

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## Narrative Technique as a Vehicle of Meaning in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Osiris Rising*

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### Abstract:

Ayi Kwei Armah is one of the foremost African writers who has relentlessly devoted and dedicated his artistic works to the course of Africa. Against the background of the Formalists approach to the appreciation of Literature, this article examines Armah's deployment of such Narrative Technique as Point of view, character / characterization and symbol as a vehicle of meaning in his sixth novel, *Osiris Rising*. The article concludes that in accordance with his Pan-African stance, Armah, through his masterly deployment of the afore mentioned narrative technique, commits his art to the total rejection of all manner of neo-colonial tendencies, especially, the Euro-centric education system, and the oppression and exploitation of Africans by the Western forces and their African allies, as well as advocate the liberation of Africa from Western fetters.

**Keywords:** Narrative technique, formalism, character / characterization, point of view symbol

### 1. Introduction

Ayi Kwei Armah is one novelist who has carved a niche for himself in the body of African Literature. His penchant for, dedication, commitment to, and consistent examination of Africa's socio-political and economic spheres, from the pre-colonial to the contemporary eras, has no doubt, contributed immensely to the development of modern African Literature. In all his Seven novels, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), *Fragments* (1970), *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972), *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), *The Healers* (1978), *Osiris Rising* (1995) and *KMT: In The House of Life* (2002). Armah commits his art to an unequivocal course for the emancipation of Africa, Pan-Africanism. Besides the novels, Armah has written *The Eloquence of the Scribes: A Memoir on the Sources and Resources of African Literature*, an expose, in which he identifies the 'desire to understand self, Society and universe' (p.9), as his driving force as a writer.

Armah consistently applies his artistic tools to digging deep, breaking new grounds and fashioning out new historical prospects for African Literature. Armah's Sixth fictional work, *Osiris Rising: A Novel of Africa's Past, Present and Future*, is a historical novel. In it, Armah tries to uncover the truth about the origin, identity and the position of Africa in humanity. He strives to re-awaken Africans on the need to go back to Africa's ancestral roots, and to re-establish Egypt as the ancestral home of all Africans. In *Osiris Rising*, Armah also emphasizes the need to make Egyptology an integral part of contemporary education in Africa.

### 2. Literature Review

*Osiris Rising*, like other fictional works of Armah, has elicited some critical comments. Peace Amala (2009) considers *Osiris Rising* as 'ingenious and remarkable in African fiction' (p.30). According to her, it presents us with something far compelling as it strives to uncover the understanding of Africa in a manner that stretches farther than the real quality of Egyptian life. Furthermore, Amala posits that *Osiris Rising* and *KMT: In The House Of Life* embody a landmark in the African fictional research. This, she attributes to Armah's more earnestly and outstanding 'search into Egypt as a new frontier of knowledge for African Literature' (59). Akhuemokhan I. Sophie (2010) argues that Armah's treatment of the symbols, the ankh and maat offers a compelling evaluation of Africa's history as well as a fascinating plan for a better future. She also avers that '*Osiris Rising* is undeniably old in the connection it makes between the affairs on the one side of the Continent and other, and between Africa's past and its future' (P.66). For Femi Abodurin (2010), Armah's major aim in *The Healers* and *Osiris Rising* is to incorporate the slightest adjustment – if not real review of the perceptions of other writers before him on issues concerning "healing' the black race's harassed socio-cultural and political psyche' (p.85), while Jude A. Agho (2012) states that *Osiris Rising* is ' a new wine in an old wine skin' (p.69), stressing that it is an analytical blend of the critique of the society of the first novels with the factual issues of the subsequent novels to produce a distinctive combination that is exclusive and authentic to Armah as a writer. Agho also argues that even though *Osiris Rising* is part of the 'historical' restoration or problem solving segment of Armah's fictional works, it does not give the hopeful spirit of *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers* (p.69). Consequently, Agho sees the work as presenting a gloomier picture of the potentials societal reform.

Kakraba A.D. and Cecilia Addei (2011) affirm that Armah's main view in *Osiris Rising* is that the coming of the Africans in Diaspora to Africa is a vital move toward unearthing their personality as Africans. They describe Armah in both

novels, *Osiris Rising* and *KMT: In the House of Life*, as a 're-creator' (p.426). For them, *Osiris Rising* and *KMT: In The House Of Life* are 'functionalistic' as well as marking the peak of Armah's search for true African identity, and they thus, see the novels as '...doors to the African identity' (426). Again, Kakraba and Addei see *Osiris Rising* as 'another of Armah's clarion call for unity in the convalescence of Africa's image' (p.431). One may agree with Kakraba and Addei's assertions above when one considers Armah's Pan- African posture in this novel.

