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## ARMAH'S MYTHOPOETIC VISION IN *TWO THOUSAND SEASONS*<sup>1</sup>

Mustapha MUHAMMAD\*

Overtly polemical in its charged dialectics and social propositions, *Two Thousand Seasons*<sup>2</sup> sets a new tone in Armah's from an ideological perspective this novel charts a course that deviates from the general gloom pervading Armah's earlier fiction. The pessimism, inertia and misanthropic seclusion of the intellectual protagonist of the earlier novels is here replaced by the optimistic activism of an assertive, confident community of daring protagonists. These youthful protagonists, active and imbued with the vision of changing Africa's social destiny, think and act as an indivisible collectivity. They are conscious of their Black identity, they are all refinement and moral scruple. What weaknesses they manifest - their unrestrained exhilaration in the gruesome murder and destruction of their White foes, for example - are discounted and justified as necessary surgery in their combat which is aimed at the curtailment of the diabolical violence and ruse of the White imperialist and his Black accomplice. They are thus idyllic and unblemished adhering as they to do the quest for the establishment of a just and morally sane society. And it is in this their puritanical and infallible moral character that they appear conceived in the image of the archetypal or mythic avenger-hero whose triumph over evil forces is assured not because of his weapons but because of his spiritual moral force, his selfless devotion to ideals which make him overcome his morally depraved and bankrupt adversary.

This article is intended to examine *Two Thousand Seasons* within this changing frame of Armah's creative vocation. It ventures

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<sup>1</sup> Ayi Kwei Armah, *Two Thousand Seasons* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973). Subsequent references are to this edition.

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<sup>2</sup> Ayi Kwei Armah, *Two Thousand Seasons* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973). Subsequent references are to this edition.

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to focus on Armah's creative and ideological consciousness in the novel within the context of his newly evolved mythical reconstruction of Africa's socio-political and historical conundrum. Armah's appropriation of the extant Akan/ African oral and communo-ethical traditions to project his vision in the novel will constitute the core reference in the elucidation of the author's social propositions in the novel.

In *Two Thousand Seasons* Armah abandons his familiar method of constructing social reality from the viewpoint of the individual protagonist to evolve a communal view using multiple protagonists. Drawing from the Akan oral tradition (myths, legend and folk-narrative), Armah develops his narrative to historical and mythical configurations<sup>3</sup>. His task exposes, as in his other works, the debilitating historical and social forces that inhibit the establishment of a just and humane social order. The novel's language is inundated with invective, pejorative and satirical innuendoes in its denunciation of all foreign (Arab and European) intervention in Africa's socio-historical evolution, and in its attack on human greed, lust, vanity, oppression and exploitation. Underpinning the pejorative language of the novel, however, is a positive social vision which is focused, in Soyinka's phrase, on "the reconstruction of the past for the purposes of social direction"<sup>4</sup>.

Of particular appeal in the novel is Armah's deployment of Akan folklore motifs and historical material, which he manipulates to advance a particular view of Africa's experience of the slave trade and colonialism. His vision, attuned to a paradoxical combination of

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<sup>3</sup> One of the hallmarks of Armah's fiction as recognised by many of his critics is the grounding of his vision in history. See Robert Fraser, *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah* (London: Heinemann, 1980) and Derek Wright, *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah* (Boulder, Colorado: Three Continents and Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992) for example. What marks out *Two Thousand Seasons* and the two novels that follow it is Armah's infusion of history with myth, both of which he selectively employs, to render his particular vision of Africa and of humanity at large. See Olusegun Adekoya, "Osiris and the African Resurrection", *Langues et Littératures: Revue du Groupe d'Etudes Linguistiques et Littéraires*, No. 5 (Février, 2001) pp.103-112 and Omar Sougou's forthcoming article, "Armah's Politics in *Osiris Rising*: The African Diaspora Reversing the Crossing" for illuminating insights into Armah's freewheeling utilisation of myth, history and legend in his recreation of Africa's socio-political experience.

<sup>4</sup> Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1976) p.108.

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glorification and condemnation of his historical and folkloric sources, presents a radical departure from the self-detached and cynical attitude that is reflected in his earlier novels.

