

THE GROTESQUE IN ARMAH'S FICTION
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Introduction:!

Ayi Kwei Armah writes about the Akan people of Ghana among whom are two prominent ethnic groups — the Asante and the Fante. The Beautiful Ones Are *Not Yet Born"! and Fragments² are set in post-independence Ghana before the 1966 military take-over from Nkurumah's government. Two Thousand Seasons[^] and The Healers[^] are set in the distant past of the Akan history. The first of the last two novels mentioned deals with the origin and migration of the Akan people while the second depicts the period of the British conquest of the Akan people which culminates in the fall of the great Asante Empire. Armah thus covers a reasonable period of the history of his people. He explores the life and activities of the national leaders; politicians, intellectuals, bureaucrats and the ordinary people, He gives an eloquent picture of the spiritual bankruptcy and the loss of moral vision that plagued the entire Ghanaian society. He goes on to analyse the corruption and bad leadership that contributed to the 'wholeness' and unity of the Akan people.

There is a vital connection between the past, the present and the future in the life of any society as T.S. Eliot stressed in Four Quarters[^]. Armah is conscious of this connection between the past, present and future, and in this four novels set in Ghana, he tries to establish the link between the corruption in present-day Ghana-nian society and that which ravaged the Akan societies in the distant past. His two latest novels Two Thousand Seasons and The Healers deal with the history of the Akan people. Armah shows how the corrupt kings, the aristocrats and even some of the ordinary people plan to destroy the 'wholeness' of the people and to encourage the society to stray from the right 'way' of the ancestors. He thus uses the past to illuminate the happenings of the present. This pre-occupation with the past has been described by Wole Soy ink a in his comment on Two Thousand Seasons as 'the visionary reconstructions of the past for the proposes of social reconstruction. Armah's argument would appear to be that there is a deep-rooted historical connection bet-ween the present-day corruption in Ghana and the corruption that existed in the Akan society of the past.

A common feature of Armah's technique as a social critic is his method of identi-fying physical deformity and moral corruption in one individual. Physical deformity is, thus, a symbol of moral corruption. In

each of these four novels, the reader discovers that, in some characters, physical deformity is the outer growth of an already warped mind. This paper sets out to examine this aspect of Armah's art by looking at the physical deformed characters in detail in each of these novels and analysing the role each plays with a view to highlighting the relationship between physical deformity and moral corruption in the characters. These distorted and twisted human beings are embodiments or reflections of the general decay and depravity in the society which Armah graphically depicts. For instance, King Koran-che and Ababio represent all the kings and aristocrats whose corrupt and oppressive reigns are a terror to the people. An attempt would be made to suggest the source of Armah's inspiration in this innovation in the African novel. What this paper sets out to achieve naturally demands that it be descriptive and illustrative rather than argumentative and critical.

Physical Deformity:

It is in *The Healers* that Armah perfects the technique of using physical deformity as an instrument of social criticism. Consider, for instance, the singular physique of Ababio:

The man was short and bald. He moved gracelessly, but this awkwardness was not on account of age. The man was fat. Underneath all his fat it was clear his bones were small, and his natural frame was that of a small slight person. But he had over-whelmed his natural frame with fat, and now he looked like a deformed sphere balanced unsteadily on thin legs. His arms were short. The upper parts were thick and heavy, but the lower arms turned suddenly thin a short way down from the elbow...(p.12)

The picture presented in the description above is a repulsive one. The reader can mentally picture a very ugly man with a grossly disproportionate body. Though the reader does not yet know the role this character would play in the novel, this unattractive picture of Ababio prepares his mind for the evil life Ababio will lead, such expressions as 'gracelessly', 'awkwardness' and 'deformed sphere' give an accurate mental picture of Ababio's ugliness. In the passage quoted above, the word 'fat' is used no less than three times, and Ababio is described as having 'overwhelmed his natural frame with fat'.

