# Living In-Between: An Autoethnographic Narrative of Eritrians in Hannah Pool's *My Fathers' Daughter*

**Francis Arnaud M'BRA**

English Department

Alassane Ouattara University

Francismbra.arnaud@gmail.com

**Abstract:** This article aims at examining through Hannah Pool's autobiographical novel, *My Fathers' Daughter*[1], the first-hand experience of her homecoming in search of the construction of her lost identity in her Eritrean's birth family. Pool's insider position as in-between identity (Eritrean and Britishness) enables the readers to dive into her true sense of belonging and emotional upheaval to retreat into her family's background. In fact, Pool's hybridity and identity crisis are conditioned by the accumulation of multicultural education she received from her adoption favoured by the aftermaths of the Eritrean's pre/post-independence struggle against Ethiopia. This study also highlights the various challenges for her intercultural metamorphosis in the process of integration and re-appropriation of her culture and identities after returning to her traditional homeland.

**Keywords:** Intercultural Exchange, Language, Identity, Homeland integration, Hybrid Culture, Returnees, Adoptees

**Résumé:** Cet article vise à examiner à travers le roman autobiographique d'Hannah Pool, *My Fathers' Daughter*, l'expérience de première main de son retour à la maison à la recherche de la construction de son identité perdue dans la famille biologique de son Érythréen. La position d'initié de Pool en tant qu'identité intermédiaire (érythréenne et britannique) permet aux lecteurs de plonger dans son véritable sentiment d'appartenance et de bouleversement émotionnel pour se retirer dans le milieu de sa famille. En fait, l'hybridité et la crise identitaire de Pool sont conditionnées par l'accumulation de l'éducation multiculturelle qu'elle a reçue de son adoption, favorisée par les conséquences de la lutte de l'Érythrée avant / après l'indépendance contre l'Éthiopie. Cette étude met également en lumière les différents défis de sa métamorphose interculturelle dans le processus d'intégration et de réappropriation de sa culture et de ses identités après son retour dans sa patrie traditionnelle.

**Mots clefs** : échange interculturel, langage, identité, retour au bercail, culture hybride,

[1] Hannah Pool. *My Fathers' Daughter: Story of Family and Belonging.* London: Penguin Books, 2005. From this page on, Hannah Pool's novel, meaning *My Fathers' Daughter* will stand for *(M.F.D).* Further references to these novels will appear in the body of the work followed by the page number of the quotation.

## Introduction

Over decades, Africa is a continent which suffers a lot from the impacts of calamities such as war, terrorism, famine and poverty generating severe consequences in terms of physical and psychological victims, refugees and migrants. These tragedies, most of the times, constrain people to leave their native land to a host country, often, creating some conditions for the adoption of the poorest children. With their prime interest in explaining the various challenges that those adoptees face at their homecoming, scholars and researchers in the field of culture and identity have become increasingly attentive to the social relationship and their sense of belonging to their birth family. In the same token, an assortment of writers has devoted much of their energy to produce some autoethnographic narratives about the social integration of the adoptee people at their return to their homeland. An autoethnographic narrative, in the social science, is a relatively new literary genre which 'displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the culture' (Ellis C.S and Bochner, 2000, 739). Ethnography allows the writers to narrate their personal experience to enrich understanding about a societal issue.

This is the case story of Hannah Pool, a British writer, who narrates her own experience of her return to her motherland in search for her lost culture and native identity. Indeed, born in Eritrea, thirty years ago, from peasant parents who she thought were all died, Hannah Pool is placed in an orphanage in Asmara, the second biggest city of the country. She is, then, first adopted by white parents in a Norwich family and then, by a British family. Pool inherited a hybrid culture during her adoption. Feeling premonition about who she really is and having the confirmation about the existence of her lost birth family in Eritrea from an anonymous letter sent by a relative, Pool is afterward invaded by the need to trace back her blood family. The objective of this strong desire is to reconstruct her lost identity. The letter, therefore, creates an open window of opportunity to further her understanding about her true sense of belonging and identity if ever she succeeds, in reconnecting with her blood family. Hannah Pool's *My Fathers' Daughter* sounds as a snapshot narrative about the selfhood of refugees' adoptees conditioned by the misfortune such as drought, war, terrorism and famine in Africa, who once been up-rooted from their cultures during their adoption feel the need to reconnect themselves to their culture identities. They feel inclined to return to their home culture in order to rediscover and re-appropriate their identities and cultures.

