

# BOOKS AND WRITERS AS DRIVERS OF CIVILIZATION

By

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“I believe that African intellectuals must align themselves with the struggle of the African masses for a meaningful national idea; for we must strive for a form of social organization that will free manacled spirit and energy of our people so we can build a new country and sing a new song. Perhaps in a small way, the African writer can help in articulating the feelings behind this struggle.”

- Ngugi Wa Thiongo in Home coming

## ABSTRACT

*The paper examined the problems of books and writer as drivers of civilization. A novel or book can exercise a considerable moral, education, and psychological effect on the reader even without deliberately setting out to do so. No mature or intelligent person will be impressed with a work which has no moral or social import. Based on experience and research evidence, the more people read standard books, the more they will get the feel of the language of communication. The paper recommended that all facts are vital and sacred and should be published without fear or favour The paper concluded that every material for publication must be subjected to investigation, vetting, and scrutiny before going to the press.*

Keywords: Books, Writers, Novels, Social, Action, Civilization and Teacher

## INTRODUCTION

African writers and their books in general function in society as a mirror and criticism of values and in so doing elevates and transforms human experience. Through words, a

book can accomplish its dual role in society: to give pleasure and to educate. Books are made to be enjoyed. A book helps to relax and get away from the monotony and the strain of ordinary daily preoccupations and worries. But it relaxes and distracts in a way in which mental laziness is excluded. This is because while the reading of a book gives pleasure, it also at the same time brings into play faculties of the mind that would otherwise lie dormant. This is why the pleasure we derive come from a higher order, because it is from a higher kind of activity.

A novel or book can exercise considerably moral educative and psychological effect on the reader even without deliberately setting out to do so. No mature and intelligent person will be impressed with a work which has no moral and social import (Egonu, 1981). The greatness of a literary work lies in its moral stature.

Such a work should be able to offer the reader wisdom, teach language and culture and philosophize on various aspect of life. The reader may not agree with this interpretation of life; but his reading will have made him aware of other realities and other ways of looking at life. Admittedly, the book will have enlarged his experiences and sense of life. That is why we say that the man who shut the book at the last page will be different man from the one who opened it, though he may not be quite aware of it.

All literary art can be considered as a form of propaganda, for the writer is the persuasive purveyor of an ideology and his work is an effort, conscious or unconscious, to influence the reader to share a certain attitude towards life. The reader is led to believe something and the technique of the writer is hypnotic because the art of the presentation seduces the reader. Thus, a literary work can engender reactions to the social realities it portrays. It can exert pressure on human sensibilities and awareness and in so doing accelerate the maturation of social and political crisis which are ingredients of revolutionary movements. This is, what Jean-Paul Sartre calls "Literature

‘engage’” (committed literature), that is, literature that portrays the commitment of art and the individual to the exigencies of political and social action. (Sartre, 1981).

The content of this paper will, therefore, be discussed under the following headings:

1. Social awareness in literature
2. Books writers and civilization
3. Traditional African Education Civilization
4. Reading Books and literature coaching
5. Awareness for Social Changes and Action
6. The African writer as a teacher

### **SOCIAL AWARENESS IN BOOKS**

It is the purpose of this paper, therefore, to bring into focus what the researcher consider to be a very profound theme developed in varying degrees by seven African writers in their novels: the raising of social awareness among the people so that they may become aware of their state of misery as well as of their potential strength. This is evident in the books or novels which form the basis of this study: Sembene Ousmane’s *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu (God’s Bits of Wood)* (1962), Soyinka’s *The Interpreters* (1965), Flora Nwapa’s *Efuru* (1966), Chinua Achebe’s *A man of the people* (1966), Ngugi’s *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), Armah’s *The beautiful ones are not yet Born* (1968) Fafunwa’s *History of West African* (1974) and Eyibe’s *The Potter’s clay* (2011).

In *Efuru*, the writer tries to dramatize the importance of children in their African marriage, on the value that Africans attach to children in their traditional and social set-up. The first novel is set in rural Igbo land. *Efuru* is a beautiful, wealthy and respected woman who, however, cannot bear children successfully or be happy in marriage. The woman for this unhappiness is that she has been chosen by river goddess, Uhamiri, to be her companion and, as far as earthly companions are concerned, she must remain

alone. We are not going to compare the treatment Flora Nwapa gave to this story with the one Elechi Amadi gave to a similar theme in *The Concubine* (1965). This is objective of the study. The researchers and authors are concerned with the traditional and social picture that Flora Nwapa offers of a female character and her vision of the world. Speaking of river goddess, Uhamiri, Flora Nwapa writes at the end of her novel:

“She was as old as the lake itself. She was happy, she was wealthy, she was beautiful, she gave women beauty and wealth, but she had no child. She had never experienced the joy of motherhood, why then did the women worship her?”

