UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

AYI KWEI ARMAH’S NARRATIVE GRAMMAR- A STUDY OF HIS FIRST THREE NOVELS

BY

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JULY, 2018
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis is my own original work produced under the supervision of my supervisors, where reference has been made to other researchers’ views and analyses, full acknowledgement is given. This thesis has not been presented in whole or part to any other institution for any degree in any university.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of my late father, D. D.P. Henry Ofori. Your insatiable quest for knowledge is what has encouraged me to come this far. And to my children: Hayford Kweku Agyare, Angel Akosua Agyare and Maame Akua Antwiwaa Agyare.
My greatest thanks go to the Almighty God for seeing me through this Herculean task. Great is His faithfulness.

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ABSTRACT

The study has proposed a narrative grammar for reading Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, Fragments*, and *Why Are We So Blest?* A narrative grammar is a distinct set of models and narrative categories to analyze a story. Tzvetan Todorov, Claud Levi-Strauss and Vladimir Propp are major proponents of this theory. Each uses a personal grammar, that is, a distinct set of models and narrative categories to analyze the “story”. This concept involves constants and variables of the story where the variables are the characters and the constants are the functions or actions of the characters. In his *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), Propp examined many Russian folktales and recognized common themes within them. He broke down the stories into units. These units according to Propp may be found in the structure of many folktales. In a similar vein, this study has propounded a grammar with the pattern that emerged from Ayi Kwei Armah’s first three novels by looking at three crucial elements: plot, character and theme. The study discovered that elements such as a hapless protagonist, corrupt environment and the absence of a resolution at the end of each story, just to mention a few, are constant features of the plots of the novels under study in spite of the slight variations identified in each plot. In terms of character, outstanding constants such as forces working for and against the protagonists were identified. In all the novels, there are more powerful characters working against the progress of the protagonists than those for them. The fate of the protagonists also becomes increasingly worse as the story progresses from *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* till the protagonist dies in *Why Are We So Blest?* An outstanding variable identified in characterization is with Modin in *Why Are We So Blest?* Similar themes such as corruption, greed, colonial mentality manifesting in the cargo cult mentality, racism and slavery are constants in the novels under study. With slight variations in their manifestations. For
example, the theme of corruption in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Why Are We So Blest?* Armah lashes out at politicians who use their positions for their selfish interest, but focuses on the lazy attitude of the citizens such as Asante – Smith and Brempong, towards their work in *Fragments*.

The thesis concludes with the grammar that in Armah’s novels under study, a hapless protagonist who lives in a corrupt environment becomes an anti-hero and is unable to overcome the odds because there are forces working for and against him. This makes the end always negative. The study concludes with recommendations for further studies.
# TABLE OF CONTENT

## TABLE OF CONTENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENT</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATEMENT OF PROBLEM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of Research</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESTABLISHING THAT ARMAH’S FIRST THREE NOVELS TELLS THE SAME STORY WITH</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE SAME CHARACTERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the study</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERATURE ON ARMAH’S WORKS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHY ARE WE SO BLEST?</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The man [The Beautiful Ones]</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baako [Fragments]</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modin [Why Are We?]</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naana [Fragments]</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naita [Why Are We?]</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koomson [The Beautiful Ones]</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brempong [Fragments]</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oyo [The Beautiful Ones]</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The term Narratology was coined in the French (Narratologie) by narratologist Tzvetan Todorov in his seminal book Grammar of the Decameron (1969). It seeks to isolate the components of a narrative to facilitate individual study of each element that makes up the narrative. In other words, narratology is a study of factors that operate in a narrative. Following the example of Propp and Todorov, this study is proposing a narrative grammar for the study of Armah’s ‘story.’ Is there a single story unit embedded in the different plots of all of Armah’s novels where the same character-role is presented in every story and the same subject irrespective the theme?

Ayi Kwei Armah’s works have been subjected to various reviews by critics and scholars but my findings reveal that there is very little work on his books from a narratological perspective. My thesis is proposing a narrative grammar for all Ayi Kwei Armah’s novels based upon the thesis that all Armah’s novels tell the same story with the same character-roles and the same subjects.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to:

1) Ascertain whether Ayi Kwei Armah is writing one Great story in his first three novels.

2) Identify an emerging pattern through plot, character and theme.

3) Use the emerging pattern to propose a grammar for Armah’s first three novels.
Research Questions

The research questions address the concerns of the study:

1) Is Ayi Kwei Armah telling one Great story in his first three novels?

2) What pattern can be identified through plot, character and theme?

3) Can the identified pattern be used to propose a grammar for Armah’s first three novels?

Scope of Research

The study will be based on the first three novels of Ayi Kwei Armah. The reason for choosing Armah’s first three novels for the research is based on the fact that the study intends to propose a grammar for the entire corpus of Armah’s works. It therefore aims at starting with *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?* so that the grammar proposed can be used as a model for reading the rest of Armah’s works.

Significance of the study

Armah’s works have enjoyed a lot scholarly attention. This study conducts a structural analysis of Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?* as a case study. The study observes a standard story structure for the novels under study in which certain constants and variables are present in
every novel. The research reveals that whether consciously or unconsciously, Armah writes with a particular formula in mind. It helps to provide a grammar with which the rest of Armah’s works can be read. Beyond that, this study should further enrich the already extensive study on Armah.

BACKGROUND

ESTABLISHING THAT ARMAH’S FIRST THREE NOVELS TELLS THE SAME STORY WITH THE SAME CHARACTERS.

Ayi Kwei Armah is very famous for his uniqueness as a writer. Most of his novels are centered on social ills in Ghana and Africa as a whole. Armah’s sole purpose of writing is not to skillfully arrange words but to use his works to change Africa’s social realities for the better. Though Armah’s vision is one of unified Africa, he writes vehemently of the psychological effects of colonialism on the people of contemporary Ghana and Africa. The gem of Armah’s novels is present in the themes of his early stories and essays: Africa’s continuing oppression under the mystic of independence and helpless entrapment in a cycle of neocolonial dependency; the failure of human reciprocity and connectedness under the pressure of a manipulatory system of relationships; and the renewal only of destruction and despair in place of an awaited social, political and spiritual regeneration of a postcolonial world. With the dawn of independence, Armah expresses his shock at the realization that independence was just a fellow-traveler of both materialism and Westernization followed closely by political corruption. Even though after independence, power passed from the colonizers to “the sons of the nation”, the tragedy and the irony was that power was not being used for the benefit of all but for the privileged few. There is disillusionment and despair when Armah realizes that there is no difference in driving out the
slave masters since the newly installed political elite are acting out the same process of rapid decay and corruption. Armah therefore uses his country as a society infested with an epidemic spread by a few powerful people represented by cabinet ministers such as Koomson in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and civil servants such as Brempong in the *Fragments*. There is emphasis that the decay and halting of the onward march of the African revolution in many African countries stems from an excessive lust for material goods with which the privileged few want to surround themselves.

Outside of Armah’s focus on African empowerment and liberation, a close reading of his first three novels reveals that Armah is telling one story in three novels. These three novels are interconnected through the same story line, the same characters and the same themes. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* is generally considered a satirical attack on the Ghanaian society during Nkrumah’s regime and the period immediately after independence in the 1960s. It portrays the independent state of Ghana, revealing a society whose aspirations have slid into disillusionment. In place of the “greatly beautiful” things expected from independence, we are shown the stark and ugly reality that is embarrassingly far from those former ideals. Leaders who shouted against the enslaving habits of Europe are perceived to use the same enslaving attitudes. The central issue in the first novel is that disillusion is the only reality from faith invested in leaders and one stands the chance of being greatly condemned if one chooses to despise greed and possessiveness.

*Fragments* tells the story of Baako, a “been-to” (a person who has come from abroad) who comes back home with trepidation as to what he will discover or uncover. He is anxious of what he will do with himself and the expectations of the people around him. He is confronted with the forces that drive the notion and thought of his society when a few minutes after his arrival into
the country the sister of a friend he had met whilst emplaned to Ghana told him that he did not look like a “been-to”. Furthermore, less than 24 hours later, a lady friend of his and his mother asked to be wheeled out when his car arrives. Yet Baako had his values; values he held in high esteem, such as prompt response to issues and efficiency. And these are the very things that the civil service within which he was finally employed did not do. Unable to handle his growing frustration, the demands from his family, the diametrically opposing views (his and society’s) et cetera, Baako finally cracks and is bundled and dumped at a psychiatric hospital.

*Why Are We So Blest?* tells the story of Modin Dofu, an African student studying in the US, who decides to return to Africa after becoming disillusioned with his experience with Western education. He brings his white girlfriend Aimée Reitch. Modin’s return to Africa proves disastrous for him. Ultimately the paradox of his situation: his rejection of Western values vis-à-vis his involvement with Aimée Reitch, eventually destroys him.

A careful study of the narrative structures of the three novels reveals a structural pattern embedded in the very foundation of each of the stories. In *The Beautiful Ones*, we are introduced to a nameless man who sets himself apart and does all he can, not to involve himself in the corrupt practices of the society in which he finds himself in spite of the pressure from his family and friends. The “man”, in *The Beautiful Ones* is seen again in *Fragments*. In the latter novel, though he is given a name he has the same disposition: loneliness coupled with an unwillingness to give in to the widespread corrupt practices of his society just like the “man” in *The Beautiful Ones*. The “Man” in *The Beautiful Ones* shares similar characteristics with Baako in *Fragments*. Just like the “Man”, Baako rejects the dishonorable path set for him by his family and society. His struggle with the corrupt and materialistic nature of his family and society leaves him so disillusioned that he is seen as the odd one. Modin is not different from the “man” and Baako. He
also faces his own share of disillusionment and disappointments due to his rejection of certain societal values. The connection between the first three novels is seen in the attitudes of the protagonists. There is that feeling of loneliness and alienation which “The Man”, Baako and Modin seem to feel. “Leaving home for school always. The search for the knowledge should not be synonymous with increasing alienation and loneliness” (Why Are We? p. 32). Here, Modin, just like Baako, leaves his home country Ghana to study in the United States. Modin’s feeling of loneliness is also similar to that of “the Man” who feels lonely and alienated even amongst his own family and friends. And this kind of loneliness is what Baako feels right from the beginning of Fragments till the end where it drives him insane. Modin, just like Baako, leaves his native Ghana with the hope of improving his education abroad. He wins a scholarship to study for his first degree at Harvard after his secondary education at Achimota. He is very optimistic about making good use of the opportunities opened to him. Out of sheer fanaticism and naivety, he does not heed to the advice of the one who could have saved him. But slowly and painfully, the truth of the reality dawns on him. Even though not much is said of Baako’s stay abroad, we are aware that he returns home with much optimism, just as Modin equally abandons his studies to join a revolution with the hope of a positive change in Africa.

The Man, Baako and Modin, share a similar distaste for colonialism. “The guide told us it was extremely important for the president to live exactly where the British governor had lived. I did not understand why, but this was not one of the facts one would have to know for the higher cert” (Why Are We? p. 76). Of all the places that the president could live after independence, why would he choose the castle just as the colonial masters did? And as if living there is not enough, he even lives exactly the way the colonial government had lived. This is Armah’s ironic way of saying that nothing has changed for Africa after independence. This goes a long way to
reiterate the story of slavery and independence which was started in *The Beautiful Ones*. The story of the betrayal by politicians after the struggle for the independence in *The Beautiful Ones* is reiterated in *Fragments* and *Why Are We*?

Alienation seems to be a peculiar feature with the protagonists in these novels. In *Fragments* when Naana narrates the libation and preparations before Baako’s departure, we are made aware of his lonely state. “A human being alone – is a thing more sad than any lost animal – and nothing destroys the soul like its loneliness” (*Fragments* p. 16). This same quality is reiterated by Modin. “Leaving home for school always. The search for knowledge should not be synonymous with increasing alienation and loneness” (*Why Are We?* p. 32). Here, both Baako and Modin are talking about leaving their home country and the more striking similarity is their state of loneliness which they describe in detail from the very beginning till the end of the novel. “The thirst for knowledge therefore becomes perverted into the desire for getting close to the alien getting out of the self. Result: loneliness as a way of life” (*Why Are We?* p. 33). Baako suffers a similar fate of loneliness and alienation.

He talked very precisely of the things worrying him like a doctor probing into a diseased body, locating a node of sickened nerve; all his talk was of a loneliness from which he was finding it impossible to break of the society he had come back to and the many ways in which it made him feel his loneliness (*Fragments* p. 149).

The kind of feeling of loneliness which the Man is seen battling with is what Baako struggles with so much that he has to seek help from a psychiatrist to help deal with it.

In terms of characterization, it becomes obvious that as the story progresses from *The Beautiful Ones*, the fate of the protagonist becomes worse. In *The Beautiful Ones*, the Man suffers humiliation in the hands of his family and Koomsom simply because he refuses to be attracted to the shiny things that will fulfill the desire of his materialistic family. Even though he does
nothing to prevent others from being corrupt and remains a passive observer to the corrupt practices that go on around him, he is finally vindicated in the end where people who were involved in corruption such as Koomson get their well-deserved punishment. The fate of Baako in *Fragments* is worse compared to that of “the Man”. Even though Baako does not remain as passive as the Man in *The Beautiful Ones*, he tries in his own small way to challenge the status-quo. He puts up a form of resistance to fight the system and tries to cause a change, unlike “the Man” who is completely passive. “What I went to learn is different’ he said’ well, there won’t be too much to do. I wish you had brought a tux, or at least a suit though” it would have been fine” I am not an ape” (*Fragments* p. 144). Right from home when his family is seen making unnecessary materialistic demands and forcing him to act in a corrupt way which is contrary to his African ideals, he puts up a resistance. Much to the annoyance and disappointment of Efua, Baako refuses to put on a suit for the naming ceremony of his nephew and bears the consequence of not being made the master of ceremonies anymore.

At the end of the novel, Baako suffers a worse fate than the Man. Modin although similar in a lot of ways to “the Man” and Baako, suffers a tragic fate which ends in his death. Just like Baako, Modin also leaves his home country to study abroad. “Leaving home. I have thought of this before, but I never saw myself flying. I am surprised. I imagined going away would make me think of things to come in my future but it was the past that fills my mind” (*Why Are We?* p. 69). Modin also gives up when he realizes that he can make very little or no change at all to a particular situation. During his studies at Harvard, he is given the impression that he is a special African who is privileged enough to be chosen and given that special scholarship. When he comes to the realization that the knowledge acquired will be of no benefit to his fellow Africans,
he abandons his studies to pursue a more fulfilling task which he thinks can help improve his people.

Modin is different from “the Man” and Baako in many ways. “The Man’s” abstinence from the gleam earns him the admiration of his wife when the coup finally comes off and corrupt people like Koomson are punished. Modin’s rejection of the fine things America has to offer him becomes fruitless in the face of his impotence to act. He is faced with the same problem of loneliness because he will not accept Olympus or the cargo cult mentality. But unlike Baako who looks for consolation in Ocran and Juana, Modin rejects the counsel of Naita and Solo to look for alternatives to his feeling of loneliness and alienation.

Apart from the protagonists who in spite of their differences have a lot in common in these three novels, there are other major characters in Armah’s first three novels who can be so classified. Let us consider the characters who are on the either sides of their respective protagonists. Teacher first on the positive side in *The Beautiful Ones* is similar to Kofi Ocran and Naana in *Fragments* and Solo and Naita in *Why Are We?* Their similarity stems from the fact that they all play the role of helping their protagonists. They are the only people who share in the sentiments of their protagonists and in their own way try to lessen their alienation by providing at least a listening ear for their problems.

**Limitations of the study**

Ideally a study of this nature should have been done with more than just three of Ayi Kwei Armah’s novels. For one to reach a firm conclusion that Armah is telling the same story in different ways using similar characters, all his novels should be reviewed. But this has not been
achieved in this research. It is the hope of the researcher that future research in this area will focus on more than just three of his novels.

