

Ayi Kwei Armah: Through the Lens of An ‘Engaged Writer’

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing a degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my Almighty Lord Who gave me the strength and patience to finish this thesis successfully.

To my Ammu and Abbu

To my Respectable Mahruba Mowtushi Ma'am, Anika Saba Ma'am, Abu Sayeed Mohammad
Noman Sir

Who served as a profound source of inspiration and enthusiasm for me.

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Abstract

After publishing the first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), Ayi Kwei Armah, a Ghanaian novelist was embroiled into controversy because of his outspoken nature that challenges the conventional African literary canon. His critique of post-independence disillusionment in Ghana that delves into political corruption and social turmoil receives both negative and positive connotations. Hence while critiquing Armah, critics choose to analyse his contributions through two distinct manners. Some critics critically examine Armah's works and praise his innovative narrative style but disapprove his direct criticism of post-independence "Ghanaian" society and political leaders. That leads him to be categorized as an "alienated writer". However, the reception of his contributions has been positive to some critics who argue, his fictions add profound and tremendous dimensions to the African literary canon. Thus, the primary goal of this paper is to provide a critical analysis of Armah's explicit language and critique of the socio-political disarray in two of his early novels *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and *Fragments* (1970) that align Armah with Jean Paul Sartre's idea of an "engaged writer."

Keywords: Ayi Kwei Armah; Engaged Writer; Fighting Phase; Post-Independence Disillusionment; Ghana; Corruption; Moral Decay

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Approval	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgement.....	v
Table of Contents	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Ayi Kwei Armah: Towards a Radical Itinerary.....	2
Fanon’s idea of “Fighting Phase of the Native Intellectual”	6
Julius Nyerere’s “Ujamaa” philosophy	9
Chapter 2: Research Questions, Rationale, Theories and Methods, Literature Review	12
Chapter 3: Critique of Post-Independence Disillusionment in Ghana	23
Brief Overview of <i>The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born</i>	24
Significance of the Title.....	25
Behind the Novel: Socio-political Context	26
Corruption and Moral Decay in <i>The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born</i>	29
Chapter 4: Critique of Materialistic Society in Post-Independence Ghana.....	42
Brief Overview	43
Material Possession and Westernization in <i>Fragments</i>	44
Chapter 5: Chinua Achebe’s Allegation of Armah.....	59
Conclusion:	68
Works Cited.....	71

Introduction

It is indisputable that, authors who expressed their harsh critique of their country, citizens, prominent leaders along with different ideologies such as nationalism, socialism, colonialism or neo-colonialism in other words, writers who act as “fighters” by using their “words” as an “instrument” to provide revolutionary literature, they often have to go through various challenges and allegations. In Aye Kwei Armah’s case this is not unusual to encounter such challenges. His first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) earned so much critical attention because of his outspoken criticism of Ghana. Jonathan B. Fenderson points out that “none of the other novels of Armah gained as much critical attention as the first novel has garnered” (52). Many prominent African writers such as Chinua Achebe, Kofi Awoonor, Arthur Gakwandi, and Ama Ata Aidoo collectively opposed Armah’s perspective and accused him as an “alienated writer”. Chinua Achebe criticized Armah’s first novel and said, “it is a sick book where sickness is in the human condition not in Ghana” (624). Moreover, Armah was directly and indirectly accused as an ‘uncommitted’ and ‘alienated’ writer by Achebe.

Thus, the primary goal of this paper is to demonstrate that Ayi Kwei Armah’s artistic vision and his extraordinary talent of writing style that challenges the conventional African literary canon are disregarded. Armah is neither ‘alienated’ writer nor ‘uncommitted’, he is indeed manifesting Fanon’s “fighting phase of the native intellectual” that aligns Armah with Sartre’s idea of an “engaged writer”.

Chapter 1: Ayi Kwei Armah: Towards a Radical Itinerary

It is of great importance to know a writer's early life and upbringing that have a significant impact on shaping his/her worldview. Cultural, historical and social influences play a vital role in shaping the human mind. To understand Ayi Kwei Armah's fictions, we need to recognise his background influences which shape his worldview that is reflected in his writings. Thus, this chapter begins with the radical itinerary of Ayi Kwei Armah's early life. As Jonathan B. Fenderson points out "we should place Armah's writing in conversation with his experiences and contextualize his work within the chapters of his life" (Fenderson 58).

In 1939 when Ayi Kwei Armah was born in the Gold Coast in (modern-day Ghana), it was under British imperial rule. As a result, Armah received his education under the influence of British imperialism. Armah did his matriculation from Achimota school in Ghana that was then known as Prince of Wales College. This institution was used to train the students to work for the colonial system. As Jonathan B. Fenderson mentions, "in 1952 when Armah entered the Achimota school he was a member of volunteers in an enterprise that was designed to endow the African children with a European consciousness" (Fenderson 50). This approach was quite similar to "The Minute on Indian Education" of, February 2, 1835"- by British historian and politician Thomas Babington Macaulay. According to Macaulay, English education would be provided to a limited number of individuals who would be the interpreters between the British and the people they govern in India. In the 'Minute' Macaulay further adds that, "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay 8).

Similarly, African education during Armah's time went through the same system. As it is mentioned before, while Armah recalls his early education in Ghana, he shared the same experience. The pattern of education in Ghana was reflected on the basis of the British Examination Council. As the education system was administered by the British, students of Ghana were taught English history, the superiority of the British. All the textbooks were in English. Students, who proved to be successful intellectuals, who would work for the British, were able to study higher education. In Armah's case it was not any different. After his brilliant performance in Achimota Armah received a scholarship in 1959 to attend Groton School in Massachusetts. According to Fenderson, "Alan Jay Parrish Pifer who was then the future President of the Carnegie Corporation and founding fellow of the African Studies Association also the trustee of the African American Institute that is a U.S. based organization took interest in Armah's education" (51). This institution gave Armah a one-year scholarship because of Pifer's recommendation.

Moreover, Armah got an opportunity to befriend some of the wealthiest men who had a great impact on Africa's economic state. For instance, Jonathan B. Fenderson points out that "Adam Hochschild who is the author of *King Leopold's Ghost* and his father Harold Hochschild who was the head of the company that earned millions of dollars by mining African and Latin American minerals" (52). Armah's early education was funded by the same people who eternalized the neocolonial state in Africa. However, Armah did not know this back then.

After finishing his education in Massachusetts, Armah was enrolled in Harvard University in 1960. Life in Harvard was a significant turning point for Armah because during this period Armah's political and intellectual development occurred. He was involved in student politics as Fenderson further mentioned that "Armah was involved into a Pan-Africanist

organization in the U.S.” (51). In addition, Pan-Africanist strives for the “unity” of Africans and rejects the White Supremacy from the Continent (*The Columbia Encyclopaedia*).

Meanwhile, in 1961 when Armah heard the shocking news of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba the first prime minister of the newly independent Democratic Republic of the Congo, it greatly affected Armah. According to Stephen R. Weissman, “Lumumba was a charismatic nationalist who led the party’s regional as a nationwide” (1). Ayi Kwei Armah in *One Writer’s Education* expressed his emotions regarding the assassination of Lumumba stating that, “The assassination of Lumumba created in me the kind of deep-running sadness. [...] I had long had a sense of myself not simply as an Akan, an Ewe, a Ghanaian and a West African, but most strongly as an African. It was as an African, then, that I contemplated, then understood, Lumumba’s murder” (Armah 1752-53). The assassination of Lumumba in 1961 discloses Armah’s Pan-Africanist beliefs. This event led to Armah’s interest in social studies thus he switched into social studies from literature and focused on “the interconnections between the economies of continents, the politics of the nations and the sociology and culture of peoples” (Armah 1752-53).

Moreover, when Armah started knowing the sources of his educational sponsor, he was disheartened to know that the wealthiest persons whom he befriended with Harold Hochschild, he was supporting the murder of Lumumba because of the Katanga secession which is enriched with minerals. In 1963 he decided to leave Harvard and headed for Cuba. Armah’s interest in going to Cuba is very significant as Fenderson pointed out “Cuba was the first modern nation in the Western Hemisphere to triumph over the U.S. capitalist imperialism during the Cold War era” (51). In addition, Fidel Castro and Che Guevera both were significant figures of the Cuban revolution. Perhaps, Armah was influenced by these revolutionary figures for their contributions

to their country. As a result, Armah's intention to head to Cuba reveals his revolutionary sentiments as Cuba represents something extraordinary revolutionary. Peniel Joseph mentions that "Cuba held the romantic promise of an alternative to American racism, cynicism and casual political and economic oppression" (Joseph 111-124).

Moreover, Armah in his memoir *One Writer's Education* said he wanted to have an entry in a Cuban training camp. However, unfortunately the Cuban Embassy in Mexico rejected Armah's entry and forced him to find another revolutionary locale. Thus, Armah travelled to Algeria instead of Cuba which is another liberated anti-colonial world. Algeria gained independence as the first French North African country. Fenderson in his article points out that "Armah wanted to join the Angolan liberation movement in Algeria because he hoped they would train him and send him to the frontlines of their struggle" (Fenderson 52). Unfortunately, this approach also failed because the Angolan liberation office ordered the Ghanaian Embassy to hold his passport for weeks so that he would not be able to join in the movement. Thus, it again impeded his revolutionary dream of getting involved in revolutionary activities.

It is important to mention that, while living in Algeria Armah worked as an English translator for the magazine *Revolution Africaine*. This magazine is crucial as "it included articles and interviews of revolutionary activists around the world" (Fenderson 52). Moreover, in an interview entitled "Home Rules: An Interview with Amiri Baraka" in 2003, American writer and activist Amiri Baraka spoke of this magazine which played a vital role in shaping his consciousness and identity and it helped him to contemplate his convictions to radical Pan-Africanism and the thinking of Fantz Fanon (Baraka 109-126). As a result, keeping these things in mind it can be said that Ayi Kwei Armah working as a translator for this magazine had a great impact on shaping Armah's revolutionary views that are reflected in his writings.

Fanon's idea of "Fighting Phase of the Native Intellectual"

During 1964 when Armah returned to Ghana he committed to be a full-time writer. This is important to note that, when Armah returned to Ghana his worldview was changed. As he then understood the colonial and anti-colonial struggles of the Africans. Also, he was influenced by prominent revolutionaries, significantly Frantz Fanon. As a result, Armah realised that it was only through writing he could truly contribute to the anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles. This belief or realisation of Armah was manifested by Frantz Fanon's concept of "fighting phase of the native intellectual". Fanon in his book *The Wretched of The Earth* (1961), a chapter titled "On National Culture" mentions about this term "the fighting phase of the native intellectual" (Fanon 222). In addition, in this phase the mindset of the 'native' intellectuals becomes more extreme. The 'natives' become more committed to the decolonization process. They use their experience and intellect to give voice to their communities. Through the creative works and critiques the 'native' intellectual becomes an awakener of the people. Fanon said, "Finally in the fighting phase, the native, after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people" (222). As a result, in this phase the native intellectual provides fighting literature, revolutionary literature that is why this phase is called the "fighting phase of the native intellectual".

Fanon's idea of "fighting phase" is reflected in Armah's writings significantly. As Armah believes that through his writing he can crucially contribute to revolutionary literature. As Fenderson mentions, "Armah began to believe that his best contribution to the anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles would come through writing - manifesting Fanon's "fighting phase" of the native intellectual" (52).

Ayi Kwei Armah's fighting phase as a native intellectual was revealed when he returned to Ghana from the U.S. in 1964 and joined as a scriptwriter for Ghana Television. When Armah realised the politics of Ghana Television he left the job. Moreover, 1965-1966 was the last phase of Kwame Nkrumah's regime who was the first Prime minister and then the President of Independent Ghana. Thus, Armah returned to Ghana he saw the political disarray of Nkrumah's government and its effects on Ghanaian society.

He expresses his experience and the critique of post-independence Ghana in his first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Armah's first novel is a great example of evaluating his works based on Fanon's "fighting phase of native intellectuals". Through his writing Armah depicts a post- independence Ghanaian society and the government who have failed to keep the promises. Also, the life of the protagonist, his struggle to survive in a corrupt society represents every man who struggles for having an honest livelihood. In the closing scene of the novel Armah openly depicts the 1966 coup which ultimately perpetuates Armah in the state of controversy. As Fenderson points out, "the timeframe of Nkrumah's leadership is openly placed in the novel which transforms this novel into an unambiguous critique of Nkrumah's Ghana" (52). Thus, his outspoken critique of post-independence Ghana (explained in Chapter 3) and the failure of the government aligns Armah with the 'fighting phase'.

However, after publishing his first novel, he started working on his second and third novel *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?* In these two novels Armah again raised the critical issues such as corruption, neocolonial education, consumerism and Westernization in post-independence Ghana. Which leads to the devastation of traditional and spiritual African society. In *Fragments* Armah portrays the modern Ghana where traditional and spiritual values are exchanged with westernization and technology. According to Derek Wright, in *Fragments*

Armah shows the importance of traditional values and what their absence can bring to society. “In Armah’s fiction the educated native becomes the depressed fighter who rejects the assimilation of Western values and strives to patronize his community” (Wright 84). This demonstrates that Armah’s fiction calls for the African identity and cultural revival against the alien influences that categorize Armah in the decolonization phase of native intellectuals who fight through writing.