These closing lines seem to give the clue to the whole book. No happiness can be achieved for a woman unless in child bearing. Like a seasonal flowering plant whose importance to an environment is normally recognized when it flowers, a woman’s respect and social status are largely seen in many traditional and social circles by the number of her issues. A failure to conceive is equated by personal disaster. Indeed some tribes of Zaire consider a childless woman so unfortunate that she is buried with a spear in her stomach, so that she will not be born in the same condition.

It is also not uncommon to witness in some African homes self-confessed witches accepting responsibilities for “celling” the wombs of women. A vendetta tale is told in Nigeria’s Benin city, the cockpit of African traditional culture, of a powerful Oba whose curse on his sub-chief culminated in the latter descendants bearing no issues as exactly predicted by the Oba. The Oba had accused the sub-chief of misappropriating stool land revenue. Throughout *Efuru*, the importance of children in marriage is repeated over and over again:

“We are not going to eat happy marriage. Marriage must be fruitful.” Say the village-women, watching *Efuru* and *Eneberi*, swimming in the lake: “of what use is it if your

husband likes your body, worships you and buys everything in the market for you and you are not productive?” or later:

“you don’t pluck children from a tree, you know. You don’t fish for them either. Money cannot buy them. Happiness cannot give you children.”

From such lines, however, Flora Nwapa makes us aware of the traditional and African civilization that places social importance in children in African marriages. Efuru’s first husband, Adizue, deserts her and does not even return for the burial of their only child. Her second, Eneberi has an illicit affair with another woman who bears him a child. He eventually goes to prison for an unspecified offence and is finally divorced by Efuru for wrongly accusing her of adultery. Efuru ends where she began in her father’s house, except that her father is now dead. She is childless, husbandless, fatherless, quite alone.

This is the totality of the action dramatized in Efuru. In spite of its potentially significant themes, the novel fails to grip; it leaves the reader cold and uninvolved. This is because of two serious faults in the writer’s handling of her narrative and her attitude to her story.

We consider the themes of the novel as potentially significant because they can be used to question the dominant attitude among Africans to children as the basic, if not the only, reason for marriage and also that man’s complex relationship with the gods. Flora Nwapa shows no moral involvement in the realities behind her tale. Her novels would be more successful if she could involve the reader by first involving herself in the deep moral problems which she mentions, but leaves unquestioned. But the biggest contradiction is that Efuru, for all her qualities and gifts, considers her life as valueless since she fails to have a child. She cannot find in herself enough resources to counterbalance her sterility and never thinks of devoting her energies to something else. If a

woman rejects the view that the “birth of a child is a crowning glory” (Achebe, 1958) is she still an African?

A very good example of social awareness in a literary work is Sembene Ousmane’s *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* (God’s Bits of wood). This book is a literary transposition of the historic strike by black railway workers between October 1947 and March 1948, which paralyzed services between Senegal and Niger. The book exposes the social, and economic exploitation of the French colonial system in that part of West Africa and the measures taken by the masses to improve their social situation. The narration shows an African society going through radical transformation as a result of conflict between capital and labour. The exploited and ill-treated mass of African workers were able to organize resistance against the white exploiters and in spite of hardship, threats and intrigues carried their fight to victory. Their triumph over the all powerful white railroad overlords and technocrats demonstrates the irresistible force of collective and determined action and underscores the need for proletarian solidarity against all forms of exploitation. The novel is a powerful expression of the belief in human dignity especially as expressed through labour and conviction that life ought to be a heroic and collective struggle to defend the rights of all men to enjoy the fruits of their labour. This, in the final analysis, is the ultimate goal of proletarian revolutionary struggle against the exploiters and profiteers of the workers’ sweat and toil.

Ngugi Wa Thiong, *A Grain of Wheat* (1968) has always been regarded as a political and social novel, depicting the ups and downs of Kenya’s struggle for Freedom. As a patriot, Ngugi is thrilled by the course and heroism displayed in the struggles that have been betrayed by his fellow countrymen. Since the days of the slave trade to colonization, Africa has suffered and is a victim of Europe. But she has not always been a passive victim. She fought back; she often protested and pleaded. But occasionally, she

has behaved like the proverbial lizard who ruined his own mother's funeral. He has out of some incredible blindness, lent a hand to her own destruction.