Although not abdicating his penchant for social analysis and indictment of the current of moral corruption that has engulfed African society as in the earlier novels, in this novel Armah proceeds further to proffer solutions to the various predicaments confronting the African world. And from this perspective, it appears as a positive response to the call to the African writer to help in the generation and advertisement of ideas that will inspire the Black man to regain his self-confidence battered by centuries of Arab and European domination over his affairs.<sup>5</sup>

Shifting from a remote past to the present and projecting into the future, the panoramic focus of the novel is concentrated on the harsh socio-political experiences of the Black people who have been entrapped in a myriad of calamitous relationships with Arab and European imperialists. Prior to the Arab-European presence, Armah suggests, Africa had enjoyed relative social tranquillity and economic prosperity: "The peace of that fertile time spread itself so long, there was such an abundance of every provision, anxiety flew so far from us..." (p.10). The flourishing of this primeval order of harmonious social co-existence and material abundance was however disrupted by internal rifts which evolved among Africans. These facilitated the coming of the Arabs into their midst. The Arabs brought along with them a culture and a religion, which in their formulations opposed every facet of the Black people's communal social heritage. Through the process of political intrigues and physical coercion, the Arabs were able to impose their socio-religious values on their hosts who now become subjected to economic exploitation by these "beggars turned snakes after feeding"(p.2). Their reign in Africa was only arrested later by the coming of another group of White exploiters: the Europeans, who also employed force and political intrigues to assert their power over the Africans. They also continued the system of exploitation of the Black people by engaging in the slave trade: "The White men have come here wishing to buy humans... and take them

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<sup>5</sup> Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, for example, are of the view that the African writer has a moral responsibility to deploy his creative talents in the pursuit of social causes. See Chinua Achebe, "The Novelist as Teacher" in John Press (ed) *Commonwealth Literature* (London: H.E.B., 1965) p.204 and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics* (London: H.E.B., 1972) p.50.

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to unknown lands” (p.83). The coming of these two external forces into Africa, one from the desert and the other from the sea, led to the destabilisation of the pristine social structure of the Black people.

The period of the European penetration coincided with the rising among the Black people of a group of twenty youths. These youths who, having undergone the communal ritual of initiation into adulthood where they acquired various skills of self-reliance, self-defence, and knowledge of their social history, cultivated a bond of mutual cooperation and the spirit of brotherhood among themselves. Along with Isanusi (one of the elders in the community who is dissatisfied with the prevailing moral and social complacency in the society), they seek to reinstate the society’s old values by involving themselves in a guerrilla-like warfare against the Arabs, Europeans and their African collaborators. The motive of the youths is ‘to create the way again’ (p.8) by destroying their destroyers. Their struggle to rediscover “the way” advocates the use of force and bloodshed: “what better way to fight fire than with similar fire” (p.60). Underpinning the youth’s sense of exhilaration and joy in their determination to destroy all those - the Arabs, the Europeans, and their African acolytes – who oppose their struggle to re-establish their society’s old values, however, is an ultimate will to make peace and harmony prevail over destruction:

*It is our destiny not to flee the predator’s thrust, not to seek hiding places from destroyers left triumphant; but to turn against the predator advancing, turn against the destroyers, and bending all our souls against their thrust, turning every stratagem of the destroyers against themselves, destroy them. That is our destiny: to end destruction, utterly; to begin the highest, the profoundest work of creation, the work that is inseparable from our way, inseparable from the way (p.157).*

Armah’s strong anti-imperialist stance and his prophetic vision of the re-establishment of Africa’s harmonized social values are in part products of his reading of Fanon’s theories, which largely prophesy the ultimate defeat of Africa’s colonial and neo-colonial order. Armah’s intense contempt for his White characters is a product of his total disenchantment with the colonial structures that imperialism has brought to Africa. His vision in the novel, despite its racist

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coloration<sup>6</sup>, is essentially focused on the celebration of African values with the aim of resuscitating the Black man's self-confidence which he had lost as a result of imperialist oppression. It is within this restricted frame of Armah's passionate call for the resuscitation of Africa's authenticity that Soyinka finds *Two Thousand Seasons* "not a racist tract" because:

*... the central theme is far too positive and dedicated,  
and its ferocious onslaught on alien contamination  
soon falls into place as a preparatory exercise for the  
liberation of the mind. A clean receptive mind is a  
pre-requisite for its ideological message*<sup>7</sup>.

Armah's ideological message, which Soyinka refers to, is however controlled by his mythopoetic vision; a vision which is not based on any particular or traditional mythology (most of which, being confined to limited tribal/ethnic localities, is traceable to quasi-religious-social values) but on an essentially secular ideology in which we do not transverse, as according to Northrop Frye, "between the upper and lower gods."<sup>8</sup> The myth in *Two Thousand Seasons* can be identified as the type which can be defined as "that quality of fancy which informs the symbolistic or configurative powers of the human mind at varying degrees of intensity; its principal virtue is that it tends to resist all constraints to time and experience to the end that it satisfies the deepest urges of a people"<sup>9</sup>.

