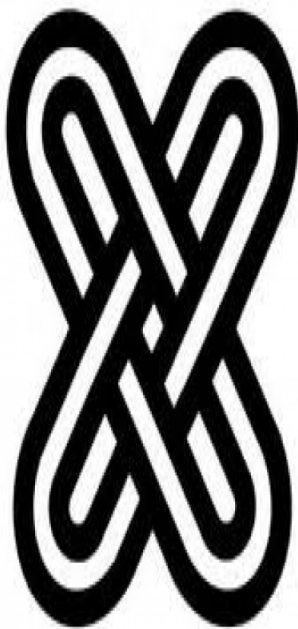

For Popularity, Pleasure, or Other Reasons? The Treatment of Sex in The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah

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ABSTRACT

Sex or the intimate relationship between or among characters is an act that is explicitly depicted in the novels of Ayi Kwei Armah for various purposes. The purpose of sex should not just be sex for the sake of sex, or for the sake of making a writer ‘popular’. The paper argues that the act of sex plays a number of literary functions in these relationships. The thematic as well as other literary relevance of sex is explored through literary concepts such as ‘linguistic foregrounding’ and ‘paradigmatic associations’. Through these literary concepts of stylistic analysis, it becomes clear that sex plays the following roles in Armah’s novels: serves as an avenue for characterization; establishes a relationship as loving or adrift; is a tool of oppression and also vengeance; creates suspense and retains readers’ interest; obscures the real story plot for a literary effect such as ‘to motivate but also shock his (Armah’s) audience into activity’ (Fubara 72); and cures characters’ negative emotions like loneliness and anguish, among other roles. The paper concludes that Armah’s treatment of sex in largely explicit terms in his novels is not gratuitous, but fundamental for the appreciation of his literary works.

KEYWORDS

Armah, explicit, sex, sexuality, sexual relationship, sex episode

Introduction

This work addresses the issue of sex and its relevance in the novels of Armah. In one sense, the state of being male or female is called sex. Sex could also refer to sexual intercourse or just intercourse, which usually involves an intimate relationship between the sexes. With close reference to the second sense of the word, the subject of sex could be a complex area of interrogation for the African writer. “Surprisingly sex is still something we hardly talk about in our society...Despite the fact that we are living in a so-called ‘liberated society’, so many of us are still ignorant ...of this very important part of our lives” (Bastyra 10). This is simply because for a number of Africans, especially the adult population, the act of sex is supposed to be confined to the individual’s home and not publicly discussed as it happens in both the print and electronic media.

As would be demonstrated in the review of literature, a number of African authors like Nawal El Saadawi and Ama Ata Aidoo who have written on the subject of sex (in general terms and) in different contexts have received considerable comments from critics. As regards Ayi Kwei Armah, ‘one of the most provocative and versatile of the post-war wave of Anglophone West African novelists’ (Wright 1), not much has been done particularly on his treatment of the act of sex. Even though attempts have been made by some critics (see the essays by Maja-Pearce, King-Aribisala and Adekoya, among others) to discuss instances of selfish heterosexual and homosexual relationships in especially *Why Are We So Blest?* and also *Two Thousand Seasons*, the very creative process of sex, repeatedly realised in the presence of sex episodes and often clearly delineated in plain language, has been largely ignored. In this work, ‘Episode(s)’ (as in *sex episode*) is used here and after to refer to any live or reported event or situation of sex in the novels of Armah. Whether live (as in characters making love or directly seen to be engaged in the act) or reported (by any of the characters involved in the sexual act or even by a participant or non-participant narrator), the sex episode could be implicit or explicit in nature (Callister, et al.).

Implicit sexual intercourse (or sex) depicts a situation where ‘sexual intercourse is not literally described but could be clearly inferred by narrative devise, such as descriptions where characters are waking up together and putting on their clothes’ (Callister et al. 480). Callister et al. further apply the term ‘explicit sexual intercourse’ to situations where there is “...a literal description of sexual intercourse act...” (480). I add that the ‘literal description(s)’ may include not just activities during the sexual act (such as the penetration of the female by the male or sometimes the moaning of one or both partners), but even before (like kissing and caressing, and so on) and sometimes after the sexual act (like the ‘sex talk’ or reflections after a sexual encounter between partners). Thus, the explicit sex episode could involve the literal descriptions before, during and even after an act of sex, whether live or reported.

The work begins with some related literature by considering a brief survey of sex and sexuality in African literature (Prose) as well as a brief review of previous studies on sex and sexuality in Armah’s novels. The paper then continues with the discussion proper.

Brief survey of sex and sexuality in African literature (Prose)

Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction (Volume 1)*, first published in 1976 and in English translation in 1978, 'now stands out as the key text in the historiography of sexuality' (Garton 10). As Foucault asserts, rules and regulations governing the 'obscene', the 'curse' and the 'indecent' were quite lax or relaxed as compared to those of the nineteenth century (3). Among other things, the beginning of the seventeenth century was a time 'when bodies made a display of themselves' (Foucault 3). This period is said to have been replaced by the imperial prude of the Victorian regime, which was also characterized by 'our restrained, mute, and hypocritical sexuality' (Foucault 3). Even though sexuality in our twenty-first century world appears to be liberated from many restrictions, it is still carefully restrained to the confines of many homes. The mention of sexuality actually brings to the fore the importance of sex. Commenting on how sex has been intricately linked to the concepts of gender and sexuality by a number of scholars, McConnell-Ginet, for instance, notes that even though 'gender, sex, and sexuality are central to individual experience and social life...Sex is the oldest of these three words' (6). She considers the distinction between these three by submitting thus:

Sexuality and gender were introduced to make explicit distinctions often conflated under sex: sex was to be reserved for biological/bodily classification of living beings as female or male, gender for sociocultural practices, conventions and ideologies clustering around the biological classification, and sexuality for sexual practices and erotic desires. Yet as Cameron and Kulick (2003) note, English speakers now often use gender where bodily configuration is at issue (under gender on many forms male and female are the choices) and sexuality is often understood simply as sexual identity (straight or gay often presumed the exclusive and exhaustive choices) whereas sex still covers the full terrain (6).

Despite the 'full terrain' of sex, the use of 'sex' in this work does not refer to the universal concepts of a male and a female, but the various acts of sex between partners of the same or different sexes. The collective result of these acts may be seen as sexual intercourse, sex play, copulation or love making, among other terms. Whatever the sexual act may be in a relationship, individuals have different sexual orientations and so engage in different sexual relationships. In all of these sexual relationships, the act of having sex is key to the enjoyment or otherwise of the relationships.

Although not as pervasive as in Western works like D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, *Women in Love* and his three versions of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the importance of sex and sexuality and their various depictions can be found in African literature, especially in the prose works of a number of notable African writers. In many of these works of fiction, heterosexuality is celebrated over homosexuality. For the treatment of homosexuality in the corpus of African literature, one may find very useful Dunton's remarkable work, 'Wheyting be dat?' The Treatment of Homosexuality in African Literature. The writer notes how homosexuality appears to be stigmatized in the works of a number of African writers, as echoed in the utterance by the grandmother in Maddy's play, *Big Berrin*, when she enquires, 'Homosexuality? Wheyting be dat?' Not concerned with the pejorative treatment of homosexuality by African writers, Dunton considers 'how the treatment of homosexuality provides a convenient reference point – a closely

defined narrative element – which helps to reveal the general thematic concerns and the larger narrative strategy of the text’ (422).

To this end, Dunton surveys the treatment of homosexuality with particular regard to Maddy’s *No Past, No Present, No Future*, Aidoo’s *Our Sister Killjoy*, Soyinka’s *The Interpreters*, and Ouologuem’s *Bound to Violence*, although he widens his scope of reference to include others like Mariama Ba’s *Scarlet Song* and Soyinka’s *Season of Anomy*. In Maddy’s work, he notes that the presentation of Joe Bengoh’s homosexuality is a means of assessing Maddy’s ‘general procedures’, with particular reference to the writer’s deliberate moral priorities which Dunton sees as radically different from those of other African novelists (422). On Soyinka, he further observes the importance of the American homosexual, Joe Golder, as constituting ‘another difficult, unpliant entity toward which others (the interpreters) must find a way to respond’ (423). He adds that the portrait of this homosexual character relates to ‘Soyinka’s romantic assertion of individual vision’ (423) as a powerful force in a truly dynamic environment.

On Ouologuem, Dunton observes that the treatment of the homosexual relationship between Raymond and Lambert ‘raises the whole question of irony and parody – of the assault on reader conventions – of being central to the novel’s strategy’ (423). Thus, to Dunton, Ouologuem complicates the idea of homosexuality as exotic and even infecting; his depiction ‘is strikingly sympathetic and sensitive’ (McDonald 68). It must be stated that Ouologuem does not only show aspects of corrupt ‘Arab’ elites sexually abusing African boys, but balances his depiction with the loving and sensitive relationship between Kassoumi and the French man in the novel (McDonald 68). Dunton finally notes that in Aidoo’s *Our Sister Killjoy*, like the three texts – Maddy’s *No Past, No Present, No Future*, Soyinka’s *The Interpreters* and Ouologuem’s *Bound to Violence* – the subject of homosexuality is ‘liberated’ in a special way in order ‘to disturb, to call questions, than in texts where it merely forms part of the data of a social typology’ (423).

Perhaps, the disinterest in homosexuality lies in the observation made by Lanre-Abass Bolatito in his essay, ‘The Natural Law Theory of Morality and the Homosexuality Debate in an African Culture’. He notes that homosexuality, often regarded as same sex relationship or union, ‘has been rejected not only on grounds of destroying the sense of identity of those who engage in it but also on the basis of negating the order of creation thereby threatening the viability of many African communities’ (183). The essence of the heterosexual family is therefore crucial to most African societies. The construction of human sexuality in most African countries is fixated around heterosexuality, with particular interest in one’s relationship with the opposite sex. This situation therefore forms the basis for a number of African authors in their discussion of sex and sexuality. Let us take some particular instances from parts of the African continent to illustrate the portrayal of sex and sexuality in the prose works of some notable African writers and perhaps too, public reaction towards these works.

