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Hopes and Hurdles: Why Are We So Blest?

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Abstract:

Why Are We So Blest? explores the hard realities of the continent by means of a communal voice. It is a fictional representation of the conflicts and contradictions that define African situation providing an opportunity to study a confrontation between European and African patterns of thought. The confrontation is apparent in the initial confusion and disillusionment, followed by fragmentation, disintegration, with final emphasis on the consolidation of African identity. It is an attempt to probe the complex relation of colonizer and colonized, a relation which is seen as historically past but psychologically present in the Africans.

Why Are We So Blest? is a fictional recreation of the peculiar phenomenon of the exploited offering itself as an easy prey to the dehumanizing process set in motion by colonialism, a negation of hard-fought independence. It is an indictment of self destructive streak of a group ethic and also exposes the destructive capabilities of the exploiters. The exploiters pose threat to the national consciousness because the colonialist tendencies are sure to raise its ugly head in postcolonial Africa. The contemporary world is "in a course of splitting process" (Gillard, "Narrative Situation and Ideology in Five Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah," *SPAN* 8) with colonial hangover still operative in every sphere of life. The battle against colonialism is not a straight road going along the lines of nationalism. The native devotes his energies to end certain definite abuses like forced labour, corporal punishment, inequality of salaries, limitation of political rights, and many others. This fight for democracy, against oppression of mankind, lets the confusion of neo-liberal universalism to emerge slowly. "It so happens that the unpreparedness of educated ... the lack of practical links ... laziness, and let it be said, their cowardice at the decisive moment of the struggle ... give rise to tragic mishaps" (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* 119).

The narrative of the text effectively captures the all-pervading sense of failure through three main protagonists - Solo Nakonam, Modin Dofu, and Aimee Reitsch. Solo's narrative is a commentary on the past, present, and future of Africa - the different slices of it are connected by a penetrating sense of gloom. The viewpoints of Modin and Aimee are corroborated by Solo who compiles the facts and views life that has been lived against the background of his own failure in the revolutionary struggle. Solo rearranges the pieces of the story together that have wide-ranging implications in personal as well as racial relationships. Within the framework of the interplay of these characters, Armah attempts to probe the relations of Africa and Europe. It is Solo who enables Armah to avoid oversimplification of treating anti-Black racism as only an American problem. It implies the need of decolonizing the African mind and giving a meaningful direction to the ongoing struggle.

The belief that firmly holds the people of 1940s and 1950s Africa is that western education is a means for emancipating natives from the clutches of colonialism and other attendant problems of racial discrimination, economic exploitation, backwardness, and poverty. This notion about western education is still carrying strong streaks in the twenty first century as well. The result of this strong adherence to the western pattern of thought is seen in an increased enrolment of students in schools established by various colonizing powers, and an upsurge in the number of Blacks going overseas for higher education, commonly nicknamed 'the golden fleece.'

Why Are We So Blest? is a remarkable indepth study of racial insults that black students are pitted against on American campuses in the 1960s. Modin Dofu, the controlling focus of Armah's novel, possesses the stuff of which tragedy is made, and that white racism merely provides the landscape for the conflict. Africa's contact with Europe had a debilitating effect on the native psyche. The clear cut demarcation between the white and the black, the oppressor and the oppressed, has social and psychological implications. The deadly repercussions of the psychological and sociological pressure are presented in protagonist Modin Dofu's fatal attraction for his white mistress, Aimee Reitsch. The consequent tragedy leaves him stranded at the bleakest dead-end of the desert setting it against the opposing image of spring water, "springwater flowing to the desert, where you flow there is no regeneration.... This is life's race, but how shall we remind a people hypnotized by death?" (Armah, *Two Thousand Seasons* xi). This work is a brilliant and honest addition to the corpus of Black man's literary response to his voyage in the land of whites.

Modin Dofu, the protagonist is highly intelligent, keen, and perceptive; he travels white man's land to pursue his studies in Social Studies at Harvard, but only to discover that it has been a false start right from the very beginning. Solo's education proves a hurdle in the process of his identification with his own people; likewise Modin's problem is confounded by his inability to adjust to the alien oppressive atmosphere. Modin comes in search of knowledge from periphery to the centre. The search for knowledge does not yield

desired results and becomes synonymous with alienation and loneliness. "The thirst for knowledge therefore becomes perverted into the desire for getting close to the alien ... Result: loneliness as the way of life" (32-33). This loneliness is an inevitable part of assimilationist African's life within the imperial structure and the "price ... is loneliness, separation from home, the constant necessity to adjust to what is alien, eccentric to the self" (33). Those that stay at periphery, intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, totally are not lonely; they are in touch with home, not cut off. The price they pay for not being lonely, however, is the crudest form of manipulation, mystification and planned ignorance.