Moreover, his fighting phase became stronger because of the influence he experienced. In 1967 Armah moved to Paris and worked with a French magazine *Jeune Afrique* that dealt with news and commentary on Africa. As a result, Armah became more active in African affairs. However, Armah’s writing portrays all the corrupted policies of nation building procedures. His attitude as a writer significantly aligns with Fanon’s “fighting phase of the native intellectual”. For instance, Armah in his article “A Mystification: African Independence Revalued” which is published in the 1969 issue of *Pan African Journal*, Armah through his writing expresses his critique on the widely used two terms “independence” and “revolution”. According to Armah, independence and revolution both are two “myths” or “two fabrications” that have not yet been realised. He criticises the use of these two terms and states that these two terms are used only to puzzle the reality of the continent. Moreover, he also criticises the bourgeois nationalist politics in Africa and said that “The new nationalist ethos means that the provincial economy, while remaining exploitative of African labour, has a sort of patriotic halo that protects it from expressions of dissatisfaction from the African labour pool” (Armah 141-151). Thus, the article significantly emphasises the economic dimension under neo-colonialism and to support this point Armah refers to the prominent intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon, Immanuel Wallerstein

and Frazier. This article also reveals as Fenderson points out Armah's early views on socialist orientation in his writing (53).

Julius Nyerere's "Ujamaa" philosophy

"Ujamaa" philosophy significantly contributed to Armah's fighting phase as a native intellectual. Armah's decision to travel Tanzania during 1970 was significantly influenced by Julius Nyerere's "Ujamaa" philosophy. In addition, Nyerere was an anti-colonialist, political theorist and the prime minister and then the president of Tanzania. He introduced the Ujamaa philosophy which is a socio-political ideology. The word is taken from Swahili that means "brotherhood" or "familyhood". According to Machael Jennings "the key elements of Ujamaa philosophy included African socialism, self-reliance, total participation of all in the nation's development, communal labour in the rural sector, communal ownership of land, nationalisation in private sector and public services" (Jennings 1).

Moreover, this philosophy combines "socialism, continental Pan-Africanism and African cultural values" (53). The reason I bring this philosophy is because Armah's two significant novels *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) and *The Healers* (1979) were written when Armah was living in Tanzania. Thus, the important aspects of Nyerere's Ujamaa philosophy are reflected in these two novels. As Ujamaa philosophy had a great influence on Armah, it is important to understand it for understanding narrative influences on Armah's fiction. It also mobilizes Armah's activism as a writer. As he through his novels and critical essays addresses the shortcomings and hypocrisy of the post-independence African society.

For instance, Armah's article titled "African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific" which is a critique of Nyerere's African socialism. In this article Armah strongly criticizes the concept of

African socialism and asserts his perspective on two categories of socialism: Utopian and scientific socialism. He also challenged the most prominent leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Kenyatta and Leopold Senghor. The article expresses Armah's frustration in African leaders and he criticizes the nationalist leaders who only preach African socialism but they do not implement what they preach. Apart from that, Armah refers to a book *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization* which is written by Kwame Nkrumah. In addition, "Consciencism" is a philosophy and ideology introduced by Nkrumah for decolonization. According to Armah, "Nkrumah presents his theory of Consciencism, an African variant of Socialism intended to be radically different from orthodox Scientific Socialism" (22). Addition to that, Consciencism is a more modified form where communism has collapsed into socialism thus there is no distinction between socialism and communism (23).

Moreover, Armah refers to Karl Mannheim's concept of ideology to support his point and points out that the way African socialism performs for the nationalist leadership during the post-independence era is similar to the colonial administration by the Christian ideology and "the white man's burden". Both are working for authoritarian power. Nationalist leaders accused the colonialists as hypocrites for preaching Christianity however, the nationalist leaders are preaching African socialism as hypocrites like the colonialists where the word is faster than the deed (28).

However, Armah praised Frantz Fanon for working consistently as one theorist whose concern is truly revolutionary for African society. Armah believes "Fanon made himself an African, but never labelled himself as a socialist" (29). Thus, through this article Armah argued for the re-evaluation of widely-used two terms "independence" and "revolution". His critique of African socialism also generates more intellectual room for African thinkers in the field of

revolution. Thus, the social and moral commentary where he criticizes the moral decay and hypocrisy of the post-independence Ghana raised Armah as a 'native' intellectual who fights through his writing for the cause of decolonization and African unity.

Thus, I would like to conclude this chapter with an argument that Ayi Kwei Armah as an intellectual who holds the pen with the intention of contributing his best to the anti-colonial struggle, criticizing the mistakes of the post-independence leadership, perpetuating cultural and traditional African values and rejecting the Western ideologies that ultimately align him with Fanon's "fighting phase" that does not necessarily categorize Armah, less committed or "alienated" as a writer.

Chapter 2: Research Questions, Rationale, Theories and Methods, Literature Review

Research Questions

Is Ayi Kwei Armah really an “alienated writer”? Is there a large distance between Armah and Ghana?

Rationale:

Chinua Achebe in “Africa and Her Writers” (see pp.624) harshly criticized Ayi Kwei Armah for his critique of Post-Independence Ghana and President Kwame Nkrumah’s regime in his first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968). According to Achebe, “Armah is an alienated writer and there is an enormous distance between Armah and Ghana” (625-626). Achebe’s remarks on Armah significantly captured my attention.

Thus, in this paper I intend to provide a critical analysis of Armah’s early two novels with the intention of demonstrating that Armah is not an “alienated writer”. By analyzing the texts thematically with the lens of Jean Paul Sartre’s idea of an “engaged writer” and Frantz Fanon’s “fighting phase of the native intellectual” I want to counter Achebe’s comments of Armah and address that Armah is indeed an “engaged writer” who is using writing as an “instrument” to contribute to the socio-political reformation in Africa.

Theories and Method:

The paper is based on the critical reading of the primary texts *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Fragments*. To support the argument, a number of secondary sources such as journal articles from *JSTOR*, commentaries, books are used. Moreover, Jean Paul Sartre’s *What is Literature?* (1947) and postcolonial theory presented by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of The*

Earth (1961) contribute to analyse the relevant themes from the primary texts. The paper also refers to the idea of an “engaged writer” by Jean Paul Sartre and “fighting phase of the native intellectual” by Frantz Fanon that play a significant role in order to answer the research questions.

Some other concepts such as Julius Nyerere’s “Ujamaa” philosophy and Hannah Arendt’s idea of “moral judgement” from her *Crises of the Republic* and *Responsibility and Judgment*, the concept of “Banality of Evil” from *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963) play a supportive role in this paper.

Literature Review:

The theme “Post-Independence Disillusionment” has been portrayed by many African writers significantly after the 1960s in their works. However, the way Ayi Kwei Armah depicted the effects of post-independence disillusionment in Ghana in his early two novels *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Fragments* have given a new scope to analyse these novels from diverse aspects.

Jean Solomon in the article titled “A Commentary on Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*” focuses on the post independent Ghanaian society and the protagonist of the novel. The author explores the independent state of Ghana where ambitions have slid into disenchant. It is obvious that from an independent state, it is supposed to be just and greatly beautiful things are expected to happen. However, in the novel it is shown that independent Ghana is far from those ideals which are expected from an independent nation. Moreover, revolutionary leaders who shouted against the enslaving things of Europe during the colonial period, used the “same power for chasing after the same enslaving things” (Solomon 25). The

protagonist of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* refuses to give up his life to corruption and bribes. The author argued that, in a society where men are valued compared to the high cost of commodities they could buy, surviving in a corrupt society in the honest way is hard for people like the protagonist in the novel.

Ode S. Ogede in the article titled “Achebe and Armah: A Unity of Shaping Visions” the author analyses the approaches of fictional representation in the novels of Chinua Achebe and Ayi Kwei Armah and particularly praises the use of symbolisms, dialogue and settings in Armah’s first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. The author further compares Achebe’s *A Man of the People* and Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and examines that both novels bring the ideological and artistic issue that unite Achebe and Armah however, Armah’s novel asserts a more positive picture than Achebe’s novel” (114). In another article titled “Symbolic Settings in the South African Novel” the author Samuel Omo Asein asserts that “West African novelists do not use setting functionally compared to South African novelists” (118). Ogede argues that “Armah is exceptional because he depicts good details in the novel to assert the relation between the characters and the environment” (118). However, the author concludes the article with a significant argument that both “Armah and Achebe have a common element in their novels which is their dissatisfaction of the political independence of Africa. Though, this is not enough to evaluate their works and understand their accomplishments. According to the author, it is important to focus on their literary strategies which are different from each other. In this case, the works of Armah represent a more positive influence on socio-political issues of Africa” (126).

Laura Murphy in the article “The Curse of Constant Remembrance: The Belated: Trauma of The Slave Trade in Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Fragments*” discusses the theme of trauma which is

reflected in Armah's second novel *Fragments*. The author analyzes the novel and explores that the long-term effect of trauma because of 'trans-Atlantic slave trade' is depicted by Armah in this novel. The author also refers to the West African literary critic Achille Mbembe who claims that "a sort of amnesia is experienced by the West Africans as a result of trans-Atlantic slave trade which has a horrible traumatic effect on the lives of Africans" (55). Even after legally abolishing the trans-Atlantic slave trade, it has a tenacious traumatic-effects on the African people. In the article, the author identifies Aye Kwei Armah's second novel *Fragments* to a great extent focuses on the consumerism of postcolonial Ghana. However, the author argues that Armah in this novel asserts the effects of the trans-Atlantic slave trade during twentieth century where materialism plays the role of its symptom" (Murphy 55). Moreover, the protagonist of the novel Baako's experience of dealing with materialism, Westernization and political corruption in postcolonial Ghana is similar to Armah's experience when he had returned from America. The author further argues that "the article only touches the surface of Armah's critique of consumerism in contemporary Ghanaian society in *Fragments*; however, Armah also tries to bridge the gap in historical consciousness, a pattern of amnesia which manipulates the materialism to keep going" (56).

Kwame Nkrumah, the first Prime Minister and President of independent Ghana in his book titled *Africa Must Unite* (1963) talks about several issues such as African society under colonialism, colonial pattern of economics, problems of Government, bringing unity in Ghana and Neocolonialism in Africa. This book is divided into twenty-one chapters. In chapter five titled "The Intellectual Vanguard" Nkrumah points out that "when an awakening intelligence emerges from people it becomes a serious vanguard of the struggle against alien power or rule" (43). That is why the colonial power ignored educational facilities in the colonies. They

however, chose to provide education to only a limited number of people who they used as a puppet. “Nkrumah realised this connection in his career and thus, it was the main reason why he became a teacher for a time” (43). Moreover, in this chapter Nkrumah gives some brief summary of the educational situation in various parts of Africa. He mentions, “during 1960, in Northern Rhodesia only 43% of African children were at school and only 1.1% of those managed to reach secondary school. On the other hand, in southern Rhodesia, only 16.5% went to school. Before 1930, there were hardly any schools in Kenya” (43). Apart from that, the pattern of education which was provided was basically “reflected to the demands of the British examination council. Which transferred the dominant ideas and thought process of the British to Africans. Thus, Nkrumah suggests that Africa needs to plan an educational system of her own which will contribute to a great intellectual foundation of Pan-African future” (49).

In chapter eighteen, titled “Neo-colonialism in Africa” Nkrumah notes that, “one of the greatest dangers that Africa faced was Neo-colonialism and the main instrument of Neo-colonialism is ‘balkanization’. In other words, the division of a place or a country into small political parts is called balkanization” (Nkrumah 173). Nkrumah calls the process of balkanization “the new imperialism which is the new danger to Africa” (179). Moreover, in this chapter Nkrumah mentions the two local elements of national revolution. “First one is the moderates of the professional and aristocratic class and the second is the so-called extremists of the mass movement” (180). According to Nkrumah, the extremists do not like violence however, they demand self-government and complete liberty. The moderates want share from the government but they are afraid of taking responsibilities. Thus, they are ready to sell some areas of sovereignty to colonial power exchange for economic aid” (180).

In order to analyse Armah's work, it would be lacking not to bring in Derek Wright who is a prominent critic of African literature and Armah's fictions. In the article titled "Tradition and the Vision of the Past in Armah's Early Novels", author Derek Wright analyses Armah's early novels specifically *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and *Fragments* (1970). He explores that "in Armah's novels there is a conflict between traditional communalism and modern individualism" (Wright 93). Moreover, the author explores Armah's early novels through the lens of tradition and the glance of the past African history. According to Derek Wright, the traditional values are expressed in Armah's second novel *Fragments*. "The educated 'been-to' are brainwashed by the Whites and forced to abandon their people. However, in Armah's novel the educated 'been-to' becomes depressed 'fighter' who wants to save their community that is falling apart under the influence of Westernization" (84). Wright also notes that, the character of Armah's first novel can be seen recalling the past vision and pre-technological Africa. In addition, Derek Wright refers to D.S Izevbaye, an outstanding Nigerian scholar and literary critic who argued that "many African contemporary novelists try to interpret the history with a linear progression which asserts that the colonial period was temporary. This perspective is followed by many African writers with the intention to minimise the effect of colonialism" (94). Thus, the author argues that "Armah rejects to follow this path and chooses neither the progressive Marxism of Ngugi or Sembene Ousmane nor the idea of alternating Yeatsian cycles which emerges at the end of Yambo Ouologuem's *Bound to Violence* rather he chooses the cycle of continuity" (Wright 94).