LITERATURE ON ARMAH’S WORKS

Armah demonstrated his eloquence and established his trademark as a profound moral writer from his first novel *The Beautiful Ones* to his most recent work. His first three novels which are the focus of this study have been subjected to various critical interpretations by critics, both local and foreign, from the time they were written to date. While some critics have looked at individual novels, others have attempted to look at some of Armah’s works together. It is evident that because Armah has written many other novels after *The Beautiful Ones, Fragments* and *Why Are We?*, most of the reviews on these first three novels were done by critics during the time they were written. More recent scholarly works on Armah mostly focus on his later works. Earlier critics like Jean Solomon (1974) talk about the difficulty that the protagonist has to endure because of his moral stance against the prevailing values of the new Ghana after independence. According to Solomon, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* portrays the stark and ugly reality of greed and possessiveness in place of the “greatly beautiful” things expected from leaders after independence. According to Solomon, the novel asks a great question: “How does a man compromise in a society where men are valued as highly as the cost of the things they could buy?” Solomon is of the view that the entire novel is centered on the conscience of a man who has chosen, in a corrupt society, to retain his moral nature. Solomon’s perception of *The Beautiful Ones* is that the novel reveals the harsh confrontations and their implications of choice that leave the man lonely. Lost goals cut the cords of purpose that anchor the man to his
society. Kirtsen Holst Peterson (1979) asserts that a society that considers a class of people as a conveyer belt for cargo is an alienated and dehumanized society. According to Peterson, in *Fragments*, Armah has vented his anger on the native bourgeoisie rather than the white foreigners. Rosemary Colmer (1980) also looks at two of Armah’s works: *Fragments* and *Why Are We So Blest?* She talks about men who have seen the deadly nature of the West. To her, both novels are statements about the alienation of the educated elite from their people. Colmer holds the view that there is a sense of disillusionment and despair induced in these protagonists because they have lost their places in their respective societies among their own people.

Both novels are studies of men who have recognized the fatal nature of the process acting upon them, but seem unable to escape the psychological disillusion which comes with the realization of the futility of any gesture in another direction. *Why Are We So Blest?* Goes further to explore the place of the intellectual in the African revolution and reaches a somewhat ambiguous conclusion. *Why Are We So Blest?* goes even further than *Fragments* in the study of the futility of effort and its picture of the African intellectual as radically, intolerably and inescapably alienated from the people. (52).

Colmer compares Armah’s treatment of the black-white men who continue to live in the shadows of the colonial masters to Fanon’s observation of the behaviour of colonized black bourgeoisie and concludes that there are some similarities between the two. To Colmer, the metaphor on which the novel is based suggests that it is always worthy to have a vision. Colmer’s view is that to make a futile gesture is always better than not to try it. G. Ojong Ayuk (1984) reviews Armah’s first two novels. He looks at the lust for material well being in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Fragments*. To him, Armah emphasizes that the decay and the halting of the onward march of African revolution in many countries, especially in Ghana, stems from the excessive lust for material goods with which the privileged few want to surround themselves to the almost total exclusion of all other considerations such as moral and spiritual riches. Ayuk (1984) is of the view that Armah tries to show that it is the post-independence materialistic
society that is out of step and not the protagonists. Derek Wright (1985) writes that Armah’s novels are informed by a radical skepticism about all communal solidarities and traditions, past and present. To Wright, the overriding preoccupation of Armah’s heroes is the same. They all seem to have the same traditional desire to place some kind of meaningful social vision at the disposal of a fragmenting society. To Wright, Armah’s depiction of the modern community is bleak. It is endowed with no social cohesion, no coherence of political status or identity. “It is a creature of its ruling powers and expresses no ideas which are separable from theirs. The idea of a post-colonial political consciousness is exposed as an untenable hypothesis. Materialism masquerading as socialism speedily enriches a few, and Teacher’s opposing spirit of silent idealism serves no-one. The flux of genuine living community is to be found neither in accelerated urban materialism nor in the stagnant ‘happiness’ of traditional village life to which Teacher’s paralysis obliquely refers” (44). Wright again looks at the ritual cycle in the first three novels of Armah (1985). According to him, in each novel, the cyclical journey is placed in the context of calendar ritual. In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, the decline of Nkrumah’s regime is played off against an end of the year purification rite. Another typical example in *Fragments* is the birth and death of Araba’s short-lived child, greedily sacrificed for money at a premature outdooring ceremony. This is also exemplified in Modin’s murder at the end of Armah’s third novel *Why Are We So Blest?* that punishes his attempt at a promethean ‘reverse crossing” from America to Africa. Kofi Owusu (1988) brings out the similarities in *Hamlet* and *Fragments* by stating that both novels have sensitive protagonists who are shocked by physical and moral corruption in the nuclear and extended families. Leif Lorentzon (1998) looks at the use of narratology in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *The Healers*. He reconstructs the encoded reader in Armah’s first and last novels by showing that they differ in their respective
narratees. Laura Murphy (2008) looks at the belated trauma of the slave trade in *Fragments*. According to Murphy, though the novel is largely focused on the rampant consumerism of post-colonial Ghanaian culture, it more significantly constitutes Armah’s exploration of the twentieth-century effects of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, of which materialism is but a symptom. Murphy’s point is that, beyond the surface reading that critics attribute to the novel, as Armah’s desire to condemn contemporary West African culture of consumerism and the materialistic culture of contemporary Ghana, Armah is exploring a gap in historical consciousness. Maovi Hocine (2012) compares Armah’s works with Ngugi’s by highlighting their similarities. According to Hocine, both writers express an ever-increasing disillusionment with current political realities in their respective countries. He maintains that both writers have diagnosed the ills of Africa and have prescribed cultural renaissance and re-Africanization as well as the rediscovery and expression of African values as an indispensable part of the decolonization process.

Like most African writers, both Ayi Kwei Armah and Ngugi wa Thion’o have grappled with the trajectory of the continent’s history. Their novels considered together, ranging from *The River Between* to *Matigari* for Ngugi and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* to *KMT* for Armah have offered a deep reflection on the trouble with Africa and have tried to identify the root causes of its underdevelopment. Besides its deficient socio-formation and its exploitative economic system, Africa has been weighed down by a western-oriented educational system that is not properly connected with indigenous value system, and hence generating alienation. (50).

Houcine asserts that both Armah and Ngugi are motivated by the fact that they were faced with similar situations of alienation especially at the beginning of their literary career. Peace Ibala Amala (2013) explores how Ayi Kwei Armah uses an inflationary and deflationary technique of characterization. In the view of Amala, characters who perpetuate corrupt practices and are
destructive are deflated while those who are morally upright and fight for a just cause for the African continent are presented in the inflationary mode.

It is common critical knowledge that the basis of fictional writing is character creation perhaps nothing else. Character not only add depth and complexity to the novels by giving readers perspectives of situation, but keep the readers engaged at all times. Armah is one of the African novelists that has continually captivated his readers for the experimental quality of his literary output. Armah’s richly textured characters contribute to his strength and provide the central point of attention in his novels. (67).

Amala concludes that striking in Armah’s portrayal of characters in his novels is his tactical move to reduce or deflate characters that perpetuate corruption in the society while at the same time advertising or inflating characters that are morally upright.

In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, characters that are thus deflated include Amankwa; the timber contractor who tries to bribe the man. Amankwa is censured even before the readers get the chance to meet him. Koomson the corrupt politician however is described as a “suit”, a glittering “shirt”, flashing cufflinks gleaming in the dark… the man, the protagonist of *the beautiful ones* is presented differently by Armah. The man displays an acute sense of morality, honest and uprightness. He is a character whose inner conviction is at variance with the demands of the loved ones or the life style of the larger society who have taken a leap towards the glean (35).

Amala concludes that the hallmark of Armah’s literary artistry is his ability to create compelling characters that are silhouetted against the institutions, traditions and general behaviours of his culture and age.

Aderinto S. I. Abiodun (2014) is of the view that Armah uses *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* to bombard the misuse of political powers by African leaders. In Abiodun’s opinion, Armah uses his first novel to reflect the socio-economic and political realities of the entire African continent. Albert A. Sackey (2014) looks at the importance of character in the semic vision of Armah’s *Why Are We So Blest?* According to Sackey, *Why Are We So Blest?* is a novel
steeped in a complex maze of philosophies, ideologies and ideas and presents a perplexing mix of literature, history and myth. “Solo, a sight through which the novel passes to the reader is the Tiresias of the novel, albeit an inadequate one. In a way, he is like Teacher in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Naana in *Fragments* and the wise Ndola and elder Isanusi in *Two Thousand Seasons* and yet he is so much unlike them” (84-85). Sackey is of the view that Armah chronicles the history of his people in a cosmic vision through his characters. In this vision, past, present and future are juxtaposed in the prism of vapid utterance. According to Sackey, *Why Are We So Blest?* depicts how the whites came to destroy African culture by replacing them with their own alien values. The only survival of the black people is a rejection of these alien values and a return to their own way. Pallavi Bhardwaj (2015) sees *Fragments* as Armah’s expression of some major obstacles fighting against development in post colonial Africa. To him, the novel is an attempt by Armah to offer solutions to these problems. He advocates communal solidarity of the visionaries. Bhardwaj is of the opinion that Armah uses *Fragments* to prescribe a rewarding approach to decolonization- that is, for the underprivileged people of the third world in general to unite in a common insight of post colonial forces of disorder to overcome the negative influence of the West.

**REVIEW ON NARRATOLOGY**

The term Narratology was coined in French (*Narratologie*) by narratologist Tzvetan Todorov in his seminal book *Grammar of the Decameron* (1969). It seeks to isolate the components of a narrative to facilitate individual study of each element that makes up the narrative. In other words, narratology is a study of factors that operate in a narrative. Narratology assumes that narratives can be found in a variety of media: oral/written language in prose/verse, sign language, still pictures as in picture stories, music, gestures as opposed to drama, etc. A narrative
may be told in one or a combination of two or more of these media. To some narratologists, this assumption presupposes that the narrative component of a narrative text can be studied in isolation and independent of its medium of narration. Narratologists have identified two distinct narrative components of a narrative: the *what* and the *how*.

The first (the *what*) represents *what* is narrated, that is, the story or what narratologists call the story/semantic structure; the second (the *How*) represents the narrating process itself, the way the narration is carried out, the discourse. Major proponents of the first type of Narratology are Tzvetan Todorov (*Grammar of the Decameron*), Claude Levi-Strauss (*Structural Anthropology*) and Vladimir Propp (*Morphology of the Folktale*). Each uses a personal GRAMMAR, that is, a distinct set of models and narrative categories to analyze the “story.” This first type of narratology which studies the “story” of the narrative has adopted several models of study. The most dominant of these models, deriving from Russian formalism, is the analysis of the notion of function or category of actions. This concept involves the constants and the variables of the story where the variables are the characters, and the constants are the functions or actions of the characters. In contrast to the “grammarians of story” who were mainly the pioneers of narratology, are those narratologists who perceive narrative as verbal/linguistic information, the recounting of events by a narrator. Their study focuses on the narrative discourse. Gerard Genette (*Narrative Discourse* and *Narrative Discourse Revisited*) is the chief proponent. This group of narratologists defines the narrative by its mode of presentation and assigns a role for the narrator.

Of the first group of narratologists, Russian critic Vladimir Propp is the most articulate in his dissemination of the grammar of story. In his *Morphology of the Folktale*, (1928) Propp (1895-1970) examined many Russian folk tales and recognized common themes within them. He broke
down the stories into recognizable units for group analysis which he called *morphemes* and identified 31 narrative units which he termed *narratemes*. These units, according to Propp, may be found in the structure of many folk tales. To Propp, most folk stories round the world and indeed, the basic plot of most novels/narratives contain the same proaieretic and semantic structure, a fact now acknowledged by most narratologists,

Propp’s thesis has been praised for its structural sincerity but censured for its lack of interest in contextual detail like mood, point of view, etc. On the whole, however, the model is easily applicable to the reading of the story unit in both old and modern scripts and has influenced the theoretical principles of many reputed narratologists worldwide.

Propp identifies five categories of elements that define both the structure and theme of a tale:

1. Functions of dramatis personae
2. Conjuctive elements (such as deus ex machina, announcement of misfortune, chance disclosure – mother calls hero loudly, etc.)
3. Motivations (reasons and aims of personages)
4. Forms of appearance of dramatis personae (the flying arrival of dragon, chance meeting with donor)
5. Attributive elements or accessories (witch’s hut or her clay leg)

Tzvetan Todorov is another major influential narratologist concerned with the “grammar of story.” In his 1969 narratological study, *Grammaire du Decameron* he proposes a narrative grammar as a model for the reading of Boccaccio’s great novella, *The Decameron*. The term ‘Narrative Grammar’ suggests that a story may be broken into ‘units of syntax’ through which a
pattern or system may emerge as the underlying ‘structure’ of the story. This type of narratological discourse falls under the first type of narratology (the *what*) where the ‘structure’ of the story, rather than the narrative process, becomes the focus of analysis. According to Todorov’s model, the tales in Boccaccio’s novella constitute propositional sentences organized into sequences; that is, syntactic units made up of PROPOSITIONS that may be arranged in SEQUENCES.

A *Proposition* evolves round the role and function of a character. A character’s function is identified either by his Attributes or his Actions; hence a typical syntactic unit (as in all grammar) may consist of Character (noun) in combination with an Attribute (adjective) or an Action (verb). This means a narrative sentence is constituted by its Subject (noun) and Predicate (adjective or verb).

In *The Decameron*, Todorov identifies three types of Attributes and three basic Actions. The three Attributes are States, Internal Properties, and External Conditions. Hence a character in a story may be propositionally identified by his attributes; such as his state (the condition in which he finds himself), or internal properties/his personality (character traits) or external factors acting on him. In the first story of the first day, Master Ciappelletto is identified first by his attributes: a scoundrel capable of the worst sin.

In the story Ciappelletto is also propositionally identified by his action. Todorov identifies three basic actions in *The Decameron* which a character may undertake: he may modify a situation, he may transgress, or he may suffer punishment. In the case of Ciappelletto, he deliberately transgresses Christian teaching, an action that he knows will damn him for all eternity. In the
end, the question of his punishment is left to God’s grace though in men’s eyes he is rewarded for what the reader recognizes as clear deception.

Organizing the tales into sequences is part of the organizational principles of *The Decameron*, a tradition dutifully practised by Boccaccio’s followers like Chaucer, etc. In Todorov’s model, sequences are based on three types of relationships between sequences of tales. These are Temporal Relations (in which some tales are linked by time – for instance, tales of the same day or tales occurring around the same time in history or within the same time frame); Logical Relations (such as the thematic or the peculiar situations in the logic of their uniqueness, character types, etc; hence their propinquity to each other); and Spatial Relations (such as tales occupying the same place in terms of the order of the tales, e.g. all second or third tales or even tales by the same character). All these relations are grouped into sequences, and we usually discover these relationships not only in the structure of the stories but also in the commentaries that appear in the transitions between stories.

On the *how* of the narrative, that is, the narrative structure, I will focus on two prominent critics: Roland Barthes and Gerald Genette. In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes proposes a microtextual theory of reading and proceeds to analyze a literary work based on that methodology. In *S/Z*, Barthes presents a word by word, phrase by phrase, sentence by sentence, and passage by passage study of a short story by Balzac titled *Sarrasine*, by analyzing the microtext of the recit. In *S/Z*, Barthes suggests that each man is a prisoner of his language and that each artist undergoes an agony to escape from his language which nails him down. Style becomes the source of interference by language, style being the form that envelopes the message of the artist. Style is the deceiving factor of the message since it is not personal, being the property of the artist time and age. The process of artistic expression is an experience of anxiety, the artist’s agony to establish a
uniqueness within the style of his time. To Barthes, the aim of reading is to trace both the style of
the artist’s time and the uniqueness of the artist as reflected in the message. The book S/Z is an
attempt to link style with the message where style means a union of contemporary style and
unique style. In S/Z, Barthes tries to read Sarracine based on the notion of style. In this approach,
Barthes gives the reader a creative role in the reading process. He starts by suggesting that there
are five reading codes in every narrative. He defines the codes as voices or conventions on which
the text is structured and through which the text may be properly understood. According to
Barthes, these codes exercise the mind of the reader in a specific way in the sense that they are
our signals to the ‘meaning’ of the text.

He identifies two types of texts: the “Lisible” and “Scriptible” texts. The lisible is the “Readerly
Text” while the scriptible is a “Writerly Text.” The readerly text is the text which can be read
passively (with no effort made at meaning, meaning coming easily and readily). Most classics
and traditional texts are readerly texts. On the other hand the writerly text is the text which
makes the reader the co-producer rather than the passive consumer of the text where the reader
actively participates in arriving at meaning. Here, the reader shares in creating meaning for the
work. An example of writerly text is the modernist text. Barthes further argues that in all
narratives, whether readerly or writerly, there is always a creative role for the reader, but this role
is stronger when reading the writerly text. This role is structured in the text for the reader to
assume following the demands of the text. Of the two texts, the writerly one involves
participation while the readerly one involves an absorbing role.

