In his second novel, *Fragments*, Ayi Kwei Armah returns to the same theme of all round corruption and cynical helplessness, as he exposed it in his previous novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. In *Fragments* we identify Armah playing the role of “hero” as well as “victim”. It is a thinly veiled autobiographical novel. The novel probes more deeply into the mind of the artist or the intellectual in contemporary African society and also the problems before an artist in Africa.

Armah and Ngugi of Kenya have shown in their works over the years a major preoccupation with their role in society, as members of the educated elite, as committed individuals, and as artists and intellectuals. The early works of both Ngugi and Armah suggest considerable self-conflict, taking the form of a self-doubt and self-glorification. This is expressed through exceptional protagonists experiencing a sense of conflict. Usually recognizable representatives of African intellectuals or artists, they are torn about their proper role in society, about the validity of their visions, and their ability to convey those visions to the community. Exhibiting in their early works
the classic symptoms of alienation, both Armah and Ngugi have come to new convictions in more recent works.

*Fragments* offers an astute portrait of the contradiction involved in a period of transition and its focus is on the struggling individual and the society which he is desperately trying to relate himself to. The novel is a further continuation of the painful saga of the individual's quest for meaning in the hopeless world of Ghana society. As in the earlier novel, Armah portrays Ghana as a society corrupt at every level. Again, a single more or less good person is isolated from society because of his refusal to get acquainted with corruption. His uprightness gains him nothing and does not alter the social order. The man of *The Beautyful Ones* and Baako of *Fragments* are alienated from their thoroughly corrupt society and Armah dramatizes their growing pain of isolation and loneliness. Armah shares Ngugi's concerns about alienation from society coupled with messianism and applies them explicitly to artists and intellectuals in *Fragments*. While commenting on Armah's visionary protagonists as artists, Chidi Amuta observes:

To be familiar with Armah's art as a novelist is to come into sympathetic acquaintance with his visionary protagonists, who in several different ways are objectifications of the creative consciousness. Perhaps in the work of no other African novelist of English expression does the
creative visionary so consistently assume such centrality in the fictional frame of things. This feature of Armah's art assumes some measure of significance in African literary scholarship on account of the topicality of the issue of the place of the artist in contemporary African society.²

Armah's protagonists, because of their determination to act in a different manner, become accused criminals or mad men. They are not very different from a whole line of western literary anti-heroes: Julian Sorel, Huckleberry Finn, Stephen Dedalus, or Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man. In his depiction of the stifled artist in contemporary Africa, and especially of the writer in Fragments, Armah has turned to a theme almost as old as western fiction itself but a theme entirely new in African Literature.

Despite some superficial resemblances to its predecessor, The Beautiful Ones, the title of the Fragments does not refer to its form. Though divided into thirteen sections, each with a sub-title of its own, it does not in itself become fragmented. "Armah's second novel is probably his most unified, structurally as well as thematically."³ The structural complexity of Fragments is hinted at in the dedication: "for AMA ATA & ANA LIVIA". Ama Ata is the Ghanaian writer, an old friend of Armah's. Anna Livia is a character in James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake. The content or story will be African, the structure (made of fragments or little pieces like a puzzle) will show an
indebtedness to Joyce. Armah does, however, make use of the shifting points of view in *Fragments* and makes use of extensive passages of introspection bordering on the stream of consciousness.\(^4\)

The story of *Fragments* is hardly more plotted than that in his earlier novel though the conflict is much more personalised. Armah's picture of Ghana in *Fragments* is more appalling, more an exposure of corruption than in *The Beautiful Ones*. Baako Onipa, the artist-protagonist of the novel is a lonely and isolated individual. He completes his studies in creative writing in the United States and returns to his own country after five years. He has suffered a sort of nervous breakdown while in America. During his stay in America Baako learns to see his society differently believing that he has certain "long-range" insights which he can communicate to society. These insights relate in particular to the need to close the social gap between the elite and the masses and to help the latter to conquer the habit of dependence which, Baako perceives, is encouraged by the elite in order to perpetuate their own power. Filled with idealism and enthusiasm he wants to contribute his creativity to his Ghanaian nation. Simultaneously he wants to retain his basically artistic consciousness intact. Ironically, these are two diametrically opposed realms of existence, for the new Ghana is so immersed in soul-deadening materialism and corruption that it has little space for youthful idealists let alone creative writers of all oddities. Baako's family
expects that as a “been-to” he will bring money, influence, and power to the family. Significantly, Baako, unlike other returning travellers, brings no gifts for his family on his return to Ghana. He brings nothing except a guitar and a typewriter. He refuses to fulfil the role of a “been-to” on his return. His return does not pave the way for a cosy future either for him or for the family. He finds himself alienated from his society by its open and cynical corruption and he is unable to collaborate with the ruling elite. His family, who hope to benefit from the privileges available to him, are disappointed at his unwillingness to promote his own interests. As a result, Baako is isolated both from his family and from the wider community. He is, as it were, caught between two worlds, neither of which he can fully identify with. His alienation is not only from the society but also from his family because of the family's inability to understand that his ambitions are not primarily material ones. Pressured by family and societal conventions, he soon suffers from a second breakdown, more serious than the first because, this time it is his own family and country that lead to the collapse. As Charles E. Nnolim remarks “the simple story which Fragments tells is a pathetic one that is replete with a series of ecstasies that end in agonies, triumphs that end in defects, the ideal frustrated by the unfulfilled existence.”

The artist protagonist is set in such a world where money, material possessions, and political power are the real marks of social
heroism. His life is an epic quest for relevance. In the words of Martin Tucker, "Baako is a symbolic African figure, the educated young man torn between the values of the old and new. But the distinction that Armah brilliantly shows is that even the new values have turned. In early African novels of colonialist Africa when the educated has returned to his own country, he was adrift. He belonged neither to his tribesmen nor to the British who acknowledged his education but never accepted him socially and personally. Such heroes, in African novels, usually ended in despair and often self-inflicted violence. Now the "been-to" returns to his own country but finds the corrupt bureaucracy has changed from a white British to a black Ghanaian skin."\(^6\)

The two other important characters in *Fragments* besides Baako are his grandmother, Naana, and a young Puerto Rican psychiatrist, Juana, who becomes Baako's lover. They represent a kind of stability and tradition which is under rapid destruction. The old world wisdom of Naana underlines the opening and closing chapters of the novel entitled "Naana." The significance of the title of the novel and its structural patterns are reflected in the thinking of Naana in the last chapter:

The larger meaning which lent sense to every small thing and every momentary happening years and years ago has shattered into a thousand and
thirty useless pieces. Things have passed which I have never seen whole, only broken and twisted against themselves. What remains of my days will be filled with more broken things. (280)

The individuals who wish to restore order and a sense of justice to the society are affected by the impact of the shattering of the larger meaning of the social order and moral vision, which leads to conflicts from within and without, resulting in violence. The consequences will be worse particularly when, society and its miniature representation, family, take an unsympathetic view of the individual's efforts to lead a meaningful life. This is demonstrated in the novel through the characters of Baako, his blind grandmother, Naana, and his girl friend, Juana. The novel achieves its wholeness through the concerns of the individuals confronted with a demanding family and a fragmented society.

