Eldred Jones’ *The Freetown Bond: A Life Under Two Flags* (hereafter referred to as *The Freetown Bond*) represents the astute memory of an octogenarian, an enduring intellectual mind, and a soulful personality. Indeed, it is a memoir in celebration of the rich life of a scholar, patriot, husband, socialite, father, friend, moderate political activist, religious man, and an educationist. These intersecting identities suggest the ways in which the personal conflates with the political; how the individual voice merges with the historical; how the private life comes with the public social life; and how Jones’ world views are larded by his religious upbringing. As the book’s subtitle suggests (*A Life Under Two Flags*), the historical period of the memoir spans from colonialism to contemporary independent, postcolonial Sierra Leone. *The Freetown Bond* narrates the life of Jones, one of the earliest products of colonial education in Sierra Leone. It highlights the duplicity inherent in the colonial masters’ rhetoric to “civilize” and educate the native. In very subtle ways, *The Freetown Bond* underlines the gradual dissatisfaction with colonial rule that led to a demand for independence, and how post-independent Sierra Leone gradually fizzled out from the heights of a functional democracy to the low depths of political intrigues, coups d’état, counter-coups, and civil war. Furthermore, *The Freetown Bond* brilliantly narrates how Fourah Bay College, the first university in West Africa, and pride of Sierra Leone, gradually lost its glory against the best intentions and efforts of Jones who served as its principal from 1975 to 1985.

As already stated above, *The Freetown Bond* is an autobiography. It attempts to recollect over eighty years of Jones’ personal history; a history that intertwines with political, social, and religious events in Sierra Leone. Like most memoirs, *The Freetown Bond* does not follow a linear, chronological narrative structure; rather, it moves back and forth, recollecting incidents, and putting them into a kind of narrative temporality that are held together by thematic coherence. Such a narrative structure is reflective of the way our minds recollect facts. However, for a man in his eighties, the details with names, dates, places, incidents, and even direct statements from people are quite admirable and impressive. Also, Jones’ provision of personal records such as letters, cast lists and flyers of past drama performances to substantiate the narrative shows the meticulous effort that went into writing this memoir.

The memoir is divided into ten chapters whose titles give some semblance of linearity to the structure of the book – from “Early Childhood Under the British Flag” to “Twilight and Evening Bell.” Chapter One mostly deals with Jones’ childhood at Leah Street in the East end of Freetown, and his ancestry to the ‘Liberated Africans’ who were captured in the Atlantic ocean by the British and resettled in Freetown at the height of the abolitionist movement in Britain. The chapter gives us an insight into Jones’ humble beginnings as a boy, and his family history. He
tells us about his early childhood education, religious life, and the various personalities who had an influence in his life. Chapter Two, “Manhood’s Gleam in Boyish Eyes,” continues the narrative with Jones’ secondary education at the CMS Grammar School, his deep involvement in his church’s (Holy Trinity Church) activities such as being a chorister, and his aspiration to further his education at Fourah Bay College (FBC). Chapter Three, “In the Footsteps of Ajayi Crowther,” talks about his undergraduate days at FBC and his application for colonial scholarship (which was out-rightly rejected) to do postgraduate studies at Oxford University in England. Chapter Four, “The Gleaming Spires of Oxford,” mainly focuses on Jones’ days at Oxford, and the number of friends and contacts made there. In Chapter Five, “Home Pastures,” we are given an insight into Jones’ post-Oxford lectureship at FBC, and the various scholastic and administrative achievements that resulted from his tenure at FBC. These include his research and publications, founding and editing the *African Literature Today* journal and the many building projects undertaken under his tenure as Principal that enhanced the growth of the college. Chapter Six, “America & New Found Lands,” is about Jones’ sojourn in the United States and Canada to do further research on Shakespeare, a period he also used to give several lectures on the burgeoning African Literature and History. Chapter Seven, “West African Travels,” focuses on his travels in West Africa, especially in Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal – the leading West African countries in the production of African literary texts in the 60s. By Chapter Eight, “All Freetown’s a Stage,” the narrative is back in Freetown, focusing on Jones’ dramatic career, his involvement with radio broadcasting, and his love for leisurely walks. Chapter Nine, “Books, Words, Causes,” gives us a more focused look at Jones’ academic carrier especially his publications, editorial work, overseas lectureships and fellowships, academic awards, and ongoing education projects, etc. He also gives us an insight into his various involvements in politics as chairman of several political committees. In Chapter 10, “Twilight & Evening Bell,” Jones brings us to the present, and tells us, with so much joy and satisfaction, what life is like for him and his faithful wife Marjorie Jones, both now in their 80s.

The content and structure of Jones’ memoir shed light on social and political concerns beyond the self. For instance, we are given an insight into how a critical self-awareness of most Sierra Leoneans under colonial rule led to their questioning of the validity of celebrating Empire Day. We also get to know that the political trump card that gave the All People’s Congress (APC) victory over the ruling Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) in the 1967 general election was its opposition of the one party democracy proposed by SLPP; but after winning the election, APC quickly and surreptitiously passed the one party bill in parliament and ratified it. In addition, through Jones’ personal story at FBC, we are given an insight into the glorious days of that institution – when it had a bookshop, and it could provide grants to lecturers to go do research in other countries. Jones’ narrative gives us a gist of how some of these facilities and opportunities were lost at FBC. We get to know about the Fourah Bay College Literature Conference which existed in the 1960s, but is now no more; or the *Sierra Leone Studies* journal and *The Sierra Leone Language Journal* which are dead and gone.

*The Freetown Bond* is a significant addition to the growing genre of life-writing in Sierra Leone. With the increasing publications of memoirs in that country, dominant discourses such as national history and political ideologies are revisited, revised, and reshaped. The past is
presented in multi-dimensional perspectives in ways that unfix our traditional notions of truth, and re-situate ‘truth’ as something which is dialogical and negotiable, mostly residing in the interstices of multiple perspectives and interpretations. The personal voice in *The Freetown Bond* validates Jones’ individual experiences within the larger framework of society, and reifies the self as an outcome of social networks. *The Freetown Bond* is the success story of the multidimensional selves of Eldred Jones and the multiple locations – personal, social, religious, academic, educational and even political – that make that possible.