

# **Africa and the New World Order: Voices and Ways of Liberation in Armah's *Osiris Rising***

by

Eric Edi, Ph.D.

Visiting Assistant Professor of Black Studies  
Knox College, Illinois

Eric Edi ([eedi@knox.edu](mailto:eedi@knox.edu); [eedi@temple.edu](mailto:eedi@temple.edu)) is a Fulbright Alumni and Visiting Assistant Professor of Black Studies at Knox College, IL. His areas of teaching and research include globalization, African cultures, and politics, and Black social political thought.

## **Abstract**

This paper explores the new Pan African and revolutionary vision of the Ghanaian author, Ayi Kwei Armah as it appears in *Osiris Rising*, a novel he published in 1995. My reading and analysis of the novel shows that with his treatment and his presentation of Africa, Armah marches away from the pessimistic tone that marked his previous novels. On the contrary *Osiris Rising* is overflowed with an optimistic mood that does not hide the roughness of the road for African liberation. Through hardworking and victorious characters, Armah traces the way and indicates the voice of the new emerging Africa. Thus, Armah initiates a new direction for the African novel and African arts in general. *Osiris Rising* is the precursor of the third generation of creative production, which will be marked with African-centeredness. *Osiris Rising* adopts an introverted and African-centered approach to liberation by focusing essentially on Africa. The novel carries three aesthetical values. First, it offers an African examination of Africa. Second, it proclaims the assertion of Africa, and third it promotes the idea of African emancipation.

Since the late 1980s, a new world order has been established with the end of the Cold War, the reunification of Germany, the official end of Apartheid, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of the insolent supremacy of Western capitalism and cultural values and the recent demonstration of Anglo-American imperialism in Afghanistan and in Iraq, just to mention a few. This modification of the international social, economic, and political arena has impacted poor and developing countries, especially those of Africa as J. Wiseman pinpoints that saying: “the end of the Cold War in the 1980s transformed the external environment in which African political systems operated.”<sup>1</sup>

Examples of these transformations are legion. The Russian politics of *Perestroika* and *Glasnot* implemented in the 1980s under President M. Gorbachev caused the Soviet Union stopped any military and financial cooperation with pro-communists, Afro-Marxist countries such as Congo-Brazzaville, Benin, Angola, and Mozambique. At the same Western European countries, such as France redefined their African agenda, as they saw that communism and Marxism were contained. One shall remember the historical speech of former French president, at La Baule, France, in 1990, warning African leaders that financial aids to their governments would continue to flow unless they practiced political liberalism.

Thus, the new international context brought tremendous shifts in the social, economic, and political bodies in almost all the African states. In fact, the ardent desire of African populations to stop mismanagement, social decay, and civil rights abuses engendered continent-wide mass movements, which started in Benin in 1989<sup>2</sup>. Thanks to these protests, mostly led by students, unionists, unemployed people, teachers, and a new breed of politicians, many African states experienced political changes characterized by the end of one-party rule, the dismantling of civilian and military dictatorship, the drafting of new constitutions, and the holding of multi-party elections, the privatization of state-run firms and the rhetoric of good governance.

Unfortunately, the neo-liberal oriented paradigm (globalization) of development has not triggered the expected results in Africa to the point that presently, Africa lags behind other continents in terms of human developments. Africa is the poorest of the five continents of the world, as she hosts 30% of the world poor people.<sup>3</sup> In two decades from 1980 to 2000, African economies and social conditions moved worsened. The World Bank indicates that more than 50% of Africans live on less than \$1 US a day, “with incomes averaging just \$ 0.65 a day of the purchasing power in parity terms.”<sup>4</sup> As far as world business is concerned, the whole continent shares less than 2% of the world business<sup>5</sup> and is overburdened with debts, hence servicing has gained preeminence over

the improvement and the construction of health and educational infrastructures. The New Internationalist <sup>6</sup> reveals the following:

*In 1996, sub-Saharan Africa paid \$2.5 billion more in debt service than it received in new long-term loans and credits.*

*The external debt of the region has ballooned by 400% since the IMF and the World Bank began managing African economies through imposed "Structural Adjustment" conditions.*

The poor economic situation of Africa largely explains the galloping deterioration of living standards, in which the outburst and the rapid spread of the HIV-AIDS pandemic and the continual threat of malaria play an important role. Estimates show that more than 200 million people in Africa have no access to health services and that life expectancy has drastically dropped to around 51<sup>7</sup>. This figure is currently the lowest in the world, and is supposed to lower more in the years to come if nothing is done to counter the effects of infectious diseases, such as AIDS. Literacy rates are overall low and access to education is still limited.

