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Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of English

Literature and Morality: Stylistic Effects in Ayi Kwei Armah's
The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born

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Submitted by :
Mrs Belkermi Sameh

Supervisor :
Pr M'hamed Bensemmane

Board of examiners:

Chair: Pr Yamina Deramchia-University of Algiers.
Supervisor: Pr M'hamed Bensemmane-University of Algiers.
Members: Pr Bouteldja Riche-University of Tizi Ouzou.

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Abstract

The Beautiful Ones Are Not yet Born reveals Armah as a moral writer who cares to bring to the fore Ghana's past ethical values, those which can form the basis for a sound nation to be built after independence. Through a scatological imagery which employs the conventional symbol of dirt, the Ghana of the 1960's is described by Armah as a country that has gone astray, and has sunk into corruption. The latter overwhelms the whole Ghanaian society and is basically related to the political system adopted by the ruling factions. Armah's attacks on Nkrumah's socialism are essentially meant to show the misuse of a political system supposed to protect the underprivileged and to stress the need for political morality. Notwithstanding his harsh criticism of Ghanaian politicians and citizens alike, however, Armah insists on the negative impact of the colonial experience on Ghanaians. Colonialism is shown to have destroyed the serenity of a once stable and coherent society, and to have planted the seeds of corruption in it. Armah's modernist treatment of the theme of corruption is certainly loaded with symbolism. In effect throughout the novel runs the leading symbol of dirt and ugliness for corruption, and that of cleanliness and beauty for morality. This is to illustrate Armah's assertion that 'the beautiful ones are not yet born', and Ghana is not likely to be a genuine democracy in the foreseeable future. Even the coup that closes the story fails to reveal such 'beautiful' individuals, a fact that reflects the failure of the change in the structural character of society to end corruption, and which shows an authorial scepticism about the theory of social morality. Nor does the theory of personal morality - the regeneration of the individual - however promise much. Armah, at the end of the novel, posits that even the cleansing of the man in the sea does not turn him into one of the Beautiful Ones. Beauty, according to Armah, belongs to the past and the promising future of Ghana depends on its return to this past. Armah's solutions for the Ghanaian predicament reside in the lost 'union' which used to exist in the past before colonialism. Armah sees that this idea of 'union' - the 'Ibibirman', that is the gathering of all black people - should be implemented. The move towards the realization of a communal society forms Armah's moral message. Evidently, the idea of 'egalitarian society' appears clearly and as early in Armah's writing career, in such an essay as 'African Socialism, Utopian or Scientific?

Dedication

For my beloved parents and affectionate family

For my dear and loving husband.

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Introduction

The appearance of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* [footnote Armah, Ayi Kwei *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. 1969; rpt, London : Heinemann, 1984-hereafter referred to as *The Beautiful Ones*. Further page references to the novel will be indicated in the text between parentheses] in 1969 brought to the literary scene one of the most important writers of Africa. Born in Ghana at Takoradi in 1939, Ayi Kwei Armah received his education at Achimota School. In 1959, he secured a scholarship which enabled him to carry on his studies in America at Groton School and Harvard University. Later, he occupied various positions as translator, scriptwriter and English teacher. The experiences and the readings which he made in parallel undoubtedly formed his aesthetic and philosophical beliefs, and in effect fostered his literary inclinations.

Armah also went through the traumas of political unrest and social disintegration at home and was somehow brought to believe in the active role of the African writer as an agent of social change. Like many of his contemporaries he asserted the responsibility of the elite to enlighten their people and raise their consciousness. He joined such writers as James Ngugi and Wole Soyinka in the search for 'alternative societies to replace the current depraved ones to be found everywhere on the continent' [footnote Jones, Eldred Durosimi. ed. *Preface to African Literature Today*, n= 13 , 1983, px.].

Armah's belief in the moral responsibility of the writer towards his society was previously voiced by many other literary figures as prominent as Sir Philip Sidney, William Blake, Dr Johnson, ... etc. They all emphasize the didactic element in literature and point to the effectiveness and relevance of the writer in society. Sir Philip Sidney, for instance, goes to accentuate the specifically moral use of literary art and considers the writer to function both as a moral philosopher and a historian [footnote. Cf. Egudu, Romanus. N. 'Five Nigerian Novels and Public Morality'. in Okafor. Dubem ed. *Meditations on African Literature* . London : Greenwood Press, 2001 p 56.]. The writer, therefore, does not only play a didactic role but an ethical one. 'African writers in general ' observes the late professor Kola Ogunbesan 'do not believe that they should abdicate their ethical role' [footnote. Idem.] and Armah was such a writer.

It is quite important to stress, at this juncture, the mixed critical appraisals that Armah has been subjected to ever since the publication of *The Beautiful Ones*, which have made him become such a controversial literary figure. The mixed appreciation of Armah's writing arises out of the polemical and antagonistic nature of his prose, tending towards a fierce

criticism of his society in a post-colonial context.

A persistent appraisal of Armah has been to consider him as the archetypal writer of disillusion. The term was coined by Arthur Ravenscroft[footnote. **See Ravenscroft, Arthur. 'African Literature. Novels of Disillusion' in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 6, 1969 pp 120-137.]**, who in 1969 included him in his typology of writers who expressed disenchantment regarding the post - colonial state of affairs in new African states. Armah's approach to the fundamental issues of Africa generates a demonic vision, where chaos and anarchy prevail, where morality is assaulted by such counter- values as corruption and individualism.

This is particularly the case for *The Beautiful Ones*, Armah's first novel, on which this research shall focus. In this novel, Armah tried to highlight the harsh experience that post- independence Ghana was enduring, in an attempt to draw the reader's attention to what seemed to be the fate of newly independent African countries. The picture thus provided is that of a gloomy Ghana deteriorating under the hands of new exploiters, this time the Ghanaians themselves, those who took charge of the government.

Despite the fact that it discloses its author's acknowledged literary talent, *The Beautiful Ones*, has often been treated with critical contempt, and at times dismissed altogether:some of his African critics [footnote.

Chinua Achebe believes that Armah has wasted his talent in vain. See Achebe, Chinua. 'Africa and her writers'. *Morning Yet on Creation Day*. London : Heinemann, 1975 p 26.] have described it as deviating from

'mainstream' modern African literature because it does not reflect its author's recognition of a viable moral and cultural frame of reference for Africa. It does on the other hand contain unequivocal criticism of the Ghanaian leaders and people. Armah's iconoclastic attitude towards the authority appears in the disrespect which his imagery reflects towards a political group which in reality seems to have dashed the hopes of the population despite the initial reverence it earned in securing political independence. As a result, a number of his critics has expressed reservations towards his work. They generally argue forcefully that he is unwilling to speak in defence of the African culture and people.

Other critics of Armah in fact, including his fellow- Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo, are mainly shocked by the scatological nature of the novel's imagery . Not infrequently they choose to examine *The Beautiful Ones* from the canons of social realism. In other words, they try to assess the extent to which the novel's imagery is a transposition of a social Ghanaian reality. Such an approach certainly suggests that Armah is making the situation of Ghana worse than it is because after all the country is not as dirty and filthy as Armah depicts it ` one has encountered similar and even worse physical decay in other parts of the world'[footnote.

Reported by Riche. Bouteldja, *The Signifying Ananse and the Quest for literary Tradition in Ayi Kwei Armah's Fiction* , Doctoral Dissertation, University of Algiers,1998 p28.]. Our intention is to focus on the means used by Armah to render the reality of which he has first hand information, a reality he experiences as a Ghanaian. Obviously this reality is rendered in harsh terms, as said earlier.

In point of fact, *The Beautiful Ones* is pervaded by images of filth, rot and decay from start to finish. Dirt and putrefaction, as signs of corruption are ubiquitous in the world Armah is portraying. They are presented in such an offensive language as to elicit shock and distress from the reader's part. Instances of such language can be found in the following passage describing the conductor's delight with the ill- smelling odour of the cedi note:

Then a vague but persistent odor forced itself on him and he rolled the cedi up and deliberately, deeply smelled it (...) But the smell was not his mistake. Fascinated, he breathed it slowly into his lungs. It was a most unexpected smell for something so new to have: it was a very old smell, very strong, and so very rotten that the stench itself of it came with a curious, satisfying pleasure. (p 3).

While Armah's detractors stress the inadequacy of the novel's scatological imagery in relation to the Ghanaian reality, the proposed work will attempt to get an insight into the relationship between literature and morality in Armah. Our preoccupation is thus to see to what extent the writer is using his art in relation to his social, political and above all his moral preoccupations. In particular I would attempt to elucidate the apparent contradiction between a 'pejorist' rendition of society and the writer's deep concern and identification with the people's need for justice and democracy.

We can consider B.R. Mulik's position, that 'morality, being one of the principal issues in life, belongs to the very fibre and texture of all literature. It cannot be otherwise, for life is the subject-matter of literature' [footnote. **Mulik, B.R. *Literary Criticism : Its Principles and History* New Delhi : S Lhand, 1969 p34**]. This seems to follow up Plato's conception of art as eminently moral and reflecting beauty. But more prescriptively, Plato condemns every story which presents ugly or immoral events, even if what it presents is life-like. He argues: 'the first thing will be to establish a censorship of the writers of fiction and let the censors receive any tale of fiction which is good and reject the bad' [footnote. **Selden, Raman. ed. *The Theory of Criticism : From Plato to the present*, London : Longman, 1996 p 476.**].

Plato's conception of literature in fact seems to be utopian, since it seems unrealistic to create a world of fiction in which only virtue is represented. Plato's obliteration of vice in human nature displays a desire to oversimplify, and even falsify facts [footnote. **Samuel Johnson also shares Plato's condemnation of stories with immoral or ugly events, because he believes that the power of the example 'is so great as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will' and for this reason 'care ought to be taken that, when the choice is unrestrained, the best examples only should be exhibited'. Johnson, Samuel, *Rambler*, n=4, works, 12 vols (London, 1796) IV p 23, in *Ibid*, p 482.**]. To come to a more contemporary view in respect of fiction, one can share Wayne.C Booth's conviction that:

Most novelists today- at least those writing in English- feel an inseparable connection between art and morality, quite apart from what it is popular to say about morality, their artistic vision consists in part, of a judgement on what they see, and they would ask us to share that judgement as part of the vision. [footnote. **C.Booth, Wayne. *The Rhetoric of Fiction* Great Britain} : Peregrine Books, 1987 p 385.**].

The main concern of the following analysis then is to study the relation between the intended morality and the effectiveness of the technical strategies that Armah uses to that effect.

It is a fact, to quote A.S. Gakwandi in reference to Armah's novel, that 'the senses of the reader are vigorously assaulted to the point of being numbed by the persistent imagery of decay, putrefaction and death' [footnote. **Gakwandi, Shatto Arthur. *The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa*. London : Heinemann, 1977 p 87.**]. Indeed, representations of decay

and waste have provoked aversion in some readers and caused their failure to endorse the very language that is supposed to sustain the authorial critical voice, even if on the other hand they do not refute the writer's seriousness and sincerity.

Some critics would argue that Armah deliberately aims to shock his audience with certainly some didactic intentions, in between the lines, where physical degradation is associated with depravity. Emmanuel Ngara remarks that ,`Armah gives words their full force, and he chooses that word and phrase which brings out the desired horrific effect'[footnote.

Ngara, Emmanuel. *Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel*. London : Heinemann, 1982 p 132.].

We are now to examine the object of Armah's criticism. Clearly, the leaders are made responsible. In all likelihood, Armah `succeeds' in provoking a certain feeling of horror and disgust regarding the evil practices of those new African leaders, and the anomy infiltrating the whole society. As Fanon observes `spoilt children of yesterday's colonialism and of today 's national governments, (...) organize the loot of whatever national resources exist'[footnote. **Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1980 p 37.]**. Nkrumah, as a concrete example of the `osagyefo', the redeemer, taken by the nationalist fervour, strove to get his country free and independent. Armah shows us how the `osagyefo' took a strayed direction from the progressive goals which he had set for himself and his people. Nkrumah, indeed, urged the resort to `consciencism' as a philosophy which gives a theoretical basis for a new ideology to govern Africa, emerging from the combined presence of traditional Africa, Islamic Africa, and Eurochristian Africa, and maintaining the original humanist and egalitarian principles of Africa. However, it is through his own example that Nkrumah comes to provide a conclusion, not about the failure of a socialist ideology but about the human failure to be faithful to such an ideology. A whole profit- making system then began to operate as soon as the ex - nationalists became self-seeking money-makers who indulged in shady dealings and dishonest actions, as the man who casts a critical look at his society realizes. Fanon grants that, if the native bourgeoisie takes over power, the new state, in spite of its formal sovereignty, remains in the hands of the imperialists[footnote.**Ibid, p 10]**, and this seems to be the case of Ghana.

Evidently, Armah is highly reproachful of the evils of neo-colonialism in *The Beautiful Ones*. The African bourgeois class became the target of his caustic and disparaging remarks. Far from coded criticism, the upshot was an unequivocal condemnation of its uppish and arrogant character. Not providing a `blueprint' for good governance, nor calling for a demolition of the existing structures, this attitude though obscure at this level, is quite evident in Armah's subsequent works. The neo-colonial situation thus with all the social ills it brings (greed, selfishness, opportunism, complacency, etc,) nurtures the growing resentment in the soul of every ``true'' African. Undoubtedly, Armah is one of those African intellectuals who choose to use the power of the word to render such a squalid situation. But then, what patterns of imagery, what rhetoric does Armah opt for in his first novel, even if, as said earlier, the reading of his pessimistic representation of post- independence Ghana can only inspire despondency? And how does he fuse the ethic and the aesthetic components ?

To answer these questions and others, Armah can be placed among those writers who strive for the realization of social progress and human welfare. But our reading of this book can inevitably privilege the presence of uncertain aesthetic- moral representations in allegorical form at the expense of an articulate social message. The lack of clarity in purpose is perhaps the objection that scholars have repeatedly formulated in respect of

Armah, consistent with this socio-cultural position that the literary scholarship has attempted to use as vantage point for analysis (Achebe, Lindfors, etc.,).

Even the most sympathetic analysts of Armah find discomfort in making out a definite picture of the nationalistic and communalistic vision underpinned by his fiction, in view of the prevalent metaphor of death and putrefaction and derision which drives the narrative of *The Beautiful Ones*. The very title of the novel is sybilline and leaves open the discussion as to what the 'beautiful ones' should look like in the future ?

For our part, if one follows a liberal humanist approach coupled with a functional position that art should be at the service of society, one can indeed study Armah's language and style in relation to his philosophical, social, political and moral bearings and relate them to his modernist representation of society. If *The Beautiful Ones* is treated as a kind of 'illegitimate child' of mainstream African literature, we concur with David Lodge that 'Modern fiction (...) is experimental or innovatory in form, exhibiting marked deviations from existing modes of discourse, literary and non-literary' [footnote. Lodge, David. 'The Language of Modernist Fiction : Metaphor and Metonymy' in Bradbury. Malcolm and Mc Farlane. James (eds) *Modernism : A Guide to European literature 1890-1930*. 1976; rpt. London : Penguin Books, 1991 p 481.].

There is undeniably a didactic purpose leading Armah to use recurrent formulations where rottenness, filth and putrefaction qualify the landscape and depraved figures he portrays, and which presumably comes in line with his modernist perception of literary composition. Accordingly, the present work will attempt to examine the following hypothesis: there are political reasons where morality is a paramount issue, that motivate Armah's attacks on the sham socialism promised by Nkrumah, and the allegorical modernist treatment is adopted as the medium conveying the disillusionment of a once idealistic young intellectual about the future of his country. In this analysis, we shall examine how Armah attempts to reconcile modernism and allegory with an intention which can only reflect an acute consciousness about living in a 'sick' society, and which denotes Armah's nationalist and socialist ideals that gave way to his severe judgement of Ghanaian society and rulers.

For this purpose, the present research is divided into three chapters. The first chapter attempts to examine the extent to which the colonial experience has affected the issues dealt with. What are the elements of colonialism which, in the manner Armah depicts his society, have 'survived' in the present time ? What patterns of societal and individual attitudes can one identify in Armah's depictions? We are going to observe, thus, how colonialism with its ineluctable manichean logic drew the line of cleavage between the Western and the native. Because 'the native is (...) subjected to a constant barrage of suggestions that Western culture is all' [footnote. Ngugi, wa thiong'o. *Homecoming : Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics*. London : Heinemann Educational Books, 1972 p 55.], he is inevitably led to believe in his own inferiority and self-denigration. Blinded by the gleam of the 'new', such characters as : Koomson, Estella, ... in *The Beautiful Ones* change their ways and manners to those of the Westerners, leaving behind their ancestral customs, thus accepting a dissolution of personality. Bitterly ashamed of their own culture, they seek refuge in their master's 'warm breast', a sham warmth though for Armah is averse to any form of slavish imitation. Consequently, civilisation for them is synonymous with Westernization, the proponents of which are the many Africans portrayed by Armah.

The role of the educational institutions to spread such sentiments is of

paramount importance, that is why it is given some space in this chapter. Education, as one of the colonial strategies of brainwashing guarantees a durable duplicity of Africa. A new generation of 'AfrEnglish' characters, then, grows up proud and prosperous, yet utterly suspicious of its African background. As Ngugi points out 'the colonial system (...) produced the kind of education which nurtured subservience, self-hatred, and mutual suspicion' [footnote. Ibid, p 14.]. The result is the creation of a 'group of people becoming alienated from the masses'. This chapter will try to investigate how Armah presents Europe's hegemony which tried to maximize the number of its stooges (Koomson, for instance) by creating an 'African elite' that would perpetuate the hierarchy inherent in the colonial system. This very purpose has been posited by Jean-Paul Sartre in his preface to Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth* [footnote. Fanon, Frantz. op cit.].

A few uneasy consciences, however, among these educated colossi refused to be the Trojan horse through which the colonial forces aim to ruin African civilisation from within, a tendency which survived in the neo-colonial situation, and to which such characters as the man and Teacher in *The Beautiful Ones* keep distant from. Some members of the intellectual elite, therefore, thwarted the imperialist objective in an attempt to look for their own needs and interests, as soon as they started to notice the inconsistency of the colonial methods. Only then could they shout 'You are making us into monstrosities, your humanism claims we are at one with the rest of humanity but your racist methods set us apart' [footnote. Fanon, Frantz. op cit, p8]. Only then could the first seeds of nationalism sprout under such key-nationalist figures [footnote.].

