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## **African Primordial Society in Armah and Kourouma's Historical Novels: The Binary Polemics of Yes and No to *Retours Aux Sources***

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### **Abstract**

Africa remains a massive political wasteland after her independence failure. The foremost nationalists who became first generation leaders and their corrupt successors in the post-colonial era mismanaged the huge success in a disconcerting manner and Africa's political, social and economic life was marked by irony and contrast. This dismal situation engendered hopelessness and scepticism which triggered off disillusionment literature. Should Africa return to her cradle of unspoilt spring of pristine and primordial values? Were these values really magnificent? Should we disdain her past and be thankful enough to colonisation and so join the global train? Ayi Kwei Armah and Ahmadou Kourouma offer different perspectives in their historical novels' accounts. This paper reviewed the high stakes in *retour aux sources* spiritual movement against the call for Africa to brace forward. It concluded by stating that the authors' parallel views are gnawed by the same virus—dissent (disunity) of which they accused the ancient society. But isn't it natural for heterogeneous voices to delimit all known historical accounts?

**Key words:** Historical novels, primordial values, disillusionment, retour aux sources

## Introduction

### I. Irony and Disillusionment

The socio-economic and political realities of Nigeria since independence till date have consistently generated poverty, disease, ignorance and insecurity. The irony however is that the country has been blessed with abundant revenue generating resources and a large population with highly skilled and resourceful members. Development and underdevelopment theorists had always attributed this anomaly of poverty amidst plenty to both internal and external sources. The internal source is generally known to derive from poor leadership. Poor leadership explains why after 50 years of independence, Nigeria still does not have a stable government and the Nigerian state is believed by many to have failed (Anikpo 2011, pp. 3-4).

Anikpo sets the tone of our discussions in this paper. By underscoring failure of leadership in the post-independent era, he brings to the fore the ironical feature of the Nigerian state which is representative of the African continent. Armah and Kourouma have indicated in their novels the causes of the Africa malaise, pointing out the major influences on Africa and her history as the factors that contribute to the current dilemma. Brassier (<http://edu...sansiron>) sheds light on the source and stages in movement of Africa's tragic history:

Ainsi, de l'exploration, on arrivera à l'exploitation, et de l'exploitation, ce sera la colonisation; et à partir de la décolonisation le système se transformera en néocolonisme grâce à la collaboration des dictateurs africains eux-mêmes!

Brassier opined that Africa's predicament stalked it and pounced on it when nothing could be done. He agrees with Armah that Africa's problem started after the contact with Europe. Exploration was succeeded by exploitation which was replaced by colonization and later by neocolonialism. At all times, African dictators were ready collaborators. To this extent, Armah and Kourouma's works take the influences on Africa into the primordial society to make critical statements. This is meant to reconstruct Africa's history. This literary approach is imperative given the aberrations that greet the period of self-rule resulting to huge social, political and economic woes. Our mission in this article is essentially to show that Armah and Kourouma's judgment of the past is positive and negative respectively and as such they have parallel opinions about Africa's early origins. In an attempt to make constructive arguments on the continent's history, the two novelists having dissenting voices on historical events paradoxically fall into the mould they cast for the ancient society.

### II. *Retour aux Sources* Apology

*Retour aux sources* is a spiritual movement or "Journey of the Mind" (Anyidoho 1989:108). It is informed by the fact that the primordial African society is marked by

selected ethos emanating from cherished values. A virgin society, paradise of peace, love and harmony once existed before it was intruded upon and its sacred tradition and customs were defiled, its people corrupted. One particular trait which appears natural and which contemporary writers have reinforced in the thought of that era is nostalgia. Expression of this sentiment dominates most African works in the main land and the Diaspora. Césaire (1983, p. 38) remembers the once amazing heroic dignity of his African ancestry:

Non, nous n'avons jamais été amazones du roi de Dahomey, ni princes de Ghana avec huit cents chameaux, ni docteurs à Tombouctou Askia le Grand étant roi, ni architectes de Djenné, ni Mahdis, ni guerriers. Nous ne nous sentons pas sous l'aisselle la démanaison de ceux qui tinrent jadis la lance.

Césaire's remarks remind us of the great kingdoms and dynasties that were founded in Africa and the great men behind them. Unfortunately, African greats could only beget descendants who were enslaved and subjected to untold hardship, forced labour and inferiority. Diop (Aniebo 2007, p. 107) evoked this romantic return in *Africa*:

African my Africa/ Africa of proud warriors in ancestral savannahs  
Africa of which my grand-mother sings/ Besides her faraway river  
I never knew you/But my gaze is full of your blood  
Your beautiful black blood spilt in the fields...