The narrative of Fragments is exposed through Naana's encompassing vision. In her blindness she is a visionary. The incantatory tone of Naana in the first chapter serves as a prologue to the narrative. This is followed by the point of view of Juana. Naana's thoughtful commentary on the life that has been lived and its future portents are a significant pointer to Juana's pragmatic vision. Both of them represent the significance of the feminine principle lending structural as well as thematic coherence to the novel. The thematic
and to go past the untouchable horizon itself" (4). She imagines his arriving at the end of his journey:

I saw Baako roaming in unknown, forbidden places, just born there again after a departure and a death somewhere. He had arrived from the horizon and standing in a large place that was open and filled with many winds, he was lonely. (15)

Because of the awareness born of her own isolation, Naana has a fear that her favourite grandchild too is suffering from loneliness and isolation resulting from more than physical displacement. She remembers an old ritual song:

A human being alone
is a thing more sad than any lost animal
and nothing destroys the soul
like its aloneness. (6)

She thinks, “sometimes I know my blindness was sent to me to save me from the madness that would surely have come with seeing so much that was not to be understood” (14). She reminds Foli, a famished priest who drains even the last drops of spirit meant as libation to the ancestors, of traditions to be observed but now lost sight of on the occasion of Baako’s departure. The tradition she represents is that of Ghana now almost completely lost, completely forgotten.
Naana is a mature symbolic deliverer of the old world values of regeneration. For her the desperate “fragments” will be unified and a new generation of values will emerge. This is the ultimate message and meaning of the narrative. She proclaims with a prophetic urgency the launching of another world:

I am here against the last of my veils.
Take me. I am ready. You are the end.
The beginning. You who have no end
I’m coming. (287)

The saga of listlessness of despair and frustration of Baako controls the narrative interest. The narrative, in a way, is divided into the world of Baako and that of “others”. Baako’s world consists of Juana, Naana, and Ocran. The “other” world consists of Brempong, Akousa Russel and Efua, Baako’s own mother. The narrative progresses by a process of obvious and recurrent contrast between the attitudes of these two worlds. If Baako’s world is a world of values of collective good, selflessness, and decent moral values, the “other world” is a gross subversion of these values. If one is “idealistic,” the other is “real.”

For Naana, Baako forms the epitome of excellence. She looks for the revival of a new world of hope and the generation of a new set of values. To this extent, Baako’s return from abroad is a sure opportunity for the revival of new values. Naana’s vision of Baako’s
purpose of the narrative is dramatized at the beginning by Naana, a representative of the old world values:

Each thing that goes away returns and nothing in the end is lost. The great friend throws all things apart and brings all things together again. That is the way everything goes and turns round. That is how, all living thing come back after long absence, and in the whole great world all things are living things. All that goes returns. He will return. (1)

This opening passage of Fragments takes us into the mind of Baako's blind grandmother. She is at peace with her world and she knows that Baako will eventually return home from abroad. Her belief in the inevitability of Baako's return is in sharp contrast to the fears of her daughter, Baako's mother, Efua. The chapter contains Naana's recollections of Baako's departure for America and her anticipations of his return. Naana's imaginative projections about Baako's departure and return are important to the overall structure of the novel. Armah uses them as a means of relating the elements of Western myth and African folklore that have been incorporated into the novel. In Naana's imagination Baako is associated with beings who live in the sky. Through Naana's blind eyes we participate in a parting scene with Baako, the day he had left for overseas, five years before. She recalls Baako's departure when he was "taken up into the sky to cross the sea
return and Efua's dreams set in perspective the narrative's hopeful
attitude to life. Baako's return will be a pregnant moment of wisdom
and fulfilment in the Ghanaian psyche. Naana sings of Baako thus:

A piece of us, go
And come a piece of us,
You will not be coming,
When you come,
The way you went away.
You will come stronger,
To make us stronger,
Wiser,
To guide us with your wisdom. (5-6)

It is against this background that the arrival of Baako is dramatized.
If Baako's world is centrally idealistic, it is poignantly negated by the
"other world."

In Fragments, Armah places before us characters defeated by
this cruel world. Ghana is the worst possible world which is glimpsed
in the sign in Akan-OBRA YEKO which means LIFE IS WAR. Juana,
an expatriate doctor in Ghana, who is first struck by this sign says
that she is in a land where she finds herself trying "to forget that now
the sum of her life was only that she was here in another defeated and
defeating place, to forget all the reminders of futility"(17). Juana, even
though a minor character, throws light on the major characters and
incidents. In the chapter entitled "Edin," which means "what is your
name? we come to know the reality of Ghana through the eyes of Juana. She takes long drives whenever the work in the hospital becomes heavy for her. The contrast between what the people desire and what they need is brought out, for example, in the description of Juana's drive through the outskirts of Aura.

Armah's descriptions of the incidents Juana witnesses not only illustrates the plight of the society but also reinforces the classical associations of the novel. The people express themselves mainly through violent action directed at the weakest among them. Juana witnesses a debased form of the hunt on the outskirts of Aura when a rugged band of men kill a dog assuming that it is mad. It is a pathetic incident, especially in the depiction of the weeping child who owns the dog. The child cries for the dog which is his best friend in the world and which is not a mad one. But the objections of the child are in vein and the dog is beaten to a mangled pulp on the pavement. We find a similar scene elsewhere in the novel, but instead of dog, Baako is considered mad by his own family and he is beaten by stones when he tries to escape the members of the family who want to put him in the mental hospital. Baako runs through the roads but cannot avoid his family's trials and is finally admitted in a mental institution.