The notion of plenitude in the readerly text suggests there is excessive information given by the
author which minimizes the structured role of the reader. Hence, the reader needs no special
skills to approach the readerly text. In S/Z, Barthes provides us with the special skills required to
fulfill our role as readers in the writerly texts. Here Barthes proposes ways in which the reader can fulfill his participatory role more effectively, especially in reading the writerly texts, though the same method applies equally to the readerly text. Barthes proposes five codes of reading as the first steps towards effective reading. These are the Proaieretic, Hermeneutic, Semic, Referential, and Symbolic codes.

Gerald Genette in his work *Narrative Discourse* and *Narrative Discourse Revisited* in a discussion on method has given us one of the most comprehensive expositions on the structure of narratives, that is, the how of the narrative. According to Genette, there are three main categories of the macrotext: Time, Mood and Voice. Genette’s category of **TIME**, the first and most important category, examines the various ways by which time may be organized in a narrative. Since a story, unlike a picture, is never static in time and can only function within the context of time, the category of Time is one of the most crucial in a narrative. In his analysis of the role of time in a narrative, Genette proposes three sub-categories of time: ORDER, DURATION, FREQUENCY. Time **Order** simply means the order in which time is ordered or arranged in the narrative, that is, narrative time (recit or signifier) as against the order in which it actually occurred in actual (fictional)/story time (histoire or signified). An **ANACHRONY** (Analepsis or Prolepsis) occurs when there is discordance in the two temporal orders of Story Time and Narrative Time. **Duration**, the second sub-category of Time in Genette’s macrotext of the recit, is defined as the narrative pace, that is, the tempo, the narrative movements or the speed at which the narrative moves. It has five sub-divisions: PAUSE, SLOW-DOWN SCENE, SCENE, SUMMARY, ELLIPSIS, though Genette actually identifies only four. To understand these five sub-categories of time duration, two concepts are crucial: Story Time (ST) and Narrative Time (NT). Each of the five sub-categories is perceived in terms of ST and NT. **Frequency** is the third
sub-category of Time. An event can either happen once or ‘n’ times and it can be told once or ‘n’ times. Frequency is defined by Genette as the number of ‘telling’ of a particular event(s), and it has three subdivisions: Singulative Frequency (2 types), Repetitive Frequency and Iterative Frequency.

Genette’s second category of narrative structure after the category of Time is the category of **MOOD** which has two subcategories: **DISTANCE** and **PERSPECTIVE**. Under Mood, one can tell as little or as much as possible (Distance), and according to one point of view or another (Perspective). Distance and Perspective are therefore the two chief modalities of that regulation of narrative information that is mood. **Distance**, the first category of Mood has two subcategories: Narration of Event which has a diegesis/mimesis duality and Narration of Speech which consists of three discourses – Narrativised, Transposed and Reported. The second subcategory of Mood is **Perspective** which has three classifications: NON-FOCALIZATION, INTERNAL FOCALIZATION and EXTERNAL FOCALIZATION, where the term Focalization suggests either the act of focalizing or the state of being focalized. To focalize is to bring to focus or to bring to view, hence focalization is Mood in terms of seeing, that is, the point of view. The three classifications of Focalization are the points of view from which the narration can be presented. Non-Focalization which is Focalization Zero is often the representation of the Omniscient Narrator.

**VOICE**, the third category in the presentation of events, is distinct from Mood which is the point of view. It is also distinct from the author, that is, the real authorial moment of writing. Hence voice is the voice of the narrator not the author. Genette defines Voice as the narrative instance as opposed to the authorial moment. In genuine autobiography, the author and the narrator are equal, and yet there is a need to have distance between author and voice despite the equality. In
theory, whether in fiction or autobiography, the narrator must be distinct from the author. They may be close but must be distinct from each other. The narrative instance may be variable in the same work and not necessarily identical throughout.

Voice has three subcategories or elements: **Time of Narration, Narrative Levels** and **Person**, all of which operate simultaneously in a narrative. For the sake of analysis, however, they may be separated and looked at distinctly.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

From the discussion above, the narratological study of Armah’s works will be based on the method of the first group of narratologists, that is, the model which deals with the how of the story; in other words the study will concern itself here with the structure of the Armah story. Following the example of Propp and Todorov, it is proposing a narrative grammar for the study of Armah’s ‘story.’ Is there a single story unit embedded in the different plots of all of Armah’s novels where the same character-role is presented in every story and the same subject irrespective the theme?

In her PhD thesis presented to Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, Patricia Mireku-Gyimah, following the grammatical models of Propp, Todorov and others proposes a story structure for all Ananse folk stories. In the thesis titled *Deep and Surface Structures of Akan Folk Tales* (2010), Mireku-Gyimah, using Anasesem from the Ejisu Juabem area of the Ashanti Region of Ghana as her case study, observes a standard story structure for all
Ananse stories in which certain constants and variables are present in every tale. For illustration she recounts a number of Anasesem to show how her formula, with some variations, applies to all the stories she analyses. This thesis is proposing a similar narrative grammar for all Ayi Kwei Armah’s novels based upon the thesis that all they all tell the same story with the same character-roles and same subjects. These are the Constants of the Armah narrative. The variables reflect in each novel and they include the plot, characters and themes. For each story (constant) a different plot (variable) is required. Likewise, for each role (constant) a different character (variable) manifests. And finally, for each subject (constant) there is a different theme (variable).

Based on the above grammar, the study proposes the following story-line, character-role and subject-matter for the structure of the Armah story which will form the structural framework for my discussion of the structure of each of the three novels the study has selected for study as representative samples of Armah’s Great Story. This story will form the structural framework for my discussion of each of the novels.

There are certain features which are characteristic of the story unit of Ayi Kwei Armah’s novels. But this study will limit itself to only his first three novels. Armah’s story-line normally focuses on a protagonist (character-roles) who lives in a society where corruption (subject-matter) is the order of the day. There are normally characters (character-role) on the side of the protagonist who are good to him and do their best to encourage and support him. These characters normally support the protagonist in his quest to desist from the corruption which is prevalent in his society. There are other characters (character-roles) on the left side of the protagonist. These characters are those who are against the protagonist. They do their best to force the protagonist to be corrupt or accept corruption as the norm. The characters who are on the right side of the
protagonist trying to help him do not normally succeed in their quest because these characters are usually powerless. Those who are against the protagonist, that is, the characters who want to force the protagonist to see corruption as the norm, are usually characters who are very powerful. These characters are so strong that they usually succeed in making it impossible for the characters who are on the good side of the protagonist to succeed in their quest. The characters against the protagonist are normally so strong that they usually use their power to render the characters who want to help the protagonist powerless.

In Armah’s story unit there is always the central issue of the relationships between the individual and his or her community (part of the subject of corruption). Armah’s protagonists are usually unsuccessful in their attempts to fight corruption.
CHAPTER ONE

This chapter deals with the constants and variables, and my intention is to match the constants against the variables of each novel. The grammar involves a series of actions leading from failure to failure. The structure of the movements looks something like the following chart:

- A hapless protagonist
- Corrupt environment
- Progress of protagonist
- Forces for and against the protagonist
- Effects of the situation on protagonist
- Protagonist then becomes anti-hero
- Protagonist is unable to overcome odds
- The end is always negative
- There is no resolution at the end
- The story seems to end where it begins

*The Beautiful Ones*

Of the three novels *The Beautiful Ones* was the first to be published, so the discussion will begin from there.

The protagonist in *The Beautiful Ones* is a nameless fellow who is referred to as “the man”. He can be said to be a hapless protagonist because he sets out to distinguish himself from the corrupt practices which prevail in his society but does not succeed. His haplessness stems from his
inability to make his family and colleagues at work accept that he does not want to be a part of the corrupt practices around him.

Another feature which is characteristic of Armah’s story line is a corrupt environment. In *The Beautiful Ones*, the environment in which the man finds himself is very corrupt and this is seen from the very beginning of the novel with the bus conductor. Koomson, who is a minister of state, shamelessly embezzles money to the admiration of people who should warn him on the dangers of his corrupt behaviour. Law enforcers are also seen engaging blatantly in the act of corruption as though it is an acceptable practice and they seem to see nothing wrong with it. Corruption is so prevalent in the man’s society that the timber merchant misinterprets the man’s refusal to cut corners in order to transport his timber as sheer wickedness on the part of the man. Ayuk 1984 reiterates this by saying that “by the moral standards of those around him he is a criminal, but what is most important, he accepts their accusations of criminality. In seeing himself apart from the corrupt masses, he must deny something of his own humanity” (117).

The progress of the protagonist is another constant feature of Armah’s story line. In *The Beautiful Ones*, the man is not seen making any progress in his quest to stay away from corruption. He is only seen going through one frustrating encounter after the other. For example, he is frustrated by his wife who sees everything wrong with his anti-corrupt stance. His encounter with the timber merchant can also be said to be another frustrating experience which hinders his progress.

Another constant feature of Armah’s story line is the forces for and against the protagonist. There are characters who are on the side of the protagonist whiles other characters are strongly against him. The characters who are on the side of the protagonist are weak while those against
him are strong. In *The Beautiful Ones*, teacher is a character who is on the side of the man. Although the man goes to see him when he becomes overwhelmed by the stiff opposition he faces in his family and society, he (teacher) is unable to be of any assistance to the man. This is because Armah does not endow characters on the side of the protagonist with any form of strength and teacher is no exception. He has no power to be able to help the man. He is only seen theorizing and this does not cause any change in the situation in which the man finds himself.

The man’s wife, Oyo and mother-in-law are seen constantly trying to prevent the man from achieving his aim of not conforming to the corrupt practices in their society. Oyo wants the man to use his position to corruptly acquire material possessions which will make life comfortable for her. The man’s mother-in-law also makes the man’s struggle difficult if not unsuccessful. She also wants the man to use his position to make life easier for the family but the man’s refusal makes their relationship strained. Comparing teacher who is on the side of the man to Oyo and her mother who are against him, it can be concluded that the actions of Oyo and her mother have negative effects on the man. This is because his constant feeling of disillusionment and loneliness stems from their constant demand that the man use his position corruptly to make life easier for them. Teacher’s actions on the other hand have positive effects on the man since they seem to provide some therapeutic relief to the man when Oyo and her mother make life unbearable for him. Because Oyo and her mother are a part of the man’s family, their actions seem to have a great influence on the man and this greatly contributes to the difficulty of the man’s situation.

Armah’s protagonists usually go through series of challenging situations and these seem to have adverse effects on the protagonists. In *The Beautiful Ones*, the man is made to feel like a stranger
in his own home. Our first encounter with Oyo reveals a dissatisfied wife who wants her husband to use his position to corruptly acquire wealth.

The man walks into the hall, meeting the eyes of his waiting wife. These eyes are flat, the eyes of a person who had come to a decision not to say anything; eyes totally accepting and unquestioning in a way only a thing from which nothing is ever expected and not questioned. And it is true that because these eyes are there the air is filled with accusation but for even that the man feels a certain tired gratitude: he is thankful that there are no words to lance the tension of the silence (The Beautyful Ones. P. 41).

After a hard day’s work, the man is not so enthused to go back home to his family because of the way the wife nags him on his inability to use his position corruptly. Even his children seem to have their own subtle way of silently accusing their father.

The children begin to come out of the room within. They are not asleep, not even the third little one. It seems their eyes also are learning this flat look that is a defense against hope, as if their mother’s message needs their confirmation, it comes across very well. So well it fills the hall with unbearable heaviness which must be broken at all cost (The Beautyful Ones. P. 41)

Oyo is seen constantly nagging him and calling him unpleasant names. Not only does she accuse the man verbally, she uses her actions to accuse him and the man seems to know her so well that her actions are perfectly understood by him. Oyo is so irked by the man’s attitude that she asks him “why are you trying to cut yourself apart from what goes for all of us?... But you will be eating with us when it is ripe? (The Beautyful Ones P. 42). Here Oyo is putting pressure on the man to make him accept the corrupt behaviour of people like Koomson and when the man calmly tries to make Oyo see the reality by asking her where she thinks Koomson has been getting all the money from, She finally explodes.“He is getting it. Flat finality. All right says the man. Let us say I am not in it. The woman stares unbelieving at her husband, then whispers softly “chichidodooooooo” (The Beautyful Ones p. 43). According to Priebe 1976 “he is continually offered bribes, but his refusal of them causes his family to look upon him as a
“chichidodo bird” (111). His mother-in-law casts insinuations at him and openly calls him a selfish man simply because he will not corruptly use his position for the benefit of his family. Because this expectation of the mother-in-law is not met, her relationship with her son-in-law is nothing to write home about if not strained. “He had no desire to go inside the house and sit down trading unfelt greetings with his mother-in-law. (122). This clearly shows that there is no cordial relationship between the Man and his mother-in-law and every attempt to avoid her company is seen to be a great relief to the Man. When Oyo asks the man to take the children to her mother’s place so that she could prepare for Koomson’s visit, the man does so unwillingly because he knows his mother-in-law will not miss any opportunity to scorn and verbally assault him any time they meet. And true to the man’s expectations, he is assaulted. Koomson’s wife simply abhors him. During her visit with Koomson to the man’s house, she does all she can to make the man feel inferior. This behavior by Estelle makes Oyo angrier as she does not understand why the man wouldn’t simply use his position to make life as luxurious for her as it is for Koomson’s wife. The disdain of the timber merchant towards the man is simply overwhelming. After the man’s refusal to cut corners in order to help him transport his timber, he manages to get the man’s colleague to help him in that regard. He becomes so resentful at the man that he chooses to verbally assault him before leaving the man’s office. “But behind him the timber man laughed again, very shrilly, and shouted at him, ‘you. You are a wicked man. You will never prosper da’.” The man said nothing, did not even look back the at the hurler of the insult” (The Beautyful Ones P. 107). All these unpleasant situations simply leave the man completely disillusioned and lonely. The man becomes disillusioned to the extent that he prefers to take long walks after work in order to while away some time instead of going straight home. “Outside, the sight of the street itself raised thoughts of the reproach of loved ones…there was
no hurry. At the other end there was only home…walking with the slowness of those whose desire has nowhere to go, the man moved up the road” (The Beautiful Ones P. 35). He indeed dreads going home to meet his wife because he knows how unpleasant the situation is at home. When he finally goes home, Oyo makes the atmosphere so charged that the man finds it unbearable. When he tries to ease the tension by telling Oyo that he has met Koomson, the situation becomes worse and Oyo calls him scornful names. “Ah, you know, the chichidodo is a bird. The chichidodo hates excrement with all its soul. But the chichidodo only feeds on maggots, and you know the maggots grow best inside the lavatory. This is the chichidodo. The woman was smiling (The Beautiful Ones p. 45). The first time Oyo refers to the man as chichidodo, she does not explain to him why she calls him by that name. But after her unsuccessful attempt to make “the man” realize that she also deserves the luxurious life that Estella lives, she turns her anger into scorn and patiently explains to the man what she meant when she called him a chichidodo. “The man’s” situation makes him very lonely and disillusioned.

Armah’s protagonists usually become Anti-Heroes. Several of the essential traits which are associated with Anti-Heroism are realized in the man’s entire mode of existence in The Beautiful One. There is his anonymity which can be declared as a characteristic of Anti-Heroism. The man’s Anti-Heroism springs from the fact that throughout his entire life, he does not do a single thing that could conceivably be regarded as having made the world a better place than he found it. The man can simply be described as an Anti-Hero because throughout the novel, he exists at the receiving end of all insults, accusations and reproaches of almost everybody else, to whom he never ceases to apologize. The first time we meet him, he placidly receives the bus conductor’s “you bloody fucking sonofabitch. Article of no commercial value” (The Beautiful Ones p. 6).
Even though it is not his fault that he drools in his sleep, the bus conductor insults him for this act and we are told that “shame dwarfed him inside and he hastened to clean it” (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 7). No sooner has he endured the conductor’s insults than he is almost run over by a taxi whose driver calls him “uncircumcised baboon….moron of a frog” (*The Beautiful Ones* p.10). In response to these insults, we are told that “the man took a step forward in order to be closer to the taxi driver, and said apologetically: I wasn’t looking. Am sorry.” This apology, we learn, “only seemed to inflame the driver’s temper” (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 10), and before he departs from the man, he dishes out even more viscous insults: “your mother’s rotten cunt” (*The Beautiful Ones* p.11). The rhythm of shame and disgrace continues unabated throughout the rest of the book: the timber merchant insults him for his refusal to take the bribe offered him, when he comes home to tell his wife about it, she also insults him. “The man” apologizes to Koomson when he visits them and wants to go to use their toilet. These series of actions cannot be considered as heroic acts. Priebe 1976 sums up the man’s anti-heroic nature by saying that:

From his home to his job, through the day, and back to his home, the man runs a course during which the fears of the conductor, a clerk, a timber merchant and then the man’s wife are virtually transformed into the man’s anguish. The community makes him a scapegoat, a point underscored by the profusion of demonic imagery that is sandwiched between each encounter (116).

