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Absurd and Anxiety in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968)

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Dedication

Mouna

First, I would like to thank my family without whom none of this would be happening. To my dear parents who made their best to see me graduate. This dissertation required more than an academic support, thus, I have to appreciate every ones' encouragement and advice including precious sisters and brothers, and my dear supervisor Mrs. Bouallegue Nadjiba. I would like to express a special gratitude to my friend Mohammed Said for his huge psychological support, and all my friends, Houda, Ahlem, and my binomial Sarah; thank you all.

Sarah

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Abstract

The Ghanaian born writer Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), is probably one of the best known; most widely read and discussed works in African literature. This dissertation analyzes *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* as a historical documentation of the social, economic and political circumstances of independent Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah's regime. The research's most important objective is to identify and describe the status of absurd and anxiety that characterized Armah's protagonists in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* from an existentialist perspective. This novel was chosen for the powerful impression it evokes in readers' mind, and for its controversial tone as a postcolonial African work that received a remarkable amount of both criticism and praise. The work comes to the conclusion that the absurd and ambiguity which the nation pondered after independence eventually led to an unaffordable feeling of anguish. The dissertation also proves Armah's both pessimistic and optimistic vision that is marked by a clear ray of hope.

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Introduction

Contemporary African writers show their great commitment to patriotic concerns. They use their writings to express their standpoints and inclinations toward the current issues of their countries. The focus of such writers is mainly on political, economic and social matters that took place following the wide liberation movements along the African continent. Like most of his peers, the Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah addresses the situation of postcolonial Ghana. Through his novels, Armah depicts a gloomy yet realistic image of Ghanaian society and government after independence, with no attempts to camouflage political corruption and moral disintegration. Ayi Kwei Armah portrays the loss of ethics, spiritual emptiness and the urging desire for materialism.

The present study will be confined to Armah's start up novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. The choice of this narrative was induced by Armah's expressiveness and openness while evaluating the social, political and ethical circumstances that have led people into invasive meaningless and spiritual emptiness. The work will examine this social and moral decadence the writer captures as a trigger point for a more severe state of absurd, focusing on images of corruption, filth and obscenity and how people seem to have lost all meaning. The spread of dishonesty, fraud and greed intensified people's sense of insignificance and purposelessness, they started to experience the emptiness and hollowness of life, they regarded their existence as absurd and irrational. The condition of the absurd fueled people's constant fears; they grew distressed with the obscurity of their surroundings. Most people showed a sense of anguish about money and financial future; they found no purpose in their daily endless routines of working in absurd jobs and enduring everlasting anxiety about what the future holds.

By adopting an existentialist approach, the study intends to illustrate the link between the corruption, materialism, greed and dishonesty invading Ghana following independence and the feelings of absurdity, and meaninglessness that Ghanaians manifest. The study also shows how the constant questioning of existence and futile search for purpose and answers led people to tumble down and submit to fear and anxiety.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first theoretical chapter attempts to explore the notions of absurd and anxiety and their various connotations. The chapter contains three sections; the first will present the diverse definitions provided by main philosophers and spot the various theories and examples of the absurd. The second section will focus on the definitions and theories of anxiety in relation to psychology and the existentialist movement. The third and the last section will provide an overview of African literature focusing on major writers and frequently discussed issues. The section will also offer a brief presentation of Ayi Kwei Armah's works and present a glimpse of his novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*.

The second chapter seeks to detect images of absurdity in the novel. The first section of the chapter investigates the prevailing political corruption and moral decay that have wrecked the country and swept the population into absurdity. The section also deals with colonial influence and domestic circumstances dictating the characters actions. The second section probes into the manifestations of the absurd. Likewise, the section depicts the characters struggle to find solid meanings in their lives and the impact of this constant sense of absurd on their growing anguish.

The third and last chapter is devoted to analyzing the link between the state of absurd and meaninglessness and the characters' anxiety and fear. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section examines the way Armah reflects the psychological status and inner conflict the characters undergo. The study reveals how these characters respond differently to the state of the absurd. The second section provides an analogical study of the two main characters; "The Man" and "The Teacher" and depicts their divergent perceptions about the moral decay that marked Ghana.

To conclude with, the aim of the work is to show that Aramh's unusual and striking style in depicting the reality of Ghanaian society without twisting the truth or attempting to hide the repulsive nature of people, contributes, to a great extent, to endow the ordinary Ghanaians with prominence and voice their sense of anguish and pain.

Chapter 1

A Theoretical Overview of Absurd and Anxiety

The chapter aspires to investigate the concepts of the absurd and anxiety and their various connotations. The first section will explore the different definitions provided by key philosophers, as well a variety of theories and examples of the absurd. The second section will display definitions and theories of anxiety in relation to psychology and the existentialist movement. The last section will provide an overview of African literature with a special emphasis on economic and political circumstances of independent Ghana. It will also present a glimpse of Armah's novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*.

1.1. Definitions and Theories of the Absurd

Following the two World Wars, thinkers of the epoch turned to existentialism to rebel against the destruction the war left behind. At this period of trauma and confusion, individuals felt alienated and trapped in a senseless universe. People grew disillusioned with rationalism and started to doubt the grounding beliefs in religious dogma, social structures, and the meaning of human life. Karl Jaspers depicts the situation by saying:

People wanted "life," wanted "really to live." They demanded "realism." Instead of wanting merely to know, they wanted to experience for themselves. Everywhere, they wanted the "genuine," searched for "origins," and wanted to press on to man himself. Superior men became more clearly visible; at the same time, it became possible to discover the true and the real in the smallest particle. (qtd.in Nellickappilly 2)

Existentialism is a cultural and philosophical movement that flourished in Europe in the 1940s and 1950s. The term was overtly adopted as a self-description by Jean-Paul Sartre in his lecture "Existentialism Is a Humanism", "Atheistic existentialism, of which I am a representative, declares with greater consistency that if God does not exist there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a being which exists before it can be defined

by any conception of it” (par.11). Though it is difficult to restrict existentialism in a single definition, philosophers of this trend focus on the individual and consider existential questions of death, God, social values, the meaning of life and the absurd (“Existentialism”, par. 1-3).

The use of existentialist and absurdist structures became the fashion through the broad circulation of the postwar literary and philosophical production for other disenchanted Writers such as Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Samuel Beckett, Kurt Vonnegut, Franz Kafka, Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, and Albert Camus who employed absurd themes and characters as a vehicle to question meaning and the purpose of existence, and explore those elements in life that do not forcibly make sense (“Existentialism”, par. 1).

Although twentieth century writers have sharpened the absurd images in literature, Lewis Carroll’s 1865 master piece *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* marked the first use of such challenging techniques and bewildering fantasy in children’s narratives. Following his lead, writers of the twentieth century wove their stories in the strangest manner, not only investigating the human psyche, the fecklessness of existence and the arbitrariness of death but also breaking with conventional literary structures by puzzling their settings and characters in a senseless way (Gentry ch.7). Eventually, twentieth century writers and philosophers were intensely influenced by their predecessors. The nineteenth century philosophers, Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche were later acknowledged as pioneers of the movement (“Existentialism”, par. 2).

During the 1840s and 1850s Kierkegaard challenged the social conventions of his age by expressing futuristic ideas of what was later considered existentialism. Kierkegaard’s work focused on the bond between man and his God and the relationship between man and his fate. He constantly accentuated the importance of subjective and personal choice to affirm one’s existence. Accordingly, Kierkegaard suggested three distinctive spheres that people might

choose to live within; aesthetic, ethical and religious. In the aesthetic sphere, one lives in search for physical or intellectual pleasure and seeks to nourish his desires. Kierkegaard expressed that such search is vulnerable to boredom and will ultimately fail and become meaningless. In the ethical sphere, one accepts moral responsibility and abides to social conventions in the line of duty and morals. Kierkegaard comments that such a life may seem easy and yet it needs much compromise to keep with community appearances. The religious sphere in which one pledges his life to the higher authority of God was the choice Kierkegaard himself adhered to and sought as the most valid (Elleray 8; Nellickappilly 5-6).

Friedrich Nietzsche, another prominent existentialist, introduced divergent ideas to Kierkegaard's. Nietzsche was an atheist; he declared the death of God and Christianity as a groundless religion. Through his philosophy, he argued that if God, the higher realm that human confines to and inspires morals from, does not exist, hence man no longer needs to restrict himself to morality and fantasize about heaven as a reward to his goodness (Malachi, par.9). Nietzsche's view is founded on the belief in the "survival of the fittest" and the superiority of aristocratic class. For him, men who hold power should conquer the rest of the people; "the superhuman" who is physically strong and intellectually transcendent is the one to set morals, and define values for the feeble to follow and obey (Malachi, par.10).

The existentialist ideas of these thinkers were often tainted with a touch of absurd. The idea of the absurd is familiar in earlier works of Kierkegaard and is a recurring theme in many other existential productions. Absurdism as a philosophical trend is an expansion of Existentialist views, which gained recognition when Albert Camus broke with existentialism and introduced Absurdism in his work *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1955). According to Camus, the absurd is the result of the contradiction between human need to find meaning in life and his inability to find it. Though Camus refused to be considered an existentialist, his thoughts are

much similar to the movement and to Sartre's in focusing on the individual and his actual existence ("Absurdism").

The Theatre of the Absurd is a movement that flourished approximately from the 1940s to 1989 among European playwrights like Jean Genet's *The Maids* (1947), Eugene Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* (1950), Arthur Adamov's *Ping-Pong* (1955), and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953) to name only but few. Dramatists of this kind adhered to the ideas of Albert Camus' essay "The Myth of Sisyphus" and often depicted characters and situations in which; individuals are powerless subjects to random mysterious forces in a godless demented world. This new drama arose out of people's doubt and fear prevailing the aftermath of the war and the erosion of traditional moral and political values. The plays astonished the audience with its break with stage conventions and kept them in suspense as to what the play means? The act rarely followed a clear plot and actions did not proceed in a logical arrangement, dialogues were often divorced from the real happenings or were even put into direct contradiction with the actions performed (Esslin 5-7).

The feeling of absurdity can evolve at any moment; no one is immune to this striking sentiment. When indulged in his boring life, man barely has time to notice that his monotonous routines bare no meaning. Yet if he takes a step back and stops to reflect on his life, the world he once knew and understood will become devoid of meaning and the universe as a whole will appear unintelligible and dubious. Out of this current, Absurdism loomed as a philosophical school of thought and became the subject of inquiry for various philosophers and writers who attempted to dot the main grounds for this notion and epitomize its cruxes.

Sartre claims that the world is a strange and feeble place and life itself has no purpose; hence the absurd starts with existence, it is born out from the rift of nothingness between a person and the world which makes the mere fact of being absurd. As Sartre explains in his

Being and Nothingness (1943) “it apprehends itself as being there for nothing, as being de trop” (84). Thomas Nagel expresses somehow similar ideas in his paper “The Absurd” by stating that the first reason leading to such absurdity is the recognition that our existence will not have much importance long after we fade away. Nagel also includes other justifications such as the mortality of humans, their feeling of insignificance in such gigantic universe, and the so called “chain of justification” which symbolizes human’s pursuit to fulfill satisfaction through the never ending activities and routines (50-51).

Albert Camus, the Godfather of Absurdism, provides his own perception on the matter. Camus explains that the absurd is the logical result for human sentiment that the world they live in is melancholic, and their inevitable fate of death is vain. As he expresses in his essay “The Myth of Sisyphus” “man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world” (20). Yet Camus was not ardent to define absurdity itself. Just as man is mortal, existence is absurd, it is a simple truism. What sparked his interest were the consequences such epiphany may echo in human psyche and the conclusions human may deduce. Camus iterates that all philosophers provide an escape to resolve this dilemma, a solution which he describes as “philosophical suicide”. He considers suicide or ending one’s life as being the lesser of two evils, though he did not personally endorse it and proclaimed it as an inadvisable choice. Camus rather opted for acceptance of the absurd explaining that one must accept the absurd as inescapable element of existence and relentlessly challenge it in order to achieve some sort of peace and happiness (Baker 2-8).

Likewise, Kierkegaard endeavored to find a solution for this feeling of absurd. Rosanna Picascia believes that Søren Kierkegaard clings to faith to confront this absurdity; his solution is the belief in a higher authority or a transcendent realm that governs the entire universe.

Kierkegaard abjures the idea that the existence of a God needs a proof; he adds that though this devotion is absurd to the human mind, one needs a “leap of faith” to achieve deliverance. Instead of trying to understand the irony of the world, Kierkegaard embraces the paradox by reaching to his faith in omnipotence and accepting the contradictions that humans face within life. However, he stresses that this faith needs to be reassured as men struggle to understand what is beyond their understanding. Camus accused Kierkegaard and criticized his position of finding comfort and solace in faith by insisting that “a constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity” (Camus 36) is the sole means to give value to life and anything that seeks to escape this condition - the divorce between men and his universe - is a betrayal to the absurd (Picascia1-8).