As one reads *Osiris Rising*, one discerns that the major themes or subject matter which Armah portrays or pre-occupies himself with are the neo-colonization of Africa by the West, the oppression of Africans by the West and their African allies, and disenchantment on the part of Africans. But the focus or concern of this article is not to explore these themes rather it is to examine the literary or narrative technique used to explore or realize the themes in the novel.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

To examine the Narrative technique as a vehicle of meaning in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Osiris Rising*, the Formalists approach to the study of Literature would be adopted. The Formalists emphasize form over content. For them, form is what makes something art to begin with. So, in order to understand a work of art as a work of art, one must focus on the form. The Formalists dwelt on the 'literariness' of art. In other words, as Roman Jakobson puts it, 'the object of study in literary science is not literature but 'literariness, that is what makes a given work a literary work' (cited in Abrams 1981.166). Wellek and Warren(1956) re-echo the premium the Formalists place on the Formalist approach to Literature over and above other approaches – moral, psychological, biographical, sociological and archetypal thus: 'The natural and sensible starting point for work in literary scholarship is the interpretation and analysis of works of Literature themselves. After all, only the work themselves justify our interest in the life of the author, in his social environment and the whole process of Literature' (p.139).

Coleridge is believed to have propagated the seed for Formalism in his views that a piece of art exists and has life, and in his concept of organic unity which sees the whole as being the harmonious involvement of all the parts. This view was further developed into the Formalist approach by T.S. Eliot with his notion of '...arts for arts, rather than as an expression of social, religious, ethical, or political ideas and advocated the close study of the text of the work themselves' (Scott.1962.179). Accordingly, the Formalists focus basically on the intrinsic, shunning all extrinsic materials and interpretations as historic, moral, sociological, and concentrates on the aesthetics of the work.

While the Sociological approach to the study of Literature sees Literature as representing 'life' which is a social reality, recognizes the writer as a component of the community, whose sensibility is shaped by the social, political, religious and economic phenomena around him, and interprets the work of art in terms of its relationship with the society, the Formalists and New Critics of North America affirm that the work of art is independent of and share no relationship with the society. For the Formalists, criticism of a work of art should be ontological, devoid of extraneous elements. Literature should be studied from the angle of literary elements. And as Robert Penn Warren (cited in Scott (1962)) posits: 'Poetry does not inhere in any particular element but depends upon the set of relationships, the structure, which we call the poem' (p.181). Accordingly, Scott (1962) states: 'the critic, then, examines elements in their interconnectedness, assuming that the meaning is made up of matters of form (meter, image, diction, and so forth) and matters of content (tone, theme, and so forth) working not separately but together' (p.181).

Literary elements as mentioned above, refer to narrative technique. In the words of Mark Schorer (1961), 'When we speak of technique, then we speak of everything. For technique is the means by which the writer's experience, which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it, technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploiting, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and finally of evaluating it' (p.141). Implicit in the above, is that technique is a matter of form. For Schorer, technique is all the devices employed by the writer, which make for a better understanding of the content or subject matter of a work of art. Holman and Harmon (1992) refer to technique as '...how something is done rather than what is done' (p.472), while Nnolim (1999) posits that: 'Technique is the means by which an author organizes his material, the rhythm or form he imposes on the work in order to achieve his meaning and in order to convey that meaning to his audience' (p.215). One infers from Holman and Harmon, and Nnolim's definitions that technique refers to all the means, employed by a writer in exploring and developing his subject matter to make meaning, and to convey such meaning to his reader. Perhaps it is in recognition of the importance of technique and its usefulness to the novelist and literary criticism that Oakley Hall (1989) states:

Fiction is the unfolding of a tale, the events of which exist before the writing, only in the writer's mind. His effort is to enable the reader to experience those events he has seen in his imagination. To do this he must arrange patterns of stimuli to evoke those events that are real but only in ink smudges on paper. Writers of fiction have invented, borrowed, stolen, and inherited a bag of tricks to provide those evocations. The sum of those tricks is art of Literature (p.3).