The dispiriting situation of the continent as partially described above has drawn several questions, one of which is to determine if Africa can make the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This question seems inappropriate because it follows the skepticism in the *Rising* of the continent, an attitude that the late Nigerian professor J. Adedeji denounced, repeatedly. He blamed some African elite and intellectuals for agreeing with the ideas that African states were pathologically dysfunctional and that progress was nothing to envisage.<sup>8</sup> I am convinced that there are no phenomenological or teleological proofs that Africa is doomed to poverty and squalor. The current demise of Africa is more man-made than it is a fatality. From an African-centered perspective and a militant proactive culture, the appropriate question is how Africa can recover from her current social, political, and economic demise. In other words, what needs to be done for and by African states to achieve liberation and be active agents in the concert of the nations of the world?

Yet, the notion of liberation needs elucidation. I use A. Cabral's views, which are that "[national] liberation means to recapture the surrendered means of production."<sup>9</sup> Production should not be viewed under the sole prism of economic resources and technological innovations. Instead, it should be extended to encompass ideas and the creation and formalization of militant cultural values.

The objective herein is to expose and critique the mechanisms of liberation that Ayi Kwei Armah dispenses in *Osiris Rising*. The analytical approach utilized in this work is African-centered and articulates around the following criteria. The first criterion is language. Language is of paramount importance inasmuch as it is culture and it creates culture.<sup>10</sup> As a medium of culture and communication, language must be located in the culture of the community from and for which the literary production springs. In other words, the African writer and artist must utilize a language that all the components of the African population can decipher. The reason is that the African liberation that people lounge for cannot happen but with the joint efforts of all.<sup>11</sup> In this regard, Chinweizu insists that the “immortality of a work depends on writing for a community for whose situation the work is resonant with meaning, a community which finds itself expressed in the work.”<sup>12</sup>

The second criterion is the focus/ subject of the work of art. A good African art should be concerned with the rapport between African communities and their environments. It should address the past and present realities of African communities and avoid the field of speculation and pure science fiction, as it is the case for Euro-centered productions. Viewed as such colonialism, neo-colonialism, corruption, starvation, drought, wars, marriage, sports, commerce, sorcery, friendship, religion, governance, politics and many other topics should inspire African writers, who in doing so, should “work from the standpoint of the African community.”<sup>13</sup> Closely related to this second criterion is the role of the African artist and writer. As a keeper of African values, the “modern” African artist should speak for and to his/her community, pinpointing and denouncing moral vices and inconsistencies and making sure individuals’ behaviors are *ber*<sup>14</sup> (beauty/good in Ugandan Acholi). The third criterion is the nature of the characters. The African artist and critic must rely on a range of characters including natural and supernatural characters ones. This disposition agrees with the African worldview, which claims there is an interconnection between the spiritual (immaterial) and the physical (material) worlds. Also, the presence of Islam and Christianity has not destroyed the importance of divinities in the life of Africans.<sup>15</sup>

The fourth criterion of is the exploitation of concepts of African oral traditions. The utilization of these concepts contributes to the African flavor of any piece of art. Thus, tales, epics, fables, drama, proverbs, symbols, and irony are primary resources that the artist possesses to reach his/her community. Therefore, to understand the function and the meaning of these concepts is capital for the analysis of African artistry.

Ghanaian born, Ayi Kwei Armah has contributed to the literary development of Africa since after the 1960's. Known for his harsh criticisms of post-colonial African societies and for the pessimistic of his writings, Armah was considered, especially by C. Achebe as an anti-nationalist African intellectual. His first novels *The beautiful ones are not yet born* and *Fragments* established his reputation, while his subsequent publications consecrated his talents and made him one of the most read novelists of Africa.<sup>16</sup> In 1995, Armah published *Osiris Rising*, a novel which is about the past, the present and the future of Africa. Based on the ancient Egyptian myth of Ausir,<sup>17</sup> *Osiris Rising* tells the story of Asar, an African and Ast, an African-American lady, and their comrades, as they strive to make emerge a new African personality to tackle African liberation issues and problems. With its tone, content, and perspective, *Osiris Rising* dives into the cultural richness of Africa to make the readers comprehend the present and envisage the future with brighter hopes.

