



This Earth, My Brother

Kofi Awoonor

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Set in Ghana, this novel echoes many of the obsessive themes of the author's poems. The story describes the pain of Awoonor's voluntary exile and his spiritual return to his native land.

This Earth, My Brother Details

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Author : Kofi Awoonor

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Jonathan says

"Kofi Awoonor was born on 13 March 1935 in the rural town of Wheta, Ghana. He completed degrees at the Universities of Ghana and London and gained his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1972"

or

"Kofi Awoonor, original name George Kofi Awoonor Williams (born March 13, 1935, Weta, Gold Coast [now Ghana]—died September 21, 2013, Nairobi, Kenya), Ghanaian novelist and poet whose verse has been widely translated and anthologized."

or

"The son of a tailor and the grandson of a woman who was a traditional singer of dirges, or songs of lament, in the Ewe culture, Kofi Awoonor was born in his grandfather's house in Wheta, Ghana, on March 13, 1935. He was baptized in the Presbyterian faith and given the name George Awoonor—Williams, but he was raised in his mother's large extended family and was exposed more often to traditional Ewe culture than to Western religion. Most important were Ewe songs and folktales which influenced Awoonor's early poetry. In an essay published in the Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series, Awoonor stated that his early work represented "very much an effort to move the oral poetry from which I learnt so much into perhaps a higher literary plane, even if it lost much in the process."

or

"It is regrettable that many Ghanaian students in today's junior and senior high schools, as well as in the tertiary institutions, know so little about Kofi Awoonor's contribution to African Literature due to the decline in Humanities' education and cultural production in our institutions of learning. There is also the general paucity in contemporary literary scholarship in Africa and Ghana in particular, as there seems to be cultural and political boundaries that have risen within the African intellectual landscape since the flowering of Modern African literature, with its crosscurrents and interpenetrations by alien discourses. On the other hand, any Ghanaian and for that matter African student, who went through secondary school education from the 1960s to the 1980s should have read the poetry of Kofi Awoonor, particularly the notably anthologized "Song of Sorrow" in Senanu and Vincent's A Selection of African Poetry. Kofi Awoonor is one of Africa's most celebrated and honorable writers, who believed in uplifting the consciousness of Africans and in particular Ghanaians, through literature"

or

"It took me at least another fifteen years or so to fully understand the novel, and I now rate it as one of the best examples of modernist alienation in African literature, to be read alongside Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North, Dambudzo Marechera's House of Hunger, Ngugi wa Thiongo's A Grain of Wheat, Yvonne Vera's Without a Name, and Coetzee's Waiting for the Barbarians, among various others. "

or

"George Kofi Awoonor-Williams became just Kofi Awoonor. He chose to be piquant and to shed the vestiges, at the same time, of his colonial past. He died last week. He was 78 years. He did not die from age related problems. He was still quite active; mentally alert and vigorous. He was killed in the Nairobi terrorist event staged by Al Shabaab, the Somali equivalent of Boko Haram, which had taken over the Westgate Mall, a high end shopping Mall in Nairobi last week, and massacred mall visitors. By last count, the death toll from the four-day siege and holdout had been officially put at seventy-two people. More are suspected to be crushed under the rubble of the collapsed mall, and therefore unaccounted."

"Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother. This revolting malevolence is thy mother. She begat thee from her womb after a pregnancy of a hundred and thirteen years. She begat thee after a long parturition she begat you into her dust, and you woke up after the eighth day screaming on a dunghill"

This is an extraordinary work that deserves readers. It took me about 18 months to find a copy of this for less than £30 (remember, this is a relatively short paperback). You may not be so lucky. So check your local library instead, and keep your eyes open in the bargain bins. In fact, pretty much any time you see one of those orange Heinemann African Writers Series paperbacks going for cheap secondhand you should snap it up...

adam changesnames-faces (twice:) says

flanked poetic heartache

kripsoo says

When I read this book I thought it was the most wonderful thing fueled my daydreams about living in Africa

Thomas says

neat little book from Ghana with an interesting structure. There are chapters numbered normally and written in a pretty straightforward narrative style about this lawyer who's alienated from society like all your favourite modernist book characters, but in between there are also auxiliary chapters numbered as 1a, 2a, and so on, that are written in a much more elaborate prose poetry sort of style.

Nathan "N.R." Gaddis says

The ancestors--revered now for their infinite sagacity--decreed long ago that this land, this earth, my brother, shall witness a crashing collapse.

I know this ; goes without saying ; evidence is ample. I'm not richly read upon the African continent. But

I've read Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (which I believe everyone ought to read, despite what the Snobs might say) and I've read Augustine's *Confessions*. Probably not much beyond that. Oh yes of course the incomparable Amos Tutuola.

And so I do read with keen interest things like Five African novels to read before you die ::

The aforementioned Achebe (but note too he's written lots of other stuff).

Ng?g? wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* (a Penguin)

Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*

Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

Bessie Head's *Maru*

I've got only 1/5. But the date range--1958-1988--does recommend the list.

And so I was a little pissed off with this snobby reply :: "because, *as someone who studies, reads, and teaches contemporary African literature*, I'm just very bored with this list, which is a fine list, but it's a bit, I don't know, 'Five White Writers You Should Read Before You Die: Shakespeare, Milton, Dostoyevsky, Austen, Woolf' {nr :: (don't miss that he skips from 'African novels' to 'White'....) [I'd prefer a language-based distinction, but that's an entirely larger kettle of fish]}. Does the world need another suggestion that you read *Things Fall Apart*?" I say, cite your authority and fuck off.

It's just five books. And a pretty good start on a pretty big fucking continent. Yes--you should read S, M, D, W, and W. Everyone should. Everyone who's literate. Now, given that I too want to be literate, What should I read? And specifically, say, I want to launch myself upon being Afro=Literate. Yes, I should read Achebe. If you've not read Achebe, you are not Afro=Literate. That's what canon means. I think if you've not read Tutuola, you're not Afro=Literate either. But you see what Tutuola does with English and I'm thinking, If you've not read Tutuola you are not literate in English Letters (that's intersectional -- The Big T belongs both to Africa and to English Letters).

And then, third article=link and we're done :: I'm Done With African Immigrant Literature. I think some of the things she's done with I'm done with too ; for different reasons. I'm just not keeping up with the jones's. But, either way, immigrant literature has always been a part of American Fiction. [no mind me in this paragraph, just go to that list linked at the top for 15 books you might find interesting]. [.....] "But that's because they weren't written for the White gaze." It's hard to tell what is and what isn't written for the White Gaze. Tutuola was not written *for* the White Gaze ; but he opened himself up to that charge as soon as White People started (correctly!) raving about his *Palm Wine*. And no but the problem is that the White Gaze very specifically and stridently does not want African Books written *for* it. What the White Gaze wants is the authentically written African Book For African Reader (authenticity is a trap ; who judges an artwork 'authentic'?). What the White Gaze wants is to overhear the internal discussion of Life and Letters upon the Continent (to say nothing of the fact that the Fictioneer may freely choose to whom to write, if to anyone). We are, however, easily tricked.

So then this novel, *This Earth, My Brother*, by the murdered Ghanaian poet Kofi Awoonor, is BURIED. OUT OF PRINT. And is EXCELLENT. A very promising early look (by me! by me!) into what African Fiction *can do*.