Ndimubandi (1999, p. 9) in *La Guerre du Juste* recaptures this past ecstatic mood and the serenity that enveloped its state of nirvana: 'Voici Kilimiro, la région légendaire. Matrice des collines verdoyantes. Au début du siècle, les Envahisseurs, les Allemands, furent conquis par sa beauté ineffable' In *One Man, One Wife*, Aluko (1967, p. 111) contributes to the eulogy as he recalls the defunct germane life of Isolo village, peaceful enclave, home to unchallenged rural dwellers in their full immersions in the sacred ancestral customs and tradition:

Peace there once was in the village of Isolo, when the village elders assembled and discussed village affairs, and recalled the heroic deeds of their cherished past as the calabash of palm wine passed from hand to hand; when house wives met at the village market and at the village brook and gossip away their cares—and the secrets of their husbands; when village lads and lasses told folk tales and riddles on moonlight nights, and played games of hide and seek, made love in the shadows; when daughters saw and chose their husbands with the eyes and the minds of their parents—guided by the infallible Ifa oracle. Those were the days—the days that would never again return.

This journey to the lost Garden of Eden is the function of the bastardisation of our values by the sick depraved regimes of the postcolonial period. Therefore, it is conjured in opposition to the harm they have caused Africa. Armah proposes retracing of steps back to the heydays to receive healing. Kourouma is sceptical about everything that has to do with such return. Both of them have arguments for whatever opinions held.

### **Currents against *Retour aux Sources***

The penchant for Africa's lost cultural *El Dorado* worries Nnolim, who laments the absence of utopian literature. Africa needs futuristic literature for her development to dump the enormity of the present. The critic makes a repertoire of literary currents awash with retour-aux-source:

It was buttressed by the return to Africa movement of Marcus Garvey, the Harlem Renaissance in the U.S., Indigenism in Haiti, Afro-Cubanism in Cuba, the Rastafarian Movement in Jamaica, and the cult of primitivism in the Caribbean. Each, along with the Negritude Movement was a *retour aux sources* romantic longing for the African past by writers for whom Africa remained a lost paradise, to which we must all return for the authentication of our humanity denied, debased, and enslaved by the colonial masters...while the most celebrated is encapsulated in Césaire's *Cahier d'un Retour au pays natal* (Nnolim 2012, pp. 105-106).

Nnolim's position aligns with Spivak, who argued that "The colonial encounter is thus seen to mark a crucial reordering of the world, and many postcolonial writers argue that the return to pristine, unspoilt pre-colonial culture is impossible and have warned against such nostalgia for lost origins" (Abrahamsen 2003, p. 196). The treatment of utopian literature has never advanced to stop the campaign. That is why writers of this subject continue to make waves. Mbembé states that Africans who left the shores of the continent through slavery are expected to come back to the land to answer Africans failing which their *africanness* becomes questionably problematic to African identity. He bemoans this bellicose spirit:

Comment rendre compte de leur inscription dans une nation définie racialement alors que la géographie les a coupés du lieu de leur naissance et du lieu où il vivent et travaillent? Pour consacrer leur africanité, on proposera qu'ils reviennent purement et simplement en Afrique. Dans une large mesure, le mythe du retour (le *back to Africa movement*) est à base du mouvement panafricanisme. Pendant longtemps, la persistance de ce mythe et l'idée selon laquelle *l'on ne peut être africain qu'en Afrique* empêcheront de traiter de la réalité diasporique autrement que sur le monde de l'exil et de la culpabilité (Mbembé 2000, pp. 29-30).

Ekpo (2005, p. 110) thinks this is a ploy by African writers to avoid the African standard being critically and objectively judged by outsiders:

The ideological meta-narrative against whose background the paranoid, Europe-facing African student and critic of African literature and art emerged is called Afrocentrism. As the ideology of a specific 'negritude' modernity, Afrocentrism is responsible for having constructed an essentially schizophrenic modern African literary subjectivity that oscillates between a repressed fixation on the overseerly role of the white European ex-master and a narcissistic Afrophilia. As a nativistic counter-discourse to imperialism, Afrocentrism stages itself as the ideological attempt to return to Africa qua Africa by overcoming Europe's voyeuristic white denigrating gaze on the arts and cultures of Africa.