After the dog-killing incident, Juana drives the rest of the way to the beach where she sees a prophet and his followers worshipping –
“a mass of human flesh and limbs rolling in sand and sending cries up toward the sky” (44). Here we are introduced to Baako’s mother, Efua, as one of the worshippers. She attends the prophet for Baako’s return. On her way back to the city, Juana offers lift in her car to Efua. The latter explains to Juana that she will follow the prophet if she gets what she wants. She says, “The prophet has promised me something, if only I have faith and follow him” (49). It is here that we see the difference between Efua and Naana. Naana strongly believes that Baako will return and his return is inevitable. Her belief in the inevitability of Baako’s return is in sharp contrast to the fears of her daughter, Efua, who worships the prophet for Baako’s return. Naana adheres to a traditional faith in ritual efficacy whereas Efua has lost faith in Baako’s return and also in faith itself, for she stops going to see the prophet after Baako’s arrival.

The chapter entitled “Akwaaba,” which means “welcome” brings Baako back to homeland. On the Flight Baako encounters H.R.S. Brempong, a Ghanaian official, who precisely fulfils the role expected of a successful “been-to.” In fact, this character is something of an old hand at the game since, as he tells Baako, he has made the journey from Ghana to Europe several times, never empty-handed. Brempong is an obnoxious Ghanaian whose only concern is in showing off the possessions he has acquired in Europe. As he tells Baako, “There are important things you can’t get to buy at home. Every time I go out I
arrange to buy all I need, suits and so on. It’s quite simple. I got two
good cars on this trip. German cars, right from the factory, all fresh.
They are following me. Shipped... (holding up a cigarette lighter)
'where in Ghana would you find a thing like this? Sharp eyes. I bought
it in Amsterdam. Tape recorders. I took one last year, and it has never
given any trouble... You just have to know what to look for when you
get a chance to go abroad. Otherwise, you come back empty-handed
like a fool, and all the time you spent is a waste, useless” (65-66).
Later he tells Baako, “But, you know, how you're dressed, how you
walk – you don’t give the impression that you know you’re a been-to.
When a Ghanaian has had a chance to go abroad and is returning
home, it’s clear from any distance he’s a been-to coming back”(69).
Through their conversation when he learns that Baako is a creative
writer and he is planning to write for Ghanavision, Brempong
mentions the name of Asante Smith, Director of Ghanavision, and tells
Baako, “a person like Asante Smith, he knows people. Besides, he is
clever. One of his own drinking friends says he has the sweetest
tongue in all of Ghana for singing his master’s praises. It’s the truth.
And it does not matter to him even when the masters change. He can
sing sweetly for anybody who dey for top” (67-68). Brempong praises
the dynamic qualities of Asante Smith and “advises” Baako that “these
things are necessary.” His values centre around “big people” and “top
officials.” He tells Baako that as he is educated abroad he must use all
his foreign exposure and education for the good of his own self. He is an “expatriate” and tells Baako thus:

“If you were an expatriate, a whiteman, it wouldn’t matter. You’d have things easy, even without real qualifications” Brempong let out a long breath. “But when you present yourself with your black face like their own, there’s no respect. You’ll see.” (68)

This is, in fact, the essential deep-rooted cultural conflict. It means that the neocolonialist roots are far more rigid than the colonial roots.

The arrival of Baako at the airport is a bizarre scene of cheap ostentation for Brempong.

Baako’s lonely, isolated return from overseas is juxtaposed to the exaggeratedly heady and dizzying welcome arranged for Brempong at the airport. Brempong, his own people’s hero, is ushered home in a limousine amidst dancing and noise, while Baako suffers the ultimate humiliation when taxi-drivers refuse him their services because he seems a nobody — all within the earshot of the din of Brempong’s tumultuous homecoming. At the airport, a mob of people wait for Brempong, their new Christ, whom they refer to as their “whiteman.” They anoint him by pouring an expensive bottle of drink over his shoes and then by giving him an expensive cloth to walk on. Brempong’s sister bathes his feet in champagne, a libation to the “god” who has descended from the sky. She restrains the throng of worshippers:
'Move back, you villagers,' she said, pushing hard against those in her way. 'Don't come and kill him with your TB. He has just returned, and if you don't know, let me tell you. The air where he has been is pure, not like ours. Give him space. Let him breathe.' She pushed till she had created some space around the hero. An old woman ventured into the space and began to ask a question: 'But how shall we ...' But the fat woman drove her back into the crowd, then whirled around, stripping off her large Kente stole in a movement of unexpected swiftness. She laid the glittering cloth on the asphalt leading to the back door of the limousine and called out, "Come, my been-to; come my brother. Walk on the best. Wipe your feet on it. Yes its Kente, and it's yours to treat on Big man, come!"

Brempong Let her lead him over the rich cloth, nodding and smiling as she yelled repeated to him, 'stamp on it, yes, greatman, walk!' (84-85)

The speech with which Brempong's sister greets him when he touches down at the airport is both funny and sad. A travesty of the traditional event, it tells us much about the way in which a whole society has been weaned into regarding its children as semi-divine figures. Through Baako's reflections on the scene which he witnesses at the airport, Armah further reinforces the distinction between the sky-dwellers (the potent ones) and the impotent ones. He also shows the
extent to which the masses are responsible for perpetuating their own servile condition, as he describes Baako's reflections at the airport:

He had seen the first thing; an invitation into a pretended world, happily given, happily taken, so completely accepted that there had hardly been any of the pretenders to whom it could have seemed unreal. What power would Brempong find to sustain such a dizzy game? Or perhaps he has found as much of this power as was necessary. After all, the crowd around him had been just as willing to let himself be lifted... like all the eager ones around him he had found in the game itself an easy potency he had not had to struggle for, to create. (88)

The Ghanaian masses, Armah suggests here, need to be rescued not only from the abuses of those with power but also from the destructive tendencies within themselves. Throughout the novel he contrasts the people's idea of their needs with their real need which is to develop their own potential for progress.

Baako gives no intimation to his family of his arrival. He spends the night in a hotel and his surroundings cause a nauseous feeling in him. This feeling will return again and again as the pressures of conformity begin to strangle him. Baako's feelings of nausea resemble Roquentin's similar experiences in Jean Paul Sartre's novel Nausea. Some of the descriptions of certain objects resemble those of filth and
disgust in some of the passages of The Beautyful Ones. In the morning, when Baako goes to a bank to see an old friend, he immediately records the impressions of change. The girls at the bank now wear wigs. No one can understand why Baako has not brought a car to Ghana with him. His friend Fifi anxiously enquires about the car and asks Baako whether it is coming by the sea. He is thrown into great embarrassment when Baako says, “I haven’t got one” (98). Even his mother, whom Baako later meets at the school where she works, asks him when his car will arrive so her bones may rest. Baako now clearly understands that people give much importance to the foreign goods but not to the inner insights.