See Oliver, Roland and Atmore. Anthony, *Africa Since 1800. Great Britain : Cambridge University Press, 1996 p 160.* as : J. E. Casely Hayford; Joe de Graft Johnson, and Kwame Nkrumah who marked the Ghanaian political arena with his nationalist philosophy which he termed 'consciencism'. According to Nkrumah, an intellectual revolution was needed to give rise to a socialist ideology which promotes social revolution, that is to say positive action seeking social justice through the destruction of oligarchic oppression of colonialism or that of neo-colonialism in which the leaders come to oppress the very people who put them in power. For such an appeal, Nkrumah was regarded as the one nationalist example of men who at last voiced the African cause with dignity.

With the publication of *Consciencism* (1964), the African revolutionaries resorted to arms. In this book Nkrumah stresses the importance of education as an instrument of national emancipation. Still, he does not ignore that it is a double-edged weapon through which colonial administration tries to sustain an ideology of alienation towards Africans. He also shows how philosophy tries to provide an explanation of the world, and how such an explanation may contribute to the process of decolonization, thus working as an instrument of social justice, an instrument of ideology. Nkrumah cites such philosophers as Plato and Aristotle who were full of ideas for the regeneration of society, still he reproaches them their conception of society in static terms by providing perfect forms of society. What is perfect, indeed, cannot change for the better. Nkrumah's philosophy of consciencism also condemns capitalism which is a domestic form of colonialism, since it encourages the exploitation of man by man. He, therefore, ends with the conclusion that capitalism is unjust, and offers socialism as the best alternative which affords an ever-increasing satisfaction for the material and spiritual needs of the greatest number. Nevertheless, Nkrumah's patriotic principles did not last long, because as soon as he took power he withdrew them to embody at last the example he had long assailed, the neo-colonialist.

The second chapter, will dwell on Armah's modernist strategies which mostly reflect the domestic anomy he resents. Armah's verbal violence reflects his

awareness of post-colonial upheavals. Unlike other African writers who chose to point out their societies' weaknesses by applying mild and corrective criticism, Armah explicitly directs his attacks at the African leaders and society at large. He trenchantly reviles every Ghanaian for his disloyalty to the country, by constantly referring to his squalid character. Likewise a native in colonial times, therefore, Armah opts for the violent solution. As Fanon remarks : 'In the native's eagerness, the fact that he openly brandishes the threat of violence proves that he is conscious of the unusual character of the contemporary situation and that he means to profit by it '[footnote. Fanon. Frantz, op cit, p58.]. While the native utilizes the power of guns, however, the modern writer uses that of words.

The novel's imagery of waste functions as a commentary on contemporary Ghana. It reflects an unequivocal condemnation of the people and their leaders, for failing to keep the promise of building a democratic and progressive society after independence. In response to Aidoo's realistic treatment of this imagery, however, we believe with Ezra Pound, that an image should not be regarded as a pictorial representation but as 'that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time ' [footnote. In Wellek, Rene and Warren. Austin *Theory of literature : A Seminal Study of the Nature and Function of Literature in All Contexts* 1949; rpt Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1985 p187.]. Pound stresses the visual image as a sensation or a perception, but also considers it to 'stand for ' something invisible, something 'inner'.

Armah also could not eschew the use of symbolism in his novel. The symbol of dirt and rottenness functions through the entire novel as a modernist device representing moral bankruptcy. It confirms the fact that 'modern fiction is generally regarded as having a symbolist bias and as being in reaction against traditional realism' [footnote. Bradbury, Malcolm and Mc Farlane .James. (eds), *Modernism : A guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, op cit, p 484.]. Unable to recognize the modernist aspect of Armah's style, such critics as Aidoo tend to display reservations about Armah's works.

Satire is another device used by Armah to expose evil practices in Ghanaian society. Armah's description of Koomson's escape through the Latrine hole in the man's house is very evocative indeed. It indicates the fragility of the Western inherited values in the face of danger, fear and hopelessness. Armah's ironical and sardonic tone, in fact, demonstrates the failure of Ghana's Socialist Party Men to rise to their responsibility. Absolutely, a statement like 'the week was filled with so much killing work. Speeches to prepare '(p 90) is not meant to venerate the Ghanaian politicians and praise their unfailing endeavours to rescue the nation. On the contrary, it tends to mock their pretence to responsibility and duty. '[I]rony ' argued Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short 'may be defined as a double significance which arises from the contrast in values associated with two different points of view' [footnote. Leech, Geoffrey N, Short. Michael H. *Style in Fiction : A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* New York : Longman , 1981 p 278.]. Armah's resort to irony here highlights the existence of two oppositional value- systems; one translating Armah's own judgement on Ghana's socialist party Men whose ineffectual character disgusts him; the other reflecting what these Socialist Party Men pretend to endure for the sake of the people. The amusing character of irony, therefore, tends to lose its effect only to be replaced by a bitterness that condemns the abnormality of reality.

The characterization, in parallel, is another prominent element in Armah's narrative to reinforce his moral preoccupations. The man and the teacher, for instance, are presented as moral characters, a morality yet which is constantly put in jeopardy in view of the passive role played by both men. The man could have no influence on his wife to protect her from a

horrifyingly 'Gilded Age'. The teacher refuses to get out of his cave. The man's wife, however, who at the beginning pursues her mundane preoccupations, comes to acknowledge, at the end, her husband's strength despite her previous 'chichidodo' taunts; the chichidodo being a bird that hates excrement, but feeds on maggots that best grow inside the lavatories. *The Beautiful Ones*, thus, points to people's moral flaws and failures, and it equally brings into relief the apparent ineffectualness of intellectuals.

The third chapter, will show how Armah draws the reader's attention to the moral conclusions which he has in mind about his country. Armah, indeed, is considered by many scholars as a deeply moral writer. For instance, R.Fraser writes 'we can (...) see that he is concerned fundamentally with the ethical quality of the nation's life'[footnote. Fraser, Robert. *The Novel of Ayi Kwei Armah : A Study in Polemical Fiction*. London : Heinemann, 1980 p2.]. {The Beautiful Ones}, therefore, with its critical acuity is an attempt at exposing the neo-colonial reality of African countries. It well informs the reader of the sourness of Ghanaian independence. The physical rottenness of the environment tends to reflect the more moral corruption of the body-politic. There is thus a constant attempt from the author 'to make physical decay symbolize or correspond to spiritual degeneration'[footnote. Aidoo, Ama Ata. 'No saviours' in Killam. G.D. ed. *African Writers on African writing*. London : Heinemann, 1973 p15.].

Armah's recourse to grotesque realism, in fact, expresses his will to degrade, debase and uncrown the African leaders. This attitude is shared by many other African writers such as Chinua Achebe *A Man of the People*, Gabriel Okara *The Voice*, Kofi Awoonor *This Earth My Brother...* and yet Armah is made somewhat the 'maverick' of the group, as if no clear regenerative picture emerges from this novel. So, this chapter will highlight the correspondence between power and corruption, power and rottenness. In other terms, how Armah deliberately chooses to use a carnivalized literary form to express the 'coarse' corruption of Ghana, which extends beyond the political level to include the social one. Koomson's escape through the latrine derives much from the carnivalesque tradition.

The socialist Party Man compelled to go through the latrine head first corresponds with the carnivalesque inversion of high and low parts of the body. According to Bakhtin, the division of body parts into one privileging 'high' segment and one 'low' segment represent[s] the oppression of marginal social groups by dominant ones in class society '[footnote. Booker, M. Keith. *The African Novel in English*. Oxford : Heinemann, 1998 p 111.]. What Armah seems to do is to subvert this very social hierarchy by bringing the 'high' segments down. In his attempt to debase and degrade Ghanaian politicians, Armah also draws upon the 'abuse' tradition which has roots in African oral culture and which tends to satirize people's flaws and defects to end up with a judgement. Booker Writes:

The abuse tradition often focuses on physical attributes of an opponent to call attention to intellectual or moral shortcomings. One thinks here of Armah's description of Koomson's obesity, flatulence, and body odor as signs of the minister's political corruption and moral decay[footnote. *Ibid*, p 112.]

One does also remember Armah's description of Amankwa's physical features, which immediately suggests the corrupt nature of the timber contractor even before he starts his discussion with the man. Amankwa is reduced to a 'belly' with a 'wolf mouth'; a portrayal which insinuates his desire to 'eat' his share of the national cake. Armah exposes the contribution of the whole society to the betrayal of the country, and shows how Africans are adding to the seriousness of the situation by indulging in the process of corruption,

by endorsing the tenets of vapid materialism.

Subsequently, the research will examine the element of despair in Armah's novel, which is according to Eldred Jones 'the dominating mood of the novel ' **[footnote. See Jones, D. Eldred (ed) *African Literature Today* n=03, 1982 p55.]**, a point of view which we share. To be sure, the pessimistic vision in *The Beautiful Ones* does not escape the reader's scrutiny, and could lead to an interpretation of a text where Ghana appears as T.S.Eliot's 'waste land'. The elements of despair are many : the decadent environment, Kofi Billy's death, Maanan's madness, the teacher's disbelief in any possible rebirth, in 'tomorrow'. All these factors, indeed, intensify the sense of disapproval with which Armah's novel was received.

The legitimate questions that can possibly be posed are why Armah seems to debase his country ? It is a prophetic voice against 'sinners' whose salvation would be with drastic reformation to be carried out by them ? Or is it simply a weary and despondent voice expressing disillusionment, as Arthur Ravenscroft has shown **[footnote. See A, Ravenscroft, 'African Literature. Novels of Disillusion' in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 6, 1969, pp120-137.]**?. Presumably, the criticism levelled against Armah bears justification, if only for the blurred and at times contradictory sets of representations in his novel. What constitutes a firm set of moral references in this novel ? who are the reliable characters ? Are the man and the teacher genuine examples when they themselves also consider they are human beings, with their moral weaknesses? Is the corrupt attitude of Koomson and other members of the ruling bourgeoisie to be excused, or condoned, when the high ideal at national level would be to set up both a communalistic and progressive ruling system, along the lines of Fanon's philosophy ?

As a matter of fact, Armah seems to say that once independence is achieved, the salient features of the 'new' Africa is extreme falsity and disrespect for the community. Instead of encouraging a new kind of nationalism which guarantees the development of the nation, African leaders, for Armah, are betraying their ideals and just paving the way for their greed and lust. Patriotism, Armah seems to say, should remain a driving force in nation-building once the colonial enemy has been defeated. An anti 'neo-colonial ' strategy should rather develop in order to ensure the nation's prosperity. Jomo Kenyatta's speech at Kenya's republic celebrations in 1963 is very suggestive here, and could summarize Armah's aspiration for his country and people :

It is not enough to have simply an image in our minds, we cannot be satisfied just with a design or take refuge in dreams... from all citizens of Kenya we need the vigour of practical initiative, the fire of a new patriotism, to turn image into reality **[footnote. Kenyatta, Jomo. *Suffering without Bitterness : The Founding of the Kenya Nation*. 1968; rpt. Nairobi : East African Publishing House, 1973 p 256.]**

whether the image has turned into reality or not, however, this cannot be ensured, for Kenyatta himself came under attack for 'selling' Kenya out to the imperialists.

The purpose of this research is not only to study the procedures and modes of representation of a writer's quarrel with his society and universe, but what narrative and descriptive elements can be traced in *The Beautiful Ones*, and for comparative purposes, in other novels by him, to trace signs of a possible reconciliation, a purging of anger and discontent through elements of redemption and regeneration. We will examine those aesthetic elements which, for the writer represents a new age of virtue, morality and communal well-being sought after, and see how notwithstanding the general atmosphere of despair, a better future for Ghana is envisaged

through an imagery of purification and cleansing. A number of elements (flowers, sea, changes in attitudes) are shown to have redeeming effects, which can inhibit negative forces from harming the nation's peace and prosperity. The very inscription at the back of the bus : 'The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born' may suggest that one day the 'Beautiful' Ones might be born. By not offering a praxis for a revolutionary change in the present situation, however, Armah could be seen to suggest that time is not yet ripe during the writing of *The Beautiful Ones*, which is not the case , it seems, with more recent novels by him, *The Healers* in particular.

It is hoped that this study will lead to a hermeneutical narrowing of the gap between the expressed disenchantment, through a language of abuse, whose effectiveness has been decried by critics, and the desired moral message that Armah wishes to convey to his compatriots.

Chapter I: Patterns of Representation of Colonial and Post-Colonial Realities}

African literary works are closely related to African realities. They tend to diagnose the African predicament, investigate its causes, comment upon its consequences and sometimes provide a vision and a praxis. Hugh Webb's affirmation that 'modern African literature responds to its historical context'[footnote. Webb, Hugh. *Passionate Spaces : African literature and the*

Post-colonial Context, Western Australia : Postcolonial Press, Unit 3, 1991, p3], can be applicable to Ayi Kwei Armah. In the writer we perceive the

reflection of bitterness and discomfort, and rarely a eulogy of past or present achievements. And yet Ayi Kwei Armah's intention is to defend the cause of Africa, and of his country in particular. His didactic approach is to draw attention to the ills of the nation, and his intention is to present an unruly society where leaders and citizens alike are acting contrary to the interest of their nation Ghana. Leonard Barnes writes about that 'capacity for corruption and graft of all sorts in all social strata including the highest (indeed especially in the highest)'[footnote.

Barnes, Leonard. *African Renaissance*, London : Victor Gollanez, 1969 , p10]. The subjects of Armah's scorn, therefore, collectively contribute to something approaching a general social critique that is far more complex and wide-ranging than an attack on the politicians alone. Various behavioural patterns, rather odd relics of the colonial period, are added to a list of what are shown to be abnormal responses to independence. The new dialectics of post- independence Ghana work as a parodic counterpart to the socialist ideals advocated by president Kwame Nkrumah. Teacher in *The Beautiful Ones* painfully informs the man : 'I saw men tear down the veils behind which the truth had been hidden. But then the same men, when they have power in their hands at last, began to find the veils useful'(p 92).

The Beautiful Ones thus traces the path from ideals to the reality that would appear to negate them, presenting what is essentially a liberal humanist view of a world gone wrong. It is an angry literary protest on behalf of those who found themselves outside the privileged areas of prosperity and good life. Actually, Armah elaborately presents the conflict between the 'haves' and the 'have nots', mainly through the juxtaposition of the man's and Koomson's lives. Conspicuously, Armah's sympathies lie with the lower elements of society, while his disdain is for the Ghanaian bourgeoisie. Armah's scathing critique of the Ghanaian bourgeoisie class, in fact, echoes Frantz Fanon's conclusions about the African bourgeoisie which is a mere replica of its European counterparts. To be sure, Fanon greatly influenced Armah's political vision and revolutionary sentiments. He is 'the one theorist', writes Armah, 'who has worked out consistent formulations concerning... a revolutionary restructuring of African society'[footnote.

Armah, Ayi Kwei. 'African Socialism : Utopian or Scientific?', *Présence Africaine* (Paris), n=64 (1967) p 29.]

Derek Wright purports that Armah's enemy in his first two novels are the Ghanaians who 'mindlessly' or 'cynically' adopt the worst elements of the White world and who embrace alien values that destroy their culture[footnote. **C.f. Wright, Derek. *Ayi Kwei Armah's Fiction; The Sources of His Fiction*, London : Hans Zell, 1989 pp 189-190.**]. Armah, indeed, castigates The Ghanaians for their failure to realize the potential represented by independence. However, if he abhors the Ghanaians, it is to caution them against the real 'enemy' who always remain the White world. African writers such as the Nigerian Chinua Achebe and the Kenyan Ngugi Wa Thiong'o share with Armah this feeling of disappointment and bitterness in relation to the neo-colonial realities of African countries. However, they disagree over the origin of the African predicament. According to Achebe, 'it is very much a case of personal failing, partly of ordinary people, but particularly at the level of the black leadership'[footnote. **Williams, Patrick. 'West African Writing' in Msiska, Mpalive-Handson, Hyland Paul. (eds) {Writing and Africa}, (New York, Addison Wesley -Longman , 1997) p 35.**]. Ngugi, however, believes that the predicament goes beyond the personal level to the larger economic one. For Ngugi, what really marred the hopes of independence is 'the economic imperialism of the West and the continued subservience of African nations in their neo-colonial roles (though aided and abetted, it must be said, by a corrupt black bourgeoisie)'[footnote. **Ibid, p 36.**]. If Armah, however, is 'concerned with the salvation of the people in toto, the reformation of the public will, rather than the redemption of the private soul or mind'[footnote. **Fraser, Robert. {The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah : A Study in Polemical Fiction} ,op cit, 1980 p xii.**], if he agrees with Achebe on the necessity of moral enlightenment for both the leader and the led, he certainly does not disagree with Ngugi on the destructive power of all forms of Western exploitation : cultural imperialism, economic imperialism,... etc. And he insists 'If we Africans were to rise from the abyss of exploitation and contempt we would be obliged to do so against murderous opposition from the West'[footnote. **Armah, Ayi Kwei. 'One Writer's Education' quoted by B. Lindfors in {African Textualities : Texts, Pretexts and Contexts of African Literature}, Trenton, N.J : Africa World Press, 1997 p 81.**]. The trouble with 'Africa'', according to Armah, started as early as the Western exploitation of African countries under the guise of 'civilising mission ' set in motion, only to be aggravated later by Africans themselves who embraced the Western values and believed in their superiority over the masses.

Despite his fierce condemnation of Africans, therefore, the nature of the prevalent anomaly, Armah stresses, is alien to the African people. It is the outcome of years of colonial domination which led the roots of neo-colonialism in Africa. In the sixth chapter of {The Beautiful Ones}, Teacher bitterly recalls the period which witnessed the beginning of the blacks suffering under the white man's domination 'the white men's gleaming bungalows were so far away, so unreachably far that people did not even think of them in their suffering'(p66). In his subsequent works, the cause of the African predicament is much more definite. In {Two Thousand seasons} the narrator speculates : 'But how profoundly the conquest had changed us. How far it had driven us from our self, how much far it had pushed us from our way, the way'[footnote. **Armah, Ayi Kwei. {Two Thousand Seasons}. 1973; rpt. London : Heinemann, 1979, p31.**].