This clearly highlights that the man is not a hero. These are people whom he has deep fear for and practically dreads any encounter with. It is evident that Armah’s protagonists are unable to overcome the odds. The man is unable to completely restrain himself from engaging in the corrupt practices of his society. This is because getting to the end of the novel when Koomson is being pursued by the law enforcers to punish him for his involvement in corruption, the man helps Koomson to escape. Even though he is not seen engaging in the act of corruption himself, the role he plays in helping Koomson to escape does not totally exonerate him. Furthermore, he
is certain that the boat deal that Oyo and her mother are so much interested in will not be a success but he is unable to convince them to refrain from investing in this venture. He watches on helplessly as they invest in the boat deal and lose their money.

Constantly, it can be seen that the end of Armah’s novels is usually negative. At the end of *The Beautiful Ones*, the man does not succeed in his attempt to cause any change in the corrupt situation which he finds in his society. Although he does not get punished like Koomson who had to finally run away to avoid punishment, his exit with Koomson through the lavatory cannot be considered as an act of victory. There is usually no resolution at the end of Armah’s novels. The inscription at the end of the *trotro* is indicative of the fact that although the novel has ended, the beautiful ones are still not yet born and there is no indication whatsoever of when they will be born. The fear that the man has of going home after work still remains with him even when Oyo has commended him for his stance of not partaking in the corrupt practices in his society. “…but suddenly, all of his mind was consumed with thoughts of everything he was going back to-Oyo, the eyes of the children after six o’clock, the office and everyday and above all, the never-ending knowledge that this aching emptiness would be all that the remainder of his own life could offer him” (*The Beautiful Ones* P. 183). Furthermore, several questions which readers might have from the beginning of the novel such as: Who is the man?, What is his real name?, What is likely to happen to the man’s society after the coup?, Does the coup succeed in eradicating corruption from the man’s society? These among a host of other issues remain unanswered at the end of the novel. With regards to who the man is, nothing is said about his identity from the beginning of the novel and his anonymity remains unresolved up to the end. Oyo who is not the main character is given a name and readers even get to know who her mother is but the anonymity of the man is kept intact. Whether the society becomes anti-corrupt after the coup or not is another
unresolved issue in the novel. Readers are not given any indication whether the coup is successful in eradicating corruption from the man’s society.

*Fragments* is the second novel of Armah published a few years after the first one. As already discussed in *The Beautiful Ones*, the protagonist in Armah’s second novel, *Fragments*, is also hapless because he is similar to the man in his quest not to engage in the corrupt practices that are prevalent in his society. His haplessness stems from his inability to make his family and colleagues at work understand that he does not want to be a part of the corrupt practices which are prevalent around him. This is a constant feature of the protagonists in Armah’s first two novels. Just like the environment of “the man”, Baako also finds himself in a very corrupt environment. Ayuk (1984) puts this blatantly by saying that “in *Fragments*, Armah sees materialism as a national epidemic threatening like the sea to engulf everybody except Baako, Naana, Ocran and Joana” (39). Upon Baako’s return to Ghana Baako tries to secure a job at Ghanavision and the Secretary of the Civil Service Commission makes it very clear to him that he will only do what he is supposed to do for Baako if he (Baako) bribes him. Corruption has been accepted the extent that when Ocran tries to report the behaviour of the Secretary of the Civil Service Commission to the Principal Secretary, the Principal Secretary puts on a nonchalant attitude and tells Baako that things do not work that way in the society. As it is at the man’s place of work, corruption is also very predominant in Baako’s place of work. Television sets meant for rural folks are blatantly distributed among officials at Ghanavision and other high-ranking officials in the society. Just as the man refuses to be a part of corruption at his place of work, Baako also refuses to partake in this corrupt act. Although the man looks on passively as corruption goes on around him, Baako is seen trying to do something about the situation by reminding Asante-Smith that the television sets are meant for the rural folks. In terms of the
progress of the protagonist, Baako can be said to make a little progress if he is compared to the man. This is because unlike the man, Baako is able to refrain from any act that might implicate him in any form of corruption from the beginning till the end of the novel. This fact notwithstanding, Baako is similar to the man in the sense that he is also seen going through a series of frustrating encounters. His encounter with the Secretary of the Civil Service Commission is one of the unpleasant situations that he experiences. After being asked by the secretary of the civil service commission to go and come back several times, Baako is unable to make the secretary do what he wants for him. But for the intervention of Ocran, his dream of working at Ghana vision would have been a mirage. He is equally unsuccessful in his attempt to cause any form of change in his corrupt and materialistic society. Baako is unsuccessful in his bid to make his mother understand that there is everything wrong with using his position to corruptly acquire wealth. He also fails to make his mother and Araba understand that returning from abroad does not necessarily make one automatically rich.

“Anyway”, she said, “you know you are the MC today”.

“Yes. What do I have to do?”

“I am not the one who has been abroad to a university”, his mother said, smiling full into his face.

“What I went to learn is different” he said.

“Well, there won’t be too much to do. I wish you had brought a tux, or at least a suit though. It would have been so fine”.

“I’m not an ape”

“What a strange thing to say!” his mother said.

“Why else would I wear tuxes or suites in this warm country” (Fragments p.145).
Baako tries to make his mother understand that there is nothing wrong with being one’s self and not conforming their European ways but he is unsuccessful in this quest as his mother rather thinks that he is the one acting strange. Forces for and against the protagonist have already been discussed in *The Beautiful Ones* as being a constant feature in Armah’s story line. In *Fragments*, just as is seen in *The Beautiful Ones*, the characters who are on the side of the protagonist are weak while those against him are rather strong. Naana, Baako’s maternal grandmother is a character who is on Baako’s side. Although she is seen trying to understand Baako in his quest to challenge the status quo, she does not have the power to go against Efua in order to be of any help to Baako in his times of difficulty. Right from the beginning of the novel even before we encounter Baako, she is seen fighting on his behalf. “Nananom, drink to your thirst and go with the young one. Protect him well and bring him back to us, to you” (*Fragments* p. 21). She insists that Foli pour the right quantity of drink as libation in order for the gods to protect Baako. After Baako gives up his job at Ghanavision, she is the first to notice that there is something wrong with him.

“Well are so quiet?” Naana asked. “It’s finished” he said. “You didn’t tell what it was”

“I was trying to say things in my mind, to let other people see”.

“That sounds like a priest”. He laughed weakly and rose up to go. “Don’t go”, Naana said. “Sit with me. You’re sad, aren’t you? I can’t understand why you always refuse to tell me what is happening”. He sat by her, and saw the strain in
her face disappear. “Will you talk to me? Not now if you don’t want to, but another day?” “I will, Naana, but not today” (Fragments p. 222)

Though Baako has some difficulty in explaining to her what he is going through probably due to the generational gap between them, she seems to offer some solace and support to Baako in her own small way. Naana seems to know Baako so well that she can tell when he is worried over something. Although unlike teacher, she is related to Baako by blood, she is as helpless as teacher. She is unable to help Baako due to the fact that she is afraid of Efua. When she tries to warn Baako of the danger in naming Araba’s child earlier than the date traditionally allowed, she quickly shuts up as soon as she hears Efua approaching and even becomes frightened to the point of shivering. Juana, another character on the side of Baako, plays a very significant role in Baako’s life but she was also unable to help him because she could not prevent his disillusionment and final detention at the asylum. The first time Juana meets Baako, they become good friends. Baako is normally relaxed when he is with Juana. They go to places of intrests such as going to the beach and travelling together. Ocran can also be said to be on the side of Baako because he helps him (Baako) to secure a job at Ghana vision. When Baako encounters difficulty with the secretary of the Civil Service Commission about his desire to secure the job at Ghanavision, Ocran quickly uses his contact with the principal secretary to help Baako. He also lends Baako a listening ear when he needs it. When Baako encounters difficulty in his choice of career, he listens to him and gives him the necessary advice to guide him in his career. Even at the end of the novel when Baako is taken to the asylum, he understands that Baako is not mad but he is only traumatizing himself for his inability to satisfy the materialistic desires of his family and society “Don’t stop thinking Onipa. You have a good mind; don’t be afraid to use it.
Stop thinking you’ve done people wrong. Nobody cares anyway. If these people had your talent, they wouldn’t want to be that way. They wouldn’t need to” (*Fragments* p. 273). On the other hand, characters such as: Efua, Araba and Asante-Smith are seen constantly working against Baako. Efua and Araba are making life unbearable for Baako at home and forcing him to use his position to corruptly acquire material possessions for their selfish interests. Right from Baako’s arrival from the states, his mother and Araba are constantly doing all they possibly can to make Baako conform to the corrupt standards of the society. Efua refuses to make him the MC for the naming ceremony of Araba’s child simply because he refuses to put on a tux. Araba becomes upset with him because he is unable to use his position as someone who has just returned from abroad to help her secure a VIP ward at the hospital. His constant refusal to conform earns him their displeasure and they seem to find him so awkward that they mistake his disillusionment for madness and take him to the asylum against his will. Asante-Smith also uses his position at the office to make life unbearable for Baako at work. At a production meeting when Baako tries to bring up his ideas for discussion, Asante-Smith does all he can to make them look ridiculous.

“You have some peculiar concerns”, Asante-Smith said… “At any rate, we have no film or tape for drama” 
From the far end of the table a different voice spoke “some new tape just got in Sir” 
“I know”, Asante-Smith answered. “It’s all booked. There are important national days ahead” (*Fragments* p. 216).

Asante-Smith makes Baako’s work look so irrelevant that even when his lame excuse that the tapes are finished is proven to be false, he still goes ahead to find another reason why Baako’s ideas will not see the light of day. Although it is a constant feature in both *The Beautiful Ones* and *Fragments* that both novels have characters for and against the protagonist, the variable is that the number of characters who are on the side of Baako in *Fragments* is more than the number of characters who are on the man’s side in *The Beautiful Ones*. Teacher is the only
character on the side of the man. He is the only one the man can go to in times of loneliness. Baako however has Naana, Juana and Ocran on his side. All these characters are seen playing different roles in Baako’s life to help him achieve his goal. Irrespective of the number of characters on the side of the protagonist, an obvious fact remains that all these characters are unable to help their protagonist. In spite of the fact that Baako has more characters on his side than the man, these characters are unable to help Baako just as teacher is also unable to help the man.

As already discussed in Armah’s first novel, the situations that his protagonists go through have adverse effects on them. Just like the man, Baako is also made to feel like a stranger in his own home because of his refusal to partake in corruption. Efua is constantly on Baako’s neck insisting that he conform to their corrupt standards. Araba has her own way of making Baako feel incompetent with her ungrateful attitude. Asante-Smith adds to Baako’s problems by making Baako’s ideas look irrelevant and absurd. These series of unpleasant situations leave Baako as disillusioned and as lonely as the man is in *The Beautiful Ones*. Baako is also made to feel like a stranger in his own home because of his refusal to partake in corruption and still live in isolation among his family. During the discussion between Efua and Araba about the date to name Araba’s baby, Baako tries to warn Efua on the date since he feels it is a little too early. His advice is quickly relegated to the background. “why are you struggling with the calendar?” Baako asked. “Are you so pressed that you have to make money out of the child?” “Eii son” his mother said sharply, we don’t need you to preach to us” (*Fragments* P. 130-131). Efua ignores Baako’s warning and continues her discussion with Araba as if Baako were not around. Baako also becomes an anti-hero just like the man, his situation is a bit better compared to the humiliation the man has to endure. Baako is not anonymous compared to the man whose identity
is unknown. Baako is also not subjected to insults and abuse when compared to the man. The man’s existence is characterized by insults and abusive language from people but Baako is seen putting up some form of resistance. For example when his mother asks him to put on a tux for the naming ceremony of Araba’s child, he simply retorts that he is not an ape. Another instance when Baako is seen putting up some form of resistance is when Efua and Araba are planning to name the baby earlier than they should, he is able to challenge them by asking them if they are so pressed that they have to make money out of the child. Even though his warning is not heeded to, he is better than the man by virtue of the fact that he is seen making various attempts. Although he does not suffer as much humiliation and shame as the man does, he is equally unable to cause any form of change in his society in spite of the fact that he puts up some resistance. His inability to prevent his detention at the asylum irrespective of the resistance he puts up cannot be considered as an act of heroism. Another constant feature identified in Armah’s novels is the inability of the protagonist to overcome the odds. Baako in his struggle against the corrupt practices in his society is faced with stiff opposition from his family at home and colleagues at work. He is constantly seen having one argument or the other with his mother. When Efua takes Baako to go and see her uncompleted building, she does so with the expectation that Baako will see how much effort she has put in and challenge himself to use his position to complete it for her; Baako on the other hand sees it as too big and does not understand why his mother should invest in such a huge edifice. Baako is unable to overcome the odds because he is unable to make Efua understand that it is not right for him to use his position to corruptly acquire wealth. The end of Fragments, just like the end of The Beautiful Ones, is also negative. After all the struggle Baako puts up with his family as well as his colleagues in order to try and cause a change in his society, at the end of the novel, he becomes so disillusioned that he has to be trapped, captured
and taken to the asylum. It is a constant feature that the ends of both novels are negative but the variable is that what happens to the man at the end of *The Beautiful Ones* is far better compared to what happens to Baako at the end of *Fragments*. Although it is not a pleasant experience for the man to escape with Koomson through the lavatory, Baako’s fate of ending up in the asylum can be said to be worse than that of the man although. As has already been discussed in Armah’s first novel, there is no resolution at the end of his second novel either. Apart from the fact that Baako’s attempt to challenge and change the status quo proves unsuccessful, there are certain issues which remain unresolved such as: Will Efua and Araba ever get to understand and appreciate Baako? Will Juana be able to use her position as a psychiatrist to help Baako leave the asylum since she knows for a fact that Baako is not insane? The issue of how long Baako will stay at the asylum remains unresolved and the question of what will happen to him after he has finally been discharged is also left unanswered. Will Baako be able to go back home to Efua and Araba? If he does, will they ever see him as a normal person again considering that even before his detention at the asylum, they doubted his sanity because of his non-conformist behaviour? Again, the question of whether his mother and sister will understand and appreciate that he will not conform to their corrupt standards is another question that is left unresolved for the reader. One is also left to wonder why Juana could not simply use her position as a psychiatrist to prevent Baako’s detention at the asylum. As already discussed, there is no clear resolution at the end of both novels. But in *The Beautiful Ones*, most of the unresolved issues revolve around the identity of the man while the unresolved issues in *Fragments* center around Baako’s detention at the asylum. These variables notwithstanding, the central issue which is common with both novels and remains unresolved is what happens to the corrupt practices that are prevalent in the
societies of these protagonists. There is no clear resolution on these issues and the outlook can be perceived to be miserable.

**WHY ARE WE SO BLEST?**

The haplessness of the protagonists in Armah's first two novels has already been established. The protagonist in his third novel, *Why Are We?*, also exhibits traits which are similar to those of the protagonists in Armah's first two novels. Modin, just like the man and Baako, can also be said to be hapless because in spite of all the struggles he also goes through, he is unsuccessful in his attempts to cause in his society. He for example struggles against Mr. Oppenhardt's opinion that contrary to what the Whites say, he is not the only intelligent black person as they want him to believe.

Some very important people are interested in you. Mr. Scott is important, but I wasn't talking about him. He works for the committee. The people you'll be meeting are members of the committee themselves. You're very polite, and you're very intelligent. Stay that way, and you'll find you have some very good friends. (*Why Are We?* P. 107-108).