My main task in the present study is to help readers to understand how and why migrants, refugees, adoptees and returnees feel the need to reconnect themselves to their generational line in spite of their relatively stable relationship with their adoptive family and achievement of high level of education and worthwhile job in their host space. Further to this, I also intend to analyse the emotional and psychological implication of the homeland integration and the variety of challenges that returnees encounter when tracing back their family background. Therefore, in order to meet the targeted objectives, this article focuses on four main questions as follows: what do they want to achieve by tracing their birth family? How do adoptees feel when tracing their generational line? Or else, what are the emotional and psychological impacts of recovering blood family on the adopted individuals and reversely on their relation to the adoptive family? What could be the potential culture barriers to the adopted persons' integrations? How do they negotiate their connection/return with their blood relatives? These are questions, among others, that will constitute the content of our analysis.

## I- Tracing Family Roots

Hannah Pool, in the narrative, juxtaposes her identity both as the narrator and the protagonist of the story narrated in the novel. She tells the story from a first-person narrator, using the personal pronoun "I" to lay emphasis on her implication in the story. During her thirties, this choice is a strategic reconsideration of her Britishness. She wants to know what else. Pool reflects on her 'Britishness' to identify herself, before she caters for the driving need and desire to trace back her family background.

> Dealing with it', I knew I meant tracing my birth family, that after that, I just didn't know. Never mind a can of worms, this felt more like I was teetering on the edge of an abyss. Once I went over, there would be no going back, but boy what a ride it would be if I made it to the other side. And just imagine how I'd feel if I lived to tell the tale. My birth family had tried to contact me and I had ignored them *(M.F.D, 7-8)*.

First apprehended as a common or ordinary act, the narrator did not realize that the commitment to discover and know more on self was beyond a simplistic intention. In fact, as BAAF concludes, 'Deciding to trace a relative can be one of the most life-changing decisions you may ever make. The final outcome is unknown and the journey has often been described as an emotional rollercoaster-at times exciting and satisfying; at others frustrating and disappointing. It can also be exhausting, both physically and emotionally' (BAAF, 2010: 1). Pool's life-changing

decision to trace back her family background is fairly motivated by the premonition about her incomplete sense of identity. She, now, feels ready to ferret out her relative even if she attempted first to ignore the letter, pretending to concentrate herself on her degree and post degree before dealing with the letter afterwards. She openly reconsiders her decision to trace her birth family in these statements:

> I thought I was 'just waiting', but I now realize that by doing nothing, I was effectively making a decision. But doing nothing is not the easy way out I thought it was. I don't know if was that I'd run out of excuses, or that I'd stopped making them. But over the last twelve months things had changed, and doing nothing was no longer an option. My main fear had shifted from 'what if they reject me?' to 'what if I've left it too late?' … The big difference was that it was a risk which was highly preferable to the alternative: a lifetime of wondering, what if? *(M.F.D, 7-8)*

The letter, so to speak, ideologically functions as a symbolic bridge which connects her with her "tragic" past, that of her unfulfilled questions related to her sense of belonging and identity of her Eritrean family. The letter, therefore, turns out as a bridge between the past and the present, to later pave the way for a future integration in African realms. By devoting her attention to the letter, Pool wants to give her birth family a chance of survival and a better new start. She definitely feels determined to establish a contact with her blood relatives so that to learn more about their lifestyle and customs. The confidential letter, she receives from the priest provides her a window of opportunity to discover her genealogical history and re-establish a sense of identity and belonging to her biological family. It also offers her a prospect for unfulfilled answers about why she has been adopted and the feeling about her sense of belonging to her birth family. Pool's decision to establish a face-to-face contact with her cousin, Gaim, is driven by the social stigma bound to not belonging to a biological family. She suffers from her friends and mates. She, therefore, relies on the letter as a real chance to gain full social acceptance.