The inescapable condition of the absurd that man has to live through and constantly confront magnifies his sense of estrangement from both the world and himself and puts him in a heightened state of abrupt fear. Existence seems brittle fragile and can shatter at any moment. Man transforms into a skeptic creature doubting his own instincts, motives, and convictions. Since these values are not intrinsic to being, at some point logic gives out. And as humans slowly tread their lonesome path, they develop a sense of anguish regarding whether their lives are meaningful and how their finitude is unavoidable. This experience of the absurd depicts the universe as labyrinthine, causing man to feel jeopardized by the nothingness of his life and triggers his anxiety (Baker1-8; Pritchard1-3).

Unlike fear which is the rational outcome of an intimidating situation, anxiety or angst is an irrational state that hijacks the human mind. This anxiety does not correspond to any actual threat but rather spurred by one’s monotonous routine, the spate of stress the person goes through to attain his or her purpose, and the inability to understand life in its own shape.

When faced with these inconsistencies, all certainties seem annihilated and man finds himself trapped into a vicious cycle of absurd and anxiety.

1.2. Definitions and Theories of Anxiety

Living in a wide world like ours may drive someone to feel lonely, passive, uncomfortable and even meaningless; this sort of absurdity will consequently lead individuals to experience the sense of Anxiety. Moreover, being anxious can be perceived as a common emotion that everyone confronts in his/her daily life, as it can be a source of concern when becoming overwhelmed. Anxiety like any other psychological issue is manifested in several symptoms and emerges out of specific factors.

Normal anxiety is a typical feeling that has an undeniable importance in one's living process. It prevents people from getting hurt or approaching any dangerous situation that can result in any kind of physical harm (Rector et al. 4). For example, an anxious person can jump out of the road when a car is about to crash him, or he is able to be serious in a job interview. It is as Endler asserts "trait anxiety encompasses anxiety about social evaluation, physical danger, anxiety about novel situations, and anxiety about daily routines" (qtd. in Wilt, Oehlberg and Revelle 990). However, when this feeling of anxiety causes panic attacks or phobia, like never to get out of home fearing of death by a car crash, or to stumble and lose control in a job meeting, anxiety is transformed into a disorder.

Anxiety can become a true handicap when it causes panic attacks or phobia. These situations embody an anxiety disorder. It affects all kinds of people regardless of their age or gender. This mental disorder makes individuals most of the time running away from situations that may cause angst or stress. This state would build a serious obstacle for having an ordinary life. Anxiety can be revealed through various physical or emotional reactions such as, "sudden

attacks of terror, usually accompanied by a pounding heart, sweatiness, weakness, faintness, or dizziness” (*Social Phobia* 3).

Analyzing the previously mentioned symptoms one may think that anxiety is the same as fear; yet, they are two different notions. Fear on one hand, has a direct connection with the actual existing threat. On the other hand, anxiety is considered as a negative expectation of the threat (be it real or imaginative) which causes pressure. Consequently, we can say that fear is related to real objects or an actual threat while anxiety is about uncertainty which leads to insecurity (Popovic 32). Stanley Rachman in his *Anxiety*, demonstrates that “the term ‘fear’ is used to describe an emotional reaction to a specific, perceived danger to a threat that is identifiable, such as a poisonous snake . . . When feeling anxious, the person has difficulty in identifying the cause of the uneasy tension or the nature of the anticipated event or disaster” (3).

Actually, anxiety was first highlighted and diagnosed by the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud who defines anxiety in his book *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926) as “Anxiety has an unmistakable relation to expectation; it is anxiety about something. It has a quality of indefiniteness and lack of object” (4317). Freud identifies anxiety as both, a biological and an ordinary phenomenon, as he claims “Real danger is a danger that is known, and realistic anxiety is anxiety about a known danger of this sort .Neurotic anxiety is anxiety about an unknown danger; neurotic danger is thus a danger that has still to be discovered” (4317). So, Realistic anxiety has no difference from fear, it can be felt with the existence of a concrete object which represents the danger situation. However, Neurotic anxiety results mainly from the frequent unsatisfied instinctual needs (Freud 4321).

Freud supposed that anxiety can be the outcome of the birth trauma¹. According to him, the threatening moment of birth which puts individuals under new conditions of life is an

original model of danger situation. The human being reproduces the state of anxiety whenever there are equivalent situations. It is the ego² that has earned power that enables it to recall the state of anxiety whenever danger exists in order to avoid stress. In this case, the ego attempts to visualize the real situation of danger with all its experiences and limit it in “a mere signal” (Freud 4315). In other words, after experiencing a particular threatening situation, the ego will record this passive event and shape it as angst, which in turn will weaken the passivity of that position in case repeated later on.

Freud explains this in *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety* as follows:

A danger-situation is a recognized, remembered, expected situation of helplessness. Anxiety is the original reaction to helplessness in the trauma and is reproduced later on in the danger situation as a signal for help. The ego, which experience the trauma passively, now repeats it actively in a weakened version in the hope of being able itself to direct its course. (4319)

Strongman refers in his critical study *Theories of Anxiety*, to Freud’s experiences that may have a relation to the progress of what Freud called “primary anxiety” including “the birth trauma that can be reproduced in later stages”, and “the possible loss of the mother”, wherein, the mere expectation of the mother’s departure makes the child feels anxious since the mother is considered the only object that guarantees security for him (Freud 4319). The third experience is “Fear of castration” as Freud explains; the danger of losing one’s genitals and being prevented from satisfying the instinctive need which in turn leads to anxiety (Freud 4294).

Away from ordinary anxiety that all people can feel from time to time, and anxiety disorder which concerns those psychologically disordered, there is what existentialists call “existential anxiety”. It differs basically from the two categories of anxiety in terms of its arousal. Existential anxiety, unlike ordinary anxiety, appears out of one’s suspicion of his/her existence i.e. uncertainty of existence itself (Popovic 32). One of the most important aspects

that may develop such inner skepticism of existence is consciousness/awareness; Belinda J. Liddell's experiments show "animals don't feel anxious only because they lack consciousness" (qtd. in Popovic 32). This plays a strong proof of the relation between awareness and uncertainty, i.e. one cannot reach the recognition of uncertainty without being aware of it.

Existential anxiety is well explained and developed by many existentialists starting with Søren Kierkegaard who, along with other existentialists, attempted to dig deeper in what really makes someone feel doubtful about his/her existence. For this end, existentialists set some basic elements that would have a direct link with feeling anxious. Besides uncertainty, it seems like "Nothingness" has a great contribution in encouraging anxiety. This concept may drive individuals to feel emptiness inside them or just see their lives as worthless (Popovic 34).

Death can also be treated as a strong motive for anxiety. It is due to the fact that this notion is unpredictable, people frequently wonder about the day they will pass away and how that would be; is it painful as they usually consider? Is it terrifying as it is universally known? Or it is just a totally positive thing. Thinking about all of these uncertainties makes individuals come into an endless state of anxiety (Popovic 35). As Yugoslav Farmer states "Anxiety is what you feel when you think too much" (qtd. in Popovic 32).

Existentialists have made a special emphasis upon the notion of meaninglessness for being the main reason behind existential anxiety. One feels unsure of his existence only if he realizes that there is no purpose for living, as Ernesto Spinelli maintains "Viewed from a wide variety of perspectives one could rightly conclude that life itself is a pointless enterprise" (qtd. in Popovic 36). This suspicion develops to become the driving motive of suicide. As many existential psychologists argue, humans need meaning to survive.

Existential anxiety's predominance has certainly led to the emergence of many theories. Nonetheless, those existential theories took a somehow different path in explaining the notion of anxiety. A major part of Strongman's study covers Kierkegaard's theory of anxiety. He claims that from Kierkegaard's era onward, feeling anxious is treated as a normal and necessary aspect that has a great contribution to reach maturity, taking into account all expected possibilities in life. In the light of Kierkegaard's distinction, Strongman confirms the difference existing between anxiety and fear. He states "to feel anxious undoubtedly requires awareness of anxiety itself and if fear rises from explicit objects, anxiety does not, it actually comes out of the numerous, confusing, and unclear choices in life" (Strongman 6).

Since anxiety highly affects personality, it would also have a huge influence upon one's social life including employment, school, family . . . etc. Anxious people usually adhere to their fears of being humiliated or misunderstood; so they tend to stay away, as much as possible, from situations that may embarrass them or make them feel uncomfortable. According to the *Social Phobia*, anxiety is also related to social phobia, "People with social phobia are afraid of doing common things in front of other people" (2). Thus, individuals suffering from anxiety disorder may seem lonely or simply give up their normal social life. In fact, this mental illness starts from childhood; it prevents children from going to school, participating in group work or any other collective activity, and then strongly manifests in later stages like adolescence and adulthood (Stein and Walker 40).

Recent studies show that anxiety is a very prevailing phenomenon among adolescents specifically. Teenagers are more expected to feel a kind of lack of social involvement and a sort of loneliness especially with the deficiency of public support in general and their parents' in particular. This may lead most of the times to suicide. In their *Social Anxiety Symptoms and Suicidal Ideation in a Clinical Sample of Early Adolescents: Examining Loneliness and Social*

Support as Longitudinal Mediators, Gallagher et al. argue that “Several specific anxiety disorders have been linked to adolescent suicidality, including panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and separation anxiety disorder”(2).

Apparently, anxiety does not involve teens only but also adults. However, anxiety’s influence on adults differs from its impact on teenagers. Old people generally appeal to Alcohol assuming that escaping reality is much better than facing it; so, anxiety disorder can be considered as a major drive of alcoholic consumption (Book and Randall 132). After all, this psychological issue, with no doubt, has special clinical treatment which can, to a considerable extent, diminish stress and solve angst problems, and therefore decrease related social problems.

Because of the strong impact it exerts on society, anxiety is regarded as one of the most delicate social phenomena. Its importance has led writers, researchers and scholars from different disciplines to investigate its causes and cures. Literature is one of those disciplines, writers wanted to shed light on this condition to reveal its effect on both individual and communal level. African writers have eventually contributed in bringing anxiety troubles to light. They were convinced of the necessity to enhance their societies, and destined to perfect their African world.

1.3. A Theoretical Overview of African Literature

After many years of colonization, it was until the 1950s that the colonized world in general, and Africa in particular started a process of decolonization to reset its supremacy and gain independence. This led many African writers to start an urgent writing, in order to, narrow the hegemonic restrictions that the west created between Africa and the world. Moreover, novelists made it a priority in their literary works to devastate any sort of inferiority that the Euro-centric perspective set about African people and Africa. They attempted to celebrate their history, and give a voice to a nation that has been long silenced and weakened by the colonizer. Nevertheless, African writers highlighted certain issues apart from others such as history, maintenance of difference and multitude of cultures (Kehinde 1).

In fact, any process of colonization starts with the distortion of the colonized subject's history. As a reaction, African novelists tended to celebrate their past and to assert the possession of a long history full of considerable events and values. Further, to break the warped vision of the west that African people are merely some savage and cannibal entities with a nonsense language like the image Daniel Defoe portrayed in his *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Chinua Achebe is one among other African writers who stressed the manipulation of African history through his first novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Achebe's work can be regarded as a response to the way Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) depicted Africa. Cheikh Anta Diop's *The African Origin of Civilization* (1988) also had an extreme contribution to the praising of African history. It revealed the significant role that the Egyptian civilization played in the evolution of contemporary civilization (Olatunji 127-128).

Maintenance of difference as well, has been one of the basic matters that took a major part in African literature. This notion appeared primarily to contest the European universalism

that emphasizes “united human nature”, which in turn put aside any different race apart from European ones. Many African writers participated in this process of maintaining difference through showing the various unique traits that African people had. Concerning this matter, Eustace Palmer States “emphasis on the beauty, dignity and excellence of black African life and culture” (qtd. in Olatunji 128). This process of detachment from the western universalism also included culture. African writers emphasized African culture as a rich, beautiful and very different from any other culture.

Language is regarded as a crucial element of culture, so that African writers offer language a great consideration. African Language was highly targeted and suppressed by the colonizer. Since the only weapon that novelists had was language, there was a kind of disagreement about the way this weapon should be used. Many African writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Obi Wali and Niyi Osundare, to name but few, asserted that using a foreign language is a betrayal, and a clear deviation from the real purpose of resistance, as Ngugi states “to neglect our languages and grab those of foreigners is tantamount to blasphemy” (qtd. in Olatunji 129) . However, Gabriel Okara, Chinua Achebe, and Ayi Kwei Armah, along with others, considered the use of manipulated European languages will highly serve African literature. Chinua Achebe declares “I feel that English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experiences; but, it will be new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings” (qtd. in Olatunji 129).

The following decade -starting from late 1950s to early 1960s- gave birth to a post-independent era in which African people sought relief and hoped for a fresh start. Yet, that was not the case; a totally unexpected state of extreme disappointment and despair appeared. All of which was mainly due to the new unsatisfying economic, social and political circumstances that surprisingly took place. New bourgeoisie elite, a recreation of the former

colonization with all western values and perspectives, held power. The only thing the new leaders cared about was their own interests and desires on the expense of Africans. Stirred with corruption and dishonesty just like white colonialists before them. Consequently, African people were still living in an endless misery. Thus, freedom was not a clear fact, Europe continued its colonization in an indirect way, at least politically, through globalization and its own made corrupt politicians that were left behind (Diop 224).