In his attempt to define the source of public immorality in society, Egudu. Romanus N states two main forces : the social pressure and the political power. These two forces, in turn, stem either from the colonial experience or the traditional African experience. He believes that modern values are inherited from the colonial intrusion and asserts that 'if the white men had never set up their partisan political machinery in black society, the belief

that politics is a kill-and-eat affair might not have been established or nurtured in that society '[footnote.Egudu, Romanus N. 'Five Nigerian Novels and Public Morality ' in Okafor. Dubem(ed) {Meditations on African Literature} , op cit, p 65.]. At the same time, however, Egudu considers the traditional system to be one further origin of public immorality. He observes, for instance, that 'the expectation that one should cater to all the members of one's extended family is, of course, of traditional origin'[footnote.Idem.]. If Armah, however, agrees with Egudu about the negative influence of the colonial experience on Africa in general and on Ghana in particular, he certainly does not seem to lay the least blame on the traditional African experience. The latter for Armah rather represents the clue for the Ghanaian turmoil and disorder. In addition, the expectation of one's responsibility towards his family or even his extended family do not seem to generate corruption only after the encroachment of the colonial materialist spirit on the African society. The traditional system, indeed, censures every corrupt behaviour and attitude, and just as put by Armah himself 'how easy, how just, the way '[footnote. Armah, Ayi Kwei. {Two Thousand Seasons} , op cit, p 17.]

Modern Ghana is thus depicted to embrace the colonial legacies which merely accelerated the speed of its people's destruction. Armah's {The Beautiful Ones} 'laments centuries of African suffering and cultural obliteration ... [and] suggest[s] Armah's total disillusion with independent Africa'[footnote. Ousby, Ian. {The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English}, UK : Cambridge University Press, 1999 p 33.], and the turn from disenchantment to expressions of anger and outrage. However, most of Armah's critics[footnote. Such as : Margaret Folarin, Henry Chakava, Chinua Achebe, Charles Nnolim, James Booth, Bernth Lindfors, Ben Obumsclu.] disapproved of his solemn tone and excessive representation of the world and considered him as 'a startling writer, a fearless and unpredictable enfant terrible at drastic odds with the literary establishment'[footnote. Fraser, Robert. {The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah : A study in polemical Fiction}, op cit, p ix.]. Armah seems to withdraw from the community to act as an eyewitness upon the calamitous situation of his country to which he erupts in a language of abuse. He gave a new appraisal of the African realities and his judgement came as a thunderbolt to many Africans. At a time when such writers as Achebe were toiling to restore African 'dignity' and 'self respect', Armah could but appear as an idiosyncratic iconoclast. His novel, writes Dathorne, 'is individualised in style and language, radical in thought, and frightening in its frank and fearless realism'[footnote. Dathorne, O.R. {African Literature in the Twentieth Century}, London : Heinemann, 1982 p105.]. If Armah, however, appears as a 'sulphite', it is because he refuses to react bromidically to the very bleak neo-colonial reality. In an article he entitles 'Bromides and Sulphites', Gelett Burgess writes :

The Bromide does his thinking by syndicate. He follows the main traveled roads, he goes with the crowd. In a word, they all think and talk alike ... The Sulphite, from his very nature, must continually surprise you by an unexpected course of action ... you never know what he will say or do ... he will not bore you, but he may shock you. You find yourself watching him to see what is coming next, and it may be a subtle jest, a paradox, or an atrocious violation of etiquette [footnote.

Burgess, Gelett. 'Bromides and Sulphites' in K.L. Knickerbocker, H. Willard Reninger, {Interpreting Literature} New York : Henry Holt and company, 1955. pp747-748.]

Absolutely, the sulphite can be said to generate this feeling the Russian formalists would call : the defamiliarization effect. However, while the Russian formalists focus on the foregrounding of language against the background of 'automatized' components so as to call attention to itself, Armah's language is foregrounded to renew the means of expression so as to reinforce and deepen the theme of {The Beautiful Ones}.

Because of his deliberate aim to shock the reader, Armah is often considered as a revolutionary writer. Ngara asserts that Armah succeeded to provoke the readers' sensibilities, through his appropriate choice of words[footnote.

See Ngara, Emmanuel. {Stylistic Criticism and the African

novel}, op cit, p132.], a fact which elucidates his sharp critique of post-independence corruption mainly represented by the bourgeois class exploiting the masses.

Armah's first novel, which provides us with\ a grotesquely surrealistic portrait of the neo-colonial situation, opens with the description of a brittle bus, hardly fit to carry on its journey. The state of the bus reveals Armah's attempt to introduce the more fragile and embarrassing situation of post- independence Ghana in which uncertainty and confusion predominate :`\ The light from the bus moved uncertainly down\ \ the road ... Its confused\ rattle had given place\ \ to an endless spastic shudder ... as if its pieces\ were held together by too much rust ever to fall\ \ completely apart'(p1). Armah then seems to take the reader to a disheartening journey and to prepare him from the start to expect the atmosphere of pessimism which overwhelms the novel.

The bus driver is the first character the reader encounters. He is the epitome of carelessness and impropriety (he is shown to spit, to urinate, to insult people, to enjoy the rotten smell of a cedi- note). His indecent behaviour provokes much of the reader's feeling of disgust and displeasure. Here again Armah prepares the reader to anticipate a moral parallel between the bus driver and the politician in charge of the nation : the former leads the bus through a chaotic setting, the latter leads his people through areas of misery and corruption.. The bus driver, therefore, defines the African leader as a guide, though giving him some negative annotations; he symbolically stands for the `false osagyefo'. Armah's attacks on African rulers is in fact an overt and fierce one. In one of his essays he wrote:

\begin{quote}

The successful African leader is likely\ to have gone quite far up the ladder of assimilation set up for his benefit by\ the white man ... the desire to excel in competition\ with one's peers in a colonial situation becomes\ \ enlisted in an incentive system that offers\ increasing rewards in proportion as the competing individual draws nearer the colonialist ideal%

\footnote{% Armah, Ayi Kwei. `African Socialism Utopian or Scientific ?' \textit{%

Pr'\{e}sence Africaine} , op cit, p16.}

\end{quote}

Power is, therefore, formally transferred to the African 'elite after it has shown signs that it would adhere to the values of the former colonial groups, and join the neo-colonial bandwagon.

According to Armah, the source of Africa's underdevelopment is colonialism, which spread its roots to ensure survival even after independence, with the help of African leaders for that matter. The latter, of course, are enjoying with Europe Africa's riches never to leave an opportunity for the masses to share in the profits. Basically, this has resulted in a class stratification and fostered cultural imperialism which mostly fed neo- colonial practices and attitudes. The new African bourgeois class saw itself seeking ``whiteness'' by adhering to a Western lifestyle and proclaiming a superiority over the masses.\ Hence, by adopting an imitative stance, the bourgeoisie is confining itself to a role fitting the former masters, that of being a sham extension of the Empire in Africa.To show the black African leaders' eagerness to equate their white'masters', Armah postulates in a language of abuse :`There is something so terrible in\ \ watching a black

man trying at\ all points to be the dark ghost of\ \ a European, and that was what\ we were seeing in those days'(p81).

The ideal image of the African leader is, thus, reduced to a ghost or a shadow of the European, so as to belittle him and mock his attempt to emulate the white man. In his attempt to ridicule and deride African leaders, Armah draws upon the carnivalesque tradition which allows for an overturning of hierarchies and which mingles the sublime with the ridiculous. 'How were these leaders to know that while they were climbing up to shit in their people's faces, their people had seen their arsholes and drawn away in disgusted laughter'(p82) writes Armah in an attempt to bring down the authority of the Ghanaian leaders and politicians to a very base degree, drawing upon the fundamental principle of grotesque realism which is degradation. According to Bakhtin, degradation is 'the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity'\footnote{% Bakhtin, Mikhail. \textit{Rabelais and his World}. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1984 p 18.}. Protest against African leaders is voiced in many African literary works\footnote{% Such as Gabriel Okara's \textit{The Voice}, and Chinua Achebe's \textit{A Man of the People}.}.

In his novel entitled \textit{This Earth, My Brother} ... , Kofi Awoonor provides a sound accusation of African rulers who have chosen to follow the same colonial path. In a language of abuse, Awoonor states : 'fartfilled respectable people toiling in moth- eaten files to continue where the colonialists and the imperialists left off'\footnote{% Awoonor, Kofi. \textit{This Earth, My Brother} ... London : Heinemann, 1982 p28.}. The result of course is a leader far removed from the interests of his people, and thoroughly egocentric and self- indulgent.

African leaders and politicians are shown to have deliberately participated in the deception of their own people. They have the power to change things, but they use it mostly for their own interests. According to Armah, they are the agents of the white man in a neo-colonial era, and they just continue the destructive mission which started long ago with colonialism\footnote{% Surprisingly, Kwame Nkrumah, the target of Armah's attacks, comes to agree with him about the danger of neo-colonialism to independent countries. He writes'Neo-colonialism is a greater danger to independent countries than is colonialism. Colonialism is crude, essentially overt, and apt to be overcome by a purposeful convert of national effort. In neo-colonialism, however the people are divided from their leaders and, instead of providing true leadership and guidance which is informed at every point by the ideal of the general welfare, leaders come to neglect the very people who put them in power and incautiously, become instruments of supression on behalf of the new colonialists, in \textit{Consciencism} (London: Panaf Book ltd, 1978) p101.}. In his second novel \textit{Fragments} Armah narrates:

\begin{quote}
...there were people here who knew of the awfulness\ of the life around them, who had the power given\ them to do something to change all this, but who were, ... only concerned with digging\ themselves a comfortable resting place within\ a bad system ? People with their eyes\ deliberately closed against the knowledge\ that their own useless lives were part of the slow dissolution of their peoples,\ \ doomed to an extinction started long ago%\footnote{% Armah, Ayi Kwei. \textit{Fragments} 1970. rpt.\ London : Heinemann, 1983, p31.}.
\end{quote}

African leaders, or the 'inheritors of Ghana', as Cameron Duodo calls them,

have best exploited their positions. They lived a comfortable life, indulged in their pleasures and desires, and considered politics as the citadel of every morally sanctioned behaviour. In the \textit{Gab Boys} Duodu argues : 'they would go home and sink into comfortable chairs and drink champagne while nestling into the arms of lovely soft women'\footnote{% Cameron, Duodu. \textit{The Gab Boys} , 1967; rpt.London : Fontana , 1974, p140.}. In \textit{The Beautiful Ones} there is an overwhelming presentation of corruption in the body- politic, of alienation evidencing a gap between ideals and action, of a lack of cogent socio-political directions, of aberrant leadership and general decay. Through ` the controlling symbol in the novel, that of money as decay or excrement'\footnote{% Windisch Brown, Swan, (ed). \textit{Contemporary} \textit{Novelists} 6\$^{th}\$ edition \ USA : st James Press, 1996, p49.} Armah tends to show this close connection between politics and immorality, in an attempt to prove wrong the alleged harmony between the two. Filled with anger and resentment, Armah shrieks out 'how long will Africa be cursed with its leaders ?' (p94) to reflect the extent to which Africans are withstanding the affliction and calamity brought about by their leaders, the scourge of independent African countries, as well as to denote his own aspiration to end up a period of misery and desolation. That would be through the unrelenting endeavour to shake up the Africans with bemused consciences.

Actually, Armah rails African nationalist leaders in plain words, charging them with hypocrisy and pretentiousness. Disguised as the liberators of the people, they play this role with an absolute craftiness. The sanctity of their ideals and the revolutionary nature of their struggle against the colonizer allowed them to attract the people's respect and admiration, which did not take long to turn into contempt and scorn. Maanan's madness, in \textit{The Beautiful Ones} for instance, is shown as a natural consequence of her loss of hope in Nkrumah's socialism, which once promised an auspicious future. The repercussion of the neo- colonial situation in Ghana was the fashioning of obnoxious deportment patterns. The archetypal character of the neo- colonial period is neither the nationalist nor the patriotic, but the helpless, the mystified or the mad. Such characters, indeed, betoken the austerity \ of neo- colonialism. Armah, then, seems to expostulate about the acceptance of this new state of ``normality'' where impotence and madness are included in a travesty of human behaviour patterns.

Armah also notes\ the basic contradictions inherent in the African leaders' historical position within an evolutionary process which maintained their personal positions in the power structure :

\begin{quote}
 in a very radical sense the nationalist\ leaders of Africa have found themselves\ sucked into the role of hypocrites, actors\ involved in a make-believe situation. The task of the leadership has been to\ take a manifestly evolutionary situation and to pretend that it is\ revolutionary ...a historic mission demanding histrionic talents of the\ highest order ...
 \footnote{%
 Armah, Ayi Kwei. 'African Socialism : Utopian or Scientific ?' in \textit{Pr'\{e}sence Africaine}, op cit, p28.}.
 \end{quote}

As far as Ghana is concerned, Nkrumah's regime is shown to employ an empty socialist rhetoric which merely aggravates the bitterness felt by such characters as the man and teacher. The changes introduced by his administration are simply superficial; they are not really meant for the good of Ghanaians, but to help the regime gain the people's trust and maintain its position. The effort of the government to place waste boxes everywhere in Ghana to `clean' the country, for instance, proves ineffectual and feeble, only because the government never tries to empty the boxes.

Armah's description of the banister is one striking symbolic image which attacks Nkrumah's regime and stresses the need for revolutionary change in society. Booker posits:

\begin{quote}

The banister...symbolically indicts the policies of Nkrumahist\ regime in Ghana. The government had not attempted to create\ a genuinely new society; rather it merely covered over colonial\ rot with ineffectual layers of post-colonial polish... Of course, this\ image does not necessarily indicate that progress is impossible in Ghana but simply that any genuine progress requires radical\ and revolutionary transformation, not mere surface repairs :\ this banister needs to be replaced, not polished\footnote{%

Booker, M. Keith. \textit{The African Novel in English} , op cit, p 108.}.

\end{quote}

Consequently, instead of bringing genuine revolutionary change, Nkrumah's socialism only proves to be a mere `sloganeering Gimmick'\footnote{%

Armah, Ayi Kwei . `African Socialism : Utopian or Scientific?' \textit{% Pr\{'e}sence Africaine} , op cit, p 27.}

The reconciliation between the words of the politicians and the actions towards which they are directed seems to be a utopian ideal. The African leaders' ravenous appetite for power and wealth, and their neglect of early revolutionary ideals, just to serve their personal interests, directed many of Armah's attacks and denunciations, and gave shape to his offensive language. An alternative form of representation of the `betrayal' is characterized by the recurrent use of language of an abusive, cursing kind. The recurrence of images of a scatological nature in \textit{The Beautiful Ones} translates the literary protest Armah voices at the deplorable and distressing 'show' of socio- political extravagances which followed the mirthful early independence days in Ghana. His description of the big public lavatory reflects such an instance :

\begin{quote}

Hot smell of caked shit split by\ afternoon's baking sun, now touched\ by still evaporating dew. The nostrils,\ incredibly, are joined in a way that\ is most horrifying direct to the throat\ itself and to the entrails right through\ to their end (p40).

\end{quote}

The oppressive atmosphere which overshadows the novel is the output of the reiteration of such images. The setting, of course, often contributes to defining the mood of a literary work or the world in which the characters move. The euphoria of the immediate post- independence period is seen to fade away just to be replaced by a wasteland. Armah's world in \textit{The Beautiful Ones} is one of decrepitude and decay. Filth, excrement and rubbish paints the novel's locale : post- independence Ghana. No doubt, Armah provides an exaggerated description of Ghana, which most of his critics deprecated. The hyperbolic nature of Armah's imagery, however, helped to highlight his moral judgement about a people sinking in depravity. `corruption' writes Emmanuel Ngara `is portrayed in terms of a pattern of images and symbols which denote filth and dirt'\footnote{%

Ngara, Emmanuel. \textit{Art and Ideology in the African} Novel : \textit{A Study of the Influence}

\par

\textit{of Marxism on African writing}, London : Heinemann, 1985 p113.}. The squalid nature of the socio-political realities of post- independence Ghana prompted Armah to produce a harrowing tale of greed and corruption.

`Throughout the book', O.R. Dathorne speculates, `Armah intentionally nauseates us to force us see the corruption and filth around; references to smells, especially excreta, are frequent'\footnote{%

Dathorne, O.R.\textit{\ African literature in the Twentieth Century}, op cit, p105.}. The physical decay of the presented world becomes synonymous with the crumbling of moral ideals. Certainly, Armah is anxious to castigate those features of the Ghanainan society which reflect an oppressive miasma of corruption, social climbing and falsehood. Ambition before integrity, money before principles, self before group interests : these features are under overt ideological attack within Armah's first novel.

The most evident manifestation of corruption in \textit{The Beautiful Ones} is bribery, a leitmotif which Armah keeps using throughout the novel. Giving and taking bribes is shown as a prevalent attitude amongst Armah's characters who want to reach their goals or conceal their guilts. To escape the feeling of terror which overwhelmed him at the discovery of his 'crime' by the supposed 'watcher', the conductor offered his accomplice some cigarettes (the first bribe offered to the man, Armah's protagonist) ' `` Brother'', he said, inclining the prized cigarettes towards his desired accomplice, `` Brother, you care for jot ? '' (p5) which suggests that the watcher is supposed to take part in some sort of 'evil' deed. The watcher, however, turns to be a mere sleeper. Nevertheless, throughout the novel, the man is seen to resist the attractions of conformity and moral abdication. A case in point is his refusal of the bribe proposed by the timber contractor Amankwa.