During the search process, she later learns from her cousin some information about her blood family existence. 'your father is tall, so are some of your brothers, and your sister, but your mother, she was small, petite-just like you' *(M.F.D, 21).* She would have never expected to hear that her father is still alive. The news she has just received about her father's existence was very shocking for her. she hardly imagined the possibility of such a situation. She has lived all her life with the idea that her blood relatives do not exist. 'My father is tall. Is tall. Not was tall, but is. And so is my sister. I have a sister. Not a half-sister, but an actual blood sister. Older. Taller. And

what does he mean by 'some of my brother'? Some. What does some mean? More than one, I know, but 'some' makes it sound like a posse of them, like more than two for a start.' *(M.F.D, 21)*

The process of constructing an identity leads to psychological factors, for she has a difficult time identifying who she is and feels low self-esteem. She is emotionally held by fear. She feels like having no control over her life and searching for her birth parents reflects a way to gain control. She also experiences a variety of feeling ranging from excitement to anger, or from anxiety to worries. She is worried about intruding into the life of her birth by discovering some details about the different members of her birth family. She feels anxious about some unanswered questions on her family life and history. 'Questions are flying around my head, with no seeming order, but at an alarming speed. Will he be angry with me for leaving it so long? Will he know if my father is alive? Will he have a message from him or a photograph? Will he recognize me straight away? Did he know my mother? Do I look like her?' *(M.F.D, 12).* The desire to have some answers to these unanswered questions triggers an overwhelming fear for what she may discover about her family. This is how it looks like for her: 'in the pit of your stomach, like you've swallowed it whole, like it is growing minute by minute and unless you do something about it, get rid of it somehow, then it's going to consume you, paralysing you forever *(M.F.D, 13).*

Pool, by displaying her intention to trace her birth family, is also caught in dilemma with her adoptive family. She blames herself for having the resentment of repudiating or betraying her adoptive father. In so doing, pool is questioning the sense of belonging and identity of the orphanage children conditioned by the war of the country. To Pool, 'the first step to finding my birth family was telling my dad I was planning to go to Eritrea. Tracing my birth family felt like the most disloyal thing I could do. I hate it when people call my dad my 'adoptive' dad, it feels like they are dismissing him, relegating him to second best, but telling him I wanted to trace was like the ultimate betrayal'. *(M.F.D, 1)* She does not want to make a difference between her blood father and her adoptive father, on the risk to lose the confidence of the parents. To her, this broaches a matter of 'blood' and 'identity'. 'the tracing dilemma goes to the heart of what it means to be adopted. Question of blood and identity, of what makes someone family and what it means to be a parent, or a child, all come to a head when tracing is brought into an already heady

mix. If my birth father is still alive, whose child am I?' *(M.F.D,1-2).* Thus, Pool is a woman living in-between. Living in-between constitutes in the present case a source of identity crisis and dilemma for the adoptees. Therefore, finding some reliable information remains a requirement to reconstruct her 'self' and 'identity'.

## II- Re-Constructing the Self and Identity

In her autoethnographic narrative, Hannah Pool addresses the issue of culture and identity, in general and particularly the notion of construction of 'identity' and 'self' of adoptees children. Shawl Wahl and Julian Scholl refer to the notion of 'identity' as 'the representation of how you view yourself and how others might see you' (Shawl Wahl and Julian Scholl, 2014: 67). They define the 'self' as 'the complex set of belief about one's attributes, as well as memories and recollections of episodes that confirm such beliefs. These attributes and memories form a schema of one self, or a mental structure that contains various bits of information that defines who a person is and guides how he or she communicates with others' (Shawl Wahl and Julian Scholl, 2014: 67).

Looking for clues and ways to reconstruct her lost identity and self, Pool tries to find an answer to the question 'who I am' *(M.F.D, 6).* Knowing about her identity is meaningful for her to help her find with whom she might belong to. Pool, in her narrative, is trying to find a sense of belonging and how she sees herself anchored in the world. The strong sense of identity is also important to her because it contributes in shaping and building her self-esteem and confidence. The heated discussion she had with her cousin, Gaim, about the existence of her blood relative living in Eritrea convinced her to pay attention to her family background.