For example, a number of conservative cultures within Kenya and Ghana are becoming eclipsed in the steady interest in human sexuality and the desired attitudes that people may need to take when it comes to making sexual choices. It is therefore no wonder that a number of African writers and critics as well have exposed issues related to sexuality in their essays and novels in clear and mostly uncensored language, often showing sex as it takes place in real life

situations. In ‘Sexual Anxieties and Rampant Masculinities in Postcolonial Kenyan Literature’, the critic Odhiambo, for instance, discusses the case of Kenyan popular fiction and writes that “it is safe to suggest that its most ‘popular’ subject has always been formulated around the topics of sex/sexuality and manhood/womanhood” (653). He sees sexuality, especially male sexuality, as a necessity of the matrices of power, authority and social change that is desired by various post-colonial governments in Africa.

Taking the Kenyan experience, for instance, Odhiambo shows how ‘Maleness’ is depicted in an intensely ‘sexualized’ manner in Postcolonial Kenyan literature. Men are depicted as sexually adventurous, ‘wild’ and ‘insatiable’, and seem not to be able to form stable relationships with women they encounter, or are seemingly in constant search of self-gratification, and so appear to be ‘out of control’. Odhiambo’s essay therefore argues that the fictional characters who appear as ‘wild men’ in postcolonial Kenyan popular fiction, even though not necessarily a reflection of Kenyan men in general, ‘are indicators of and suggest a (re)fashioning of (new) masculinities as one of the many responses to a transiting and transforming social, cultural and economic environment that has at the same time generated a sense of intense (male) anxiety’ (Odhiambo 653). Odhiambo notes further how canonized works by literary artists such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Ayi Kwei Armah and ‘popular’ writings by Cyprian Ekwensi of Nigeria, David Maillu of Kenya, and Asare Konadu of Ghana have all at one time or another engaged with the problem of sexuality.

Similarly, in a recent article entitled ‘Controlling Deviant Wives: Marriage and Justice in the Early Ghanaian Novel’, Yitah and Dako consider the control of women’s sexuality in Obeng’s *Eighteenpence* and Native’s *Marita: or the Folly of Love*. These two early Ghanaian novels portray conjugal life in colonial Ghana during a time of legislative and judicial transition and show attempts by both traditional authorities and the colonial administration to regulate and perpetuate their hold on ‘the contested arena of marriage’ (Yitah and Dako 359). Yitah and Dako remark that the impression has been created in the novels that such external controls freed women from traditional restraints and turned them into deviant wives. However, they argue that an underpinning ‘male angst’ is what is responsible for this perception, as well as for the marginalization of resistant women. The essays by Odhiambo and Yitah & Dako depict some aspects of the sexuality of Kenyans and Ghanaians respectively. One paramount issue that underscores both articles is the prominent roles played by especially males in defining the sexuality of others. These roles are often supported by cultural norms and institutions of power.

From Southern Africa, Zimbabwe, Tsitsi Dangarembga also explores the subject of sexuality in her works and this is well observed by C.M. Shaw. Shaw explores the themes of sexuality, feminist consciousness and women in postcolonial politics in Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* and *She No Longer Weeps*, a play that deals with gender relationships in postcolonial Zimbabwe. With these two works in mind, Shaw advances three interesting observations. She first notes that ‘women’s sexuality is caught up in a series of oppositions – sex as sin versus pleasure, sex as self-expression versus dependence, and sex as individual right versus cultural compulsion’ (8). She observes how Dangarembga develops these conflicting situations through several characters, although Dangarembga’s primary concern with sexuality in both the play and the novel is ‘directed to the antithesis between open sexuality and being a good daughter’ (8).

The second observation that Shaw makes concerns Dangarembga's feminist consciousness which, she remarks, 'was highly influenced by the discourses present in Zimbabwe at the time of the writing of both works and by feminist ideas popular in the West in the 1980s' (9). Finally, Shaw points out 'that in the postcolonial period, Dangarembga recognized very early on that gender inequality must be understood within the context of other social and political inequalities' (9). She intimates how the failures of postcolonial Zimbabwe in both ethnic and gender relationships appear 'to have dampened her enthusiasm for feminist social change' (9).

From Arab North Africa, when one considers the Egyptian, Nawal El Saadawi's *God Dies by the Nile*, sex is an instrument of power. For example, the Mayor's affairs with the daughters of Kafrawi, Nefissa, and Zeinab reflect the material power of the ruling class, serving as a source of the sexual exploitation of women in particular and the ruled in general. This is what Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang notes when she remarks: 'The women uniformly go through incidents of sexual exploitation and economic subjugation. The males are consistently emasculated, their ability to lead their families persistently undermined by members of the middle and upper classes' (306) like the Mayor and his cohorts.

As an instrument of power, therefore, sex may take a material, physical or religious form against women. In Ama Ata Aidoo's work, *Changes*, 'Sex is something a husband claims from his wife as his right. Anytime. And at his convenience' (12). Hence in *Changes*, one notices how Esi, the protagonist and career woman, is raped by her husband Oko. This is what Derek Wright observes in Aidoo's work when he writes that 'the concept of marital rape does not exist in this or in neighbouring African societies, in which sex is a right claimed by the husband at his own convenience, and the devaluation and oppression of women is still not regarded as a serious issue' (189). The case is not at all different with Mara in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*. Mara is subjected to sexual abuse by her husband because he thinks he has the traditional right as the head of the family to do so. There are several instances in the novel where Akobi, Mara's husband, makes love to Mara whether the latter is in the mood for it or not. This way, Akobi continually suppresses Mara's sexuality and reduces it to satisfying his own sexuality.

In all, a number of African writers have portrayed in their novels sex and sexuality in both subtle and explicit terms for various reasons. With regard to Armah, whose novels are replete with sexual relationships, images and episodes, not much has been done on his treatment of particularly sex and sexuality.

Brief review of previous studies on sex and sexuality in Armah's novels

There are a number of scholarly works (see the essays by Maja-Pearce, King-Aribisala, Busia, Wright, Adekoya, Kakraba and Sackey) which touch generally on sex, sexual types, sexual practices, sexual parts, sexual images, (homo) eroticism and pornography, among similar areas of concern in the works of Armah. Generally, the point of reference for scholars and critics alike on any of these areas has often been just one or two novels by Armah. Some of these critics (like Busia and Maja-Pearce) and some readers alike believe that sexual tension and suspense are stronger when the writer leaves a lot of it to one's curious imagination.

To begin with the review, we have quite recent research works by scholars like Kakraba, Dunham and O'Connell which (arguably, but also understandably) ignore the direct or indirect reference to the concepts of sex and sexuality. Dunham comments on the various angles of analysis that *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* has been given by critics. In his own analysis, he notes about the estrangement in the sexual relationship between 'The Man' and his wife Oyo because the former refuses bribe. 'This simple act of refusal places him at odds with his wife and family' (372), notes O'Connell. However, as this paper asserts, this estrangement is also demonstrated by Armah in the explicit sex episode that never ends in lovemaking in the novel. Understandably, this sex episode escapes the comment of both O'Connell and Dunham. O'Connell's interest lies in depicting a different way of reading Armah's novel, hence his topic: 'A weak utopianism of postcolonial nationalist *Bildung*: Re-reading Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*'.

Similarly, Kakraba's essay, 'Ayi Kwei Armah's Novels of Liberation' examines Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers* as novels of liberation. As he observes, these two novels form 'a kind of continuous and conscious struggle against the forces of slavery and colonisation in the past, and neo-colonialism and globalization at present; forces which have plagued the African continent for so many years' (48). He effectively captures Armah's portrayal of the communal way of doing things for all Africans in order to overcome their many challenges. Throughout his discussion of *Two Thousand Seasons*, he does not directly mention the sexual abuse of the African women and other servants even though he remarkably notes that 'Armah's disdain for the institution of slavery and its debauchery is seen in the cluster of oral rhetorical devices he uses as a spur to commence the narration of the massacre of the Arab predators by the African women' (51). Furthermore, Kakraba indirectly refers to the women as 'agents of liberation from slavery' (54). The issue of liberation is significant here because of the sexual abuse that these women suffer in their slavery. The nature and roles of the parties in unwilling sexual relationships in this novel must therefore be considered if one is to fully appreciate the importance of liberation. So as this work would add, one may consider the issue of liberation in the way it also liberates a person's freedom to choose his or her sexual partner and create the necessary emotional (or sexual) satisfaction.

Additionally, in Kakraba's laudable discussion of the healers too as agents of liberation, the caring role of the female healer Ajoa to the personal development of the healer Densu (and vice versa) is left out in the discussion. Although this particular omission is understandable because of the preoccupation of the writer, these characters (Densu and Ajoa) are agents of liberation who have a particular life they share together as adults. The caring role they provide each other is seen in their consenting sexual relationship. In their sexual relationship, they satisfy each other and it is arguably this strong sexual bond that ties the two together as they forge on as agents of liberation. It is the position of this work that the sexual relationship between Ajoa and Densu strengthens them to face each day, knowing that they would see each other after their healing assignments. Thus, notwithstanding Kakraba's general observations about liberation in Armah's novels, one may also consider the issue of liberation in the way it liberates characters to enjoy their sexuality and make positive contributions to the liberation of others.