Actually, African people became even more disillusioned after the so called independence. Unprecedented political, economic and social chaos entrapped Africans in the corrupt governments that were controlled by tyrants; a political elite with materialistic spirits. Africa then, found itself facing a new economic imperialist system that has no link to its traditions of communitarian bases, but serves the indirect involvement of the ex-colonial rule. African society witnessed a bitter discrimination and a destructive social classifications based on wealth and social positions, which created vicious divisive binaries such as “black, white”; “bourgeois class, working class”; “good, bad”. . . etc (Diop 225).

Ghana is an example of an African country that, with no doubt, suffered from the new trends that independence brought with, especially under the presidency of Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah at first gave a lot of guarantees for Ghanaian people that promised a “political kingdom” and “economic paradise”, with which he gained their support and belief. However, after holding power, what really happened had no common points with what has been promised. Thus, Ghana witnessed all kinds of unethical practices like bribery, cheating and even killing and jailing for personal purposes. Nkrumah’s economic policies, seemingly, led the country to a serious economic crisis that made the situation even worse. Despite the situation, ironically all politicians enjoyed a luxurious life (Biney 99).

Therefore, the shift of conflict that swept Africa in the aftermath of independence paved the way for a new body of African literature, which in turn took a new path to draw on new themes and concerns. Thus, various local writers displayed their potentialities, each in his/her way, in the embodiment of the existing tough circumstances of the late 1950s and early 1960s through their literary production. Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966), for instance, highly condemned the new political rule that stemmed its principles from the former colonial one. The protagonist is also depicted as corrupt as the new leaders, as if he was contaminated with their dishonesty. Similarly, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) criticized the dishonesty of the African politicians accusing them of betraying their peoples, he asked Africans to view their independence with a critical eye (Diop 225).

Many books were produced to raise the national consciousness of Africans. Frantz Fanon in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) called for a massive violence to end any sort of indirect colonization. The book also recognizes the importance of African past and culture in preserving the African identity. The Senegalese author Cheikh Hamidou Kane in his *L'Aventure ambiguë* (1961), portrayed through his protagonist Samba Diallo the kind of contact that existed between the western and the eastern cultures. Ahmadou Kourouma's *The Suns of Independence* (1969) shows Africa's suffering under the unreal independence and the neoliberal economic system that it has undergone, bringing nothing positive but unemployment and cultural hegemony. The novel also draws the spiritual emptiness of people after liberty and their psychological status. Nevertheless, *L'Afrique Noire est Mal Partie* (1962) of Rene Dumont is a work that did not actually blame the natural environment of Africa in the dissatisfying situation of the continent, but it censured the bad governance and wrong policy direction (Diop 225).

In his masterpiece, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, the Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah harshly criticized the wrong path that the rule of the aftermath of independence took. Using a very vulgar language, Armah depicted to what extent African people seemed to convert to materialism, forgetting all what represented their identity and culture. Armah tended to show the real economic, political and social circumstances that Africa in general and Ghana in particular went through, emphasizing the psychological status that resulted from all that.

Ayi Kwei Armah is a contemporary Ghanaian novelist born in 1938 in Takoradi, a seaport on Ghana's coast, from an elite family. Armah received his early education at the Achimota College, a secondary school in Accra, Ghana's capital, before winning a scholarship to the Groton School in Massachusetts in 1959, a prestigious boarding school for boys. From there, Armah went on to Harvard University, where he earned a degree in sociology. His first published short story appeared in a 1964 *Harvard Advocate* issue. Throughout his life, Armah worked as a scriptwriter, translator, and English teacher in Paris, Algeria, Tanzania, Lesotho, Senegal, and the United States, among other places (“Ayi Kwei Armah”).

At the time of his birth, the West African nation was a British colony, but the first twenty years of his life overlapped with Ghana's long battle for independence; an event that sparked his interest in political and social conditions of Ghana. For a period of more than four decades, he stayed vocal and consistent against Western education and its bequeathal in the continent of Africa. His productions depicted themes of the harrowing experience of colonialism, the subversion of traditional values and cultural vacuum, the effects of Western influence and political corruption immediately after independence. In *Fragments* (1971), as in his first novel *The Beautiful Ones*, Armah contrasts the two worlds of materialism and moral

values, integrity and social pressure. The 1972 novel *Why Are We So Blest?* also portrays a protagonist torn between independence and western values (“AyiKweiArmah”).

His debut novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, has established Armah as a major African writer and provoked conflicting reactions about his intentions. On one hand, Armah was criticized on the ground of being more Western than he is African. He was accused of resembling black Americans trying to be white. The portrayal of a misfit, alienated protagonist in a society that is clearly wrong and lacks moral restrictions is a typical duplication of twentieth century wasteland. Regarding this matter, Charles Larson further demonstrated that Armah devoted more tension to his ascetic writing rather than his “Africanism”; making an analogy between *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Ralph Ellison’s 1952 *Invisible Man* in terms of their essence (Bodunde 23).

Other Critics like Chinua Achebe and Charles Nnolim stressed mainly the state of pessimism and gloom that Armah displayed throughout his narrative, especially in describing Ghanaian society and the current political situation. Leonard Kibera hypothesized that the lesson the novel provides would be apparently more understandable when detached from the pessimistic view (Adeoti 9). Armah’s novel was also criticized for the pungent vulgar language he employed to portray corruption and fraud of the bourgeoisie class, and the economic situation that the new capitalism brought with. However, others as Ode Ogede were highly impressed with the way Armah used a body of discourteous expressions to convey his message (Bodunde 22).

The novel is a portrayal of the social and economic situation of independent Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah’s corrupt regime. The events take place between Passion Week³ 1965-the week most of the working class spend striving till their next pay day- and February 25th 1966, a day after the overthrow of Nkrumah’s government.

The story is about an outcast protagonist who remains nameless throughout the narrative and only referred to as “the Man”. The narrative is divided into fifteen chapters which project the tedious and tiresome routine of the Man’s life from home to his workplace at the railway administration. Through the novel, Armah employs extremely vulgar language and stresses images of filth and rottenness to show the ethical devolution that Ghana has reached during the aftermath of political independence.

Armah embodies the fissure between the two classes – the politicians and the workers- in the characters of the Man and Koomson since both men possess the same educational background, but live totally antithetical lives. Koomson appeals to inducements and suspected bargains as a shortcut towards riches, luxurious life, and titles of a well-known politician and a businessman. In contrast the man persists to his rectitude while striving to feed his family and survive the month till the next payday.

The Man struggles to keep himself decent against the temptations of inducements and briberies in his work, and to live with his wife and mother in law’s constant nagging. Though he is convinced with his honesty and remains loyal to his values; he cannot prevent himself from feeling guilty and responsible for the poverty of his family. Seeking to find company, the Man often pays visits to another nameless character. “Teacher” is a man who shares the protagonist’s views about corruption and materialism. However, unlike the Man, Teacher chooses to escape this bitter reality by isolating himself from society.

The events take a faster pace when the government is overthrown by a military coup. Koomson who was involved with the corrupted system rushes to the Man to help him escape by water. The act gives the Man some relief as his wife shows him respect for the first time. However, the novel closes with a gloomy scene when the Man sees a bus driver offers a police officer a bribe and he confirms that nothing has changed.

Ayi Kwei Armah was admired for his commitment to social issues and the novel was viewed as a bold attempt to improve the Ghanaian society. Armah's work aimed to raise social consciousness and motivate Africans to enhance their conditions. The evocative symbolism, imagery and narrative techniques contributed to a large extent to the beauty and meaning of the novel, and they sought to stress the present condition of many African countries.

Chapter 2

The Manifestations of the Absurd in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*

This practical chapter aspires to identify elements of absurdity in Armah's novel. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section highlights the socio-economic circumstances of the newly independent Ghana as well as the relics of a century of colonialism that are manifested through Ghanaians' crave to enjoy European lavish life style. The section also spots corruption, moral decay and family relations and detects their impact on the man's character. The second section explores the incarnation of the absurd through the novel. Likewise, the section focuses on the impact of this absurd on the characters' growing anguish.

2.1 .The Influence of Imperialism on Ghanaian Life

The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born demonstrates the Ghanaian people's despair and anguish during Kwame Nkrumah's regime and the post-independence circumstances. The novel chronicles the life of a maverick character "The Man" through his daily routine and presents a meticulous depiction of the physical surrounding as well as people's mindset. The book opens with the Man's usual bus ride to his workplace at the Railway and Harbor Administration describing the corrosion of the bus and the burdened passengers. As the novel develops it exposes extensive images of rottenness and decomposition of the surrounding and unfolds the corruption eroding Ghana.

Armah offers a detailed portrayal of the city, and notes on the commercial buildings that stand as both a product and a reflection of the white man. The houses and buildings the whites have left only portend more deeply embedded survival of colonialism through the ideologies of the new leaders. May-Ann's 1998 study guide on *The Beautiful Ones* shows that Armah captures the false promises of the rulers who were only a mimesis of the old white

masters they rebelled against. Armah further explains that the sons of the nation felt love and admiration for the colonizer, “What they felt for their white masters and our white masters was gratitude and faith” (Armah 81).

Ghana has been affected by the white oppression during colonial years and even with independence the organization of society was still influenced, and labeled according to the white man’s norms. Armah gives an incisive examination of two antithetical yet entwined worlds; by mirroring the suffering of the working class contrasted by the ignorance of the rulers. In his thesis Nicholas Nafeesa expresses that “Armah is more interested in the oppressions and exploitations that occur across class lines rather than racial analysis” (3). He focuses on the fact that policy makers and the bourgeois monopolize the riches of the country while common men through whom independence has been achieved are marginalized by their own people. Armah also speaks of the trauma of soldiers who left their families to fight for Ghana and when they returned they realized that their war was for nothing, and all they did was replacing a bunch of white tyrants with another gang of black embezzlers:

When the war was over the soldiers came back to homes broken in their absence and they themselves brought murder in their hearts and gave it to those nearest them . . . Whose victory? Ours? It did not matter. We marched, and only a dishonest fool will look back on his boyhood and say he knew even then that there was no meaning in any of it. It is so funny now, to remember that all thought we were welcoming victory. Or perhaps there is nothing funny here at all, and it is only that victory itself happens to be the identical twin of defeat. (64)

Nicholas Nafeesa uses Herbert Werlin’s analysis of Armah’s work to describe the effect of colonialism. Werlin examines how people were still trapped in their own convictions and felt enslaved by the greatness of the white man. In spite of all the atrocities and the suffering the whites have brought to the country, Ghanaians looked up to them and duplicated their manners. He writes “Those with professional qualifications or foreign training are especially desirous of having the same standard of living as their Western counterparts” (qtd.in Nafeesa

7). The overtime clerk for example was fascinated by whites; he spoke with “the effort of a Ghanaian struggling to talk like some Englishman” (24). Politicians, in particular, were like little insects mesmerized by the charm of Europe and the brightness of their new life. Once in power they forgot about national issues and followed the lead of the white tormenter, “After a youth spent fighting the white man, why should not the president discover as he grows older that his real desire has been to be like the white governor” (92).

The Western mimicry is a theme tackled by many third world critics. Among these writers and critics is, the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong’o who examined the effect of imperialism on African countries. In his book *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (1993), Ngugi wa Thiong’o explored the cultural and psychological impact of neo-colonialism on African people. According to him, imperialism will only lead to a mental and spiritual oppression, he explains:

By thus controlling the cultural and psychological domain, the oppressor nation and classes try to ensure the situation of a slave who takes it that to be a slave is the normal human condition. If the exploited and the oppressed of the earth can view themselves and their place in the universe as they are viewed by the imperialist bourgeoisie, then they can become their own policemen, no longer able to see any significant contradiction between their own condition and that of the oppressor nations and classes. (69)

Koomson, for instance, was brought up in a modest family. In his youth, he believed in building the nation and reforming the system. However, once he held power, he disclaimed his convictions and became eager to taste the luxury of European goods. Koomson, the Minister, wears expensive suits and speaks with the superiority and arrogance of English bourgeois. He and his wife Estella enjoyed an extravagant life style in the upper Residential Area along with the other wannabe whites. Koomson’s new motto was “money is not the difficult thing . . . the Commercial Bank is ours, and we can do anything” (136). As a result, he drained the public funds to finance his lavish parties, pay for the fancy cars and houses and

travel around the world (36,144-147). Koomson is unable to see a difference between his own actions and the former colonizer's actions may be the sole difference lies in the color of their skin (Irungu 3, 4).