She inherits hybrid identities that overlap and even contradict one another. The acquisition of hybrid identity produces culture shock and crisis of identity in her inner. It establishes a binary opposition of the implication of her identity as follows: fragmentating/diversifying versus unicity/homogeneity. She finds herself caught in-between, a state which trigger out dilemma. She is wondering about which aspects of her identity she wants to show and feels herself completely at sea. She has to make a choice between her dual identities. She feels overwhelmed at the thought of 'someone who shared my genes was a gulf between us but, ultimately, we had the parents, we were from the same place. If we met, would there be a connection, an invisible bond because we were brother and sister? Would we smile the same,

laugh the same, cry the same? Or was this man, connected to me only by blood, no more than a stranger?' *(M.F.D, 6).* Other dimension of her sense of identity takes into account her conceded identity she acquired from her white adoptive family living in Manchester. She 'already had a brother in Manchester, who I'd known every day of his life. I might not share genes with Tom, but I couldn't love him more. I share a history with him…Surely that proved our credentials as siblings. One was white and English, the other was black and Eritrean, but which one was my true brothers?' *(M.F.D, 6-7).* Pool reflects on identity as a negotiable concept. This elucidates her choice to embark on the ship of culture at sea for a cohesive identity. She undertakes a homeward journey in Eritrea to reconstruct her 'self' and identity. She tries to retrieve into her family background in Eritrea, searching for clue of her identity from her adoption certificate. She, soon, discover some anomalies about her identity. It reads from her personal file of her adoption certificate that:

Grandfather's name: MEDHIN

Mother's name: HIDAT ZEROM

Parents: Alive-Dead-Lost: BOTH DEAD

District: KEREN

Division: ANSEBA

Village: BEKISHEMNOK

Sex: F

Religion: ORTHODOX

Age: 29 days

Admitted: 31-5-74

Discharged Date & Reason: 21-10-74 [no reason is given] *(M.F.D, 68-69).*

The information she received from her birth certificate comes to contradict her pre-constructed identity. Two anomalies can be noticed from her birth certificate. One is about her family name. The other is related to her birthday date. These two anomalies from the adoption certificate operate a modification on her cognitive schema of her personality to determinate 'who she is.' The extra 'I' slipping in her name, from 'Azeb' to 'Azieb'Asrat, as it appears in her name is a crucial change that affects her 'self' and identity. To Pool,

> changing a child's name without telling them is stealing from them; it's as if you are trying to wipe out their history. And imagine what it does to you to

> discover in adulthood that the name you have now was a completely different one to the one you were first given. It's supposed to represent a fresh start in life, wiping the slate clean, but whose benefit is the new name for?' *(M.F.D, 91).*

More importantly, the incongruity of her day of birth from her personal file of her adoption certificate comes to deconstruct her pre-constructed identity. Stupefied, the narrator keeps on to shed light on the way they gerrymandered her as both physical being and cultural archive: 'my birthday has always highlighted how different I am from everyone else. Every time it comes around or every time I feel '10 May' in on a form I am reminded of how little I know about myself. I feel fraudulent accepting gifts and guilty celebrating what I know is a lie. If someone asks me what time I was born, I fob them off. 'What time?' I want to scream. 'I don't even know what date' *(M.F.D, 71).* She has the sentiment of being stolen her own identity since her childhood, reason for which she claims that, 'parents: both dead; that's where it all started, with that lie, and my life, my identity since that date, 31 May 1974, has been built on that lie' *(M.F.D, 69).* Despite this sentiment of disgust, Pool senses that one way to re-appropriate her lost identity is to refers to her family as the root of identity. No matter the cane she receives, family remains important to identify herself. Finding ways to integrate her birth family, therefore, represent to her the key to the puzzle of the reconstruction of her 'self' and identity. A move toward her social integration requires identifying herself to the member of her birth family. The apparent ever state of one's identity depending either on intern or extern factor begins to show up:

> in half an hour I will know the answer. I will go from being the adopted girl who has never met her family to the adopted girl who has. They are two very different people. How many changes of identity can one person take? I have already been an Eritrean daughter, Eritrean orphan, Eritrean adoptee, and now I am about to become Eritrean daughter again. The nearer I come to meeting them, the nearer I am becoming a completely different person, a full person, instead of one whose identity is dominated by that which is missing-my birth family *(M.F.D, 84).*