Life in modern Ghana is thus shown as a new 'inferno'. \textit{The Beautiful Ones} summarizes comment on the modern African moral inferno. It presents contradictions and competing values through the careful exposition of the various behaviour patterns of its characters. The Ghana of the immediate post -independence era is shown as a world of pretence and appearances which translate the materialistic and individualistic spirit of the period. ' Money Sweet Pass All ' (p106) a graffiti on the lavatory wall of the railway building stands out in big letters. The accumulation of wealth seems, therefore, to be the only worthwhile business for such characters as Koomson and his wife Estella. The boat deal, indeed, best reflects the greedy and selfish nature of their souls. It is, infact, a whole generation of greed to use Cyprian Ekwensi's words who wrote in \textit{Iska} ' the generation of today; a generation that was in a hurry to live, to make progress, to accumulate wealth, to bed girls, to eat, drink, be promoted to fill fat-salaried posts, to be in power only to line one's pockets'\footnote{% Ekwensi, Cyprian. \textit{Iska} 1966; rpt. London : Panther Books, 1968 p68.}% . Armah's effective manipulation of the notion of money and the concept of power draws the reader's attention to the unequivocal dichotomy between importance and impotence. Wealth in Armah's Ghana is represented as the source of power which in turn decides the individual's worth and importance. Impecuniousness, on the other hand, is shown to generate feelings of weakness and impotence :

\begin{quote}
...so mostly people held out the exact fare\ and tried to look into the receiver's face with its knowledge of their impotence\ \ and if they give a fifty - pesewa coin they look into the collector's eyes\ \ to see if he acknowledges their own\ importance. (p2)
\end{quote}

The sleep walkers - who best mirror the situation of post - independence Ghanaians sinking in darkness and unawareness - get rid of their fearful dreams after each pay day; they feel powerful and want the others to recognize this power. The potent giver of the cedi note eagerly looks for the conductor's assuring recognition of his importance. The conductor, indeed, with a look of admiration could prevent the giver to check the

change and assured himself some extra coins. The challenge of every Ghanain,

Armah points out, is to look like a 'big man'.

The only path towards the 'gleam' - which ironically stands for the ease and comfort in which the leader Nkrumah and his fellow African politicians live - however is the corrupt one. 'The gleam is approached : in one bold, corrupt leap that gives the leaper the power to laugh with contempt at those of us who still plod on the daily round, stupid, honest, dull, poor ...

'(p96). Morality, on the other hand, is shown as a handicap for progress in the Ghanaian society. The man's moral integrity could not provide him with the hardness that the new African 'gleam' requires. It rather makes him feel strange, a criminal like. His decision not to share in the 'game' every Ghanaian is playing is seen as a crime done to society. Just like Albert Camus' protagonist in *The Outsider*, Meursault, the man is simply sanctioned for not participating in the pretentiousness of the world around. The man often questions

The fact that Armah's protagonist is an intellectual questioning Ghanaian citizen gives the narrative thrust a relevance in terms of post - independence debate. The man's various comments act as a reference to 'inside' commentary on socio - political trends. The man's questioning points to the presence of an underlying anguish, an awakened state of bitter perceptions.} himself 'what I have done wrong, and there is really nothing (p 54). Notwithstanding his confusion and mixed feelings, the man could always assert that, he is right and that he has done nothing wrong.

Meursault, in his turn, asserts with absolute certainty. 'I'd been right, I was still right, I was always right'

Camus, Albert. *The Outsider*. Trans. Joseph Laredo. 1942, rpt. England : Penguin Books, 1983 , p 115.}. Despite frequent reference to their honesty and moral integrity, both Meursault and the man appear as anti - heroes, who lack the heroic qualities expected of the traditional hero. Both are shown to be satisfied with the mere fact of being moral, though their morality itself is coloured with naivety.

O.R, Dathorne writes 'The novel's main plot centers on an honest man of unshakable integrity ... One of the Beautiful People '\footnote{% Dathorne, O.R. *African Literature in the Twentieth Century*, op cit, p 105.}. Armah presents the man as an honest individual who deplores the existing demonic forces in his society. The dichotomy between the man and the world around him sets off a chain of oppositions that proceed from the basic clash of values. Yet, despite his morality, the man is shown to have little courage and determination. The first description Armah provides for the man in the opening chapter is that of a careless and helpless person whose actions disgusts the reader. The man is shown to add to the surrounding decay some of his own filth : '\ \ ... running down from the left corner\ of the watcher's mouth, a stream of the\ man's spittle. Oozing freely, the oil -like\ liquid first entangled itself in the fingers\ of the watcher's left hand ...'(p5) .

The man, indeed, is aware of the aimless life he is leading as he is of the total breakdown around. Still, he seems to think of no alternative way out of this Ghanaian 'inferno'. And though the reader feels sympathy with the man mainly because of his decision to refuse corruption, he is certainly irritated by his passivity and lack of resolve as to what course of action to take. The man's moral integrity, therefore, does not seem to provide him with any help to decide upon an active and positive role in his society. Probably, this is the very thing the man lacks to become one of the 'Beautiful Ones'. In other words, if Armah provides the reader with an ambivalent image of his protagonist, and if despite the moral consciousness of the man Armah tends to condemn him with the whole Ghanaian society, it is to confirm that moral consciousness should be translated into action, otherwise passivity would only add to its bearer's despair, pain and 'aloneness'. The man, asserts Simon Gikandi, 'prefers withdrawal to

reaction and this is what makes him such a modernist character'\footnote{% Gikandi, Simon. \textit{Reading the African Novel}. London, James Currey ltd, 1987. p 77.}. As readers, we do not evidence the man's change in the course of the narrative. We only witness a helpless man living in an unchangeable society. `The possibility of action' adds Gikandi :

\begin{quote}

may in fact threaten the man's own illusion that by withdrawing into himself he can preserve his purity in the midst of the rot that characterizes his world...he has thus turned his loneliness into a virtue and, more practically, an instrument of self-preservation and justification\footnote{% Ibid, p 80.}

\end{quote}

Evidently, the man's morality is based on personal or self-regeneration and this kind of morality is usually`limited at best, and besides being incomplete, it is often used as a means of evaluating issues and expressing moral snobbery and moral priggishness'\footnote{%

Farrell, James.T. \textit{Literature and Morality}, USA : The Vanguard Press, inc, 1947 \ p 06.}. The man, in fact, believes that he has accomplished his duty towards himself by ensuring his own morality, but he fails, indeed, to feel responsibility towards his society and his community. The man proves only too weak to influence even his `beloved ones'. One may imagine him snobbishly affirming : `I have told them, I cannot do something more'. The man, indeed, does not launch a `fight' on corruption, and if he is seen to launch any, it is only a very pacific and impotent one. Douglas Killam and Ruth Rowe emphasize:

\begin{quote}

Most of the heroes of West African novels about post- independence disillusionment are... hardly moved to initiate the necessary steps to change their condition. They lack the will to act; \ they are variants of the man in *The Beautiful Ones*, watchers and witnesses unwilling to move against those who have robbed them of their dignity\footnote{% Killam, Douglas and Rowe, Ruth (eds) \textit{The Companion to African Literatures}. United Kingdom : James Currey ltd. 2000, p 225.}

\end{quote}

Teacher, to whom the man resorts to get rid of his feeling of `aloneness'% \footnote{%

Through intellectual discussion which has become a substitute for action, within a state of total inertia.} is himself living in isolation. he prefers to withdraw from the whole world and let his pessimism overcome him. He makes a decision to cut all links with the outside world and live in a small room, passing his time in reading books or listening to music on the radio. In reality, the teacher is shown to have a much more precise understanding and perception of the Ghanaian turmoil in comparison to the man. However, he shares with the protagonist the same passivity which undermines his high moral consciousness.

At the far extreme, however, a character like the ex- wharf labourer `His excellency Joseph Koomson, Minister plenipotentiary, Member of the Presidential Commission, Hero of Socialist Labor '(p56) chooses to circumvent the burden of meditation over the Ghanaian predicament to allow himself to enjoy the pleasures of a politician's luxurious life. Koomson lives in the Upper Residential Area in very elaborate and highly furnished house, he has a limousine with a chauffeur and he passes some of his evenings in the *Atlantic Caprice*. Koomson's lifestyle stands in sharp contrast to the man's. This is shown through the choice of the setting of both characters ' houses. While Koomson lives in the upper Residential area in a house with a big garden, a vast \ expanse of lush grass and a lawn

surrounded by high hedges\footnote{%

CF. Emmanuel, Obiechina. \textit{Culture, Tradition and} \textit{Society in the West African Novel} 1975; rpt. Great Britain : Cambridge University Press, 1980 p51.}, the man's house is a reeking dismal place, with some ancient furniture. In fact, the juxtaposition of settings by Armah \ reflects the much deeper division between\ the bourgeois middle class and the lower class in Ghana; a state of affairs which seems to substitute the ex- colonial class- stratification.

The rise of this bourgeois middle class is considered to be the only gain of independence according to Armah. How did Koomson, however, rise from a docker at the harbor to a 'big man' ? 'Everybody says with a wave of the hand'(p89). Armah's description of Koomson is loaded with irony. The Party man is shown to relax from the exhaustion of his 'killing work'; the preparation of speeches on 'moral uplift. Socialism. Revolution. Dedication '(p90) with some ' young vaginas waiting for him in some hired place paid for by the government'(pp 89-90). Although Armah tries to show that corruption became a social phenomenon in Ghana, his target in his attacks is always political corruption. The farcical tableau of Koomson is thus presented as an available image to typify the sheer grotesqueness of political activity in early - post independence Ghana. The indictment of political corruption is a strong thematic concern of \textit{The Beautiful Ones}. The development of Ghana is seen to be the last of the Ghanaian politicians' worries; socialism a 'nuisance' which is impossible in Ghana, and more in which the party men do not believe. In a lecture supposed to give insight about the stages of growth of poor countries to the Ministers, Parliamentarians and the Party activists, the audience fell asleep. Koomson recalls the man who gave the lecture, he 'had many degrees, and he was very boring. In the first place he was dressed like a poor man'(p132); a value Judgement which only demonstrates Koomson's adherence to a world of pretence and appearances. Such praise words as '\$\left[\text{m} \right] \$y own lord, my master, oh, my white man '(p37) would certainly please the party man who tries at all points to look like a white man. His wife's revulsion at drinking local beer reflects the worship of the new middle class of all that is foreign, and its rapid assimilation to an alien mode of life which mirrors its faint attachment to its African background. Ngara writes about 'the yearning for things European by the rising bourgeoisie who look down upon their own African way of life and hanker after western bourgeois luxuries and lifestyle'\footnote{%

Ngara, Emmanuel. \textit{Art and Ideology in the African} \textit{Novel : A Study of the Influence of Marxism on African} \textit{Writing}, op cit, p 53.% }. Armah's satirical presentation of the scene where Koomson has to articulate his servant's name, in a manner a white man does but do not mind to do it properly, works to deflate the arrogance of all those who would attempt to look like a white man : '\ `Atinga !', it was a peculiar kind of shout,\ the kind made by white men trying to\ pronounce African names without any\ particular desire to pronounce them well,\ indeed deriving that certain superior\ pleasure from their inability'(p147).

One criticism of \textit{The Beautiful Ones} is shatto Arthur Gakwandi's claim that 'the novel dismisses the black elite as slaves of the colonial boss'\footnote{%

Gakwandi, Shatto Arthur. \textit{The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa}, op cit, p 91.}. In fact, the African intellectuals are also subjects of Armah's scorn. Koomson and even the man and Teacher are shown to forsake the enlightening role they are supposed to fulfill; Koomson being overpowered by the greed of what seems to be a 'Gilded Age'; the man being overwhelmed by confusion and uncertainty; the teacher being overcome by his despair and pessimism. Modin, a character in Ayi Kwei Armah's novel \textit{Why Are\ We So Blest}, comes to the bitter realization that as an educated African he was an agent in the destruction of his own history, a factor in

the deformation of the African identity. Modin sourly recognizes : \

\begin{quote}

Factors then, scholarship holders, B.A.s, \ M.A.s, Ph.D. now, the privileged \ servants of white empire, factors then, factors \ now ... The educated African, the westernized African \ successes are contemptible worms \ the end of a western education \ is not work but self-indulgence \ footnote{% Armah, Ayi Kwei. \textit{Why Are We So Blest} 1972; rpt. London : Heinemann, 1981 p 161.}.

\end{quote}

According to Armah, colonial education created a black elite- mainly embodied in the person of Nkrumah in \textit{The Beautiful Ones} to succeed the colonial authority and perpetuate its interests in the post-independence period. In \textit{How Europe Underdeveloped Africa}, Walter Rodney asserts that 'colonial education was education for subordination, exploitation, the creation of mental confusion, and the development of

underdevelopment' \footnote{%

Rodney, Walter. \textit{How Europe Undeveloped Africa} 1972; rpt. London : Bogle L'Ouverture, 1988 p 263.}. Armah, in fact, projects the momentous role of education in the enlightenment of Africans in general and of Ghanaians in particular. In \textit{Why Are We So Blest} he asserts the vitality of education in the African resistance to the western imperialistic plans. The African's weapon, Armah \ argues, 'should be the educational process for creating new anti-European, anti-imperial, anti-elitist values' \footnote{% Armah, Ayi. Kwei. \textit{Why Are We So Blest}, op cit, p 222.}. Armah, therefore, dismisses foreign education in favour of an African education which would revalue African history and culture, and which upholds African values.

As a post colonial writer, whose writing clearly demonstrates the close relationship between art and the social world, Armah's social responsibility towards the 'sick' Africa turns him into one of its 'healers' who wants to rid it ` of colonial and neo-colonial infections' \footnote{%

Lindfors, Bernth. \textit{\ African Textualities: Texts, Pretexts and Contexts of } African Literature, Trenton, N.J : Africa World Press, 1997 p 85.} in an attempt to contribute to the development of a new national identity. In \textit{\ Two Thousand Seasons } Armah presents the way as 'the highest beauty', but he seems to have suggested this as early as his first novel \textit{The Beautiful Ones}, when he vouches for the eventual victory

of the banister's wood over the different kinds of polish. ` The ultimate and inevitable triumph of the wood ', Booker writes, 'might even be taken as an optimistic suggestion that the technological civilization of the West will ultimately succumb to the more nature-oriented culture of Africa' % \footnote{%

Booker, M. Keith. \textit{The African Novel in English}, op cit, p 108.}.

It is quite evident that Armah suggests no definite and clear answers to the neo-colonial contradictions portrayed in \textit{The Beautiful Ones}. However, the reader of his first novel will not fail to notice some half-baked propositions which Armah developed in his subsequent works.

\chapter{Technical strategies :The Predominance of modernism in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born}

The ``deviation'' of Armah's first novel from mainstream post-independence African \ literature, which concentrates upon the rehabilitation of African culture, was not indeed welcomed in the literary scene by his African compatriots. Certainly, Armah was accused of degrading and debasing his

country and his people, and providing a false picture of African realities. The Ghana Armah depicts in \textit{The Beautiful Ones} is a wasteland, where obnoxious effluvia and images of excrement, urine, vomit, and saliva dominate. Most of Armah's critics, however, tend to question the very aim behind this bleak picture of Ghana or to dismiss it altogether. In other words, \textit{The Beautiful Ones} is either considered to obliterate the whole Ghanaian history and culture, and to provide a meagre account of a momentary period of upheaval in Ghana; or just to display Armah's aesthetic concerns which seem to be the sole objective of his writing, and which stem from some alien literary source. Both allegations, in fact, reveal the failure of Armah's critics to interpret \textit{The Beautiful Ones} in the light of the close relationship between form and content, and how the former plays a crucial role in determining the latter.

Chinua Achebe, for instance, considers Armah as 'an alienated native ... writing like some white district officer'\footnote{%
 .Achebe, Chinua. 'Africa and her writers ', \textit{\ Morning Yet on Creation Day}, op cit, p26.}. Achebe's reductionist reading of \textit{The Beautiful Ones}, is consistent with his commitment to a genuine liberation of Africa, through a realistic presentation of the social and cultural problems faced by the continent. Armah's departure from the norms of social realism is seen by Achebe as a betrayal. Measured by the criteria of realist fiction, Armah's first novel was therefore considered to denigrate and disparage the African identity. This was also Ama Ata Aidoo's conclusion about Armah's first novel. Like Achebe, Aidoo chose to treat \textit{The Beautiful Ones} % along the lines of social realism (already discussed in the introduction). Other critics of Armah, however, disapproved of his style and considered it to reflect the exaltation of an alien literary tradition. Lewis Nkosi, for instance, saw in Armah's first novel 'a falsification of African reality in order to serve foreign artistic gods '\footnote{%
 Nkosi, Lewis. \textit{Tasks and Masks} : \textit{\ Themes and styles of African Literature}, London : Longman Group ltd, 1981 , p73.}. According to Nkosi, Armah appears to adopt a western literary style which is considered as an end in itself. It seems, however, quite awkward to imagine that Armah's sole purpose behind a novel like \textit{The Beautiful Ones} is to follow the principle of art for art's sake, to fill him with delectation and contentment at the brilliant artistry of a writer. A more pressing objective can be felt to direct the thrust of the novel. Armah, indeed, exposes a world full of contradictions and inconsistencies to which the man as the main figure in the novel stands in opposition. Another critic of Armah, Ben Obumselu, considers \textit{The Beautiful Ones} to evidence 'an aesthetic discomfort' stemming from an exiled imagination '\footnote{%
 .Obumselu, Ben. 'Marx, politics and the African Novel' \textit{Twentieth Century Studies} N\$%
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 10\$ \$(1973), \$p\$116.\$}. some other critics saw in Armah a writer of decadence; Charles. E. Nnolim identifies him with 'the Goncourts, Walter Pater, Paul Verlaine, Joseph Conrad, fin de si'\{e}cle symbolists whose works revealed their fascination with decay, corruption and with the smell of charnel houses'\footnote{%
 .Nnolim, Charles. E, 'Dialectic as Form : Pejorism in the Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah ' \textit{African Literature Today}, N\$%
 %TCIMACRO{\UNICODE[m]{0xb0}}%
 %BeginExpansion
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 =10\$, (1979), p 205.}. Such a judgement, indeed, illustrates the long-lasting dichotomy between form and content in the criticism of literature.

aspect of the novel's imagery, Armah's critics focused on its literal meaning. Hence, they failed to identify the underlying thematic framework. The imagery employed by Armah in his first novel is of a scatological nature; it is like the one the reader encountered in Swift and Rabelais. The pattern of images which denote dirt and filth, indeed, portrays the corruption that went along with neo - colonial practices in post - independence Ghana under Nkrumah's regime. Such images, of course, are meant to generate in the reader feelings of disgust, which in turn tend to arouse his condemnation of corruption, of neo - colonial practices and of bourgeois middle class snobbery and egotism. The omnipresence of dirt and rottenness in Armah's novel is a deliberate technical strategy from the writer who aimed to shock his reader by constantly offending his senses, making him 'hear', 'feel', and 'see' the horrors of the new order in Ghana. In spite of the ugliness of the novel's imagery, however, it transmits a truth of a high moral value. In fact, it aims at heightening the awareness of the reader about certain aspects of life to attain some moral realizations about justice, freedom and honesty. Such human values are shown to constitute the basic criteria for the realization of a good life. To go back to Ezra Pound's conception of imagery (to which we referred earlier in the introduction) that an image transcends the mere pictorial representation to stand for something invisible, it is to confirm the figurative aspect of Armah's imagery in \textit{The Beautiful Ones}.