*A Grain of Wheat* is not only a novel of protest but also that of vindication. Ngugi sets out to dispel the colonial myth that the Mau Mau was something purely and simply evil, atavistic and completely unrelated to the main stream of African nationalism or any decent political sentiments. To most Africans, Mau Mau, was a heroic and glorious aspect of that main stream. The basic objectives of Mau Mau revolutionaries were to drive out the Europeans, seize the government, and give back to the Kenya peasants their stolen lands and property.

*A Grain of Wheat* is thus, a political and social novel of vindication portraying and justifying Kenya's struggle for independence and the Mau Mau movement as the core of the struggle. Therefore, all those who took part in that struggle are the heroes good people as contrasted with those who tried to frustrate it lizards, either directly through tyranny and oppression trying to break the spirit of the people, or indirectly through collaboration with the colonial rulers. For Ngugi the leaders of their struggle may include the "Burning Spear" but its backbone is those ordinary men and women whose little, nameless, unremembered acts of the self-denial and sacrifice are essential to sustain any movement of national liberation or reconstruction. Thus, it is the small men and women Kihkika, Mugo, Ginonyo, Mumbi, Warui, Wambui and Njeri who are the heroes and heroines of the novel. But Kihkika stands pre-eminent among them: he is the young hero who sees the vision of an independent Kenya, is "moved by the story of Moses and the children of Israel," and like the great prophet who hopes to lead his people to the Promised Land. His eloquence makes the people socially aware of their servitude and inspires them to plunge into the struggle for freedom; it is his martyrdom which waters the tree of freedom and keeps the struggle alive by infusing new life into the party, which finally leads to freedom.

The biblical text which proclaims the central message of the novel and forms part of the answer to a rhetorical question posed by St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians: “But you may ask, how are the dead raised? In what kind of body? How foolish! The seed you sow does not come to life unless it has first died; and what you sow is the body that shall be, but a naked grain, perhaps of wheat, or is of some other kind. Kihkika is, therefore, the seed which, by dying first, comes to life: the ‘corn of wheat’ which by falling into the ground and dying bring forth much fruit’. These are the bones of the story that Ngugi has stretched out in *A Grain of wheat*.

Armah, Soyinka and Achebe seem to adopt an identical narrative approach in their novels: a critical look at social situation in post-independence Africa. These writers attack the post-independence. The failure of independence is regarded as evidence of the failure of the elites to justify themselves to the masses and validate their claim to leadership. These three novelists see the post-independence leaders as betraying the pledges they made in nationalist days to create a just, egalitarian and contented new states out of the colonial societies. The writers attack the elite most sharply for creating a standard of living for themselves out of proportion with the national level of economic production. Most of the social criticisms can be treated to this major accusation, that the elite have used their privilege political, social and administrative position to appropriate the meager national resources.

Abernathy (1981) has tried to find an explanation for this situation in his work: “The government had committed itself to bring about greater equality, yet it was the government officials themselves who were far above the common man in education, income, social status and political power hence the officials would be the first to suffer losses from any leveling reforms they might institute. This conflict of interest proved difficult, if not impossible to resolve.



Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1964) which deals mainly with the power struggle among the elite is thematically structured around images of "eating" and "sharing". The politics of chief Ngugi and chief Koko is "eating" politics. When Nanga appeals to Odili to leave his school mastering in the hinterland and come down to the capital city and join a government department as a civil servant, his reason is expressed in the language of "national cake;" politics, he must come and help to secure his people's share of the national cake.

"Our people, says Nanga, must press for their fair share of the national cake". Everywhere in the novel, in the parliament, among the people, during political campaigns, the theme is the same: national politics is a frantic struggle for a share of the "national cake" if the nation is not being "eating", it is being fought over. "Eating and sharing" has become an all-pervasive symbol for expressing the absence of health and constructiveness in the body politic.

"Eating" and "sharing" images also feature prominently in *The Interpreters* (1965) and *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*. (1968)

The hectic scramble for national resources goes on in these two novels too. The social situation here shows that the politicians as well as lesser citizens are staunch believers in taking what one can get out of the general coffers. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet*

Born (1968) opens with a bus-conductor trying to steal money from passengers fare. Confronted with an apparently open-eyed watcher, who turns out to be a sleeping passenger, he offers: "You see, we can share". It is all sharing and eating. When the man attempts to dissociate himself from the shoddy boat deal between Koomson and his mother-in-law, his wife remonstrates with him: "why are you trying to cut yourself apart from what goes for all of us.....? You will be eating it with us when it is ripe."