In the process of the re-construction of her lost identity, Pool tries to identify herself with and through member of her own family. She determines some features of belonging to her family that they share in common. She identifies 'hairstyle' and 'skin colour' as a criterion of identity. Pool has spent her entire life wishing to look like someone in her family. This is what makes her smile 'at the sight of his afro' *(M.F.D, 11)* when she met her cousin, Gaim, for the first time on a photograph. She felt delighted to share a 'hairstyle in common' *(M.F.D, 11).* She does reflect on 'Afro hairstyle' as the sense of self having something to do with cultural identity and character

makeup. 'hair became a strong connecting force between members of the black collective' (Myrna Lashley, 2020: 213). 'Afro hairstyle' represents a symbol and a testament of identity within culture. Pool, on the other hand, touches on the uniqueness of her 'skin colour' and physical feature as a standard of identity. She conclusively determines her physical resemblance with 'the colouring of Zemichael, a reddish brown compared to the others' deeper shade, and Timmit's smile, and that overall, I look most like Stephanos' *(M.F.D, 103-104)*. She tries to identify herself as a potential member, so that, to smooth the path of her acceptation to her birth family, even if, her social integration is not systematic.

## III- Cultural Differences as a Barrier to Social Integration of Adoptees

The daunting challenges of social integration experienced by adoptees in the process of reconstruction of their lost identity, after returning to their family background, is a significant topic discussed in cultural and social studies in general, and in the field of creative literature in particular. One of the major challenges that returnees, most of the times after long stays elsewhere, encounter in their home culture, as discussed in this narrative, is cultural difference. As a matter of fact, cultural differences pose difficulties to returnees to fully accommodate to their home space. Pool, in her narrative, discovers a structural difference in the dressing code of the Eritrean's inhabitants. Unlike European women who used to be dressed in 'tight jeans' *(M.F.D,12)*, Eritrean women are

> either [dressed] in long, traditional white dresses that look like they are made of natural cotton…or in modest but modern skirts and dresses that graze the floor. The attire of choice for teenagers seems to be jeans and a shirt, blouse or T-shirt, but nothing too tight. No one is in shorts and there is not a bare torso nor a pierced belly button, which I have to say, is something of a relief. Mind you, I haven't seen any builders yet, so who knows. There's another big difference which it takes me a while to pin down. It's not about what people are wearing or the language they are speaking, but it's no less obvious. It's the way everyone is walking, or rather carrying themselves *(M.F.D,57)*.

At Pool's great astonishment, she discovers that Eritrean people are radically conservative. Their traditional values are not intended to change any time to whatever reason. They conform themselves to the social norm of dressing and have a deep respect for their culture. She regards dressing code as one of the foremost identity symbols and a powerful expression of Eritrean's national identity from which she slightly feels marginalized and discriminated. She

completely feels alien and different from the Eritrean cultural identity. Despite her best effort to accommodate with the appropriate way of dressing for an Eritrean woman of her age, reading and writing a beauty column in a newspaper magazine for goodness' sake, she unwillingly transgresses the dressing code. She deeply feels offended by her father who rejects her for her 'indecent' clothes she is wearing and qualifies her as 'bandit' *(M.F.D,12).*

But above all, language also stands as a potential problem of sociability from which returnees are confronted at their return to their host society. Language, identity and cultural differences are interrelated and influence each other in one way or other. 'While culture is concerned about 'sharing meaning', language is a link that is used to 'make sense' of things, and meaning can be exchanged and produced… language is essential to culture and meaning and can be considered the key container of the values and meanings of culture' (Sultan Hammad Alshammari, 2018: 98). Language, according to Massimo Piattelli-Palmarini, is a term which means 'internal language, a state of the computational system of the mind/brain that generates structured expressions, each of which can be taken to be a set of instructions for the interface systems within which the faculty of language is embedded' (Massimo Piattelli-Palmarini, 2009: 18-19). It plays a significant role in the process of individuals and social integration. However, language, not easily assimilated sounds as a cultural barrier to the socialization and belonging of the returnee individuals.

Pool, in the narrative, experiences a lot of difficulties to properly integrate her host society. She feels difficulties to communicate with other peoples as exemplified through the intercultural exchange between her and the other Eritrean women at the Embassy. The women use their local language, Tigrinya, as a medium of communication. The use of Tigrinya language at the bosom of the Embassy as institutional language reveals their ultimate intention to promote their national identity. Reversely, Pool's incapacity to verbally communicate with those persons, in her mother tongue, positions her as an alien in a more or less hostile environment. Her awareness of her acculturation and loss of identity and the risks it involves compelled her to choose Lufthansa flight as the best option of her travel to Eritrea.