Arguably, *Osiris Rising* is the most revolutionary novel that Armah has published. It skillfully combines criticisms, denouncement and solutions. In fact, Asar, one of the two major characters in the novel, warns that it is time for his fellow Africans to "shift the debate from the criticism of the old system to the design and testing of a new one"<sup>18</sup>(*Osiris Rising*, 188). This statement contains the essence of Armah's thoughts, voice, and ways for the liberation of Africa. Implicitly, Armah warns that there will be no salvation without the emergence of a new culture of struggle based on activism rather than on mere criticism. Criticism entails lethargy and reaction, while activism is dynamic and proactive.

The fact that the main characters in the novel are convinced that salvation goes through action gives the novel its functional characteristics. In fact, it does not suffice to critique, the African intellectual must undertake as C.L.R James says: “ a man is not only what he says, but also what he does.”<sup>19</sup> In *Osiris Rising*, Armah presents some ways for Africa to face the challenges of the New World order. Two of these ways are the concern of this exercise. The first one is the African examination of Africa. The second way is the assertion and emancipation of the continent through an adaptation to the present realities.  
20

### ***Osiris Rising: An African Examination of Africa***

Following the story in the novel and considering the deeds of the main characters, it is evident that the first and inevitable step towards liberation is the “African examination of Africa”. The African examination of Africa means that Africa scrutinizes itself through its own eyes and according to its feelings and daily experience, and with African instruments. In fact, it does not suffice for Africans to critique the continent for their opinions to be African. The instruments of analysis must be Africans. In doing so, the vices and the immoralities that pervade post-independent African societies are unveiled to broad-daylight. Some of these vices include theft, corruption, betrayal, favoritism, public resources embezzlement, the depreciation of education system, and so on. It is evident, throughout the novel that although she stands at her place geographically, Africa is culturally, morally, and spiritually displaced.

Examples of immoralities or unorthodox practices are legion in the novel. One is the question of education, which has lost its value. In the novel, the school system has two handicaps. First, teaching is not considered a decent job for people, who have spent many years at school and obtained higher degrees. The DD, also known as Set in the novel and representative of the state, contends that teaching is the “lowest of the tertiary institutions.”<sup>21</sup> In a discussion with Ast, the DD mentions the teacher training school of Manda, a small town, which for him is a “pretty place for a tourist to spend two hours getting brown, but no place for an African intellectual with options. The following is a substance of what the DD thinks about education:

*... In Africa, everything is at the opposite pole from the ideal. The way our system is structured, the best brains try first to get out. If they fail they go into other fields, not teaching. Teacher training colleges here were set up to absorb border-line cases. Kids unable to make it into secondary schools. Or into the university. They've been some superficial changes, but teaching remains a dog's job. (p. 32)*

The second handicap of the educational system is the gap that exists between it and the realities of the society. The question that Armah raises in *Osiris Rising* is the connection between school curriculum and the knowledge, which African youngsters receive. The novel indicates that teaching is dislocated and de-centered.

Beside the critique of the education system, *Osiris Rising* also emphasizes the dysfunction of the economic structures and the problems of the civil administration. Netta, a female character voices these criticisms. Her knowledge of social habits in the state allows her to expose the shortcomings of the society she lives in. In a description of the society, Netta accuses the government of blocking external trade. While the government blames the economic difficulties on the disadvantage of the foreign exchange system, Netta believes that it is the root cause of the economic demise of the country through the embezzlement of the public funds.<sup>22</sup> Netta is right, because corruption, greediness and selfishness are crucial issues that African countries have faced since the independence.<sup>23</sup> In addition to denouncing the misappropriation of public funds by leaders and senior servants, Netta also condemns the fact that the economy is extraverted. In her opinion, time has come for her country to manufacture its own goods.<sup>24</sup> Thus, she advises that it is no longer acceptable that Africa consumes what she does not produce. This particular idea revamps Mengisteb's auto-centric philosophy according to which Africans should organize their lives primarily around the resources and products that are available in their immediate environment.<sup>25</sup>

While the critique of political and economic practices is done in a plain and direct language, Netta utilizes sarcasm and satire to critique the inactivity and the slowness of the civil administration. The following passage reveals her satirical and sarcastic tone:

*Rule one in the Civil Service Code says never takes less than a month to Finish a day's work. Rule two says never begin work on a file unless you See the person concerned in front of you. The files just lie there on the floor until someone hunts them out. To get things done, you have to be physically present if you fill out forms and wait for action, you will wait till the Sahara turns green again.*<sup>26</sup>

Being the microcosm of the state, the civil service is not portrayed into this enchanting mood that will make us believe that the state and the public authorities care about the needs of their populations. Instead, there is a culture of favoritism, procrastination, and carelessness, which has progressively shut down the social, economic, and political structures in Africa without the reaction of African decision-makers. This is the reason why Netta claims that African rulers have made moral issues irrelevant to the lives of their people.<sup>27</sup> This claim is corroborated by a bus-driver, who explains that he accepts to take more passengers than required because infringing the laws is the “normal way to survive.” “If you obey law” he says, “you no survive. Big thief make law, small thief dodge law<sup>28</sup>”. This ironic statement puts both African elites and masses in the same categories as participants in the regression of Africa.

The intellectuals are the other important group that *Osiris Rising* sheds lights on. Considered as trailblazers, keepers of rightness, torchbearers of the people, barometers of morale and good conduct, teachers and healers of the communities, the intellectuals, in the novel, departed from these attributes to search for money, power, and so on. At the exception of Asar, Ast, Netta, and some other teachers of the training college, who accepted to follow them, all intellectuals in the novel preach individualistic behaviors and forget the meaning of liberation for Africa. Netta argues that they are not concerned with liberation, but are more preoccupied with making money, living in charming places, traveling, directing local branches of multinational firms, occupying diplomatic posts, working for international organizations specialized in fighting illiteracy and disease.<sup>29</sup> By using their intelligence to avoid risks, these intellectuals advocate the status quo. These elite are the breed of educated people that A. Cabral once critiqued and asked to be reeducated simply because they are disoriented, dislocated, and spiritually dead. For Cabral, this reeducation is more a spiritual reconversion and a deep re-Africanization. This is possible only through the contact with the mass of the people on a daily basis and through a communion of sacrifices.<sup>30</sup>



The transformations of intellectuals symbolizes the chaos of a community where nothing works at it should, a community where life has stopped going its normal direction and has started the road of decay. With the sense of exaggeration that characterizes him, Armah tells about a thoroughly wrecked society. The civil administration is quasi-inoperable, traffic lights are broken down for more than two years <sup>31</sup> and people are fascinated by foreign products and lifestyle, like this taxi driver, who dreams of driving an American cab because it is big, while his friends praise American music.

Playing facilities are lacking leaving youngsters to risk their lives by playing near the road. The justice system is ineffective, while the government and its satellites invest money in intelligence to block the efforts of people who, like Asar, want to renovate the social, political, and economic apparatus. In short, nothing works.

In the light of these few examples, we see that *Osiris Rising* focuses of Africans mainly. Only Africans are presented and critiqued. This African-oriented critique may give the impression that Armah denies the validity of theories of dependency, according to which the present situation of Africa is the resultant of constant exploitation of this continent by European powers. <sup>32</sup> Considering the international context of today, one may critique Armah for disregarding the impacts of globalization of Africans' living conditions. However, this is not Armah's intention. On the contrary, he wants to awaken the dormant sensibilities of Africans and stress the idea that they are the centers of their liberation. As such Africans need to solve part of their problems by removing the obstacles that are inherent to them and that they control. If it is accepted that Africans should put their historical experiences and their cultural values at the forefront of the study of the phenomena that affect them, then it is also true that Africans should turn their criticisms towards themselves first. In short, Armah indicates that Africa can engage in a liberating catharsis only when she recognizes her own dirt.

In the novel, the African examination of Africa is achieved with a particular linguistic style. There is a mixture of irony, sarcasm, satire, and proverbs, which recalls the richness of African cultures. In fact, the traditional values of Africa teach us that laughter and derision are not humiliating devices, but they have the potential of healing and correcting anomie. It is also commonplace to read Armah relating facts in their least details.