Baako’s next experience is a blatant type of social discrimination, of all places, in a public hospital. He takes his pregnant sister Araba in a taxi to the hospital for confinement in a serious condition. There is a brief delay at the hospital. The nurse will not admit Araba to the new maternity ward reserved for VIP’s and Senior Officers. Here is a conversation between the Staff Nurse and Baako:

“So what is your status?” she asked, turning to Baako again.
“I have no status,” he said. He saw the nurse’s brows rise and the corners of her lips fall.
“Well”, she said. “This new wing is for VIP’s and Senior Officers. The rest, to the old wards.”
"And where are the old wards?"

"There!" The nurse pointed with perfunctory disdain, and swung off into the interior of modern building. (107)

The taxi driver who takes Araba, to the hospital frowns: "Ghana life sweet oh!" and shows Baako the old ward and says, "This place for broke people" (107). In his perception of the relationship between the elite and the masses in Ghana, Armah depicts a society composed of two orders, the oppressed and the elite.

Baako chooses to serve his society as a script writer for Ghanavision. He wants to fulfil his creative urge so that it enables him to reach out to the illiterate and ordinary people. "Armah depicts the attempt of a conscientious intellectual to dissociate himself from the new political elite that emerged during the struggle for independence in African societies and to serve the interests of the ordinary people whose lot remained unchanged in the post-independent era." But Baako is unable to get a job as a script writer for Ghanavision because he has not bribed the proper people. His third confrontation is with a minor fry in the form of a Junior Assistant to the Secretary of Civil Service Commission, who puts off Baako everytime he goes to the Commission to enquire about his appointment at Ghanavision. If Baako wants his application to be taken up for consideration he should take the "help" of the Junior Assistant and for that "help" he must
bribe him. Baako is unable to understand this “principle” and he seeks the help of Ocran, his old art teacher. In a discussion on the potentials of art in an emergent nation, Baako explains to Ocran the importance of film for communicating with the illiterate masses:

“Film gets to everyone,” Baako said, and he saw the other nod gently. “In many ways. I’ve thought the chance of doing film scripts for an illiterate audience would be superior to writing, just as an artistic opportunity. It would be a matter of images, not words. Nothing necessarily foreign in images, not like English words.”

“I understand,” Ocran said. Now he was no longer nodding; he was shaking his head. “I understand, and what you say is true. But there is something I’d like to tell you. I know you’ll think I’m crazy or worse. Anyway, it does not matter. If you want to any real work here, you have to decide quite soon that you’ll work alone.”

“That’s impossible with film.”

“I have no idea,” Ocran said. “I’m antiquated, maybe. But I know definitely that you can’t do anything serious here if you need other people’s help, because nobody is interested in being serious.” (114-115)

The links between the artist’s visionary self, his vision, and the guidance of his society are demonstrated or most explicitly verbalized in the above conversation. Ocran warns Baako that no one in Ghana

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takes art seriously. He says, “what can you expect? The place is run by this so-called elite of pompous asses trained to do nothing. Nothing works.” (116)

Finally, Baako gets a job at Ghanavision and he is to report for duty even without a formal order of appointment when Ocran puts a word to the Principal Secretary to the Ministry of Information. Baako learns through this episode the ways of the bureaucracy, the system that is impersonal, slow and at times cruel, and of bureaucrats with their obsession with trifling personal concerns. Baako's own idealistic hope to revolutionize Ghana through creative journalism at Ghanavision is counterpointed with the frustrations he experiences at the hands of the highest policy-makers in Ghana's Civil Service. The Principal Secretary tells him: “'If you come back thinking you can make things work in any smooth efficient way, you'll just get a complete waste of your time. It is not worth bothering about’” (118). Baako's helpless frustration is equally reflected in Ocran's cynicism:

I hate these stupid Ghanaian big shots. They know things don't work, but they're happy to sit on top of the mess all the same... The machinery does not work, except as a special favor for special cases. A chance to work... But they know what they're doing, in the long run you know, Baako, what you're getting there is not a chance to do any useful work. Heaven help you if you go into that Civil
Service thinking you're going to work. They sit on their bottoms doing nothing. So it's a sinecure. Things make sense. What a twisted life! (119)

It is this recurrent conflict between the expedient ruling elite and the ordinary, exploited masses that provides the staple narrative action. Armah uses the technique of deflation to drive home the point that Baako's thinking is out of place in the given context. With an uncanny sense of foreboding, the Principal Secretary tells Ocran what really works in the country: "Unfortunately ... the young man will also be finding out that making a go of life means forgetting all the beautiful stuff they teach in the classroom" (118).

Later, Baako finds, much to his chagrin, the words of the Principal Secretary coming true with frightening clarity. What he finds at the Ghanavision is a total negation of purposeful thinking. Asante Smith, Director of Ghanavision, and his other colleagues are incapable of doing anything that is creative and their commitment is to glorify the "big" people. Although Baako works hard on his scripts, they are not filmed. His first script for Ghanavision is an obscure symbolic drama dominated by images of dark circle and a white square. The action reflects, on different levels, the history of Ghana and Baako's own sense of alienation from his society. His scripts aimed at educating the people on the culture of the land are just ignored and his suggestion to distribute TV sets to the villages is
laughed at. Instead, the sets find their way to the homes of the elite of
the town and two persons from Technician's chamber resort to
physical violence for a left-over set. And the films, far from being used
to educate the masses, are conserved to cover the functions attended
by the Head of the State, as the Director tells Baako, "A Nation is built
through glorifying its big shots" (214).

Baako's commitment to his society and his artistic vocation are
out of tune with a people who are known for their creative impotence.
At the production meeting, Baako presents his script about slavery
entitled "The Root" but Asante-Smith dismisses the treatment with a
small yawn: "'Look, we're a free, independent people, we're engaged
in a gigantic task of nation-building. We have inherited a glorious
culture, and that's what we're here to deal with" (209). Baako presents
another script, named "The Brand," about survival. But the Director,
interested as he is in the process of "nation-building", by turning his
cameras on the Head of State, comments on Baako: "I know what the
trouble is with you. You're too abstract in your approach to our work.
For instance, what you've just said has nothing to do with our people's
culture – all this slavery, survival, the brand" (209).