Buntui, the little — brained monster whose cruelty is paralleled only by Ababio's in *The Healers* has also a body build that nauseates the reader. The following is part of Armah's portrait of Buntui's awkward structure:

Two things stood out about this one: his ugliness and his size. He was huge. He was not merely huge. He was a giant...His chest was enormous. It bulged forwards, backward&:and sideways, the brawny upper arms were gross extensions of the bulky body. (p. 9)

Bunti is incredibly strong in a very unpleasant and crude manner. His gross body conveys a strength that is brutal and destructive:

...the giant's neck and nothing delicate about it. It was a crude mass, immensely powerful-looking and it grew directly from the torso. It was not a long neck, but in its short rise to the base of the head above it, it had time to taper somewhat. The head, for from broadening out from the neck, simply continued this tapering. The giant's head was therefore dramatically smaller and less impressive than the neck supporting it... There was no rounding anywhere except at the top, and there the whole body ended in a blunt, brutal point, (p. 9)

The impression one has of Buntui is one of singular ugliness, ferocity and animal-strength. The sensitive reader is outraged by such a repulsive and unpleasant physi que. Armah eloquently depicts Buntui's brute force and destructive strength through such expressions as 'huge', 'enormous', 'overwhelming weight', 'expansive width', 'blunt', 'brutal', 'uncontrollable tension' and 'massive'. Armah thus prepares the milder for the destructive role Buntui plays later in the novel, armah often gives the minutest details in describing some of these characters' ugliness. Of Buntui, he luihor writes:

...his teeth, which were enormous, each ye/tow one separated from its neighbour by ample space, strained aggressively forward, forcing his slimly fyps permanently open. His nostrils showed wide and open... The giant's eyes were small in themselves, pig-like... They were bloodshot eyes, unclear, murky, utterly repulsive. (pp.9-10)

Armah usually devotes whole pages to the description of the physique of these characters, making them look grotesque. His use of language and his descriptive ability make his portrait of them come alive in a very striking manner. The cruel king Koranche of Two Thousand Seasons has been abnormal from birth and is physically deformed for the rest of his life. In childhood he was retarded in his development:

Koranche of all the children of the time was slowest. It was his habit to stay wherever he was left from morning till evening and sit staring

straight ahead of his body. He could 'not smile. The only expression he had was a constant duff, flat, ever staring look... He could not cry like other children... (p. 66)

When he cried, it was 'with a constricted explosive violence quite astounding to all hearers'. Koranche's physical and mental development was a marvel to his people, especially his parents. The fact that he was heir to the throne made it all the more disappointing that he was an idiot. And he could only walk 'in his thirteenth season'. In other areas of development, he was not better endowed:

As for talking Koranche waited till his seventeen season to begin it, and every speech of his was a cataract of words shot out after unbelievably long periods of silent internal struggle. This was not stammering, unless we wish to take it into our minds to give lightning and any little stone-sparks the same name (.66)

The general pattern of Koranche's physical and mental development shows him to be different from other children. In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Amankwa has a body build that is as ugly and awkward as Ababio's. His overfed body has grown out of shape:

In through the door came a belly swathed in Kente cloth. The feet beneath the belly dragged themselves and the mass above it in little aros, getting caught in angular ends of heavy cloth... The visitors's mouth was a wolf shaped... Children had a name for such teeth. Nephews, they called these teeth which come in rows, an second and even a third set pushing impatiently out against the first, (pp. 31-32).

Armah humorously and satirically refers to Amankwa in subsequent passages as 'the teeth' 'the many teeth', and his description of the man centres on his physical defects — large belly, 'generation of teeth' and 'wolf mouth'. The man's lips 'had this habit of leaving in their wake bubbles and lines of filmy saliva whose yellow color was not all from the bulb above' (p.33). Amankwa presents a picture as nauseating as Ababio and Buntui.

And finally there is in *Fragments* the man who succeeds in killing brutally the helpless dog:

He was a short man, with something swollen and out of shape about his shortness, so that the eye on first seeing him searched unordered for some twisting cause, for something perhaps like a hump upon his back. But there was nothing there to explain the twistedness, until the baffled eye descended and was struck in the region of the sweating man's loins with the sight of a scrota/ sac so swollen that within the tattered pants containing it had the look of a third and large buttock winning ruthless struggle to puch the original two out of the way. (p.27)

This man is ravaged by a genital disease which has rendered his scrotum unnaturany large. His twisted and distorted body is an unpleasant sight and Armah's description of it is not without some dry humour. The unnatural mass of flesh is (described as resembling 'a third and large buttock winning a ruthless struggle to puch the original two out of the way.' and at one stage, from this swollen flesh flows a reoulusive 'stream of something yellow like long-thickened urine mixed with streaks of slotted blood' (p29)