The black students' problems are often aggravated by real lack of funds, an absence of financial freedom that directly land them at the mercy of white benefactors. African Education Committee Building is the place for helping African students. Mr. Blanchard informs Modin that he is Mr. Scott's blue-eyed boy and soon he is going to meet the members of committee, especially the Oppenhardts. Naita, the receptionist, calls these members, the "crooks" (109), "bunch of bastards" (119), and warns Modin not to allow these crooks to mess with him. She notices that he is not one of the dumb ones they bring on their little tours to show their superiority and therefore "can't ... blind" (110) him.

Richmond Oppenhardt, the Chairman of the African Committee, is all praise for Modin's academic record, hoping a bright future for him in America. He sponsors Modin's studies. However, Oppenhardt is deadly against accepting all Africans as intelligent ones: "You talk as if all Africans were as intelligent as you ... grow up and learn to stop lying to yourself" (127). He is "an angry white man" (128) who can not expect and digest arguments from an African. Consequently Modin realizes that Oppenhardt wants to buy obedience not friendship, thus he refuses sponsorship telling him that they are not friends; therefore, he can not accept sponsorship. As soon as he decides, he does not feel ill any more, has no headaches. Professor Jefferson is greatly worried for him for he "had done a ... destructive thing" (129) and advises him to tender an apology. Modin, however, is quite determined now not to lick the shoes of the white masters who are merely using the oppressed race as a puppet in hands to entertain them. In fact, the rejection of this manifest destruction should have taken place early in his academic career in America. Oppenhardt's words used to infuriate him: "With your intelligence, you'll only grow in the best company ... the best company was European, white" (160). The tragedy is that the ripeness never comes when it is needed and now it is too late as Modin can neither translate his ideology into action nor can he remain attached to the place where he is best known by his colour and race and not by his individuality. This nagging question of identity makes him in effect a double exile.

In *Why Are We So Blest?* Armah moves away from his indigenous society and examines the theme of human isolation from a more general point of view. The text has close parallels to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* only if we substitute the Africo-American for the African; the strategies for black man's subjugation through the institution of education are similar, almost identical. Armah's resentment at the oppression and exploitation of Africa is here crystallized in Aimee Reitsch from "Denver" (269) and her unhealthy love affair. Aimee is depicted as totally evil or more accurately, completely incapable of any good, since she too is involved in a frantic search for self-discovery in the form of sexual fulfillment. Her search renders her unusually selfish, dominantly aggressive and indiscriminating in her relationship with Modin.

Modin wants to take revenge on the whites but the path he chooses is a path of self-annihilation. Aimee's friendship with Modin signifies her search for the exotic, she is portrayed both as an individual and as a representative of her race, colour, and continent, "an object ... powerfully hurled against ... from the barrel of ... destructive culture" (115). Aimee's research is on "Moja Moja" (177) leadership and in search of information Aimee sleeps with various leaders of Moja Moja rising and subsequently with the President of the Nationalist Government. The ancient white hatred of Africa is projected through Aimee, a female wolf whose axis of life is sex. She is one of the white destroyers who "use the accumulated energy within ... black selves to do work of importance to their white selves" (208). The sexual neurosis is so overpowering in her that ultimately all her contact with fellow human beings, whether Africans or whites, her professors or African heads of state, acquire a sexual interpretation.

Aimee has a domineering personality and Modin shivers under her impact, even though he is the one who is instrumental in bringing back her womanliness. He proves no match for her aggressive drive who launches an uninhibited and multi-pronged assault on his personality by fully exploiting his psychological disadvantages without qualms. "She is portrayed as being true to herself in selecting a prey, exploiting it to the last drop and finally letting destruction overpower her victim" (Rao, K. Damodar, *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah* 81). There is "so much destructiveness caught in everything she said, everything she did, the way she moved, the tenor of her being" (149) that Solo fails to perceive the reason for Modin's passive acceptance: "Why did he let her destroy him? ... love, but that is an answer for fools" (149). "She played at love; her aim was survival, not union ... a possessor of the experience, not its victim" (232). Moreover there is no love between them and if there is any love it is not "a fusion of two beings, but ... a confusion of the loving ego" (261).