In Wright's another article titled "*Fragments: The Akan Background*", he analyses the use of religious mythology of the Akan people and the rituals which are sacrificial in the novel *Fragments*. In the novel the traditional Akan beliefs are reflected in Baako's grandmother's

monologue. The immature death of the child in the novel has a connection with the sacrificial ritual of Akan beliefs. Moreover, the author Derek Wright argues that, “perhaps Armah has two purposes for asserting the Akan religious mythology and sacrificial rituals in the novel. Firstly, to show that the modern Ghanaians have forgotten the traditional beliefs of their ancestors and gave priority to the Western technology which ultimately destroys their vital human values” (Wright 184). Second, the author explains that, “the traditional ancestral beliefs emphasises the power of death with the intention to shock the contemporary Ghanaians so that they can get back to the worth of real values of human life” (184). The author explores that the timeless perspective of Akan worldview plays a vital role to give a significant framework for the novel’s internal dimensions.

In the article titled “Ayi Kwei Armah and the Significance of His Novels and Histories” the author Derek Wright discusses the significance of Armah’s novels specifically focusing on *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments*, *Why Are We So Blest?* *Two Thousand Seasons* and *The Healers*. Armah’s second novel *Fragments* focuses on the experience of the character Baako who returned to his country after completing higher education from America. The irony of Baako’s life is he becomes a disappointment to his family as well as society because he returned from America with moral values and generosity instead of material possessions that is unexpected from a “been-to”. The author in this article connects Armah’s first two novels and outlines that “In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* the protagonist serves as a means for purification and in the second novel *Fragments* the protagonist Baako is basically a sacrificial victim and this sacrificial pattern helps the contemporary Ghanaians to bring back their true values and human dignity” (33). However, Wright analyses that “the main focus of Armah’s first two novels are not the Western world rather the Ghanaians themselves who consume the

Western values and destroy their own culture. However, the third novel *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972) the focus is the White world as the main archenemy that destroys the life of the victims by a satanic covetousness” (36).

The author Stewart Crehan examines the novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* focusing on the theme of Phantasy and Repression in his article “Phantasy and Repression in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*”. In many critical readings, the political and moral portion have been emphasised but Crehan argues that “a psychoanalytic interpretation can also shed significant light on this novel because Armah’s novel is one of the most “Freudian” texts of modern Africa” (105). Moreover, the author also analyses the symbolism and allegory from the novel and connects them with the decay of the society of Ghana. For example, the author mentions the opening scene of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* where “The light from the bus [...]” (Armah 1) is mentioned. Crehan refers to Derek Wright who says “the bus represents the Ghanaian society” (106). Thus, Crehan explores Armah’s first novel’s psychological aspects and tries to bridge the gap in this field.

Shelby Steele, author of “Existentialism in the Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah” bridges the gap by exploring Armah’s novels in the lens of Existentialism. The author identifies that “Armah’s writing style has a reflection of Existential spirit that is seen in the writing of Sartre, Camus, Kafka and Dostoyevsky” (5). Moreover, Steele explores that, the way Existentialist writers depict the characters in their works who suffer deep conflict between their existence as an individual and their roles in larger society. Similarly, Armah’s fictional characters such as “the man” in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Baako in *Fragments* and Modin and Solo in *Why Are We So Blest?* suffer from this existential conflict as an individual. The author notes that “there are some central themes which are seen in Existential fictions such as nausea, alienation,

malaise, emotional breakdown etc. It is noted that all these themes are strongly seen in Armah's novels" (Steele 9).

Derek Wright in his article "African-American Tensions in Black Writing of the 1960s" explores "the relations between Africa and Afro-America and the treatment of Black Americans in the works of African authors during the 1960s" (442). Wright refers to the character" Eulalie in *Dilemma of A Ghost* which is written by Ama Ata Aidoo and Joe Golder in *The Interpreters* which is written by Wole Soyinka" (442). The author noted that both of these characters betray a patronising racism and ignorant self-esteem that have a long lineage in Black American middle-class culture and attitudes towards Africa" (442). Apart from that, Derek Wright mentions a scholar, Nigerian poet and playwright J.P.Clark. "In Clark's journalistic autobiography *America, Their America* (1968) Clark mentions about the poor black who do not have their own identity in their own society. The blacks become the object of oppression. Wright finds Clark's journalistic chauvinism similar to the Western education system with a view to producing African elites in *Why Are We So Blest?* novel written by Armah. However, in the novel Armah is more alert than Clark" (443). In other words, the author finds that "Armah's novels depict the experiences of African and the Negro under the same umbrella of the black race" (457).

Richard Priebe reviewed the novel *Why Are We So Blest?* by Ayi Kwei Armah. In the review Priebe examines that because of the racial segregation in the United States, there has been a great misunderstanding going on regarding some of the West African novels. For instance, he refers to the novel *Bound to Violence* which is written by Malian writer Yambo Ouologuem. This book is translated in English and both praised and criticised for its perspective on colonialism in Africa. As this book asserts the racial bias of the critic. As a result, the novel lost its value because of emotional arguments. Thus, Richard Priebe notes that "Armah's novel *Why Are We So Blest?*

perhaps provoke similar controversy because many readers will read this novel with racial sentiments” (724). As a result, the reviewer suggests that “the novel should be seen as Armah’s critique of all forms of racism, not a simple black-white dichotomy” (724).

Riche Bouteldja in the article titled “Literary Mentors and Tormentors in Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Why Are We So Blest?*” explores the parallel between Armah’s *Why Are We So Blest?* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. The author finds similarities between Modin and Kurtz, Solo and Marlow. The author further analyses that, “the character Modin who has a horrible thought when he sees a European man, it is similar to Kurtz saying in *Heart of Darkness* “The Horror! The Horror!” (140). Moreover, the author also highlights the comparison between Solo and Marlow from Conrad’s novel. The author explains that “Just like Marlow, Solo also fails to save Modin from the false idealism of Aimee. Modin dies in a pagan place white desert and his journal becomes Aimee’s possession similar to Kurtz’s paper to his fiancé. However, the author notes that the way Aimee and Kurtz’s ‘intended’ find the paper is different” (140). Apart from that, the author suggests that “in Armah’s novel the character Aimee can be portrayed as a representative of the Western modernist writer searching for inspirations from other sources because she is empty within herself” (142). Thus, the author of the article concludes that Armah’s novel *Why Are We So Blest?* can be seen in the “category of slave narratives which signifies on white Western literary mentors as tormentors” (143). Thus, it also shows how Armah through his writing asserts the complex relation between the African and Western worlds.

In “The Metaphysical and Material Worlds: Ayi Kwei Armah’s Ritual Cycle” Derek Wright analyses “the metaphysical and material nature of ritual cycle and its implications in Armah’s early novels” (338). Through this analysis the author finds out that, in Armah’s early novels, whenever the context is religious or metaphysical the appraisal is positive. However, whenever

the context is material, the appraisal is negative” (338). Moreover, the author refers to Armah’s second novel *Fragments* where the character Naana who is “the repository of traditional wisdom” (337) says, “The way everything goes and turns around. [...] All that goes returns” (337). According to Derek Wright, Armah’s fiction serves this type of cycle “where everything moves in circles” (337). Wright notes that, in Armah’s first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* the rise and fall of Africa’s political regimes is compared by Wright to the “human physiological circuit’s regular cycle of ingestion and evacuation” (337). The ways Africa’s political regimes are hampered by the alien power, similarly Africa is falling because of corruption, national politics that Armah depicts in the novel. In Armah’s second novel *Fragments* the cycle moves more actively. The author explores that, the world which is filled with traditional religious concepts and ancestor spirit turns into the material world” (338). However, in Armah’s third novel *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972) Wright notes that, “Armah brought the theology of neocolonialism from Fanon which depicts the intellectual factors between America and Africa where America is represented as the lands of blessed and Africa as the lands of damned” (338). Derek Wright ends his article by connecting an important connection among Armah’s three novels. According to Wright, the newly born independent Ghana in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is compared with the real premature child in *Fragments* who fails to survive in a deadening corrupted and Western material society. This premature death is followed by an increasingly decline which results in the third novel *Why Are We So Blest?* where the landscapes are blasted with impotence” (342). Thus, there are hardly any “Beautiful ones” in Armah’s fiction because they “are not yet born in ritual sense” (342).

Chapter 3: Critique of Post-Independence Disillusionment in Ghana

Jean Paul Sartre at the beginning of *What is Literature?* (1947) points out that critics should examine the art of writing without any prejudice and biases. He raised some important questions which should be asked by every-one to himself/herself which are “What is writing? Why does one write? For whom?” (Satre 5).

The concept of “engaged literature” is introduced by Sartre in this book where he pays attention to the fact that literature should actively address the contemporary issue of the society. According to Sartre, “the ‘engaged’ writer knows that words are action” (23). Moreover, the ‘engaged’ writer “reveals truth through his writing to create change and has given up the dream of portraying an impartial picture of society and the human condition” (Satre 23). This means instead of portraying idealized or neutral pictures of society the ‘engaged’ writers strive for portraying the realities of the society whether it is political or social. Through this can take part in contributing social change “using words as an instrument of action”. However, in Ayi Kwei Armah’s first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) we see the exact concern of socio-political issues of the author and the portrayal of impulsive commentary on the post-independence disillusionment in Ghana. Armah’s harsh critique of corruption and moral degradation among the political leaders, citizens in the newly independent Ghana aligns Armah with Sartre’s idea of an “engaged writer” who addresses socio-political issues and uses writing as an instrument for social transformation.

Thus, in this chapter, I will critically analyse Ayi Kwei Armah’s outspoken criticism of the socio-political situation of Kwame Nkrumah’s regime in post-independence Ghana which led the Ghanaians towards corruption and moral decay.

Brief Overview of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*

Ayi Kwei Armah's first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) is set in post-independence Ghana, the locale of West Africa during the decade of disillusionment. As many African countries which became independent, slipped into disarray soon at that time. Thus, the 1960s which used to be known as the decade of independence turned into a decade of disillusionment.

Armah in this novel depicts the 1960s post-independent Ghana which was going through social and political turbulence. The story follows the unnamed protagonist who is called "the man" in the novel. The protagonist is a railway clerk who struggles to fit into a society where corruption and bribery have become the norm of everyday life. It is noted that, the protagonist with a family struggling to subsist on a little allowance, strongly manages to remain a non-participant in the national game of corruption. In the novel Armah, by referring directly to Kwame Nkrumah and a fictional character Koomson who works under Nkrumah's ministers make this novel an outspoken critic of post-independence Ghana. Armah's protagonist in the novel suffers internal struggles in a society which is filled with moral decay, political corruption and greed.

The novel concludes with the protagonist's sense of both hope and despair. The unexpected military coup in 1966 which overthrows Nkrumah's regime which is marked by corruption, bankruptcy, and moral decay leads to the protagonist's dissatisfaction with the political leaders. In the meantime, it also gives a sense of hope that beautiful people are yet to be born.

Significance of the Title

The title of Armah's first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is highly symbolic. Armah intentionally misspelled the word "Beautiful". In addition, the title is taken from the last part of the novel when the protagonist sees the slogan "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" which is written on the rear of a bus. It can be said that the way the word "Beautiful" is misspelled in the slogan which ironically demonstrates that the slogan itself is corrupted in terms of spelling symbolizes the difference between what it says versus the way it appears. Similarly, the corrupted national leaders who preach socialism, solidarity and peace but end up doing actions which are opposite of what they preach. Moreover, while searching for more analysis regarding the title I found one lecture from YouTube entitled "Ayi Kwei Armah: The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" which was uploaded by *Vidya Mitra* in 2018 where Professor Vijay T. Kumar connects the title with two incidents which took place in Africa.

Firstly, the title is linked with "The bust of Queen Nefertiti". In addition, Nefertiti was an Egyptian queen who according to Joyce Tyldesley, "played vital role in "transforming Egypt's traditional polytheistic religion to monotheistic" (Tyldesley 1). Moreover, the word "Nefertiti" means "The Beautiful one has come". The bust of Queen Nefertiti was found in Egypt by a German archaeologist in 1912. Thus, it shifted to Germany and it is displayed in the Egyptian Museum located in Berlin (Kumar). As a result, linking the title with the bust of Queen Nefertiti perhaps suggest that, the way the artistic wealth of Africa has been snatched from Africa by the colonizers similarly the socialist leaders of the newly independent Ghana used their power to control national resources and that could be one link.

Secondly, the title is linked with the Egyptian god Osiris who symbolizes "regeneration", "resurrection", "transition" (Kumar). According to Armah the phrase "Beautiful Ones" is

ancient thus it can be linked with the mythical Egyptian god who symbolizes both disintegration and reintegration. We can relate this to Armah's protagonist in the novel "the man" which suggests that only by the rebirth of men and women like the protagonist, we can build a just and peaceful society. As Ode S. Ogede said, "it is on the birth of men and women with new standards like the man and Oyo (his wife) that Armah pins his hope for the redemption of the society" (Ogede 125).

Behind the Novel: Socio-political Context

It is crucial to understand the context based on which the novel is written. When Armah returned to Ghana from the U.S. in 1964, he experienced post-independence disillusionment in Ghana. Moreover, he saw the political disarray of Nkrumah's Regime. One of the major political and historical contexts behind Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is the last stage of Kwame Nkrumah's regime. In addition, Nkrumah was the first president and prime minister of the newly independent Ghana. He ruled from 1957 till his regime was overthrown in a military coup on 24th February 1966. Moreover, Nkrumah played a vital role in the independence of Ghana. Thus, he is regarded as the "builder of modern Ghana".