Moral Corruption

1. Manipulators and the lust for power

The deformed human characters form a long chain connecting Armah's four novels and they represent the evils the author wishes to expose in the societies he epicts, there is Ababio of the Esuano royal family who has a mind and physique that complement each other. His ungainly stature houses one of the most diabolical minds in Armah's fiction. Ababio was originally of slave ancestry but later a close member of the Esauano royal family. He represents the extreme example of the type of aristocrats that tftte 'healers'^ condemn aqd are working against. In him Armah explores the psychology of a 'manipulator'. Failing to enlist Densu's help in his con-spiracy to usurp the throne, he manipulates Buntui, a mindless giant, into killing I'rince Appia. Bent on destroying Densu too, Ababio has Appia's body mutilated and parts of his flesh removed in a way that casts suspicion on Densu who has earlier proved Appia's closest rival during the week of games. Ironically Ababio's plan to destroy Densu acts as a boomerang against him as Araba Jesiwa, Appia.'s mother (long supposed dead), reappears dramatically in court to save Densu and convict Ababio by revealing evidence of Appia's murder which proves Densu's in-i M icence and Ababio's complicity. The aim here is not to merely recount the story of Ababio's evil career in the novel but to point out how Armah makes use of this evil man's life in his concern with social criticism. It is clear that Ababio constitutes a for-midable destructive force in the society. Armah identifies him with

the three corrupt methods prevalent at court — 'force, fraud, deceit! (p 27). His enviable position at court is acquired not through blood-ties or hard work, but through his ancestors' and his ability to flatter the people in power as he tells Densu:

Do I still need to tell you I know everything there is to know about roads to power? The knowledge is in the spirit my grandfather passed down mixed with the blood of my mother. I can show you the quickest of the roads to power: blind loyalty to those who already have the greatest power.' (p.300)

The above assertion is revealing. It presents Ababio as the forerunner and ancestor of those of her characters in Amah's novels whose success in life rests solely on their ability to flatter and show 'blind loyalty' to those in power in the state.

Cases in point are Koomson of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* whose success thrives on his flattery of Nkrumah; Asante — Smith the boss of Ghanavi-sion in *Fragments* who 'knew how to sing his master's praise' and profit by it; and Otumfur of *Two Thousand Seasons* whose flattery of King Koranche secures for him a position of trust at court.

Ambition, greed and selfishness are some of the motivations that guide the actions of 'manipulation'. Ababio's inordinate ambition is revealed in his blind pursuit of power and wealth. He is absolutely prepared to destroy innocent lives in the process of acquiring power and to use others as a stepping stone to power and influence.

ii. Predators, Destruction and Treachery

Predators are a group of people whom Amah portrays as the exploiters of the people. These exploiters belong mostly to the ruling class. King Koranche's role in *Two Thousand Seasons* shows him to be the greatest enemy of his people for his reign is marred by destructive and treacherous acts which culminate in the sell-out of his people to the white 'destroyers' from the sea. Even in his childhood, Koranche derived unusual pleasure from acts of destruction. For instance, during the initiation rites in which he participated, he destroyed the beautiful masks carved by his mates:

In finding means to destroy the efforts of people more skilful than himself he now and then displayed a truly uncanny talent,...

A week before the dance of celebration all other masks were ready. That same night (Koranche) took a palm-wine tapper's brand from his father's courtyard and walked directly to the second grove. There he set fire to the hut of masks... The light from the burning hut brought people running to the second grove. There was nothing anyone could do to save the masks. They saw Koranche standing apart from the flames staring steadily at the conflagration, (p. 68)

He does not only destroy objects and things but also human lives. During that same initiation ceremony he attempted to kill Beying, the most skilful hunger among the boys, by planting a deadly adder in his sleeping mat. After he has become king at the death of his father, he destroys the successful farmer Ngubane who has married Idawa, the village beauty whom Koranche covets. His destructive fits are always brought about by his envy of those better than he is. His physical and mental handicaps are a source of misery, a potent poison that ravages his self-confidence. Consequently he hates everyone who has talent or any form of superior skill. Mere thought of such people confronts him with his profound inferiority. Hence the urge to destroy them, and one such victim is Ngubane, the farmer:

The king felt happy at the thought of Ngubane's destruction, and gratitude filled his heart when he contemplated the social power that had made it possible. Now life became clear again in his mind: a conflict between the unjustly intelligent, and experts with their skill and their intelligence on the one hand, and on the other hand those born mediocre, those inferior through no fault of their own, the hollow ones, the stupid ones, the uncreative ones. Lucky arrangement indeed, that power in the present world was placed at the disposal of the latter. Lucky that the talented were usually too pre-occupied with their craftsmanship to bother to master those other crafts useful for destroying people better than oneself, those roads without which the unintelligent would be so surety, so cruelly lost. Lucky chance for kings, that power was pitted against intelligence. Lucky chance, that talent was suppressible power. (pp. 73-74)