The descriptions of lovemaking scenes between Asar and Ast are a case in point. Repeatedly, Armah uses a (porno) graphic language instead of metaphors or other speech figures. When he describes Ast and Asar making love, Armah uses words or expressions such as clitoris, penis, nipples, etc. An illustrative sentence reads as follows:

*he slipped his tongue inside her from the clitoris . . . At the same time, he licked her in tiny vibration that made her orgasm a long slide into pleasure.”*<sup>33</sup>

The use of these obscene expressions is also manifest when the author describes the genital organs of Set the villain and opponents of Asar, who lounges for Ast.

*From the heavy thighs the penis hung dangling, the scrotum loose and raggedy, one ball way lower than its brother . . . At the tip of DD’s penis there was a birthmark, a reddish square, and despite the seriousness of her predicament, she could not help thinking this was an incongruous place for a birthmark. That was when she saw liquid oozing from the DD’s limp penis, a thick, yellow pus.*<sup>34</sup>

Armah’s use of obscene words in his writings has always been intriguing, especially for those who grew up with the idea that sex was a tabou topic in public discussions. The question we need to raise is what is wrong with Armah’s graphic language? In June 2001, I met with Armah at Temple University, Philadelphia, USA after a lecture. He justified his propensity to talk so overtly of sex in his novels by saying that he tried as much to stick to reality and keep as it is. From this justification, I understood the search for truth was the fundamental element of Armah’s intellectual career. Symbolically, this means that Africans should be exposed to the truth of their actions and thoughts, no matter how painful or shocking this truth is. Further research allowed me to understand the rationality of Armah’s thought. In traditional African art, such the Yoruba art, truth is symbolized with nude figures (statutes), suggesting that truth should not be concealed or hidden. Rather it is open to everyone to see.<sup>35</sup>

To complete this section on the African examination of Africa, it is also necessary to consider the nature of the story in *Osiris Rising*. As indicated, the novel romanticizes the 1990's Africa by diving deep into the culture of this continent. *Osiris Rising* is the artistic version of the Ancient Egyptian myth of Osiris, the myth of resurrection. By referring to this past myth that is unknown of younger African generations, Armah, as a griot, not only recounts the history of Africa, but he fuses the past and the present together. The reactivation of this important aspect of ancient Africa reflects the idea that African people need to remember their origins, where they come from in order to reshuffle their struggle for liberation.

In short, *Osiris Rising* makes explicit Armah's ideas that an African auto-centered examination of Africa is the beginning of the process of liberation. This process must be completed with strategic emancipatory actions.

### ***Osiris Rising* as the Expression of Africa's Assertion and Emancipation.**

The second message that Armah provides in *Osiris Rising* is that criticism without concrete actions is null. Armah suggests a number of dispositions and attitudes to set the wheels of liberation in motion. The first attitude is the expression of the consciousness of victory. What this means is that African-descent people must rid their minds and attitudes of the idea that the present poverty and squalor of Africa is eternal. In place of this attitude, Africans need to be hopeful and confident that success will thrive from their efforts. This consciousness of victory rests in the optimistic mode in *Osiris Rising* through the great optimism that it displays.

Even if it portrays Africa in its negative, gloomy, and disenchanting aspects, *Osiris Rising* diffuses optimism through the determination of the main characters to achieve their goals. Despite the villainy and the cunningness of Set, who tries to dissuade Asar and Ast from putting their ideas into actions, they never think of resigning. On the contrary, the counteractions of their opponent fuel their motivations and commitment. To be able to turn villainy into motivation, Ast and Asar transcend the physical nature of their duty and engage a spiritual struggle. For instance, Asar's death at the end of the novel does not interrupt his actions because a son that Ast, his spouse carries in her womb, survives him. This child is Osiris, hence the title of the novel. Osiris is the symbol of the continuation of Asar's work for Africa. Osiris also symbolizes the birth of a new Africa. He also manifests the idea that sowing ideas and values creates the conditions of a spiritual and timeless struggle and change. The death and the symbolic resurrection of Asar (through his child) echoes Armah's warning that the building of a strong Africa is a difficult task. Therefore, it behooves Africans to sacrifice their materialistic view of life to reach the "Promised Land," which is a place of strong communalism free of inter-human exploitation.