The novel shows Estella's addiction to the whites' life style and how it affects her behavior. Estella believes that she is a high-born woman who ought to be admired and feared. She often patronizes people and has no respect for commoners. Acting on this basis, Estella strutted in her imported silk gowns covering her curly dark hair with freshly straightened wig, which was supposed to look like European women's hair. On the dinner, the Man hosted at his house. Estella made no effort to hide her snobbery; contrariwise she confirmed her superiority by refusing to drink the local beer the Man and Oyo offered her, "the high voice of his wife cut the air to pieces. This local beer, she was saying, does not agree with my constitution" (131).

The Koomsons' fondness for European culture was also apparent in the way they decorated their house with marble and carefully polished wood brought from foreign countries. They filled the house with the latest inventions like the television set, the radio and the recorder. The Koomsons surrounded themselves with servants and even the way they spoke with the help was filled with whites' arrogance (Abiodun34). The minister Koomson, for instance, had troubles pronouncing the African names as if he had never heard such names "he called out . . . it was a peculiar kind of shout, the kind made by white men" (147).

The Man recalls with both pity and sarcasm a walk he once took and came across a group of Ghanaians in the company of other white men. The Ghanaians tried to hide the darkness of their skin with the whiteness of their uniforms. Disguised in white, one of the men sounded so ridiculous and desperate, as the Man describes "He was trying to speak like a white man, and the sound that came out of his mouth reminded the listener of a constipated man, straining in

his first minute on top of the lavatory seat” (125) .The protagonist never anticipated any change from the new leaders; he only thought of them as “old baboons” (84), eager to fill their big bellies with whatever they could grab from the people’s money. They were trained apes who only responded to their white masters’ voice (89).

Armah’s gloomy vision persists along the whole novel and his cynical thoughts reverberate through his characters’ skeptic attitude and the hopelessness they feel. The Man conveys his disappointment with independence by recalling the aftermath of the war. He speaks with sorrow and frustration of the leaders they believed in and paid their blood to bring them to rule. After the freedom’s joy had ended, people realized that all their work and sacrifice to exterminate whites control over Ghana was worthless. The new leaders will not bring any change to the country, for they were only puppets in the hands of the white masters (Sougou18), “We were ready here for big and beautiful things, but what we had was our own black men hugging new paunches scrambling to ask the white man to welcome them onto our backs” (81).

Like weeds feeding on the trees’ roots, the leaders escalated on the backs of the workers and poor people; they took control of key positions and pointed their relatives and friends in jobs they did not merit ,depriving common men from their rights . The situation fed the populations’ despair and absurdity, they could not relate to this new reality were the ones who were supposed to bring salvation have only brought misery and desolation:

growing greasy on the troubles of people who worked the land . . . Their brothers and their friends were merchants eating what was left in the teeth of the white men with their companies. They too came to speak to us of salvation. Our masters were the white men and we were coming to know this and the knowledge was filling us with fear first and then with anger. (81)

Armah pictures the society’s mania for the glint of money. The person’s value is measured by how much money s/he has in the pocket, and what kind of goods s/he can

purchase “if you come near people here they will ask you, what about you? Where is your house? Where have you left your car? What do you bring in your hands for the loved ones?”(93). Armah embodies the rush for wealth in the two antagonistic characters of the robber “Koomson” and the robbed “the Man”. Koomson represents the perfect sample of the avid, greedy political clique; once in power, they abuse their authority to control national institutions and collect the wealth produced by the laboring class. The bourgeois minority reap what common people plant and leave only small crumbs for the majority to fight over (Ngugi *Writers in Politics* 76).

Distanced in their fortified castles, the ruling circle became insensitive to the problems of the working class. They ate their loot at comfort and slept in peace while the less fortunate, as it was the case for most Ghanaians, struggled to survive the month till the next payday, and worried about having just enough money for bread, shelter, and clothes at the same time. Common people only dreamed of owning new clothes or television and mostly thought of wealthy families they knew and the things they owned, they imagined what their lives would be like if they ever had a chance to switch places (Abiodun 33).

Armah makes a stand against corruption and brings attention to the fact that people did not care about the way they gained their money; hence the novel depicts a category of people that has converted all ethics to meet its desire. These people’s love for money justified all the wrong deeds. The bus conductor, for instance, did not feel guilty as he handed people short-change. Instead, he enjoyed the smell of rotteness that came from money he did not deserve (3). Armah employs vulgar and somehow repulsive images of filth and rot to foreshadow the illness of society. Like the banister’s wood that has been consumed by rotteness, Ghana has been ruined by centuries of corrupt leaders, policemen, and workers each took what he saw his right to have (Abiodun 34; May).

Because of this pervasive corruption, bribery and inducements became national games. The timber merchant who offered the Man a bribe to book him a wagon was not able to understand the Man's refusal and tried to offer even more money. In the same way, the Man was not able to see the logic in the merchant's behavior and could not understand why he was offering a bribe for a customary procedure (27-31). The Man's colleague who won the lottery hoped the organizers would take some of his prize and leave him the rest because he knew this is how things work in Ghana (19). Policemen also had their fair share of bribes. Whenever they had the chance; they used the privilege of law to extort money from bus drivers. On many occasions, the Man heard policemen repeat their famous statement which left the drivers no choice but to pay for their passage "Even *Kola* nuts can say thanks" (182).

Bribery was becoming the "national game" (55), everybody wanted to play and only "two types of men who took refuge in honesty- the cowards and the fool" (51). In Ghana, bribery is regarded as an act of heroism, a sacrifice every man should take for the sake of the loved ones. Honest men were exiled and blamed for the poverty and misery of their loved ones. Teacher, for example, escaped his family because he knew he was nothing and will never be anything, he could never give his family members the life they desired, and consequently they will never accept his character and let him be at peace with his life preferences (56).

To escape the decay of his society, Teacher chose to free himself from his obligations toward the loved ones and isolate himself. He went to live alone in a prostitution neighborhood and spend his days lying naked in bed, reading books and listening to the radio. Teacher broke all the ties with the outside world, he neither cared about life escaping him nor concerned himself with people's judgment as they sought him from the window (53-60). Alienation is considered to be one of the major themes of existentialist movement. When the man is exhausted from life burdens and pressures, he tends to seek refuge and peace in

isolation. According to Sartre, people opt for alienation because “they can either deny the actuality of whom they are (based on their past choices) or else deny the possibility of who they might become (through our future choices)” (“Alienation”).

In his dissertation entitled *Despair and Disintegration in Ayi Kwei Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Emmanuel Samba Zumakpeh tackled the theme of alienation. According to him, alienation in Armah's novel is more a response to a social reason than an existential cause. He explains, “Armah shows that it is the conduct of the powerful in society which brings about this problem. It is the Koomsons of Ghana (or Africa) who, by their corruption, engender all the moral bewilderment” (5).

Eventually, it is the corruption of Ghana that led to the sharp disruption of family relationships. Zumakpeh believes that “Western culture has eaten into traditional family values and individualism has supplanted the cohesiveness of the extended family structure” (7-8). Every member of the family is concerned with his or her self-fulfillment, denying the other's desires, wishes and needs. Materialism and the imitation of the Western life style have powerfully affected the African culture.

Nepotism is another epidemic that infected Ghana. People in higher position used their influence to appoint their relatives and develop their business. The supervisor of space allocation at the Man's office is an excellent model of this partiality. Everybody knew that the supervisor was a corrupt bursar at some secondary school. He used his position to fill his pocket with stolen money from the school, and when students complained about his practice to the Ministry of Education, they were the one to be punished. The Ministry did not investigate the bursar's case; instead they dismissed the students and closed the school. And with the help of his powerful friends he was appointed at the Railway Administration along with the allocation clerk (109-110).

Like most government officials in Ghana, Koomson too used his position and connections to close illegal bargains. He purchased fishing boats under borrowed names like the Man's wife Oyo and her mother, and arranged a scholarship for his sister-in-law to study in London "Everything is possible, Koomson said. It depends on the person" (149). Even simple things like buying imported goods or fine liquor required the acquaintance of people who knew how to smuggle it to the country "things get done all the time, and if you know people who can do these things, there is nothing wrong in that" (116). Nepotism and bribery are just manifestations of a corrupt Ghana; they are depicted as reasons behind the poverty of African countries "It is this active and general participation in corruption that is responsible for the continent's endemic poverty, hunger and disease" (Zumakpeh 14).

The novel probes into the signs of devolution and moral decay in independent Ghana. In most occasions, the narrator starts with images of the physical excrement moving toward the spiritual degradation. The Man watches a "mother calmly puts her mouth to the wet congested nostrils and sucks them free. The mess she lets fall gently by the roadside and with her bare foot she rubs it softly into the earth" (35). Following this sickening scene a prostitute tries to seduce the Man and negotiate her price with him. In chapter five, Armah makes an apparent link between the environments' contamination and spiritual emptiness. He reflects on the Essei market -where prostitutes live- that was flooded by water. This place became a symbol of a country that was plagued with corruption, prostitution and immorality (Bodunde 23).

The Man expresses his nostalgia to the beauty of the old days, his "mind is disturbed by memories from the past" (67). With sorrow, he recalls the past friends who were victims to Ghana's decadence. Sister Maanan who fell in love with a young politician and believed in his promise of a bright future, was soon disillusioned, for her man was no better than those

old baboons full of vain promises. Maanan was ultimately pushed toward her doom and went mad from using wee. The Man also tells the story of Kofi Billy, a physically strong man who found pleasure in hard work. One day while he was moving cargo, the young white man operating the machine loaded too much cargo and the wire snapped cutting Kofi Billy's right leg. Billy was accused of playing at his work and the white man said he got what he deserves, unable to live broken; Billy committed suicide to end his pain (66).

Egya Akon is another victim to people's greed and mad scramble for money. Akon was a straight man; he never drank, smoked or chased women. Because Akon never did a thing to waste his money, people thought he kept a lot of money hidden and he was killed. People assumed the murderer was someone Akon knew and consequently pointed the finger at Slim Tano; a close friend that Akon would do anything for him. Slim Tano could not stand the condemning whispers and accusing gazes people gave him. He finally lost his sense and spent the rest of his miserable life "shouting every ten minutes or so "I didn't do it oooo, I swear upon my father's foot I didn't do it ooooo!" (77).

The Man fails to conform to his society that was altered into a rotten and suffocating space. Therefore he cocooned himself in his lone world. He can neither understand why his country was still under the oppressive embrace of western imperialism, nor relate to this racist world that divided people of the same skin into conflicting factions each wanted to crucify the other. The Man's inner confusion is further aroused by the collision between his convictions and responsibilities; he stands against the temptations of bribery and easy money yet seems burdened by a sense of dereliction and guilt toward his family(Abiodun 35), "In the end he was left feeling he would never be capable of doing what was necessary" (135).

2. 2. The Incarnation of the Absurd in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*

The accumulation of the Man and his wife's disagreement fueled the escalating tension at their house. The wife Oyo is not only afflicted by greed and materialism; she also suffers from envy. Oyo refuses to accept the honest nature of her husband and considers him responsible of their family's unhappiness. She constantly confronts the Man with his failure and reminds him of his uselessness and futility. She resembles the fact that her husband rejected dirty money, but did not mind living in all that filth and insanitary house to the chichidodo bird that hates excrements with all its soul but only feeds on the maggots growing in excrements (45).

Like most Ghanaians, Oyo is hypnotized by the gleam of money she cannot suppress her lust for expensive objects and whites' life. The Man comments, "she talks about it, Teacher. It is the blinding gleam of beautiful new houses and the shine of powerful new Mercedes cars. It is also the scent of expansive perfumes and the mass of new wig" (56). Oyo's failure to reach her dreams leads her to frustration, she feels sorry for herself and children and regrets her marriage to such a stubborn man, "When I speak of Koomson my wife looks at the children and I can see how sorry she feels for herself" (93). Oyo thought of the Koomsons as a token for success and prosperity, she envied their life and wanted to be a powerful and respected woman like Estella Koomson, "Yes, like Estella. And why not? Is she more than I?"(44).

The Man is repulsed by his wife both physically and mentally, he cannot stand the sight of the birth scar on her belly and refuses that she changes her clothes while he is in the room. The Man is also annoyed by the shallowness of her thoughts and rarely has a conversation with her that does not end with her complaining about money. Nevertheless, what irritates the Man most was the childish illusions of his wife, mainly in the presence of strangers and people who do not know her true self. Oyo would experience daydreams in which she acts like some important lady who must be respected and feared "she would talk, bringing up the

few rich things that had happened to her all her life and some that had not really happened . . . the whole world was in the habit of pretending that their dreams were true in certain chosen places” (141).

Oyo thought Koomson is her salvation, her way out of the gutter, so she restlessly urged her husband to get smarter and seize this opportunities to get a head, if not for his own good, “for the children” (145). Seeing that the Man will not change his mind, she decided to pursue her futile search for fortune against her husband’s will. She made a deal with Koomson to buy fishing boats under her name. Affirming her supremacy, Oyo frequently assaults her husband and reminds him of his worthlessness and insignificance “they are using it to hit me on the head every day, to make me feel so useless”, expresses the Man (57).