In this long passage, the author makes clear his views concerning the group of people who wield power in the society. He uses powerful expressions to denote their unfruitful lives — 'those born mediocre', 'those inferior...', 'the hollow one's, the stupid ones', 'the uncreative ones' and 'the unintelligent'. In Armah's novels, these people are always the ones that get on in the society. Apart from Koranche, the others found in similar positions are Koomson, Asante-Smith, Brempong, Bradford

George, Ababio and Buntui. They are people without talent but are characterised by selfishness, cunning, greed and cruelty. It is not surprising, therefore that Koranche, the most violent of these people, conspires with the white strangers and sells the cream of the society's youth into slavery. A corollary to his destruction mania is his greed to amass wealth that will enable him to keep his empty and uncreative life 'to external pomp sufficient to cover him in the eyes of the world'. He hopes to also sustain his power over his people if he becomes richer, and sees the coming of the white man as a step to realizing his fondest dreams of power.

iii. Violence and Brutality

The language of violence and brutality is one readily understood by these grotesque human beings. Buntui, the mindless giant, is one of the most violent characters in Armah's novels. He is always bursting with nervous energy, and this strength is never put to constructive use. Rather his actions are characterized by destruction, packing the skill of an accomplished, master-wrestler, Buntui violates all the rules of wrestling in his bid to destroy Anah in a contest during the weeklong celebrations of 'rituals of wholeness' in Esuano:

Buntui's right hand travelled up Anah's body to grab him by the throat...he began to twist his opponent's neck... The aim of the wrestling game was not to maim the opponent. It was to put him down. But Buntui clearly had not the slightest interest in putting Anah down. (p. 16)

Anah is a better wrestler than Buntui and has already thrown him once. Envious of Anah's superior tactics and his graceful body, Buntui seeks to use his physical strength and massive arms to strangle him. Later, Ababio uses him to destroy Prince Appaia and his mother, Araba Jesiwa. The destructive force of 'manipulation' is confirmed in the role Buntui played in *The Healers*. He allows himself to be used by Ababio as an instrument to exterminate anyone, blocking his way to power. Perhaps Buntui's role in society is even more dangerous than Ababio's. Here is a man with enormous strength but little brain. He does not rationalise his actions, but allows himself to be manipulated into serving forces of evil. Such a one constitutes a deadly threat to the continued existence of society.

The killing of the dog in *Fragments* by the man with the 'fat balls' is most brutality against a helpless creature. The image of the helpless dog, as Robert Fraser argues, is a metaphor which enlarges and extends into the

brutalization of Baako by his family and the entire society. Fraser sees 'the episode of the dog as a cogent metaphor for the whole work held in perfect miniature'⁸. In our context, the dog is a scapegoat for the frustration of a man whose masculinity has been poisoned by an unnatural and diseased growth. There is in his eyes

a manic shine with far more burn in it than that possessing any of the others, and... this was a man who needed something like the first killing of the dog for reasons that lay within and were far more powerful than the mere outside glory open to the hunger with his skill. (p.27)

He is an important man plagued by disease and perhaps poverty, who relieves his charged emotion by resorting to violence and brutality, Perhaps he has neither a way of improving his lot in life nor of curing his 'swollen scrotum' and he acts out his frustration through inflicting pain upon the harmless dog. The act of killing the dog seems important to him since it helps him to assert what is left of his manhood and to register his superiority in strength and courage.

iv. The Sin of Bribery

In the Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, the timber merchant Amankwa with the many teeth and wolfish mouth tries to corrupt 'the man' by bribing him. To obtain wagon space for his timber, he offers money to the man:

*'Take that one for yourself and give the other one to your friend. I myself will find some fine drink for you',
(p. 36)*

He cannot understand the man's refusal to take the money and ironically he 'was angry now, in the special way the upright have of being angry with perverse people.' To him the man's refusal to accept a bribe is seen as an injustice and act of vic-timization of himself, and this feeling is conveyed by his final insult to the man at their second meeting — 'You are a very wicked man. You will never prosper' (p. 126). Amankwa's reaction is utilized by Armah to underscore the sad state of affairs in a society where the criminal raises his head while the upright is the one that becomes shamefaced. It reminds one of the proverbial saying that 'when the dog eats shit, it is the goat's teeth that get soiled!'