He argues that it is this unguarded pseudo-patriotic and highly romanticized nationalist zeal, sentimentalism and comatose love for Africa exhibited by foremost African writers and critics that violated and armed African leaders and politicians of the post-independence era, who, in their bid to defend Africa and protect her cultural values, went haywire, descending to the abyss of dictatorship. These currents have called *retour aux source* to question.

#### **Armah's Call for *Retour aux Sources***

Armah accounted for much of the efforts to return to the old days. Armah had quite a lot of faith in the past, with its quintessential mores, to rehabilitate the new aberrant culture. His position is unambiguous. In *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*, his audience is appalled by the alacrity with which he propounds his apology for 'the way'. Ezeigbo (1982, p. 36) spoke of Armah's views:

Armah shows how the corrupt kings, the aristocrats and even some of the ordinary people plan to destroy the 'wholeness' of the people and to encourage the society to stray from the right 'way' of the ancestors. He thus uses its past to illuminate the happenings of the present.

Armah sought the annulment of the devastating wayward order induced by corruption through the adoption of the moral ethos of 'the people of the way'. He strived to prove that 'the people of the way' are not only found in the primordial period since they incarnate in the novels of individual exploration as lonely characters who reject the moral crassness. Their moral authority has freed them from moral bankruptcy and has helped them to educate the lost sheep of the land. In the historical novels, such characters are Isanusi, Densu, Abena etc. Anozie (1970, pp. 250-251) observed:

...l'individu commence à s'affirmer de plus en plus librement en tant qu'être clairvoyant ou conscience créatrice du groupe, et surtout en

tant qu'éducateur de son peuple. C'est bien dans cette double perspective—affirmation de la liberté de l'individu et rééducation du public en Afrique—qu'il faut comprendre la tentative du jeune romancier malien Yambo Ouloguem, dans son deuxième roman *Le Devoir de Violence* et celle du Ghanéen Ayi Kwei Armah, dans *The Beautiful Ones are not yet born*.

Armah's judgment does not skip the drastic lack of foresight in the people of the past which gave intruders the opportunity to penetrate freely into the Africans to cause harm. Such complacency led to wrong calculation of the danger that was lurking around. One group that poses this risk are migrant Arabs who disguised as beggars:

Concerning the hollow-eyed beggars seeking refuge from their desert people's cruelties, concerning the easy hospitality with which we welcomed them there was still no change. But among the beggars themselves there were changes. More of them came. Cured and fed they thought us fools and said so, then acted on time we laughed at this, laughed because we could afford to part with what the white beggars from the desert so coveted, laughed because we have strayed so far from the way it way the paltry quantity of the thing coveted that drew our gaze, not the heinous nature of predation itself (Armah 1973, p. 18).

One deduces absence of power of anticipation in the people, a situation that could have helped them to guard against the unexpected. It is this callous mistake that the novelist abhors and he is rankled by its historical consequences. The social realism of the ancient sub-Saharan Africans for this reason could not guarantee social security and uninterrupted evolution. The result is that it bequeathed unsafe future to its posterity. This is the bane of the postcolonial society which shares most of these characteristics plus those inherited from colonisation. Besides, in *The Healers*, the author reproaches the people for disunity and divisions. Disunity becomes destructive lethal virus that gave destroyers the chance to infiltrate the race. Armah (1973, p. 82) discovered that a people may be healthy but their incapacitation might be discordant voices. This is sickness. If one part, body or spirit, is diseased, the other cannot function:

A people can be diseased the same way. Those who need naturally to be together but are not, are they not a people sicker than the individual body disintegrated from its soul? Sometimes a whole people need healing work. Not a tribe, not a nation. Tribes and nations are just signs that the whole is diseased. The healing work that cures a whole people is the highest work, far higher than the cure of individuals.

Armah's postulations suggest that the Asante Empire as smaller tribes fractured by inter-tribal wars cannot withstand external aggression. Africa today faces the same fate.

So, the ancient society gave in to disruptive forces of peaceful evolution. However, Armah in his historical novels tacitly indicted this age for lackadaisical attitude toward existential challenges.

Armah apologised for the past. Yet the travesty of Africa's present could be traced to that past for its aberrant values. This faulted the flaunted moral uprightness of that period. Armah agreed that the past contributed to the dilemma of the present. He weaves such moral weaknesses around villainous characters such as Buntui, Ababio, Koranche and Atobra. Ezeigbo (1982, p.37) described Ababio's portrait as deliberate representation of internal rot and corruption with physical oddity:

The man was short and bald. He moved gracelessly, but this awkwardness was not on account of age. The man was fat. Underneath all his fat it was clear his bones were small and his natural frame was that of a small slight person. But he had overwhelmed his natural frame with fate, and now he looked like a deformed sphere balanced unsteadily on thin legs. His arms were short. The upper parts were thick and heavy, but the lower arms turned suddenly thin a short way from the elbow...