The mythical projection in Armah's novel, thriving on the idea of a common social origin of Black people which is embodied in 'the way'-the key phrase Armah uses to embody his vision of the ideal African communal values whose chief characteristic is reciprocal and egalitarian relationships-reveals the author's Pan-African views. In Armah's bid to project these views, however, he shows a conscious rejection of the narrow tribal or national myths which focus on the origin of particular social groups in Africa to evolve a new myth to reflect on Africa's contemporary social

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<sup>6</sup> It is indisputable, no matter what excuse may be offered, that Armah's vision in this novel is affected by his somewhat immoderate racial views.

<sup>7</sup> Soyinka, *ibid.*, pp.111-2.

<sup>8</sup> Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton University Press, 1957) p.318.

<sup>9</sup> Isidore Okpewho, *The Epic in Africa* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979) p.212.

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circumstances. Armah's employment of such myth compares with the rhetoric of the progenitors of the concept of Pan-Africanism such as Blyden, Padmore, Du Bois, Nkrumah and Senghor<sup>10</sup>. The Pan-Africanist concept has been subjected to various interpretations by its leading proponents. There are those like Nkrumah and Sekou Toure who promote the Pan-Africanist philosophy in terms of continental demarcation, in which all the African races are included (without discrimination against the Arabs who inhabit the northern portion of the African land mass). In contrast, there are others, like Senghor, whose Pan-Africanist view is narrowed down to the racial and social contexts. Senghor, for instance, has an idea of Pan-Africanism from which the Arabs are excluded.

Armah's Pan-Africanist view in *Two Thousand Seasons* is also influenced by racial considerations. Armah's thesis is based on the establishment of a common racial front for all Black people in order to challenge what he regards as the Arab-European devastation of Africa. The creation or re-interpretation of the myth of Pan-Africanism in order to come to terms with the new African social circumstances shows Armah's rejection of the non-racial concept of Pan-Africanism as advocated by the late Kwame Nkrumah, who in fact was married to an Egyptian Arab. The creation or modification of existing myths by African writers, in order to make statements on contemporary African socio-political life to which old myths cannot provide an adequate response, is evident in the works of writers such as Soyinka and Odukuem. Soyinka, who uses the Ogunnian myths of the Yoruba people, modifies these myths in order to use them as a vehicle for expressing the violent and turbulent social realities in African post-independent nation-states. It appears that for the African artist to cope with the novel social order in Africa, he is often forced to reshape the mythic traditions that he employs as a source for his creative vision, since the old mythic traditions, which are largely inspired by tribal or ethnic considerations, cannot provide adequate answers to the problems of an increasingly changing African world that is catapulted from the narrow tribal society to a larger social organization of nation-states comprising a number of ethnic groups under a common political leadership.

In *Two Thousand Seasons* Armah shows his rejection of such myths which emphasise the uniqueness of the various African tribal

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<sup>10</sup> See V.P. Thompson, *Africa and Unity: The Evolution of Pan-Africanism* (London: Longman, 1969). He discusses the various concepts and personalities behind the Pan-Africanist Movement.



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societies in order to fashion out a new myth about the common origin of all Black peoples. His mythic perception is also underlined by a rejection of what he construes as the Arab-European version of Africa's history. The group of youth who act as his spokesmen in the novel intone:

*That we black people are one people we know. Destroyers will travel long distances in their minds to deny you this truth. We do not argue with them, the fools. Let them presume to instruct us about ourselves. That too is in their two thousand seasons against us (p.3).*

Armah's rejection of the formally accepted African history may only be fully appreciated within the biased context of his Pan-Africanist vision. And within the context of the mythic configurations of *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah's self-acclaimed version of African history appears to be no less true than those histories which tend to overemphasize the tribal or ethnic identities of Black people without taking due cognisance of those socio-cultural traits which most Black Africans share. In his study of African literature, James Olney has noted that despite the differing tribal identities in Black Africa, there is still an "essential unity or basic consistency of different African cultures"<sup>11</sup>. Rattray, who undertook an anthropological study among the Hausa people in Nigeria and also among the Akan people of Ghana, notes the strong kinship which exists in the forms of folklore common to the two peoples.