At work and wherever he goes Baako runs into corruption. He
realizes that he is just another part of a gigantic system designed to
make the "big shots" richer and the poorer people poorer. In such a
system there is no place for the artist at all. Baako’s treatment of the questions of slavery and survival in his scripts assumes significance in that it raises fundamental questions relating to newly-acquired independence and attempts to tamper with it and the struggle against colonialism. For instance, in “The Brand,” there is a ladder from a weak circle symbolizing servitude to a strong square representing independence, as shown in the long shot. The hero, dim and abstract, is not to be shown in the close-up. He climbs the ladder made up of the shoulders of the inhabitants of the circle, the oppressed, and reiterates his promise that he will liberate the others once he has climbed on. But the old man’s cynical warning that the hot promises are worth nothing comes true. The hero clings to the square, unwilling to come back:

“THE CLimb ITSELF, THE PROCESS OF GETTING TO THE SQUARE, HAS INJECTED INTO HIS BEING AN ADDICTION TO WAYS AND HABITS DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO THE LIBERATOR’S CAREER.” (211)

Other characters include a weeping woman who is ignored by everybody. She firmly says that the square is there not to absorb the circle. There is the thinker, the intellectual who, in “flashes of manic eloquence,” preaches his favourite theme of defeating the square with the force of the square itself. The script is a startling revelation about African reality which is marked by a total indifference of the leaders
towards the plight of the masses with whose participation they have climbed up the ladder.

After a final attempt to get one of his scripts filmed fails, Baako quits his job and burns his manuscripts. The specific script he had tried to have filmed was about slavery – human cargo. Baako realizes that a new kind of slavery is choking the nation - the slavery of material possessions. Baako manages to some degree the reconciliation of isolation and community, since his relationship with Juana enables him to overcome his loneliness and not get implicated in the corruption of the society. “At the end of the novel, however, he apparently fails to order the fragments of his world into any significant whole. His mind itself has, in fact fragmented.”

Throughout the novel, Baako senses the separatedness of things and the absence of any true connecting link. As he moves towards his second breakdown, even his words fail to cohere into any thought: “he opened [his note book] and looked again at the words of the previous night. He could not make them flow together; they remained separate words, separate letters” (238-9). Even the landscape which he depicts shows a radical disorder in nature: “It was a clearing that seemed filled with broken things and with unfinished work stopped violently for some sudden reason, leaving wrenched, jagged edges that gave the eye a feeling of being grated against a thousand snapped fractions of things”(254).
Baako finds himself entangled in a tricky situation. He knows that he is not cut out for the role of a "been-to" which his family expects of him. He cannot expose himself to the general trend of greed and easy gain. He wants to serve his society with his artistic vocation, but steeped as the society is in hypocrisy, it also views his attempts with suspicion. This is because the society judges the achievement of an individual from the standpoint of family, its miniature representation. In the context of corruption and moral depravity, Baako's pragmatic thinking appears to be idealistic. Baako's attempt at reconciliation between the familial aspirations and societal demands is summed up by Juana at the end in terms of the cargo-cult. She tells Ocran:

It can be a terrifying conflict, if you see the need to help the relation, though, and also to do something useful in a larger sense. There are two communities, really, and they don't coincide. It's not easy to work out priorities. (273)

Baako and Juana once observe a boy singing songs continuously on the beach, while the fishermen are engaged in work. Although the fishermen do not seem to be aware of it, the boy, in his act of singing, provides rhythm and inspiration to the elders. When Juana asks why Baako constantly observes only the little boy, he replies: "The boy, he was giving those men something they didn't have" (185). The comment
reveals what Baako himself is striving for. The boy, like Baako, is engaged in creative work. But the people around him are insensitive.

Looked upon as a misfit both by the family and society, Baako turns to writing about men, matters, and the contemporary situation. His resignation from his job precipitates the conflict between the community and the struggling self. His failure to register success in a corrupt and degenerated society turns him into a writer. As a sensitive man and perceptive writer, he looks upon his family as an encumbrance and interprets it in terms of Melanesian cargo mythology. He compares the expectations of the family with "ritual games" played by the people in Melanesia:

CARGO MENTALITY. The expectancy, the waiting for bounty dropping from the sky through benign intercession of dead ancestors, the beneficent ghosts. Out there in ancestral territory beyond the cemetery the goods are available in abundance, no doubt at all about that in Melanesian cargo mythology. (228)

In one of the most disturbing scenes in the novel, where Baako is ill and yet continuing to write in his notebooks, Armah brilliantly sums up the dilemma of the writer in contemporary Africa. When his mother asks him what he is writing, Baako replies:

"Something that occurred to me, a thought that's all," he said.
“For whom?”
“Myself.”
“You wrote it to yourself,” she said slowly, her voice musing. Thinking he had made himself plain enough he added nothing to help her.
“But that is a little like having a conversation with no one, talking alone to yourself.”
“Well, if you want...” he said.
“Baako,” she asked, “is that the way it was before you came, when you were ill?”
“Is that what?”
“Did you write things to yourself?”
For moments he did not find words for an answer; he just thought of the words, heard the concern with which his mother had spoken them, but heard something else too that made him forget pain in his body in the anger of the moment. (226)

For the family, and for its “cargo mentality”, his writings became sure sign of madness. As his fever continues, the members of his family turn against him and insist on taking him to a mental hospital. Baako refuses to be taken to the asylum for treatment and is successful in thwarting their plans for a time, but eventually, because they take advantage of his exhaustion from fever, his uncle Foli and three other men chase him through the roads proclaiming to the bystanders that he is mad. “Stay far from him. His bite will make you also maaaaad!” (243). And the mob also joins the race. They throw stones at him. The irony is that Araba, whom Baako saved by
donating his blood when she was delivering a baby, feels compelled to
direct the mob to tie him up with ropes. As he is being tied up, he
hears the crowd talking about him:

"Some enemy he made has done him this,"
"It was himself, they say."
"Books."
"Ah, yes, Books." (245-46)

The litany of sorrow the people express and the sense of sympathy
they show for him are in reality only "strangely twisted truths and
unaccountable lies, all flowing together in a stream he could do
nothing to stop" (247). The contrast between the prosperity of
Brempong and the plight of Baako is tellingly brought out in the scene
of stone-throwing. Baako, in order to escape the fury of surging
crowds, waves at the passing cars. In one of the cars he sees Brempong
and hopefully shouts his name but it remains a cry in the wilderness
as the car whizzes past him. Subsequently he faces the wrath of the
surging crowd and in spite of his protests, Baako is forcibly confined to
an asylum accentuating the process of his nervous breakdown. Only
Naana protests against the family's treatment of Baako, but her words
are ignored. This happens when Juana has gone back to Puerto Rico
for her annual leave.

