts this responsibility to pristine justice and mediation. As proven, legal justice fails to effectively resolve the conflict that opposes Bigger Thomas to Mary Dalton and, by extension, the conflict that opposes Blacks to Whites. Rather, the court is depicted as a machinery put in place by white hegemony to legitimise the inhuman treatment of Blacks. Even the accruing conflict between Communists and Capitalists remains unresolved. Meanwhile, pristine justice— coupled with Achamba’s in-put as a mediator— yields better results in Ambanasom’s novel. The Dudum community, that was divided, become one people who have a common purpose and focus. Not only is the intergroup conflict between the Ajong and the Akan resolved, but so also are interpersonal conflicts among the characters. By the end of the novel, the people of Dudum agree to work as a clan and finding a solution to the conflict that still opposes the chiefs of Ajong and Akan is topmost in their agenda for the clan’s next meeting. It is obvious that pristine justice poses as a fairer and more effective means of conflict resolution in this paper.

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