Author's source of Inspiration

Many critics of African literature have commented on the attempts several African novelists have made to integrate folklore material into their books⁹. However, the aspects of folklore material extensively used are myths and legends. For instance, Ngugi wa Thiong'o had made extensive use of the myths and legends of his people in his novels, and a good example is the creation myth of Gikuyu and Mumbi in *Weep Not Child*.¹⁰ Wole Soyinka has also made use of Yoruba myths as can be seen in the various embodiments of the Yoruba pantheon that characterize the canvas of Kola, the artist, in *The Interpreters*.¹¹ Few African novelists have worked into their novels direct motifs and themes from folktales. What Achebe did in Chapter Eleven of *Things Fall Apart*¹² was to introduce the story of tortoise and the birds to highlight the incidence of story-telling as a form of entertainment popular in the African village, especially among children. The use of folktale here is purely incidental and does not affect profoundly the content and form of the novel. In other words, the use of folktale material here does not affect the main characters in the novel nor does it determine action in the book. But this is quite the opposite of what I believe Armah does in his novels. He uses folktale material in a more direct and decisive manner. He lifts certain motifs and themes from the folktales and uses them imaginatively to depict the evils prevalent in the society. We see this in the characters he creates and the atmosphere surrounding some of the scenes that he unfolds. Some of these motifs used by Armah are common in many parts of Africa.

Many editors of collections of African stories have attested to the comparable motifs in African folktales.¹³ Some of these common motifs¹⁴ which Armah has used are that of the deformed wicked creature or human being who deliberately brings harm to another human being primarily out of envy, that of the jealousy between two equals or between chief and subject, that of the extremes of friendship and affection shown by two companions, that of the giant or monster who causes havoc and loss of lives in the community.

Two Thousand Seasons and the Healer

In fact, by way of conception, structure and technique, these two novels are more traditional than the rest and are less dependent on European forms and models.¹⁵ It would appear Armah is moving away from the European tradition and looking inwards, into the African tradition with a view to discover new techniques and forms that can carry more meaningfully the African experience. His use of the plural voice — 'we',

and the tendency to subject individual identity to that of the community in these two novels are good illustrations of Armah's new ventures in fictional writing.

The deformed and retarded king Koranche, the wicked and ugly Ababio, the disease-ravaged man with the 'swollen scrotum' and the brutal 'giant' and 'monster' Buntui have their equivalents in the African folklore. As Ruth Finnegan stated, many of these evil figures who sometimes are giants or monsters, are characterized by their great strength, cunning and deformities.¹⁶ Their actions are puled by lust for power, ambition and envy. We find that the deformed and grotesque personnels in Armah's novels are more often than not guided in their actions by similar propensities. Koranche destroys Ngubane ana sells the thrity young men and women of Anoa into slavery out of envy and greed respectively. Buntui is envious of Appia's graceful figure and accomplishments and he covets the precious stones Appia and his mother are carrying with them to the Eastern forests to present to the healer, Damfo. Consequently, Buntui allows Ababio to persuade him to destroy the prince and main his mother. Ababio, himself, plans Appia's murder and Densu's destruction out of envy and greed for power. But perhaps, the one motif common to all the novels discussed here is that of physical deformity. There are many varieties of folktales structure around this motif. For example, among the Kikuyu there is the story of Wacici and her girlfriends. She was a young beatiful girl who was hurried in a porcupine hole, by her jealous friends none of which was as beautiful as she. " This tale has its variation in Nigeria. Among the Igbp people, for example, there are about three variations. One is told about two sisters, Odu and Ola, the younger one who is more beautiful. The ugly and deformed Odo drowns Ola in the river out of envy. Another variation tells of the spirit-monster who traps a little boy and steals his voice from him and transfers to the boy his own harsh and cracked voice. The third is about the ugly slave girls who kills her master's beautiful daughter in the forest. In all these variations, the aggressor and evil character is always discovered and punished for his crime. We see the same pattern in Armah's novels where some of the evil characters pay for their crime in one way or the other. Cases in point are Ababio and Buntui.

Ben Obumsele has argued that/folklore Has very little either with technique or its themes to offer the contemporary African writer...¹⁸ I believe Armah's adaptations of folk take material invalidates this line of argument. He is able to create real human characters and real life situations. The characters motivated by the true human passions and they

interact meaningfully with 'me another in the society. Ababio, for instance, is convincingly delineated in his pursuit of power, and his other evil roles. We follow with fascination the execution of his well-planned and diabolical strategy which will make it possible for him to inherit power in Esuano. The plan to kill Appia and put the blame on Densu, the protracted search for Ap-pia's so-called killer, the barbaric mock-trial to convict Densu of the crime and the decision to ally himself to the white men at the coast are all vividly depicted to reveal the character of Ababio.