However, Nkrumah is also a controversial figure. Because his government faced lots of external and internal challenges which unexpectedly led to its downfall. Not only that, Nkrumah's government soon became authoritarian and started suppressing political opposition. It is significant to mention that Nkrumah always expressed his Pan-Africanist convictions. He dreamed of making Ghana's transition from colonial domination to independence. Which became true. However, his dream as a Pan-Africanist failed because of his mismanagement and poor decisions. In this issue, it is crucial to relate Armah's views on Nkrumah. In 1974 in *Black*

World magazine Armah reviewed the book *Black Star: A View of the Life and Times of Kwame Nkrumah* which was written by Basil Davidson. This review expresses Armah's thoughts on Nkrumah where he wrote "the great cruelty of Nkrumah's position was. . .he could not work out a way for his people to break out of the neocolonial prison, all he could do was to preside over their exploitation" (Armah 88-91). Regarding Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist project Armah further said in this review that "The solution to Africa's every problem was the Pan-Africanist project of Nkrumah however, Nkrumah's mistake was he believed extremely on state's ability to build this project successfully" (Armah 88-91).

Moreover, Armah's thoughts in this review also demonstrate his support for Nkrumah's Pan-Africanist conviction though he criticizes Nkrumah's actions which were against Pan-Africanism. As Minna Neimi mentioned "Nkrumah declared Ghana as a one-party state in 1964 as a result, Nkrumah's later regime became a more totalitarian system" (Neimi 6). In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* the settings highlighted the authoritarian period of Nkrumah's regime. Armah depicts the image of post-independence Ghana which survived and became independent from a dark colonial legacy in 1957, turned into post-colonial disillusionment by the power abuse of national elites. As Minna Neimi further mentioned, "The novel expresses Armah's disappointment in Kwame Nkrumah's regime in the late 1960s more precisely" (6).

In a documentary uploaded by *New Africa* in 2020 it is mentioned that, Nkrumah was influenced by Marx, Lenin and Mao and created a state ideology which he called "Nkrumaism". Moreover, an ideological institution was also established by Nkrumah where he employed some foreign socialist thinkers to develop political theories based on Nkrumah's socialist philosophy. According to this ideological institution,

“Nkrumaism is simply the ideology for the new Africa, independent and absolutely free from imperialism, organized on a continental scale, founded upon the conception of one and united Africa, drawing its strength from modern science and technology and from the traditional African belief that the free development of each is conditioned by the free development of all”(New Africa documentary).

Unfortunately, this view and social ideology by Nkrumah failed in terms of implementation. Intending to transform Ghana into an industrial powerhouse, Nkrumah’s government set major infrastructure projects which were advertised by foreign companies . However, the money allocated for these projects was hijacked by corrupt officials and major ministers of Nkrumah’s government who became very rich by charging bribes from foreign companies. This led Ghana to turn into an “Orwellian Animal Farm” society and Ghana’s powerful political elites started exploiting the independent nation similarly to the colonial power.

Furthermore, Nkrumah announced the “Detention Act of 1958” which means, giving detention of individuals without any trial for up to five years. Nkrumah’s government misused this act to silence the opposition and critics. This leads to a dictatorship where the power is in Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party (CPP). In addition, CPP was Nkrumah’s own party which focused on stirring up the emotions of the masses with revolutionary songs, slogans and posters that raised anti-colonial sentiments of the citizens.

However, Nkrumah’s authoritarian power ultimately results in the exclusion of political pluralism. Moreover, the economic situation was also entangled during Nkrumah’s regime. The economic mismanagement and costly development projects severely impacted the country’s finances. In addition, Ghana’s two most important exports were gold and cocoa. During the

1960s, the international cocoa prices decreased which disrupted Ghana's revenue. The political ministers of Nkrumah's government also started corruption and fraud which increased the dissatisfaction with the government by the citizens. Ghana became an extremely corrupt nation where ministers led a lavish lifestyle. Armah in his novel with the use of allegory, new narrative style and symbols depicts the political and social disarray of Nkrumah's regime.

On February 24, 1966 Nkrumah's regime was overthrown by a military coup when Nkrumah was in Vietnam. This event significantly impacted Armah's views on corruption, post-independence disillusionment, and moral decay in post-independence Ghana. We see the reflection of Armah's views through his harsh criticism of post-independence Ghana and Nkrumah's regime in his first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Armah through the novel depicts the scenario and social and political condition of post-independence Ghana where from government leaders to general people are having moral decay. Armah through the protagonist shows his critical views on corruption and bribery of the dishonest people in the novel as Minna Neimi mentioned that "Armah's novel puts an emphasis on individual ethics as the nameless main character, unlike most of the other characters in the novel, persistently resists totalitarian rule and moral collapse by refusing to accept bribes" (Neimi 4).

Corruption and Moral Decay in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*

One of the most praiseworthy characteristics of Armah's first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is his portrayal and use of symbolism which are ironic and poignant. His writing expresses the individual experiences of the characters in detail which develops the sense of emotional intensity of the narrative. Thus, the themes of corruption and moral decay among the Ghanaians during the post-independence disillusionment period are precisely depicted by

Armah in this novel in several plots. The novel asserts how political corruption leads to social corruption in post-independence Ghana.

For instance, the opening scene of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is very significant because through the “bus scene” Armah gives the reader an important message. We can say that Armah uses the bus scene as a metaphor for the larger socio-political issues in Ghana at that time. According to Stewart Crehan “the bus in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* represents the Ghanaian society...where the whole bus scene can be analyzed as political allegory” (Crehan 106). In the opening scene, Armah’s protagonist “the man” is on the bus where the conductor is collecting bribes from the passengers.

“[H]e poured out all the money he had collected so far ... Then, checking the coins against the tickets, he began to count the morning’s take. It was mostly what he expected at this time of the month: small coins, a lot of pesewas, single brown pieces, with some fives, a few tens and the occasional twenty-five. Collecting was always easier around Passion Week” (Armah 1).

In addition, “Passion week” refers to the Holy week for the Christian as “during this time people reflect on the holy matters of faith by recalling the life of Jesus Christ” (*Britannica*). During this week people try to avoid getting involved in mundane matters. They do not ask for change during their bus ride. Thus, the conductor said collecting money during “Passion Week” is easy as people either give exact money or do not ask for change.

Moreover, among the passengers “someone gave him a cedi” (6) which is equal to 100 pesewas. Receiving this big note, the conductor became so happy and began smelling the note which for him was satisfying. With an admiration for the giver the conductor said, “Yes, man. You are a big man” (6). This incident was seen by the protagonist of the novel “the man”. When

the conductor noticed that “the man” in the back seat of the bus was watching him in his eyes directly, a sudden shame and fear arose in the conductor’s mind. Because the eye contact was making the conductor uncomfortable. He fears that “He was about to go down as the victim of a cruel game” (7). Here, the “cruel game” perhaps symbolizes the corruption in Ghanaian society where, giving and taking bribes has become an everyday ritual.

However, when the conductor went to “the man” he was indirectly giving hints for money. Unfortunately, the conductor’s expectation was not fulfilled as “the man” did not give him any cedi. As a result, with anger the conductor shouted, “You bloody fucking son of a bitch! Article of no commercial value! You think the bus belongs to your grandfather?” (8) Through this first scene of the novel Armah made the readers introduces a society where everything is dependent on a “give and take” bribe. If anyone refuses to participate in this cruel game, he/she is seen as a human with no value or worth.

In the opening scene of the bus, the conductor represents a symbol of corruption and moral decay in Ghanaian society. Moreover, the bus represents post-independence Ghana which is becoming a degraded nation losing all moral values and consciousness. As Ode S. Ogede mentioned, “[T]he bus represents the decadent nation [...] Its driver and conductor stand for its corrupt, opportunistic, and thoughtless leaders who instead of ruling the country with honesty and consideration subjugate the citizens through bribes and intimidation” (Ogede 118). Agreeing with Ogede’s point, I want to add that “the man” or the protagonist on the other hand represents the symbol of resistance and integrity in that corrupt environment. In this regard, Minna Neimi argues that “Armah’s first novel’s protagonist represents a figure who is capable of individual thinking and active moral resistance to corruption similar to what Hanna Arendt advocates in her *Crises of the Republic* and *Responsibility and Judgment*” (Neimi 3-4).

In addition, “Arendt was a German-American historian who gave importance to moral judgement and independent thinking during the times of moral collapse” (3). As a result, it can be said that Arendt’s idea of “moral judgement” aligns with Armah’s protagonist in the context of moral and political collapse. Thus, Armah’s protagonist in the novel resonates with Arendt. In the novel Armah’s protagonist “the man” is among them who strives to hold his conscience and integrity when most of the citizens of Ghana are under the shade of moral decay. Moreover, Armah with this important symbolic plot of the bus scene sets the novel for the broader themes like corruption and moral decay among the Ghanaian elites and citizens which can be explored more in this novel.

The frustration among the citizens regarding the governmental officials including police in the novel is depicted vividly by the author. For instance, in the conversation between the protagonist and a messenger in his office, Armah shows the instant vibe of the contemporary situation of Ghana. The messenger who won “one hundred cedis” in the lottery shared his fear with the protagonist that “I am happy, but I’m afraid...you know our Ghana...And everybody says the Ghana lottery is more Ghanaian than Ghana” (Armah 15). It declares the corrupt practices which are happening in Ghana. Where Ghanaians are corrupted in every sphere of their lives, the lottery system in Ghana is more corrupted because it is a scam. The owner will never get the exact money because the money will be taken by the official at the lottery place. If someone complains to the police, he/she has to give a bribe to the police and the amount is more than what he/she won in the lottery. This suggests that, from every sector of the official’s bribery and corruption are practiced in Ghana.

Moreover, the unnamed protagonist in the novel is faced with people’s manipulation to engage in corruption as he is a railway clerk. As in railway offices people practice receiving

bribes often. But in Armah's protagonist's case, he is not among the people who receive or give bribes. In the novel we see the protagonist continuously struggling both external and internal ways and becomes the symbol of resistance to the manifested moral decay and corruption. Which almost destroys everyone's moral values and integrity. The protagonist's surroundings are precisely polluted by corruption.

We see the sense of resistance in the protagonist when a visitor offers him a bribe for allocating a seat during odd hours. The visitor in many ways tried to trick the man and manipulate him so that he could take the bribe. However, the man refused to take the bribe and told him to come during working hours and ask for a booking seat at that time. The visitor insists-

"Take it. Take it, my friend. The man looked at the face before him, pleading with the words of millions and the voice of ages, and he felt lonely in the way only a man condemned by all things around him can ever feel lonely. "I will not take it," he said, too quietly, perhaps" (Armah 22).

The reply disappointed the visitor as he was surprised why on earth the railway clerk was refusing to take a bribe. Through this action of the protagonist, it creates a certain sense of integrity and resistance within the protagonist.

In the degraded Ghanaian society where no one is concerned about integrity and conscience the unnamed protagonist in Armah's novel strongly holds a moral conscience which makes him different from everyone. However, instead of feeling moral superiority, he feels lonely and miserable. He feels that "[T]here was something miserable, something unspeakably dishonest about a man who refused to take and to give what everyone around was busy taking and giving: something unnatural, something very cruel, something that was criminal, for who but

a criminal could ever be left with such a feeling of loneliness?” (23). This mental tyranny of the protagonist is caused by the society where no one can understand the nameless man’s differing actions.

Moreover, the government of the country is also responsible for this issue. In addition, during that time in Ghana the political system was nondemocratic as Nkrumah started his authoritarian power. The elite class was becoming richer day by day thus Armah mentioned them as “gleam” in the novel. Everyone in Ghana wanted to become “gleam” like the elites thus they felt it obligatory to take bribes like the “elite”. As Minna Neimi mentioned that “The Ghanaian avoided trouble thus did not become politically rebellious, instead they found ways to benefitted by the non-democratic leaders and everyone started taking bribes to follow the elite, the gleam” (Neimi 14).

Furthermore, Cameroonian political theorist Achille Mbembe in his book *On the Postcolony*(2001) writes, “ the authoritarian epistemology have been internalized by the subjects of the postcolony to the point where they practice it themselves in every minor circumstance of daily life”(Mbembe 128). As a result, taking bribes has been a consequence of this authoritarian epistemology which is internalized by the general citizens of Ghana. Perhaps that can be one reason behind the protagonist’s colleagues and the people of that society judging the protagonist's actions “not participating in taking bribes” as an “unnatural, self-destructive” phenomenon.

Even his wife criticizes him for his integrity. He is called “Chichidodo” by his wife. In addition, “Chichidodo is a bird found in Ghana ...it hates its excrement with all its soul. But the chichidodo only feeds on maggots, and ...the maggots grow best inside the lavatory” (30). The

comparison with the chichidodo is very symbolic here. Because it suggests that the nameless man in Armah's novel hates corruption with all his heart, however, he has to live in this corrupt world anyhow for his survival.

Moreover, the condition of corruption among the postcolonial leaders who preach "socialism", "Solidarity" is vividly criticized by Armah in the novel through the character Koomson. Armah portrays the lavish lifestyle of the politicians with outstanding accuracy. Nkrumah's government ministers with their extensive powers started controlling the resources as their private property. Which leads to the culture of bribery.