The dirt imagery, indeed, is not merely meant for its literal aspect but mainly for its figurative character. The dirt images work as a metaphor for the corrupt environment devastating the Ghanaian society. African writers such as Chinua Achebe and Gabriel Okara also emphasized the dirt metaphor which principally represent 'political' corruption. Chief M. A. Nanga in Achebe's \textit{A Man of the People} believes that politics is a 'dirty game' \footnote{% Achebe, Chinua, \textit{A Man of the People}, (London, Heinemann, 1966) p 133.}, while Odili who stands in opposition to Nanga aspires to 'a new era of cleanliness in the politics of \left[\text{the} \right] \$country' \footnote{% Ibid, p 146.}. Okolo in Okara's \textit{The Voice}, like Odili, aspires to 'sweep the dirt out of \left[\text{the} \right] \$ houses' but Tebeowei reminds him that 'the heap of the dirt may bury \left[\text{him} \right] \$' \footnote{% Okara, Gabriel \textit{The Voice}. London : Heinemann, 1970 p 50.}. The dirt metaphor in Armah, however, is reiterated throughout the novel which gives it a symbolic significance. A symbol, indeed, is a recurrent and persistent metaphor. Austin Warren and Ren'\{e} Wellek defined the symbol as follows : '\left[\text{an} \right] \$ `image' may be invoked once as a metaphor, but if it persistently recurs, both as presentation and representation, it becomes a symbol' \footnote{% Wellek, Ren'\{e}, and Warren, Austin. \textit{Theory of Literature} : \textit{A Seminal Study of the Nature and Function} \textit{of Literature in all its Contexts}, op cit, p 189.}. One such evocative image is Armah's description of one of Ghana's waste boxes :

\begin{quote}
The thing had been a gleaming white sign\ when it was first installed, and that was\ not so very long ago. Now even the\ lettering on it was no longer decipherable.\ it was covered over thickly with juice\ \ of every imaginable kind of waste matter. But once the letters had said in their\ \ brief brightness :.C.C. Receptable For Disposal of Waste\ That was printed in blue. Underneath, in\ bolder capitals executed in lucent red, was the message :\ Keep Your Country Clean\ By Keeping Your City Clean(p7)\ \end{quote}

Ironically, the waste box itself is the epitome of dirt and uncleanness.

In the main, it reflects the greed and covetousness of the people in authority who are in charge of this 'dirty' campaign for cleanliness; since it was only one further way for them to gain as much money as possible from the budget allocated for it. In addition, it denotes the participation of the whole Ghanaian society in the defilement of Ghana, in the betrayal of Ghana. Ghanaians are shown to add to the intensity of the situation by indulging themselves in the process of corruption to the extent that Ghana itself became synonymous with corruption. The winner of the one hundred cedis in the lottery did not find a way to receive his money except to bribe some official at the lottery. To the man's claim that he 'will be corrupting a public officer' he replied 'this is Ghana' (p19).

The reiteration of scatological images in *The Beautiful Ones* is in fact an alternative method of aesthetic ordering to compensate for the diminution of narrative structure and unity, which characterizes most modernist writings: modernist fiction displays a reluctance to follow the straight chronological ordering of its material; it often employs the method of multiple points of view; it has neither a real beginning nor a clear end.

. Cf. Lodge, David. *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature*, London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd, 1977 pp 45-46.}. For these reasons, modernist writing is alleged to suffer from plotlessness, shapelessness and randomness. And for the same reasons, Armah's first novel was considered to reflect a writer's indulgence in art as an autonomous activity rather than as a representation of reality or a medium for social change. Modernists, however, claim to be representing reality. David Lodge asserts: 'in their pursuit of what they took to be real, they found it necessary to distort the form of their discourse until it bore less and less resemblance to the historical description of reality'.

. Ibid, p 45.}

Armah, therefore, shares with the modernist writers their tendency to translate raw experience into 'immortal form'.

. Ibid, p 157.} by renewing the means of expression. It is not however to give priority to form over content, but to consolidate and reinforce the content presented through the constant foregrounding of discourse. *The Beautiful Ones* imagery, therefore, which is foregrounded against the background of the imagery of the realist novels, attempts to deepen and intensify the theme of corruption and to illustrate Armah's concern to condemn it. Kim Addonizio and Dorianne Laux assert that images do not only represent something but also carry a message and almost always evokes the readers' response towards a given subject. They posit that: 'Images are seductive in themselves, but they're not merely scenery, or shouldn't be. An image, when it's doing its full work, can direct a reader towards some insight; bring a poem to an emotional pitch, embody an idea'.

Addonizio, Kim Laux. Dorianne. *The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry*, USA: W.W. Norton Company Inc, 1997 pp 86-87.}

The idea embodied in *The Beautiful Ones* imagery is the moral degeneracy from which post-independence Ghanaians suffer; the emotional pitch it generates is the reader's feeling of disgust and abomination; the insight towards which it directs the reader is to condemn corruption, the most evident feature of neo-colonial practices.

Armah's protest against the anomy infiltrating the social and political scenes of post-independence Ghana, however, takes a violent tone. Ghanaians are portrayed as 'sinners in the eyes of an angry writer'. Armah's verbal violence, in fact, is one characteristic of modernist writings. The modernist writer does not hesitate to vociferate his anger and

exasperation in a language of an offensive, insulting character. In \textit{The Beautiful Ones}, Ghanaians are depicted as 'insects' as long as they are 'fascinated by the white man's power' (p86); Ghanaian politicians are described as the 'apes' (p89) of the white man; the 'osagyefo' who once promised a hopeful future turns into a 'devilish Nkrumah' (p159) by the end of the novel; the 'osagyefo' who once deposed Nkrumah's regime are delineated as another 'group of bellies' (p158), the metonymic reference suggesting their hunger for power.

The modernist writer's verbal violence is, indeed, a deliberate choice generated out of the socio-political realities, and which aims at the edification of the masses. This being the case, it can be argued that \textit{The Beautiful Ones} cannot be said to degrade Ghanaians and debase their leaders for the mere satisfaction of a writer's sadistic obsessions. \textit{The Beautiful Ones} can only reflect a writer's apprehension about his country and people and his attempt to accentuate the indispensability of salvation and redemption. S. Okechukwu Mezu's revolutionary conception of modern poetry can be applicable to Armah's early fiction. Okechukwu Mezu argues that 'the modern poet has chosen to sing, chant, shout, be angry, rave, curse, condemn and praise when occasion demands it in the interests of his people'

\footnote{% Okechukwu, Mezu. S. 'Poetry and Revolution in Modern Africa' in \textit{African Writers On African Writings} Killam, G.D. ed. London : Heinemann, 1972 pp 95-96.}.

Many modern African literary works signify a recognition of betrayal. The latter nurtures these literary productions with an overwhelming mood of resentment and indignation. Remarkable notes of outrage and markers of anger can be identified through an investigation of some linguistic and syntactic patterns which confirm the distinctive thematic emphasis. Armah, in fact, is often accused of using a rude and violent style. Indeed, verbal violence exists in \textit{The Beautiful Ones}, yet it should be looked upon in relation to its historical context. Enthusiastic critics tend to treat the concept of violence as a separate abstract entity rather than a necessary liberating act (albeit a verbal one). But how can Armah's verbal violence be considered as a liberating act in an independent country like Ghana? Certainly, official independence does not always mean freedom. Colonial injustice recreates itself in the African leaders' hunger for power and in their exploitation of their countries' riches for their own profit. Armah's verbal violence, then, can only be a consequential reaction to the anomy inflicted upon the Ghanaian world; it can only be seen to foster an 'intellectual' liberation. Frantz Fanon writes 'decolonization is always a violent phenomenon'

\footnote{% Fanon, Frantz. \textit{The Wretched of the Earth}, op cit, p27.}. Armah's anti-neo-colonial attitudes exercise the same kind of violence, though at the verbal level through the medium of language and directed towards a new target, mainly the African leaders. 'The rebel's weapon 'writes Fanon' is the proof of his humanity'

\footnote{% . Ibid, p 19.}. Armah, indeed, appears as a rebel who directs his weapon, the word, towards his own society in an attempt to foster the process of self-recreation. Whether or not Armah is a committed writer, however, what seems to be a general appraisal of Armah is that \textit{The Beautiful Ones} shows him as 'an independent individual. No longer does he feel that he has to prop up tribal mores; he is free to attack the group'

\footnote{% . Dathorne, O.R. \textit{African Literature in the Twentieth Century}, op cit, p 105.}.

Certainly, Armah's prose has deviated from the preceding literary discourse which displayed a faithfulness to reality. Like all modernist fiction which is innovatory in form, Armah's style avoids conformity with social realism to voice the concerns of another 'Angry Young Man'

. See Baldick Chris, \textit{The Concise Oxford Dictionary} \textit{of Literary Terms} (New York, Oxford University Press, 1991) p10.). To be sure, Armah's language is of an offensive kind which lacks verbal etiquette, and which aims to shock the reader in order to evoke in him feelings of contempt for the neo- colonial realities and to persuade him to feel the necessity of change. 'by the time full-blown literatures of revolt had emerged', writes Kenneth.W. Harrow, 'an entire generation of youthful rebels was claiming its place, including Ngugi, Armah, Oyono, Beti, Oloquem, Soyinka, Semb\`e}ne...' % \footnote{%

Harrow, Kenneth.W. \textit{The Thresholds of Change in African Literature : The Emergence of a Tradition} London : Heinemann, 1994. p75.) and in the most 'blunt' way they cried out their anger.

Emmanuel Ngara argues that some African literary works are 'blunt ' and 'unreserved' in matters relating to human waste and sex. Yet he directly excludes such works as Armah's \textit{The Beautiful Ones}, which purposefully chooses to be blunt in order to accentuate the thematic framework of the novel. Ngara posits : 'Unless such bluntness is justifiable\ in terms of aesthetic purpose, as in\ Armah's \underline{The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born}, then it is certain to offend,\ shock or alienate part of the writer's\ audience'\footnote{% . Ngara, Emmanuel. \textit{Stylistic Criticism and the African} \textit{Novel}%, op cit, p26{\small .}}.

\textit{The Beautiful Ones}, therefore, is revolutionary both in form and content. Its highly figurative text undertakes to move the reader towards the adoption of a particular position on moral and political issues. As such, it clearly fulfills the function of persuasion. The very title of the novel \textit{The Beautiful ones Are Not Yet Born} is metaphorical- and this is generally the tendency of most modernist writings - attempting to draw the parallell between the 'Beautiful' people and the moral ones. It is interesting to note that Armah's work clearly has allegorical implications directed towards the modern African socio- political situation. The manchild who goes through the entire life cycle in seven years is a metaphor for post- independence Ghana which rapidly moved towards decay and deterioration. The image, indeed, represents the premature deterioration of Nkrumah's regime. In 1957, Ghana gained its independence and Nkrumah became its first leader who hold out high hopes of prosperity and good life. Seven years after independence, however, Nkrumah ascended to a lifetime presidency only to fullfil his personal hopes of wealth and greatness. Hence, shattering the early dreams of his people.

Armah's creation of the allegorical frame gives power to the satiric textual references. \textit{The Beautiful Ones} readily identifiable by a distinctive sardonic tone, provides a striking example of the process wherein the expression of disgust is transmuted into the biting thrust of satire. In fact, it is satire that feeds off the underlying mood of dejection. The tone of Armah's satire is of bitter indignation, indeed, it tends to expose the failings of Ghanaians chiefly those in position of power and authority. Armah pours scorn on the Ghanaian politicians who enjoy the profits of independence alone at the expense of the suffering masses. He actually ridicules them and scorns their pretentious attempts to lift their countries out of their squalor. 'These were the socialists of Africa' writes Armah 'fat, perfumed, soft with the ancestral softness of chiefs who had sold their people and are celestially happy with the fruits of the trade'(p131). Armah adopts a sarcastic attitude which presents the reader with a critique of the Ghanaian politicians and their cynical manoeuvring for personal security. Satiric shafts, in truth, are aimed at the shallowness of the private search for advancement. \textit{The Beautiful Ones} is marked by the scathing sarcastic tone of the satirist. One striking example (which needs to be quoted fully) of satire is the passage in which

Armah points out the kind of relationship between African leaders and colonial authorities :

\begin{quote}

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.\ And they who would be our leaders, they also had the white men for their masters, and they also feared the masters, but\ after the fear what was at the bottom of their beings was not the hate\ \ and the anger we knew in our despair. What they felt was love(p81)

\end{quote}

The passage is carefully patterned to enforce a rhetorical impact with the repetition of masters - fear - anger working to diminish the importance of African leaders, while at the same time wittily satirising their pretentious posture. Unquestionably, satire never works to exalt; it deflates and derides. Armah has selected certain targets for his attack; the Ghanaian citizens are one such target that is ridiculed and scorned. In effect, the description of one black man striving to emulate a white man's speech is one of Armah's instances of exaggeration and caricature. It says :` 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'(p125).

Armah's bitter indignation at the sour socio - political state of affairs in Ghana certainly goes beyond the mere criticism to suggest a yearning for redemption. His fierce denunciation of Ghanaian citizens in general and of African bourgeois class in particular for their mercenary lives translate the writer's worries about his country and people and his intention to express the necessity of and the urgency for change. The disgusted tone of Armah's satire which is much written in a Juvenalian style is, thus, directed towards a condemnation of human vice and folly, hence the glorification and ennoblement of human virtue. Arthur Pollard points out that satire `is always acutely conscious of the difference between what things are and what they ought to be\footnote{%

. Pollard, Arthur. *Satire*, The Critical Idiom Series, N\$%

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07,\$ London : Methuen, 1970 p7.}. According to Armah, `what things are' in \textit{The Beautiful Ones} is the overall corruption and depravity which dominate the whole Ghanaian society, `what things ought to be ' is the birth of the Beautiful people who are supposed to end up a period of desolation and pace the way for a promising future for Ghana. Alongside the continuing significations of disgust, therefore, Armah deploys `satirical methods that are aimed at the criticism and correction of behaviour'\footnote{% Webb, Hugh. \textit{Passionate Spaces : African literature} \textit{and the Post - Colonial Context}, op cit, p50.}.

The man's questioning of his societal values serves to galvanize acquiescent Ghanaians into meditation and rumination over their socio- political realities, in order to discover the big moral gap between ideals and actuality. It also serves to foster a revolutionary sensibility and embolden Ghanaians to overpower their indifference and passivity. In fact, the questions tend to carry forward Armah's sardonic vein of protest\footnote{% . The expression of protest in art indeed gives birth to the device of satire. Literary protest is evidenced in the use of satirical methods.}, and direct attention towards the ideological concerns at hand. They radiate into the novel giving it point and direction, and serve for an examination of values. If Armah's protagonist, however, is a questioning Ghanaian it is

because the world around him is not perfect and if he is displeased, it is to urge people to change their behaviour. The utilization of questioning within Armah's novel, then is directed towards the possibility of change.

Along with Armah's strong satirical treatment in \textit{The Beautiful Ones} goes the necessary placing of figures within the moral spectrum. The characters are being defined strictly by their moral positions. In effect, there exist two major types of individuals in \textit{The Beautiful Ones}; the corrupt ones principally represented by such characters as Koomson, the bus driver, the timber contractor Amankwa, the allocations clerk, Oyo and her mother, the President Nkrumah and others to mention but a few; and the moral ones mainly represented by the man and the teacher. The oppositional relationship which exists between these two kinds of characters allows for an expression of conflict, with the ideal of morality pitted against corruption. Surprisingly, however, the moral characters are isolated from the surrounding community. Of course, because of the very moral position they prefer to take. `the modernist novelist' observes Gikandi `sees himself as the medium through which the alienated individual expresses his sense of fragmentation'\footnote{% Gikandi, Simon. \textit{Reading the African Novel}}, op cit, p 74.}.