One may unequivocally state here, that the 'bag of tricks' Oakley refers to above, is technique. The Formalist thus, studies how the writer has employed the narrative devices- techniques, the interrelatedness of all the parts at his disposal, to form a unit, a whole – the work of art, as well as convey his message to the reader.

Against the background of the Formalists approach to Literature, this article examines narrative Technique as a vehicle of meaning in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Osiris Rising*. Its thrust is to examine how the writer deploys such Narrative Techniques as character, Point of view and Symbol to convey such meanings as neo-colonialism, oppression and exploitation, and disenchantment, which are the basic themes of the work.

#### 4. Methodology

The article is carried out basically through qualitative method which involves the interpretation and analysis of the primary source. Other related materials such as textbooks, journal articles and critical works on the novels of Ayi Kwei Armah were also consulted to aid the study.

##### 4.1. Discussions: Point of view

In *Osiris Rising*, Armah adopts the third person omniscient point of view. The narrator tells the story of Ast, the African-American protagonist, as she returns to Africa to trace her ancestry. The narrator tells us that: 'Her doctorate focused on Kemet: She wrote her thesis on identity and social justice in the philosophy of Ancient Egypt. By graduation time her search for knowledge of self, of self within universe, had led her through a flow of changes, some so generous with knowledge they made pain worthwhile in the end. The search accelerated her decision to return' (p.8). Ast's return is also given impetus by her desire to learn the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs which her grandmother and name sake, Nwt had promised to teach her before she died: 'Nwt taught her to read, as her fourth birthday gift. At ten, Ast wanted a bicycle. Nwt had promised one if she'd let her teach her to read ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Her parents called the bargain mad, but it opened doors to her soul' (p.7).

Ast's return to Africa was further strengthened by her nostalgia to trace her roots, coupled with her zeal to contribute to Africa's intellectual development and liberate it from Western-held falsehood about its history and neo-colonialism. It is through her journey and interactions through the towns of Hapa, Manda and Bara that Armah reveals leadership failure; the government's propensity to oppress and suppress; the clandestine designs of the West to perpetuate neo-colonialism, as well as engender intellectual mediocrity in Africa. Ast feels fulfilled when she meets Asar after their successful reform of the curricula and syllabuses at the Teacher Training College, Manda. The narrator states that: 'She'd found the beginning of an inner peace she'd only imagined, never experienced in America. Under this sky, with these stars that seemed to exist not so much above her as around her, on this grass that also beckoned her to rest, she was home. Her mind came to Asar, the comfort of his presence' (p.233).

A major aspect of Point of view in *Osiris Rising* is authorial intrusion. It is through it Armah reveals his perceptions to the reader. The narrator quotes Netta as saying: 'There is no better ideal than the making of Africa' (p.78), and Asar as follows: 'We'll have to work against stiff odds to return our dismembered Continent into a healing society, Africa' (p.112). It is obvious that it is neither Netta nor Asar that is speaking in each of the above instances, but Armah. Armah appears to be saying that the only worthwhile venture which should be of paramount interest to all Africans, leaders and intellectuals alike, is the restoration and establishment of Africa's pride and glory in all spheres. To achieve this therefore, there is need for all African countries (neo-colonies) to come together, form a common front and work together to dismantle all obstacles which had hitherto, hindered Africa's development. In another instance, the narrator quotes Bai Kamara as saying: 'From the time I began teaching, all we Africans have done is to find stuff made – syllabuses, curricula, the whole educational system. We haven't created our own system. We have operated within this old system, sometimes we grumble...' (p.189). It is evident that Armah and not Bai Kamara that is identifying the Euro-centric education system and the lack of creativity on the part of the African intellectuals as the problem here. Armah seems to be saying that the lack of innovation, the seeming complacency – the regurgitation of the existing Western-centered education system, and the inability of the African intellectuals to create a replacement are the bane of Africa's development.