In the novel Koomson is a political figure who works in the ministry of Kwame Nkrumah. He is one of the "gleams" in that Ghanaian society. Everyone calls him "a big man" (25). Moreover, Minna Neimi points out that "Koomson is a personification of moral decay in Armah's novel who represents consumerist culture full of greed" (Neimi 19). In the novel Armah also gives his commentary regarding the African socialist leaders in the face of Koomson by saying,

The man, when he shook hands, was again amazed at the flabby softness of the hand. Ideological hands, the hands of revolutionaries leading their people into bold sacrifices, should these hands not have become even tougher than they were when their owner was hauling loads along the wharf? And yet these were the socialists of Africa, fat, perfumed, soft with the ancestral softness of chiefs who have sold their people and are celestially happy with the fruits of the trade. (Armah 75)

Which basically suggests Armah's perspective of the Ghanaian political leaders of that time who preached socialism, revolutionaries but end up selling their own dignity and country and were

satisfied with the outcome which benefited them. Moreover, S.K.B. Asante pointed out that “Guyanan Ras Makonnen, one of the loyal workers of Nkrumah was convinced that socialism had failed in Ghana because leaders who preached socialism were more capitalistic than the Western people thus socialism cannot be built without socialists” (Asante 1944).

Armah in this novel depicts the scenario of the politicians who used to live a life of luxury at the expense of the citizens through the character Koomson. In the novel when “the man” with his wife Oyo visits Koomson’s house Koomson offers them expensive drinks as a welcome drink. For instance, “There’s White Horse, you know. Black and White, Seagram’s, Gilbey’s Dry . . . “Well, I’ll let you choose, then...Atinga, bring the trolley, and put different drinks” (Armah 86). Which suggests Koomson’s luxurious life which he lives. As Aderinto S.I. Abiodun mentioned that “In his first novel, Armah revealed how African politicians live Luxurious lives at the expense of the ordinary people in their societies” (Abiodun 3).

A documentary entitled “Kwame Nkrumah: The Story of Post-colonial Africa” states that, “Nkrumah’s ministry started flaunting their wealth and living lavish lifestyles. For instance, one of the ministers of Nkrumah was criticized for importing a 3000 pound gold-plated bed from London and he responded by saying “Socialism does not mean that if you have made a lot of money, you cannot keep it”” (*New Africa Documentary*). This kind of tendency for material things and flaunting behavior are reflected by the character Koomson who is the minister in Nkrumah’s regime and his wife Estella in Armah’s novel.

As in the novel it is mentioned, “Bungalows, white with a wounding whiteness. Cars, long and heavy, with drivers in white men’s uniforms waiting for ages in the sun. Women, so horribly young, fucked and changed like pants, asking only for blouses and perfume from

diplomatic bags and wigs of human hair scraped from which decayed white woman's corpse?" (53). This resonates with the lifestyle of the elite class during that time. Who used to live life as a "Big man" like the White Europeans they could buy everything including academic scholarships through bribes.

In the novel it is noted that, when the protagonist's wife asked Estie about their daughter Regina she said, "She's in London now...She has a scholarship. Joe arranged it for her" (87). This suggests the practice of corruption in the field of education which was going on during that time. It also demonstrates how all these social realities are depicted by Armah in this novel. Moreover, Ogede pointed out that "In Armah's first novel the brand of socialism during Nkrumah's regime is depicted as a disguise, a cover for materialistic pursuits for the politicians" (Ogede 9).

Furthermore, in the novel we see the protagonist's wife and his mother-in-law wanting to start a fishing business with the help of Koomson as he got the power and authority in his hand. While discussing the price of the boat Koomson said "the boat cost twelve thousand pounds" (78). As the amount was so high, they got frightened. But Koomson said, "money is not the difficult thing. After all, the Commercial Bank is ours, and we can do anything" (79). This statement of Koomson is an important indication that for the political leaders of that time no matter how big the amount of money was that did not matter to them as they got the full authority to control the commercial banks. As Abiodun further mentioned that "African politicians buy whatever they want because they believe they can lift any cash from the government purse without any problem" (3). This was the exact case during the last stage of Nkrumah's regime when all the government ministries were involved in corruption and filled their pockets with black money. As a result, the lavish lifestyle and corrupted game of the

politicians are depicted by Armah in this novel to demonstrate the main reason behind destroying Ghana's socio-economic field during the post-independence disillusionment.

The critique of moral decay faced by individuals in post-independence Ghana is significantly depicted by Armah in one of the parts of the novel where the Protagonist's wife and mother-in-law wanted to be involved in signing contract with Koomson regarding the "fish boat" which is under the authority of Koomson. Because that would be a great opportunity for them to earn a good amount of money.

Moreover, the wife of the protagonist, Oyo has a great thirst for living a life like Koomson's family, his wife Estella lives. Thus, the protagonist is treated as a disappointment because he wants to earn in an honest way which is the main cause of their poverty. According to the protagonist's wife, the life of Estella, Koomson's wife, is nice and clean (30). However, the protagonist thinks this kind of cleanliness has more rottenness beneath it. He says, "Some of that kind of cleanness has more rottenness in it than the slime at the bottom of a garbage dump" (Armah 30). Though the protagonist was fully against it, he was not able to stop his wife from getting involved in this corrupt work. His family was under economic distress and poverty which made Oyo, the protagonist's wife desperate to ask for help from Koomson as he got power and opportunity in his hand.

This scene represents the overall situation of the Ghanaians who have to make this kind of corrupt choices for their economic benefit which can be threatened if they maintain moral integrity. Again, Oyo's choice of economic benefit over moral integrity where she was unaware of making moral judgement or thinking of her action echoes Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil". In addition, Arendt in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* refers to Adolf Eichmann at his 1961

trial. According to Thomas White, “Eichmann was the Nazi operative who used to organize the transportation of the Jews to the concentration camp” (White). Arendt thinks that evil rises from a lack of thinking. As White further mentions, “For Arendt Eichmann was not perverted sadistic but terrifying normal...His motive was not to do evil but to advance his career in Nazy bureaucracy” (White). Moreover, Arendt in her *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963) concludes that “Eichmann did evil deeds without evil intentions...he was unable to judge his actions based on his conscience ...he was under the circumstance which made difficult for him to understand what he was doing” (White). Arendt termed these characteristics of Eichmann as “the banality of evil”.

Similarly, the protagonist’s wife Oyo and the mother-in-law who wanted to start the unethical business with the help of Koomson can be analyzed through the lens of Arendt’s “Banality of evil”. Because likely any other Ghanaian Oyo also wanted to live a life with economic benefits which was only possible through involvement in evil works like dishonesty and bribery. Thus, her desire to become financially well suppressed her integrity and conscience. Similarly, the corrupted Ghanaians in Armah’s novel can be seen through the lens of Arendt’s banality of evil where the corrupt people who are unapologetically receiving bribes the bus conductor, railway clerk, police officers etc. All are incapable of thinking what they are doing. They want to advance their career and life. Thus, instead of resisting corruption they support their corrupt society, a corrupt government similar to Eichmann under Nazy bureaucracy. Thus, they do not even think of integrity. That is why when they see a man like the unnamed protagonist who refuses to take bribes and sticks to his moral principles, they find it “unnatural”.

Moreover, in a corrupt society living with dignity might be difficult as it would create frustration among individuals. In the novel the teacher was the only friend of the protagonist who

also hates corruption and immoral activities. It is seen that they both strive to be a non-participant in the national game of corruption thus they distance themselves from the corrupt society. However, in several parts of the novel we see the inner conflict and frustration of the protagonist which he feels. On the one hand, he feels content with himself because of not compromising his moral principles and dignity under this cruel game, on the other hand, he feels frustrated when he sees the lives of the dishonest like Koomson. The protagonist shares his frustration with his teacher by saying,

“I am asking myself what is wrong with me. Do I have some part missing? Teacher, this Koomson was my own classmate. My classmate, Teacher, my classmate. So tell me, what is wrong with me?” (Armah 37). This suggests the protagonist’s inner struggles where living a life with dignity offers no value but living a life with depravity gives one value, worth and power. Jean Solomon outlines a connection between the protagonist’s steadfastness to remain honest in a corrupt society and Plato’s idea of a just society where “justice in the state is modelled upon justice in the soul and it is dependent on the latter” (Solomon 9). This suggests that, if people stay true in a moral sense, then something good will happen and justice will happen because they will strive to protect their moral values.

However, in the ending scene of the novel Armah directly mentions the military coup of 1966 which dethroned Nkrumah along with his ministers including Koomson. Armah, by referring to the coup openly placed the novel as Fenderson said “from figurative novel to an unambiguous critique of Nkrumah’s Ghana” (Fenderson 52). Fenderson further mentioned that “for Nkrumah supporters Armah’s first novel is seen as an anti-Nkrumah propaganda and the novel turned into an evidence for justifying the 1966 coup for the anti-Nkrumahist” (52).

In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Armah's commentary regarding the coup is very significant. He further says, "One man, with the help of people who loved him and believed in him, had arrived at power and used it for himself. Now other men, with the help of guns, had come to this same power. What would it mean?" (92). This illustrates Armah's disappointment on Nkrumah's regime also with the power which will come after because they also bring the same cycle of corruption.

As a result, Armah's critique on post-independence disillusionment during Nkrumah's regime in the novel which categorized Armah as an "engaged writer". Who uses words as an instrument for asserting the socio-political realities of a society which undergoes corruption, moral degradation due to political shortcomings. According to Sartre, "the prose-writer is a man who has chosen a certain method of secondary action which we may call action by disclosure" (23). Armah in this novel, portrays the failure of socialism in Nkrumah's regime and the corrupt civilian administration whose only aim was to grab power and resources of Ghana.

Thus, this novel can be seen as a disclosure of the disruption of socio-political condition of Ghana during the last stage of Kwame Nkrumah's regime that led to corruption and moral decay. However, this does not necessarily mean that Armah is an anti-Nkrumahist. For Chinua Achebe, direct mention of Nkrumah in the novel is a mistake of Armah. He points out, "Just as the hero is nameless, so should everything else be" (Achebe 625). However, I want to argue that including realistic settings and characters like Ghana and Nkrumah in the novel are not mistakes of Armah. Rather, this can be seen as Armah's contribution to Africa's betterment where he is pointing out the consequences of Nkrumah's mistakes so that African leaders can learn from it. Thus, Armah can be seen as an example of an "engaged writer" who is an outspoken critic of socio-political issues and uses his writing as an instrument to transform the society.

Chapter 4: Critique of Materialistic Society in Post-Independence Ghana

In Ayi Kwei Armah's second novel *Fragments* (1970) we see the author's concern regarding post-independence Ghanaian society that is becoming extremely materialistic. Due to globalization, the Western influence on Africa was immensely created negative effects. Moreover, the extreme love for materialism ultimately threatened the traditional African culture. Intellectuals who were supposed to be the nation's future hope and social reformers, they became the "Western product" whose only aim was to fulfill their immediate material needs, social status in the society. As a result, Armah in his second novel depicts a society that is under a dangerous threat due to the effect of 'Westernization' and 'Materialism'.

In *Fragments* through the characters Armah portrays how greed, material possession, bribery, Nepotism have become the utmost values that are embraced by the Ghanaians instead of spiritual and traditional African convictions. As a result, Armah in *Fragments* portrays the realities of the materialistic Ghanaian society where people are more concerned about money, power, status and showing off wealth rather than human values, conscience. In a society people started worshipping wealth and neglecting their African roots. This again aligns Armah with Sartre's idea of an "engaged writer" as Armah addresses the social issues and uses writing as an instrument for the social reformation.

Thus, in this chapter, I would like to analyse Armah's second novel *Fragments* based on the author's criticism of the materialistic society in post-independence Ghana and the depiction of greed, bribery, westernization that creates a destructive effect on intellectuals as well as on the African society.

Brief Overview

Ayi Kwei Armah's second novel *Fragments* (1970) is set in the locale of West Africa, Ghana during the period that saw the extreme love for materialism and rejection of traditional values due to Western influence on the post-colonial Ghanaian culture. The story follows young Ghanaian Baako Onipa, a 25-year-old graduated from the New York. The protagonist Baako after completing his 5 years of study in the U.S., returned to Ghana with a dream of becoming an Artist (script writer). In addition, he wanted to contribute to his community as an activist through his writings. However, in Ghana he feels completely alienated. The protagonist's return was not worth it according to the expectations of his family and society. Because Baako did not fulfill the criteria of usual "been-to". In addition, "been-to" refers to the person who has been abroad. In African society people used to call their people who go abroad "been-to". In *Fragments* Armah introduces another character Brempong who epitomizes the perfect "been-to" in a society that is becoming extremely materialistic. Brempong returns from abroad with so many expensive material things. To the contrary, Baako brings nothing but his "degree", "documents".

The story culminates with Baako's internal struggles in a society where happiness, reputation and fulfillment are achieved by the acquisition of material things. Money and social status are bigger than moral and traditional values. In a society, the value of human life is less important. That results the protagonist mental breakdown that led him to mental asylum. The novel concludes with blind Naana (Baako's grand-mother) whose reflection plays a vital role as Armah through this character asserts the significance of the traditional African values and the distraction that may emerge because of its absence.