Another incident that occurred in the pre-colonial society which is recorded in the accounts of Armah's novels is the activities of the White destroyers and the Arab predators. Such acts affect the post-colonial society. The intruding predators came with the kind of moral insanity and violent greed that summarily infected the 'people of the way'. So, they converted the zombies and the *askaris* to work for them against the interest of their people especially in the slave business. The predators who disguised initially as beggars not only turned to preachers of strange religion and forcefully converted the autochthones, they became homosexuals. The White destroyers in particular met indigenous aristocrats with natural greed:

At the time the white destroyers broke through the wall of water and arrived from the sea the king Koranche had already shown he was greedy for power over our people, eager to wield a tyrannous power. Then the white destroyers came: first a trader wanting to buy goods from us and sell us things. With him was a hunter who the next time he came Anoa killed a woman pointed out by the drunken king to show the power of his gun. There was a third white destroyer: a missionary who wanted to replace all knowledge of our way with fables even our children laughed at then.

That evil relics of the past still linger in the post-colonial space is sustainable. In spite of these obnoxious weaknesses, Armah exhorted the primordial African society and recommends its moral template for the rotten undisciplined post-colonial society. He

argued that the norms and values of that generation be retrieved and used as remedy to the wreckage and violence done to rectitude by the wayward post-independent era.

### **Kourouma's Repugnance for Africa's Past**

*Monnè, Outrages et Défis* is ample in x-raying the pre-colonial African society of the Mandingo, the exploits of its empire under Samory Kéita and the proof of influence on the modern African society grappling with the parody of post-independence dreams. Generally, Kourouma's novels are works of disillusionment on Africa's political experiences and have demonstrated this in totalising perspectives which show loss of faith in the ability of African leadership to steer the ship of state. It is their conviction that Africa's woes lingering in the contemporary times derive from the faulty foundation of African traditional philosophy. The beliefs and practices seem much inimical to development and evolution into modernity becomes practically impossible. Paraded paraphernalia of norms and conventions that form the foundation of the society are inhibition to the spirit.

In *Monnè, Outrages et Défis*, the people of Soba resort to self-pity as intruders from alien climes descend upon them to impose upon them strange authority and religion. The technique of humour therefore helps Kourouma to dispel the timbre of destructive criticism when he should denounce Soba for not fighting to win a battle at their doorstep no matter who their adversaries are or how armed they might be. Instead the people are filled with high expectation of divine intervention.

Nevertheless, Kourouma recognises the resourcefulness of the indigenous language and its uses of tropes and metaphors. He discerns that such linguistic endowments turn dysfunctional as the masters hide under the mastery of language to condone unnecessary human weaknesses and biases. The argument between Soumaré and Djigui explains vividly the people's resignation:

-Kéita! Kéita! Le savez-vous? Le savez-vous? Après le combat entre deux lutteurs qui ont tous les deux pour totem le caïman, le saurien du vaincu devient un vil margouillat. Le caïman-totems des Noirs s'est avili, réduit en margouillat; celui de la France émerge en plein crocodile, car, avec la rupture de Samory, les nazaréens français instaurent leurs paix et force dans toute la Négritie, du sud au nord. Gloire et joie aux vainqueurs! Malheur aux vaincus! (*Monnè...* 1990, p. 53).

It is evident from these that Africa's compounded woes exist even today partly as a result of the unpreparedness of the pre-colonial society to welcome the challenges of foreign invasion and the advent of civilisation and science. It is made to remain in such stagnation first by sheer exhibition of ignorance and non-systematic development of



reason that ushers in readiness for existential challenges. Djigui and his men choose to shed blood by making human sacrifices instead of resisting the French at Soba:

“Du sang! encore du sang! Des sacrifice! encore des sacrifices!” commandait Djigui toujours le roi. Affolés, sbires sicaires se précipitent dans la ville, obligèrent dans des concessions, le peuple à sacrifier. Les vautours arrivaient toujours. Un nuage noir plomba le ciel, les toits se couvraient de voiles noirs. Du sang toute sorte de sang! Des sacrifices, toute sorte de sacrifices! Les sbires comprirent: il manquait des sacrifices humains. Ils descendirent dans les quartiers périphériques enlevèrent trois albinos et les égorgèrent sur les autels sénoufos des bois sacrés environnants. Ce fut une faute. Le fumet du sang humain se mêla à celui des bêtes et trouble l’univers (*Monnè* 1990, p. 13).