Within the context of the text and the utterly pessimistic scenario Aimee cannot but degenerate into a specimen, a female symbol of destruction, with which more and more Armah has come to associate her race with. Modin lives through the horror of an association with such a creature; it is Solo, the visionary protagonist, who articulates the tragedy of weak Modin. He considers himself lucky because Sylvia, his Portuguese girlfriend, was passive. Aimee is the "hyperactive embodiment of that energy, that hatred that has impelled Europe against us all. And the cadaverous white-haired woman, Manuel's hidden mistress - what is her species of love but the same ancient white hatred of Africa, taking rotten form in her dry, decayed body. What is she doing if not taking care to kill the possibility itself of anything good being born in Africa?" (229). This suicidal blunder can result in destruction only, and those who live under the illusion that the coming together of two people can bridge the gap between two races, have to bear the brunt of this ancient white hatred.

Aimee has the advantage of being superior culturally as well as sociologically. In a committed but forced relationship, the subjugated personality must always be on its guard to liberate itself from the corrupting influence and the dehumanizing death-dealing of the

other. But Modin never resorts to either of the options, Solo strongly feels for Modin wishing if only something could have been done to avoid his imminent tragedy. "I cannot escape the chagrin of not being able to stop his destruction" (116) from the devouring egotistic Aimee and her needs that blast a path through everything around her. There were constant adjustments to needs impinging on him from outside. Solo wishes his gentleness should not have gone to feed her hardness, but in vain.

Modin clearly visualizes his own tragedy, the disastrous consequences of Aimee's masochism and cultural divide that is apparent in the words as well as deeds. Modin's thinking reflects the impending doom due to life "lived at the level of its culture's basic myths" (157), and the things he was doing freely to escape "too much forced living ... part of the larger scheme that aims ... destruction ... invitations to different kinds of death ... a spiritual disintegration far beyond the merely social disintegration" (158-159). Europe has no need to destroy the Africans singly as the force for their own deaths is very much within them. They have swallowed the wish for destruction themselves by choosing wrong companions on wrong paths. Thus it can be reiterated that not only involvement with whites is destructive so is withdrawal and nothing can be done in this dead territory. There is no point in absorbing loneliness till it's time to go home: "I must contain my loneliness while I'm here. But why in fact remain?" (157). In this destructiveness, greed, climb after privilege and degrees obstruct the way back home, rendering a man completely impotent to act.

Fanon rightly calls colonised man the "prisoner of an unbearable insularity," being handicapped in establishing contacts with his environment because of his complexes and feelings of insecurity. Fanon observes that in the man of colour there is a constant effort to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence, because whenever "a man of colour protests, there is alienation" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 60). His attempts to find a way out of the alienation inevitably lands him in the white world and inter racial sexual contacts seems the only solution to his problems, though secretly. The man of colour takes revenge on the colonial master by "having a sexual relation with a white woman ... and at the same time proves that he is equal, a member of the human race" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 81) and tries to get solace for his bruised psyche.

Solo, a translator for the *Jeune Nation*, is a visionary, a repository of light and wisdom, amidst the general atmosphere of chaos and darkness. Man in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Naana and Baako in *Fragments*, are his forerunners. Life for him "was a viscous medium ... [that] could move ... very painfully, against resisting forces" (45). The disillusionment after the revolutionary struggle to bring a new era ends in passivity and inaction that has become a hallmark of Solo's life too. He often identifies himself with Modin who likewise remains a mute witness to the process of disintegration having similar experiences in personal and revolutionary front. "I read him, watching me, a specter from an unwanted destiny, wondering how little time he had to go before his fire also went out and he too was reduced to me" (138).

The artist-searcher for truth and meaning - Solo, laments his dilemma and carries with him "the burden of ideological schism" (Gillard, "Narrative Situation and Ideology in Five Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah," *SPAN* 4) and the burden of the twin failure of his own past and the burden of African past. His experiences of total helplessness make him feel that even before his death he has "become a ghost, wandering about the face of the earth, moving with a freedom ... not chosen" (11). He works as a translator in the People's Union of Congheria, seat of the government in exile. His failure in the revolutionary struggle fills him with despair and desolation. Though the reasons for his failure are not specified, it is through the bits and pieces of his reminiscences, the nature of the revolutionary struggle can be deduced. Solo can not attune himself to the nature and orientation of the struggle itself as he is reluctant to pretend and the need of the hour demands pretension. Solo sadly recalls his failure to develop "the ability to do one thing while saying, and preferably also thinking, another thing entirely" (14). Thus, success in these times depends on pretension and he remains a loser, a "life's failure", while the "successful livers are those with entrails hard enough to bear the contradiction and thrive on it" (14).