But he is successful in this attempt of the whites in this assertion. “Mr. Oppenhardt was first: All your confidential reports say you are a most unusually intelligent African- the most intelligent as a matter of fact.” “That is not true sir.” I said” (*Why Are We?* p. 120). Modin again tries to convince Mike, an African student like him, to see the reality of their situation, which is, the Whites only want them to feel special so that at the end, they will be used to exploit their fellow blacks. Looking at the behaviour of Armah’s protagonists in his first three novels, it can be
argued that the efforts that the protagonists put in to cause changes in their various societies keep increasing from the man to Modin. It can be seen that although the man wants nothing to do with the corruption that is being perpetuated in his society, he does next to nothing to prevent the practice from going on. Baako, puts up some resistance by challenging his mother and subtly reminding Asante-Smith of the reason why the television sets were brought when they were being shared among the workers at Ghanavision and finally leaving his job when he failed to cause any change. On the part of Modin, he rejects the offer he thinks will help solve his society’s problems. Irrespective of the varying degrees of resistance that these protagonists put in their efforts to cause changes in their respective societies. It is a constant feature that all the protagonists are unsuccessful in their attempts. The variables can be seen in the amount of effort that each protagonist puts in his struggle. It can be observed that Baako puts in more effort than the man while Modin also does more than Baako. Corruption is again prevalent in the environment in which Modin finds himself. Unlike the case of the man and Baako, corruption in Modin’s environment seems to take a different form. In the case of Modin, it takes the form of racial exploitation where a few Africans are selected and given privileges by the Whites. These selected Africans are given special treatment in the form of scholarships but at the end, they are used by the Whites to exploit other Africans.

We’re here in America. We’re too healthy for breast feeding, Modin. Let us celebrate our excellence and perhaps our luck. Me, you and all the blest... most of the foreign students-Africans, Asians, Latins, they talk all the time about what they’ll do to overturn the system once they got out of here. I don’t take them seriously. I know nobody goes through the struggle to get here so they can fall back into that communal dirt (Why Are We? p.100-101).

This is the situation in which Modin and Mike find themselves. Corrupt environment seems to be a constant feature in all three novels under study. Although the corrupt environment in which the man finds himself is similar to the one Baako also finds himself, since they both take the form of
family members expecting the protagonist to use his position corruptly, corruption in Modin’s environment can be said to be a variable since it takes a racial and sexual approach.

Progress of the protagonist is another constant feature in Armah’s first three novels. As has already been discussed in his first two novels, Modin also goes through a series of frustrating events in an attempt to cause a change in his society. He rejects the offer of the Whites and even goes to the extent of abandoning his studies so that he can help cause a change in his society. It is a constant feature that all three protagonists are unsuccessful in their various attempts to cause any form of change in their respective societies.

Another constant feature which has already been discussed in Armah’s first two novels is characters for and against the protagonist. Solo, the eyes through which the narrative passes to the reader, is a character on the side of Modin. He warns Modin of his actions from the beginning till the end of the novel. He always warns Modin of the impending danger ahead but Modin does not heed to his advice. When Modin decides to embark on his revolutionary journey with Aimée, Solo does all he can to discourage him from endangering his life even to the anger of Aimée.

“They’ll tell you to wait another two weeks”

The girl turned and raised her trunk up on one elbow. Her face was red with anger.

“How do you know?”

“I know.” I said

“Ok. So we’ll wait. She returned to her original position.

“After that, another two weeks”

They were both quiet. Then the man asked, aggressively, just wanting to know:

“How do you know” (Why Are We? p. 259).
Naita is also seen to be on the side of Modin because although he does not seem to understand some of the things she tries to warn him of, he later gets to understand her.

“Don’t let them crooks mess with you, her?”
“What crooks?”
She laughed again, “you’ll find out soon enough.
“You’re not one of them dumb ones they bring on their little tours. You’ll see.
“You talk strangely, I said. At the same time I wished she’d continue talking…”
(Why Are We? p.110).

She tries to warn Modin of the schemes of the Whites and also provides emotional support and comfort to Modin in his moments of loneliness. Aimée, Mrs Jefferson, Mr Oppenhardt are characters who are against Modin. Aimée Pretends to be in love with Modin and behaves as if she supports his idea for a revolution. She capitalizes on the love Modin has for her to urge him on his fatal search for a revolution but the reality is that she is only interested in using Modin to her sexual advantage. Even at the point of Modin’s death, she shows no sympathy but insists on achieving her much desired sexual pleasure. Mrs Jefferson also exploits Modin sexually by capitalizing on his loneliness and by also trying to satisfy a few of his material needs. Mr. Oppenhardt is also against Modin because although he pretends to be his benefactor, he is seen pushing certain ideas which will be detrimental to the black race into Modin’s head. When Modin tries to challenge these ideas, he becomes very upset with him.

Mr. Oppenhardt is harder to discuss anything with, more important when he talks to me. We had an extremely long conversation last night. At one point he said: ‘you talk as if all Africans are as intelligent as you”. That made the horrible loneliness I felt the first time return. ‘they are intelligent. You don’t know them’, I said. Mr. Oppenhardt’s face became completely red… ‘Your tuition and expenses for next term’, he said. He rose to go, turned his head on his neck to look at me, and added: “I’m glad you find nothing to argue about in that”
Right from *The Beatyful Ones* through *Fragments* to *Why Are We?* It is a constant feature that characters who try to help the protagonist are weak and helpless. As mentioned in the earlier discussion, Naita and Solo are also weak just like the man, Naana, Ocran and Juana. Naita is weak because she is only a secretary who cannot do anything to stop the manipulating power of the whites against African students. Although she is aware of the danger Modin exposes himself to by trusting the Whites, she is powerless in stopping him from getting involved with them. Solo on the other hand, who can foresee the fate of Modin right from the beginning of the novel, is seen very helpless in trying to stop him. He is seen fruitlessly trying to persuade Modin from the moment he sets eyes on him but he is unable to stop him and Modin meets his death which truly devastates him. A common trait which is peculiar to the characters who are against the protagonist right from *The Beatyful Ones* is the fact that they are very strong and influential in the lives of the protagonists. Aimée is very influential in Modin’s life because he sees her as his confidant and discusses all his plans with her. Mrs Jefferson is also very influential because of her husband’s position and so is Mr. Oppenhardt also very influential in Modin’s life. Aside being a constant that all these characters who are against Modin are influential in his life just like the characters against “the man” and Baako, there are certain features which the characters against Modin exhibit which can be considered as a variable. All the characters against Modin pretend to love him but the opposite is the reality. The man obviously knows that his wife, his mother-in-law and the timber merchant are all against his anti-corrupt behaviour. It is not a secret to Baako that his mother and sister as well as Asante-Smith are not in favour of his non-conformist behavior. But this is not the case with Modin. All the characters against him are dangerous and it is no wonder that Modin meets his death through one of them. Another variable is that unlike the first two novels, all the characters against Modin are Whites. It can also be
observed that unlike the situations of “the man” and Baako where the characters against them are related to them by blood, it can be seen that none of the characters against Modin is related to him by blood. Armah’s protagonists experience series of setbacks which have adverse effects on them. Loneliness is a common trait which all of Armah’s heroes in the novels under study experience. After the numerous unpleasant situations that Modin goes through at the hands of the whites, it is “not surprising in all of this. My life here has made a self-destruction swing all the time. Only I haven’t thought seriously about it. Loneliness. The search for a way out” (*Why Are We?* p.156). In Modin’s bid to escape loneliness, he rather ends up finding himself in more complex webs such as his relationship with Aimée. “I thought I was succeeding in overcoming my old habitual feelings of loneliness. Now I look forward to her visit” (*Why Are We?* p.178). This feeling of loneliness is what makes him vulnerable to the sexual exploitation of Mrs Jefferson. The unpleasant situations that Modin experiences at the hands of the whites make him feel lonely. It is a constant feature that the unpleasant situations that Armah’s protagonists go through leave all of them extremely lonely. Modin also becomes an anti-hero just like the man and Baako. Although unlike “the man”, Modin does not have to endure abuse and insults. Modin can be said to be similar to Baako in the sense that he is also seen putting up some form of resistance. He is able to tell Mr. Oppenhardt, that he (Modin) is not the only intelligent black. “They are intelligent. You don’t know them” I said. Mr. Oppenhardt’s face became completely red” (*Why Are We?* p.127). Even though there are certain actions taken by Modin which can be considered as being heroic acts such as standing up for his fellow blacks when they are described by Mr. Oppenhardt as unintelligent, and even going to the extent of refusing to apologize to him when professor Jefferson asks him to. “Mr. Oppenhardt will accept an apology” he said “he is a big-hearted man, a very big man” “but I have done nothing wrong” “you’ve been most
destructive” “there was no friendship, that’s all” (*Why Are We?* p.129). Modin, unlike the man, tries to defend his people. He stands up for them in his own small way. “My friendship with those who so condemn my people became not a source of joy, but the cause of an acute sickness, that bottomless feeling of loneliness” (*Why Are We?* p.161). He even goes to the extent of forgoing the scholarship he is offered. “I’ve had to find new ways to survive. The jobs I found after the break with Mr. Oppenhardt are now too strenuous” (*Why Are We?* P. 168). After his unpleasant exchange with Mr. Oppenhardt, he forgoes all the money and other opportunities he is being given simply because he finds no fulfillment in satisfying his personal interest at the expense of that of his entire race. Although the above-mentioned deeds can be considered as heroic acts, his anti-heroism stems from the fact that he allows Aimée to exploit him.

“I turned to go. There was a pair of underpants at the foot of the bed, I threw them to Aimee, keep your pants on, they aren’t mine, she said. What do you mean? They’re Carol’s. She took them off, don’t you remember? She smoked a joint and the just thing she wanted was for you to screw her (*Why Are We?* p. 93 - 94).

Not only does Aimée use Modin to her sexual advantage, but also she allows her friends to have their way with him when he is not in the right frame of mind. His ability to resist Mrs. Jefferson’s sexual advances to the detriment of his own life can be considered anti-heroic.

“Don’t spoil it, Modin, someone a bit drunk, that’s all” next something cold and sharp hit me. It felt like a blow then, just a hard external blow. For a while, I felt no inner pain. The object was removed and my own hot blood was rushing down the side of my neck” (*Why Are We?* p.156).

A constant feature of Armah’s protagonists in the novel under study is that they are all anti-heroes. The man is a variable because of his inability to do any heroic deed, Baako and Modin are able to perform some heroic acts. Right from *The Beautiful Ones*, the protagonists are unable to overcome the odds. Modin is confronted with a society where the whites use education as a system to exploit the blacks.
Sixth form. The hundreds forgotten. A dozen here, twenty there. Small groups getting absorbed deeper into European ways. The justification: a higher quality, University. Single survivors in the last reaches of alienation. But it is these, the farthest removed from the living realities of the hundreds, the thousands, the millions who are given power in the imperial systems to regulate the lives of millions, thousands, hundreds. My future – a continuation of this past nightmare? What work awaits me after this academic nonsense? No work. Just small privilege. Bungalows, cars, salary allowance. Creative compacts for a mediocre feature (*Why Are We?* P. 224).

A few blacks are selected by the whites and made to feel privileged by being offered scholarships for higher education. At the end of their studies, they are used to exploit their fellow blacks. This is the system Modin tries to fight but he is unable to overcome the odds because even his fellow Africans do not seem to see anything wrong with the system. “We’re here in America. We’re too healthy for breast beating. Modin let us celebrate our excellence and perhaps our luck. Me, you and all the blacks… you’re here on Olympus, Modin” (*Why Are We?* P. 100). Mike is rather encouraging Modin to count himself lucky to be among the blest and make the most of the opportunity given him instead of seeing anything wrong with the system.

If it makes you feel better, pretend you are on the plains, sweating it with the unwashed, or better still, in a gutter lower than the plains… most of these foreign students – Africans, Asians, Latins, they talk all the time about what they’ll do to overturn the system once they get out of here so they can fall back into the communal dirt (*Why Are We?* P. 101).

Modin does not succeed in changing Mike’s opinion about the fact that they are merely being used by the whites to their advantage. He is unable to overcome the odds just as “the man” and Baako. He is also unsuccessful in causing any form of change in the entire system. He does not also succeed in changing the perception of the whites that he is the only intelligent black man.

*Why Are We?* also ends negatively just like Armah’s first two novels did. At the end of the novel, Modin does not survive. “They untied him and didn’t do anything to him. We left him there in the dessert” (*Why Are We?* P. 28). Although it can concretely be established that the end of all
the novels under study is negative, the end of *Why Are We?* can be said to be worse because it ends in tragedy.
CHAPTER TWO

According to Gerald Brace (1969), one of the greatest charms about narrative is “the representation and revelation of human behaviour”. He outlines that “the creation and animation of characters is the most important job that the author has to do… without good characters fiction is nothing” (78). Abrams and Harpham (2005) opine that characterization is the act of endowing the persons presented in either dramatic or narrative work with moral, intellectual and dispositional qualities” (33). Characters in the novels under study are a combination of traits, conflicting impulses and motives that are strongly influenced by events in their lives. Armah’s skillful portrayal of characters greatly contributes to the attention his novels receive. This chapter looks at how Armah employs characterization as a technique to distinguish characters who perpetuate corruption and destruction against the morally upright in the novels under study. It is the purpose of this study to establish that there are a lot of traits which Armah endows characters in his novels with. These similar traits which are peculiar to the characters are what will be referred to as constants. The study will for example establish that loneliness is a common trait with all the three protagonists under study. The concept of the Constant will therefore be used to imply similarity. In spite of the great constants (similarities) that will be established, a few differences will also be discussed. These differences are the variables. In this chapter therefore, constants and variables between characters in the novels under study will be identified and discussed. The discussion will begin with the major characters in the novels under study.
The man [The Beautyful Ones]

The discussion on characterization will begin with an analysis of the protagonists in the novels under study. In Armah’s first novel, the man, the protagonist in The Beautiful Ones, exhibits an acute sense of morality, honesty and uprightness. He is a character whose inner conviction is contrary to the demands of his loved ones or the lifestyle of the larger society who have taken a leap towards the gleam. We are told that in the society where the man lives “he was the only thing that had no way of answering the call of the night” (The Beautyful Ones p. 47). Although we see him acting very little and doing a lot of thinking, he is inwardly, intellectually and actively alive in his condemnation of corruption and moral decay in his society. He seems to be the only hope of positive change in the society. Apart from the above-mentioned traits which are positive about the man, he is greatly influenced by certain events in his life. He for example feels out of place among his own family. The situation is so bad to the extent that after a hard day’s work, the man is not so enthused to go back home to his family because of the way his wife nags him due to his inability to take part in corruption. Even his children seem to have their own subtle way of silently accusing their father.

The children begin to come out of the room within. They are not asleep, not even the third little one. It seems their eyes are also learning this flat look that is a defense against hope, as if their mother’s message needs their confirmation, it comes across very well. So well it fills the hall with unbearable heaviness which must be broken at all cost (The Beautyful Ones p. 41).

Not only is he despised by his family because of his non-conformist attitude but he is also ill-treated by the society. The timber merchant sees the man’s refusal to cut corners in order to have him transport his timber as sheer wickedness. “But behind him the timber merchant laughed again very shrilly and shouted at him, you. ‘You wicked man. You will never prosper da’. The man said nothing, did not even look at the hurler of the insult” (The Beautyful Ones p.107).
The man who consciously refuses to take the rotten, easy way to success is despised by the society. Loneliness is an impulse which is very common to the man.

And in his restlessness he rose and went out very quietly through the door, and his wife sat there not even staring after him, not even asking where he was going or when he would come back in the night or even whether he wanted to return at all to this home. Outside, the night was dark tunnel so long that out in front and above there it never could be any end to it (The Beautiful Ones p. 47).