The reader discovers the propensity to failure and an atmosphere pregnant with premonitions, a system of beliefs and superstition leading to redundancy and social inertia. It is here that the laugh of the hyena, the flight of vultures, the cries of crocodiles are symbolic and sinister. Signs and wonders are awash and reason is forced to derail. It is a world fore-grounded in dreams and prophesies. The people of Soba feed their inputs into natures’ whims and caprices rather than the empirical box of human emancipation through material transformation of the universe. That is why only misfortunes are occurring and they choose to announce their advent through these events representing the matrices of a primitive world. Only through these signs can the people understand the world:

Un homme exhibant un poulet s’écria: “le coquelet que voici a chanté au milieu de la nuit et a pondu un œuf de lézard”. “Voilà la patte du singe rouge que nous avons surpris dans le fourré lapant des termites rouges d’une termitière rouge.” “Cette chèvre a mis bas ce petit cochon.” “Ma femme a accouché de ce python.” “Une silure de la pluie de silures s’est abattu hier soir sur notre village.” “Chez nous, l’hyène est descendue en plein jour des montagnes et a par des maléfices magiques, déterré, sans fouir la tombe, un sorcier que nous avons enseveli voilà le linceul.” “Chez nous, ce n’est pas l’hyène, mais le serpent sacré du bois sacré qui s’est transformé en ce pangolin.” “Cette natte est celle dans laquelle dormait le bébé adultérin que le crocodile sacré a enlevé dans une case close de notre village” (*Monnè ...1990*, pp. 93-94).

The encounter of the French with the people of Soba turns hilarious as the Africans claim that the aliens have eaten a larger number of slaves and sacrificed more to their gods:

Les Africains avaient fini par croire que les nombreux esclaves acquis étaient sacrifiés et consommés. On avait d'ailleurs expliqué que c'étaient les bénéfices des sacrifices humains qu'ils avaient offerts à leurs divinités et la force vitale de tous les Nègres qu'ils avaient consommés qui avaient donné aux Toubabs la sorcellerie du savoir-faire technologique, savoir-faire qui était signe patent de leur damnation (*Monnè...* 1990, p. 24).

The novel demonstrates how the two societies are directly opposed to each other. The mastery of metaphysics and its uses rather than technological advancements fails. Fantasy is knocked by reality. This justifies Kourouma's loss of faith in the people's practices:

Je ne crois pas à la magie pour une raison très simple: si l'Afrique avait quelque chose à cacher, avait des pouvoirs mystérieux, notre histoire n'aurait pas été si tragique. Je le répète si les Africains détenaient vraiment des pouvoirs magiques, notre histoire serait moins tragique. Si les millions de personnes que l'on a fait partir aux Etats Unis avaient pu se transformer en oiseaux et s'échapper, tous se seraient envolés et auraient fui (Lefort et Mauro 1999, p. 180).

If Africans had magical powers, they would have flown away like birds from the slave hunters and Africa would not have lost millions of people. Africa's history wouldn't have been so tragic and that is the essential Kourouma says. The author portrays Djigui as a convoluted megalomaniac. He alone decodes nature's semiotics that constitute the channel of metaphysical forces incarnated in signs and symbols. If flesh and blood and a centenarian like Djigui herding a harem of wives and concubines is so deluded in his paranoid condition because he lays claim to being the doyen of spiritualism, it is not surprising that he is the only one in the midst of his entourage to see the ghost of a kinsman who is about to pass on. The question remains why shouldn't another person in the crowd be so privileged to see the fleeing ghost since they all are begotten by the same cultural womb?

The hedonist urge in Djigui is demonstrated by the carnal love that controls his entire life. Sex in particular has overwhelming influence on him. The narrator attests to this fact by stating that his harem is a retinue of young beautiful girls offered by the chiefs of Soba on the coronation day (*Monnè...* 1990:133). Even as a centenarian, tradition allows him to add Muossokoro, who was in her mother's (Karidia's) womb when Djigui as a young prince saved them from drowning. The novel draws attention to the plight of women in the pre-colonial African society legitimized by ancient customs and tradition. Djigui ridicules Muossokoro, who desires freedom: "Quelle liberté?" (*Monnè...*1990, p. 132). The following remarks therefore clamour for women liberation:

Women have been unduly burdened by injustice created by patriarchy. Natural justice therefore demands that women be allowed to decide how they want to live their lives, just as men do; pick husbands of their choice; make decisions on matters of procreation as it affects their lives; have equal access to basic education; share the same basic liberty and to all intents and purposes enjoy absolute equality (Nwodo 2007, p. 16).