Why Are We So Blest? is an investigation into the nature of revolution and the three narratives provide a variety of variables. All three principal personae have in common a desire to take part in a meaningful revolution, combined with an inability to become actually involved. Aimee represents the point farthest removed from a committed involvement. It is clear from the nature of her characterisation that she is a thrill seeker who desires merely a new and more complete sensation. This is made evident in the obvious connection between the experiment in the psychology laboratory and Aimee's sexual experience, and her reaction to the torturing of Modin. Modin is more sincerely committed to the revolution, but his naive understanding of the real factors at work is brought out by the placing of his story inside the comments of Solo. The latter has proceeded through the revolutionary experience and emerged from the other side into a state of passive cynicism. That Solo has been committed is shown by the way the active revolutionaries trust him to continue to perform administrative tasks for them, though they expect no more than this from him. However, unlike the other two, he had achieved at one time a true revolutionary consciousness; he is simply insufficiently integrated to maintain it.

Thus, despite offering brief glimpses of commitment, the view of revolution is created mainly by negative means, in the studies of characters on the periphery and the origins of their deficiencies. Each of them has a specific psychic problem, textualised in a specific way. Aimee is manifested primarily in her frigidity, which is complementary to her sensation seeking. The key text for her is the fantasy she uses for masturbation. Modin's problem is verbalised as a sort of death wish, expressed in confessional form - giving the ending the force of apparent inevitability. Solo's relationship to text is that of the professional translator who functions as an interpreter in relation to people. Thus he writes of Modin's morbidity: "He seemed to have absolutely no desire to go in any direction ... Once, seeing him, I caught myself thinking a thought that put fear in me: 'Here is a corpse'" (262). He is probably able to see it because he sees himself in much the same way, his guilt arising from his sense of failure, his inability to carry out what he sees as being required of him. Thus his writing is most verbose, most periphrastic and least decisive.

Therefore, the true revolutionary path calls for a thorough soul searching and mass participation with "a readiness to travel through ... paths barely visible in the darkness of the forest with all its unknown dangers and possible enemies lying in ambush for the unsuspecting traveller, such as the prince Appia and his mother Araba Jesiwa" (Anyidoho, "Ayi Kwei Armah and Our Journey of the Mind," *Calabar Studies in African Literature* 115).

Solo initially treats Bureau of The People's Union of Congheria (UPC) at Laccryville as the revolutionary place but soon he is disillusioned by all "that was ... around me" (49). In the Bureau there are usually two persons - Jorge Manuel and Esteban Ngulo. Jorge Manuel is half Portuguese, has a university education in Lisbon and Esteban Ngulo sans university education, gets a job in a commercial warehouse in Kiloma, the capital. Later he becomes "a full-time cadre, going wherever the movement wanted him" (50). Esteban Ngulo occupies the lower floor where he types all correspondence, cuts out press items concerning the UPC and sends letters and bulletins to press agencies and UPC sympathizers all over the world. He is constantly busy with his work stopping only when he is called upon to explain something about the UPC, or about the revolt to some visitor. Jorge Manuel spends very little time in the Bureau, only when there is an international newspaperman to be given an interview, or when there is one of those leaders from some African state to be entertained. Jorge Manuel, apart from being an ordinary Freedom Fighter, has a more important title: he is "the Foreign Minister of the Congherian Government in exile ... carrying himself ... the ... dignity of an African leader" (51).

These two people give the impression of "brothers co-operating in the long fight for our country's freedom" (51) but the post revolutionary disillusionment is tellingly brought out in the running of People's Union of Congheria itself. Solo soon perceives the division that exists between the two, Jorge Manuel and Esteban Ngulo, "the mulatto and the dark, silent African" (51), the lighter brother drank spirits upstairs with suave travelers, while down below the black one licked the tasteless backs of stamps. Solo prefers to call them "man and his shadow" (52) indicating that a division would exist even when the last of Portuguese had left Congheria: Ngulo will remain a clerk while Jorge Manuel would usurp "the credit and the sweetness" (52) of country's freedom. All the slogans and the dreams of inequality and justice will dissolve into an endless procession of masters and servants. Thus, Solo finds "inequalities within the struggle to end inequality ... inequities tending to justice are better ... than injustice feeding existing injustice" (115).