The man refuses to join in the corrupt practices because he knows the gleam is a false beacon; he is aware of the fact that it does not only kill the soul but also does not offer any satisfying solution. Yet the entire society of the man is fascinated and drawn to it. An honest man in the eyes of the society is seen as stupid, naïve and uncooperative. Someone who is honest is regarded as one who is insensitive to the needs of others. The man has a generality of anonymity, a clerk who works for the nationalized railway system in Ghana. He lives in comparative poverty with his family because of his unflinching determination not to involve in corruption but survives on his inadequate salary, a behaviour which the society finds incomprehensible. Although his honesty imposes a lot of hardship, he remains unaltered. In spite of the fact that there are certain traits of the man which readers seem to hail as exemplary, he is by no means a shining example of a moral or decent member of society. His marriage to Oyo can be considered as something he did not do willingly. “Oyo’s parents had to come with their long story of their daughter ruined” (The Beautiful Ones p. 67). This might be what probably draws his attention to the difficult situation he has put Oyo in before he finally decides to marry her. He decides to marry her based on an impulsive decision influenced by the sentiments of Oyo’s parents. “He was intelligent and would have gone to the university had he not prematurely taken up family responsibility” (The Beautiful Ones p. 75). This does not give a picture of a man who is able to make firm decisions on his own. It clearly shows that he is someone who can be influenced. And for a decision as
crucial as marriage, it is not ideal for one to allow oneself to be forced into it. He further admits to teacher: “how can I look on Oyo and say I hate long shiny cars? How can I come back to the children and despise international schools?” (The Beautiful Ones p. 48). For someone who is considered one of the few morally upright persons in his society, these traits are uncharacteristic. Another instance when the man’s integrity becomes questionable is at the end when he helps koomson to escape punishment. He is aware that Koomson is part of those who embezzle and misuse state money but when Koomson comes to him for help in order to escape being punished, he willingly helps him do so. He even goes an extra mile to successfully urge the boatman to offer a bribe to the watchman so that Koomson escape. It is a general assertion that evil prospers when good men do nothing, in the case of the man, evil triumphs because a supposedly “good” man takes an active part in promoting bad practices such as corruption in this case. Throughout the novel, the man tries to maintain an untainted moral posture. And how he is presented to readers vis-à-vis the atmosphere of corruption “he struggles incessantly to live within his income” contradicts helping to Koomson escape punishment for his corrupt acts.

The boatman hesitated. But the man turned to him and said. Give it to him if there’s another one. The boatman took out another of the notes, and the watchman took them slowly, with something like a loving awe. So that the notes made a soft crackling noise as they rubbed against his palm (The Beautiful Ones p.176).
Baako [Fragments]

Fragments also presents characters that are similar to characters in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born in certain respects. The protagonist in Fragments, Baako, also exhibits traits which are similar to the traits of the man in The Beautiful One. According to Pallavi Bhardwaj (2015), “Baako, like the man in The Beautiful Ones, is an island of sanity in an ocean of madness.” He is also endowed with an acute sense of morality, honesty and uprightness. Baako also abhors corruption just like the man. While working at Ghanavision, television sets which are meant to be distributed to rural areas are generously shared among the various ministries and the highest officials with total disregard for the reason why these sets are brought. Everyone seems to be so blinded by corruption that all they seem to care about is how to use their positions for their personal gains at the expense of national development. It is only Baako who seems to see anything wrong with how the television sets are distributed.

‘Twelve… Hey, wait a minute. What the hell you mean, twelve?

“I be police Inspector General Kakra him driver. If him say twelve, paper no lie, no be so?” All right, twelve”. Four for Colonel Blay” (Fragments p. 218).

It is evident here that Baako has every opportunity to take some of the television sets home but he refuses to do so. Baako is also subjected to severe pressure from his family just like the man. In the case of Baako, since he is not married, his mother and sister play the role of family members who put pressure on him to conform to their corrupt standards. During the outdooring of Araba’s child, Efua, Baako’s mother decides to make Baako the MC. Efua’s sole reason of choosing Baako as the MC is for him (Baako) to use his status as a ‘been to’ to solicit as much money as she can from the guests. She expects him to conform to certain societal standards which Baako finds rather absurd. Efua on the other hand sees nothing wrong with her demand
and feels that Baako is rather the odd one. “Oh Baako”, his mother said, with real hurt in her voice, ‘I was only thinking of the best. Baako, what happened to you” (Fragments p.154). Araba on her part becomes greatly disappointed when Baako is unable to use his position to secure a VIP ward for her. Instead of being grateful for the fact that but Baako’s timely intervention saved her from a fatal situation, she rather becomes contemptuous.

“Allaba”, Baako said, “I’m going in to find a nurse. Everything will be all right. Wait for me. He smiled at her, but she did not make even the shadow of an attempt to smile. The look of panic that had been on her face had disappeared. Now all he could see was a flat, hurt look” (Fragments p.113).

Even though one can be tempted to think that because Baako is not married, the pressure from his family could be less compared to what the man faces from his family, the quotation above is indicative of the fact that Baako also faces a lot of pressure from his family. The man is not the only protagonist who feels lonely and alienated from his family. “Baako felt something else rising in him to add itself to that feeling of isolation and unease from which he had thought he was fleeing” (Fragments p. 93). Loneliness is a trait which is also common to Baako. Baako’s loneliness also partly stems from the fact that his family has unrealistic expectations of him which he cannot meet.

All his talk was from a loneliness from which he was finding it impossible to break, of the society he had come back to and the many ways in which it made him feel his aloneness. She asked him about his family, thinking of some possible shelter, but when he spoke of it, his family became only a closer intenser, more intimate reflection of the society itself, a concave mirror… “and yet” he was saying “the family is always there, with a solid presence and real demands” (Fragments p. 149).

Baako’s problem with his family is similar to the man’s family in terms of the demands that the family imposes on him. Just like the man’s family, the demands that Baako’s family impose on him compounds his problem of loneliness and alienation. The man goes to see Teacher to talk to him about his feeling of loneliness, Baako also goes to see Juana and Ocran. “The member of the
family who goes out and comes back home is a sort of charmed man, a miracle worker. He goes, he comes back and with his return some astounding and sudden change is expected” (Fragments p.150). The demands the family makes on Baako stem from the fact that he (Baako) has travelled abroad. These unrealistic demands devastate Baako. The man is not the only protagonist who is despised by his society because of his intolerance for corruption. Baako also suffers the same fate.

You have some peculiar concerns, Asante-Smith said… At any rate we have no film or tape for drama! From the far end of the table, a different voice spoke “some new tape just got in sir” ‘I know ‘ Asante-Smith answered. ‘it’s all booked. There are important national days ahead. (Fragments p. 216).

Asante Smith makes Baako’s work look very irrelevant and even when his (Asante-Smith’s) lame excuse that the tapes are finished is proven to be false, he instantly gives Baako another excuse which is very upsetting. He says there are important national days ahead as if what Baako is writing about has no relevance. He degrades Baako’s ideas at a production meeting. Just like the man, Baako also refuses to use his position corruptly. There is every opportunity for Baako to use his position at Ghanavision to corruptly acquire wealth to satisfy his family demands but irrespective of the pressure by his family, he stands his ground and refuses to use his position at work to satisfy their material demands.

A weariness filled his body, so that he remained leaning against the huge wall, just watching what was happening in the sun… Look, man, it’s no use standing there worrying” he said pointing. “Go in and get yours. You’ll want one anyway”. He chuckled and tried to smile” (Fragments p. 218).

There was every opportunity for Baako to choose to take as many television sets as he wanted home but just like the protagonist in The Beautiful Ones, he opts not to, and merely looking at how his colleagues greedily take the television sets makes him feel sick. In spite of the above-mentioned constants (similarities) that both the man and Baako seem to have in common, there
are a few variables (differences) which can be observed in their traits. The man is simply anonymous. Nothing is known about his identity and any information readers get to know about him in terms of his family is about his wife. Nothing is said about who his parents are or any relation except information about his wife. Baako on the other hand is given an identity. His full name, “yes Mr. Baako Onipa” (Fragments p. 217) is given. Apart from this, other personal information such as who his mother is and where she works is also given. His sister, grandmother and brother-in-law are all known. In short Baako is not anonymous. Another variable between the man and Baako is the fact that unlike the man who alters his anti-corrupt stance by asking the boatman to bribe the watchman in order to help Koomson escape, Baako can be said to be anti corrupt till the end of the novel. There is no instance when he is seen acting corruptly from the beginning till the end of the novel. Amala (2015) opines that “Baako is a character whose sensibilities transcend the rest in the society” (68).

**Modin [Why Are We?]**

Armah’s third novel also presents us with Modin who repeats most of the experiences of the man and Baako although he has peculiar characteristics. He becomes overly enthusiastic of the opportunities offered him on his arrival in America. Armah does not say much about Baako’s stay abroad but all that is on Modin concerns his stay abroad. Readers encounter an enthusiastic Modin who is excited about being in America where he is first made to feel special and privileged but gradually and painfully, the truth of the reality of his scholarship dawns on him. Sackey (2004) rightly puts it “that his native ingenuity is being undermined by America” (76). The resistance that Modin shows at the beginning is short-lived. Although he rejects Mr.
Oppenhardt’s scholarship which he (Modin) thinks stands for the money paid to “slave factors” as he realizes that Western education is nothing but a malicious attempt by the whites to distance him from his people. He sees it as an attempt to make him look down on his own people and make him partake in the “ritual of celebrating a tradition called great because it is European, western, white” and he feels that “participating in this kind of ritual made me not just lonely, not just one person unsupported by a larger whole but less than one person: a person split, fractured because of my participation in …. Communal rituals designed to break me and my kind” (34).

In spite of the resistance put up by Modin, he is unable to resist the sexual temptations from white women. During his subsequent moments of loneliness he practically ignores Naita’s warnings and gets involved in relationships with white women. He is, for example, easily seduced and carried away by Mrs. Jefferson who uses Modin simply for her sexual gratification. Their relationship lays the foundation for the destructive process which he goes through. As if the near-death experience he goes through with Professor Jefferson who almost stabs him to death is not enough, he still goes through another relationship with other white women such as Sandra. Although he becomes conscious of the danger he goes through with his relationships with white women as he promises to heed to Naita’s warning: “My life has had a self-destructive swing all the time, only I haven’t thought seriously about it. Loneliness…. I must contain my loneliness while I’m here” (Why Are We? P. 156). This resolve by Modin to deal with his loneliness is short-lived. Modin is not able to live by it for long as he soon gets involved with Aimée Reitsch who leads him to his final destruction.

Loneliness is a trait which is peculiar to all the protagonists. It is a constant feature that their loneliness seems to stem from the fact that they have all chosen not to follow the materialistic ways of their respective societies as is the case with the Man in The Beautiful Ones, the cargo
cult mentality in *Fragments*, and the racial exploitation in *Why Are We?* They all seem to be swimming against the tide in their societies. And this attitude that they have in common is what makes their respective societies reject them. As aforementioned, the man faces rejection by his family and this is what makes him lonely. Baako also suffers rejection by his family while Modin equally faces his own form of rejection. The rejection that the protagonists face makes all of them feel lonely. There is however, a slight variation in Modin’s loneliness because both the man and Baako are rejected by their immediate families and their respective societies but Modin’s family is not mentioned in the novel. Although they all suffer from loneliness, Modin’s loneliness has nothing to do with his family unlike the situation with the man and Baako.

The influence of the whites in the lives of the protagonists is worthy of note. It is evident that all the protagonists live in societies that the whites have either had an influence on, or are still influencing. *The Beautiful Ones* and *Fragments* are similar in this regard because the protagonists live in post-independence Ghana. In these novels, it can be observed that the protagonists are bearing the effects of the influence of the whites in their respective societies. This takes the form of independence after colonialism. Modin on his part is seen directly suffering from the whites through their racial exploitation. Although it is a constant feature that all the protagonist suffer through the negative influence of the whites, Modin’s case varies slightly because unlike the man and Baako who are not in direct contact with the whites, Modin is seen suffering directly from their actions. Another constant feature of all three protagonists under study is their resistance to the pressure from family and society to conform to corrupt standards. In *The Beautiful Ones*, the man does his best not to conform to the corrupt standards of his society in spite of the pressure from his family and friends “Contrey, why you dey to do me so?” (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 107). There are several instances in the novel where the man
resists the attempts by his family and society to be corrupt. He stands his ground and does not conform. Baako also puts up his own form of resistance. He is able to talk against the corrupt practices at Ghanavision where he works and does his best not to conform to his mother and sister’s materialistic expectations of him. On the part of Modin, he resists every attempt by the whites to make him look down on his race and even challenges his benefactor that his (Mr. Oppenhardt’s) perception that he (Modin) is the only intelligent African is wrong. Inspite of the fact that all three protagonists are able to put up some form of resistance in spite of their societal pressure to conform, there is a slight variation in the resistance put up by the man. Although one can easily classify the man’s act of instructing the boatman to bribe the watchman in order to allow Koomson pass as a desperate act to save a friend, it can still be considered as a form of bribery. This is a variation because there is no instance where Baako and Modin are seen perpetuating any act of corruption irrespective of their circumstance. Another constant is the fact that in spite of the resistance put up by these protagonists, their end is always negative. Even though at the end of *The Beautiful Ones*, the man regains his lost respect from his wife when Oyo finally admits “I am glad you never became like him. In Oyo’s eyes there was now real gratitude” (*The Beautyful Ones* p. 165), the man’s escape with Koomson through the lavatory can be seen as negative and not victorious. Baako on his part also suffers a mental breakdown at the end of *Fragments*. According to Losambe (1987) “the obsessive preoccupation with his home country’s problems leads him to a physical breakdown” (70). Although Losambe opines that Baako’s mental breakdown is due to his (Baako’s) country’s problems, his disillusionment can also be attributed to the cargo-cult mentality of his family and society. Irrespective of what makes Baako breakdown mentally, his end is negative just as the end of the man. The end of Modin is also negative just like the man and Baako. Losambe (1987) maintains that “One sees in
Aimée the germ of Modin’s final destruction as Mrs. Jefferson represented Modin’s first step towards destruction” (67). At the end of the novel, Modin suffers a negative fate in the form of a tragic death. Although Modin’s death can be attributed to factors such as loneliness and his desire for a revolutionary change in his society, some critics are of the opinion that his rebellion against America’s laid out plan for the African has much to do with it. Sackey (2014) opines that Modin goes through a series of tests because of his rebellion. “This time there is no escape for the rebel for in spite of his better knowledge, he will accept death as love and embrace it with all his soul” (48). Sackey further holds the view that “his meeting with Aimée is prophetic in its tragic inevitability” (81) because although Modin swears not to have any encounter with the whites after his near-death experience with Mr. Jefferson, he still goes ahead to get involved with Aimée. As has already been discussed, it is evident that a constant feature of the protagonists under the study is the fact that they all seem to have negative things happening to them at the end of the novels. It can also be realized that progressively, their fate gets worse from the first novel through to the third. Furthermore, all three protagonists seem to find solace in others when they are confronted with situations that make them feel lonely. The man pours out his feelings to teacher when he is overwhelmed by the unpleasant situation in his home and society at large. Although he (teacher) does next to nothing to help the man during his (the man’s) distressing moments, “I wanted to come and see you’ the man said” (The Beautiful Ones p. 53). The mere fact that the man at least has someone who understands him and shares his opinion on societal issues is consoling. Armah repeats the same in Baako. Although Baako shares a bond of friendship with Naana, Juana and Ocran, he seems to be more at ease with Juana and is able to tell her everything he feels. Modin also confides in Naita. She seems to offer Modin information about the deadly nature of the whites and warns him to disregard any form of love or affection
from them. She does so the first time she encounters Modin. It can therefore be said to be a constant feature that all three protagonists under study have characters they confide in their moments of difficulties and loneliness. According to Lokangak Losambe (1960) “Naita appears as a refuge, a source of wisdom and comfort to Modin” (77). Teacher and Juana can be said to do the same for the man and Baako respectively. Although it has been established as a constant feature that all three protagonists have characters they confide in when they are going through moments of distress and loneliness, Modin’s relationship with Naita can be said to be slightly different. The man listens to teacher and holds his views in high esteem. Baako and Juana have a very close relationship and Baako seems to confide in her more than he does in anyone else. But unlike these protagonists, Modin does not heed to Naita’s advice.

“They just want to mess you. If you’re dumb enough to treat them seriously, that’s just what they’ll do to you”

“have taken them seriously”. I said.

“just don’t come around me with any of your headaches then” she said” (Why Are We? P.125).

It is only Modin who does not listen to Naita even though he himself admits that she is right. This makes their friendship strained to the extent that she leaves without telling him where she is going. “Could your advice then have been better. I would have come to you; I would have asked you again had you not put limitless distance between us” (Why Are We? p.168). Modin’s relationship with Naita is different because none of the protagonist understudy loses contact with the one they confide in. “Walking around the house, she saw only lifeless things, till the idea came to her that she should begin preparing the messed room (Fragments, 276). Juana is with Baako till the end and even goes to the extent of thinking of preparing an unused room for Baako to stay with her after his release from the asylum.
There are other characters apart from the protagonists in the novels under study. This chapter will continue the discussion on characterization by assessing the roles played by other characters in the lives of the protagonists. The analysis will categorize these characters into positive and negative characters based on the roles they play in the lives of the protagonists. It will begin by looking at positive characters who are male. Teacher, Ocran and Solo fall under this category.