Moving on, the concept of homoeroticism is touched on by Stewart Crehan and Glen Retief. In an article entitled: 'Homoeroticism and the Failure of African Nationalism in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones*', Retief observes how 'Stewart Crehan offers a psychological analysis to explain the man's resignation and his scatological preoccupations' (63). However, he notes how Crehan appears (in his analysis of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*) to shy away from the full implications of "homoeroticism that structures this most brooding and 'queer' of dystopian novels about the twentieth-century African nationalist project" (63). Retief is further of the view that if one considers the critical stance against homosexuality by some African leaders like Robert Mugabe and Yoweri Museveni, as well as the light that has been shed on the 'diversity and vibrancy of precolonial and indigenous African homosexual experiences' by writers such as Simon Nkoli, Hugh McClean and Linda Ngcobo, Dhiannaraj Chetty, T. Dunbar Moodie, and Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe, then 'same-sex eroticism and intimacy are no longer topics that can be ignored in African studies, and the queer critical project as it applies to the African novel can no longer be delayed' (63).

The purposes in Retief's paper are multifold. Among many things, he argues that 'the nameless Everyman narrator' of the novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, "while perhaps not precisely a closeted 'gay' or 'bisexual' man in the banal Western-centric sense of the word, does exhibit signs of same-sex attraction, visible both directly in his thoughts and actions, but also indirectly in the text's silences, omissions, and hint" (64). So, for instance, apart from what Crehan notes as the novel's atmosphere of 'a kind of mental twilight' (Crehan 106), Retief considers the opening scene of the novel and identifies another element, 'homoeroticism':

So the conductor had not lowered his eyes. Instead he had kept them fastened to the hungry eyes of the giver of the cedi, and fed them with admiration. He had softened his own gaze the better to receive the masculine sharpness of the giver's stare. He had opened his mouth slightly so that the smile that had a gape in it would say to the boastful giver, 'Yes, man. You are a big man' (2-3).

Loco citato, Retief considers the symbolic or connotative importance of words and actions and remarks that the conductor is 'symbolically penetrated twice' (64) by the man in the scene where the conductor opens his mouth slightly to receive the cedi note from the man. He accepts that the 'big' man refers to the man's wealth but adds that one cannot gloss over the sexual connotations too. Although this conclusion appears extreme, he actually suggests that one could see the 'big man' as perhaps the man having a big or large penis with which he symbolically penetrates the conductor. Thus, there is reference to same-sex relationship here. There are quite a number of such deductions that Retief makes in his queer reading of the novel. A number of them are contentious; nevertheless, they are not categorical assertions but often symbolic or connotative references that the writer tries to make. In other words, his work may be seen to have widened the reading of Armah's novel and perhaps opened new grounds for further debate on homoeroticism in the novel and by extension, his other novels.

Sexual parts and images are also considered by critics such as Derek Wright. In his work Wright reviews one work each of the authors: Awoonor, Aidoo and Armah, 'giving greater space to the latter's *Osiris Rising*, since this is the most substantial of the collection' (180), while he also refers to recent works by two younger Ghanaians, Kojo Laing and Willie Ansah. Among

many things, Wright considers the incestuous intertextual allusions in Armah's novel. Thus, he notes how the killer with the diseased scrotum (Seth or SSS) 'hacks back to the dog-slayer in *Fragments*' (187), thereby portraying SSS as a diseased man whose nefarious activities including sexual impropriety may have given him 'the diseased scrotum'. Textual references like the immediately cited have wider significance which can be highlighted when one considers, for instance, the failed sexual relationship SSS tries to form with Ast in *Osiris Rising*.

Moreover, Wright observes how educational reforms by characters define the preoccupation of the novel, *Osiris Rising*. This work adds that these reforms take place also because of the peace of mind characters have in the novel. This peace of mind is, among others, due to the emotionally satisfying and consensual sexual relationships that the major characters (Ast and Asar) enjoy in the text, *Osiris Rising*. This is why the issue of sex and sexuality appears to overshadow the contributions of Ast and Asar when the two are encountered in the text. Hence, closely attached to the desire to effect educational reforms is the tranquility individuals like Ast and Asar have in enjoying their sexual relationship.

The various sexual relationships and especially the treatment of women are also considered by critics such as Maja-Pearce, King-Aribisala, Busia and Adekoya. In her 1986 essay entitled, 'Parasites and Prophets: The Use of Women in Ayi Kwei Armah's Novels', reprinted in Wright's 1992 *Critical Perspectives on Ayi Kwei Armah*, Abena Busia observes how 'Armah shifts between two central perceptions of women (48) – women as parasites and women as liberating prophets. Busia notes how the prophets eclipse the parasites as we move sequentially through Armah's works. The works she considers are the first five novels of Armah: *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments*, *Why Are We So Blest?*, *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*. One observation she makes about women in Armah's works is that they 'never have roles independent of the novel's hero or protagonist – always a man in a male-dominated society' (Busia 48). Where there are women, they are seen as wives, lovers, or blood relationships to the novel's central male characters. Hence, their sexuality is simply defined and realised because of their dealings with men as central characters in the novels.

To a great extent, this is the case in a number of instances in the novels that Busia looks at. However, ignoring these novels Busia considers, there appears to be a further consideration of the prominent roles that women can play (also in sexual relationships) as Armah gives them more voice in his later two novels. Thus, in Armah's *Osiris Rising*, one encounters the major protagonist, Ast, a female and an African American scholar, whose involvements with Asar in the novel move the plot. Then one meets Lindela, the narrator-cum-chief character in *KMT: In the House of Life*. In fact, *KMT: In the House of Life* is, as depicted in the publisher's blurb, 'the narrative of an African woman's life quest, and the answers she uncovers'. These women (Lindela and especially Ast) assume stronger voices and also form a number of remarkable relationships in their novels.

Similarly, the editor and critic, Simon Gikandi, essentially captures the issue of sexual relationships in Armah's *Fragments* when he comments thus:

Sexual contact is one way of dealing with the mask: it is a means by which these characters can reach out to external things (i.e. reinforce their physical being)

without compromising themselves. But this kind of contact itself is illusionary – the real world exists outside the narrow universe of the lovers (93).

Considering the amiable relationship, also sexual in nature, between these characters (Juana, a Puerto Rican and Baako, a Ghanaian), for instance, will help one to ‘observe the interrelationships of experiences and personal histories in *Fragments*’ (Gikandi 89).

One interesting phenomenon that has been maintained by a number of critics is how the sexuality of some characters may be symbolic of the desires and affiliations of not just the characters involved, but also their race. For instance, scholars like Maja-Pearce, King-Aribisala and Adekoya have observed and made profound remarks about Aimee Reitsch in Armah’s *Why Are We So Blest?* So in ‘The House of Slavery’, Maja-Pearce notes well that ‘one of the most persistent themes in modern African literature is that of the relationship between the European woman and the African man’ (140). He discusses ‘the European woman, the white woman’, as ‘invested with a symbolic significance: in her person she is made to bear the burden of her people’ (140). He dwells on this theme of race relationship between the European woman and the African man in Kole Omotoso’s *The Edifice*, Mbella Sonne Dipoko’s *A Few Nights and Days*, Yulisa Amadu Maddy’s *No Past, No Present, No Future*, Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration* and Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Why Are We So Blest?*

Considering the novel of Armah, for instance, Maja-Pearce writes that ‘Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Why Are We So Blest?* is probably the most objectionable of all the African novels which deal with this theme’ (149). He observes how Modin Dofu, the protagonist, “is reduced to a ‘boy’, the black buck with whom Aimee satisfies her perverted sexuality” (149). He writes that the originality of Armah’s novel lies in the fact that Armah’s ‘hero is himself overtly destroyed, along with the woman; but the hatred of the white woman, symbol of his oppression, is no less vicious’ (150). He believes that ‘Africans have not yet liberated themselves from their past, if the literature is anything to go by’ (151). Maja-Pearce misses the point of Armah’s satire of the African male as oversexualised in White imagination. The stereotypical assumption of some Whites about African males having unimaginable sexual prowess which can be tapped by others is the issue that is foregrounded by Armah as he presents Modin in his (Modin’s) sexual encounters with Mrs. Jefferson and Aimee. Modin may be regarded as having ‘the mythical African prick’ [an expression already alluded to in Armah’s *Fragments* (65)] that is tapped by both Mrs. Jefferson and Aimee. Of course, the African’s inherent frailty which makes him form all manner of sexual relationships is also underscored by Armah in his presentation of Modin’s sexual involvements in America.

Moreover, Armah tells the ‘African’ story and ‘opens up the rotten underside of a diseased society’, to borrow the words of Adekoya, ‘and does not present a deodorized image of modern Africa in his fiction’ (155). Ayi Kwei Armah, like any other creative African writer, has every creative power to write in *Why Are We So Blest?* about ‘the evil elements of the Western world, such as the attitude of the white intellectual to the black personality and the sexual perversion of the white, coupled with the black man’s inherent frailties that ruin the virtues of the latter’ (Angmor 82). Perhaps, as noted by Ode Ogede and cited by Alexander Kakraba, ‘With the exception of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Ngugi wa Thiong’o, no other African writer has confronted and dealt so honestly and courageously with the problem of contemporary Africa as

Armah has' (Ogede 4). 'Armah focuses on the depravity of European and American treatment of Africa – particularly when the evidence is, historically speaking, incontrovertible' (Lobb 248).

Maja-Pearce is further critical of Armah, in his later article entitled 'Ayi Kwei Armah and the Harbingers of Death'. He refers to a scene in Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?* where Aimee, the American, kisses dying Modin Dofu, swallows the blood that fills her mouth, and asks him if he loves her. In this instance, the subject of sex is perhaps foregrounded, as one may regard kissing as a foreplay that should initiate the parties into a more intimate activity. But, of course, one cannot categorize the kissing in this particular gory circumstance as foreplay since one party is presented as dying. Maja-Pearce concludes that 'this is certainly one of the most unpleasant scenes in the entire corpus of modern African literature – and one of the least convincing' (14).