In Laccryville, the revolt is over and the survivors are content "with their masters' hypocritical honors" (115) and a peace indistinguishable from triviality has descended upon the place. The presence of beggars and cripples is an important question, has a kind of revolutionary conscience so cleverly upheld, that it "has space for the beggar and the newly rich, for cannon fodder and the briefcase-carrying traveler" (115). The sense of failure witnessed in the beginning is sustained throughout the text and leads to "the motif of death in the actual physical enactment of death-crescendo" (Rao, K. Damodar, *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah* 77).

Modin along with Aimee visit UPC in search of revolutionary action. Aimee and Modin want enrollment in UPC to participate in the revolutionary struggle. The persons-in-charge of the People's Union of Congheria try to dissuade and actually prevent them from joining the scene of struggle. They are aware that the two have read everything, without understanding anything. They tell the couple that they would be out of place there, for the "battlefield is not a place for intellectuals" (252). They warn Solo to keep out of this too, the way he was kept out of everything happening in the Bureau since his own failure and return to "the twilight world of the useless people, the uninvolved" (252). They decide not to enroll them into the ranks of the UPC but do not tell the truth at face. In order to reassure them they take applications and ask the couple to wait for the outcome.

Solo, who is a witness to the ensuing discussion between Jorge Manuel and Esteban Ngulo, knows that the couple would be kept waiting for decision indefinitely to the point of desperation. Ngulo is angry with Modin for his involvement with Aimee, for him their love is a "fusion, confusion, of the self with an other self.... How indeed, except through confusion, could that African soul love an American?" (139). Modin is one of those intellectuals who want to die but he should have courage to do it himself. He can't come to us "looking for an instrument of death" (255). Solo aptly answers that Modin needs no instrument of death, he has already found one in Aimee, a fitting comment on the devouring spirit of Aimee. Jorge Manuel believes that "an African in love with a European is a pure slave. Not a man accidentally enslaved. A pure slave, with the heart of a slave, with the spirit of a slave" (255), and he firmly believes Bureau does not need slaves.

The sadistic streak in Aimee provokes her to take part in the revolutionary struggle whatever may be the scene. Guided by the intoxicating desire to find new sensations in different kinds of experiences, she goes to the psychology laboratory where she meets Modin for the first time. The revolutionary action for her is an adventurous sport, exciting as well as stimulating. This sadistic streak results in her sympathy for the liberation movement but in reality this is only a "self-made facade for her volatile sexual desires" (Rao, K. Damodar, *The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah* 82). The patience of the duo subsequently gives way and as a last resort Aimee and Modin undertake the journey that proves fatal. Modin is an unwilling partner in this death-bound journey to the forest that was under the control of the French army. "The soldiers had the look of beasts of prey cheated of their prey but still eyeing him" (275). The European soldiers rule the desert and the frustration in their eyes has become "hostile come-on attitude" (276). Modin's deep-rooted psychological subjugation and Aimee's aggressive experimentation with sexual encounters now reach at its culmination. All along the journey Modin is nagged by the doubt that he is treading a dangerous path, whenever he gives vent to his feelings he is snubbed by Aimee for being "paranoid" and "bourgeois" (283) in his thoughts. Modin admits that he has seen her sickness before, but has never been afraid. The newspaper picture of the "Boston girl who cut off her man friend's testicles with a nail clipper, put them in her handbag, then tried to disappear southward, into the South American hinterland" (276) has filled him with fear now. The invitation in the eyes of soldiers is not simply hostile but portrays "a sense of being irresistibly pulled toward something decisive, the pull growing stronger as we go deeper into the desert" (277).

They pursue their journey in the desert aimlessly until they reach Ouasnia and meet a friendly policeman, who asks: "You have something important to do" (278) in the desert and in answer Aimee laughs only. Modin does not want to continue with the journey, having a deep longing to go back into the soft "padded embrace of the blest" (235). They are "halfway across the Sahara by now ... wants to go the bourgeois way.... a boat back home" (283). They meet the Army Personnel in a jeep who are on patrol, they offer them ride, Modin refuses rides saying the guys are racists. Aimee is shocked to hear him "using the black and white thing as an excuse" (283) but she attributes this to his deterioration of health, and decides to find ways of bringing him back on track once the crossing of Sahara is over, but that never happens in reality.