Teacher [The Beautiful Ones]

Teacher plays the role of a confidant and companion to the man. He offers solace to the man when he (the man) is overwhelmed by the corruption going on in his society. He can be very sarcastic. When the man tells him of Oyo’s fervent admiration for Koomson because of his wealth and power, he quickly interjects, “careful, man. Big names must not be mentioned naked. His Excellency Joseph Koomson, Minister Plenipotentiary, member of the Presidential commission. Heros socialist labour. Is that the dignitary you mean?” (56). He is a character who serves as the man’s mentor and close friend. A careful study of his character reveals some contradictions. He is supposed to be detached from the corrupt life which is prevalent everywhere in Ghana. But he contradicts himself when he admits to the man that they are all “chichidodos” (a bird that eats maggots but detests excrement). Even though it is obvious that teacher does not like Koomson because of how corrupt he (Koomson) is, he deliberately tries to mention his name with a lot of appellations of a well- deserving minister although he does not really mean them. He sarcastically refers to Oyo as very polite. “I was thinking of your wife. A very polite woman, your wife, he said, and the laugh that followed was dry and far too long.” (55). But the reality of the situation is that he does not appreciate Oyo’s deep attraction to the gleam. He is also very much aware of the fact that Oyo torments the man and also knows that he cannot bear to live with her but sarcastically refers to her as a very polite woman. In spite of all
the measures he puts in place to ensure that he frees himself from the corrupt practices which
prevail in his society, he is unable to completely set himself free.

‘I think you are the freest person I know’, said the man.

Then everyone you know is a slave.

You have escaped the call of the loved ones, as you say.

Yes, but am not free. I have not stopped wanting to meet the loved ones and to
touch them and be touched by them (The Beautiful Ones p. 55).

Although teacher chooses to live in isolation in order not to be corrupted, he still misses his
family as he admits and his strange lifestyle does not insulate him from the normal human
sentiments such as affection and love. “No. I have tried to be free, but I am not free. Perhaps I
will never be” (The Beautiful Ones p. 55). Contrary to what the man thinks of teacher, he
(teacher) makes him aware that he is not as free as the man thinks he is and he might never be
free. This subsequently destroys any hope that the man has ever nurtured that there is a better
way to live. In spite of his sarcastic nature and his inability to help the man in any way, his role
of offering a listening ear to the man in times of his need cannot be overemphasized.

Ocran [Fragments]

In Fragments, the male character who is on the side of Baako is Ocran. He is just like Teacher in
The Beautiful Ones. Our first encounter with him is when Baako goes to see him after being
frustrated by the secretary of the Civil Service Commission when he is looking for a job after his
return from abroad. “No, but truly, Onipa, not many of you come back to see me. And call me
Kofi. No master nonsense. You’re taller than I am now, and the baby face now has a beard”
(Fragments p.116). He makes it very easy for Baako to confide in him. As soon as Baako goes to
see him, he puts him at ease by insisting that he (Baako) does away with all forms of formal
addresses and simply call him Kofi. This makes Baako feel at ease and he is able to express his frustrations and confusions about his thoughts and career. He also shares in Baako’s frustration at the corrupt nature of their society. “I have no idea, Ocran said. I’m antiquated, maybe. But I know definitely that you can’t do anything serious here if you need other people’s help, because nobody is interested in being serious” (Fragments p. 120). He makes Baako see the reality of the society which is the fact that people cannot simply do what they are supposed to do at the right time without being bribed. “That’s what they say when they want a bribe, Ocran muttered, running his hand over his hair and facing the floor. Nothing works in this country. (Fragments p. 121). He enlightens Baako on the fact that he should not expect things to work smoothly as it is expected to be. Things are done differently from the normal way they are supposed to be done.

It isn’t even that things are slow. Nothing works. There are dozens of organizations, supposed to take care of this and that. But if you want anything done, you have to go running all around these stupid organizations themselves (Fragments p. 121).

But for the help of Ocran, Baako’s dream of writing for Ghanavision would have been a mirage. He uses his influence to take Baako to the Principal Secretary and that is how Baako finally gets a job at Ghanavision. He helps Baako till the end of the novel when Baako is taken to the asylum.

Don’t stop thinking Onipa. You have a good mind; don’t be afraid to use it. Stop thinking you’ve done people wrong. Nobody cares anyway. If these people have your talent, they wouldn’t want to be that way. They wouldn’t need to (Fragments p. 273).

Ocran understands Baako so much that he knows that Baako is not mad but he (Baako) is psychologically worried about his inability to satisfy the materialistic desires of his family and society simply because he (Baako) has chosen not to conform to their corrupt standards. He is also very instrumental in offering a listening ear to Baako when it is much needed.
Solo [Why Are We?]

Solo, also plays a key role in Modin’s life. Apart from commenting on events he is also the sight through which the narrative passes to the reader. He is wise because he is the one character in the novel who seems to understand the hidden meaning behind appearances and whose comments on the actions throws more light on our understanding of the novel. “He was not blind. He saw. These notes are not the scribbling of a feeble mind. His soul was not mediocre. Was it then her exterior glow that drew him? What assault. His luster” (Why Are We? P. 207). Solo is seen right from the beginning of the novel trying his best to warn Modin of the impending danger. He tries to understand what can possibly draw Modin to Aimée and uses all means to warn Modin. “It should be easy to tell them you don’t want them, you know. They’re here with all kinds of false hopes. Help them. Disillusion them” (Why Are We? P. 256).

After several failed attempts to dissuade Modin of the futility of the endeavour he wants to embark on, Solo tries to convince Jorge Manuel to tell Modin the realities even though he (Jorge Manuel) does not agree to this and rather becomes furious.

“They’ll tell you to wait another two weeks”

The girl turned and raised her trunk up on one elbow. Her face was red with anger.

“how do you know?”

“I know, “ I said

“ok. So we’ll wait. She returned to her original position.

“After that, another two weeks”

They were both quiet. Then the man asked, unaggressively, just wanting to know:

“how do you know?” (Why Are We? p. 259).
In spite of Modin’s disbelief of all the warnings, Solo does not give up. He persists gently in his bid to dissuade Modin from embarking on the deadly path he has chosen to tread. He does not get discouraged and abandon Modin to his fate but tries all he can to make him (Modin) see things from his point of view though it proves unsuccessful in the end. “Regret overwhelmed me that I had not known him, that I had despaired of trying. For a moment I imagined I could have stopped his destruction some miraculous way, in spite of my own” (Why Are We? P. 268). Solo proves to be a sensitive realist whose revolutionary fervour has been mellowed by experience. He tries in vain to use his failed revolutionary experience to deter Modin from the dangerous revolutionary mission he wants to embark on. He laments “I reached the place of my dream. I found pain, not fulfillment” (Why Are We? P. 114). Even though Slo plays a crucial role in Modin’s life and but for Modin’s obstinate behavior, he (Modin) would have been alive, Solo blames himself for his inability to save Modin from destruction. Teacher, Ocran and Solo are as afore-mentioned, male characters who play vital roles in the lives of the protagonists. It is a constant that these three characters are on the side of their respective protagonists and fully understand the plights of the protagonists in their quest to challenge the corrupt practices in their various societies. Solo’s situation however presents a slight variation in the sense that the man goes to Teacher when he becomes overwhelmed by the unpleasant situation he faces at home. Baako also goes to Ocran when he becomes distressed about the behaviour of the Secretary of the Civil Service Commission and even when he becomes confused with the choice of career when he returns from abroad, he goes to Ocran for advice. The same cannot be said of Solo and Modin. Solo rather pesters Modin with warnings and advice to reconsider his quest for a revolution. Solo’s case is considered a variable because instead of allowing Modin to seek his
advice as it is with the man and Baako, Solo rather chases Modin with advice which Modin rejects.

When it comes to female characters who do positive things in the lives of the protagonists, characters such as Juana, Naana and Naita will be looked at. *The Beautiful Ones*, does not have a single female character who does anything positive to encourage the man in his quest to remain anti-corrupt. These negative characters will be treated in a separate discussion as the study progresses. For the positive characters, we shall turn to Juana and Naana in *Fragments* and Naita in *Why Are we?*

**Juana [Fragments]**

Juana, though not a Ghanaian, is another character who is on the side of the protagonist. She plays a significant role in Baako’s life to help him cope with his disillusionment when he gets overwhelmed by corrupt events in the society.

“What was on your mind?”

“Many things.”

“I supposed so”, she said, but mainly?

“The worst thing was the fear of the return”, he said.

“What was frightening about it?”

“I don’t know if I’d be able to do anything worthwhile” (*Fragments* p.78).

Even though Juana is Baako’s psychiatrist, she understands him beyond the professional level.

He seems to open up to her and confides in her by telling her about things that he cannot talk to anybody about, such as his fears. Apart from the fact that Baako finds comfort in Juana and confides in her, their relationship goes beyond a platonic one.

“You’ve done it very often? She asked
“What?”

“Made love in the sea. You said you had”

“No”, he said. “I was asking you”

“This wasn’t the first time” (Fragments p. 181).

It is only when Baako is with Juana that he seems relaxed and happy. She supports him with everything. No matter how temporary or fleeting the moment is, Juana is able to make Baako forget his worries and enjoy a care-free life. Pallavi Bhardwaj (2015) affirms this view by saying that Juana is “a psychiatrist and Baako’s girlfriend who acts as a moderating influence on the troubled psyche of Baako” (43).

A heaviness came over on her way back home. Inside, she sat a long time trying to think, but her mind remained blank except for a continuing gratitude she was feeling for Ocran’s presence this day and occasionally disturbing traces of the frustration she’d felt before. Walking around the house, she saw only lifeless things till the idea came to her that she could begin preparing the used room. (Fragments p. 276).

From the above, it can be concluded that Juana will let Baako come and live with her when he is discharged from the hospital. Although the nature of Juana’s job might contribute to why she seems to understand Baako, it can also be that she shares similar sentiments with him. This might account for the reason why she is able to stay with Baako throughout his ordeal. Ayuk (1984) reiterates this view by saying that Juana is “the only person who shows some understanding of his obstinate refusal to embrace elitism and affluence” (41). Ayuk holds the view that Juana truly understands Baako and does not make him feel awkward irrespective of how his society and family make him feel about his anti-corruption stance. He further reiterates that “together they witness the rampant corruption and, perhaps worse, the nonchalance with which it is accepted by Brempong and others like him and also Baako’s family” (41). Cecil Abrahams (1977) supports this view by saying:
When Baako destroys all his film scripts to purge himself of Ghana television and the nations immorality, his relatives, who until now had disappointingly endured his failure to enrich them, declare him insane and admit him at a mental asylum. It is left, then, to the Puerto Rican psychiatrist, Juana, who had left the corruption of the West to search for herself in the supposed innocence of Africa, to assist Baako in his recuperative (99).

Naana [Fragments]

Naana represents the pre-colonial Ghanaian values, traditions and ideals. She tries her best and struggles to retain her traditional ideals but ends up waging a lost battle. Instead of the reverence and respect that should be accorded someone of her caliber she rather lives in loneliness among the children and grand-children. “I am a person no more but for them it has too long been an annoying burden. I am old and of no use to anyone… I am such a mouth that continues to eat pepper and taste salt. I am such a month joined to an end that runs with waste, pending others’ love that has long since disappeared” (Fragments p.12). She is aware that her existence is no longer a welcome sight to her own children grandchildren. There seems to be no communication between her and her children. She however takes consolation from the fact that she will soon be joining her ancestors in the next life.

I have become the remnant of something that passed by and was immediately forgotten. The fruits that fell from my own entrails are looking hard for ways to push me into the earth deeper than where my naval was buried and to stamp the ground above me smooth with their hasty soles. And I have forgotten how to speak to them of the shame with which they have filled the last of my days and for the sourness. (Fragments p. 277)

She knows and acknowledges that she has overstayed her welcome and news of her death will be welcomed by her children. She seems prepared to die because she cannot even have a meaningful conversation with them because of how changed they have become. She sees and
understands the world through her traditions and as such sees traditional ceremonies and rituals as very significant and meaningful.

‘But that is not possible’ she said ‘Or have I lost count of my days all over again? Is it a week since your sister came back with the child?’ You have not lost count, Naana. Its five days no, but it’s been decided. This is to be the day! ‘five days’ the old woman whispered in her astonishment. Five days. The child is not yet with us. He is in the keeping of the spirits still and already they are dragging him out into this world for eyes in heads that have eaten flesh to gape at (Fragments p.142).

According to Naana, a child should be named traditionally a week after its birth. She does not simply understand why Efua and Araba should defy this tradition and name the child before it is a week old. So deep-rooted is she in her traditions that she believes that until the eight day, the child is still “in the keeping of the spirits still” (Fragments p.142). According to Abrahams (1977) “Naana’s worldview is reinforced by a layer of references of Akan religious mythology” (77). She holds the view that if these traditions are done right, it has positive effects but if they are neglected, the resultant effects are usually fatal. “The child is one of the uncertain ones. If he stays, he may bring great things”……they themselves say he refused the world several times. And it should have made them think; the way he finally came he was weeks before his time” (Fragments p. 142). She knows that because Efua and Araba have defied tradition and named the child before the traditionally allowed time, the child will not survive. Even before anybody gets to know that the child is dead, she already knows. She tells Baako. “You should have saved the child” (Fragments p. 262) during the naming ceremony when nobody knows that the baby is dead. “My mind can see him, lying in state now” (Fragments p. 262). The outdooring ceremony of the child is an extended metaphor in the sense that it forewarns the impending doom destined for sensitive individuals in the wake of spiritual mutation. It can safely be inferred that Armah wishes to uphold African traditions and manners. Although Efua is Naana’s daughter, she seems
to harbour some fear for her. The mother-daughter relationship which exists between Efua and Araba is nonexistent between her and Efua.

Listen, Baako, I should tell you this. She stopped so suddenly it was only after his mother had knocked and entered that Baako realized his grandmother had felt the approaching steps. And when is mother saw his grandmother in the room she frowned and asked with obvious anger, “what is troubling you Naana? “For a momentthe old woman sat like a person held there by some huge terror and made inarticulate by a deep loathing (Fragments p. 144).

Their relationship is perhaps strained due to the fact that Efua chooses to ignore the traditionally rightful way of doing things whiles Naana upholds these values with her very life. Naana’s blindness can also contribute to her total loss of control over her daughter. This is because as the oldest in the family, she should be able to stamp her authority by insisting that the right things are done. But blindness and old age have merely reduced her to a chorus commenting on events.

Don’t you see? You know the child is only a traveler between the world of the spirits and this one of heavy flesh. This birth can be a good beginning, and he may find his body and this world around it a have where he wants to stay. But he must be protected. Or he will run screaming back, fleeing he horrors prepared for him up here (Fragments p.143).