He is very direct in his attack on Armah when he continues that 'artistic truth is not among Armah's most pressing concerns, as the quotation with which this essay opens makes clear' (14). Certainly, the stance taken on Armah by Maja-Pearce is contentious, because as Charles Angmor also remarkably observes, Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?* 'demonstrates an advance in Armah's artistry' (82). Maja-Pearce believes further that "*Why Are We So Blest?* is written largely to prove a thesis; in the words of Solo: 'Why could he not see his companion? This was an object, destructive, ... from the barrel of a powerfully, destructive culture'" (14). Of course the 'destructive' 'companion' is Aimee, an American, who nevertheless had numerous orgies with Modin Dofu, orgies that include sex which is worth interrogating in establishing the kind of relationship that these two really had in the novel.

In her essay, 'Race, Racism and Sexual Metaphor in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?*', King-Aribisala largely looks at Armah's use of sexual metaphor to depict the relationships in the novels – relationships that are often catastrophic in the end for the protagonist, Modin Dofu. As the writer notes, 'salient in the exposition of Armah's answer to the so-called white superiority and black inferiority question is the employment of sexual metaphor' (295). As she notes further, Armah uses this sexual metaphor as a way of characterizing the nature of the two races represented by the black/African Modin and the American/European Aimee. Noting about the sexual relationship between these two, King-Aribisala remarks, among others, that though Aimee ('Europe') is more or less on the same intellectual level as her companion Modin ('Africa') (and they are both graduate students), she 'fantasizes herself into the superior position. The inference is that even when Europe and Africa are on the same level, Europe imagines herself to be in a superior position' (297).

Similarly, Aimee is seen as one who complains about her inadequate sexual satisfaction with men. Hence, in Africa, on a research project, she sleeps with a 'black minister' who fails to satisfy her. In response to Aimee's accusations, the minister says 'trying to satisfy a white woman is like trying to fetch water in a basket'. Consequently, just as Daniel Oppong Adjei (2016) notes, Aimee 'succeeds in sleeping with a Prime Minister (for that was her desire), and because the Minister is not able to sexually satisfy her, she terminates the relation' (19). Commenting on this, King-Aribisala writes that by inference, 'Europe is never quite content' (298). This, as she notes further, is 'a characteristic which propels Aimee to have sex with as many black men as possible; it is a lack of satisfaction which causes Europe to expand its own territory, to move into Africa' (298-299). Even though this assertion by King-Aribisala may

be the case, to some extent too (and this position does not fault King-Aribisala's assertion at all), it may be argued by others that the actions of Aimee should be regarded as an individual's lot among her race, notwithstanding the likely connections that others may make.

It is perhaps possible to add that King-Aribisala's assertion is shared by Adekoya in his essay, 'Literary Democratisation in Armah's *Why Are We So Blest?*' He notes well that *Why Are We So Blest?* 'exudes sex, but it is not by any means a pornographic novel' (153). The mention of pornography here is worth commenting on, even before this work further shows how Adekoya shares in King-Aribisala's assertions. Some pages of sex episodes in Armah's novels may, to some extent (as long as characters and even readers alike derive desire and pleasure from the depictions), be regarded as falling within the realms of erotica. Certainly, the key aim of these depictions is to underscore the importance of sex in (consensual) relationships and how some people may exploit this same pleasure for their selfish gains. 'The essential characteristic of pornography', Linton asserts, 'is the dehumanizing and degrading of sex; which it produces through its separation of sex from love' (57). In Armah's case, his erotic depictions in aspects of his novels like *Why Are We So Blest?* showcase the role played by sex in sexual relationships and the sort of emotions characters undergo; emotions that are sometimes hidden but often expressed in or during lovemaking. A work that is pornographic often 'exploits and dehumanizes sex, so that human beings are treated as things and women in particular as sex objects' (Linton 57). This situation is certainly not the case or purpose in Armah's novels. Although occasionally one notices how some characters exploit others sexually because of the power they wield, just as the Arab overlords do to their unwilling slaves and zombies in *Two Thousand Seasons*, there are a lot more of sexual depictions in Armah's novels which demonstrate characters' devotion to sex and their enjoyment thereof.

Turning our attention to how Adekoya shares in the opinion of King-Aribisala, he observes that all the sexual relationships Modin enters into with white women in America, as a way of overcoming his loneliness, are symbolic of the unequal social, political and economic dynamics and relationships between Africa and the West. Adekoya notes particularly about the sexual relationship between Modin and Aimee as one that reveals 'the secret of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, as the title of Walter Rodney's seminal book aptly puts it'. Thus, vested with racial significance, Aimee is seen as a symbol of 'European Capitalist individualism', insatiably greedy for human and material resources of Africa, whereas Modin also represents the human and material resources of Africa which are exploited. Their love affair is hence an oblique metaphor for the continuation of the colonial relationship. Unlike Modin, Aimee is seen as one who preys on Modin, her 'soul food' and gives nothing back. Their sexual relationship is therefore unequal, and their 'symbolic relationship is a negation of the democratic ideal' (Adekoya 150).

Commenting also on the charge of racism leveled against Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* by Robert Fraser and Neil Lazarus, Alexander Kakraba asserts that notwithstanding the contributions of the critics mentioned earlier to Armah's works, their charge of *Two Thousand Seasons* (abbreviated as *TTS* in Kakraba's work) as 'a racist novel is too rash' (p.53). In the following words, Kakraba sums up his argument, an argument that Ogede (109) possibly shares when the latter positively remarks about the essence of *Two Thousand Seasons*:

Armah's fierce confrontation of the dehumanizing institution of slavery, an institution that was born out of racism more than an economic desire, is a novelty in African Literature. No African writer has attacked and exposed the racist institution of slavery thoroughly in a single novel as Ayi Kwei Armah has done (54).

So like Kakraba, Ogede believes that Armah's objective in *Two Thousand Seasons* is clear: 'Armah participates in the process of racial re-engineering of the black person' (Ogede 109) when he presents to his readers of the novel, 'a sense of the horrors, degradation and humiliation of the experience of slavery' (Ogede 109).

Certainly the elaborate emphasis on Armah's depiction of the Arabs in *Two Thousand Seasons*, for instance, sometimes without much interest in or reference to his depiction of other classes of people in that same novel and especially his other novels, has the effect of portraying Armah as racist, perhaps in the eyes of an Arab reader or some critics of Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*. Armah's depictions of the Arabs in *Two Thousand Seasons* may be appreciated within textual evidence and the appropriate use of language by the author in the kind of sexual relationships existing among characters.

The analysis of explicit sex in Armah's novels is echoed in Busia, Maja-Pearce, Kakraba and more so in Sackey. I will illustrate this point with the relatively recent works of Kakraba and Sackey. For instance, in an essay entitled: 'Ayi Kwei Armah's Vulgar Language in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, a Therapeutic Tool', Kakraba cites an example of a sexual image, 'VAGINA SWEET' and remarks that 'the novelist sometimes deliberately uses vulgar language to offend the reader's sense of decency, thereby drawing his attention to the very thing he satirically and strongly condemns in the society' (307). Before this, he makes reference to how Armah transgresses the conventional norms of regular literature and this becomes the basis for Achebe to label *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* as 'a sick book' (Morell). But as Kakraba asserts, 'Chinua Achebe completely misses the point in his criticism of Armah and *The Beautiful Ones*. Achebe, in his unrealistic criticism, failed to see the artistic and therapeutic effect of the vulgar language in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*' (306).

Also, when Albert A. Sackey sums up the heterosexual relationships between Modin and the three women (Naita, Mrs. Jefferson and Aimee) in America, he notably considers how vocabulary, depicted in the sexual encounters between the characters, shows how unrewarding the relationships were. For Sackey, the depiction of sex episodes is unique for the understanding of the nature of sexuality existing among characters. Hence, Sackey writes that 'the separation between Naita and the two white women is further demonstrated in Modin's first sexual experience with each of them' (121). The strong evidence of detachment in the relationships between Modin and Mrs. Jefferson and Aimee is also felt in the way they make love, and this is demonstrated in the vocabulary of their sex episodes. Here, the position of the present work, as amply supported by the observations of Sackey, is that the depiction of sex in plain vocabulary (among other purposes) helps in underscoring the nature of sexual relationships existing between characters.

In all, this section has attempted a brief review of previous literature on sex and sexuality in the novels of Armah. From the review, it is obvious that attempts have been made by some critics (like Maja-Pearce, King-Aribisala, Busia, Wright, Adekoya and Sackey, among others) to discuss instances of non-consensual heterosexual and homosexual relationships in especially *Why Are We So Blest?* and *Two Thousand Seasons*. However, the largely consensual heterosexual relationships in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments*, *The Healers* and *Osiris Rising* have escaped the critical eyes of many critics like Dunham and O'Connell. Moreover, notwithstanding the few contributions by scholars such as Kakraba and Sackey, the very creative process of sex, often delineated in plain language in Armah's novels, has also been largely ignored. It is possible for a researcher to bring the novels of Armah together in order to make an in-depth analysis and provide interesting conclusions on particularly the issue of sex. This research examines Armah's treatment of sex (as noticed in the varied sexual relationships) in seven novels, out of his nine novels. The excluded two are *The Revolutionaries* and *Sanhat*, novels that generally focus on translations of Egyptian hieroglyphics and mythology. The selected seven novels are: *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments*, *Why Are We So Blest?*, *Two Thousand Seasons*, *The Healers*, *Osiris Rising* and *KMT: In the House of Life*. In varying levels of treatment, these novels abound in consensual and non-consensual sexual relationships among other relationships between characters living within and outside the continent of Africa. The consensual sexual relationships are largely found in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments*, *The Healers*, *Osiris Rising* and *KMT: In the House of Life*. Then we have largely exploitative and sometimes non-consensual sexual relationships in especially *Why Are We So Blest?* and *Two Thousand Seasons*. In addition, there is a blend of both consensual and non-consensual sexual relationships in *Why Are We So Blest?*, *Two Thousand Seasons*, *Osiris Rising* and *KMT: In the House of Life*.