The colour disparity of the couple and Aimee's decision to respect Modin more than him accentuates the sadistic tendencies of army personnel. The driver shouts it is impolite to refuse twice, they grab Modin, get his arms behind his back and three of them sit with him at the back, while Aimee is in the front. In a sandy area, they break his left elbow and his arm hangs loose. They undress Modin, tie him "to the back of the jeep, straight up and naked" (285), humiliate him, arouse him, cut his male organ and leave him in the desert to die, their actions cross the limits of barbarism.

Aimee does not feel the pinch of his suffering, as she is engrossed in her own lustful thoughts of not having made a final contact with the already dazed, bleeding Modin. The sadism turns Modin into an object, a plaything to gratify the sense of a bulldozing superiority and an instrument to satisfy the insatiable lust of Aimee. The white Army Personnel leave Aimee near Laccryville. Throughout the journey death looms large, creates a chilling effect while the "actual death crescendo" (285-288) turns out to be one of the most horrific in modern literature.

Fanon postulates that the hatred of the whites against the Negroes stems from a feeling of sexual inferiority. The brutal way in which Modin is murdered by the white army personnel has psychological implications propounded by Fanon. Consequently, the lynching of a Negro would have to be interpreted as sexual revenge. Fanon, in fact, interprets racism as the protection of the civilized white man's irrational longing for the lost paradise of sexual license onto the Negro: "Projecting his own desires onto the Negro, the white man behaves as if the Negro really had them" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 165). In the context of Fanon's stratagem of approaching colonial, neocolonial structures, Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?* proves a befitting statement.

The colonial predicament complicates the dilemma of Modin to the farthest limits of alienation. In a most symbolic move, he repudiates the coloniser's system of knowledge, having recognized the education it offers as a "trap" (209) and he sets off back home on a war path. The intention is to go and drive the coloniser off the land and for the fighting companion, he chooses the coloniser's daughter. There is no wonder that when the final confrontation occurs, the coloniser simply takes hold of his daughter and drives off with her leaving him stranded, wounded and slowly dying in the desert. It posits the question can the white woman save the black man from the white man?

It seems clear that the Africans have missed the way and this symbolic desert is the ultimate dead end, the worst possible place for anyone to be lost in. In the true desert, there are no roads coming from anywhere and no roads going anywhere. In his poem "Where We Are Going" the Ghanaian poet Kobena Eyi Acquah asks, "Is it not a long way /when you don't know where you are going?" At this point we can only wonder with Acquah that having missed the way at least one can return home. "The only logical direction from a dead-end is a return to the point of departure" (Anyidoho, "Ayi Kwei Armah and Our Journey of the Mind," *Calabar Studies in African Literature* 116). It is from the desert that the threads of the fresh start need to be picked up. "Every journey in this way becomes a return, another visit into myself" (75) and in this journey of the self, Modin discovers the many points at which he has gone astray. By the time Modin reaches the dead end of white death in the desert, a few lessons become quite clear, like the need to deal decisively with colonial disease. Probably the single most important lesson in this search for a way out of the colonial dilemma is the lesson in "a redefinition of nationhood" (Anyidoho, "Ayi Kwei Armah and Our Journey of the Mind," *Calabar Studies in African Literature* 118).

It is apparent in the very name of the central character Modin - Blackman. Even more significant is his refusal to identify with only one country in Africa as his nation: "You didn't say which country you were from. Were you ashamed? ... It's not shame. I just think of our small states as colonial things. I'm an African" (176). Thus, Armah's search for a more meaningful definition of African identity begins to emerge clearly in *Why Are We So Blest?*

The war path is the only measure to achieve the final destination. With Armah's emphasis on togetherness, reciprocity, and sharing, there is hardly any distinction between men and women now. Both men and women join in the revolutionary struggle against white oppression which is the theme of *Two Thousand Seasons*. Armah's focus on the part played by women in the liberation struggle proves how realistic he is and has been in all his works on the issue of the position of American women in their societies. Solo defines the future line of action: "In this wreckage there is no creative art outside the destruction of the destroyers. In my people's world, revolution would be the only art, revolutionaries the only creators. All else is part of Africa's destruction" (231). Thus, Solo, paves the way for seers, prophets, utterers, and healers - the exponents of positive direction, the maquis of Modin's vision, opening up possibilities for a literary warfare against colonialism of all shades and hues appropriately defining the fictional oeuvre of Armah in clear cut lines.

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