Material Possession and Westernization in *Fragments*

Ayi Kwei Armah in his second novel *Fragments* depicts a Ghanaian society that is under threats because of the influence of Western culture and excessive material possession. Moreover, he also shows the traumatic sufferings of the intellectual activist due to extreme materialistic and consumerist society where bribery, nepotism, corruption have the highest value over honesty, qualification and conscience. According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, “Materialism is an ideology where there is a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values”. Armah in his second novel portrays some characters who are highly influenced by this type of materialism. We see the extreme love for material things, nepotism, bribery in various shapes in *Fragments*.

In the novel Armah portrays the role of a “been-to” through two characters Brempong and Baako. According to Kirsten Holst Petersen, “A “been-to” is a person who has been to England or America for study purposes and expected to come back with all the wonders of Western technology such as radios, refrigerators, cars etc.” (Petersen 59-60). The protagonist Baako just completed his education from America and returned to Ghana with his enthusiastic vision of doing useful creative works for his motherland. Where Brempong is more concerned about his Western identity, material things Baako is concerned about creating his own identity in his homeland. Baako wants to find a job as a script writer at “Ghanavision Corporation” (Armah 67).

The first form of material depravity and Western influence on the intellectual is seen between the conversation of Brempong and Baako while they both are on the plane returning to Ghana from the U.S. As it is mentioned in the novel Brempong with “the dark wool suit”(62) comes close to Baako and says,

“Henry Robert Hudson Brempong is my name.”

“Baako.”

“Is that your Christian or your surname? Brempong asked.

“No Christian name.”

“You know your other names.”

“Onipa”

“It is an unusual name,” Brempong said. (Armah 63)

Here in this first conversation between Brempong and Baako we see the influence of the Westernized pattern of names on Brempong though he is a Ghanaian. Armah, through the character Brempong who has been living abroad almost 8 years shows how the educated “been-to” becomes a Western product. Moreover, Brempong adds Christian name “Henry Robert Hudson” because it will give him respect and power in the society. Also, it will give him more acknowledgement and acceptance as a “been-to” in society. Thus, when Brempong knows Baako has no Christian surname he becomes surprised and considers the family surname “Onipa” as unusual.

Moreover, every time Brempong talks with Baako he talks about material things such as cars, branded cigarettes, wallets, suits and so on. For instance, Brempong said to Baako, “Every time I go out, I arrange to buy all I need, suits and so on. It is quite simple. I got two good cars on this trip. German cars, right from the factory, all fresh. They are following me. Shipped” (Armah 65). This suggests Brempong’s excessive desire for material things. According to Brempong, all good and branded things are from abroad. He said, “You just have to know what to look for when you get a chance to go abroad. Otherwise, you come back empty-handed like a fool, and all the time you spent is a waste, useless” (Armah 66). This kind of mentality is seen in

various characters in the novel. If someone goes abroad for study or anything he/she has to buy things from there, big things for family. Otherwise, going abroad is of no use. As a result, when Brempong hears Baako returning to Ghana without buying anything from abroad he becomes astonished. For Baako, his only aim to go abroad was to complete his degree.

Armah asserts in this novel how extremely the Ghanaians were obsessed with wealth and status that they started treating their intellect as an “instrument” for material possession. Armah brilliantly portrays this through the reference of the “Cargo Cult”. In *Fragments* Armah creates a connection between the “Cargo Cult” (224) and the role of the “been-to”. It also highlights the extreme material possession that was going on in West Africa. For instance,

[...] There is nothing all that special about the been-to’s coming given the logic of the cargo system itself. After all, in the unelaborated system where the been-to has yet to make its appearance, and there is no intermediary between the earth below and the sky above no visible flesh and blood intermediary at any rate the human being once dead is in his burial considerate as having been exported to the other world. [...] The been-to here then only fleshes out the pattern. He is the ghost in person returned to live among men, a powerful ghost understood to the extent that he behaves like a powerful ghost [...] in many ways the been-to is and has to be a transmission belt for Cargo. Not a maker but an intermediary. Making takes too long, the intermediary brings quick gains. (Armah 224)

This clearly states Armah’s reference to the Cargo Cult that has a great historical significance. In addition, Cargo Cult refers to the “religious movements in Melanesia that exhibit belief in the nearness of a new age of blessing that is introduced by the arrival of a special “cargo” of goods from supernatural sources based on the observation by the local residents of the delivery of

supplies to the colonial officials” (*Britannica*). It was basically a socio-religious movement in New Guinea during colonial dominance. As Petersen mentions “Cargo Cult was a socio-political movement in New Guinea between 1870 and 1950 that was the result of colonial interference with a traditional system that resembled West Africa in economic and social structure as well as religion” (Petersen 60). This disturbed the traditional African culture because of the Western interference.

Moreover, the local people who were totally unaware of technological advancements, when they saw the colonizers were bringing large cargo planes with so many European goods it created a huge impact on the indigenous people who became so much obsessed with the idea of “Cargo”. They started thinking that cargo comes from supernatural powers that bring valuable material things. As Peter Lawrence mentions “The people of New Guinea started modifying their traditional belief in relation to the cargo and adapted a new belief that cargo ships, aircraft, military equipment were not man-made but had to be obtained from divine source” (Lawrence 1). They thought Cargo can be obtained by prayer and sacrifice. As a result, they started worshipping airplanes and burning the crops that hugely hampered the society both economically and socially.

Thus, the “Cargo Cult” has a great symbolic significance in this novel that can be analysed by connecting it to the role of the “been-to”. In the novel, both Brempong and Baako are treated just like the “Cargo” that will bring modern technologies, material things for their families. For instance, when Baako’s mother Efua first heard from Baako’s uncle Foli that Baako returned Ghana, Foli said, “I have a huge present waiting for you” (98). This expresses the exact portrayal of Baako to his family because for them he is a “present” means through him they will get valuable foreign gifts, valuable goods. The people of New Guinea who used to believe Cargo

comes from supernatural power by praying. In *Fragments* the Ghanaians replace this supernatural power with “Western education” where a “been-to” conveys those material things. That is why Armah said “Not a maker but an intermediary. Making takes too long, the intermediary brings quick gains” (224). That means, the “been-to” is playing the role as an ‘intermediary’ who brings the material goods to the people as a “conveyer belt for cargo”. Petersen in his article termed this kind of society that regards its people as a conveyer of material possession “an alienated and dehumanized society” (62) and this alienation spreads from economic level to personal level that we see in *Fragments*.

It is significant to mention that in *The Wretched of The Earth* Frantz Fanon used the word “intermediary” in relation to the national middle- class people. In addition, according to Fanon the national bourgeoisie is the major barrier of the newly independent country. Because this class has a great tendency to imitate Europeans. Fanon mentioned, “the national bourgeoisie identifies itself with the Western bourgeoisie, from whom it has learnt its lessons. It follows the Western bourgeoisie along its path of negation and decadence without ever having emulated it in its first stages of exploration and invention, stages which are an acquisition of that Western bourgeoisie whatever the circumstances” (Fanon 153). That means, it has less interest in developing the nation and more interest in personal gains. The national bourgeoisie’s only intention is to do activities that are intermediary. Fanon further said, “The national middle class discovers its historic mission: that of intermediary” (152). Critic like Kirsten Holst Petersen identifies that Armah picked Fanon’s keyword “intermediary” and used it as his own in *Fragments* connecting the word with the role of the “been-to”. As Petersen mentions, “The hatred of the black bourgeoisie is one of the motivating forces behind *Fragments*” (Petersen 62). We can relate this

with the two characters mentioned by Armah in the novel. One is Asante Smith who is the head of Ghana-vision and Akosua Russell who is the corrupted fake writer.

In *Fragments* Armah portrayed Akosua Russell as a fake writer who uses other's works and collects money out of it. It is mentioned that a "production meeting" (162) was held by Akosua Russell that was attended by Ghanaian artists and American Sponsors. Akosua arranged this occasion just to collect money for herself. In addition, in this meeting she invited the writers who will get the chance to read their writings and she would say that she taught them how to write and encouraged them. Thus, the American sponsors would donate money and all the money would be taken by Akosua. As a result, through this character Armah asserts how even in the field of creative works, literature corruption is spreading. Moreover, Akosua also represents the African leaders who are using their own country and its natural resources for their personal gain. Similarly, the national bourgeoisie that Fanon mentioned whose only intention is collect material gains and imitate the Europeans.

Moreover, in the conversation between Brempong and Baako Armah gives hints to the idea of "Nepotism" that was going on in Ghana. For instance, when Baako shares with Brempong that he wants to work in Ghana-vision, the first thing Brempong asks is "You know Asante-Smith, don't you?" (67) In addition, Asante Smith is the boss of Ghana-vision Corporation. As Baako do not know Asante personally, according to Brempong, Baako must have a connection with Asante otherwise he will never find job there. Furthermore, the suggestions given by Brempong to Baako here is significant because through this Armah asserts the real scenario of Ghana during that time when elites were extremely doing nepotism, corruption, bribery in job sectors. Brempong says, "[...] Asante Smith, he knows people. Besides, he is clever...he has the sweetest tongue in all of Ghana for singing his master's

praises” (Armah 67). That means, the reason behind Asante Smith becoming the boss of Ghana-vision is he has connections with “big people” thus he gets privileges and he knows whom to praise. As a result, for finding job in Ghana-vision or anywhere else, Baako needs to know “big people” because by their reference he can get privilege or he has to give bribe. Otherwise, no one will give job just looking at degrees or certificates.

In the novel it has been continuously seen that the Ghanaian society is giving too much attention to the status of a person. For instance, when Baako saw his sister Araba terribly suffering from labor pain and took her to the hospital, the nurse instead of admitting the patient asked, “Are you a Senior Officer? [...] Is the husband a Senior Officer? [...] What is your status?” (107) As Baako has no status the nurse told him she could not admit the patient in new wards because it was for VIP’s. Thus, the patient should be admitted in the old wards. This also suggests that even in hospitals discrimination was happening along with job sectors. The Senior Officers will get extra privilege because of their status in the society. On the other hand, the people who have no “big” status are deprived of basic treatments.

Moreover, we see the practice of bribery, corruption that was going on in the fictional Ghana. No matter how many certificates and degrees one has, a job will be given not by qualification but by bribe or nepotism. For instance, the protagonist Baako while talking to the Junior Assistant regarding his job application, the only answer Baako gets is “You have to come tomorrow” (110). Despite filling all the requirements, Baako went to the office “fifth” time and got the same answer “come tomorrow”. This ultimately frustrated the protagonist and when he asked the reason to the junior Assistant he replied, “You want me to help you? [...] You can come and see me when you decide you want me to help you. And do not come here just to waste my time. I am a busy man” (110). Here “help” indirectly means bribe. No matter how many

times Baako comes to the office fulfilling all the requirements he will never get the job because he has to ask for “help” that means, offering a bribe so that the officers can help him to get the job. We can say that perhaps Armah in this novel portrays the reality of many newly graduated intellectuals during that time in Ghana. Who strived for getting jobs with the belief that they had the proper qualification but ended up getting frustrated as corruption and bribery were the ways to get jobs.

Furthermore, Armah represents some characters in this novel through which we see various forms of material possessions. For instance, Efua (Baako’s mother), Araba (sister). It is noted that, like any other people in that society, the protagonist’s mother and sister were too much obsessed with material things such as money, gifts, cars etc.

For instance, we see Baako’s mother is more concerned about Baako’s appearance rather than his returns after five years. When Baako attended his nephew’s naming ceremony the first thing his mother said was “I wish you had brought a tux, or at least a suit, though. It would have been so fine” (Armah 98). This is because, in their perspective, a highly educated “been-to” should not be dressed like an ordinary person. As Kasimi Djiman mentions that “In Baako’s mother’s psyche when one attends a university institution it compels one to stand out which must be expressed in one’s appearance and clothing” (Djiman 96). As Baako had a Western education, he must show this through his clothing that indirectly means that he should “imitate” the Western people. As Djiman further mentions, “Baako who has mastered the knowledge of the Whites, he is also expected to show off how he masters the dressing habit as well” (96).

Moreover, we also see Brempong’s sister’s perspective is similar to Efua. She also judged Baako based on his appearance. When Brempong said Baako is also a “been-to” his sister

became surprised and said, “You mean he is also a been-to? Inspecting Baako with suspicious thoroughness from head to toe” (84). This again states, Brempong’s sister also has this preconceived idea of a “been-to” that should be well dressed like Brempong. Armah through the character Brempong asserts how important the idea of appearance of a “been-to” is for the Ghanaians. As Brempong said to Baako, “You know how you are dressed, how you walk, you don’t give the impression that you know you are a “been-to”. When a Ghanaian has a chance to go abroad and return home, it’s clear from any distance he’s a “been-to” coming back” (69). This means, the importance of appearance, clothing style are highly expected from a “been-to” in Ghanaian society that they can sense someone a “been-to” just looking at his/her appearance. Moreover, it also suggests that the consumeristic culture and material possession effectively narrows the mind of the Ghanaians that they are giving importance to the things that are less important and neglecting the things those are worthy enough to be concerned about.