What makes this paper different and unique is the particular extraction of sex episodes in the various novels and how these episodes could be put together to make meaningful deductions, regarding their literary usefulness in the various novels. Hence, the paper mainly considers the sexual acts or/and reports by and of characters (which make up the sex episodes) and quotes excerpts of these sexual activities, where necessary, in order to identify their common literary relevance in the contexts in which they appear. Evidently, each of the works of Armah is referred to, as and when it becomes necessary in the analysis. Thus, the seven novels form a corpus in discussing the treatment of sex in Armah's novels.

Discussion

One can identify the occasional sexual images in expressions like 'Your mother's rotten cunt' (9), 'VAGINA SWEET...MONEY SWEET PASS ALL' (106) (both in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*), and 'sweet *kojo* magic' (*Fragments* 68). These three instances are typical of the various expressions some people make about sexuality, sometimes openly and other times secretly. In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, in order for an individual to express 'VAGINA SWEET...MONEY SWEET PASS ALL' (106), the individual chooses a secret place like the wall of a public place of convenience to address his or her absent patrons. In this particular case, the noun phrases in the brackets:

$$\left. \begin{array}{c} \text{Vagina} \\ \\ \text{Money} \end{array} \right\} + \text{'Sweet'}$$

belong to the same paradigm by virtue of the fact that they are in syntagmatic relationship with the adjective “Sweet”. They may also be regarded as synonymously related under the general semantic feature of /+joy/ or /+sweetness/, among similar descriptions. They actually depict the pleasures of humans when they make love (symbolized by ‘vagina’) and also when they have wealth (marked by ‘money’) to enjoy life. In effect, these two terms have been contextually conditioned to depict two main sources of happiness to humans. By reading these sexually explicit ‘thoughts’ (Vagina Sweet...Money sweet pass all), patrons of these public places are individually informed and they in turn may announce them in their conversation with others for the desired and sometimes undesired effect(s).

The presence of an expression like ‘sweet *kojo* magic’ (penis) (*Fragments* 68) may perhaps signal how sexually repressed our Ghanaian society is, and as such expressions like ‘penis’ or ‘vagina’ are not openly uttered. Instead, euphemisms are often preferred or employed by a number of people. This situation is what Kakraba notes in the following:

Although it is common to sometimes hear people mention vagina, it is a taboo to do so openly in most African communities and what is a taboo can sometimes be vulgar. This is why Africans have so many euphemisms to describe especially the genital part of a woman (307).

So, for instance, when Araba dialogues with her mother in *Fragments* on what she (Araba) would do to win Kwesi’s consent in the early outdoorings of their child, she mentions her ‘secret weapon’ and points to her ‘genitals’. She is unable to openly mention her ‘vagina’ since that would have been too explicit. Toned-down expressions like ‘sweet *kojo* magic’ (referring to Fifi’s penis) are very much preferred by the larger society where sex appears to be repressed. These images of sex are there in the novels, but the sex episodes abound.

There are quite a number of pages with usually explicit (often unrewarding and sometimes too brief) sex episodes in Armah’s *Why Are We So Blest?* more than one observes in the few but explicit sex episodes in *Two Thousand Seasons* and others like *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments*, *The Healers*, *Osiris Rising* and *KMT: In the House of Life*. For instance, when one considers the heterosexual relationship between Modin Dofu and Aimee Reitsch in *Why Are We So Blest?* one has an explicit sex report by Modin clearly delineated in the following words:

She sat on the far side of the bed, lighting the pipe. I felt the wall. It was cool. I gave her the pillow and she put it between her back and the wall. Her body, angled against the wall and the bed, was rigid, unrelaxed. I reached out with my left hand to play with her navel, then let it slip down to her thigh. An appetite rose in my mouth. Bending to reach her navel, I sucked on it, holding her left nipple

lightly. My left hand found her lap and my fingers pushed against her cunt. Through the hair and the soft flesh, I found her clitoris. I took it between my thumb and forefinger and squeezed it, hard (194).

Then there are sometimes brief sex reports or images of sexual activity such as the following:

We were making love...I was coming. I'd closed my eyes and was thinking of you. That's how I started coming (*Why Are We So Blest?* 154).

The slave-driver cut off her skirt but after that he could not move his eyes, his hands away from her. John held her by the shoulder, touched her neck, her breasts, her belly, touched her in between her thighs (*Two Thousand Seasons* 123).

These sexual acts or sex episodes unquestionably depict desirable and undesirable circumstances in which characters find themselves and their willing and unwilling sexual experiences.

These episodes may be offensive to the sensibilities of some people. Such people may flip these pages with sexual content and simply continue reading; or they may just discontinue reading these texts with quite a number of these sexual acts. Some other people would certainly enjoy these sex episodes because they may identify their own sexual experiences in these sex episodes; or they may be curious enough to find out how a sexual experience would be enjoyed or otherwise by those involved. This last group of people may read these sex episodes because they enjoy the presence of sex in novels. There is no shame in that. But far from simply attaining pleasure from reading these sex episodes, an individual can be shown the nature of characters in these sex episodes. Evidently, Armah vividly illustrates these sexual activities, for instance, in his texts to enforce the beauty of sex when enjoyed by two people who accept each other and thus become one, exchanging their pleasure with each other. These sexual activities actually become another effective tool for characterization, besides their sheer enjoyment too by readers. In other words, these sex episodes endorse sometimes the roles of characters. Thus, in the pages with sexual acts, we see characters also in action and we are either able to endorse or refute an earlier comment made either by a character, other characters or a narrator in the texts under study.

From the extracted sex episodes in *Fragments*, *Why Are We So Blest?* and *The Healers*, Armah presents one with the beauty and power of sex between partners who truly care for each other. This situation is underscored in the excerpts taken from the first sexual encounters between Baako and Juana in *Fragments*, Modin and Naita in *Why Are We So Blest?*, and Densu and Ajoa in *The Healers*. For instance, in the first sexual encounter between Baako and Juana, it is recorded as below:

When he too was naked he lay beside her on the sand and she could see the night light sharp on his face. He continued caressing the inside of her thighs and brought her left hand up to touch his own nipple. When he felt her wetness and came inside her, his movement was diffident, and almost immediately he shook so that she was afraid he had already come...he relaxed after a while and he said, 'It's a difficult thing, making love to someone I'm so strongly drawn to' (119).

The profound sense of emotion (love) that Baako has for Juana is perfectly echoed in this particular sex episode with Juana. In this sex episode, both mild and explicit expressions like 'naked', 'caressing', 'thighs', 'nipple', 'felt', 'wetness' and 'making love' all foreground intimacy, appeal to one's sexual desires, and create the perfect atmosphere for one to enjoy the episode. The inexplicable nature of the feeling in the above quotation overwhelms Baako himself, and it definitely sweeps Juana off her feet as she feared that her pleasure with Baako was about to end (because she thought Baako had 'come' or ejaculated). Her mind is put to rest when Baako explains his own uneasiness in making love to her due to his immense affection for her. In this singular explanation, and due to the presence of the sex episode, Baako seals his love for Juana and clears any doubt in Juana's mind that he loves her. Their lovemaking comes to symbolize a rewarding and consensual sexual relationship between two characters. It is no wonder that their numerous contacts and subsequent sexual escapades fill up most of the narration of *Fragments*, and eventually drive the plot of the novel.

Also, in the course of experiencing his first sexual encounter with Naita, Modin sweetly reflects in *Why Are We So Blest?*:

Naked, Naita is perfect. Nothing about her is fat. I had never thought it possible I would bend to kiss a woman down there, but last night it was a natural, wonderful thing to do. She kissed me, too. I did not know two people could be together so freely, so easily. At first, when I understood it was Naita I was touching and that I could touch her freely, anywhere I chose, the excitement in me made me shake. I could do nothing (122).

The tone is soft here as the feeling expressed is relishing to Modin. Modin feels this way because Armah presents him in detail as making love to Naita for the first time, not because Modin just talks with Naita or simply holds hands with her. The joy of their union is seen in expressions such as 'perfect', 'kiss', 'natural', 'wonderful', 'kissed', 'together', 'freely', 'easily', 'touching' and 'excitement'. These words form a paradigm of affection that conveys a sense of togetherness and an expression of mutual love. This episode of sex makes it possible for one to see Modin in action and appreciate how overwhelmed Modin, like Baako in *Fragments*, feels by the sheer force of making love with someone he cherishes so much. For these two (Modin and Naita), sex comes to symbolize a powerful uniting force.

Similarly, we read about the first sexual encounter between Densu and Ajoa in *The Healers* in the following words:

Lying beneath her, he looked at her face against the sky, and he had no desire at all to stop his desire for her. She did not resist him. He touched her chin, her neck...her collarbone and her neck, then the hand came down, touched a nipple and found it hard with desire she was not hiding...he groped between her thighs and let her wetness guide him into her. He slid in gently, and she made room for him till she could make no more...He felt her unopened, and hesitated. Then he looked at her face and saw not fear but a determination to go beyond fear, and he let his desire answer hers. Tears came, but she did not cry out, did not give any

sign that pain had touched her joy, or even come close to it. She was the reluctant one when the time came for separation (179-180).