Armah sees the fatal social disease in his country, Ghana as this "eating" propensity. Nothing sums it up better than the crude semi-literate dambing on the wall of a latrine: "SOCIALISM-CHOP MAKE I CHOP CONTREY BROKE.

### **BOOKS, WRITERS AND CIVILIZATION**

In *The Interpreters*, Soyinka's eyes see the many ways which the elite invent occasions to indulge their appetites. One of his "interpreters" seizes on the funeral of Sir Derinole to comment on the endless orgies and parties of the elite: "Thank God, said Sagoe, for our orgiastic funerals. If he ever freelanced he knew where to go lean days.

Weddings also, yes, and child-naming, and engagements, cock-tail parties, but a funeral with its night-long waking, its outing, its forty days turning over of the body, its memorial service only a few days later, its sudden irrational remembrance feasts- a man could spend his entire life just feeding on a dead man. And many did. Both novels are full of images of throat and belly and of filth and decay arising from intemperate eating. In *The Interpreters*, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not yet Born* and to some extent *A Man of the people*, the attack of the writers focuses attention on the social vices. The philosophy of "eating while you may" spread in these novels like a dangerous fingers across the face of national life; destroying and disfiguring it and even threatening to kill the host altogether. Temporary reprieve only came with a military take-over.

Eyibe's *The Potter's Clay* (2011) is a social novel of lamentation and critique of a contemporary society which appears the most perverted and harmful in history. He laments that injustice is the standard behaviour such that many people do not know any more what it means to act right and do good in society. The social environment of the contemporary society reeks with injustice, dishonesty and pernicious anaemia. No nation, family, tongue or person is spared. He regrets bitterly that wherever you turn moral pollution, deprivation, crime, corruption and violence are visible. He regrets that many youths parade degrees, certificates, and diplomas but not qualified to do the productive and skilled work needed for the welfare of their developing nations.

Eyibe specially points out that one thing has enlarged social problems is the indiscriminate production and use of hard drugs, resulting in strange behaviour among the youths of today. He decries the social problems of indecent dressing, divorce, secret cults, and prostitution and examination malpractice among young people. He opines that the only way open to the bewildered parents and teachers is to get hold of their children and youths and re-orientate them towards positive values of training, discipline, self-control, education, responsibility, humility and hard work, after all criminals are the products of bad homes.

### **AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CIVILIZATION**

Long before the advent of colonial masters to the West Coast of Africa, there existed the traditional or indigenous education which taught our young and inexperienced members the inculcation of skills, knowledge and attitudes that will fit them to live usefully in our African societies. Fafunwa (1974) observed that the aims and objectives of traditional education are:

- I. To develop character of the individual child;
- II. To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority;

- III. To develop the child's latent physical skills;
- IV. To develop intellectual skills;
- V. To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour;
- VI. To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs; and finally
- VII. To understand, appreciate, and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

To achieve these aims and objectives, there were carefully planned programmes of training and initiation where various institutions transmitted knowledge, skills, ideas, special training and codes of behaviour to the young and inexperienced in the traditional society. Suffice it to say that traditional education was conducted mostly through public discussions and imitation in village squares where young people and adults were educated on traditional laws, proverbs, social values, norms and traditions. In traditional societies, the apprenticeship system was practiced extensively for the training of young men and women in skills such as tailoring, crafts, wood carving, iron smelting, brick laying, gold-smithing as well as homemaking and marriage for women. Indeed, the apprenticeship period lasts for a number of years, and this course, depends on the person who is under an agreement to serve and his master-trainer. Similarly, there existed associations of herbalists, goldsmiths, wood carvers, tailors, metal workers who joined together in former times to help one another and to design programmes of training, initiation, community education, homemaking, traditional values, and respect for elders, ancestral beliefs, solemn responsibility, justice or worth. It must be noted, however, that a well-educated person in traditional education must not only be respected in the society but also knowledgeable in the traditional education curriculum was aimed at developing the whole person because it encompasses the entire spectrum of civic education, domestic education, moral education, vocational education as well as the acquisition of survival skills for solving human problems of the period.