In Armah's ideological/creative vision it is those aspects that emphasize Africa's socio-cultural cohesion, especially as they relate to the moral and communal ethos which are pronounced, while those aspects which are less appealing, or go counter to his vision, are glossed over. Conscious of his partisan approach to Africa's social history, Armah labels his narrative 'remembrance' and his youth narrators accordingly admit that "we have not found that lying trick to our taste, the trick of making up sure knowledge of things possible to wonder about but impossible to know in any such ultimate way" (p.3). His aim, as in the Negritude writing of Senghor, Kane and Laye for example, is not only to advertise African 'humanistic' values but, more importantly, to raise the level of pride among Africans which centuries of slavery and colonialism have devastated. But any

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<sup>11</sup> James Olney, *Tell Me Africa* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), p.15.

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comparison between Armah's creative endeavour and that which informs Negritude literature ends at this point as the tenor of his vision contests the essential notions underlying Negritude writing, which is at times tethered to the upholding and celebration of Islamic cultural values and /or Africa's past empires. Armah's creative vision is based on the rejection of both of these elements, which are in fact presented by him as inauthentic to Africa's indigenous culture. In fact, he castigates the Islamic presence as evidence of Africa's loss of its endeared primeval values.

Armah's claim that chieftaincy institutions were part of Arab imports to Africa marks the turning of his vision away from historical reality into the territory of a personal myth. As Oba AbdulRaheem points out, Armah distorts historical evidence in order to make history accord with his creative goal<sup>12</sup>. Using Munz's ideas, AbdulRaheem further explains how Armah tries to transmute or telescope history into myth in his narrative:

*For what Munz cryptically calls telescope of 'true history' into significant myth, could be simply understood in the context of Two Thousand Seasons to be no more than imagination projected into, or functioning simultaneously as (so to speak) a 'leach form' and 'sieve' on the body of historiography. Thus the historical narrative is worked loose... making it possible for the individual facts to be amended, exaggerated, devalued, refurbished or discarded-according to the creative preference and goal... The resultant story is not thus faithful to the original facts as such, but it may lay claim to true-ness, albeit only in an archetypal sense.<sup>13</sup>*

One such factual historical event Armah manipulates to make it accord with his creative design is the capture of the Christiansburg Castle from the Danes by the Akwamu adventurer, Kofi Assameni, in 1693<sup>14</sup>. The anthropologist Isaac Ephson has given a full account of this coup d'état which took place at the Christiansburg Castle (known

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<sup>12</sup> S.O. AbdulRaheem, *Mythology and the African Novel* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Kent at Canterbury, 1982) p.180.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid; Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Isaac Ephson, *Ancient Forts and Castles of the Gold Coast* (Accra: Ilen Publications, 1970) pp.51-2.

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as Osu Castle among Ghanaians). He tells how Assameni, accompanied by about eighty men visited the Osu castle on the pretext of buying bullets from its Danish residents. Unknown to the Danish factors, Assameni and his men had brought in some slugs which they slipped in to their guns and attacked them. On capturing the castle, Assameni was installed as Governor and flew a white flag. He was always dressed in the fashion of the White Governor he had replaced, and he also "caused himself to be treated in every way as Governor". The Danes however got back the castle from Assameni by paying him a compensation of £1, 860,000. Another of the many-recorded incidents of this kind was in 1701 when the Anomobos also attacked the new English residents of the castle causing the English resident factor and his men to flee to the Cape Coast.

In *Two Thousand Seasons*, Armah re-enacts this historical incident to dramatise the conflict between the group of the initiates and the Europeans in the former's bid to capture the European stronghold, the Poano Castle. The wit, gallantry and sense of patriotism of the youths are juxtaposed against the greed and selfish ambitions of the Europeans. Fortified and housing the colonial Governor, Poano Castle is presented by Armah as the European stronghold. The capture of the castle by the youths in a guerrilla-like attack indicates Armah's idea that armed struggle is the only means through which Africa can regain its liberty from colonial domination.