> The best options seem to be via Frankfurt with Lufthansa (due to Germany's kinder immigration policy there is a large Eritrean community there, hence the Lufthansa flight). The Lufthansa flight is the more expensive of the two, but something about Eritrean Airlines freak me out. I don't feel ready for it yet. I keep imaging them, the crew and the passenger, all speaking Tigrinya and

> having a go at me for speaking English. I decide to travel via Frankfurt flight *(M.F.D, 37)*.

Travelling via Lufthansa flight reveals her intimate intention to avoid being severely censured or blamed for her acculturation. She wants to feel herself a little bit as a normal person. Her choice of Lufthansa flight also operates as a revealer of her weak psychological mind state. Out of this, she faces the obstacle in getting into contact with her relative at her arrival to Eritrea due to the language differences. Language differences deepen the gap to the social integration of the adoptees to their birth families. Yet, looking for some ways to assimilate her culture become a necessity.

## IV- Negotiating Integration to Eritreans

The return of Hannah Pool to her native land is not a guarantee for her to be accepted as any other people in Eritrea, or to be welcomed in her family of origin as if she was just away on a travel. Negotiating cultural integration remains a demanding requirement set out by children or grow ups in search of homeland roots to re-construct their identity and sense of belonging in the native land by means of family. Negotiating cultural integration implies paying attention to all the aspects of the Eritrean's culture and sharing meaning or connection with members of families. In this sense, learning and practicing local language is a prerequisite to the social integration of returnees in their homeland. Being aware of her deficiency, she undertakes some initiatives to pave the way to her social insertion and acceptance. To that end, trying out to speak her mother tongue sounds as a best approach to establish connection with her relatives. Greeting her father at their first meeting in the local language connotes her recognition of the importance of her native language. In another sense, it is a great sign of respect to her father, and a strategy as if to say I am not lost. Yet, the author's return home is not confined in an intention of recognizing the value of her father's language and culture only. Pool means more:

> I want everything to be right, so once we get in the taxi, Manna in the front, me in the back, I quietly remove the chain. As soon as the H comes off I feel naked without it. I thought taking it off would make me feel better; it had felt like a hot stone on my chest, or a flashing neon sign that read 'not from around here'. It was the letter, rather than the necklace itself. It felt aggressive somehow, like I was using it to guard me against some sort of evil. And to remind everyone around me that my name is Hannah now, not Azieb, which of course it is, but there's no need to shout it from the rooftops. *(M.F.D, 85-86)*

The withdrawal of her silver necklace which was a clear expression of her belonging to the UK and expression of her agreement to be perceived as such, is a great indicator of her renunciation to Britishness, to her reduction to the white man's belonging. She metaphorizes the situation as 'that sketch of an English person abroad: they don't speak the language but figure that if they speak English loudly enough locals will understand. Except, if I were watching this scene, instead of taking part in it, I'd find it sad rather than funny' *(M.F.D, 97).* Alternatively, the narrator presents 'translation' and 'interpretation' as efficient methods to make herself understood and negotiate her full integration to her birth family. She requires to native speakers, namely her brother, to translate her words whenever she wants to communicate with her relative. The plot uncovering her intimate conversation with her older sister, Timnit, helps illustrate this assertion. She feels delighted to have her own words being translated by a woman, establishing a bond between them.

Other outstanding ways of negotiating her sense of identity and belonging to her African family is to investigate and create her own aide-mémoire her family, whenever she is introduced to a relative of her extended family. She kindly asks them to,

> write their name down on the pad, in English as well as Tigrinya. Those who can't write, of whom there are many, generally give the pad to Medhanie or Zemichael and make them do the honours. I then try to copy the Tigrinya, and write an aide-mémoire in my own semi-official shorthand (part real shorthand, part my messy writing) which no one else can read, but which allows me to write crucial information –such as 'father's best friend, twinkly eyes-which means I have a much better chance of committing them to memory *(M.F.D 133).*

This aide-mémoire has been written to fulfill a clear function: that of a living memorial of her birth family. This is meant to keep forever the genealogical line and cultural heritage of her Eritrean family.