In the area of technique and style, Armah uses satire, humour, ridicule and irony to explore the actions of these evil characters, and his attitude towards them is satirical. For instance, Armah ridicules the man with the diseased scrotum by referring to him as 'fat balls' and 'swollen scrotum and Amankwa's unsightly dentition is humourously referred to as 'generation of teeth'. There is irony in Armah's portrayal of the corrupt timber merchant, Amankwa, in his self-righteous anger against the man who refuses to accept a bribe from him: The visitor was angry now, in the special way the upright have of being angry with perverse people' (p. 37). It is ironical that Amankwa, who is being 'perverse', should regard himself as 'the upright'. It is quite clear under the circumstance, that if anyone is to be referred to as 'the upright', it is the man, not Amankwa. The irony here underscores the sickness in the society Armah depicts; a society where a man finds it 'more and more difficult to justify his own honesty' (p.59) and 'all around him the whole world never tired of saying there were only two types of men who took refuge in honesty — the cowards and the fool' (p.59). It is quite ironical that honesty has come to be identified with 'cowards' and 'fools'. Armah uses Koranche's and Ababio's acts to satirize the kings and aristocrats whom they represent. Koranche is just one of those other kings who oppress the people of Anoa, and Ababio is a typical 'manipulator' at court. Both are perfect examples of those rulers and leaders who, rather than serve their people, use their positions to realize their selfish ambition.

Conclusion:

Armah would seem to imply that so long as Africa has her Ababios Koranches and Buntuis, the society will continue to be plagued by evil and corruption. The deformity in these characters is seen as a form of disease. Armah uses disease imagery to give a clear picture of the problem confronting the societies he depicts. The characters are representations and embodiments of the societal diseases. The evils in the society perpetrated by them are shown as one form of disease or the

other. The desire of men to enslave their fellow men, the blind pursuit of power and wealth by aristocrats and kings the need to destroy life in order to acquire power are all depicted by Armah as different forms of diseases or deformities ravaging the bodywork of the society. The physical deformity of the evil characters is, therefore, a metaphor for the general corruption in the society. This metaphor is one way through which Armah underscores his disenchantment with the society he depicts. His concern for the restoration of societal health which he refers to as 'wholeness' in *Two Thousand Seasons* is a corollary to his suggestion for a return to the authentic 'way' of the ancestors. Modern African music put the past and present in perspective and learn from both the past and present mistakes in order to bring about social change in the future.

NOTE?

1. Ayi Kwei Armah, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (London: Heinemann, 1968). All page references are to the recent 1971 edition.
2. Ayi Kwei Armah, *Fragments* (London: Heinemann, 1966). All page references are to the 1974 edition.
3. Ayi Kwei Armah, *Two Thousand Seasons* (London: Heinemann, 1973). All page references are to this edition.
4. Ayi Kwei Armah, *The Healers* (London: Heinemann, 1979). All page references are to this edition.
5. Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 106.
6. T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton", in *Four Quartets*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 13.
7. In *The Healers*, Armah distinguishes between two kinds of people — those he calls 'inspirers' (men with the desire to restructure and refine society) and others known as 'manipulators' (those greedy for power and wealth). The healers are the 'inspirers' while the aristocrats and the white men are 'manipulators'. The role of the 'manipulators' is clearly stated in the novel: 'the most damaging poison was manipulation.... It destroys people, plants, everything' (p. 27).
8. Robert Frazer, *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah* (London: Heinemann, 1980) p. 42.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
10. Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, *Weep Not Child*, (London: Heinemann, 1964)
11. Wole Soyinka, *The Interpreters* (London: Heinemann, 1970)

12. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, (London: Heinemann, 1958)
13. Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa*, (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 322.
14. *Ibid.* p. 304. Finnegan gives a list of some of these motifs.
15. See Chinua Achebe, 'Africa and Her Writers' in *Morning Yet On Creation Day*, (London: Heinemann 1975), p. 27. Achebe criticizes Armah for adopting the attitude of some early European writers on Africa in his treatment of his material in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*: Ayi Kwei: Armah: The aliebatated native. It seems that to achieve the modern alienated stance. The African writer will end up writing like some white District Officer.
16. Ruth Finnegan, p. 335
17. *Ibid.*, p. 258.
18. Ben Obumselu, *The Background of Modern African Literature*, Ibadan, No. 22 (June 1966), p. 58 On Obumselu's usage 'folklore' is synonymous with 'folktale.'