After the capture of the Castle by the youths (an act symbolising Africa's independence), ironically there arose among them one Kamuzu, "who had suffered long under the keen burden of ambitions suppressed in impotence [wanting] to become a copy of the chief of the white destroyers, the one they called the Governor" (p.171). For Kamuzu, the Castle represents "the new seat of power over our people" (p.171). Kamuzu's behaviour shows how closely Armah weaves his narrative to his historical sources. Historically, the capture of the castle by Assameni led him to declare himself governor in the European fashion. In the novel, Kamuzu appears as a social type serving as a mirror of the greed, vanity and selfishness that Armah associates with Africa's past and contemporary leadership. Like many an African leader, Kamuzu displays an acute regard for his own personal welfare and prestige to the detriment of his followers. Like the historical Assameni he has his own flag designed and erected on the castle. His penchant for praise names, also likened to the megalomaniac craving for titles among African leaders, such as Nkrumah (the Osagyefo; Redeemer), is also ridiculed by Armah. The youths inflate Kamuzu's ego by inventing hollow praise names to describe him:

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What spurious praise names did we not  
Invent to lull Kamuzu's buffon spirit?

Osagyefo!  
Kantamanto!  
Kabiyesi!  
Sese!  
Mweyenguvu!  
Otumfuo!

Dishonest words are the food of rotten spirits.  
We filled Kamuzu with his beloved nourishment  
(p.171)

That Armah's satire is directed against the African royal class as well as the political elite is evident in his use of titles drawn from across Africa. The title of 'Kabiyesi', for example, is Yoruba while 'Osagyefo' is Akan. Both these titles are used as praise appellations for Yoruba and Akan political leaders respectively. In fact, as Okpewho has noted, Armah even uses actual names that echo those of real-life African leaders such as 'Mzee' (Kenyatta of Kenya); 'Senho' (President Senghor of Senegal); 'Bokasa' (President Bokasa of the central African Republic); and 'Kamuzu' (President Kamuzu Banda of Malawi), in order to ridicule contemporary African political leaders<sup>15</sup>. Armah caricatures these personalities as the villain leaders of Africa. Among his Arab characters we also have echoes of some contemporary leaders such as Hussein (the late King Hussein of Jordan); Hassan (the late King Hassan of Morocco); and Faisal (the late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia).

Contrasted against such a parade of villain characters are Armah's 'Beautiful Ones' who seek to challenge the complacent moral and social order that nurtures this class of parasitic leaders. Among the protagonists for change one comes across the familiar names of Africa's leading literary and social activists such as the Nobel Laureate Wole 'Soyinka', a prominent Nigerian University don and distinguished social and literary critic, 'Atukwei' Okwai, a Ghanaian poet; and 'Thomas' Mofolo, the author of the novel *Chaka*.

Armah's criticism of Africa's social problems of tribal divisions, moral and political corruption, and the loss of cultural

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<sup>15</sup> Okpewho, *Ibid.*, p.211.

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authenticity is extended to encompass the African family system. The extended family structure which has often been acclaimed by many an African as one of the more laudable aspects of Africa's cultural heritage Nyerere of Tanzania bases his 'Ujamaa' [familyhood] socialists system on concepts that derive from the African extended family structure, and Kenyatta of Kenya also once said that "if this country of ours is to prosper, we must create a sense of togetherness, of national familyhood"<sup>16</sup> is condemned by Armah in this novel. He projects the African family structure as constituting a frustrating force militating against the African struggle for the establishment of a just social order which is free from parochial family sentiments that go directly against the current of unity among all Africans. Armah's criticism of the family is an echo of Nkrumah's attack on the African family system. Writing of his experiences as Ghana's President Nkrumah stated that "I had to combat not only tribalism but the African tradition that a man's first duty was to his family group and that therefore nepotism was the highest of all virtues"<sup>17</sup>.

Armah's distrust for the African family system, which he sees as an inhibiting force against larger social goals, is especially evident in his first two novels, where his protagonists are portrayed as victims of a web of family expectations. Both protagonists end up physically and mentally destroyed, because they fail to break away from the narrow and selfish demands of their families on them in order to serve the larger societal interest. In *Two Thousand Seasons* Armah again shows the family unit as a negative force working against Africa's process of moral and social development. Through Dovi, one of the youths committed to fighting to liberate Black people from their Arab-European oppressors, Armah shows how family ties have become obstacles to Africa's fight for her socio-political freedom. Dovi, because of his strong familial sentiments, gives in to parental pressure and abandons the military struggle against the society's oppressors. For him, his family interest supersedes that of the society at large. His inability to sacrifice familial affection for the sake of the larger society is condemned in the novel:

*And the call for cut-off love; the soft abandoned,  
peaceful closeness of the loved ones even when the*

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<sup>16</sup> Soyinka, op. cit., ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana* (New York: International Publishers, 1968) p. 66.