Similarly, the narrator quotes Asar as saying that it is time Africa rose to the challenge, looked inwards, revolutionized her economic policies and shook off the neo-colonial shackles of undemocratic institutions like the World Bank, UN and IMF:

But over the last few years, several of us were acutely aware that a social revolution in Africa would take a long preparatory work. The anti-colonial politicians never bothered to organize that kind of long-range work. Now we've got to do it unless we resign ourselves to this new form of slavery, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund beating out the rhythm for the dance of death ... it's a matter of bringing up generations conscious with democratic working and living habits ... The daily work of people capable of examining the World Bank, the UN and the IMF and seeing through them as inherently undemocratic institutions wrecking the lives of millions they're unaccountable to. If we could move a generation beyond the notion that voting politicians is democracy enough, if we can reach the point of refusing to have our economic lives run by dictators in banks and boardrooms, we can say we're working (p.116-117).

It is clear that Armah and not Asar is speaking here. Armah here presents his socio-economic and political blueprint for Africa – the need for a radical and drastic re-orientation. Armah seems to be saying that it is high time Africa rose to the occasion and tackle Africa's problems neo-colonialism and leadership, head long. Apart from waking up from our political stupor, and holding our politicians, nay leaders accountable, Armah appears to be saying that it is time Africa freed herself from the claws of undemocratic multinational institutions as World Bank, UN and IMF which had held Africa bound, if Africa must get it right.

Armah's deployment of the third person omniscient point of view no doubt, enables him to achieve a great deal of realism and authenticity in *Osiris Rising*, as well as enhances the understanding of the work. It also enables the reader to understand the writer's perception of the world around him.

##### 4.2. Character / Characterization

A major and unique feature of Armah's works is his masterly delineation and categorization of his characters, his juxtaposition of good characters – characters who represent virtue, with evil or bad characters – characters who represent vice. This bi-partite delineation of characters is evident in *Osiris Rising*. In this novel, we have the progressives and the

conservatives. The progressives are characters who are motivated by the need to unearth the historical truth and debunk all Western falsehood and distorted information about Africa's history; as well as the need to liberate Africa's educational system from Euro-supremacist fetters and colonialism.

The progressives are the intellectuals: Ast, Asar and other innovators at the Teacher Training College, Manda, and Ama Tete. Ast, the protagonist, named after the 'African Ast, most intelligent divinity' (p.7), is portrayed as a creative and intelligent character in *Osiris Rising*. Ast is a historian and holds a doctorate degree in Ancient Egyptology from Emerson, America. Apart from her desire to discover her African ancestry given momentum by the article entitled 'Who We Are and Why' (9), which Asar had mimeographed to her while she was yet in America, and to get information about the symbol 'ankh', Ast has one vision for returning to Africa as she tells Netta: 'I want to work in a society I belong to, with friends moving in directions I can live with' ... 'it would have to be in Africa, because of Who we are, who I am' (p.69), and Asar: 'My being here is the best statement of intentions I could ever make. I 'd like to work here like you' (p.112). This explains why she is not swayed nor enticed by and, bluntly rejects the offer D.D. makes to her of an apartment 'fully furnished, all amenities and appliances included' with 'a cook, a car, a chauffeur and a servant plus a Gardner' (p.33) in a villa, together with an endowment from 'research imprest', free publications, and unlimited travels to US with their attendant allowances. She sees these as bait against and distractions to her vision.

Ast is in Africa not just to do any kind of work but to contribute meaningfully towards the making of a better Africa. Again, she tells Asar; 'I know I want to do the kind of work you describe even when you're just talking casually. Innovation, creation, revolution, everything necessary to remake Africa. Using as you say, living essences brought up from hidden roots' (p.243). The realization of this vision is uppermost in Ast's heart and this she earnestly desires. Hence she tells Asar: 'it doesn't matter how clear my vision of Africa may be. If I can't connect through work, the vision is useless' (p.244).

Ast finds realization of this vision when she and other innovators at the Teacher Training College, Manda, work assiduously, against stiff oppositions, to change the old education system. Apart from promoting mediocrity, the educational system we encounter in *Osiris Rising* is Euro-centric. It is designed to debase Africa and promote imperialism. To actualize this, the curricula for African Studies, History and Literature are designed to falsify, distort and even obliterate all facts about Africa's history and civilization, to demonstrate Westernization, and to project same as a model which Africa must learn from or imitate. It is this disparaging and enslaving educational system that Ast collaborates with the innovator to change or replace with a new education system for Africa - an education system that would liberate Africa from neo-colonial tethers and subjugation. Asar puts it succinctly thus: 'We advocate the reinstatement of ancient Egypt at the center of African history and culture. We think African Studies program should embrace the intellectual universe of our entire continent, including Ancient Egypt' (p.215).