Unfortunately, the advent of Islamic, Christian and colonial education brought about rifts in the traditional education and things, as Achebe (1958) pointed out have fallen apart since then.

### **READING BOOKS AND LITERACY COACHING**

The acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulation, communication and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning and reading of literature. If we define literature and books is language used with the greatest skill in writings about sources of information and culture esteemed for their beauty of form and style, then reading without literature would be a poor relation indeed (Gateside, 1975, Watts 1989). From the stand point of culture and it's bearing upon personality and character, publication of many good books by today's intellectuals of travel, culture, biography, natural history, or popular science for social awareness and action; all, provide efficient reading for those seeking to widen their literary horizon, acquire knowledge, ideas, literary and general education that can help individuals and nations realize the new millennium development goals. (Eyibe, 2012)

### **AWARENESS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AND ACTION**

It appears that primary objective of these seven African writers is the raising of awareness among the people so that they may become aware of their social situation. Similarly, the perpetrators of social abuse are also made aware of their crime, for as Karl Marx said, literature must force people to be conscious of themselves, even against their will. This is committed literature. Chinua Achebe put it this way: "commitment may be defined as a sense of obligation or a strong attachment to a cause. When we speak of a writer's commitment we mean his attachment to particular social aims and the use of his writing to advance those aims. This, of course, implies a belief that literature can and

should be used as a force for social change, and that a writer has a responsibility to do so. In other words, the age when literature was referred to as “Art’s Sake” has passed. Literature should be seen as socially responsible, especially in those parts of the world where rapid social changes are taking place or where social oppression occurs. Africa fits both criteria: it is undergoing radical changes and its people are subjected to foreign and a domestic influence as seen in Eyibe’s *The Potter’s Clay* (2011). The main objection in *Efuru* is that by making her heroine unique among her fellow-villagers and by reporting the unanimously hostile and adverse comments of the other women on every one of *Efuru*’s decisions and actions, Flora Nwapa gives a disturbing picture of narrow-mindedness, superstition, malevolence, greed and fear in social and traditional African might go contrary to what she has thought to defend. Considering her performance in both *Efuru* and *Idu* one cannot help wondering the motives of Flora Nwapa. In her novels there is a complete absence of that phenomenon that has been described by various writers as the impulse to write which “kicks you in the pit of your stomach” in *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu* (God’s Bits of wood) Sembane Ousmane adopts the technique of exposing and extolling. He is a revolutionary literature. For the people. In his book, he identified the exploiters of the people – the white railroad overlords, and showed how a whole African population—men, women, children and workers organized a demonstration against social, economic and cultural exploitation: their courage, heroism and devotion to the cause of social change.

In *Grain of Wheat*, Ngugi Wa Thion shows how a Mau Mau select soldier, a man who accepted the use of violence as a legitimate mode of social and political action could embody the Christian message. Ngugi believes that Christianity does not condemn the use of violence unequivocally. Violence is criminal only when it is used “to protect an unjust social order. It is not savagery: it purifies man. The essence of Christianity is contained not in the idea of eschewing violence at all costs but in that of redemption through suffering and sacrifice. Jesus became the Christ by the act of crucifixion, by his

willingness to sacrifice himself for the good of others. By saying that “if Christ had lived in Kenya in 1952... he would have been crucified as a Mau Mau terrorist, Ngugi leaves little doubt in his belief that Kihika is a true Christ who, through sacrifice brings about a revolution in the lives of his friends and followers by showing them the way to spiritual regeneration, and to the birth of a new Kenya.

Like Soyinka, Armah sees the common people in the dual image of victim and evil-doer. But their evil-doing is reduced by their being vulnerable and lacking in social power. But are reproached for lacking the moral will to resist corruption, but it is also pointed out that they are exposed unceasingly to the seduction of corruption. They observe those who adopt short cuts to fame, wealth and power, and the hardship which is the lot of the honest and morally fastidious. Nothing is done to give respectability to morality. The man in the beautiful ones are not yet born and his friends the Naked Man who hold to their moral integrity become outsiders. They are saved from destruction by pessimism and their reliance on individual integrity. They turn their back on society in the hope that everything may collapse except the truth of individual conviction.

But does the answer to social corruption lie in the withdrawal from active participation by good people? Alan Paton (1953) has rightly declared that “good people and devout Christians must assert spiritual and moral superiority, but that would not be easy to rebuke the excesses of nationalism after an era of subordination. “Indeed, good people should participate actively in the social and political life in order to help transform the society through their moral rectitude and exemplary devotion. The man does not actually withdraw, as the naked man does, but his resistance is too passive to provide an effective answer to social corruption. Soyinka’s Young activist and Achebe’s Odili and Max present a more positive challenge to social corruption.