Both familial and societal factors are responsible for the crisis
in Baako's life. The forcible confinement of Baako to the mental
institution is the culmination of all forces working against the individual's sensibility. What brings on Baako's second breakdown is the problem of choosing between the almost impossible alternatives of a safe but sterile solitude and a potentially fruitful and loving relationship which exposes him to the likelihood of pain if he loses Juana who is in fact away from him when he needs her most. One of the most significant agents in Baako's destruction is his mother, Efua, who expects a lot from him on his arrival. She looks upon Baako as an osagyefo – the saviour of the family. She hopes that he would complete the unfinished house which she has undertaken keeping in view the status of a "been-to." But soon she becomes disillusioned and is very much disappointed at Baako's refusal to avail himself of the privileges society offers him. She takes him to her unfinished house and tells him: "we come to walls in life, all the time. If we try to break them down we destroy ourselves. I was wanting you to break down and the see the world here, before I saw you yourself were a wall" (253). While they are there, an aeroplane passes overhead:

Efua stood completely still, her face raised after the plane. "That always made me think of you", she said after the plane was gone. "It must make you so different to have flown, looking at us all crawling down below. I used to think of your coming when I saw a plane. Now all I think is that I won't ever fly" (255-56)
Armah's description of Efua's reaction to the sight of the airplane passing above suggests that flying has become a metaphor for describing the relative positions of the two groups in society, the elite and the oppressed. Those who have flown to the West in an airplane acquire a god-like status in society. But Baako refuses to acquire that status and remains as a "failed saviour," and couldn't fulfil Efua's dream. Finally she fails to understand Baako's dream of writing. When she discovers his journal and concludes that he is writing to himself, she rationalizes that he is mad, for only a sick man writes and speaks to himself. And she is the first one to insist on Baako's admission to a mental asylum.

Araba's materialistic outlook can be noticed on the occasion of the "outdooring ceremony" of Araba's child. The familial aspirations and expectations are brilliantly brought out in the outdooring ceremony, a dislocated ritual in which so many concessions are made. Efua exploits her friends in order to make her grandson's outdooring ceremony profitable for the family. The ceremony, intended to welcome the child from the world of ancestors, should be conducted shortly after the eighth day of its birth. But Araba's premature baby is considered in terms of material gain. Efua suggests that the child's "outdooring" be held the Sunday after the child's birth, that is, five days later, because it falls after the pay day – the only time guests will be generous with their money. Araba and Efua believe that the
ceremony held more than a few days after pay day would be useless. Baako warns of the hasty venture on the ground that it may be detrimental to the child's health. He tries to stop them by asking, "Are you so pressed you have to make money out of the child?" (126). But he and Araba's husband Kwesi have little to say in the matter. Baako, in his concern for the child's welfare, is a better father than Kwesi, who is much more anxious about sexual activity than about the present issue. He is easily blackmailed into permitting the ceremony. In Derek Wright's words, "Baako's failure to stop the debased ritual marks the capitulation of corporate values, vested in the blood nexus of the matrikin, to the new exhibitionist individualism, as represented by the wealth-displaying patriarchs at the ceremony and the selfish behaviour of the father". Only blind Naana, of all the women, is against the ceremony, but no one pays attention to her. She says, "five days, the child is not yet with us. He is in keeping of the spirits still, and already they are dragging him out into this world for eyes in heads that have eaten flesh to gape at" (138). She is, however, even more helpless than Baako in preventing people from proceeding with their ritual. She tells Baako, "Ah! That is a shame. The ceremony you ought to understand, or where do you get the meaning of it, even if it is done right? You know the child is only a traveler between the world of spirits and this one of heavy flesh. His birth can be a good beginning, and he may find his body and this world around it a home
where he wants to stay. But for this he must be protected. Or he will run screaming back, fleeing the horrors prepared for him up here" (139). Armah here draws up a detailed description of non-functioning values from his knowledge of traditional ritual practice and belief. Robert Fraser points out thus:

Naana's spiritual intuitions may be seen as an almost perfect fusion of traditional Akan and Christian thought. The notion of sterility is illustrated most poignantly in the outdooring episode which straddles the structure of the book, endorsing the main flaw. In effect, this episode and the death of the child which results can be seen as an extended metaphor of the factors which the novelist seen as strangling the nation's instinctual life.10

Baako's warning and Naana's sense of foreboding come true when the child dies during the ceremony itself amongst heavy cloths, electric fans and mercedes baloons. Naana compares the sacrifice of the child with the eating of the unripe fruit by people "who have forgotten that fruit is not a gathered gift of the instant but seed hidden in the earth and tended and waited for and allowed to grow" (282-83). Naana manages to convey the spiritual meaning and the practical wisdom of the original outdooring ritual to convince her grandson who understands too little to share her anger. Naana analyses the problem more clearly and tries to posit it in the larger perspective. For her the
killing of the child is the result of loss of faith in the "wisdom of those gone before" (284) but wonders "what new power has made them forgot that a child too soon exposed is bound to die?" She feels that the baby is a sacrifice they offered to a new god. The new god they have found is much like the white destroyers who began the long destruction of "our people."

Naana is a silent witness to the needless violence perpetrated in many forms. In her epilogue - like commentary in the last chapter, we realize that her basic individual position of loneliness has not changed so much as the situation around her. Her hopeful waiting and wishful thinking as discernible in the first chapter have not entirely gone unrewarded. But what has taken place later is something unexpected. In the last chapter, Naana recaptures in her brooding moments what has happened:

The return of this one traveler has held out so much of good hope. But there were those left behind who had their dreams and put them on the shoulders of the travelers returned, heavy dreams and hopes filled with the mass of things here and of this time. And another spirit has already found its death in the hot wet embrace of people who have forgotten that fruit is not a gathered gift of the instant but seed hidden in the earth and tended and waited for and allowed to grow so busy

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have they become in their reaching new things and newer ways to consume them. (282-83)

The “traveler” referred to in the above passage is Baako who becomes a victim of the materialistic aspirations of the family which are “filled with the mass of the things here and of this time” only. “Another spirit” mentioned in the passage is a reference to the new born child of Araba. The novel, as such, is as much a story of the child as about Baako. The child image haunts the consciousness of the principal characters in the novel and serves as a nucleus that holds the meanings of the novel together. It is also an extended metaphor signifying the plight of Baako.