The man, indeed, is shown struggling against the corrupt socio-political order around him which clearly places him as one of the few `moral' people. Essentially, he is introduced in terms of his moral demeanour and of public attitudes towards him. He is pressured by his society (his wife and fellow workers) to accept bribes and involve himself in the corrupt activities in order to ensure a prosperous life. To see these temptations as being of only personal significance, however, would be to seriously neglect the text's scheme of correlation. For these temptations clearly represent varying ways forward for the young, educated, idealistic African who wishes to preserve the best of the traditional values in the post- independence era. Because of his inability to provide his family with material goods, mainly due to his honesty, the man is often perceived as a fool and a social misfit. Oyo, his wife, was most insulting to him when she remarked :

\begin{quote}
You are the Chichidodo itself...\ Ah, you know, the Chichidodo is a bird. The chichidodo hates excrement\ with all its soul. But the chichidodo only feeds on maggots, and you know\ \ the maggots grow best inside the lavatory. This is the chichidodo. (pp44-45).
\end{quote}

Surely, the man is charged with hypocrisy by his wife and his morality is seen as a kind of defence against accusations of his inability to provide a good living for his family. For instance, the happiness felt by the man the day he was shopping for the Koomsons' dinner clearly translates the human weakness in front of power and money. Despite knowing it was foolish, the man could not suppress the joy of the moment, the narrator tells us :

\begin{quote}
When he had asked for all that white man's food, the beautiful long rice in the\ packet with the Afro-American Uncle Ben smiling on it, the tinned cake which had\ traveled thousands of miles from rich people's countries, and the New Zealand butter,\ he had known it was stupid to be feeling so good just because he was buying these\ things he could not in the end afford, yet he could not help the smile that came to his lips\ and spread this feeling of well-being over all his body. If the aristocratic drinks the White\ Horse whisky and the Vat 69, had been available then, he would have bought them gladly\ \ in the foolish happiness of the moment, no matter how bitterly he would have cursed himself\ later. It was not only because of the admiring glances of people in the shops, for whom a\ \ man's value could only be as

high as the cost of the things he could buy. And it was not all\ of it because of Oyo's words, her happiness when an important visitor could praise what he\ had been given, and her angry silences when there was nothing but the food of ruffians and the drink of ruffians to be given to these big people when they came. There was also,\ \ inside the man himself, a very strong happiness whenever he found himself able, no matter\ for how brief a spell, to do the heroic things that were expected all the time, even if in the\ end it was only himself he was killing. How was it possible for a man to control himself,\ when the admiration of the world, the pride of his family and \underline{his own secret happiness}, at\ least for the moment, all demanded that he lose control of himself and behave like someone\ he was not and would never be? Money. Power.\ (p 115) (emphasis mine).
\end{quote}

At times, the man perceives himself as a criminal and goes even to think about things he could do to 'redeem' himself in front of his family, as is the case for Baako in \textit{Fragments}. He frequently questions himself and the values of his society to allow for a clear understanding of the prevalent traumatic situation, and to enable himself surmount the confusion he is enduring. In effect, the man's constant questioning mirrors his interest to find an end to corruption and selfishness. His aspiration for change is presented as being a necessity for the group, for all individuals.

Notwithstanding the protagonist's moral consciousness, however, 'the basic stance of the man, from beginning to end, is that of an enduring stoic'
\footnote{%
. Webb, Hugh. \textit{Passionate Spaces : African Literature} \textit{and the Post-colonial Context}, op cit, p 89.}. Unlike the teacher, he is shown to have the capacity to cope with the corrupt world around. Furthermore, he is shown to lead a helpless life which is overwhelmed with disappointment and despair. In fact, the aimless life of the man indicates his failure to overcome his passivity. The question 'Why do we agree to go on like this ? '(p26) illustrates the uneasiness at this state of acquiescence and indifference. However both protagonists, Okara's Okolo and Armah's the man, seem to follow the same moral line, a sharp distinction can be made between the two with reference to their understanding of moral obligations.

The man's moral preoccupations do not seem to provide help in the definition of a workable scheme to 'change ' the gruesome state of affairs of the Ghanaian society. What his morality enables him to do is to protect himself- and just himself- against corruption. The man, in contrast to Okolo, lacks the indispensable determination to fight immorality in other people. True, he refused Amankwa's bribe, but he does nothing to stop another clerk to finish the deal with the timber contractor. Hence, while Okolo 'endeavours to change his society for the better without allowing himself to be changed for the worse by that society '\footnote{%

Egudu, Romannu N. 'Five Nigerian Novels and public Morality 'in Okafor. Dubem (ed), \textit{Meditations} \textit{on African Literature}, op cit, p64.% }, while he mounts a moral campaign which costs him his life, the man just appears as the absolute epitome of impotence and helplessness. The reader, thus, is left with an ambivalent attitude towards the man. A case in point is when the man refuses to sign the boat contract, but at the same time could not help to prevent his wife to get involved. Rather, he accompanies her to Koomson's house where they finalise the deal. The man's morality is therefore constantly put into question. 'The reader's first and most lasting impression of the man' asserts Gikandi :

\begin{quote}
is that of a human being condemned to apologize for his clean existence. As an agent of the narrative, he is not an active or assertive character. He rarely responds to his world in any self-supporting way, and the fact that

he suffers because the world is corrupt is not always convincing; the man is simply overwhelmed by his situation. Even anger comes to the man as a delayed effect which is never activated\footnote{%
Gikandi, Simon. \textit{Reading the African Novel}, op cit, p76.}.
\end{quote}

Certainly, Armah intends to show that moral awareness alone does not suffice to bring the desired change. It should, however, be translated into action to ensure a better future; to give birth to the 'Beautiful Ones'. The title of the novel indeed confirms that neither the man nor the teacher are considered as 'beautiful' people, despite the moral character of their personalities.

Such critics as Robert Fraser and Neil Lazarus conceive the man as a very positive and honest figure of the highest integrity. His efforts to withstand corruption are shown to translate his moral insight and self discipline. Other critics such as Derek Wright, Leonard Kibera, and Shatto Arthur Gakwandi do not see in the man any strength or optimism. The man is rather considered to be more interested in his own survival than in the moral uplifting of his society \footnote{%
Cf. Booker, M.Keith. \textit{The African Novel in English} , op cit, pp 104-105.}. Armah's description of the man, in fact, unfolds two main concerns : first that moral consciousness alone is not enough to make change, it should be transferred into 'action '. Second that 'action ' is not the business of one individual, it is a group work. Certainly, Armah wants to provide a picture of the very moral individual who lacks the strength to move alone towards the realization of social integrity. In \textit{Two Thousand Seasons}, Armah insists that 'a group thinking together could act, but a single person thinking would spread mere dreams- childish occupation' \footnote{%
Armah, Ayi Kwei. \textit{Two Thousand Seasons} , op cit, p 116.}. Of course, the very title of the novel illustrates that Armah does not consider the man as a ' beautiful' individual. Through his description of the man, therefore, Armah wants to convey the following message :

\begin{quote}
The working together of minds connected, souls connected, \ travelling along that one way, our way, the way. Connected\ thought, connected action : that is the beginning of our journey\ back to our self, to living again the connected life, travelling again along our way, the way \footnote{%
Ibid, p 134.}
\end{quote}

Armah's protagonist is not given a name, he is just 'the man '. With this lack of a real identity, Armah presents him as a sort of Everyman and suggests 'at once his anonymity and universality '\footnote{%
Arab, Si Abderrahmane. \textit{The Individual and the Urban Situation} \textit{in the Negro African Novel} (from 1934 to 1966), V II, (Doctorat Bi - cycle Thesis, University of Algiers, 1973) p 361.}. Still, what is universal in the man? What does he share with the rest of mankind? In fact, it seems that Armah skilfully works on every stylistic feature to help unravel his moral preoccupations. Actually the man's lack of a name indicates the universality of his 'humanity', it denotes Everyman's humane and good - natured essence. M. Keith Booker contends : ' given the man's apparent uniqueness in his society, his namelessness might suggest that he is the only character who maintains a genuine humanity amid the dehumanizing conditions in which he lives'\footnote{%
Booker, M. Keith. \textit{The African Novel in English} , op cit, \ p 105.}. Accordingly, the nature of human beings, Armah seems to suggest is integrity and virtue.

Teacher, though shown to have a better understanding of the Ghanaian predicament than the man he is also suffering from passivity. He has resolved to withdraw from the world around him and to live in seclusion in a small room, thus allowing his pessimistic vision to ride over his thoughts. The only remaining worthwhile activity for Teacher seems to be reading books which serve to confirm his despondent conclusions about the Ghanaian state of affairs, and to intensify his feelings of loneliness. Obviously, to the man's appeal for help, Teacher can provide no response, since he himself lacks the strength to deal with the situation. He tells the man 'I don't feel any hope in me any more' (p61). Teacher's disbelief in 'tomorrow', in fact, is the outcome of the dashed hopes of the early independence days. This all- pervasive pessimism finds its origin in the particular ideological nature of the original hopes.

When Teacher puts in the balance the promise that the future can hold and the gloom of the present situation, he quickly sinks in despair, and fears to be further disappointed by possible changes in governance. The juxtaposition of 'the greatly beautiful things that could be' with 'starkly ugly things that are' (p79) allegorically works to oppose the future 'goodness' to the present 'corruption'. The latter, for the teacher, is something that Ghanaians choose to live with. Ghanaians are willing to live in darkness because it fits their materially-minded spirits, they are unwilling to believe that there is a way out of it, they are eager to throw 'the bringer of unwanted light' (p79) with such accusations as : 'delusioned, madman, ill', ... etc. Teacher, thus, prefers to abandon the enlightening role he is supposed to fulfill. Nevertheless, he could enlighten the man about the cause of his unhappiness. He confirms his morality in a world gone wrong. 'It may be that you cannot lie very well, and you are afraid to steal, that is what is wrong with you' (p57). Also, Teacher provides one of the key-solutions to the Ghanaian plight which resides in 'action'. To turn one's beliefs into action will give sense to the concept of freedom. As Teacher puts it : 'If we can't consume ourselves for something we believe in, freedom makes no difference at all. You see I am free to do what I want, but there is nothing hapenning now that I want to join' (p61).

Armah's liberal humanist approach which displays his commitement to man whose essence is freedom is, therefore, directly moulded by the Akan belief in the free will of the individual, but with a determinism guided by ethics and morality.

It is quite evident that Armah does not present the man and Teacher as archetypal moral individuals. On the contrary, their descriptions emphasize the flaws in their characters, which hinders the realization of their full 'beauty'. Teacher's escapist attitude towards the agitations of post-colonial Ghana, for instance, is absolutely repudiated by Armah. Teacher is already living death. In his dispair, he abandons the supposedly crucial role of the intellectual in a post-colonial era, hence intensifying the general decadence. Teacher, thus, lacks the kind of commitment and dedication intellectuals manifest in their struggle against neo - colonial pressure. Unquestionably, Armah's description of teacher is meant to condemn the ineffectualness of intellectuals in post- independence Ghana and to stress their momentous role in the struggle against neo- colonialism.

In contrast to the first type of characters, Armah presents the corrupt individuals who make the majority of the Ghanaian scene. Such characters as Koomson, for instance, are shown to accelerate the move towards destruction and death. They are the fickle leaders akin to the 'manipulators' of Armah's 'The Healers' who try to influence people through unfair means to serve chiefly their own interests. These individuals are driven by the calls of the materialistic pressure that characterized the Ghanaian

post-independence era, and the way they choose is that of 'corruption' and 'public theft'. Koomson's attempt to sign the boat contract with Oyo reveals his eagerness to accumulate money and to parade his recently acquired importance. Oyo herself does not conceive of salvation without acquiring money and power and the 'blinding gleam of beautiful new houses and the shine of powerful new Mercedes cars. It is also the scent of expensive perfumes and the mass of a new wig' (p56). Teacher comments that this kind of salvation is 'only within the cycle of our damnation itself' (p56).

In his second novel, Armah develops further the theme of materialism in contemporary Ghana. As a 'been-to', Baako is expected to return to his family and relatives with a huge amount of consumer goods. His return home, with just a guitar is quite a disappointment for his kith and kin.

Indirectly, Armah seems to blame colonialism for having made the materialistic spirit a key feature of modern Ghana's life. Baako speculates: 'the voyage abroad, everything that follows; it's very much a colonial thing'

. Armah, Ayi Kwei. *Fragments*. op cit, p 103.}. Material success, therefore, becomes the standard by which people's importance is measured. Social climbing was the passport to a world of pretence and appearances. Addressing Baako, Ocran points to the phoney claims to importance of: 'all the people needing to have things\ to set them above people. Position,\ power, cars, wigs, houses, money.\ If they lost those things they'd get\ sick with their own emptiness'

. Ibid, p 192.}. Money, therefore, is condemned as a cult leading to waste and loss because of diverting individuals from their duties towards society and nation building.

Corruption is thus so widespread in the world Armah depicts that every Ghanaian is charged with fraud and deceit. The statement that Egya Akon 'was a man of this country, but did not have the character to steal from his work' (p77) suggests that ethics are turned upside down by the whole Ghanaian society. It is Nkrumah, however, who is seen to have done the greatest injustice to Ghana, by using the power given him by his loving people to achieve his personal objectives. 'One man', writes Armah, 'with the help of people who loved him and believed in him, had arrived at power and used it for himself' (p157). The allegorical aspects of the novel suggest that many African leaders have forsaken the early independence ideals to indulge in the enrichment of themselves and the impoverishment of their countries. The seducingly 'clean' life African leaders and politicians are getting, however, hides the most rotten side of it. Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's play keeps washing her hands, after Duncan's murder, but they remain 'dirty' with the stench of her crime on them. The man remarks that 'some kind of that cleanness has more rottenness in it than the slime at the bottom of a garbage dump' (p44). Certainly, this is not to deny the yearning of the mind to attain wealth and progress. What the man does reject, however, is the unethical and phoney way Ghanaians approach progress, and which seems to be the only course of action taken in post- independence Ghana. About the temptations of Koomson's comfortable life the man speculates:

\begin{quote}

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. And everybody knew the chances of finding\ a way that was not rotten from the beginning were always ridiculously\ small (pp 144-145).

\end{quote}

Armah, therefore, condemns the corrupt means Ghanaians use to reach their goals, a path that the man, for example, strives to eschew. Nevertheless, the public attitude towards the two major types of characters is a reverse

one, indicating the phoniness of the world Armah pictures. Honesty, in Armah's novel, is considered as a 'social vice' (p51) in which only the 'coward' or the 'fool' takes refuge. Corruption, on the other hand, is considered as the passport to success. Koomson, for instance, is seen as the saviour who is going to put an end to Oyo and her mother's suffering, as a 'Jesus Christ' who is going to bring them salvation. Such an appraisal, however, does not take long to turn to the opposite direction. The close association of Koomson with rottenness becomes evident at the close of the novel, when he has to escape death after the coup d'état. Through the character of this party man, therefore, the reader is exposed to the vagaries of the Ghanaian political body which is rotten at the bottom, and devoid of a moral force to drive it. The scene of Koomson hiding himself in the man's house is very illustrative of the 'polluted' body-politic :

\begin{quote}

His mouth had the rich stench of \ \ rotten menstrual blood. The man held\ his breath until the new smell had gone\ down in the mixture with the liquid atmosphere of the party man's farts\ \ filling the room. At the same time Koomson's insides gave a growl longer\ than usual, an inner fart of personal corrupt thunder which in its fullness\ sounded as if it had rolled down from the eating throat thundering through the\ belly and the guts, to end in further silent pollution of the air already\ thick with flatulent fear (p 163).

\end{quote}

The constant correlation between rottenness and politics, rottenness and power highlights Armah's endeavour to draw the parallel between the two. The derogatory connotation of the word 'rotten' suggests : corruption, wickedness, immorality and degeneration; a set of reference which reflects the writer's moral concerns.

The integrating symbol in Armah's \textit{The Beautiful Ones} is dirt, the symbol of moral depravation. It is worked through the entire novel as an integrating device to which all facts are related. The dirt symbol is a conventional one, whose meaning is defined by a previous mutual understanding between reader and writer (such writers as Faulkner, Rabelais, Swift, Soyinka, made use of it in their works). In contrast to the dirt symbol, cleanliness comes to stand for 'goodness' and 'morality', which seems to find no place in the Ghana Armah depicts. Throughout the novel, Armah cleverly manipulates these leading symbols around which his thematic concerns are framed. Certainly, Armah's symbolist mode is a modernist feature which characterizes all 'writerly' texts. The general tendency of modernist writing is towards symbolic structure and texture. One symbolic image, which Armah uses to evoke the possibility of freedom from corruption, is that of the clean water that escapes through a small gap the general filthy stream to allow for 'this beautiful freedom from dirt' (p23). Armah's equation of cleanness to beauty and that of dirt to ugliness runs throughout the novel to reinforce Armah's aspiration to a better future and accentuate his condemnation of the present anomy in the political sphere, leaving society to its own devices.\

\chapter{Ethics and Aesthetics : The 'Beautiful', the Ugly and the debate over the moral}

To try a definition of morality is to step into a philosophical quagmire. Yet Griffin's attempt seems to bear insight as far as \textit{The Beautiful Ones} is concerned.\ For Griffin 'morals are a category of values, and ethics is a code of conduct related to them'\footnote{% Quoted in Crookes, Graham. \textit{A Practicum in} \textit{TESOL : Professional Development through Teaching Practice} UK : Cambridge University Press, 2003 p 87.}. Yet the question which imposes itself here is

just for the moment. Man is the only judge of his moral decisions. Still, if Man is alone judge of his actions and if he recognizes no established moral code, it seems difficult to understand how he can live in a community or how he can accept the democratic way of life'\footnote{%

Hardr\{'e}, Jacques. `Sartre's Existentialism and Humanism'. in \textit{% Studies in Philosophy}, 49 (July, 1952) p 545.}. In contrast with Sartre, Armah believes that there is a universal human nature, and that Man can by no means enjoy his life individually. This is absolutely mirrored in his later fiction which calls for union and communal life. Foli's speech at Baako's departure, in \textit{Fragments}, was strong enough to show the danger of `aloneness' and to confirm the natural bond between individuals of the same community. `there are no humans born alone. You are a piece of us, of those gone before', asserts Foli, `...A human being alone is a thing more sad than any lost animal and nothing destroys the soul like its aloneness'% \footnote{%

Armah, Ayi Kwei. \textit{Fragments}, op cit, pp4-5.}. Armah's communal vision, in fact, goes with that of the humanist who :

\begin{quote}

...also believes that Man's happiness is conditioned by his relations with his fellow- men.\ This relationship, in time as well as in space is characterized, according to humanism, by a communion and, as far as relations in space are concerned, by an interdependence which contrast with both rugged individualism and class consciousness. In fact without this communion there could not be a humanism.\footnote{%

Hardr\{'e}, Jacques. `Sartre's Existentialism and Humanism', in \textit{% Studies in Philosophy} op cit, p 537.}

\end{quote}

and without this communion, the possibility of a better future for Armah becomes a mere utopian ideal.

As noted, \textit{The Beautiful Ones} provides the reader with a barely disguised condemnation of post-independence Ghana, and it reflects a writer's concern and worry about the problematic orientation taken by his country's political leaders. Despite the fact that Armah's style misled many of his critics because of its modernist inclination, this very style led other critics to classify Armah among the moral writers. One can refer to Yvor Winters' view, stating that the aesthetic side of a work may play a major role in determining the moral inclinations of the writer. Winters argues :\ ` We must not forget that this quality,\ form, is not something outside the poet,\ something ``aesthetic'', and superimposed\ upon his moral

content; it is essentially\ a part, in fact it may be the decisive\ part, of the moral content'\footnote{%

Winters, Yvor. \textit{In Defense of Reason}, op cit, p22.}.