Kourouma views the pre-colonial society not as a model. Both he and Armah treat the interregnum in ancient kingdoms to show how the throne must be irrigated with blood before succession takes place. Assassinations, arson, rape, looting and stealing go on. In the case of Soba, the situation comes under control with the arrival of Monsieur Bernier, the commandant.

Djéliiba insists that it is never peaceful; and once a Kéïta, named Bamory ordered the Malinke to massacre young boys of Senoufos. “L’égorgement de quatre-vingt-sept jeunes dans une seule ville et une seule nuit horrifia les gens” (Monnè 1990, p.188). Violence is perpetrated by leaders and that characterizes the dynasty; certain rulers wreaked violence on their subjects and dictatorship thrived. Djéliiba recounts the litany of crimes committed by different sovereigns of the kingdom comprising among others Tiefla, who lost an eye and decrees that the number “one” be skipped in counting throughout the kingdom; Seriki, who transforms himself into a vulture in the night; Kanka, who, for the love of his wife, Masseni, goes berserk killing all other women lovers with whom he cheated her. The African shows no sign of self-absolution from Western criticism that he is only a man of physical prowess, especially in relation to sex. Over the centuries, this notion of sexual ardour has been etched in the annals of Western narratives and the situation in *Monnè* aptly demonstrates it. Djéliiba recounts Djigui’s encounter with Moussokoro, his favorite wife:

Les attouchements commencèrent par les oreilles, elle susurra ou plutôt souffla des mots obscènes indistincts. Les doigts descendirent, s’égarèrent; Djigui répondit par des caresses qu’elle guida, les lèvres se promenèrent; le désir profond d’un contact plus intime se créa. Djigui éclata sur la langue; c’était la première fois qu’il connaissait ça; tout son corps désirait; il la demanda sur le ton pleurard d’un enfant...Elle lui enseigna une position; rapidement, au sentiment de détente succéda un rythme qui l’emporta, le désir d’aller plus profondément. Jamais il ne l’avait vécu aussi prolongé. Enfin, tout son corps se convulsa, la sensation de chaleur envahit le bassin et ce fut la tempête...Djigui en soufflant tomba dans le lit, désarticulé (*Monnè...1990, p.151*).

Djigui falls apart and his inarticulate form emits a sour taste of emptiness of his personality and the emptiness of pre-colonial Africa which he incarnates. Kourouma passes that judgement on it and this is a conviction of history. Kourouma therefore dispensed *retour aux sources*.

### Conclusion

This paper proved that *retour aux sources* comes from the stock of highly ambitious African cultural nationalism. It has shown that the philosophy behind this is ascetic patriotism which assigns to itself herculean voluntarism to defend the African cause and identity. These attributes have led most writers to assume the role of salvaging the image of the continent in the face of global upsurge of racial prejudices against Africa. Armah and his historical novels are an embodiment of the said role. And it only needs an eclectic spirit like that of Kourouma to provide a counterpoint to that. *Monnè, Outrages et Défis* is the basis of this opposition. However, one critical thing about the authors is that in their accounts of history they like Africans of the primordial times are diseased with divergent views. Their status as intellectuals even widens the gap and defers the solution to Africa's problems. A lesson to be drawn from their opposing views is the inalienable fact that accounts of history could not be homogeneous. The heterogeneity of the narrating voices is the only constant feature in our historical trajectory. Armah's refutation of the gains of colonisation is explicit as is Kourouma's language of acknowledgement. « Celui qui s'engage à tisser un couil pour couvrir la nudité des fesses de l'éléphant s'est obligé à réussir une œuvre exceptionnelle » (*Monnè* 1990, p.78), which could be translated as he who embarks upon sewing a *lappa* to cover the nakedness of the elephant's arse is bound to accomplish an extraordinary task. This is more or less a proverb which Kourouma uses to emphasize that above all the crimes Europe committed in the course of colonization, her contributions in the enthronement of modern civilization in Africa are undeniable. Little wonder that Kourouma could justify Europe and colonization by commending their efforts in Africa's modern civilization in such affirmative proverbial manner.

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