The second attitude is the acceptance of sacrifice, determination and perseverance in the pursuit of positive goals. In this regard, *Osiris Rising* presents Asar and Ast as two intellectuals who base and center their undertakings in the interests of the ordinary people. Ast, to start with her, abandons the American luxury to settle in an African area, where poverty, corruption, cupidity, and so on seem to take over moral values and work ethics. The numerous warnings and threats that she is exposed do not make her change her plans. As for Asar, he rejects the bourgeois life that his education can offer him and contents himself with an “insignificant” position of teacher. Rather than wasting his competence and skills at the service of international institutions and accumulating wealth, Asar concentrates chooses to work for the ordinary people, first by enlisting in an African army fighting for liberation in Southern Africa, and second by holding a teaching position at *Manda* with a “miserable” salary.

As the main character and initiator of the revolution in the novel, Asar says the following about his life, showing his acceptance of communal sacrifice:

I can't structure my life around the paranoid fears of a security boss.  
What we're doing is only the beginning. I'm not indispensable. There  
are several of us working toward the future. We can leave personal  
security obsession to the other side.

.....  
We've thought of the possibility of our getting killed, as individuals.  
Or jailed. Or made to disappear. But we decided it won't matter  
which of us they kill if we do our work well.<sup>36</sup>

Asar and Ast's sacrifice rests on their activism. Activism, or pragmatism, therefore, is the third attitude that the novel proposes for the African liberation. Talking about Asar's achievements, Netta reveals: “ he does not make a career of analyzing problems. He proceeds to put his conclusions into practice.”<sup>37</sup> Asar's appeal to his fellow teachers is that “it is time they shift the debate from the criticism of the old system to the design and testing of a new one.”<sup>38</sup> The proposal of new alternatives to replace older practices and habits makes Asar's plans a revolutionary success. Because he is a teacher and because he believes that teaching is the key to social change,<sup>39</sup> it is within the academy that Asar, decides to set the wheels of change in motion. The lesson, here, is that it is imperative to reform the school system in Africa and make it compatible with the challenges of the now. By diffusing his ideas to his fellow teachers and to his students, Asar builds up a collective consciousness, and creates a unity of thought and actions.

In the novel, the proposed academic changes concern three department, history, literature and African studies, and are based on three premises, according to Asar:

One making Africa the center of our studies. Two shifting from Eurocentric orientations to universalistic approaches as far as the rest of the world is concerned. Three, giving our work a serious backing in African history.<sup>40</sup>

The novel indicates that academic changes are manifest in the drafting of new proposals and curricula of studies<sup>41</sup> which de-emphasize the importance of European-oriented theories and paradigms. As far as teaching is concerned, the suggested changes favour creativity and production, and innovations. In fact, unlike in the past, students are taught to operate beyond incarcerating stereotypes, and be proactive. For the teaching of literature, Asar makes students write their own piece rather than studying and reproducing the works of famous artists.<sup>42</sup> Also, students of the architecture department demonstrate their talents by designing the plan of three houses on their own. The instance on practical teaching stems from the fact that it ensures communication, it liberates, and it benefits more the education of oppressed people.<sup>43</sup> It also promotes the consciousness of political and social practice.<sup>44</sup>

The third attitude of liberation is the construction of operational strategies. This attitude ties to a fourth one, which is that, Asar and Ast's actions center all on the cultural richness of the milieu where they operate. The lesson that the fourth attitude carries is that no strategy of liberation can be efficient unless it takes ground on the African culture. From an African-centered perspective, a message addressed to a people is meaningful to them if this message is conveyed in their culture. For, as Cabral contends liberation is an act of culture and there will be no liberation without cultural liberation.<sup>45</sup>

The fifth attitude is the development and the diffusion of a Pan African consciousness. The marriage and the tacit complicity between Asar and Ast indicate the Pan African orientation of Armah's thoughts. Ast is African-American while Asar is African. These are two people of same origins, whose ancestors were separated by the disparaging effects of slavery. But, despite her American background, Ast becomes a key support to Asar. She contributes to the success of the change of curriculum and syllabus discussed above. But more important, she carries the seed of Asar's rebirth, with the child in her womb. On the other hand, it is under the guidance of Asar that Ast finds the story of the ankh she possesses. The success of the union between Asar and Ast symbolizes the

reunion and the collaboration between continental and American-born Africans.<sup>46</sup> Pan Africanism in the novel is also manifest with Asar's willingness to enlist for liberation struggles against colonialism in African places other than his.