Additionally, learning about culture and tradition appears as a viable method to strengthen her connection and share affinity with her family member and society as well. She discovers that there is a dinner tradition in the Eritrean's family. Dinner, in the Eritrean's family is present as a ritual which consists in creating and reinforcing sociability and intimacy between the family members. It is a time-honoured tradition meant to provide a sense of belonging to the family and to the question of 'who we are'. Feeding each other with the hands, thus, represents a time of sharing and rapprochement as it can be crystallized through these statements:

> My father turns to me with a handful of food in one hand, and saying something in Tigrinya…He wants to feed you' said Medhanie…it's a way to celebrate, to show love, to feed someone from your own hand…As my father brings his right hand up and gently eases the food into my mouth with his fingers, I see his eyes have welled up. The moment feels almost too intimate. A communal ripple of relief goes around the room and the tension is broken *(M.F.D,109).*

Having dinner in the Eritrean's family symbolizes a moment of conviviality and joie de vivre. It also provides an opportunity of release of tension in the family where all sorts of disagreement are resolved. Pool, on the other hand, also manages to negotiate her social integration by discovering

Social realities about traditional Eritrean wedding. Taking part to the wedding ceremony is an opportunity to immerse herself in the Eritrean's society and learning about the culture. Weddings, in the Eritrean's society are, most of time, institutionalized into arranged marriage. She really gets surprised from the fact that 'in the village many families marry their daughters off even younger, despite the government and aid agencies trying to encourage them to do otherwise' *(M.F.D 226).* Pool, by investing her efforts and energy to learn about her cultural ideologies aims to show to the readers how important it is to know about own culture to fully integrate the society.

**Conclusion**

This article unearths at least one clear truth: living in-between identities is not an easy experience. Inheriting from two cultures constitutes a source of dilemma generating crisis of identity. The major concern of the autoethnographic narrative is the expression of the homeland integration of the adoptees which reveals their clear awareness of their acculturation following their adoptions. Adoptees, most of the times, feel the need to discover to their genealogical line and return to their real "them". In *In Search of our Mother's Garden*, Alice Walker proves the extent to which the sense of loss pushes acculturates people to stop at a certain moment, no matter how poor, wealthy, invisible or popular they are, and go back to search the missing parts. This is the personal experience of Hannah Pool whose identity and sense of belonging to family has been questioned and which illustrate her identity crisis. The dominant ideology which is persistent in Hannah Pool's *My Fathers' Daughter* is the complexity of the inner realm in the reconstruction of the identity and self for cultural integration of returnee individuals in the "host"

culture. Pool's social integration in the Eritrean social unit, which is family, is not systematic and is submitted to a certain amount of challenges. There is a plurality of challenges in the equation of the construction of identity and re-appropriation of the culture of the adoptee children. Among these challenges, cultural differences and languages problems emerge as the most pertinent. Hannah Pool's literary and critical consciousness are insightful resources to help the readers to cope with the methods to align to the family history, tradition and culture. This is possible by ways of negotiation which implies some learning skills of language and cultural ideologies.

**Bibliography**

Bin Ai C.S and Lifei Wang. 'Homeland Integration: An Academic Returnee's Experiences in Chinese Universities'. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Volume 16-9, 2017

Ellis C.S and Bochner A. 'AutoEthnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researchers as Subject.' In N. Denzin & YS Lincoln (Eds), Handbook of Quantitative Research, 2000

Hannah Pool. *My Fathers' Daughter: a Story of Family and Belonging*. London: Penguin Books, 2005

Massimo Piattelli-Palmarini et al. *Of Minds and Language: a Dialogue with Noam Chomsky in the Basque Country.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009

Myrna Lashley. 'The Importance of Hair in the Identity of Black People'. Nouvelles Pratiques Sociales, Volume 31, Number 2, Fall 2020

Reagan Curtis and Frances Pearson. 'Contact with Birth Parents: Differentials Psychological Adjustment for Adults Adopted as Infants.' *Journal Social Work*, 2010

Shawn Wahl and Juliann Scholl. 'Culture and Identity'. Kendall Hunt Publishing, 1st Edition, 2014

Sultan Hammad Alshammari. 'The Relationship Between Language, Identity and Cultural Differences: A Crucial Review'. Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 8, N°4, 2018

'Tracing Birth Relatives: a Practical Guide for Adopted People'. BAAF, Adoption and Fostering, 2010

Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil. *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996