From the above quotation, the strong bond between the two lovers cannot be ignored, and this is made known in the careful but passionate lovemaking that the two enjoy. From this quotation, the methodological approach to their intimacy is expressed in the parallel structures captured in the following brackets:

He touched + {her chin...her neck...her collarbone...her neck...her nipple...}

The noun phrases in the brackets belong to the same paradigm by virtue of the fact that they are in syntagmatic relationship with the transitive verb 'touched'. They are also synonymously related under the general semantic feature /+ body/. From the brackets, the leading role played by Densu is remarkable, as he undertakes a step-by-step appreciation of Ajoa's body and further shows total understanding of the need to prepare Ajoa for what becomes a rewarding and enjoyable sexual experience. The joy of their moment is re-echoed in the classic combination of words that illuminate both pain and pleasure, as seen in expressions like 'desire', 'tears', 'hard', 'slid', 'unopened', 'pain', 'joy', 'wetness', 'groped', 'reluctant' and 'separation'. The combination of these contrasting expressions, especially as conveyed through the experience of Ajoa, foregrounds the mixed joys of these lovers who were about to experience intercourse for the first time. Hence, Ajoa's 'tears' are contextually conditioned to take on the additional meaning of 'joy' rather than 'pain'. The delight that is absent when 'The Man' thinks of making love to his wife in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is profoundly felt by Densu when he makes love to Ajoa. Ajoa's own pleasure or delight in her first sexual encounter is amply demonstrated in the fact that 'she was the reluctant one when the time came for separation' (180).

The lucid presentation here captures this awesome feeling of Ajoa, and it would not have been so if this sex episode had been simply narrated thus: 'Densu and Ajoa made love for the first time and Ajoa especially felt pleased with Densu'. With such a simple narration, 'How, or in what ways did Ajoa feel pleased?' are some probing questions that could be enquired by any inquisitive reader, without any answers; however, these questions are easily dealt with when a writer like Armah allows one to witness at first hand the sexual experiences of his characters. Hence, from the above explicit sexual excerpts, Armah endorses sex as a uniting force that could bind people together. The characters all enjoy their heterosexual relationships so much that they demonstrate their love for each other in their various sex episodes or escapades.

Besides the effect of sex uniting partners, its absence in other relationships can forecast these relationships as adrift. One would notice that as an example, there is a subtle depiction of sex in the relationship between The Man and Oyo (his wife) in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. In fact there is only an instance of explicit sex episode between The Man and his wife in this particular novel, and this is shown in the following language:

The man put out his hand and touched the body in between the thighs, just below the genitals. The flesh yielded too readily, and the dreaded sense of familiarity threatened to return. The hand moved up. The vagina itself was harder, more resisting, almost abrasive in the sharpness of its hair and the dryness of outer skin.

Wanting the satisfying moistness of a woman aroused at last, the man pushed his hand farther up and then bent it, searching for the hidden knob of flesh. But the movement had brought his wrist against his wife's belly, and the long line of scar took the man's mind completely away from any thought of joy (98).

The unsuccessful sexual activity here shows the joy that is missing in the marriage between The Man and his wife. This is evident in the choice of diction. Words such as 'dreaded', 'harder', 'resisting', 'abrasive', 'sharpness', 'dryness' and 'scar' create a visual imagery of distaste in The Man and further depict the situation of a woman who is not ready to make love. One may regard these words as forming a paradigm of resistance, whereby the natural body of the woman is at war with the desires of The Man.

Some readers may regard the entire depiction in the immediately cited extract as gratuitous, since fewer words could perhaps be used to capture the same situation in the above quotation. But the fact still remains that in clear and uncut language, Armah succeeds in giving one firsthand information which concretizes the impressions one forms about the sexual relationship between The Man and his wife. The lonely nature of The Man and his distance from his family, especially his wife, are echoed too in this lucid presentation by Armah. This situation may be the reason why The Man leaves home very early for work, perhaps due to the lack of joy at home. The relationship between The Man and his wife is summarily 'a sexless marriage' (Retief 66); sex or intimacy is totally absent in their marriage, especially after the birth of their three children.

From other extracted sex episodes in the novels of Armah, it is clear that sex can also be abused by others for it to become destructive to either or both sexual partners. For example, throughout *Two Thousand Seasons*, the narrator refers to the ruling class of Arabs as 'predators'. This position is supported by the participant narrator of *Two Thousand Seasons* as he reports for one to form one's opinion about the sexual exploitation of African women and men in the novel. Revelations are made about how the ruling class of Arabs 'scooped out buttered dates stuck cunningly into the genitals of' 'women lined up for just their pleasant competition'; 'licked lovingly' the dawa drug 'from the youngest virgin genitals – licked with a furious appetite'; and even 'sought sexual entry into the same genitals they had so recently eaten food and licked their dawa from' (*Two Thousand Seasons* 20). For a number of African readers, all of these sexual acts may be regarded as 'queer' and appalling, and the fact that they are mostly performed on women and in some cases men who are vulnerable is what aggravates the situation and perhaps begs for change. Thus, considering the African setting that these Arabs found themselves, it is evident from the immediately cited page (from *Two Thousand Seasons*) the 'queerness' of the sexual preferences of these Arabs.

Ignoring generalities, the participant narrator in *Two Thousand Seasons* concretizes his depictions by providing one with specific instances of abuse by the ruling Arabs. This is seen in the following sex episode:

Faisal beckoned the black woman of his dreams...Azania welcomed the **predator** Faisal,...and then took him in spite of all his fumbling, took him into herself and moved under him with a smooth grace that gave him his first ecstasy with a

female. But Faisal, it had not been his intention to orgage into Azania all by himself. He wanted his young askari in him - from behind - while Azania welcomed him inside herself, so that he would himself be firmly clasped between his lower and his higher joys. So the scream that forced its way out of Faisal's throat during his first ecstasy was not Azania's name but the young askari's...He strode forward at the urgent call and in a moment was naked upon his master's back, ploughing the predator's open arsehole...pumping manseed into his Arab master (22-23).

Through visual imagery, the participant narrator reveals the sexual exploitation of African women and men who have become instruments of oppression for the Arabs in the novel. In this example of Faisal, the 'queerness' or weird character of the ruling class of Arabs is shown, as issues of bisexual and homosexual practices arise. Armah's 'linguistic, intellectual, verbal onslaught has a purpose: not only to motivate but also shock his audience into activity' (Fubara 72). The feeling of 'shock', for a number of African readers, is perhaps at the sight of a man allowing another man and a woman to have sex with him at the same time. It may be argued, for example, that the askari (or man servant) 'makes love' to the Arab overlord and so has 'power' over his master. But clearly the askari, like Azania, is just a servant conditioned to please his master in any way the master deems fit. He is there, in the sexual activity, not to feel (any form of excitement) but to be felt by the master. In other words, he is there to please the master even when he appears to have pleased himself too by ejaculating. Again, for a number of Africans, the sense of repulsion in the askari 'ploughing the predator's open arsehole...pumping manseed into his Arab master' and the unequivocal strong use of language in the quotation make it, perhaps, easier for them (Africans) to detest these other non-straight sexual relationships in the novel.

When the narrator in *Two Thousand Seasons* describes the Arab master Faisal as a 'predator' in the above sexual report, he makes use of ambiguity. However, it is Faisal's sexual exploitation of Azania and 'his young askari' which makes it possible for one to accept as appropriate the narrator's description of Faisal. Thus, Faisal is not to be considered as an animal that preys on other animals but rather the other dictionary definition of a person who exploits others, especially financially or sexually (Adjei 75). Faisal exploits Azania and others sexually, and the effect of the visual imagery created in the above quotation is one of distaste at the excesses of pleasure by the ruling class of Arabs like Faisal. Armah therefore succeeds in criticizing Faisal by presenting him and other Arabs in concrete sexual situations. These concrete sexual situations become avenues for one to constructively agree with his portrayal of a character like Faisal as a 'predator'.

Additionally, it must be noted that of the Arab's 'accustomed orgies of food, of drugs and of sex' (20), 'sex' becomes their 'greatest' and the cause of their ruin. To the sexually oppressed African women, 'there is one duty to be done, one end to achieve: to thrust out colonialism by every means in their power' (Fanon 18). 'Fanon justifies the use of violence as an instrument of liberation, because the only language the colonialist understands is the use of force' (Sani and Mani 38). Sex becomes the weapon for the oppression of women in this novel and it is an effective weapon that the women also capitalize on to redeem their freedom. Thus, sexually exploited African women like Azania, Sekela and Nywele 'prey on the perverted lusts of their

masters and use their sex to slaughter them' (Busia 60) in the peak of their (the Arabs') sexual pleasure. The way the women capitalize on sex to end their oppression is only seen in the explicit sex episodes involving them and the Arabs. The freedom that these women gain from their Arab overlords comes at a great price; but as may be desired, the pitiless revolution by these women brings them freedom.

Similarly, the open depiction of sex in Armah's novels shows how undignified it is for any person to suffer sexual abuse of any kind in the hands of another person(s). In one example, Modin Dofu and Aimee Reitsch suffer sexual abuse in the hands of French soldiers in *Why Are We So Blest?* Then in *KMT: In the House of Life*, the wife of 'a Colonial Service officer', a recent arrival in Britain from India, also undergoes sexual abuse by a mob in India. The account of her abuse is so sordid the narrator minces no words:

At the first murder, completely unprepared for what was happening so suddenly, she had made an effort to intercede. But then she had been brushed aside by a human wave, angry, irresistibly violent, yet uncannily aware that she was not of interest as a target. At one point the wave carried her forward, then dropped her, leaving her with a feeling she had never imagined she could experience, a mixture of total helplessness and boundless rage. She remembered details formerly lost in her pain: the crowd in its solid rush had carried her like a baby; but someone found one of her breasts and squeezed it. Two hands gripped her buttocks with a pressure that had nothing to do with blind mob fury, and one hand actually reached up between her buttocks and into her...The memory plunged her into catatonia, and for the remainder of the evening she said nothing (75).