The sixth attitude the novel suggests relates to women's contribution in the liberation of Africa. In the novel, female characters play central roles. The first example is the impact that Ast has on Asar's life and her role in mothering the spirit of the revolution after Asar. The second important female character is Netta, who serves as informant to Ast when she travels to Africa. In the novel, Netta is the memory of the people. She knows the political, economic, and social trends of the country. Her words shed lights on the vices and the immoralities of Africa. As for Nut, she is the grandmother, who first instructed Ast on her African origins, gave her the ankh (symbol of life), and encouraged her to make the trip to Africa. Therefore, it is Nut, who initiated Ast's healing journey to the motherland. But for Ast to know the complete story of the ankh, she needs the guidance of another woman. This woman is Nana Tete. Her wisdom and knowledge of the past makes her the keeper of traditions in the novel.

With the importance he gives to female characters in the novel, Armah reinforces the idea that the liberation of Africa cannot be achieved without the liberation of African women. The African women, despite the extreme poverty and the injustice, which victimize them, continue to be the core of African societies by their activities of mothers, nurturers, healers, and so on. Therefore, it is inadmissible that strategies for African development continue to ignore the voices of those who are the major victims of mortality, the AIDS pandemic, genital, mutilations, illiteracy, poverty, rapes, and forms of sexual discriminations.

## **Conclusion**

In short, the purpose of this presentation was to identify and present the possibilities that *Osiris Rising* offers Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The novel presents a decayed society in which institutions are upside down and where people have transformed wrong into right and right into wrong. Such a society cannot resist the rapacious intricacies of globalization, unless it accepts auto-criticism and implements practical solutions that emanate from the needs and aspirations of its people. I contend that the enchanting, revolutionary, optimistic mood of the novel makes it one of the finest contributions to African literature in the 1990's. And in addition, its tone as well as the consciousness of victory that it displays so brilliantly, pave the way for better African tomorrows.

## References

- 1 Wiseman, John. "The Movement towards democracy: Global Continental and State Perspectives." *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*. (1995), p. 3.
- 2 See John Clark and David Gardinier, *Political Reform in Africa* (1997); Mamadou Diouf, *Political Liberalization in Africa* (1999); Mohammed Ould-Mey, 'Democratization in Africa: the political face of the SAP's,' *Journal of Third World Studies* (1995) and John Wiseman, "The Movement towards democracy: Global Continental and State Perspectives." *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (1995).
- 3 World Bank, *Can Africa Claim the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2000), p.10
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid, p. 8
- 6 "The global Economy Facts." *New Internationalist*, 320. (January-February 2000).
- 7 World Bank, *Can Africa Claim the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2000), p.10
- 8 Adebayo Adedeji, *Africa in the Nineteen-nineties: A Decade for the Socio-economic Recovery and Transformation or Another Lost Decade?* (1991).
- 9 Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle* (1979) pp. 129 – 130.
- 10 Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Writers in politics*, (1981), p. 15.
- 11 Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle* (1979) pp. 129 – 130
- 12 Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa, Jemie, and Ihechukwu Madubuike, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, ( 1980), p. 242.

- 13 Ibid., p. 243.
- 14 Okot Pbitek,
- 15 Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa, Jemie, and Ihechukwu Madubuike, *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*, ( 1980), p. 20
- 16 Ayi Kwi Armah started his writing career with the publication of these two novels, which negatively depicts the shortcomings of independent Africa through the Ghanaian case. *The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born* came out in 1968 and *Fragments* was published in 1970.
- 17 The ancient Egyptian ausirian myth is considered the oldest myth of creation and regeneration. This myth has ben many a time revisited by a new Black scholarship in their quest to reestablish the predominance of ancient Egypt as a Black civilization.
- 18 Ayi Kwei Armah, *Osiris Rising*, (1995), p. 188.
- 19 C. L. R. James,
- 20 I used Chinweizu's aesthetic criteria as developed in *Towards the decolonization of Africa* to analyze the liberation philosophy of Armah. But I emphasized the fact that for Armah assertion and emancipation implicitly call for the consideration of the current situation Africa is in.
- 21 Ayi Kwei Armah, *Osiris Rising*, (1995), p. 32.
- 22 Ibid., p. 54.
- 23 Colin Legum, *Africa Since Independence*, (1999).
- 24 Ayi Kwei Armah, *Osiris Rising*, (1995), p. 54
- 25 Kidane Mengisteab, *Globalization and Autocentricity in Africa's Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (2000), p. 54.
- 26 Ayi Kwei Armah, *Osiris Rising*, (1995), p. 55.