It is significant to note that the family in its haste “to consume things,” severes its links with the past, present and the future. But Naana in her visionary thinking and Baako in his vocation are creators. Naana identifies herself with Baako when she says, “Happy event if in his future there is yet something hidden that will reveal itself with time, though that will be long after I am dead” (284). Baako, in turn, identifies himself with the child whom he has saved by donating his blood: “He looked past at the baby on the bed. Babyhood, infancy, going to school... the thought of a person having to go through the whole cycle again brought back his nausea” (122). Naana herself says that the child belongs to him: “The child is yours to look after... The blood that flows in Araba is yours, Baako, and the child is yours
also if it is hers" (139-40). Like the child itself, Baako's arrival is unexpected and again like "the child traveler," Baako is offered as a sacrifice to the "new god." This impending doom of the sensitive individuals in the context of spiritual mutation is forewarned through a series of cinematic episodes and flashbacks.

In a flashback Juana remembers Skido, the lorry driver who anxiously waits to get his food loads across the Yeji ferry to the market. He has already waited for three days and is afraid that the foodstuffs may get rotten. He takes up the issue with the higher authorities. But his plea goes unheeded. In the ensuing rush that follows, his lorry gets overturned resulting in his death. Baako, along with Juana, reports the incident to the Chief Engineer but the Chief Engineer takes the news from Baako casually and does not show any inclination to take preventive measures to avoid recurrence of such fatal accidents. His reaction against the news again gives Baako a nauseating feeling. Juana realizes that Baako does not exactly fit into the scheme of things. She feels that a situation and a place like this, "could so easily turn his lucidity into some vertiginous disease" unless he took care or "found survival by shedding this painful ability to see so clearly" (143).

In another episode, Juana and Baako attend an art-session in which Akosua-Russel, President of the Writer's Workshop and Ford
Foundation Money, and other members exhibit hypocrisy and undisguised snobbery. The hypocrisy of the social order is depicted through the meaningless exercises carried out at the writers' workshop in the name of training youngsters in creative writing. Lawrence Boateng, an aspiring writer, gets drunk at a literary soiree and embarrasses the President and other successful hacks who dominate the official culture. His self-destructive behaviour is, as he says, the result of clear sight: "Lawrence Boateng is a drunkard, Lawrence Boating drinks too much. I'm tired of people talking about me. I drink. Yes. I see the truth when I'm drunk, and I can say what I see" (152). He continues to tell the truth regarding the Writers' Workshop:

Nobody meets to discuss real writing anymore.
This has become a market where we are all sold.
We are confused. There's money for this and that.
Grants and so forth, but who swallows all this money? Everybody says it secretly, but I'm tired of secrets and whispers. (164-65)

Armah's satire here is directed against the Ghanaian officials who, far from being innovative, are superficial and self-centred. Baako and Juana are stunned by the creative impotence of the President and some of the members of the Workshop. The episode accentuates their sense of isolation. All these episodes are important since they enumerate the reasons for Baako's failure.
Baako’s dilemma in *Fragments* is that he senses the necessity of some kind of human contact even while recognizing the danger of it. Baako sympathizes with the family’s desires: “right, right, they’re right, right, right,” he thinks (250) and finds it hard to maintain his pure vision of serving the community if it means he cannot help his family. He wonders if his refusal to help the family may not be a kind of cowardice. This sense of human contact as something at once desirable and dangerous is shared by the other chief characters. The dialogue between Baako and Ocran in the hospital brings out the precarious nature of Baako’s conflicts. Ocran says:

“You know. Don’t stop thinking, Onipa. You have a good mind; don’t be afraid to use it. Stop thinking you’ve done people wrong. Nobody cares, anyway. If these people had your talent, they wouldn’t want to be that way. They wouldn’t need to”.

“They’re useful”.

“If that’s all the usefulness you can think of we all have relatives who want to be like your Brempong – get them things that shout they’re rich, they’re powerful. But you don’t have time for that nonsense. The country’s full of people dying to look down on everybody else.” (274)

Juana, despite her own urge for solitude, realizes that “the high flight of the individual alone, escaping the touch of life around leads only to annihilation” (271), and when Ocran and Juana come out of the
hospital, she says: "Salvation is such an empty thing when you're alone" (276). Ocran replies, "You don't find it in the market place. You have to be alone to find what's in you". Ocran explains this paradox of the artist who needs to work alone in order to serve the public better.

But a satisfactory human relationship is hard to come by in a corrupt society. Baako's sister, Araba, for example, is frankly manipulative in her relationship with her husband, Kwesi, "... the midwife says Kwesi should leave me alone for two months. If he doesn't agree to the things I'm going to ask for, I'll add another month" (277). In fact, the only life-giving relationship in the novel is the affair between Baako and Juana. Juana provides the much-needed emotional companionship to Baako. She provides a perfect complement to Baako's idealism. In a way she understands, though she does not "sympathize" with, the corroding system of values. She feels that her energies are going waste in a society which seems to ignore or frustrate the very nature of healing. It is with Juana that Baako experiences some moments of joy which illuminate some of the tenderest and most explicit scenes of love-making to be found in African literature. Just as the man in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born turns to the Teacher for consolation and inspiration, Baako seeks Juana who provides moments of comfort and solace to him.
Baako initially meets Juana because he seeks her out professionally. He expresses his fears to her about his writing and the fact that he does not fit into the typical pattern of a “been-to” grabbing material comfort. When Baako comes to her as a patient, and as a sensitive individual, Juana finds him closer to her own inner self and she cannot reject his offer of friendship. In his loneliness and general gloominess Baako finds a source of strength and vitality in the company of Juana. Both Baako and Juana, who are striving for values, become close, and love grows stronger between them. Juana understands Baako’s predicament and shares his private moments of joy, sorrow, and loneliness.