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*destroyers triumph already whitens all love with hate; strong call indeed as long as the vision truncated, small, detached, from our larger wholeness, the call only serves the surrounding alien lare of death (p.199).*

Although Armah criticizes aspects of African values (family system, tribal or clan grouping and chieftaincy institutions) which he finds in opposition to his stated Pan-Africanist/socialist ideological vision in the novel, for the greater part of the narrative he dwells on advancing, extolling and celebrating those cultural ingredients-communal values in particular-which promote his views. His glorification of such values is aimed at raising the Black man's pride in his cultural past in order to release him from the feeling of self-denigration, which slavery and socio-political and cultural domination of Arabs and Europeans have created in him. But it would appear also that Armah's focusing of his vision on Africa's past values is influenced by the growing consciousness among the contemporary Ghanaian elite class of the need for Africans to delve into their past in order to find effective socio-cultural and political system that could accommodate the new African realities. The Ghanaian Arts and Culture Magazine-*Sankofa* (meaning 'go back and fetch it' or referring to 'the wise bird who picks for the present what is best in ancient eyes to meet the demands of the future') which has been appearing in print since 1971 and has had some of the more renowned Ghanaian intellectuals such as Nketia, Abruquah, Efua Sutherland and Kofi Agovi as its editors and contributors, is evidence of the growing cultural consciousness that is gaining ground in the Ghanaian literary circle to which Armah belongs<sup>18</sup>.

Armah's indictment of Arab-European values in *Two Thousand Seasons* is therefore best appreciated within the context of the current Ghanaian call for the revival of ancient African values and the rejection of all alien-Arab and European-influences. As the editorial of *Sankofa* maintains:

*The so-called 'civilising mission of the West' the former colonisers left behind their cultural traditions, e.g. their system of education, language, religion and forms of economic organization.... And as long as we*

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<sup>18</sup> The Ghanaian Arts and Culture Magazine, *Sankofa*, is edited by Ato Bedu-Addo and is published bi-annually in Accra, Ghana.

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*adhere to them... the imperialists are still firmly in control of our mind... life and fate.*<sup>19</sup>

In his novel, Armah endorses the view that Africans can only regain self-authenticity by abandoning all foreign values. His strong indictment of the Arabs and Europeans, although essentially aimed at projecting his moral revulsion against imperialist injustices, however, slips into racist vituperation, an attitude which affects the literary value of the novel. By grouping all the White characters into the villain exploiters and destroyers of the over-generous and peace-loving Black Africans, he only seems to be reducing, as Bernth Lindfors notes, the entire races of mankind to the level of primal forces<sup>20</sup>. This reductive vision which divides humanity into two distinct categories of Black (good) and White (evil) is but evidence of the polemical nature of *Two Thousand Seasons*. And it is in this regard that Armah's vision of social reality appears to be distorted.

Despite this flaw, resulting from Armah's ideological commitment, the novel remains an achieved work, not only in the sense that it provides a unique experiment in the marrying of African oral art forms to the conventional techniques of the novel, but mainly because it questions the moral justification of the subjugation of one segment of humanity by another. We may question or even object to the validity or objectivity of Armah's provocative views, and we may even dissociate ourselves from the racist tract underlying such views, but we should not fail to credit his innovative use of the resources of orature to express or point out the essential evil designs of the morally repulsive creed of imperialism. Another equally significant point in this novel is Armah's escape from his earlier pre-occupation with only the condemnation of Africa's moral and social vices of corruption and political oppression to fashion out solutions to the issues confronting the Africa of his vision. It is thus no coincidence that the narrator-protagonist in one of his most recent short stories, "Halfway to Nirvana", says "I've changed from a man of problems to a man of solutions"<sup>21</sup>. The bearing of this statement on Armah's vision in *Two Thousand Seasons* is significant.

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<sup>19</sup> See *Sankofa* Vol. 51, No. 1 (January-June, 1981) p.46.

<sup>20</sup> Bernth Lindfors, "Armah's Histories", *African Literature Today*, II (1980) p.90.

<sup>21</sup> Aye Kwei Armah, "Half-way to Nirvana", *West Africa*, No.3501 (24<sup>th</sup> September 1984) p.1948.

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The satire which was shelved in Armah's earlier novels thus reaches its apogee in this novel as Armah 'bluntly' exposes not only the internal bases of moral and social crises in Africa, but also the ignoble imperialist enterprise in Africa, all of which he blames for the upsetting of Africa's 'elegant' moral and socio-economic values. In this regard *Two Thousand Seasons* appears as a literary panacea aimed at salvaging Africa both from the vestiges of imperialist bondage and post-independence political mayhem.