Because of their extreme greed Baako’s sister’s child’s “naming ceremony” lost its traditional significance. In addition, in African society when a newborn arrives, they do an outdoor ceremony that has a spiritual significance. As Panaewazibiou Dadjia Tiou said, “The purpose of such ceremony is to allow the ancestors to protect the new born baby [...] the newly born infant is given a name and identity and it occurs eighteen days after the baby’s birth” (Dadjia Tiou 186-187). However, in *Fragments* we see Baako’s family corrupts this ceremony and their intention to arrange this ceremony is only to “make money” out of it. Because, they will invite their “rich” guests who will give expensive gifts to the child. Moreover, in the novel we see the outdoor ceremony is totally detached from traditional norms and values.

Firstly, Baako’s mother Efua and sister Araba fixed the date of the occasion close to the “Payday”. For instance, between the conversation of Efua and Araba while fixing the date of the

ceremony they said, “An outdoor ceremony held more than a few days after payday is useless [...] Ghanaian men broke so fast these days it isn’t funny [...] The only sensible time is the first weekend after payday” (125). In this conversation it is clear that the characters are more concerned about money rather than the ceremony. They fix the date close to payday because the pockets of their guests will be full during that time. Thus, they totally ignored the traditional rule of fixing dates that were supposed to be “eighteen days” after the baby’s birth.

Moreover, they also violate another significant traditional value that is giving the eldest family member proper importance as a consultant. Baako’s grandmother Naana in this case is the most- oldest person in the family. But we see she is ignored in taking decisions. While fixing the date of the ceremony we do not hear Naana’s opinion. Also, we see Baako is appointed as the Master of Ceremony (MC) because he is a “been-to” a pride for the family. Traditionally, the eldest family member that is Naana supposed to be the main of the ceremony but she is neglected. This value is again violated. As Baako’s family is more concerned about “showing off” things. They have got the baby ready in rich cloths and arrange a “wind machine” to cool the baby. As Baako’s Naana said, “What do they want with this wind machine?

“To cool the baby”, said Baako.

“Naana laughed, “To boast, more likely” (Armah 266).

The above dialogue clearly states that Efua and Araba arrange the “wind machine” just to show off rather than cooling the baby. During that time, having a wind machine was equal of having an “Air Conditioner”. As the wind machine was Araba’s valuable possession that ironically became the reason for their child’s cruel death. Armah in this part of the novel asserts a deep message that how the excessive materialistic mentality can lead to death.

This show off culminates when the newborn was dead in its own outdooring ceremony. we see that all the “VIP guests were giving donation in the brass pan in appreciation of the birth of the child” (264). While everyone was busy giving and collecting presence, “terrifying sound burst from the cradle” (266). It is mentioned in the novel “Sparks flew out in a small shower where the cord snapped at the base of the fan” (266). That means, the fan fell down on the baby and it was brutally killed and this destructive scene was first seen by Baako. “The terrifying sound burst from the cradle and [...] the clown came off his wall and bounded the few steps to the cradle trying to stop the fan he fumbled, the button he pushed making the machine run faster” (266). Here “clown” refers to Baako who was trying to save the baby but could not save.

“The confusion brought Araba out, smiling feebly, a hand on her abdomen, still visibly in pain. [...] her mother Efua looking vacantly out into the yard, standing upright among the scattered notes” (266). This suggests how extreme material possession makes these characters totally detached from the human reaction to someone's death. Instead of crying over their infant's death, Efua was looking at the “scattered notes” in the yard. She was more concerned about the money than the dead baby.

However, this affected Baako terribly. Along with all his experiences after returned to Ghana such as “modern Westernized Ghana” far from traditional values, frustration in finding jobs, everyone treating him as a “commodity” instead of “human”, failure of his dream to become an activist through writing scripts etc. became the reasons of Baako's mental breakdown and led Baako to mental asylum. Baako's madness is very symbolic here. Armah ironically portrays what would happen to an individual like Baako who strives to survive in a society that is extremely far from moral values due to the westernized idea of materialistic culture. The intellectuals like Baako who had a vision to work for his country Ghana through his writing

whose motive was killed by not the outsiders but his own country people. As Petersen mentions, “In *Fragments* Armah has vented his anger on the native bourgeoisie rather than the white foreigners, the feeling of alienation and bitterness that was created in Baako by that class is obviously no less vehement” (Petersen 64). Baako felt totally alienated from his own society as well as family because of extreme expectations of the society that is materialistic, westernized as well as destructive. Kofi Owusu in his Article compares Baako’s situation with Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and points out that “Both Hamlet and Baako are the sensitive protagonists who are shocked by physical and moral corruption [...] Baako’s loneliness and aloneness correspond to Hamlet’s” (Owusu 361).

In *Fragments* Armah gives much importance to African culture. He depicts how material possession and Western culture threaten traditional African culture especially in West Africa. It is significant to mention that Africans give so much importance to their ancestors. They have this belief that their ancestor plays a vital role in their life as they get protection from them. As Panaewazibiou Dadjia-Tiou mentions that, “In African culture it is believed that even though the ancestors are dead they are communicating with the world of human beings from the world of spirit” (184). That means, the physical death of the ancestors leads them to the world of spirit from where they constantly pray for their lineage’s protection. Armah in this novel portrays the traditional African value through Baako’s grandmother, Naana. Armah gives this character so much importance that the first chapter of *Fragments* is titled as “Naana”.

As Africans believed that their ancestors guide their generation, Armah shows this through the character Naana. It is mentioned in the novel, when Baako was leaving for America for his study his Naana arranged a “ceremony for Baako’s departure” (Armah 5). The intention was to satisfy the ancestors through this ceremony so that Baako could come back safely from abroad.

In addition, this ceremony was performed by Baako's uncle Foli who did the ritual incorrectly. Instead of pouring all the drinks into a glass he, "poured a little drink" (9) that was seen by Naana. As Panaewazibiou Dadja-Tiou further mentions, "African people have this belief that their ancestors have the power to punish them if they break the traditionally sanctioned code" (184). As a result, when Baako's Naana saw that Foli was violating the traditional code, she herself performed the libation so that "the cycle would never break" (8) and Baako could return safely. Here, cycle means the ancestors may always pray for Baako's protection and never punish him for any violation.

For instance, "I poured down everything in the glass and it was only that I opened my mouth again Naananom, drink to your thirst and go with the young one. Protect him well and bring him back, to us to you" (10). This suggests Naana's belief that as she corrects Foli's mistake and does the ritual by herself pouring all drink into the glass now the ancestors will not punish them and will bring Baako back safely. Here "Naananom" means ancestors who are dead and become the spirits in the world of spirit. In *Fragments* Armah used the word "Naananom" several times because of its great significance in African traditional society.

However, I want to argue that, through the character Naana, Baako's departure ceremony and Araba's child's outdoor ceremony Armah tries to give a hidden message that is the paramount importance to the African traditional and cultural values that was under threat. Significantly, Armah starts his novel *Fragments* with Naana and ends it with Naana that must be important to draw attention. It is seen that Baako's uncle Foli violated the traditional code because of his greed. His violation could bring punishment to Baako according to the norms. However, Naana by correcting the mistakes of Foli helped Baako so that the cycle would never break and the ancestors might be satisfied. As a result, we see Baako returned to Ghana safely.

On the contrary, we see another traditional sanctioned code has been violated that is Araba's child's outdoor ceremony. Because of extreme greed for money and material things Baako's mother and sister fixed the ceremony date close to payday. That was supposed to be eight days after the child's birth. Most importantly, their intention was corrupted. They just wanted to make money, not the blessings of the ancestors. As a result, it can be said that perhaps because of corrupting the traditional code the newborn was dead which can be seen as "punishment".

Also, in the outdoor ceremony we do not see any action of Naana which she did in Baako's departure ceremony by correcting Foli's mistake. She could stop Araba and Efua from violating the ceremony and maintaining rules. Perhaps, extreme love for material possession and Western influence made Baako's family so greedy and blind that they ignored Naana as an "ancestor" and did not bother to listen to her anything. Baako's family represents the African society that is becoming far from their roots, beliefs and traditional values. They are blind lovers of material things and trying hard to imitate the Whites.

Thus, Armah in his second novel *Fragments* portrays the post- independence Ghanaian society's realities that were becoming extremely corrupted, influenced by Western values rejecting the African values, love for material possession that threatens the African culture immensely. The reasons behind Baako's mental illness and the infant's death are the African society itself. Because they lack the moral conscience and forget their roots.

As a result, I want to argue that Armah's concern in this novel is to create African social reformation that illustrates African people should be aware of its own destruction and take serious actions with the intention of restoring the traditional African values. Moreover, *Fragments* can be seen as Armah's contribution to Africa's betterment as well where he is using

his words as an “instrument” to transform the society. Armah’s critique of materialistic society in post-independence Ghana aligns with Sartre’s idea of an “engaged writer” where Armah instead of portraying the post-independence idealized Ghanaian society, portrays a society that was far from its ideal roots. Society, that totally forgot its tradition and borrowed the Western pattern of lifestyle. Thus, Armah is undoubtedly an ‘engaged writer’ who is brave enough to criticize his country’s shortcomings not as an “alienated native” but as more than a “native” who has a deep connection with his roots and African values.

Chapter 5: Chinua Achebe's Allegation of Armah

A Nigerian novelist and critic Chinua Achebe in "Africa and Her Writers" asserts his views regarding African arts and differentiates African arts from European arts that is based on "Arts for Art's sake" (Achebe 617). It is significant to mention that Achebe had a firm belief and respect for African traditional culture. According to Achebe, African legends and ancestors who created myths and stories, their intention was doing good for the society. As Achebe said, "Our ancestors [...] they made their sculpture in wood and terra-cotta, stone and bronze to serve the needs of their times. Their artists lived and moved and had their being in society, and created their works for the good of that society" (617). As a result, Achebe's conviction for African arts contradicts with European Arts because "for Europe the idea of Art is that Art should not be accountable for anyone and needed to justify to nobody except itself" (Achebe 617). That means, European arts are most likely "uncommitted" in nature. In addition, an uncommitted work of literature or artist do not necessarily create arts for any specific social, political or moral purpose. They create art for art's sake. They give importance to aesthetics rather than social causes. To the contrary, African arts are most likely "committed" in nature. That means, they have a certain kind of commitment to the society that their works will actively notify the social issues of the time with a purpose and have a moral lesson.

According to Achebe, "Words like use, purpose, value are beneath the divine concerns of European Arts and so are we, the vulgarians craving for the message and the morality" (618). Here, "we" refers to the African artists. Just like Europeans treat the "purpose of art" as its least concern similarly they treat Africans as inferior to be concerned for. Thus, African artists are different from European artist as Africans are more committed to their art as well as society. However, Achebe said "many African writers are accepting the European aesthetic uncritically"

(622). That means, Achebe thinks African writers are starting borrowing the “human condition syndrome” (624) from Europe in their writings. In addition, human condition means the inherent condition of being human for instance, emotions, despair, struggles etc. European literature is more concerned with these themes like despair and existential crisis thus Achebe called it “human condition syndrome” (624). Moreover, Achebe believes “European art and literature have every good reason for going into a phase of despair but African art and literature does not” (624).

The reason I mentioned all these is because ironically, Achebe refers to Ayi Kwei Armah as an example of African writers who “accept this European aesthetic and human condition syndrome” in their works. Specifically, Achebe mentioned Armah’s first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968). As Achebe said, “There is a brilliant Ghanaian novelist, Ayi Kwei Armah, who seems to me to be in grave danger of squandering his enormous talents and energy in pursuit of the human condition. In an impressive first novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, he gives us a striking parable of corruption in Ghana society and of one man who refuses to be contaminated by this filth” (Achebe 624). That suggests, Achebe thinks Armah is wasting his enormous talent and energy following the “human condition” in his works just like the European artists. According to Achebe’s concern, Armah is in great danger as an African writer. He further mentioned that, “Armah’s first novel is a sick book. Sick, not with the sickness of Ghana but with the sickness of the human condition. [...] Armah is clearly an alienated modern writer” (624-625). Thus, in this chapter I will critically argue against Chinua Achebe’s accusations of Ayi Kwei Armah.

According to Achebe, the protagonist of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* Armah gives the character elements which are seen in protagonists of the existential novels of Europe.

He said, “The hero is pale and passive and nameless just like a creation in the best manner of existentialist writing...” (614). Achebe also mentioned that the protagonist of Armah’s first novel though he tries hard to be a non-participant of corruption, “he did not do anything as positive as refusing” (624).

In an interview that was uploaded in *YouTube* by *Blacker The Berry* in 2020 entitled “African Writers of Today [Chinua Achebe]”, the host Lewis Nkosi along with Nigerian playwright and novelist Wole Soyinka asked some important questions to the honorable guest Chinua Achebe. One of the questions asked by Nkosi was “In *Things Fall Apart* the protagonist Okonkwo deliberately attempts to avoid moral judgement. There was this absolute cruelty that is because of the tribal society sanction of killing Ikemefuna by his protector where it is seen that Okonkwo had some kind of doubt but he did not avoid doing so and the way you wrote that passage seem, you were not able to make any particular judgement on that action” (Nkosi). And the answer to this by Achebe was, “No I don’t think so. You have to see the story as a whole. As this particular Igbo society had too much belief in manliness and this is part of the reason why this society crashed at the end and I don’t think the writer should point a moral lesson on every page and regarding the story this is the way that things went...” (Achebe).