Juana provides a silver lining in the sordid drama of greed and spiritual mutation. She shares the positive vision of Naana and Baako. In a society that is full of “heavy dreams of things”, Juana craves for soothing human touch, “the hunger for which continued in her inspite of everything” (19). This sustained search for a meaning in their surroundings eventually unites Baako and Juana. The feminine principle demonstrated by Juana underlines the man-woman relationship, the ramifications of which go beyond their loneliness. After their first act of love-making on the beach, Baako narrates the myth of “MameWater and the Musician” according to which the lonely musician goes to the beach playing his instrument. The beautiful goddess of MameWater emerges from the water and they make love.
She leaves him to go back to the sea, and they meet at long, fixed intervals. The musician cannot bear separation. However, this separation brings the best out of him and he sings as he had never done before. In this myth of “MameWater,” the absence of the goddess makes him reach the highest point of his creative capabilities. Armah sustains the appeal of convention that solitude and retirement are the nursery of contemplation and visionary creativity. The connection between aloneness and the poetic spark is, for instance, the real point of Baako’s retelling of the myth of MameWater and the Musician. But in contrast, Baako in his own life crumbles under pressure in the absence of Juana.

It is Juana who guides Baako back to confidence and sanity when his nerves finally break under the strain of social rejection. As a psychiatrist she tries to heal Baako’s physical and psychological wounds. As Juana talks gently to Baako in the garden of the mental asylum to which his mother, sister and uncle have lovingly committed him, the story swings back once more into the enfolding frame of Naana’s faith. The human touch provided by Juana at the hospital to Baako’s bruised psyche brings portents of hope and recovery, and she took his hand and held it, “a fullness of affection she had been unable to let out in words broke through and took complete possession of her”(272). Baako also feels it and moves closer to her as “the resistance that had been so strong in his words was gone, and his body next to
hers felt totally willing. He was crying” (272). She invites him to her place when he is discharged from the hospital. At the end of the novel, she is busy preparing the unused room for Baako. Juana too hopefully waits for Baako’s recovery, just as Naana waited for his safe return in the opening pages of the novel. Thus, the opening and concluding passages of the novel converge on the same idea: “All that goes returns. He will return” (1). If Baako is torn in hope and despair, Juana is the “craziest optimist.”

But now for Naana there is nothing left but the preparation for death and the perfection of her belief in continuity. The last chapter which completes the cycle is again named after Naana and is related from her point of view:

I have lived too long. The elders I knew and those who came traveling with me, thy are all on the other side, and I myself am lost here, a stranger unable to find a home in a town of strangers so huge it has finished sending me helpless the long way back to all the ignorance of childhood. (279)

Out of her faith in the unseen world there can be hope for Baako too. These last pages are the most beautiful Armah has written. Here is a sample of them:

My spirit is straining for another beginning in a place where there will be new eyes and where the farewells that remain unsaid here will return to a
It is significant to note that fragmentation is portrayed in internal and external terms. Society is fragmented in the absence of a just social order and vivid ideology. However, like the man in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, Naana and her spiritual companion, Baako, struggle to preserve their cherished values swimming against the tide. Consequently they become victims of conflicting tendencies within, as exemplified in Baako’s occasional nervous breakdown and Naana’s death wish. As a traditional African, she has a strongly developed sense of community but in the world of present-day Ghana her isolation appears to her as a boon. She says: “Since so much of what remains to be seen brings fear and the sights of day are followed in the night by this silent danger which has no name, I find it a matter in which the path of my soul has been good; that my body should be closing all the holes through which the world has entered me” (279). And again, she says: “Things have passed which I have never seen whole, only broken and twisted against themselves. What remains of my days will be filled with more broken things” (280).

Naana claims to have given up the effort to understand, and has, by her own account, “found rest in despair” (281). Nevertheless,
her monologue closes with an expression of faith in a god or God she never names.

I am reproaching you. Forgive me. I know of the screens in life you have left us, veils that rise in front of us, cutting into easy pieces eternity and the circle of the world, so that until we have grown tall enough to look behind the next veil we think the whole world and the whole of life is the little we are allowed to see, and this little we clutch at which such desperation... I am here against the last of my veils. Take me. I am ready. You are the end. The beginning. You who have no end. I'm coming (286-87)

The grandmother hopes for the end to come. The grandmother has faith and the faith sustains truth. Her hope is a muted one. This is a more passive view than the one in Armah's first novel. Naana's thoughts suggest that for Baako too the only release will be exile to a place where there will be new eyes, new faces. The events in *Fragments* record those which precipitated Armah's own mental relapse when returned to Ghana after studying abroad.

Armah's understanding of the capacity of women for creativity and destruction is clearly seen in *Fragments*. In the novel, Naana and Juana participate in the process of healing and creation whereas Araba and Efua partake in the process of destruction. But the stress is always on the woman as the fountain-head of love, inspiration, and
fertility in the process of self-discovery. While commenting on the principle of feminine fertility in the novels of Armah, V.U.Ola points out thus:

> Among African writers, Armah and Ngugi are the two who have demonstrated the greatest insight and sensitivity as well as rare ability to artistically portray the problems and fears of the African woman and to delve imaginatively deep into the wells of her being. Armah, however, more than Ngugi towers above the rest in capturing the enigmatic combination of good and evil in her nature.  

In this bleak picture and sordid drama presented in the novel, the writer's visionary ideal is filtered through the overlapping consciousness of Naana, Baako, and Juana. Together, they offer a connectedness between the past, present and the future. Naana, for instance, implores the surging crowds to spare Baako from such inhuman treatment. She says: “What have you done to him? What has Baako done to you? Where is he?” (248). Baako belongs to her spiritually, but like the boy in the initial pages, she is pushed back. The writer's penetrating vision upholds wholeness and connectedness as it attempts to posit carefully the inner meaning in a larger historical perspective through the principle of feminine fertility. Juana bears portents of hope. Although she is pained by the “old slave castle which had now become the proud seat of the new rulers, the blind
children of slavery themselves" (44), she also realizes that "the burning of old frames and the shedding of cruel blood would not be against the making of another world" (45).

The complexity of the theme and structure of Fragments requires a careful analysis. Rand Bishop confesses that the first reading of the novel disappointed him but says subsequent readings helped him "appreciate the care and precision that went into the construction\textsuperscript{12} of the novel. Many critics are of the opinion that Fragments is essentially a representation of themes of The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born. While it is true that the novel presents characters that are similar to The Beautyful Ones in certain respects, Fragments has a greater narrative sweep. The episodic narration and the cinematic techniques of spotlight and flashback coupled with the tone of mythical past add a new dimension to the tempo of narration. Gerald Moore concedes that the novel "will eventually establish itself as superior to The Beautyful Ones in quality, profundity and originality." \textsuperscript{13}
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