The Man feels a stranger at his own house “the terrible feeling of loneliness again came over him in his own home, and he walked out with desperation. . . groping through the night for the only human hand that could touch his and not make him feel a stranger to life” (153). The family lacks communication and the Man’s relationship with his little ones is no better, he usually comes home late and leaves early before they wake, and even when he has the chance he barely says a word to the children, and “many other days would pass without his saying anything to the children” (102).

The Man alienates himself from his kids and they look at him like some foreigner. The children do not speak to their fathers’ nor share the room with him and the Man too was always avoiding them. “He turned the chair sideways and sat looking away from the children in the direction of the next house” (119). The Man cocooned himself in his secluded hole because whenever he looks at them; he sees in their hopeless gaze an extension of their mother’s lust for the many things he can never afford to give, “it seems their eyes also are

learning this flat look that is a defense against hope, as if their mother's message needs confirmation" (41).

The Man and his mother-in-law share mutual hatred for each other. The two kept distance and eliminated any possibility for reunion. And even when their contact is inescapable, the Man keep to himself and never addresses her and accordingly the old woman evades any direct conversation or eye contact with him, "she kept her gaze trained on one or the other of the children, deliberately avoiding the direct look into the man's face" (122). Oyo's mother was spiteful to the Man, and made sure to let him know how much she despises him, she thinks he does not deserve her daughter and holds him responsible for her unhappiness and imprisonment in that dreadful neighborhood.

The mother-in-law is keen to offend her son-in-law on every occasion; she never misses a chance to flag his failure and uselessness at his face, pointing out all the other men who thrived and secured their families' future, "the old woman began at last, 'I must say that there are men somewhere in Ghana who at least know how to take good care of their own.' The Man restrained himself, and the growls of displeasure continued from the old woman. 'People who can do manly things, and take the burdens of others too'" (139). Adding to that, the woman is constantly filling the children's heads against their father "you must know you have nobody, you are an orphan, a complete orphan. You mustn't run around, like people who have men behind them" (123).

The rejection the Man received from his family increased his sense of loneliness and estrangement. He is not only casted away from society, even the loved ones turned against him. His family members' desperate need for approval and admiration from their society and peers granted the Man no support or encouragement in his struggle to maintain honesty. Instead, they tried to persuade him to disclaim his values and seize opportunities from his

work to progress. The loved ones expressed no sentiments of love or gratitude for the Man and his wife was unable to understand his way of thinking.

Running from this stifling atmosphere, the Man often finds refuge in his friend Teacher and admits his dilemma of in-betweenness and confusion between familial duty and ethical obligation:

What I don't understand, he said, is my own feeling about it I know I have done nothing wrong. I could even get angry with Oyo about this. And yet I am the one who feels angry . . . I feel like a criminal. Often these days I find myself thinking of something sudden I could do to redeem myself in their eyes. Then I sit down and ask myself what I have done. Nothing, and there is really nothing. (54)

Following the military coup, the Man was relieved from his wife's scornful attitude. Oyo, realizing at last that she was oblivious, became grateful that her husband was not like Koomson. She sought his amnesty by confessing "I am glad you never became like him" (165). And for the first time in their married life she looked at him with the respect and passion he deserves, "the Man could see in her eyes something he could only think of as a deep kind of love, a great respect" (160).

The novel stands as a decisive proof of Armah's devotion to social and political concerns of the African continent in general, and his country in particular. It is recognized as a weapon for social change and an attempt to shed light on individuals' struggle. The work epitomizes the social and political corruption which dictates collective rottenness and moral disintegration, as well as signals the atrophy of Ghana and hinders any potential development of the country. Armah targets the hierarchical system distinguishing social classes which is in reality designed to make rich people richer and keep poor people stumbling in their poverty. The work shows, not only Armah's involvement in the national struggle, but also displays his eloquence and mastery of complex literary techniques (Kouamé 2).

Armah demonstrates the pathologies that afflict Ghana such as corruption, prostitution, greed, envy and jealousy as the core trigger of the state of meaninglessness and absurdity the characters experience. He suggests that since honest characters like the Man or Teacher fail to assimilate in their perverted reality and likewise fail to bring any change to their society, they simply submit to their overwhelming hopelessness (Wraight “Ayi Kwei Armah and the Significance of his novels”). The Man’s words on independence, illustrate only despair, cynicism and the absurdity people felt following independence:

This was the thing for which poor men had fought and shouted. This was what it had come to: not that the whole thing might be overturned and ended, but that a few black men might be pushed to their masters, to eat some of the fat into their bellies too. That had been the entire end of it all. (126)

The novel examines the manifestation of the absurd in relation to the social, political and economic factors. Armah sketches lucid links between the Man and other characters incisive, and the arousing sense of absurdity. Given that “Convictions are more dangerous foes of truth than lies” (qtd. in goodreads), Armah harmonizes the marginalization of the working class and the pervasive sentiment of emptiness and meaninglessness. He shows how people are victimized by materialism propaganda, and brainwashed to thinking that life only makes sense by means of money. Consequently, attempting to fill the hollowness of their lives, people jostle to gain money and pile possessions at their homes. Others who cannot pay for such luxury nor restrain their desire are held in an “endless round that shrinks a man into something less than the size” (22).

Armah exhibits images of the absurd people experience in their daily routine. He describes the workers coming home after a long exhausting day at work; they are sleep walkers “only bodies walking in their sleep” (2). Trailing their worn bodies to the homes they fled earlier, thinking about the empty mouths they have to feed. Waddling with the crowd, all workers share the same concerns; the shrinking salary that has come to its end, the angry

wives and crying children waiting for their return and the debts growing heavier on their shoulders. Each of them drowned in his own fears and anxieties, the only consolation they have is that everyone else suffers on his way “Perhaps the living dead could take some solace in the half-thought that there were so many others dead in life with them” (22).

The novel reflects on Ghanaians’ carelessness about time. Because people have nothing to aspire for and their days are only a reproduction of the same routine, they have no desire to pursue life, “there was nothing worth pursuing, nothing at all worth spending life’s minutes on?” (47). The workers at the Man’s office did not worry about wasting time; they came to their jobs late, they took a break whenever they felt like it and went for walks to buy food and spend all the time they needed in lavatories. They wasted more effort fooling around than actually working, and when sat behind their desks they either gossiped or took naps. Since there was actually no sufficient work for the staff to do around the day, they created an unnecessary sequence for things to get done; they repeatedly wrote needless transactions over and over to give themselves the satisfaction of doing something significant.

To give more meaning and importance to his life, the bus conductor exercised his pretentious control over the passengers. As if he belonged to a higher authority and had a grip over their lives (Nafeesa 2). The conductor did not bother about the weary worker waiting to go home, he took all the time he needed to eat his meal and go to the lavatory while people stood by the bus waiting patiently for his return. The few, who were too tired to stand climbed to the bus, took a seat and waited. When the conductor came back and sought the passenger already seated, he unleashed a spate of insults and lowered them from the bus. To reclaim his power and further punish the passengers, the conductor ordered them to the back of the line and took even more time than he usually did to cut tickets and give change while expressing his anger with nonstop swearwords (39).

The Man often roamed the streets haphazardly with no purpose or precise destination, “Walking with the slowness of those whose desire has nowhere to go” (35). He walked on the beach and pondered on life and memories. Lying on the white sand it “looked so beautiful. . . giving the watcher the childhood feeling of infinite things finally understood, the humiliating feeling of the watcher’s nothingness” (72). The man thought about the meaninglessness of life and the futility of the journey humans had to go through to only end up meeting with their own death, he remembered the man-child from the book of freaks and oddities and how he has finished his whole life from birth to death in seven years. The man thought of how it was both strange and ridiculous at the same time that an entire existence can be summarized in only few years, and he finally came with the conclusion that life was overestimated since death is indisputable.

On his walks to the beach, the Man is often hunted by the ghosts of Kofi Billy and Maanan. He thinks of them and the way their life has come to its end so easily. The Man remembers the emptiness and meaningless Billy felt after he has lost his leg, and how he grew quieter every day until he committed suicide. He also recalls the time he saw Maanan on the beach after she lost her sanity and how her face seemed so worn and old. The Man felt vulnerable and helpless, he could do nothing to save them from their fate. He was overwhelmed by the certainty that “Existence is illusory and it is eternal” (Camus 67) and that humans were powerless against their destiny.

The society has no respect for human existence; everyone is running to catch his gleam and it does not matter if they have to step on others beneath them. Koomson, for instance, did everything necessary to reach his goals, even if it is on the expense of close people like the Man’s family. The taxi driver who was coming fast did not care about people walking in the street, his only concern was reaching his destination, and when he almost run the Man, he did

not apologize but shouted “Moron of a frog. If your time has come, search for someone else to take your worthless life” (9). People are worthless, only insignificant worms that no one minds stepping on. Likewise their demise is insignificant and after they are gone there was no echo for their existence.

In the novel, Armah focuses on the truism of life’s futility; this is reflected through the character of the Teacher. Teacher is portrayed as someone who has seen so much shallowness in life to the point he realized so early that life is vain. The Teacher knows that there is no point in trying to break the cycle of life, “there was never going to be anything but despair, and there would be no way of escaping it” (154). He knows that everyone no matter how far he goes in life or how much fortune he manages to mound by the end there would be no other place to go but the grave. Teacher lives in his lowliness at peace, free from desires; he does not have a family to worry about nor has to get anxious over paychecks ending by mid-month (May).

Teacher reached the point where he no longer cares about earthly materials; he never leaves his house, for he has no interest in the outside world and only spends his days lying in bed and does not even care about people who can see him from the window. Teacher knows that all the efforts to change the situation in Ghana would be needless. Therefore he detached himself from the world and no longer questions life, nor hopes for finding answers. Teacher is reassured by his conviction that there is something beyond man’s understanding, which has to remain unfolded.

According to May-Ann, Armah makes a clear simile between the process of digestion and the cycle of life. The image of food in its pure, intact state before it is consumed and the way it comes out of people decomposed, rotten and repulsing resembles the human being as he is first born untainted with meanness and the person he is turned to after he has spent a lifetime

in such dissolution and corruption. Over years, the human being is transformed to a degenerated, greedy creature driven by lust and whims, people become like “some insect lost in all the vastness of the world around it” (75). Captured by the gleam, they confine to no religion but wealth and worship no God but money (May).

Oyo is blinded by greed and jealousy and her attitude toward herself and life leads her to experience the absurdity in her own way. Oyo’s life is hollow and void because she is not satisfied with her husband and the life he provides for her. Doubting herself constantly fuels her sense of meaninglessness and unimportance, and her only solution to fill her spiritual emptiness is by owning more things and gaining more money like Estella Koomson. Apart from the momentary relief Oyo feels while pretending to be some important woman, or when Koomson came asking her husband’s help after the overthrow of the government, Oyo is not able to find solace and diminish her sense of meaninglessness.

The Man, on the other hand, was getting tired of his life and family, his absurdity is triggered partially by the draining routines of life and the constant blame of his wife. The Man is unable to understand why he is rejected by both society and family, he feels unwanted and disrespected, and this sentiment raises questions that are never silenced. The Man cannot relate to his wife’s logic and cannot make sense of his community’s way of life. He feels trapped in an inescapable loop of compulsive duties and rejection:

His mind was consumed with thoughts of everything he was going back to Oyo, the eyes of the children after six o’clock, the office and every day, and above all the never-ending knowledge that this aching emptiness would be all that the remainder of his own life could offer him. He walked very slowly, going home. (183)

Ghanaian people are always laden by the burdens of life that add to their sense of meaninglessness and absurdity. The emptiness people experience urges them to find ways so they can feel whole again, and the lone solution they can think of is collecting money and

possessions by any means. However, what people thought the answer to their agonizing absurdity is in fact the core of the problem. The more they scramble for materialism the more they feel unfilled and worthless. People became troubled by their restless fears and insecurities over their financial state, and the growing worries and anxiety about how to escape them.

Chapter3

Examining Anxiety in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*

This chapter attempts to reveal that the notion of anxiety in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is the primary result of the absurd that overwhelmed the Ghanaian people after independence. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first one will display Armah's way of epitomizing the nation's psychological state and how each character deals with anguish. The second section will provide an analogical study of the two main characters, "the Man" and "Teacher" in relation to their perception and reaction to the existing conditions in Ghana.

3.1. Armah's Portrayal of Anxiety in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*

The writer Ayi Kwei Armah, unlike others, deviated from the norms in his writing, for no reason but, to reveal the society's fragmentation and the desolate psychology of the nation in the aftermath of independence, as well as, to portray the frustration and disappointment in a regime which pledged the well to do life for all Ghanaians with no exception. Armah in the novel used very strong and filthy imagery to exploit the result of the country's ethical decay and corruption that had a great impact on individuals. This result is manifested in an unprecedented angst that made people uncertain of their destiny as illustrated in the novel "Everybody seemed to sweat a lot, not from the exertion of their jobs, but from some kind of inner struggle that was always going on" (20).