I argue that, in Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, similarly the Ghanaian society was too much obsessed with money, power and corruption which was the reason for its post-independence disillusionment. As Achebe said he did not notice Armah’s unnamed protagonist positively refused corruption. Ode S. Ogede mentions, “In the end of the novel, the man’s refusal to participate in the fraudulent boat deal, to which is tied his wife’s final hope of achieving easy wealth, represents his most giant step to victory over the forces threatening the struggle to reinstate healthy moral standards” (Ogede 125). Armah shows the protagonist’s sense

of responsibility and moral judgement in various parts of the novel. I agree that Armah does not represent his protagonist as an activist. But Armah asserts a more vital message through the protagonist that only by the ‘rebirth’ of men and women who have the moral sensibility and conscience like the protagonist, can a society find its redemption. As Achebe points out *Things Fall Apart* should be seen as a whole, I want to add that Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* also should be seen as a whole instead of criticizing based on one specific point.

Achebe also compared Armah’s first novel’s protagonist to the man and woman in Jean-Paul Sartre’s novel and expressed his disappointment in Armah’s novel that failed him to convince. Achebe said,

“He reminded me very strongly of that man and woman in Jean-Paul Sartre’s novel who sit in anguished gloom in a restaurant and then in a sudden access of nihilistic energy seize table knives and stab their hands right through to the wood to prove some very obscure point to each other [...] Ultimately the novel failed to convince me. And this was because Armah insists that this story is happening in Ghana and not in some modern, existentialist no man's land” (625).

I want to argue that, neither Armah is trying to prove any “obscure” point nor his novel is an “existentialist” novel. However, critics can analyse Armah’s protagonist based on “Existentialism” but this is not the only theme or point that is asserted by Armah in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*.

Moreover, the novel failed to convince Achebe because Armah insisted that “the story is happening in Ghana not in any existentialist no man’s land” (625). Thus, the question is what is wrong with that if Armah sets the novel’s settings in Ghana? Don’t Ghanaians or Africans go through an “existential crisis” at a certain point of their lives? As existential crisis is a sort of

inner conflict to find meaning in life related to human experience that is a universal theme we can find in literature. This does not mean that it is limited to just “Western literature”. Thus, pointing out Armah’s protagonist as “pale, passive and creation of existential writing” and direct mention of the setting as “Ghana” are indeed a fragile reason to accuse any novel as a “failure”.

Furthermore, Achebe gives another opinion on Armah that “[...] [T]here is enormous distance between Armah and Ghana and there is something cold and remote about Armah’s obsession with the filth of Ghana” (626). That suggests that, in Achebe’s view Armah has some distance with his own country. He only focuses on the filth sides of Ghana that are portrayed by him in his first novel. Achebe also gave examples of some passages from *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* where Armah is describing the setting of the novel that is Ghana. Achebe figured out that those descriptions are quite similar to the description that is given by Joyce Cary in his famous novel *Mister Johnson* (1939). In addition, Joyce Cary was a British author who during 1917 worked as a district officer in Nigeria (*Britannica*). As a result, in *Mister Johnson* Cary writes about Africa that according to Achebe “an alien writing about Africa” (626). Even, Achebe in an interview by Lewis Nkosi said, “The negative influence of Joyce Cary’s *Mister Johnson* that angered him deeply when he was a student at the University College Ibadan” (Achebe).

As a result, Achebe finds similarities with Joyce Cary’s writing in Armah and said, “Ayi Kwei Armah is an ‘alienated native’. It seems that to achieve the modern alienated stance an African writer will end up writing like some white District Officer” (626). Here “White District Officer” refers to Joyce Cary. Achebe also refers to Armah’s interview where he said, “he is not an African writer but just a writer” (626). According to Achebe, it is just a sentiment with the intention to gain praise from the Western circles. Because the people of Africa fear the

“rejection”. Thus, I strongly go against Achebe’s opinion on Armah. Because, Armah is not an “alienated” writer and never will be. He is as much conscious as any other writer in Africa. His first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* was not his cold anger for his own country. Rather, it was his concern for his country that just became independent but did not seem as an “independent” country. His disappointment was on African leaders who preached good words but ended up using their power just like the colonizers. He highlights the post-independence disillusionment in Ghana that was extremely contaminated by bribery, corruption and moral decay. As Ogede mentions, “The failure of socialism in Ghana during Nkrumah’s regime, though a historically real local Ghanaian misadventure, is presented convincingly by Armah as an unsettling continental calamity” (Ogede 120).

However, Achebe finds Armah’s novel is full of individual expressions. Achebe explains that “Even one’s anger one must feel the relation of one’s society not alienation from it. Armah’s first novel is a cold accusation of Nkrumah according to Achebe” (113). But Armah’s criticism of Nkrumah focuses on the inability to guide the government for improving the lives of the citizens of Ghana. Armah’s aim was to shed light on Nkrumah’s mistakes so that future leaders could learn from it. However, Armah’s perspective contradicts with other critics’ perspectives such as Achebe, Kofi Awoonor, Ama Ata Aidoo because they prefer to give Nkrumah honour for his contribution to Ghana’s independence rather than pointing out his mistakes” (Ogede 113).

Kirsten Holst Petersen points out Kofi Awoonor’s opinion on Armah who said, “I particularly think that Armah is much more concerned with the degree of despair, which at times is very relentless, much more relentless than is warranted by the conditions” (Peterson 62). It is significant to mention that Achebe, Kofi Awoonor, Efua Sutherland shared similar views regarding Armah. As Petersen further mentions, “Kofi Awoonor and Efua Sutherland focused on

Armah's position as an alienated writer, his alienation from the social class that produces most of West Africa's writers". As a result, it is said that "Perhaps Asante Smith and Akosua Russell in *Fragments* is the caricature of Kofi Awoonor and Efuia Sutherland" (62). As we have seen in *Fragments* the protagonist Baako's dream was to communicate with his community through his creative and intellectual works. However, the way Baako's scripts were rejected by Asante Smith because his project/story was based on "slavery", "Criticism of educated Africans" that according to Asante Smith was "too much abstract approach" (Armah 147). We can say that, Baako's creative writings manifest "fighting phase of the native intellectual" as explicated by Fanon in *The Wretched of The Earth*. However, in Armah's fictional Ghana there was no acceptance of such creative works those were based on "truth". As Kasimi Djiman mentions that, "In *Fragments* the society valued the glorifications of vulgar objects thus there was no room for 'intellectual reflection' in that Ghanaian society" (100). We can say that was the main reason of Baako's alienation from his own society by his own people. Similarly, Armah has the exact dream when he returned to Ghana from America manifesting Fanon's "fighting phase".

After publishing the first novel, Armah started writing his second and third novels, *Fragments* (1970) and *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972). In both of the novels we see Armah is concerned about the "African identity and root". In *Fragments* along with portraying the post-independence Ghana which is becoming an extremely materialistic and Westernized influence on Ghana, he deliberately asserts African cultural and traditional values by the character Naana. That I critically analysed in the previous chapter. In *Why Are We So Blest?* Armah depicts the educational process that is used as a tool for recruiting the neocolonial elite. Also, Armah shows the sexual tensions between the racist. As Peter Thomas reviews the novel *Why Are We So Blest?* and highlights that "the novel explores the contrast between the self-satisfied European and the

assimilated African who want to be like the white European” (Thomas 81). The reviewer also notes that the African elite class were trained to follow the White man’s ways on a newly independent continent which emerged from a dark past and passionately making an identity of its own. “Modin Dofu, from the novel, is such an African who is manipulated by the Europeans to act like them” (81). Moreover, Thomas identifies that this novel asserts Armah’s own feelings regarding the revolutionary history of contemporary Africa. Perhaps, Armah went through similar feelings and struggles as Modin.

Armah’s outspoken and uncompromising nature of writing create a huge impact on his writing career. Thus, he has gained negative criticism from prominent critics like Chinua Achebe, Kofi Awoonor. Even, Armah went into exile because of so much hatred from the West African literary elites. As Petersen said that, “We can see Armah’s exile as a gesture of final rejection” (64-65). However, Armah did not give up on his dream that is contributing to society through writing. He continued his writings in Tanzania where he wrote another famous novel *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) where Armah shows how African people who used to live in harmony with each other and had their deep belief in “our way the way” became destroyed by the alien power. Moreover, in this novel Armah talks about two invasions- Arabs and European invasions. Armah portrays the pre-colonial era and colonial era in this novel and depicts the effect of colonization in Africa. It is significant to mention that, while writing *Two Thousand Seasons* Armah was greatly influenced by Julius Nyerere’s “Ujamaa” philosophy. In addition, the key elements of Ujamaa philosophy according to Machael Jennigs, “African socialism, self-reliance, total participation of all in the nation’s development, communal labour in the rural sector, communal ownership of land, nationalisation in private sector and public services” (Jennings 1). It also prioritizes Pan-Africanism. In addition, Pan- Africanism means, as Peter

Kuryla said, “a political and cultural movement which suggests African descend have common interests and should be unified” (Kuryla). Moreover, Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons* also asserts the theme of Pan-African conviction. Moreover, his later novels *The Healers* (1979), *Osiris Rising* (1995), *KMT: In the House of Life* (2002) we see Armah is consistently asserting the “African identity” by retelling the history of Africa and European colonization that impeded the African values.

Thus, how come a writer who consistently through his writing asserts African identity, culture and tradition also criticizes the shortcomings that caused Africa’s destruction can be an “alienated” writer having distance from Africa?

Moreover, the experience regarding colonialism in Nigeria is different from the colonial experience in Ghana. As different invaders such as Arab, Portuguese, Britain, France invaded the lands in different time periods. As the process of colonization was different, the experience of colonization by the colonized must be different from one-another. Thus, Achebe’s experience of colonization is different from Armah. As a result, instead of accusing Armah as an “alienated” writer, we should look at his work by contextualizing it within the chapters of his life and experience.

Lastly, I would like to conclude this chapter with an argument that Ayi Kwei Armah is not an “alienated” writer his outspoken critique of Ghana in his first novel does not necessarily categorize him as ‘less committed’ for African literature. We should look Armah through the lens of an ‘engaged writer’ who is portraying the true picture of society as an ‘active critic’ with the intention of transforming the society.

Conclusion:

Initially, this thesis sought to provide a critical analysis of Ayi Kwei Armah's early two novels *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Fragments* thematically through the lens of an 'engaged writer' that is explicated by Jean Paul Sartre and the concept of "fighting phase of the native intellectual" explained by Frantz Fanon. The thesis progressed critically through analysing the themes such as post-independence disillusionment in Ghana, corruption and moral decay, nepotism, material possession and Westernization in post-independence Ghana within the chosen texts.

Moreover, the critical analysis of the two novels demonstrate, Ayi Kwei Armah is not an "alienated" writer. Rather, he is an "engaged" writer who in his first novel depicts the post-independence Ghanaian society that had failed to maintain the true meaning of independence. There is a Bengali proverb that says, "Freedom is harder to defend than to gain". Armah's outspoken critique of Kwame Nkrumah's regime shows Armah's frustration on the prominent African leaders who are using the power alike the European colonizers. African leaders who have failed to implement African socialism and Pan-Africanism. This failure causes a moral decay among the Ghanaians. In *Fragments* the moral decay becomes so extreme that the Africans totally forgot the true essence of being human. Due to globalization, people become so preoccupied with material possession and the idea of Westernization, they go far away from their African traditional values. Moreover, Armah depicts a society that epitomizes corruption and greed. That is the crucial reason behind Baako's frustration, insanity and the death of the newborn. Armah's direct critique of post-independence Ghana does not demonstrate that he has a 'secret' contempt for his country. Instead, it demonstrates Armah's responsibility as a writer to portray the deficiencies of Ghanaian society, African leaders so that he can contribute to the

betterment of the society. As Sartre said, “the significant motive of ‘engaged’ writers for artistic creation is certainly the need of feeling that they are essential in relationship to the world” (Sartre 39). If we align Armah with Sartre’s idea of an ‘engaged’ writer, we then hopefully understand Armah’s artistic vision that has been disregarded.

As literature plays a significant role to reflect history whether it is political, social or personal. Moreover, literature is believed to be closely related to human life. Thus, through literature we gain the knowledge of the past history. As the early novels of Ayi Kwei Armah are regarded as semi-autobiographical, the author through writing expresses the reality of the society that surrounds him. He experienced the political disarray of the newly independent country Ghana that was becoming extremely corrupt and materialistic and far from Pan-African convictions. According to Sartre, the art of literature demands to get the human experience through the notion of language. As literature mirrors our life, there is nothing wrong if any author chooses to portray that reality whether it is personal or political or social. Thus, this thesis demonstrates that, Armah asserts the shortcomings of the political leaders as well as the society, to urge his readers to create “change”. Instead of portraying the ideal society Armah chooses to portray the reality of the society so that he can use his writing to contribute to his community. To conclude, through the analysis of the chosen texts the thesis has demonstrated that Ayi Kwei Armah is indeed an ‘engaged’ writer who is using his writing as an ‘instrument’ to contribute to the socio-political reconstruction in Africa. As Armah said, “Alone, I am nothing. I have nothing. We have power. But we will never know it; we will never see it work. Unless we choose to come together to make it work. Let us come together. . . . Let us. . . . We. . . . We. . . . We. . . . Freedom. . . . Freeeeeeeeedom!” – (*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, 52)

Lastly, Armah's early novels provide valuable opportunity to explore his writings in the lens of Sartre's idea of an 'engaged writer'. However, his novels convey enormous significant dimensions which need to be studied more.

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