## **THE AFRICAN WRITERS AS A TEACHER**

It is difficult to give a sharp definition of a teacher because a teacher performs a variety of social, religious, cultural, and academic activities in the school in his attempt to teach. Similarly, a good teacher or writer can be defined as an adaptable, attractive, knowledgeable professional who facilitates learning or writing with skills, abilities, and knowledge required to perform these duties successfully, effectively, and efficiently.

Eyibe (2014) observed that good teaching calls for men and women who can use academic and professional skills to inform, motivate, and challenge students and readers everywhere. Furthermore, "The Webster's New Dictionary" (1975) gives three definitions of a teacher as follows: first, a teacher is a person who teaches or instructs: second, a teacher is a person who instructs others in religion: third, a teacher is a person who preaches without ordination. Just as the teacher does many things in the classroom, a writer writes on many subject matters or topics in books, journals, novels, magazines, newspapers and more. However, nobody can hope to be an effective writer or teacher, unless he has the command of the official language of communication, a moral disposition and a fertile imagination. The teacher or writer must bear in mind that all facts are vital and sacred and have to be published. However, all hypothetical ideas are vital, but they are not publishable.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The African notion that when a married woman gives birth to a female baby, she is yet to have a baby should be discarded. All children are gifts from God.
2. All children born into a family should be given equal training and equal rights without discrimination.
3. All facts are vital and sacred and should be published without fear or favour so as to free the manacle spirit of our people so we can sing a new song of freedom.

4. It is scandalous and shameful for a man to give birth to thirty or more children without training them and equipping them for life in the 21st century.
5. All hypothetical ideas are vital, but they are not publishable for the social good of our society.
6. Every material for publication must be subjected to investigation and scrutiny before giving to the press.
7. The training and care for the children born into a family by a man must be responsibility of the parents, not that of the government.
8. Overcrowding or population explosion in homes, families, schools, and society gives rise to poverty, violence and crimes.
9. Criminals are the products of bad overcrowded homes where parents do not agree.
10. The 21st century is one in which only knowledge driven societies will be able to accomplish more than mere survival.
11. We must endeavour to educate our children maximally so that they may become effective drivers and players in the 21st century.

## **CONCLUSION**

I have tried to show in this paper that the African writer is first and foremost a storyteller, but he is also sometimes a teacher, philosopher and a moral and social commentator. The novelist responds, with his total personality, to a social environment which changes all the time. Being a kind of sensitive needle, he registers, with varying degrees of accuracy and success, the conflicts and tensions in his changing society. Thus, the same writer will produce different types of work, sometimes contradictory in mood,

sentiment, degree of optimism or pessimism, and even world-view. For the writer himself lives in, and is shaped by history.

These African writers begin by the raising of African traditional civilization but the awareness is not sufficient. It must be backed up by a positive social action aimed at changing and improving the society. Flora nwapa has merely made us aware of the social and traditional stigma attached to children in African marriage. Sembane ousmane identifies the oppressors and exploiters of the people but he goes further to show how the people have organized themselves to protest against social and economic exploitation. Ngugi value and skill as a writer must take into account the social, political and historical base from which he is working. His avowed intention is to write in a way which will connect with the people and their struggle. "As a radical and revolutionary writer, Ngugi focus on Mumbi and Gikonyo in the final pages of A Grain of Wheat which reminds us that social salvation may come from the hills, but it rests with the people."

Achebe and Soyinka believe in vigorous social action to change the corrupt social order, while Armah thinks the situation is too far gone to be redeemed, at least in the near future. Achebe's young radicals believe in challenging the older corrupt politicians for power, Soyinka's "Interpreters" attack and expose the hypocrisy and corruptions of the ruling class. Armah on the other hand sees some hope in some distant future: "some day in the long future a new life may flower in the country but when it comes, it could not choose as its instruments the same people who had made a habit of killing new flowers." But can the "new life" come without preparation, a preparation which in its most positive form must involve the deliberate subversion of the old corrupt life?

Perhaps each African writer has his own literary ideology which he projects and defends in his writing which is normal in human nature after all "the human heart beats where it wishes that "spiritus Ubi Vult spirat" of the latin poet.

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