This narrative piece affirms the helplessness of the victim and the desired effect of repulsion is evoked in the listeners. The sexual violence is connoted by linguistic expressions such as 'brushed aside', 'violent', 'carried', 'dropped', 'helplessness', 'squeezed', 'gripped', 'fury', and 'catatonia', among others. To think that the same person suffers all of these despicable acts by an angry mob is enough a depiction to elicit the desired pity in the audience. The visual imagery is apparently unimaginable, and surely no one would wish to undergo such trauma. Thus, the explicit narrative piece momentarily overwhelms the listeners in the novel and some audience alike, and this is why in the novel tears well up the eyes of the character, DeSouza while Irene Priestley (another character) cries. Suffice it to say that without the explicit presentation of the above quoted excerpt, the effects on characters (DeSouza and Irene) and audience alike would have been lost in the scheme of simple narration.

Again, Armah's treatment of sex in usually explicit terms makes it possible for one to understand the inordinate cravings of some characters and why they form sexual relationships. This situation is captured in the various race relations in Armah's novels. Thus, in 'The House of Slavery', Maja-Pearce notes well that 'one of the most persistent themes in modern African literature is that of the relationship between the European woman and the African man' (140). In this case, the relationship between Modin and Aimee can be cited in *Why Are We So Blest?* Aimee, the American, simply adores and enjoys sex and she is plain about this with her African lover, Modin Dofu. In this particular intimate dialogue, after making love with Modin Dofu, Aimee asks him:

‘Can we make love again – when you come back?’ she asked.

‘Yes,’ I said.

‘Don’t stay long’ ...

She finished washing herself and we dried ourselves.

‘Don’t be long,’ she said again when I was dressed. ‘We’ll make love till lunchtime’.

‘Sounds like the beginning of a suicide pact’ (95).

Two arguments may be made here. First, Modin may be conceived of as the mythical African man who has enormous sexual prowess – the make-believe slave character, Mwangi, which Aimee fantasizes in order to reach orgasm. It is, perhaps, this sexual prowess that Aimee sees in Modin and hence affirms that they would make love ‘till lunchtime’. Thus, Modin is portrayed as a stereotype of the mythical African man with unspeakable sexual prowess who is ready to sexually satisfy his partner.

Second, it is desirable that all persons (and from the above example, the female) should be able to take charge of their sexuality and express themselves as such. Inasmuch as the settings of a number of societies in Africa are fundamentally patriarchal, sex should not be seen as a male-dominated activity in which the man dictates his desires only for the woman to agree to such desires. It is phenomenal that Aimee is assertive enough to insist on her sexual desires, whether it pleases the ears of her partner or not. She loves to have sex, as a number of men would, and she expresses herself accordingly.

Defining female sexuality brings to the fore issues such as lack of orgasm, and the insatiable nature of some women in their sexual relationships. In *Why Are We So Blest?* mention can be made of Mrs. Jefferson, the American who could experience orgasm alright but did not get enough sex from her husband. She is very much like Aimee, and this situation is underscored by both Busia and Sackey, among other scholars. While Busia notes that: ‘Mrs. Jefferson proves as insatiable as Aimee proves frigid’ (56-57), Sackey also writes that: ‘Mrs. Jefferson like Aimee is a symbol of domineering and aggressive sexual behavior and abuse’ (118). Mrs. Jefferson initiates all the sexual contacts between Modin and her, and she often wears out Modin in her effort to make him fulfill his role as a sexual partner. When she is in the mood for sex, she does not mind where she makes love or masturbates with Modin; it could be in her family car, Modin’s room or her family home, specifically in their garden. Strange as it may be for some people, Mrs. Jefferson enjoys her sex life with Modin in all of these places. In a particular instance, the protagonist Modin observes a situation where Mrs. Jefferson is supposed to attend some conference sessions with the husband, but:

Mrs. Jefferson never went. She always waited till her husband and daughter left in a hurry, then she came directly up to my room wanting to make love. This woman would like to spend the rest of her life making love...She has begun saying things to me about herself and her husband. Uncomfortable things. But she’s a nice friend to have (133).

Perhaps the depiction here of Mrs. Jefferson is not explicit but simply narrated. Nevertheless, Mrs. Jefferson is portrayed as a character with an inordinate sexual desire and this situation is

realised in her extra marital relationship with Modin. ‘Mrs. Jefferson is the beginning of his descent into degradation. Aimee Reitsch completes his fall’ (Busia 57) in *Why Are We So Blest?*

Thus, just as Mrs. Jefferson proves insatiable, Aimee is portrayed as frigid. Aimee cannot feel or ‘orgage’ during lovemaking unless she fantasizes about a make-believe slave character, Mwangi, making love to her. Busia also notes this but she leaves out the detail of the sex scenes with structures such as ‘In the sex scenes with Modin...’ (57) and ‘We are subjected to the explicit details of this odyssey...’ (58). Here, the paper posits that the depiction of Aimee in explicit sex episodes highlights not only the unrewarding nature of Aimee’s sexual relationships, but also the contributions of her sexual partners who could not make her experience orgasm. Her partner Modin submits about their lovemaking in the following words:

She stretched her body as though she were about to yawn, and clasped her hands underneath her head, on the pillow. I was still moving in her, but mechanically. Her body had stopped answering, though at intervals I could feel a small movement, like an involuntary contraction, within her.

‘Wait. Now! Don’t talk. Keep moving. Yes.’

‘Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yeeesss oooh, Mwangi, yeeesss.’

The sheer unexpectedness of that name made me halt

‘Mwangi?’ I heard myself ask. (198)

From the foregoing quotation, the repetition and rise in pitch of Aimee’s ‘yes’ shows that she cannot experience orgasm or enjoy her sexual relationship with Modin unless she fantasizes about Mwangi, a name that takes her lover by surprise and halts his own pleasure. It is very ironical that when Modin expects his name to be mentioned in the peak of the moment, someone else is mentioned, as it happens to Odili in Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People*, when Elsie mentions Ralph’s name instead of Odili’s in the heat of their lovemaking. In both cases, the women signal their joy and satisfaction by sending out ‘loud cries’, just as Mrs. Jefferson does. Notwithstanding the joy of these women, the men must also be seen to be equally enjoying themselves since the sexual acts with these women are mutual. It is thus logical for Modin to halt their lovemaking when Mwangi’s name is mentioned, only to reassess the situation and continue without any particular interest. *Loco citato*, the detail of this sexual act makes it possible for one to see how sex satisfies only the desires of the female (Aimee) to the displeasure of her male partner (Modin, and possibly other male partners). This sexual depiction symbolically foregrounds the unsuccessful race relationships in particularly, *Why Are We So Blest?* and other novels of Armah such as *Two Thousand Seasons* and *KMT: In the House of Life*.

Moreover, the several sex episodes in *Fragments* and especially *Why Are We So Blest?* further reveal how some characters see sex as an avenue of escape from undesirable emotional states such as loneliness or boredom. Loneliness is a thematic preoccupation of Armah in most of his novels and he uses sex an avenue of escape for a number of characters. One may consider the sex episodes between Baako and Juana in *Fragments*, as the two journey away from their worries and loneliness and plunge themselves into self-discovery adventures and several sexual activities. Similarly, in his feeling of loneliness, Modin goes to see Naita, the African American lady, and then they make love in *Why Are We So Blest?* Naita is the only woman with whom

Modin forms a brief but ‘free, natural bond (which even distance cannot obliterate)’ (Sackey 120). Their sexual exchange is recorded by the protagonist, Modin, in his notebook as follows:

‘Relax,’ Naita said. She smiled at me and took my penis, stroking it. Quietly, just playing, she slipped my penis into herself...

Her vagina was contracting around my penis and letting go, slowly, easily. No hands could ever imitate that gentleness of feeling. The sweetness filled my body, my head. What was most beautiful, I knew she felt something of my exhilaration with every contraction... We moved together. Each motion told me she felt what I felt. Our end was unforced, natural. She said nothing. I just felt every motion, knew everything. I cannot feel lonely any more (122-123).

Every moment with Naita makes Modin feel lost in another world he could only locate in the sweet embrace of Naita. His feeling of happiness is fairly represented in expressions such as ‘gentleness’, ‘sweetness’, ‘beautiful’, ‘exhilaration’, ‘together’, ‘slowly’, ‘easily’, ‘unforced’ and ‘natural’. These words convey a strong sense of attachment, especially of Modin to Naita and how he would not simply allow the awesome sexual experience to disappear in memory. This is why he records the details in his notebook in order to relish the moment whenever he takes his notebook. In truth, his sexual experiences with Naita made him feel he could not be lonely any more.

Consequently, when Naita leaves Modin without any trace, Modin’s bottomless sense of loss and helplessness is recorded by him: ‘I called the A.E.C. The receptionist says Naita left. That she left no address. I want to talk to you Naita, I want to talk to you’ (134). The repetition of the parallel structure, ‘I want to talk to you’, shows how strongly he desires the presence and intimacy of Naita whom he had come to appreciate as a true companion. As remarked well by Sackey, for Modin and Naita ‘their relationship is unforced, their sex life natural and their feelings mutual in a free kind of way’ (120).

The consequence of Modin’s loneliness and catastrophic sexual relationships is seen in the confession he makes in his notebook thus: ‘My life here has had a self-destructive swing all the time, only I haven’t thought seriously about it. Loneliness. The search for a way out... What to do in this dead territory? Why, learn to absorb loneliness till it’s time for me to go home’ (156). Modin fails to absorb his loneliness, and he accompanies Aimee on her quest to the desert in search of newer ‘fires’ or experiences that can make her happy. Their fatal experience in the desert in the hands of some French soldiers spells the doom for both characters.