On his own part, Asar is an intellectual with a vision of 'a unified Africa' (p.61). This vision becomes a driving factor for his actions and gives impetus to all his intellectual works which are directed towards Africa's future as well as changing the African society. In what seems to be his therapy for healing African society, Asar emphasizes the need for African countries (neo-colonies) to come together, unite, form a common front and work against all forces that had torn and shattered the continent, Africa: 'We 'll have to work against stiff odds to turn our dismembered continent into a healing society, Africa' (p.112).

Asar is a graduate of English also from Emerson who excelled in all spheres. Netta tells Ast that 'he did so many things well. People were certain he was going to be a big shot fast' (p.70). But interestingly, Asar is different from other African elites. On graduation, he chose to be a revolutionary, he 'went south to the freedom wars' (p.71) and later as a teacher. Again, Netta tells Ast: '... here educated people use their intelligence to avoid risk, to accumulate power, money, privileges. We call it security ... but Asar used his gifts to design high risk plan' (p.71). Thus unlike other African elites, Asar directs his intelligence, energy and actions towards profitable venture in line with his vision - 'liberation work' (p.71), which of course, is Africa's problem. Once again, Netta informs Ast that 'Asar doesn't make a carrier of analyzing problems. He proceeds to put his conclusions into practice. Starting with his own life. Intellectuals here don't do that. If they have a principle, it's never to let principle interfere with expediency' (p.71). It is against this backdrop that Asar mobilizes other intellectuals of like minds at the Faculty of Humanities, Teacher Training College, Manda, against stiff opposition by the conservatives, to revolutionize the education system and replace it with a new one.

More interesting is the fact that as a liberator or revolutionary, Asar is not unaware of the risk involved, that he might be killed in the struggle. Allaying Ast's fears of his being killed by the Security Chief, DD, Asar says:

I can't structure my life around the paranoid fears of a security boss. What we're doing is only a beginning. I'm not indispensable. There are several of us working toward the future ... we've thoughts 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 (p.165).

Here then is the spirit of a true, selfless liberator who is ever ready to damn all odds and consequences and even lay down his life for a common cause, to better the society.

Ama Tete, the historian, teacher and farmer at Bara, is the repository of the people's history. She also has a doctorate but was disenchanted by the kind of education she received during her high school. She tells Ast and Asar that she had to accept what she was taught as a student, without question, to enable her pass her certificate exams (p.250), just like Lindela in *KMT: In the House of Life*. It is Ama Tete who puts the records straight. She identifies and confirms Ast's 'Ankh' as having originated from Bara, and points out that its meaning has to do with its history (253). Apart from debunking all the Whites' atrocious and outrageous lies and views on the existence of a secret society, and the origin and significance of the symbol 'Ankh', all aimed at denigrating Africa and making Africans seem inferior, Ama Tete's account

reveals the true identity of Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano's self-acclaimed royal ancestry to the utter disappointment and discomfiture of Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano and his over-bloated ego (p.258-269). The characters in this group are visionary and selfless intellectuals who are committed towards ensuring positive changes and better future for Africa.

In contrast, we have in *Osiris Rising*, intellectuals – characters whose motivation is basically to maintain the status quo, and stop any change in Africa. In this group are: Seth Soja Spencer, the Deputy Director, State Security Service; Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano, Prince Wossen, and the conservatives – Professor Wright Woolley, Professor Clive Jayasenkara Pandamasana and Dr. Ezekiel Jehosophat Nguruwe of the Faculty of Humanities, Teacher Training College, Manda.

Seth Soja Spencer, the Deputy Director, State Security Service, holds a doctorate in Criminology also from Emerson. He is a womanizer, brute and rapist (p.62) who according to Netta, possesses 'Raw ambition' desires 'Destructive forms of power, Control' and has 'found the levers of neo-colonial power' (p.75). Ast tells Asar: 'He may be incompetent when it comes to creating something useful. But he is capable of murder, enormous destruction' (208). Seth Soja Spencer's character could be understood from two perspectives. Firstly, we see him as representative of the African elites, the intelligentsia, who rather than use their education wisely, to set Africa free from colonialism, feel insensitive and less concerned about Africa's problem; those elite whose interest is in the 'belly level', and who focus their mind mainly on 'The charmed life while the continent burns' (p.76), and possession of wealth, money. Consequently, they engage in all kinds of bizarre, criminal actions to actualize their dreams. They as well, hate and term mad, any one who puts his intelligence into the struggle to liberate the African continent from the shackles of neo-colonialism.