For perfectly sketching the genuine image of Ghanaians' anguish, Armah picked cautiously his characters and tended to delve deeply in their conscience. Further, the novel is a mere sequential description of the characters' spiritual struggle over their existential situation, namely that of the Man, the Teacher, the Conductor, Sister Maanan, Kofi Billy, Oyo, and Rama Krishna. Thus, Armah dissected in his own way how each of the previously mentioned

characters tried to overcome his subdued fear and looked for some sort of joy to meet his need of continuity (Onwueme 75).

Armah strongly believes in the necessity to transfer the country's scornful social and economic standards that contributed, to a great extent, to the nation's misfortune. Eboye Juliana claims in her *Symbols of Decadance in Ayi Kwei Armah's The Beautiful Ones*: "In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Armah shows how the 1957 independence of Ghana was reduced to nothingness through a flamboyant lifestyle and a greed for the acquisition of material riches" (27). Perhaps the nation's financial reality was the only reason why the majority of Ghanaians sought to engage into the materialistic competition seeking for salvation. The nation was fiercely traced with the ghost of unemployment and low income. People's irresistible poverty and dissatisfaction, along with the surrounding rot and dirt shaped their way of living. No one cared about the way he would get money, what really mattered was putting an end to the existing shortage. However, it was too hard for any human being to sustain the pressure that the perpetual search for money imposes.

In the first chapter, the narrative opens with a tough passion week that makes the poor conductor so pleased of deceiving a passenger by stealing some extra coins. However, his happiness did not last long after realizing that another traveler has been watching him all along, the conductor had a sense of guilt he never experienced before as Armah expressed:

In the conductor's mind everything was already too loudly said and too completely said. 'I have been seen you. You have been seen. We have seen all.' It was not the voice of the watcher. It could not be the voice of any human being the conductor knew. It was a large voice rolling down and really never stopping anywhere at all. (4)

The conductor's inner voice made him suffer even though nothing happened, but in his mind everything was completely done. His trial of reaching contentment was eventually associated with the feeling of shame and ignominy. At the end, the observer is only a sleeper

and the conductor is overwhelmed with a mistaken anticipation of his own creation that was the main drive of anxiety he felt. Freud states in *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety* that “Anxiety has an unmistakable relation to expectation” (4317). It is his Superego⁴ that pushes him to act in a way that is ethically and socially acceptable since the Superego is “the source of moral censorship and of conscience” (Lapsley and Stey 1).

Furthermore, Armah employed the character of Oyo to highlight the victimized women of Ghana under the shadow of gleam that motivated their greed, on one hand, and the struggle to become like westerners, on the other. It is an infinite fight that plagued Ghanaian women to attain richness and authority with one way or another; as stated in “*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born: Man Society and Communal Vision*” “Oyo belongs to the world of acquisitive tendency” (38). It has been asserted also in *The Mpagaze Times: The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* “Women are busying themselves decorating them so that they look like European women”. That was a vital issue which sparked in the aftermath of independence, and highly inspired the writer to embody it in a creative piece of writing. Throughout the novel, Oyo’s feeling of inferiority can gain readers’ sympathy when one looks to her miserable environment; yet, her behavior just macerated her psychological estate and people’s surrounding her.

In chapter four, Oyo’s jealousy from the luxurious life of Estella Koomson turns to a huge insult toward her husband for being poor, calling him a Chichidodo. She is constantly censuring him for his honesty and for not playing the filthy game to get wealthy. In another part of the novel, when she was going to visit Koomson’s house along with her husband, Oyo chooses to take a modern taxi pretending it is hers and talking like a high class woman. Acting in such way reflects the wife’s unbearable inner fight to contest Estella Koomson and all other rich women (43-141).

Oyo's anxiety can be traced also to the way her husband looks at her body after her last caesarean birth, which left a big ugly scar on her womb. She feels a painful alienation mixed with fear from losing her partner who felt disgusted each time they were in an intimate position, as it is stated, "Ashamed to be seen naked by lecherous strangers, Oyo?" 'Ah, look at it if you want to. It's you who'll lose your appetite for it, not me.' Every time he saw it looked bigger than he thought it should be" (128). Furthermore, Oyo symbolizes African women who are ashamed of being black with curly hairs doing whatever it takes to change their nature. To illustrate, Armah exhibits this in a scene when Oyo was ready to burn her hair just not to be embarrassed in front of Estella's wig (129).

It was until the end of the novel that Oyo disposed of her angst. Oyo used to see Koomson as godlike, so that, she felt an instant peace of mind after seeing his miserable position waiting to be arrested, and appearing in a repulsive state. The veil of gleam was finally vanished and Oyo accepted her husband and her life the way they are, addressing her husband with a special gaze of proud and greatness as she never did before (165). With Oyo's new conception of life, the soft environment of the house would return again.

Armah's attitude toward the rot of Ghana was not stable. Thus, after any description of bleak despair, he is likely to show that there is some sort of hope. In order to represent that small torch of optimism, the writer offers some solutions and some views of purification namely the sea and water streams. Onwueme declares in his *Speaking Without Tongue: Silence and self-Search in Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* "My own prognosis therefore is that embedded in the rhetoric and scatological imagery of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is the grain of hope and salvation naturally derivable from a conscious revulsion to the negative energy of sin, decadence, and consumption"(73). Further, Armah sees a hidden honesty laying there somewhere among people, which is hard to reveal due to the prevailing

corruption and fraud. So, he tries to characterize a sample of Ghanaians' effort to avoid their spiritual deterioration which is perfectly fulfilled through the character of Rama Krishna (47).

Rama Krishna adopted a western name, faith and life style to escape the current awful rot and decay. He appeals to Yoga, meditative exercise, and turns to be a vegetarian.

Nevertheless, Rama Krishna's uncertainty about the idea of killing plants, bearing in mind that they are much more alive than many surrounding souls, made him quote the prophet Gibran, whom he follows, to give himself a reason to survive "But since you must kill to eat . . . Let it then be an act of worship" (47). Terry Goldie argues in *A Connection of Images: The Structure of Symbols in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* "Rama Krishna is unable to rise above the evil acts that life requires and in his avoidance of outward decay, the inside of his body decays before its time" (99). Moreover, through Krishna's death, Armah wanted to convey his own state of hopelessness toward the country's decadence that touched every living entity.

Ayi Kwei Armah devotes a significant part from chapter six to shed the light on the cruel impact of the war on the psychological state of soldiers and men fought for independence. About which they were not even sure. Some of them 'went simply mad', because they could not endure the extent of chaos the world has undergone. For example, the Home Boy, a soldier whose periodical drills, learned in the army, never left him in peace. He kept repeating them every single moment for the rest of his life. Others opted to worship silence which did not take so long to bring their end. It was just a minority who were lucky enough to rise from their ashes and search for something to keep them standing in a totally wrenched world (65). Anita Annan asserts, in her *A Presentation of Post-Independence Political Disillusionment in Ayi Kwei Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born and Kojó B. Laing's Search Sweet Country* ; "Through the first-person narrator we learn about the veterans

who fought in World War II . . . These veterans came back home with the brokenness of war . . . Neglected by their leaders and the system, these characters live a life of hopelessness” (55).

Kofi Billy, one of the lucky ones, succeeded in obtaining a job in which he found a kind of solace. Yet, after losing his right leg in a work accident, Billy felt an endless despair and discomfort from his situation. Armah through the character of Kofi Billy tended to conceptualize the miserable position of Ghanaians who were victims of the white’s subjugation. Billy’s anguish increased from the dread of his life’s purposelessness. Like James S. Fleming argued in his *Existentialism: From the Age of Anxiety to the Present* in the light of Sartre’s point of view “human’s existence is meaningless and each of us has to create his own essence” (1), which was not attainable for Billy. In a scene, he appears to sit in front of the sea seeking purification from any sort of decay he ever witnessed. That was an attempt of cleansing that did not brought any relief. Following his unsuccessful endeavor to stop the stress of his existential anxiety, Billy found refuge in drugs (74-75). However, angst pressure drove him to commit suicide as Armah confirms “Kofi Billy hid himself from the world, and said nothing . . . It was the Sunday after that Kofi Billy’s body was found” (75).

The character of Sister Maanan has two dimensions. She represents women of Ghana who are disillusioned with the betrayal of their men, yet never surrender to frustration and isolation. She kept finding ideals to move on. Even though her soul was aching from the knowledge that things will not get better, she was likely to create excuses and make connections to anything that can give her a motive to live. Thus, Maanan does not belong to Oyo’s category of women; she never run after materials, the only thing she sought was joy (Goldie 97-98).

Sister Maanan plays a significant role as a guide for happiness to the Man and Kofi Billy. She is the one who first introduces the *Wee* and teach them how to smoke it. The Man and his

friend Billy quickly involve in drug consumption aiming at forgetting all about what is happening around them; yet, that was not the case. Smoking drugs had a very deep impact on the three of them especially Maanan. Thinking that *Wee* is the cure for her loneliness and gloom was a wrong idea after all, and what really happened is that the *Wee* opened her eyes on the unaffordable and tough circumstances she is living through (69-70). Drug consumption is a result of the extent of anxiety that these three characters ponder; considering it as a way for escaping reality, as it is explained in the first chapter of this dissertation.

Kofi Billy's death hardened the task for Sister Maanan to recover; as it is stated in the novel "Every one of us was uneasy after this death, because we knew there was no reason he should go alone like that, killing his own self. Each one of us must have thought of it; he was surely not the only one to go, only the first, surely" (76). Despite this, Maanan unlike other characters did not give up to the darkness, but she looked for happiness elsewhere. She succeeded to restore her life once more, and save her soul from rupture. Maanan fell in love with a politician:

Maanan came much later, and found us all so quiet. We could see her happiness in the movement of her body itself and it was beautiful. She was a woman in love then. . .
 'Today things have gone inside me, and they brought out what I have hidden in me. He brought them up. They were not new to me. Only I have never seen anything to go and fish them up like that. He was reading me. (87)

Unfortunately, the end of Maanan is not actually happy as she always wished, and it seems like even love could not bring her to the light of hope and ease. She gets mad after all.

Ayi Kwei Armah took many scholars by surprise through the choking way he transmitted the political uprisings in Ghana. *The Beautiful Ones* draws on the different political phases the country went through, emphasizing the military coup that overthrew Kwame Nkrumah from presidency "*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is not so much a novel about an individual as it is a novel about a society. It is in fact, a merciless attack on political

corruption” (“The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born 28) .Nkrumah governmental system was featured with displaying power over the weak and giving right to those who do not deserve. Annan claims “Nkrumah’s position as the president appeared to reveal his true intention. His revels in the personality cult, and also his governance without the inclusion of the masses projected his authoritarian side rather loudly” (22). With this skillful satirical work, Armah tried to evince the results of the pervasive political events on people’s personality, and how generally they embraced their situation.

In chapter thirteen, the narrator provides a description of the typical work day of the Man at the Railway Administration. Yet, some new events were taking place; Nkrumah was overthrown. After few minutes from the beginning of the manifestations against Nkrumah, policemen arrived and took strikers to jail. It was the moment that the real face of the new regime revealed and everyone who was waiting for the big event of change lost their hope “New people, new style, old dance” (157). Old party men were locked up and others waited anxiously the day they will be arrested; Koomson was one of them (157).

Streets were overwhelmed with peoples’ noise and different bans praising the new men who would hold power, chasing those who were in favor of the old political system. The Man’s stuff joined the crowd outside in spite of their uncertainty about what is really going to happen, as the passage states “The messenger said nothing. Even the one who had come in whistling had a sort of second fear in his eyes, the kind of look people have when they are unsure of what they are doing, and want to take care to be able to claim that it was all a joke” (157).This indicates that their fear from the future is larger than words can carry (158).

With the end of this chaotic day, the country seemed too quiet for a nation that has just witnessed a huge political adjustment. People, unusually, did not have much talk about what happened. For instance, the evening shift man as Armah expresses “came only a few minutes

late. He looked very occupied with some interior business, and offered nothing, no information about the coup, except a look of great chagrin and uncertainty” (159). However, their doubts and thoughts about the new government were too loud than the silence they maintained (159).

Armah’s narrative focuses on sharing his ideology about the result of the assumed independence that was a frustration more than a reason of celebration. Gbemisola Adeoti comments in his *The Re-Making of Africa: Ayi Kwei Armah and the Narrative of an (Alter)-native Route to Development* “The work was in part motivated by the author’s disappointment with the sudden collapse of the socialist democratic ideal inaugurated at independence in 1957” (5). Armah also highlights the mess that followed the war and all the striking virtues that characterized it. *The Beautiful Ones* displays the extent of the absurd that the nation reached and the emptiness that buried their dreams and hopes. This state of meaninglessness eventually leads to overwhelming unease and anguish to which people react differently.

Armah’s characters give the readers a general and clear idea of what Ghanaians suffered namely disinheritance, subjugation, deception, disappointment and any kind of misfortune.