Armah's knowledge and evaluation of `evil' in post-independence Ghana, thus, translates his moral attitude. The latter is communicated through the whole novel by means of certain technical strategies fused in symbolism. For instance, `Armah's presentation of the gleam' argues M.Keith Booker `inverts the traditional white image structure in which whiteness and light are associated with good, blackness and dark with evil' \footnote{%

Booker, M.Keith. \textit{The African Novel in English}, op cit, p 104.}.

Images of brightness and whiteness stand as representatives of the temptation of western commodity culture. The `gleam ' is shown to encompass all the evil brought to Ghana by the white man, working as a metaphor for the rampant materialism of modern society. For Armah, this corrupt brightness serves to seduce every Ghanaian into craving for wealth and fortune. While the man resists the temptation of the `gleam' despite the pressure put on him by society, however, the Ghanaians surrender in

compliance to secure the affluence Ghanaian politicians enjoy; a prosperity which only sharpens the inequities in postcolonial Ghanaian society. Brightness, in Armah's world, therefore, turns out to conceal the even more unjust and corrupt side of society. Booker emphasizes:

\begin{quote}

Material symbols of Western wealth (such as the Atlantic-Caprice tourist hotel) are painted in dazzling white and bathed in bright light. But this brightness merely obscures the exploitation and injustice that allow such wealth to exist amid the general poverty of Ghana \footnote{%

Idem.}).

\end{quote}

The paraphrasable content of \textit{The Beautiful Ones} can simply offer such suggestions as : 'post- independence Ghana is corrupt'and 'those leaders who can save their country are still awaited'. Still, Armah's aim goes beyond this mere realization. Armah wants to express his feelings of anger and disgust at the decadent situation of the 1960's Ghana, and he intends to make the reader share his feelings. It is therefore adequate to share Winters' conviction that a writer's moral attitude towards a subject is 'a matter not only of logical content, but of feeling as well'\footnote{% Winters, Yvor. \textit{In Defense of Reason}, op cit, p 20.}.

This does not mean that \textit{The Beautiful Ones} corresponds to the conception of literature as a safety valve. It is not an instance in which Armah escapes responsibility by pouring his 'feeling' in work and leave it behind him. On the contrary, Armah means to stir feelings of dissatisfaction at the prevailing decadence, which in turn will help the creation of a desire to refuse the actual situation and to bring changes to it.\textit{\ The Beautiful Ones}, in fact, intends the transfer of such feelings into action. It is not revolutionary literature proper, but it has the same revolutionary passion one can feel in, say, the poems of Philip Freneau or the essays of Thomas Paine. The call for revolutionary action, in fact, is implicitly but strongly signified through Armah's condemnation of the sterility and impotence of the man's and Teacher's lives. Though depicted as morally enlightened characters, Teacher and the man are never presented by Armah as the 'saviours' of Ghana or as the ' beautiful ' people who will cure Ghana of its ills. The need for collective action among Ghanaians against their unscrupulous leaders constitutes the centre of Armah's interests in \textit{The Beautiful Ones}. In reality, Armah's emphasis on revolutionary action transcends the lives of his characters to include his own life. When he left Ghana for a scholarship in America, Armah intended to specialize in literature, but after his first year at Harvard his interest shifted to the social science disciplines, which actually helped to shape Armah's revolutionary sentiments. In an autobiographical essay he entitled ' One Writer's Education ', Armah maintains :

\begin{quote}

My old respect and affection for authors whose work had moved me was now transferred, not indeed to eminent sociologists, but to persons and groups that had worked to create new, better social realities in place of those they had found at birth. These, after all, were practically involved in creativity of a more difficult and necessary type, and it mattered not at all that their work was essentially anonymous. It was to that kind of creativity that I wanted to engage my life \footnote{%

Armah, Ayi Kwei. 'One Writer's Education ' (1952-53) quoted in

Lindfors.Bernth, \textit{African Textualities : Texts, Pretexts and Contexts} \textit{of African Literature} ', op cit, p 68.)

\end{quote}

Before he could graduate, Armah decided to leave Harvard to look for work

that would answer his moral, social and political preoccupations. What Armah has in mind upon leaving Harvard was 'to work with the liberation movements in southern Africa' \footnote{%

Ibid, p 69.) yet though he could not realize this ambition and ended with a nervous breakdown, Armah's interest in revolutionary action did not weaken and remained manifest in his writings, thus translating his hope to contribute to the moral and political recovery of modern Africa. \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \ \

To be sure, the fact that Armah wants to communicate his feelings of anger and disillusion may put him along the lines of romantic writers who believe that literature is a purely emotional experience. However, Armah seems to do more than to give free rein to his emotions; his bitter criticism of Ghana reflects the sore realizations of an insightful writer who cares for his society. \textit{The Beautiful Ones} is therefore, seen to communicate the emotion which is motivated by the rational understanding of the post-independence Ghanaian experience.

Accordingly, Armah appears as a moral absolutist in so far as he believes in the right of societies to lead a 'good' life. 'The absolutist believes in the existence of absolute truths and values', writes Winters, 'and it is the duty of every man and every society to endeavour as far as may be to approximate them'\footnote{%

Winters, Yvor. \textit{In Defense of Reason}, op cit, p 10.}\ Armah, indeed, attempts to drive his countrymen to realize the general welfare of Ghana, though in his own peculiar way. It is therefore adequate to say that Armah's novel tends to 'describe and reveal the discoveries which come from an honest and relentless effort to explore to the bitter end the nature of human experience'\footnote{%

Farrell, T. James. \textit{Literature and Morality}, op cit, p\$_{XI}\$.). Apparently, the daring descriptions provided by Armah about the Ghanaian experience did not please many compatriots and critics.\ The latter could even charge him with disloyalty, hence providing a sentimental appreciation which lacks rational grounds. They tend to ignore Armah's moral conclusions about Ghana or to refute them altogether.

There is undeniably a didactic purpose behind \textit{The Beautiful Ones}, yet one cannot assume that the sole end of the novel is didacticism. After all, the reader enjoys the pleasure of a literary work, while reading the novel, though a different sort of pleasure; a painful yet truthful one. In his first novel, Armah exposes the social evils as an inevitable result of the exploitation of man by man.\ Throughout the novel Armah tends to show that the major causative factor of social immorality is the exploitation of the lower class- the masses - by the ruling bourgeois class. His tendency in fact is Marxist in essence indeed. 'Marxism', argues James.T.Farrell 'declares without equivocation that the exploitation of man by man is the major causative factor underlying social immorality'\footnote{% . Ibid, p 4.}. To fight social immorality, however, For Armah, the way ahead depends on the resurrection of forgotten truths and moral codes which are the 'gift' of tradition. He strongly maintains :

\begin{quote}

The greatest source of power and influence available to the African tradition is its acceptance and imaginative use of the archetypal dream of total liberation, the end of all conflict and injustice, the advent of utopian conditions of abundance and freedom, the thoroughgoing negation of the repressive facts of real life \footnote{%

Armah, Ayi Kwei. 'African Socialism : Utopian or Scientific?' Pr'\{e}sence Africaine, op cit, p 8.}.

\end{quote}

Armah laments the goodness of the 'old days ' and contrasts it to the 'low' character of the present : 'How horribly rapid everything has\ been from the days when men were not ashamed to talk of souls and of suffering and of hope, to these low days of smiles that will never again\ \ be sly enough to hide the knowledge of betrayal and deceit'(p62), writes Armah. The present and the past are constantly juxtaposed in Armah's works.\ The 'beauty' of the past is contrasted with the 'ugliness' of the present. Armah's reference to the past is always appealing, while his reference to the present is always appalling. \textit{In Fragments}, Foli's words at Baako's departure took Naana to a 'clear' past which is full of understanding. Naana remarked :

\begin{quote}

The words took me away into a \ past that filled me with satisfaction because everything in it was full of\ \ understanding. After the words, there were sounds that rose before me as if \ all this crowded present had never come at all, and days and years \ already gone had come again to live with us, their sounds bringing clearness\ out of the dim forgotten nights

\footnote{{\small .} Armah, Ayi Kwei. \textit{Fragments}, op cit, p 4{\small % .}}.

\end{quote}

In his novel \textit{The Voice}, Gabriel Okara proceeds from the same symbolic manipulation of the concepts of morality and corruption as Armah. Okara refers to morality as something clean and straight, whereas to corruption and depravity as something dirty and filthy. Both writers, actually, regret the dramatic reversal of the earlier confident times and look back on the past to gain assurance in the future. Both writers, therefore, condemn the 'gloomy' present and seek refuge in the past which offers the best solutions to preserve the future. Okara indicates : 'Our fathers' insides always contained\ thing straight. They did straight things.\ Our insides were also clean and we did the\ straight things until the new time came. We can still sweep the dirt out of our\ houses every morning'\footnote{% Okara, Gabriel. \textit{The Voice}, op cit, p 50.}.

Armah tries, indeed, to express the problems and contradictions of the particular period of post- independence in Ghana, in a search for authentic values as part of a consideration of the way forward out of the actual 'nightmare'. He, thus, seeks the retrieval of the African past to find the clues for the building of a better future.\ The solution as Armah sees it is to use the past for the present in a regeneration of spirit that will lead

to a better life in the future. The movement for a recovery of wholeness and purpose (which is much evident in a novel like \textit{Two Thousand Seasons} and its concept of the 'way') suggests Armah's nostalgia for some past golden age. Okot p'Bitek also shares Armah's conviction that traditional values are meaningful and coherent and should retain their place in contemporary Africa : 'The ways of your ancestors\ /\ Are good,\ / Their customs are solid /\ And not hollow\ / They are not thin, not easily breakable\ /\ They cannot be blown away /\ By the winds /\ Because their roots reach deep into the soil'\footnote{% p'Bitek, Okot. Song of Lawino. 1966; rpt. Nairobi : East African Publishing House. 1973. p29 in Webb. Hugh, \textit{Passionate Spaces}, op cit, pp 103-104.}.

The fact that the coup d'\{e}tat at the end of \textit{The Beautiful Ones} brings\ no change, not only reflects the failure of the new regime to get over the prevailing anarchy, but mirrors the writer's attempt to highlight the necessity for a 'new' age of virtue which will hold the promise for the future. Accordingly, Armah seems to emphasize the significance of the moral code as a vital element in the process of change of the actual socio -

political reality tending towards a racial clarification for the Ghanaian state of affairs after independence, in an attempt to collect the remnants of the 'glorious' past. Contrary to the advocates of social change as the major means for the creation of social morality\footnote{% James, T. Farrell. states two approaches to morality : social morality which assumes that evil is derivable from the structural character of society. Its aim, thus, is to change society to create better moral conditions; and Individual or personal morality which aims at individual regeneration. See James T. Farrell, \textit{Literature} \textit{and Morality}, op cit, pp3-6.}% , therefore, Armah illustrates the futility of the subsequent coup d'\''{e}tat. The latter could not display an effort to counter the corrupt manifestations of government. Corruption, on the contrary, continues to exist, and the new regime is the first to profit from it. 'New men would take into their hands the power to steal the nation's riches and to use it for their own satisfaction'(p162) asserts the narrator in \textit{The Beautiful Ones}. Armah's presentation of the coup d'\''{e}tat at the end of \textit{The Beautiful Ones} is by no means an attempt to provide an opportunity for a new beginning. Despite the seemingly national interest and patriotic duty, military coups have proved to be sometimes even more corrupt and oppressive than the civilian governments they have deposed. Soldiers have been known to be more corrupt, greedy and incompetent. Samuel Decalo assures that 'military intervention has not always been conducted to 'rescue' the nation from political ills. Coups have been linked directly or indirectly with personal ambitions and the craving for power by some \specific key players'\footnote{% Decalo, Samuel.\textit{\ Coups and Army Rule in Africa} clinton : the Colonial Press Inc, 1976. p 231.}.

Individual morality, on the other hand, does not seem to provide an alternative solution.\ The purification of the man through water which is believed to have a cleansing effect does not make of him one of the 'Beautiful' people. The man's morality, in fact, seems to lead him to moral priggishness and escape. What is needed, Armah seems to say, is a collective attempt to put individual morality into practice, to put into action the moral code. According to Armah, the man is not one of the 'Beautiful' ones, because he suffers from moral paralysis and because of his passivity. The intended mistake in the title of Armah's novel may reveal his attempt to deny the holders of future promise a kind of contracted beauty. Instead, Armah notes the complete form of beauty they possess. Of course, one cannot fail to notice Armah's equation of beauty with morality.

Armah, in fact, is pondering on the moral position of the politician or leader. No question for him that leaders are supposed to play their role properly and, therefore, assume their moral responsibility towards their people. It is obviously necessary to relate morality and politics, in so far as the latter is supposed to organise and implement the best policies possible to guarantee social order and stability. Graham Crookes argues: 'it is worth recognizing that political systems have a morality. That is they are attempts to say what one should do, within a system of governance'% \footnote{%

Crookes, Graham. \textit{A Practicum in TESOL} : \textit{Professional Development Through Teaching Practice}, op cit, p 95.

\par

{}) to arrive, of course, at a fairly governed and organized society. A case in point is the American Constitution which encompasses the concept that humans inherently have rights (Liberty, Equality and the Pursuit of Happiness) which should be respected in order to arrive at a fair society.

The ethical revitalization of the political system, therefore, ensures the healthy climate for political activity and prepares the ground for the various institutions of the government to operate positively. Albeit ethical

resuscitation is meant for ordinary people as well as political leaders, the latter seem to require it more as regards their paramount role in the reshaping of the people's lives. However, Ghanaian politicians, according to Armah, can achieve 'beauty' in its wholeness, only 'when the way is found again' \footnote{%

Armah, Ayi Kwei. \textit{Two Thousand Seasons}, op cit, p 57.}. The African tradition certainly offers, for Armah, the badly-needed ethical foundation for a corruption- free political system. Just like Armah, Egudu suggests the traditional model as an alternative to the modern African political system. He posits :

\begin{quote}

The relationship between the leaders and the followers in the modern political system in which the leader is lord and ruler and the masses are passive, oppressed followers can be corrected on the basis of the model that existed in the traditional society \footnote{%

Egudu, Romanus.N. 'Five Nigerian Novels and Public Morality 'in Okafor Dubem(ed) \textit{Meditations} \textit{on African Literature} , op cit, p 104.}.\ \ \

\end{quote}

The lack of clarity in Armah's moral message which the reader may note in \textit{The Beautiful Ones} gradually gives way to a more focused picture in his subsequent works. Armah, in fact, not only refers to the source of morality being the resourceful traditional values and ethics but emphasizes the point that these values have to be put into practice. The transfer of these values to action, should not only be in terms of the 'don'ts' as shown in \textit{The Beautiful Ones} by the man, but also in terms of the 'do's'. Armah, indeed, wants to show that such values translate a lifestyle which applies to all domains, including politics. If Armah, therefore, stresses a re-establishment of the 'way' in \textit{Two Thousand Seasons}, for instance, it is to stress the return to the sum of values that shaped the African authentic mode of existence. In this novel, Armah wants to point out the importance of the origins and how dangerous it is for a people to refuse to acknowledge the originality and richness of their traditional sources. \ For Armah, such a people are doomed to destruction in their ignorance of such sources, and are facing annihilation. Armah contends that 'a people losing sight of origins are dead' \footnote{%

Armah, Ayi Kwei. \textit{Two Thousand Seasons}, op cit, p \$_{XIV}\$.).

At the positive pole of moral values, the concept of the way plays an essential part in \textit{Two Thousand Seasons}. The collective voice in the novel, in fact, suits the collective national response at which Armah aims. In the Ghana Armah depicts in \textit{The Beautiful Ones}, there is no unity directed to building a better life, there is no collective sense of direction. Aiming at the rebirth of a whole generation, therefore, Armah seems to call for the setting up of a communalist country, based on collective values of the past. 'the only real power a black man can have', writes Armah, 'will come from black people' (p82). Armah insists that the solution to the Ghanaian predicament in particular and the African one in general resides in this return to the origins. 'The hopes of a whole people' (p162) seem to depend on the unity of all Africans, which reflects the national direction of Armah's vision mainly clarified in his subsequent works. Armah asserts the existence of 'two forces : unity and division. The first creates. The second destroys' \footnote{%

. Armah, Ayi Kwei. \textit{The Healers}, 1978; rpt. London : Heinemann, 1979 p 82.}. The 'way' is a unified and purposeful path which leads towards the realization of justice, which puts the community above the isolate self.

In \textit{The Beautiful Ones}, Armah values the human capacity to free itself from corruption (through the man for instance), summarizing the

individual struggle with the 'self' to ensure salvation. On a much larger scale, Armah's subsequent works evidence a realization of the scanty scope of the individual struggle, and offers the communal alternative as the real preserver of values. Because he sees 'Africa as a community without unity'

Killam, Douglas and Rowe, Ruth (eds) *The Companion to African Literatures*, op cit, p31.}, Armah, thus clearly calls for an 'African union' which derives strength from the African past communal values. 'Armah's novels', writes Simon Gikandi, 'have become a forum for advocating the unification of African cultures, of the bringing together of those value systems that inspired the continent in the past as a prelude to a future of true national independence'

Gikandi, Simon. *Reading the African Novel*, op cit, p3.}. *Two Thousand Seasons*, for instance, represents Armah's literary protest directed to the articulation of values that will enable the African peoples to move forward collectively and fruitfully.