Again, the African intellectuals are so indoctrinated and Euro-centric that they make Europe their focal point that they no longer consider themselves Africans or have dealings with Africa. They see Europe as their home. According to Asar: 'a lot of African intellectuals dream of going home to Europe any other year' (p.106).

Secondly, Seth Soja Spencer, as the Deputy Director, State Security Service is representative of the misdirected and visionless government or leadership in Africa. The leaders believe so much in capitalism and detest communism. They hinge the survival of Africa on the West. African leaders see the world as 'an interdependence system' and disregard independence. For them, independence 'only stabilized European and American control' of Africa and not a 'revolt against white power' (p.36). This is why the leaders tag Communists and all those who advocate a change in the system as subversive elements who must be crushed by all means. African leaders no longer care nor do believe in a just system. DD tells Ast: 'you know, justice is a vague concept, meaningless except to intellectuals. From whose point of view is a system just or unjust? Look, the new world order is a system of cooperation, division of labor, mutual respect among those who deserve respect' (p.37). To this end therefore, African leaders see their relationship with European and American powers, and such neo-colonial and undemocratic institutions as IMF, World Bank and UN, as rosy and inseparable. Thus, any one or group that goes contrary to the above views of the African government / leaders must be exterminated. For these reason, Seth see Asar as a threat and subsequently murders him in the most gruesome manner (p.305).

Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano is the African- American Sheldon Tubman, descendant of Apo, the once freed slave that turned slaver (p.206), the 'prototype' African elite 'hustler' who returns to Africa. His lack of vision and duplicity lie in the multiplicity of names he bears upon his return to Africa – Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano which Bailey refers to as 'names better left to rot in peace'... Ras the oblivious little emperor, Jomo the tribalist dictator serving Africa's enemies, Equiano the blind victim, medium of European stereotypes, Cinque the freed slave turned slaver' (p.96). We see him as representing the African elites in Diaspora with ill-conceived, half-baked and undigested ideology, who have an erroneous perception of themselves and who collude with the Western world to rip-off Africa and Africans.

Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano returns to Africa and uses Africa as a cover up for his dubious activities. Bailey says of him: Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano has transposed his American Africult here. His line is he's offering the uprooted their lost roots. Turning Americans into Africans. Only his process has nothing to do with Africa. It's a funky mix of Christianity, Islam and Negritude. Take those three anti-African slave philosophies, mix them, and what d'you get? Something onta sight weird. That's what he has on offer (p.125).

Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano sees himself as a 'fixer' (128) and thus dupes and deceives unsuspecting African-Americans through his church which he claims, aims at turning Americans with African roots back to Africa, making them 'leave their American selves behind' (p.136). Bailey notes that he is 'one more hustler using Africa to cover ego needs' (p.137). In his sermon, Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano, the fake prophet feeds his followers with falsehood. He shows his initiates and worshippers the ( a broken Ankh) claiming it is 'Africa's sign of power' (p.143), distorts the historical account and meaning of the Ankh and arrogates the knowledge to his ancestors, as well as lays claim to it as the only survivor; 'I Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano, am the last repository of that secret knowledge in our family. I am the keeper of the sign' (p.144), which Ama Tete refers to as suffering from 'the glory syndrome' (p.254).

The African –American Prince Wossen, the fake Ethiopian Prince is the errand boy to Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano and Seth Soja Spencer, who apart from being a dupe and crook, is also like his masters, bereft of vision and sense of direction. He colludes with Seth and Professor Wright Woolley to frame Asar up by planting the incriminating shinning suit case in Asar's apartment.