Moses Geoffrey Kwame Ayivor argues in his *A Saga of Black Deglorification: The Disfigurement of Afric in Ayi Kwei Armah’s Novels*:

In *The Beautiful Ones*, Armah presents us with a creative vision of small and powerful political elite which imposes itself and its "ideology of the gleam" on the poverty-stricken masses. Hence the novelist introduces the reader to "the gleam" from the beginning of the work. We are introduced to the gleam which largely comes to symbolize various manifestations of political and moral corruption which rule Armah’s depraved world through the eyes of the Man. (57)

Armah through his work blames not only the corrupt regime, but also people themselves for being dragged with the new system. The system is far away from their traditions and heritage which resulted in an unexpected social disorder and ethical chaos. *The Beautiful Ones* studies

the nation's hollowness that people tried to occupy through materialism which made it even worse especially for the poor and the honest.

3. 2. The Man and Teacher: Similarity or Difference

The tough conditions of corruption and filth the Man struggles with had a rather different impact on Teacher from that on the Man. Nwaegbe William confirms, in his *Alienation and Literature: Discursive Maps in the West African Experience* "The net result is that the philosophic individual finds himself alienated from his family and eventually from the wider society . . . Teacher is an other character in the book that has a fragmented self" (161-162). Despite the fact that both have been pictured with a fragmented self, Armah tends to show his optimistic view through the protagonist in parallel with his pessimism through Teacher. Thus, each of the two characters reacts in diverse manners to coexist with Ghana's fake political independence and all what brought with.

The positive side displayed by the Man is embodied in his intense attempts to form connections for overcoming his alienation, and keeping his engagement in society regardless of his spiritual isolation. Further, the Man's hope can be revealed in the preservation of his values in a decayed environment believing in a better future for the country. Teacher's dreams however, sparked since he was young by the end of the colonial period, and then were crashed with the wrong path that Ghanaian politics took. So, he lost every single ray of hope and quickly surrendered to darkness and spiritual emptiness that drove him to the gloom of the existential struggle (Nwaegbe 162).

The Man's anxiety started out of the passive routine of work that has nothing special but boredom and worthless. Besides the eventless every day journey, the Man is pressed with his helpless economic position that he can do nothing about, like the passage states "the

loneliness was made a bit more bitter by the distant beat of bands on the hill creating happiness for those able to pay money at all times of the month ” (15). In a scene where the Man is at Teacher’s house seeking comfort away from his mocking wife, thoughts stroke his mind about the way of honesty he chose which is considered the fools’ or cowards’ way (51).

The Man is a simple character who mirrors each hurt and devastated Ghanaian who suffers social disintegration and humiliation due to poverty. Yet, he is brave enough to stick to his honesty despite the killing silent accusations from his wife and children. “This gives him the dual personality of representing the ordinary, suffering Ghanaian, disillusioned and pessimistic, yet retaining his identity as a morally sensitive man determined to stick to his principles” (Nwaegbe 162). The Man’s burden of satisfying the loved ones, on one hand, and his commitment to sincerity on the other, is the hardest kind of moral torment (31). The Man appears in a weak personality that constantly endures insults from people he barely know. This can be explained through the scene of the offenses he got from the conductor in the bus after being caught asleep with his spit spilled on the bus chair (6).

Teacher in contrast to the Man has withdrawn from life after witnessing the tragic situation the country ended up to. Teacher lost hope in any potential salvation, so he just lied down naked on his bed as a dead body, careless of being seen, and cutting any possible bond with the world outside, as he says “It is not a choice between life and death, but what kind of death we can bear, in the end. Have you not seen there is no salvation?” (56). The book he reads *He Who Must Die* symbolizes despair and abandonment, unlike his friend the Man who is likely to live with all the surrounding impurities waiting for a change. The Teacher’s disconnection can be noticed in his lack of communication and family alienation (53).

It seems like Teacher is powerless in front of all what it takes to please his family, in comparison to the Man, because anything would be done is undoubtedly wrong, and it will be

so much harder than giving up as Nwaegbe clarifies “He knows that without interaction with relations and friends, life is particularly meaningless” (162). Furthermore, he never got rid of his desire to join the loved ones; yet, thinking of the presupposed sacrifices makes him in favor of running away and being in such miserable position as the following passage entails:

I know I am nothing and will never be anything without them, and when I wish to stop being nothing, then the desire to run back to those I have fled comes back with unbearable strength. Until I see again those loving arms outstretched, bringing me their gift of death. Then I stop and turn around and come back here, living my half-life of loneliness. (56)

Despite his realization of the significant importance the family implies in one’s life, the Man’s friend chooses to stay lonely escaping any kind of unaffordable blame or accusation.

Nevertheless, Teacher’s mother came in his dreams condemning him for avoiding responsibility which gave him insight of what he was escaping all along (60).

In fact, the Man’s struggle and lack of conviction comes from his wife and mother in law in first place; it is women’s greed that ruined his life. Doubt and uncertainty about his state toward corruption and decadence cynically made him wonder about what is right and what is wrong. Women are expected to support their men in joy and sorrow, which is not the case for Oyo. The Man sustained the terrible material hunger of his wife with a deep silence associated with patience and tolerance, particularly toward the way she compares him to his old classmate and her ideal Joseph Koomson. Oyo is astonished with Koomson’s wealth to the extent of envy, and treats him as the chosen one who will save her from poverty (116,123,141).

The most remarkable difference between Teacher and the Man can be envisioned in the educational level Teacher got, unlike the Man who abandoned his studies to marry Oyo. “Teacher is obviously the better educated of the two, most likely a university graduate” (Nwaegbe 163), which gave him aptitude to explain his situation better than his friend did. He

employed Plato's cave myth to address all those who followed the national game to hold high positions and become rich. Those called the elite are depicted as the inhabitants of the cave; they know nothing but the darkness surrounding them filled of filth and rot, rejecting any kind of rescue from the dim. If anyone of them sees an external light, he would be perceived as 'madman'. Light in this context is the concept of integrity and purity; however, darkness is the ghost of materialism and corruption (80).

In chapter six, the Man is wondering of what really have brought his friend to this unwilling isolation from other entities. The critic Fleming uses the words of the philosopher Martin Heidegger about this condition when he explains "Heidegger believed a person can choose to live an authentic life or an inauthentic one . . . the inauthentic life is one in which a person merely exists. Like an animal following its herd, the inauthentic individual simply conforms" (5); this is a position that is so much like the Teacher's. The Man looks at his friend with a huge pity in concurrence of scolding him for wasting his valuable soul and turning his back to society. Teacher's intense angst started from independence and developed through time to kill all what he once believed in. As it is demonstrated:

There is something powerful that has burned him. The naked body is a conveying for a soul once almost destroyed, now full of fear for itself, and full of killing anguish at what this fear makes impossible. But the Man has never really known the thing that turned his friend into a human being hiding from other human beings. (78)

Teacher's tired soul from resisting the evil was finally destroyed and it seems that nothing would bring it to life, even his closest friend. Ghana's degeneration was too much for Teacher to handle, so that he simply stepped out (78).

Even the Man, sometimes, appears in the narrative as totally hopeless when things reach the climax. It is conveyed by the end of chapter six through the Man's emotional speech about the party men and how each one attained power and used it in his favor, particularly

Koomson. He was so angered with the new politicians who took the path of the whites before them, or became even worse; he confirms “There is no difference then. No difference at all between the white men and their apes, the lawyers and the merchants, and now the apes of the apes, our party men” (89). In a desperate moment of vagueness, the Man gives reason to those who worship money and amenities; he states “It is terrible, but it is not a lie. Who can blame them when in this society there is no way of knowing whether anything else is possible?” (90).

The Man’s recognition of the tiring valueless quality of his job is so apparent in chapter seven. “He drifts aimlessly through a colorless life of poverty. Each day he makes the dreary journey from his loveless home through filth, slime, and insults to his tedious job in the decaying Railway Administration Block” (“The Beautiful Ones: Man, Society, and the Communal Vision” 35). This recognition opens his sight toward the other identity he acquires with the loved ones that is so much different from him alone. Thus, the Man’s confused mind about his real stand toward money and wealth frightened him just like Teacher few years ago; the difference lays in the efforts the Man keeps doing to provide better conditions for his family, unlike his friend. In a long conversation, Teacher explains his escape from society putting all the censure on country betrayers who fought white men to replace them and enjoy a parallel luxurious life. Similarly, the Man points on the tough ignorance of questions incapable to answer like “. . . Where is your house? Where have you left your car? What do you bring in your hands for the loved ones?”(93).

Looking to the Man’s suffering may give an excuse for Teacher’s run away, due to what family maintenance costs. By the end of the exhausting day, and after the hopeless visit to his friend searching for solace, the Man seeks for some joy with his wife Oyo as a signal for conciliation; though, that is quite difficult with the unattractive scar on her womb. The

obstacle of getting pleasure would manifest in the sense of anxiety like Freud demonstrates in *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety* “The relation between inhibition and anxiety is pretty evident” (4249); “In men the chief stages at which inhibition occur are shown by: a turning away of the Libido at the very beginning of the process (physically unpleased)” (4249).

Thus, Inhibition which is any act of restriction to a particular instinctual function (Freud 4248) is implied in the physical disfiguration of Oyo’s body that resulted in her husband’s aversion. Armah’s creation to the protagonist’s dilemma aimed at transmitting the picture of any ordinary Ghanaian experiencing money shortage in one hand, and family alienation on the other. Moreover, he emphasizes the extent of complexity for anyone to preserve his honesty where corruption turns to be a life style (98-99).

The protagonist’s position in distinction to Teacher’s was dramatically unstable. Thus, Teacher’s destiny is already obvious; however, the Man’s life is filled with unexpected and ambiguous possibilities throughout the novel. The variety of possibilities causes uncertainty and thus anxiety, which in turn results in insecurity. The Man’s threatening nature raises fears from anything which is not schemed for. Thus, in regard to the political, economic and social circumstances the country going through, it seems like the Man’s angst is endless.

The Man’s work as a railway clerk is among the inescapable sources of depression and anguish. In the same chapter the narrator tells about another boring day from the Man’s office with a detailed description of how he got there, highlighting all the encountered excrement and dirt like vomit, sweat, shit...etc. Then the narration shifts to the Man informing about his awful experience in the lavatory, providing a full image of its disgusting view with all what was written on the walls and doors, naming but few, “VAGINA SWEET, MONEY SWEET PASS ALL, WHO BORN FOOL, SOCIALISM SHOP MAKE I SHOP, CONTREY BROKE . . .” (106).

The Man's habit of appealing to the sea fleeing the diffuse chaos is, sometimes, associated with a strong stream of thoughts that strikes with the movement of the ocean. The most two prevailing experiences in front of the sea are with Kofi Billy and sister Maanan while smoking drugs, and the other one after Billy's death. The second contact with the sea is characterized by a deep feeling of nostalgia and hopelessness like the narrator demonstrates "Thoughts of the past and present, hopes and fears for the future, all come with the speed of the vehicle. . . The thoughts rising from the sea all have a painful hopelessness"(112).

Furthermore, the shadow of poverty never left the Man in rest, after being insulted by his wife for refusing a bribe, the necessity of delighting the loved ones pushed him to compensate what he missed. In the opening of chapter nine, the Man awakens on memories of the shopping day he spent buying European food for Oyo's special guests; Koomson and his wife Estella. Despite the fact that the high quality products the Man bought would harden his shortage, yet, his feeling of happiness for his wife was worthwhile. Nevertheless, the wife's total satisfaction never has been fulfilled, because it was impossible to find any classy drinks, only beer; Oyo stressed "The food is fine'. . . 'The food is fine, but the drinks. . .'" (115).

The Man's shiny smile in the shopping day did not last long. His engagement in the hall cleansing process eventually drove him to a killing disenchantment for remaining just the same in spite of all the effort. This annoying truth mirrors corruption that swept Ghana and reached its high levels through years. Thus, "Armah is sensitive to all kinds of filth, from the indecency of speech to that filth which is the natural result of decay, use and age" (Eboye 21). The Man's anguish develops to be a pressing concern for his children's future; would it be the same as his? Thus, purposeless cleansing procedures, or some gleaming destiny is waiting for them? This is really what he hoped for but he is quickly faced with a bitter chagrin. The following passage confirms the Man's estate "Perhaps one of them would one day break free

from the horrible cycle of the powerless. . . Dreams. Dreams to break the backs of children with. Dreams to give a moment's peace to the parent who knows inside himself that things never work out that way" (119).

Just like Teacher's mother or worse, the Man's mother in law addresses him with pejorative humiliations which sounds like serious accusations. It was the evening of Koomson's visit, so the children were taken to their grandmother's house. When she first sees them with their father, she shouts with pity and sympathy that strongly ashamed the Man "“Ah yes, the suffering daughter of mine, what does she say?”. . . My God, how she must be tiring herself! Oh my dear, dear God!"(123). The grandmother's reaction did not take the Man by surprise due to the growing hostility between them. Yet, it was uncomfortable what he felt in front of the harsh indictments she addressed him with for not taking care and starving his children. Actually, the tension existing between the Man and his mother in law was due to his neutral stand toward the boat affair that supposed to enrich the family (123).