In *Why Are We So Blest*?, Armah advocates the need for a classless society, where individuals would equally benefit from the available lucrative resources. From a moral standpoint Armah lashes at the inequities of the hierarchical society and draws much on his revolutionary objectives; he asserts the necessity to create an egalitarian society which would preserve individuals' rights and prevent unscrupulousness and profligacy; the key enemies of communal peaceful life. 'The revolutionary ideal' writes Armah 'is an actual, working egalitarian society'

Armah, Ayi Kwei. *Why Are We So Blest*, op cit, p222.}, the idea that each individual in society works with all the others for the general welfare of the whole, not for the single profit of a minority. Individualism is seen to go counter to the communal ideal and, thus, is condemned. In *Why Are We So Blest*? Armah contends that :

begin{quote}

The best that is absent from this heavy, mediocre world would be its mark: community. In place of isolate bodies, greedy to consume more privileges to set us above, apart from others, there would be community : sustenance, suffering, endurance, relief, danger-all shared

Ibid, p 114. *{small .}*

end{quote}

It is only through a rediscovery of the 'way' again that the ideal of unity could be fulfilled. The restoration of the Ibibirman 'that was the community of all black people'

Armah, Ayi Kwei. *The Healers*, op cit, p 84.}, as Armah referred to it in *The Healers* is a long-term project. Armah avers 'the highest work, the bringing together again of the black people, will take centuries'

Ibid, p 83.}. To prepare for the future, however, it is indispensable to return to the past, the source of truths.

Readers of *The Beautiful Ones* may feel doubts vis-à-vis Armah's nationalistic fervour. Armah's debasement of Ghanaian leaders and citizens may corroborate such doubts. A thorough reading of the novel, however, certainly reveals Armah's intentions 'both to make Africa more conscious of its ills and to prescribe corrective remedies for what was wrong'

Lindfors, Bernth. *African Textualities : Texts, Pretexts and Contexts of African Literature*, op cit, p 85.}. Therefore, though Armah's condemnation of Ghanaian leaders may seem to counter the nationalist objectives; mainly unity, it is this very condemnation which serves to fight the causes of disunity in Ghana. At all events, this is no easy or joyful task for Armah or for other writers. Brenda Cooper argues :

\begin{quote}

Faced with the now undeniable existence of highly placed blacks in post-colonial Africa, the African writer's task of conceptualising these black figures is complicated by the nationalist tradition that has tended to emphasise black unity. The unsatisfactory solution sometimes settled upon is the figure of the white's puppet or watchdog, where the colonizers retain full culpability and control as before\footnote{%

Cooper, Brenda. \textit{To Lay These Secrets Open} : \textit{Evaluating African Writing}, (Capetown, David Philip Publishers (PTY) Ltd, 1992) p 38.%

}. \end{quote}

To achieve this 'unity', however, Armah does not only offer the return to past communal life, but also suggests unity of language in literature. Both Soyinka and Armah, who themselves write in English, have suggested that African writers should begin to work toward the eventual development of a pan-African literary language, perhaps Swahili'\footnote{%

Booker, M. Keith,\textit{\ The African Novel in English}, op cit, p 16.}. Now, that Armah didn't really provide a practical solution and that he erroneously presents Africa as a classless society without contradictions, Armah may suggest that even if hierarchies existed in Africa, the relationship between ruler and ruled is that of responsibility and respect; the chiefs, the elders, the kings never position themselves above their society looking down.

In many textual instances Armah refers to the concept of beauty which he contrasts to ugliness to mean respectively 'good' and 'evil'. 'Beauty as it is conceived in the novel can exist and may be born'\footnote{%

Folarin, Margaret. 'An additional comment on Ayi Kwei Armah's \textit{The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born}', \textit{African Literature Today}, N\$%
%TCIMACRO{\UNICODE[m]{0xb0}}%

%BeginExpansion
{ }^{\circ}%
%EndExpansion
=5\$ (1971). p128}, and this goes counter to the overall pessimistic impression \textit{The Beautiful Ones} may evoke. The manipulation of the concept of beauty, throughout Armah's novels, reveals the writer's equation of the term to unity and to the strength or power needed to realize it. Real beauty is seen in 'the working together of our whole people along our way'%
\footnote{%

. Armah, Ayi Kwei. \textit{Two Thousand Seasons}, op cit, p 183.}, and it is also seen in ' the waking of the powerless'(p100). The remarks of Solo's companion about the overall view of the medina is, in fact, illustrative of the need for union. 'The beauty comes from the patterns ' he continued:

\begin{quote}

Each little bit of it down there, taken by\ itself, is nothing. In fact most of the\ parts are just ugly when considered singly. But when we draw back and take\ \ a look at the whole, the patterns become clear, like the whole of an anthill seen at\ once, and then we are free to admire the complete picture. \footnote{%

Armah,\ Ayi Kwei. \textit{Why Are We So Blest} ?, op cit, p46.}. \end{quote}

Despite the official Ghanaian independence, Armah seems to emphasize the need for a 'real' revolution to overturn the phony political tenets of 'new' Ghana. This revolution cannot be effected unless the 'Beautiful' ones are born. The return to the communal past values, for Armah, which is the key solution for the neo-colonial predicament, aims to initiate a new

nationalistic and patriotic sentiment which will enable every African to rise to his responsibility towards his country, and to share in its development. Emmanuel Ngara stresses the writer's attempt to influence the reader's attitude towards a given subject; he posits :

\begin{quote}

The writer expresses his own emotions, \ releases the tension in him, satisfies himself by expressing ` this thing in\ this form and these words', while at the same time he hopes to affect\ the reader, to evoke a certain kind of feeling in him or to persuade him\ either to take action or to see life in a new light\footnote{%

Ngara, Emmanuel. \textit{Stylistic Criticism and \ the} \textit{African Novel}%, op cit, p 11.}.

\end{quote}

Armah, indeed, places himself in the vanguard of the search for a valid national direction, in the post - independence period, which is meant for the introduction of change at the socio- political level. Change, however, is by no means the duty of the African leaders alone, but of the whole African people. It is a common struggle for the common welfare. Apparently, Armah highlights the necessity of action through the presentation of passive characters that are not able to resolve the impasse. Their passivity, in fact, is seen to destroy them and inhibit in them any intention of contributing to the promotion of genuine progress in their country. It is this defeatist attitude, well exemplified in the man and the teacher, which makes the writer express doubts about the `beautiful' future of Ghana.

\textit{In The Wretched of the Earth}, Fanon suggests `your passivity serves only to place you in the ranks of the oppressors'\footnote{%

. Fanon, Frantz. \textit{The Wretched of the Earth}, op cit, p 21.}. Teacher and the man do not thus appear as more worthy and `enlightened' people than the common people because of their lack of commitment. However conscious of this emptiness, both men are shown to have little chance to change the existing state of affairs. Both men are shown to fail to turn their intellectual struggle into redemptive action. As put by Emmanuel Kant in \textit{The Metaphysic of Morals} (1797) : \ `struggle, then must accompany\ all attempts to realize virtue, \ \ in society as well as in oneself. Struggle is the guarantee of higher\ intentions, and compromise a surrender\ to base instincts'\footnote{%

Quoted in Kedourie Elie \textit{Nationalism} (London, Hutchinson \& co ltd, 1969), p 30.}.

Armah 's call for the realization of an `African nation' is, in fact, motivated by his attempt to achieve virtue. This, however, can only take place when the power of the group replaces the power of the individual. Rousseau's political thought seems to shed light on Armah's vision, he argues that : `neither individual nor state could attain happiness or virtue unless\ man exchanged a general will\ for his own selfish particular\ will, and willed the good of all,\ rather than his own'\footnote{%

Quoted in Kedourie, Elie. \textit{Nationalism}, Ibid, p 40.}.

Armah's progressive vision emanates from the nature of his liberal humanist discourse which points at man's capability of \ unlimited achievements in a positive and progressive world.\ Clearly, in the face of post- independence malaise, Armah's discourse can be seen to confront the bleakness of reality, hence reacting both aggressively and desperately. Indeed a sense of despair overwhelms the novel, and pervades Armah's subsequent works. The view that life in Ghana is a new `inferno' that is endured is expressed by Armah's protagonist in \textit{The Beautiful Ones}. At times, Armah could be felt to ask : how can one look forward to a future that proceeds from such a dismal present ? However, expressions of pessimism are only statements which reveal a writer's worry about his country. In reality, there are many elements of

despair in the novel : Kofi Billy's death, Maanan's madness, teacher's disbelief in 'tomorrow', the futility of the subsequent coup d'état, ... etc which may signify the impossibility of hope. The military coup which is presented as an alternative solution to Nkrumah's regime can only reflect the quarrel of Ghana with its own self; between interest and reform the unity of Ghana is the scape-goat. This, indeed, could but intensify the grim and grisly picture of the future for Ghanaians whose consciences are no longer at ease, like the man for instance. Other works by Armah display the same pessimistic attitude. In \textit{Why Are We So Blest }? Solo is shown thinking about the possible things he can do in the `new Africa '. Intellectual discussion no longer appeals to him : \ `What was there to talk about, \ \ anyway? Revolution. \ Commitment. \ Justice. \ The only thing I was aware of these \ days was despair, and it was not a \ thing I wanted to sit and talk about, \ not in this place\footnote{% Armah, Ayi Kwei. \textit{Why Are We So Blest}}, op cit, p 55.}.

Yet to consider \textit{The Beautiful Ones} as being purely pessimistic, while ignoring the clear attempts to suggest possible solutions to Ghana's predicament would be fallacious. There is indeed, in the novel, the hint at the promise of a new life, of some future `goodness', though it is \ at best an uncertain, long- term prospect.

The expression of despair is, thus, turned into a purpose, the aspiration for this return to the past. In fact, despair is shown to reflect this refusal to accept post- independence realities, and is shown to return the mind to the memories of the serene and peaceful past. \ `And even in the decline into the end \ there are things that remind the longing \ mind of old beginnings and hold out \ \ the promise of new ones, things even \ like your despair itself' (p63).

Despite the pessimistic tone of \textit{The Beautiful Ones}, every so often Armah provides a note of hope which hints at the possibility of redemption and regeneration, in an attempt to counter the overwhelming despair and hopelessness in the novel. Oyo's confession to the man and her recognition of his moral integrity is one case in point. \ She told him `I am glad you never became like him \$\left[\textit{Koomson}\right] \$\' (p165).

The inscription on the back of the bus, ``\textit{The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born}'', encircles an image of a very beautiful flower which is engraved on the man's mind. Yet, after a while, the picture of the flower turns into a `single melodious note' (p183). One may immediately wonder what common ground there is between a very beautiful flower and a melodious note. A possible answer may lead us to Ren'\{e} Wellek's and Austin Warren's comment on the figurative use of language in Burns's verses : My love is like a red, red rose.../ My love is like a melody/ That's sweetly played in tune', when they assert that the similarity between a beautiful woman, a fresh red rose, and a sweetly played melody `is their beauty and desirability; they are all, in kind, the best'\footnote{% Wellek Ren'\{e}, Warren Austin. \textit{Theory of Literature} : \textit{A Seminal Study of the Nature and Function of Literature in all its Contexts}, op cit, p 201.}. The common ground, thus, is neither colour nor structure but rather value. Similarly, Armah intends to join the birth of the Beautiful Ones with the desirability of `the best' for Ghana's future. Reference to flowers is another instance `out of the decay and the dung there is always a new flowering' (p85). In fact, even Koomson's escape through the latrine, head first, in an attempt to degrade him, may be seen as a kind of regeneration for him which envisages some hopeful aspiration, because as put by Bakhtin :

\begin{quote}
Degradation ... has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a

leaders for their corrupt practices, hence providing moral enlightenment to make society's moral direction clearer, it is necessary to note that Armah not only condemns the leaders, but also the led, the masses, the intellectuals for contributing to the destruction and deformation of the African identity, if only because of their mere passive attitude. Besides, morality for Armah is not only a matter of politics but of a whole living code, the source of which is the African traditions. Armah's plea for the oppressed puts him along the liberal humanist advocates. \ Armah, however, insists on the fact that part of the responsibility is put on the oppressed himself, in the sense that he should have an active role in the transformation of the actual realities. Armah's moral message, therefore, is directed to the leaders and the led alike and tends to direct their feelings towards revolutionary action. The formal features which tend to enlighten society morally and which reflect the ideological content are quite diverse (such as satire, ridicule, ... etc) and are considered as 'corrective narrative techniques'. The role of such writers like Armah, therefore, was to preserve ideals and bolster them through the organizing process of self-redemption.

\chapter{Conclusion}

It is evident that Armah's writings provide a striking example of a writer's responsibility towards his society. Such an attitude emanates from his belief in the role of the writer as an agent of social change. Actually, African literature in general provides 'an important demonstration that art cannot be separated from the social world '\footnote{%

Booker, M. Keith. \textit{The African Novel in English}, op cit, p 6.}. In his attempt to talk on behalf of the oppressed, Armah provides a general social critique of the Ghanaian world, but chooses as the target of his attacks the African leaders mainly embodied in the figure of president Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah's socialism is highly derided as a 'sloganeering ' theory which has never found a way to be effected in Ghana. Ghanaian leaders and politicians are rather shown busy positioning themselves above their people as a privileged class succeeding to the colonial authorities. There is an Akan proverb from modern Ghana which says 'power is like holding an egg in the hand ... If you hold it too tightly it breaks, and if you hold it too loosely, it drops'\footnote{%

Lliffe, John. \textit{Africans : The History of a Continent}, cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1999 p70.}. Power, in fact, allowed the new African rulers to grow more and more corrupt and dishonest. It helped to encourage their selfish personal interests which went counter their national mission. African leaders seem to hold 'the egg ' so tightly that when it broke they licked its contents.\

Political corruption is seen to be the driving motive behind Armah's attacks on African leaders. Nevertheless, \ corruption is shown to go beyond the political sphere to include the social one. Officers, in the post-independence Ghana Armah portrays in \textit{The Beautiful Ones}, indulge themselves in corruption by profiting from their jobs. Public theft is the national game, justice is absent from the Ghanaian scene. Fraud and deceit are the currency of the time. Corrupt individuals are considered as heroes and moral ones are considered as fools; a reverse situation which only elucidates the falsehood of the principles held in the neo-colonial era. Individualism and materialism are shown to help in the rapid spread of corrupt practices. 'There would always be only one way for the young to reach the gleam. Cutting corners, eating the fruits of fraud ... offering bribe, the way'(p95). This appetite for material goods puts the masses on the same line as their leaders. \ Ghanaians are shown to run after wealth and appearance using unethical means. 'It doesn't matter how they get it '(p54) writes Armah. Therefore, while corruption is considered as the only way to approach the ' gleam', morality seems to be a great handicap. Despite his

harsh criticism of the Ghanaian leaders and led, however, Armah attributes the origin of this anomaly to the colonial experience which greatly deformed the African identity.

The concern of the present research was to examine how Armah fuses the ethic and the aesthetic components. A close scrutiny of the writer's modernist style allowed for an understanding of his moral attitude and moral message. The very setting of *The Beautiful Ones* defines the mood of dejection and translates Armah's moral judgement on the Ghanaian state of affairs. The reiteration of scatological images is meant to heighten the reader's awareness to attain some moral realizations. It deepens the theme of corruption and works as a new means of expressing reality. Armah's use of an offensive kind of language also goes with the modernist writer's tendency to exercise verbal violence as a weapon in his fight for intellectual liberation. Armah's literary protest takes a sarcastic tone which exposes the failings of Ghanaians especially the leaders in an attempt to condemn vice and enoble human virtue. Certainly, the use of satire alludes to what things ought to be, hence evidencing Armah's yearning for change and

redemption. Change, however, does not only concern Armah's corrupt characters like Koomson, but equally involves the moral characters like the man and teacher, who suffer from a passivity that undermines their moral consciousness, and denies them complete 'beauty'. Symbolically, *The Beautiful Ones* employs dirt and ugliness to stand for corruption and beauty and cleanliness to stand for morality in such a way that reveals how form and content do reinforce each other.

Undoubtedly, Armah's modernist style misleads some critics about having a clear understanding of his moral message, though it is this very style which consolidates the content, deepens its theme and expresses the writer's moral attitude and judgement about Ghana. The latter, which is depicted as a waste land arouses feelings of disgust in the reader. It is Armah's intention, however, to transfer these feelings into action so as to introduce change. This fight for change, however, cannot be effected regardless of values. Indeed, Armah appears as a moral absolutist who aspires the approximation of ideals to attain a good life. Because they have the power to change the situation for the better, Ghanaian leaders and politicians are supposed to retain this moral background which will help them approximate such ideals as justice, freedom, unity... etc. Political morality is, therefore, advocated by Armah to allow for the realization of justice, to allow the common profit for all people. Armah's attacks on the bourgeois class privileges are intended to counter the exploitation of man by man. Furthermore, Armah emphasizes the moral code as a necessary force that ensures the healthy survival of individuals and promises their well being. It is, therefore, not only required in politics but in life in general to allow for the realization of a fair society.

According to Armah, the moral code is a gift of tradition, and this clearly appears in his constant juxtaposition of past beauty with present ugliness. The equation of beauty to morality and ugliness to corruption, of course, works throughout *The Beautiful Ones* to reinforce Armah's condemnation of post-independence corrupt practices. Armah's use of a scatological imagery disgusts the reader only to increase his feelings of contempt and condemnation of neo-colonialism. The modernist way in which he chooses to cry his anger through is, indeed, highly symbolical and tends to bring this effect of defamiliarization in situations which reinforces the moral content of the work, by disrupting the habitual perception of the Ghanaian world.

Despite the overwhelmingly desperate mood of the novel which is only intensified at the end by the ineffectualness of the coup d'état and the

man's cleansing, Armah concludes his novel with the possibility of future 'beauty'; the birth of the 'Beautiful' Ones; a birth which is, however, conditioned by a return to the origins, to the way 'the highest beauty'

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Armah, Ayi Kwei. \textit{Two Thousand Seasons}, op cit, p 203.}. According to Armah, salvation is seen in the return to the communal past life to realize the egalitarian society of all African people. Armah's solution, however, is just hinted at in \textit{The Beautiful Ones} to be developed later in his subsequent works mainly in \textit{The Healers} where the highest ideal seems to be in the gathering of all black people. To realize union, however, there is a need to regeneration which will enable the birth of the 'Beautiful' ones. Such a rejuvenation is meant for every Ghanaian citizen to ensure this concerted attempt to move towards the realization of a classless society without necessarily being related to the marxist model. It is, therefore, not enough to have a moral consciousness, but what is more crucial is to translate that consciousness into action, so as to serve collective interests and social regeneration.

\chapter{Bibliography}

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