Professor Wright Woolley a third class degree graduate in English from Cambridge, was employed as Assistant District Commissioner then Assistant Regional Commissioner by the Colonial Administration and on the heels of independence in the country, he was appointed Head of African Studies and latter Professor of African Studies at Manda. He and Professor Clive Jayasekara Pandamasana, the Indian, who managed to graduate from Oxford and could not get a job due to his low academic credential, until appointed Lecturer and given rapid promotion up to Professorship, specializing in British History, which had 'deserted him' (p.225) while in school at Oxford, are misfits, square pegs in round holes. On his own part, Dr. Ezekiel Johosophat Nguruwe is a South African and holds a doctorate in English Language. He is a prototype

of the self-centered African intellectuals who focus on 'belly level'... '... while the continent burns.' He had escaped the 'involvement in the freedom struggle' (p.227) to take a job as a lecturer and Head of the English Department, at Manda, while the war was on in his Country. The trio of Professor Wright Woolley, Professor Clive Jayasekara Pandamasa and Dr. Ezekiel Johosopha Nguruwe see Asar and his team, who are better qualified and more knowledgeable, as a threat to their career and what they stand for, hence, they mount stiff opposition, including framing up Asar, to the changes they advocate in the Euro-centric curricula and syllabuses in the African Studies, at the Faculty of Humanities, Teacher, Training College, Manda.

The characters in this group are vicious as their actions and thoughts are directed at oppressing and exploiting Africa and Africans while entrenching neo-colonialism in Africa.

#### 4.3. Symbols

Apart from the high degree of formal language in line with the seriousness and great importance of his subject matter to Africa and the Africans, and the clear and concise language with which he registers his disenchantment with the African elites' seeming insensitivity over the plights of Africa, Armah deploys striking symbols to convey his message in the novel, *Osiris Rising*. The education system with its attendant curricula and syllabuses is symbolic of all policies and programmes designed by the West to cast aspersion on and relegate Africa to the background, and to make Africa inferior to the West. Also, it symbolizes all wide-spread distorted and concocted falsehood about Africa's culture and identity. Similarly, the 'long, khaki-colored rectangular four stories high' Ministry of Education building, 'clearly constructed to shut out sunshine' (p.155) is symbolic of its underlying grand design to keep Africans in mental darkness, to deprive them of true knowledge and the universe.

Equally symbolic is the broken 'ankh' which Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano parades and sees as 'a symbol of royal power, the power of kings and queens' (p.259). It signifies the misconstrued and misconceived views of the African elites in Diaspora, the African-Americans, about their roots and Africa. The taking out of the African slave woman's eyes, by her master, thereby perpetually shutting off her vision and future is significant of the way and manner the Black race, indeed Africans, are oppressed and suppressed by the Whites. In the same vein, the distortion of historical facts and the 'compromise' made by the author of *Journey to the Source*, to please his European-American readership, and to make a living, is representational of Europeans and Americans' oppressive exploitative tendencies in Africa.

Again, we see such institutions as the IMF, UN and World Bank, multinational corporations as Kaiserlver, and the People to Peoples US Aid as signifying the Western neo-colonial claws on and exploitation and oppression of Africa. The State Security Service (SSS) apparatus with its highly sophisticated modern electronic monitoring gadgets and weaponry at both the airport and HQS, represent oppression as these are used to intimidate and in most cases, exterminate citizens and perceived enemies.

The brutal murder of Asar, in cold blood, by Seth Soja Spencer, the DD, Security Chief, is symbolic of the way the government and leadership in Africa no longer have regard for human life and mindlessly exterminate their visionary intellectuals as a means of stemming genuine criticism of government's obnoxious and anti-people's programmes and policies.

Armah's protagonists, the progressives - Ast, Asar, Ama Tete and the other progressives represent African intellectuals, elites whose ideas, yearnings and aspirations, and zeal to advance the course of Africa, to make African and Africans take their pride of place in the comity of continents are not allowed to come to fruition. They are intimidated, maimed or killed and silenced for life. These represent good or virtue.

Similarly, Seth Soja Spencer, Ras Jomo Cinque Equiano, Wossen, the fake Ethiopian prince and the Conservatives at the Teacher Training College, Manda, apart from representing all forces, internal and external, which repress Africa and Africans, symbolize evil or vice. From the above symbols, Armah seems to be saying that Africa's unfortunate relationship with the West, Europe and America is Africa's bane.

#### 5. Conclusion

Armah is a novelist who uses his craft to project his views or perceptions about the socio-political, economic, cultural and historical spheres of Africa. He is a Pan-African, in other words, he uses his art to project a better Africa. Armah has dexterously deployed narrative technique as point of view, character/ characterization and symbols to convey such messages as neo-colonialism and the oppression and exploitation of the Africa by the West, Europe and America, and the disenchantment on the part of the Africans, which form the major themes or subject matter of work, *Osiris Rising*.

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