The Man's real struggle with his conscience was while visiting Koomson's mansion for the first time; the visit that shrunken him between his morals and the bad desire for richness. His astonishment and amazement were manifested through the way he stared to Koomson's living room along with his wife. "The "gleam" has an attraction that arouses interest in the masses; it has the power to corrupt even the upright man, that is, if he succumbs" (Annan 40). The Man confirms his love for the luxurious life as he states "How could a man be right in the midst of all this, wanting these things against which the mind sought to struggle? It was not the things themselves, but the way to arrive at them which brought so much confusion to the soul" (144). The protagonist's anguish then has nothing to do with materials themselves, but with methods of earning them (144).

Armah devotes the whole twelfth chapter for revealing the disappointment of the Man's wife and mother in law about the purchase of the sailing boat, which was the only hope for getting wealthy; a frustration that did not change the grandmother's hatred for the Man. Oyo finally understood her husband's failure of providing her with the sophisticated life she always longed for. For a poor man, it was the most difficult pain to endure; seeing all the silent eyes staring at him with gaze of expectation and want. This pain nurtured the Man's desire for death, claiming that the only escape from all wishes that turned to devastations would be "the final going" (152-154).

The Man's psychological estate never has been showed as steady. Chapter thirteen is introduced with a total excitement and interest of the Man concerning his job, listing a body of positive points that may be found in his assignment "At least the job itself was one of the few around which did not have a killing dullness" (155). An unprecedented situation of happiness and relief; yet, the loneliness of the office and the passive surrounding entities reminded him of the miserable country he is living in. the repeated scenario of hopes and disappointments was the case for all Africans and Ghanaians, specifically. It was a long lasting situation that never reached an end even with the new government (155).

The sharp effect of corruption was like an anesthetic not only for the different sectors of the country but also for its citizens. The Man reflects those powerless groups of people who distrusted anything that has to do with politics. Armah pictures this through the Man's attitude toward the military coup that took place after the withdrawal of Kwame Nkrumah; "he knows that there will not be very much of a change" ("The Beautiful Ones: Man, Society, and the Communal Vision" 58). When he was asked to join the manifesting crowd, the Man acted in a very sarcastic manner. He powerfully revealed his carelessness and unconcern about the new

regime. It is because he knew that things do not work like this, so, he just rested in his office waiting for a more convincing motive to get him out of it (158).

On his way home, 'the Man felt almost happy', not sure of the reason, but his blatant ideas about the future were prominent, as it is mentioned in the novel "When he got home the Man felt almost happy, and like a happy man he did not climb the four little steps onto the veranda, but leaped lightly up" (160). Actually, the coup changed his life indeed; since all Nkrumaists or old political figures were wanted from the army, Koomson was in trouble. He appealed to the Man to help him run away. The terrible look of Joseph Koomson did affect Oyo's way of thinking after realizing the inescapable destiny of men like Koomson (160).

Armah's metaphorical foreshadowing of the disgraceful ending of anyone playing the filthy game is apparent from the disgusting way Koomson escaped. The writer provides a panoramic description of Koomson's flee through the Man's latrine hole, which is an unexpected and chocking scene for readers. The collection of events that characterized the fall of the famous former minister Koomson, has finally opened Oyo's eyes on what the easy richness and the ideal luxurious life costs. It was the moment that the Man's wife appreciated her husband's honesty like the passage implies "In Oyo's eyes there was now real gratitude. Perhaps for the first time in their married life the Man could believe that she was glad to have him the way he was" (165).

After helping Koomson in his big runaway, and contributing in bribing the watchman, it seems like even the Man is not entirely clean after all. That is to say, in such a rot, it is impossible for a person to keep himself uncontaminated even without intention. The final scene of swimming back to the beach is a symbol of purification from all what happened, and from anything that drove the Man to act against his principles. This can be deemed as an

important distinction from his friend Teacher. Thus, Teacher's resignation is somehow a better solution to avoid any sort of involvement in any kind of deception (178).

What is so special about the novel is its title. In the first sight, readers can never guess the real significance of the title and its relation to the content. It is until the end, that the expression "THE BEAUTYFUL ONES ARE NOT YET BORN" appears in a very symbolic scene. In his way home, the Man notices a shiny new bus, painted in green with the written phrase associated with solitude flower. The most frustrating scene for the Man however, is seeing the bus driver bribing the policeman to pass, right after gaining some hope from the redeeming moment with water. Armah's tendency is to show the same cyclic story of Ghana's corrupt regime, and to emphasize that there is no beautiful born ones; may be in the future but for sure not now (183).

Many critics pointed the significance of the novel's title and explained it in various ways. The Center of Critical Analyses states that 'The Beautiful Ones Are not Yet Born', as the expression entails, reflects Armah's optimism in one hand, and pessimism on the other. It refers to the honest Ghanaian people who remained loyal to their morals and maintained their principles despite the existing confusion. The misspelled word "Beautiful" denotes the vicious sample of the nation that supposed to be frank and deviated from their traditions and principles to adhere to materialism and amenities, with one way or another, besides marginalizing and abusing those minority of 'Beautiful Ones' ("The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born").

Despite the numerous differences between the Man and Teacher, one cannot deny the existing similarities between the two. Remarkably from the novel, both have the same perception of the indisputable and pervasive filth that swept Ghana. Teacher like his friend the Man is highly disgusted by what the entire nation was busy collecting, and what all people

were doing to show off. Both of them carried the unbearable burden of sustaining their honesty regardless of what that costs. The two main characters shared their anxiety, from different fears, but the same distressing feeling.

The nakedness of Teacher and his escape to books and music is contrasted with the Man's fight to regain the loved ones' trust. Further, Teacher is perceived as more rational than his friend, that is to say, Teacher is characterized with a kind of wisdom that can be noticed in his way of speaking. However, his loss of faith and his withdrawal to despair proved his weak personality and lack of will. In fact, these two central characters can be considered as an example of the "Beautiful Ones" that Armah meant in the title, because they highly represent the moral side of the nation.

The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born is a very creative work in which Ayi Kwei Armah tends to display all what he saw in his society and Africa in general. His aim is so apparent from the way and the language that he uses. The choice of characters and the sequence of the events skillfully transmit his own hurt and pain from the recurring disappointments he witnessed in his country. Armah shed the light on the purgative mission that the military coup assumed to hold after the withdrawal of Kwame Nkrumah, which replaced former tyrants with others from the same root.

The dominating political, economic, and social circumstances are certainly the most significant issues that shaped Africa's estates of the absurd and anxiety. The tough money shortage the working class ponders, and the luxurious life the elite enjoy, is the only concern of the whole continent. This kind of hierarchy is generated by the wrong path the political sector went through. Corruption and fraud are the major policies, while bribery and subornment are simply the jurisdiction. Armah shows the uncertain destiny that Ghana, as a special case, is facing.

Conclusion

The Absurd and Anxiety are two highly related and significant notions that are strongly manifested in independent Ghana. People's disbelief and passive perception of life pave the way for a mass feeling of meaninglessness and spiritual emptiness. This state of absurdity eventually leads to insecurity and unease, which in turn provides a direct cause for anguish. These two states of existence are mainly a result of the unexpected prevailing Ghanaian political, economic and social circumstances.

The dissertation attempted to deal with important theories of the absurd. It showed how the absurd is an expansion of the existentialist movement. It is concerned with the link between the man's quest for a meaning of life and his inability to find this meaning. The study touched on the main characteristics of the absurd theater and focused on the great contribution of Albert Camus. Overcoming the sense of the absurd was a question that many philosophers and writers endeavored to answer. Different philosophers proposed different solutions. While Albert Camus opted for an acceptance of the absurd, Søren Kierkegaard clings to faith to confront this absurdity.

The study aimed to offer definitions to the concept of anxiety. It revealed the difference between anxiety and fear. While fear is related to real objects or an actual threat, anxiety is about uncertainty. Sigmund Freud differentiates between two kinds of anxiety: the realistic and the neurotic one. The realistic anxiety is associated to a known danger whereas the neurotic anxiety is related to a mysterious threat. Thus, realistic anxiety is no more than fear. The person's uncertainty about the existence can also lead to a sort of anxiety. This anxiety is called an existential anxiety; it is related to the person's doubts about his or her existence.

The dissertation revealed how Armah pictures the disappointment of the nation with independence, which is supposed to lead Ghana to environmental, economic, social, and political prosperity that is not a clear fact in the country. The study revealed the impact of imperialism on the social and economic circumstances of Ghana. Class distinction and imitation of the Western life style are viewed as consequences of imperialism. Through his novel, Armah portrayed the desperate yearning for whiteness. The thesis focused on the lure of materialism. People are so obsessed with money that they try all ways to earn money. Denying all moral values, people are dragged into the filth of corruption and decay. Bribery has become a national game that is played by all categories of people. The persons who refuse to participate in the game are marginalized and alienation seems to be their outlet.

Besides alienation, carelessness about time is another aspect of the absurd. Armah revealed Ghanaians' sense of meaninglessness through their neglect of time. Instead of working, they spend their days fooling around. This act denotes their inability to pursue their life. The disrespect for the human existence is another facet of the absurd. The idea of life futility is powerfully apparent in the character of the Teacher who shows no interest in the outside world, securing himself from both love and hatred of the others.

The study examined the anxiety that Ghanaians suffer from. The anxiety of African women about their African physical appearance is sharply depicted in the character of Oyo. Soldiers' anxiety is also apparent in the character of Home Boy. Armah showed how this feeling of anxiety is mingled with a strong sense of deception with the present reality of Ghana. The madness of some characters, like Sister Maanan, is associated with the dangerous path that anxiety can lead a person to. Drug addiction and suicide are also viewed as fatal consequences of anxiety. The thesis explored the similarities and differences between the Man

and the Teacher. Despite their disgust with the corrupt and rotten situation of Ghana, the Man refuses to break all the ties with the world. He adheres to a ray of hope.

Notes

¹The new born baby feels anxious to face the danger of his separation from the mother, fearing not to satisfy his urgent needs as he was inside (Freud 4292). For further information read Freud's *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety*

²A province of personality that controls the way of the libidinal satisfaction a way that adheres to reality demands (Lapsley and Stey 1).

³It is also called Holy Week. It is the period during which Christians praise and recall the Passion of Christ. He assumed to die for the sake of redeeming humans' sins. He will resurrect and give new life to all who believed. ("Britannica")

⁴It is the "conscience" of the personality, and it can retaliate against the imperfections of the ego by inducing guilt (Lapsley and Stey 6). In other words, the Superego can be considered as the engine of one's ethics that will inhibit any instinctive act through repression, which in turn results in the sense of anxiety.

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ملخص

تعد رواية "الجميلون لم يولدوا بعد" (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) للكاتب الغاني الأصل أبي كوي أرماء، من أكثر الأعمال الأدبية الإفريقية قراءة و مناقشة. تقوم هذه الدراسة على تحليل هذا العمل الأدبي باعتباره توثيقا تاريخيا للظروف الاجتماعية، السياسية و الاقتصادية لدولة غانا المستقلة تحت نظام الرئيس كوامي نكروما. إن الهدف الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة هو تحديد و وصف حالة الإبهام و القلق التي تتملك أبطال رواية أرماء من وجهة نظر وجودية. لقد تم اختيار هذه الرواية للشعور العميق الذي تبعثه في نفس القارئ، و كذا طبيعتها المثيرة للجدل كعمل إفريقي يعود لحقبة ما بعد الاستعمار حيث تلقت قدرا واسعا من الانتقاد و الثناء. يأتي هذا العمل ليستخلص أن الإبهام و الغموض الذي تعيشه الأمة ما بعد الاستقلال هو ما يقودها في نهاية المطاف إلى شعور دائم بالقلق لا يمكن تحمله. كما تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى برهنة رؤية الكاتب المتشائمة و المتفائلة على حد سواء و التي تنعكس من خلال بصيص الأمل الذي يبدو واضحا في نهاية الرواية.

Résumé

Considérée comme l'une des meilleures œuvres littéraires, le roman Africain *Les Beaux Ne Sont Pas Encore Nés* (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) de l'écrivain Ghanéen Ayi Kwei Armah est la plus lue et discutée. Cette étude a pour but d'analyser le roman en tant qu'un document historique des situations sociales, politiques et économiques de l'état indépendant de Ghana sous le régime du président Kwame Nkrumah. L'objectif principal de cette étude est de bien préciser et décrire l'absurde et l'angoisse des personnages du roman du point de vue existentiel. Ce roman a été choisi dû au profond sentiment qui évoque ainsi que sa nature controversée comme étant une œuvre Africaine provenant de l'époque postcoloniale ou elle a subit une large critique et appréciation. Cette analyse conclue que l'absurde qui précède l'indépendance conduit à une situation d'angoisse permanente et insupportable. Cette thèse vise également à démontrer la vision pessimiste et optimiste semblable de l'écrivain qui se reflète au rayon d'espoir bien claire a la fin du roman.