- 27 Ibid., p. 56.
- 28 Ibid., p. 98.
- 29 Ibid., pp. 76 – 77.
- 30 Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle* (1979) p. 154.
- 31 Ayi Kwei Armah, *Osiris Rising*, (1995), p. 49.
- 32 Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (1972), Ch. 5.
- 33 Ayi Kwei Armah, *Osiris Rising*, (1995), pp. 117 118.
- 34 Ibid., pp. 63 – 64.
- 35 Moyo Okedji, ‘The Naked Truth: Nude Figures in Yoruba Art,’ *Journal of Black Studies*, 22, 1 (1991), pp. 30 – 44.
- 36 Ayi Kwei Armah, *Osiris Rising*, (1995), pp. 165.
- 37 Ibid., p. 71
- 38 Ibid., p. 188.
- 39 Ibid., p. 103.
- 40 Ibid., p. 104.
- 41 Ibid., pp. 211 – 232.
- 42 Ibid., p. 219.
- 43 Paolo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (1997), pp. 52 – 68.
- 44 James Joy, ‘Teaching Theory, Teaching Community’ *A Turbulent Voyage* (1999), p. 443.

- 45 Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle* (1979) p. 154.
- 46 I hold the statement that the union between the two major characters of the novel contains the essential of the Pan African vision that Armah conveys in his work. This PAN African vision exists in terms of collaboration of between African Americans and Africans.

### Works cited

- Adedeji, Adebayo. *Africa in the Nineteen-nineties: A Decade for the Socio-economic Recovery and Transformation or Another Lost Decade?* Lagos: The Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, (1991).
- Armah, Ayi Kwei. *Fragments*. London: Heinemann, (1970).
- - -. *Osiris Rising: A Novel of African Past, Present and Future*. Popenguine, West Africa: Per Ankh, (1995).
- - -. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. London: Heinemann, 1968.
- Akbar, Na'im. *Light From Ancient Africa*. Florida: Mind Productions and Associates, Inc,(1994).
- Asante, Molefi & Abarry Abu. *African Intellectual Heritage*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, (1996).
- Asante, Molefi Kete. "Afrocentricity" In H. Gates and K. Appiah, eds. *Encarta Africana 2000 Microsoft*. Seattle: Washington, (1999).
- - -. *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, (1990).
- - -. "Locating a Text: Implications of Afrocentric Theory." (January 1999). < <http://www.Asante.net/articles/LocatingText.html>.
- Chinweizu; Onwuchekwa, Jemie, Ihechukwu Madubuike. *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*. Unugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co, Ltd, (1980).
- Clark, John & Gardinier, David. Ed. *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*. USA: Westview Press, (1997).

- Diouf, Mamadou. *Political Liberalization or Democratic Transition: African Perspectives*. Dakar: CODESRIA, (1999).
- Du Bois, William Edgard Burghart. *The Souls of Black Folks*. USA: Penguin Group, (1995).
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, (1997).
- James, Joy. "Teaching Theory, Talking Community." *A Turbulent Voyage*. Floyd W. Hayes, III. Ed. San Diego: Collegiate Press, (1997). 437-48.
- Legum, Colin. *African Since Independence*. Indiana: Indiana University Press. (1999).
- Mengisteab, Kidane. *Globalization and Autocentricity in Africa's Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Trenton: Africa World Press Inc, (1991).
- Ngugi, Wa Thiong'o. *Writers in Politics: Essays*. London: Heinemann, (1981).
- . *Decolonizing the Mind*. London: Heinemann, (1986).
- Okedji, Moyo. "The Naked Truth: Nude Figures in Yoruba Art." *Journal of Black Studies*, 22, 1. USA: Sage Publications (1991). pp. 45 –54.
- Ould-Mey, Mohammed. "Democratization in Africa: the Political Face of the SAP's." *Journal of Third World Studies*. USA: Association of Third World Studies, (1995).
- Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Washington: Howard University Press, (1982).
- "The global Economy Facts." *New Internationalist*. Issue 320. (January-February 2000). <http://www.oneworld.org/xi/issue320>
- Wiseman, John. "The Movement towards democracy: Global Continental and State Perspectives." *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*. London: Routledge, (1995), pp. 1-10.
- World Bank. *Can Africa Claim the 21<sup>st</sup> ?* Washington DC: World Bank, (2000).