Here, Aimee’s identification with the race of the French soldiers does not save her from the sexual ordeal she subsequently suffers with Modin. The French soldiers consequently subject these two to unimaginable trauma. In his essay, ‘Race, Racism and Sexual Metaphor in Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Why Are We So Blest?*’, King-Aribisala largely looks at Armah’s remarkable use of sexual metaphor to depict the race relations in the novels – relations that are often catastrophic in the end for the hero of the novel, Modin Dofu. It is certainly a surprise for one to notice Aimee desiring Modin when she is undressed and brought closer to Modin as a way of arousing him. She appears unconcerned about their immediate ordeal. ‘She never becomes human, but remains

the voraciously female entrance to Modin's private hell. The association with her ultimately leads Modin, appropriately enough, to a horrifying death by castration in the deserts of North Africa' (Busia 58). Thus, the four soldiers take turns in raping Aimee while they perform a surgical removal of the tip of Modin's erect penis. The sordid effect of their sexual exploitation on the readers' minds would have been lost if the explicit details had not been provided but simply narrated by Armah as: 'The two suffered unimaginable trauma in the deserts of North Africa', and so on. The gruesome nature of the lovers' ordeal, therefore, is realised in Armah's unaltered language use and the presence of sexual images in the pages of the novel.

The treatment of sex in usually explicit terms further allows the author to build up tension and suspense in his audience. When one encounters an episode of sex in the texts, and especially for the one who enjoys the presence of sex, one may consciously or unconsciously ask, 'And then... or what happens?', in one's bid to know how the sexual experience ends for the characters involved. (Sexual)Tension rises here, as one craves for more sexual descriptions. For instance, when Mrs. Jefferson first visits Modin in *Why Are We So Blest?*, the curious reader (who is interested in sex) would be eager to know what would happen when Mrs. Jefferson asks Modin Dofu to 'lock the door' (130), and Modin himself begins to wonder what is happening. Suspense is heightened here as one wonders if Modin would do what one believes could happen. Of course, the inevitable happens and they make love, sparking the beginning of a sexual relationship that nearly ends Modin's life in the hands of Mr. Jefferson.

Suspense is also created when lovers like Densu and Ajoa in *The Healers* and Ast and Asar in *Osiris Rising* intersperse their lovemaking process with constant interruptions, especially with questions. Let us take the example of Ast and Asar. Just when Ast (and the reader) thinks that they (Ast and Asar) are about to make love, Ast feels a sudden resistance from Asar who further shakes his head:

She raised herself up on her knees, shifted forward on top of him, and began to lower herself onto his erect penis. She felt a subtle resistance, and looking at his face, saw him shake his head. 'What's wrong?' she asked. He gave no answer, but his embarrassed smile was eloquent (118-119).

In Armah's vivid imagery, 'smile' has been personified to foreground the source of 'the subtle resistance' from Asar, even though Asar was completely in favour of enjoying the company of Ast. This situation obviously means Asar is not prepared for the sexual encounter, mainly because he does not want to make Ast pregnant. When it all seems to surely come to its natural end, the feeling in Asar is revived by Ast when the latter declares she is 'on the pill' (119). This brief suspense, which is evoked and sustained in the novel when Asar decides not to continue, is released not only in Ast but the audience when Asar finally makes love to Ast despite his reservations. Hence, 'She held steady above him while he moved beneath her' (119).

One obvious trend that runs through most of the sex episodes in Armah's novels is the importance of verbal communication. The verbal communication between sexual partners prepares their minds for lovemaking and also settles any misunderstandings that may be present or needs to be tackled by both partners. Let us take, for example, the conversation that ensues in the sexual experience between Modin and Naita in *Why Are We So Blest?*:

‘Relax,’ Naita said. She smiled at me and took my penis, stroking it. Quietly, just playing, she slipped my penis into herself.

‘Relax,’ she said.

‘I’m trying to,’ I answered.

‘Don’t try. Just relax. Completely.’

We lay on our sides, facing each other. My thighs were between hers... (122).

This particular example presents Naita to be in complete control of her sexuality. She is the experienced one who guides Modin to enjoy their sexual encounter. She is very relaxed and ‘makes’ lovemaking with Modin a relaxed and completely enjoyable activity. The satisfaction for Modin is so effective that he becomes delirious soon after the act and begins to express his infinite love for Naita. Open communication is key here to the enjoyment of their sexual experience. Modin appreciates and respects Naita’s views, and only moves in her when she finally tells him to: ‘Move in me, Modin, yes’ (123). The result of this perfect communication is the beautiful sex both enjoy, ‘the unavoidable result of everything Naita had done’ (123). Naita communicates effectively.

A similar situation is witnessed in *The Healers* when Densu intersperses lovemaking with appropriate communication feedback in his first and particularly second sexual encounters with Ajoa. He is principally watchful of the emotions that his lover goes through and in most cases he perfectly interprets his partner’s bodily language without any need for words. Thus, in *The Healers*, when Densu and Ajoa want to first make love on the grass, “she only reached out to touch the grass beside him seeking to take her weight off him. He understood her movement, though she had said nothing. ‘Your weight isn’t a burden,’ he said, his hold becoming firmer” (179). Here, Ajoa’s movement, non-verbal in nature, is well interpreted by Densu who subsequently assures Ajoa of her light weight, for the two to enjoy their sexual encounter. This situation of characters mixing their sexual experiences with non-verbal and mostly verbal communication fundamentally accounts for the presence of sex episodes in many pages of the various novels than would have been the case. The communication between lovers stretches their lovemaking into several pages in the various novels, and this situation consequently drives the plot of most of the novels. The communication between lovers accounts for the reason why *Why Are We So Blest?* has the most pages of sex episodes, depicting further the importance of sex.

However, in his treatment of sex Armah establishes how the lack of communication between partners can create unnecessary results that fail to attain the very reason for sex. This situation can be seen in the sexual relationship between Baako and Juana in *Fragments* and between Aimee Reitsch and Bombo Pakansa in *Why Are We So Blest?* In *Fragments*, when Juana pushes Baako away when the latter is just about to make love to her, it is Juana’s further utterance, ‘You hurt me just then’ (122) that makes Baako feel loved rather than rejected. He quickly replies: ‘Sorry. I didn’t mean to’ (122) and they continue with their passionate lovemaking. Similarly, in the relationship between Aimee Reitsch and Bombo Pakansa, the Prime Minister in *Why Are We So Blest?*, Aimee records their experience in her diary as follows:

He sounded so happy, I kept thinking: Hell, here am I about to get laid by a head of state. That made me laugh. He thought I was laughing at him.

‘You also think I’m too old, eh? You’ll see. I’ll teach you how to fuck properly. I’ll teach you how to fuck properly.’

I still don’t know if he entered me. His dick was so soft. But he was contented. He moved around a lot, throwing his bulk up and down and shouting he’d teach me how to fuck properly (145).

Now it must be understood that this sexual relationship is consensual, only a misunderstanding out of lack of communication renders this sexual experience unattractive. The feeling of happiness ‘for both partners’ that accompanies ‘a safe/good sexual encounter or relationship’ (Odoi, Geoffrion and Prah 38) is absent in this consensual relationship. The issue is that if only the ‘head of state’ had asked Aimee Reitsch why she was laughing, he would have known the reason for Aimee’s laughter and perhaps felt relaxed enough to enjoy their sexual encounter. He fails to do so and, in the eyes of his sexual partner, Aimee, he performs abysmally. In sex episodes, therefore, the importance of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication is foregrounded in one’s mind, and this is the essence too in lucidly reporting sex in the novels of Armah.

Conclusion

It is clear in this study that an episode of sex (whether simple or explicit, in real time or reported) in novels serves various purposes. It is not sex for sex’s sake, or for the sake of making a writer popular. In all, Armah’s *Fragments*, *Why Are We So Blest?* and *Two Thousand Seasons* have quite a number of explicit sexual episodes or activities than his other works: *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *The Healers*, *Osiris Rising* and *KMT: In the House of Life*. This study has shown that these sex episodes serve as avenues for characterization. Given that a character’s personality can also be defined through what the character does, sexual activity is an act that can help one see striking connections in a person’s character and his or her sexual activities. If a particular character is seen as loving or caring, strong-willed or selfish, a ‘predator’, among other traits, one can tell so also through the behaviour a character exhibits in a sexual act and it is shown or reported in the text. As in the case of Faisal, the Arab in *Two Thousand Seasons*, he is described as a ‘predator’ because of his sexual exploitation of African subjects, especially the female. Thus, these sexual acts are present in the novels to endorse and strengthen what is known about a character, further deepening our understanding of some characters in the novels.

Significantly too, the work reveals that the various sexual depictions largely reveal the diverse roles of sex in the texts and other literary effects such as shock or disgust. For what it is, Armah endorses sex as a uniting force that could bind people. In such a sexual relationship, one largely notices two people actively making love and enjoying every bit of it. The two people usually involve a male and a female, an affirmation of heterosexuality as a sexual preference of many people in most African settings. The explicit sexual relationships between Baako and Juana in *Fragments*, Modin and Naita in *Why Are We So Blest?* and Densu and Ajoa in *The Healers* are some concrete examples used to substantiate this point.

Besides, Armah’s treatment of sex in explicit terms makes it possible for one to question the sexual cravings of some characters like Aimee Reitsch and Mrs. Jefferson in *Why Are We So Blest?* and consider why they form sexual relationships. Their selfish attitudes in their sexual

relationships foreground the unrewarding nature of race relations in that particular novel and others like *Two Thousand Seasons*.

Furthermore, it becomes clear in *Fragments* in the relationship between Baako and Juana and more especially *Why Are We So Blest?* how some characters see sex as an avenue of escape from undesirable emotional states like loneliness or boredom. Loneliness becomes a major theme in the novels of Armah and it is revealed also through the many sexual relationships that characters form.

The presentation of sex in explicit terms also allows the writer to build up tension and suspense in his audience, whose interest is appealed to through the desire to know more. Regarding the didactic value of literature, this study concludes that these sex episodes have inherent lessons such as the importance of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication before, during and after sex.

All in all, the episodes of sex in Armah's novels are not gratuitous or simply for popularity or pleasure, but very important in the overall appreciation of sex in the novels.

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