She knows the implication of Araba allowing her mother to influence her into naming her child earlier but is seen merely commenting on it several times without actually confronting Efua about it. She tries to shift her inability to insist that her daughter does right thing to Baako. “Why did you not stop your mother from this foolishness” (Fragments p. 143). As if being a grandmother to Efua and Araba does not give her any right over them. And when Baako tells her that he could not, she rather finds it difficult to understand him. “Now it is my turn to understand. You, the uncle, you could not” (Fragments p. 143), as though being an uncle gives Baako more power over his mother and sister than being a mother and grandmother affords her. She is frustrated by her helplessness and vents her frustration on Baako. “The world has changed… the old woman murmured, then raised her voice. Always and everywhere the same.
words that bring sickness to the stomach of the listener. The world has changed… and they think it is enough to explain every new crime, to push a person to accept all” (*Fragments* p. 144). She believes in her traditions very much and believes that until the right thing is done at the traditionally appointed time, things will go wrong. According to Derek Wright (1985), “Naana’s traditional beliefs imply progress or at least a salvaging, holding action” (66). She sees no reason why the old and traditional way of doing things must be changed. There are few occasions where she is seen disagreeing with Baako over issues concerning traditions. For example she disagrees with Baako’s excuse that he is only an uncle to Araba’s child and cannot prevent the child from being named earlier than the traditionally approved date. Apart from their differences in opinion on issues of tradition, she can be said to be very fond of Baako and does the little she can to support him. Right from the beginning of the novel even before we encounter Baako, she is seen fighting on his behalf. “Nananom, drink to your thirst and go with the young one. Protect him well and bring him back to us, to you” (*Fragments* p. 21). When Foli pours a few drops of wine as libation to the ancestors, she feels that the wine is inadequate and so to ensure that Baako receives the full protection of the ancestors, she displeases Foli by pouring a considerable amount which she thinks will satisfy the ancestors so that they will ensure the safe return of Baako. “Did they pour a libation before starting the drinking? I heard nothing, neither the silence nor the words” (*Fragments* p. 262). So insistent is she on the right tradition at the right time that she does not even believe when Baako tells her that libation was not poured before the naming ceremony was started. “Don’t play with me, Baako. You make my heart jump” (*Fragments* p. 262). She does not understand why a ceremony as important as naming a new born can be done successfully without pouring libation. She believes in these traditional rituals that she feels they can only yield their desired results if they are done accurately. She has such deep-rooted
attachment to Baako to the extent that even in her blind state, she is sensitive enough towards him to know when there is something worrying Baako.

I have such strong feelings here for you”, Naana said, placing a hand just below her breast, it’s a good thing I was sent so far ahead of you. Have I come in your age, some nameless things might have happened in this family”. “Listen to him laugh. You think your grandmother is crazy this morning. You’re also so young. You’re among those who think a woman’s love gift dies with age, it doesn’t die. It makes a strong spirit, though to make it more again” (Fragments p. 207).

She affirms her deep-rooted love for Baako and states that her age rather makes her love him deeper instead of making the love die. There is such a bond between them that Naana is only seen talking freely only when she is with Baako. Their relation is better than the relationship between mother (Naana) and daughter (Efua). In spite of the fact that she is unable to help Baako in solving any of his problems, she has a strong conviction that Baako will be well protected by the gods even in her absence. Sackey (2014) affirms this view by saying that “Naana after years of humiliation and emptiness finally joins her ancestors in the confidence that her grandson, Baako has “strong spirits looking after him” and “something hidden that will reveal itself with time” (103). Murphy (2008) agrees with Sackey by reiterating that, “Naana is the only one able, then, to see what Baako has seen. And she is the only one who has hope for Baako, that he can continue to fight this corruption born of the slave trade” (68). Murphy is of the view that Baako’s society’s total lack of respect for their customs and traditions is the resultant effect of the slave trade. When Baako resigns from Ghanavision, she seems to be the first to notice that something has gone wrong with Baako. Nana seems to know Baako so well that she can tell when he is worried over something. Even though Baako finds some difficulty in explaining to her what he is going through probably due to the generational gap between them, she seems to offer some solace and support to Baako in her own small way.
“Why are so quiet?” Naana asked. “It’s finished” he said.
“You didn’t tell me what it was”
“I was trying to say things in my mind, to let other people see”.
“That sounds like a priest”. He laughed weakly and rose up to go. “Don’t go”, Naana said.
“Sit with me. You’re sad, aren’t you? I can’t understand why you always refuse to tell me what is happening”. He sat by her, and saw the strain in her face disappear. “Will you talk to me? Not now if you don’t want to, but another day?”
“I will, Naana, but not today” (Fragments p. 222).

Naita [Why Are We?]
Although Naita can be considered as one of the minor characters, she plays a vital role in Modin’s life when he arrives in America. Apart from the role she plays in Modin’s life, nothing is said about her. Readers first encounter her as a front desk executive at the African Education Committee. She can be described to be warm and friendly because even though Modin does not know her, she makes him feel at home with her on their first encounter. She is first seen when Modin goes to the African Education Committee building to meet Mr. Blanchard.

The receptionist smiled as if someone she knew and liked and had been waiting for had come in. I looked behind me. There was no one.
“You’re the student”, she said. Mr. Blanchard will be in soon. His office is down here, to the right and then left. The last one. (Why Are We? p.109

Even though it is their first encounter, once she knows Modin is from Africa she does not hesitate to throw hints of warnings to him to be wary of the whites. “So the crooks are out to take you over in a big way er?” (Why Are We? p.109). She refers to the whites as crooks which is a subtle way of telling Modin not to trust them.

“Don’t let them crooks mess with you, er?”
“What crooks?” She laughed again. “you’ll find out soon enough.
“You’re not one of them dumb ones they bring on their little tours. You’ll see.

“You talk strangely, “I said. At the same time I wished she’d continue talking…” (Why Are We? p.110).

Because Modin is new in America, Naita knows he is ignorant of the schemes and manipulations of the whites. In spite of this, she still goes ahead to warn him not to trust them.

“How come you get so upset?” Naita asked me

“What do you expect? They want you feeling all special on account of being with them. Trouble with you is you take crackers seriously there’s no sense in that”

“What are crackers?”

“They”

“Not with you. They just want to mess you. If you’re dumb enough to treat them seriously, that’s just what they’ll do to you”

“I have to take them seriously”, I said.

“Just don’t come around me with any of your headaches, then” she said (Why Are We? p.125).

Although Naita finds it difficult to convince Modin to see the whites for who they truly are, she is persistent in her efforts. Losangaka Losambe (1987) sums up Naita’s role in Modin’s life by saying that “Naita appears as a refuge, a source of wisdom and comfort to Modin” (210). She tries her possible best to dissuade Modin and even threatens not to be there for him when he becomes traumatized by their actions. Throughout the novel, the role we see Naita play is being there to warn Modin not to trust the whites.

Looking at Juana, Naana and Naita together as characters who are on the side of the protagonists, it is obvious that they all play important roles in the lives of their respective protagonists, they all offer solace to the protagonists in their turbulent times. Naana is obviously fond of Baako, as Kofi Owusu (1988) rightly puts it “Baako shares close emotional affinities with the old woman, Naana” (361). She is normally seen sharing a few moments with him whenever she has the
opportunity. Juana also shares most of her free time with Baako travelling with him to various parts of the country. There is a strong bond and affection between Baako and Juana.

She took his hand and held it, caressing it; a fullness of affection she had been unable to let in words broke through and took complete possession of her. He seemed to have felt it too, and moved closer against her. The resistance that had been so strong in his words was gone, and his body next to hers felt totally willing. He was crying again. (Fragments p. 271).

Naita on her part also shares some good times with Modin. Another similarity with Juana, Naana and Naita is fact that they are all unable to prevent their protagonists from going through their ordeals at the end of the respective novels. Nana is unable to use her position as the oldest in the family to stop her daughter (Efua) from taking Baako to the asylum even though she knows for a fact that there is absolutely nothing wrong with Baako. Although Juana is a psychiatrist and is aware that Baako is not insane, she is also unable to prevent his detention at the asylum. Baako himself tells Juana that he has been brought to the asylum because of his refusal to satisfy the materialistic expectations of his family. Juana admits that there is no point in Baako arguing with the hospital officials that he is not insane without even trying to convince them that there is nothing wrong with Baako. In spite of the fact that Naita is the first to warn Modin to be weary of the Whites when he (Modin) first arrives in the States, she is nowhere to be found when Modin goes through moments of difficulty, not to talk of helping him overcome those trying times.

A few differences can also be observed in how these characters relate with their protagonists. Juana and Naana are able to stay with Baako till the end of the novel. Juana and Naana are around Baako when he is detained at the asylum. But the same cannot be said of Naita. She easily gives up on Modin when he refuses to heed to her advice to stop any association with the Whites. She abandons him to his fate without telling him where she is leaving for.
In as much as there are male and female characters who are seen doing their best to support the protagonists in the quest to fight against the rot in their respective societies, there are also characters who make life unbearable for these protagonists. Just as has been discussed earlier, these characters will also be grouped and discussed according to their gender. Koomson, Brempong and Mr. Jefferson, will be discussed as the male characters who make life unbearable for the protagonists. In the case of female characters who make life unbearable for the protagonists Oyo, Efua and Aimée will be the characters for discussion under this category. The discussion will begin with male characters.

Koomson [The Beautiful Ones]

Koomson is portrayed by Armah as the corrupt politician and because the central theme of the novel is on how politicians especially after independence run the country down with their greed, he (Koomson) is given all the negative attributes which best describes anyone as corrupt as he is. He is first described as a suit. “The sharp voice inside the car makes one more sound of impatience, then subsides, waiting. The suit stops in front of the seller, and the voice that comes out of it is playful, patronizing” (The Beautiful Ones p. 37). It is later on that Koomson is referred to by his name but when readers first meet him, he is merely described by what he is wearing as if he has no identity. “The suited man looks around him… a pale cuff flashes and the suited man looks at his watch” (The Beautiful Ones p. 38). He is also portrayed as someone who is not serious-minded. This is exemplified when he goes to visit the man and gulps down the beer he is given clumsily. “He raised his mug dramatically and took a gulp, then exclaimed, imitating the man on the boards, Ah Star. When the mug came down it was empty and a small stream of
beer was running down the party mean’s lower jaw” (The Beautiful Ones p. 132). As if that is not enough he goes ahead to tell a story about a lecture he attended. Through his narration, Armah highlights the ignorance of many African politicians who know next to nothing about the economic growth of their respective countries. According to Ayuk (1984) “he does not hide his corruption or lack of dedication to public welfare, but with a kind of amoral innocence, ridicules those that put ideals before their own comfort” (36). But in spite of the level of ignorance displayed by Koomson, he is still admired and respected by his society simply because he is rich. Ayuk (1984) shares this view by reiterating that “in the public view, Koomson is the real hero of Takoradi; he has a new Mercedes, a well-stocked liquor cabinet, a large house… values are essentially material. Accordingly, a hero is someone who amasses a substantial lot of wealth and the means by which he has obtained them are irrelevant” (36). Koomson is a character who is interested in the display of affluence irrespective of the fact that he knows it is not a secret that his wealth is ill-acquired. “Koomson walked over to the big radio in the corner and turned the receiver on. A voice like thunder shook the air and Koomson slowly turned down the volume. There is nothing to beat a German set; he said” (The Beautiful Ones p.147). According to Ayuk (1984), “Koomson’s wealth has been produced by the illegal siphoning of public funds but in Takoradi this is no reason for shame” (39) When the man and Oyo go to visit koomson, he does all he can to display his ill-acquired wealth to the admiration of Oyo and the disdain of the man. Instead of simply offering them something to drink, he gives a tall list of what he has. “Oh you must choose, said Koomson. There is white horse, you know. Black and white, Seagram’s, Culbey’s Dry” (The Beautiful Ones p. 147). But for the man’s interruption that “anything will do, his voice deliberately dull” (The Beautiful Ones p. 147), Koomson would have probably continued mentioning the names of numerous drinks just to display his wealth and show off to
the man and his wife. This pleasure that Koomason derives from showing off his ill-acquired possessions is affirmed by Ayuk (1984) when he says “in a rotten way, Koomson has found much sweetness in his life. He wants to be as close to the White man as possible. He lives in a big house with a large garden” (37). He gets severely punished after the coup because everything that made people respect and admire him as a man of importance is taken away from him and he is simply reduced to nothing. Contrary to the initial appellations used to describe him “my big Lord… my own lord, my master” (The Beautyful Ones p. 37) before the coup, he is now described as a nobody after the coup

‘Or … Alomo, is it you?’ the voice came again ‘Alomo!’ after that only the silence of a baffled person inside. The man knocked again, trying to make the wood sound gently and reassuring. But the silence inside became absolute. The man bent down and said softly through the keyhole, ‘Brother, come. It is nobody, just the minister (The Beautiful Ones p. 173).

For a man as powerful as Koomson to be described as nobody is an indication to the fact that events are really not going in his favour. “the individual man of power, now shivering his head filled with the fear of the vengeance of those people he had wronged” (The Beautyful Ones p. 162). Amala, (2013), affirms to this view that “the tables have really turned and the influential Koomason’s degeneration is so terrible to the extent that even his way of walking is affected”. (36). Amala further compares how before the coup “The man turns and walks confidently back to the car” (36), this is in sharp contrast to his physical motion after the coup. Readers are told that he was “walking stiffly” (The Beautiful Ones p. 170). At this critical moment, Koomson seems to be losing his mind because he “walked like a man without a will of his own” (The Beautiful Ones p. 166) and “he is completely doomed” (The Beautiful Ones p. 175). Perhaps Armah deflates Koomson to the lowest simply to emphasize the fact that the evil that men do lives after them. “The man remembered the last visit and wondered at the great contrast with the
super confidence of the days gone by” (*The Beautyful Ones* p. 162). There is indeed a great difference between the Koomson who visited the man and the Koomson the man is seeing now. In spite of the fact that Koomson is portrayed in a negative light to elaborate on the theme of corruption, he can be said to be down to earth. “At last koomson found words. It doesn’t matter after all beer is beer. He raised his mug dramatically and took a gulp, then exclaimed. Imitating the man on the billboard, Ah Star!” (*The Beautyful Ones* p. 132). When he realizes that his wife is making Oyo feel uncomfortable with her insistence that she prefers foreign drinks to the local beer, he quickly jumps to Oyo’s rescue by accepting to drink it wholeheartedly and this act even compels Estella to change her initial stance and join them on drinking it. Although Koomson does not actually do anything to force the man to change his anti-corrupt stance, his ill-acquired wealth makes it possible for Oyo to assume that the man can equally use his position to acquire wealth as well. This compels Oyo to put a lot of pressure on the man thereby making life unbearable for him. It is also due to Koomson’s ill-acquired wealth that his mother-in-law despises the man so passionately.

**Brempong [Fragments]**

Just like Koomson in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Brempong in *Fragments* is another character who can be said to be against his protagonist, Baako though he does so in an indirect manner. He first encounters Baako at the airport on their return to Ghana, He heightens Baako’s anxiety and fear of returning home by making Baako feel that he has done the wrong thing by returning home immediately after his studies. “He leaned back completely and his voice relaxed to a quiet sound just above a whisper; 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” (Fragments p. 71). He states categorically that anybody who comes back home empty handed is a fool, as if Baako’s plan of quickly returning home to help his country with his acquired knowledge is not an ideal reason why he should return empty-handed right after his studies. He contributes greatly to Baako’s restlessness of returning by speaking of the corrupt nature of those in positions of power and authority as if there is nothing wrong with it.

“Mistake, Brempong said with an expression between distaste and exasperated concern

“it’s a bad mistake you’ve made. You’ve put yourself in a bad position …………

Baako was quiet for several moments, trying to get an understanding of what the other had said, but in the end, failing to get any real grasp, he let them slide away into the even sound of the plane’s flight (Fragments p. 74).

Instead of encouraging Baako that he (Baako) has taken a bold step of returning to help his country, Brempong rather becomes exasperated with Baako’s inability to understand how the corrupt system rather works, “Well, these things are necessary. You have to know people. Big people, not useless people. Top officials who can go anywhere and say: do this, do that for my boy!” (Fragments p. 73). He rather makes corruption look normal. He is one of the characters through whom the traits of greed, self interest and narrow-mindedness manifest. Brempong goes further to make Baako aware that he (Baako) does not resemble a been-to.

“I wasn’t sure either. That you were a fellow Ghanaian. You look different somehow”

“I never thought I looked so different”’”I don’t mean facially. But, you know, how you’re dressed, how you walk, you don’t give the impression that you know you’re a been-to. When a Ghanaian has had a chance to go abroad and is returning home, it’s clear from a distance he’s a been-to coming back (Fragments p. 74-75).
After Baako’s conversation with Brempong he (Baako) starts to feel lonely. Brempong indirectly introduces Baako to the materialistic expectations of his society. This is the way Baako feels after he encounters any corrupt situation even when he parts ways with Brempong. “He had not been able to perceive anything without having it deepen that unsettling feeling that was not only one of loneliness, but a much more fearful emotion as if there never was going to be any way out of his …isolation, a feeling that waiting would only heighten” (Fragments p. 76). The behavior of a typical ‘been-to’ African is well highlighted in Brempong as he proudly talks about the items he has been able to purchase and is returning home with. “The nicest things I bought will have to get home by sea. I’ve insured everything, though but still. You know, for my mother I bought a complete freezer” (Fragments p. 82). Cecil Abrahams (1977) confirms this view by describing Brempong as a “caricature of Western decadence” (356). Losangaka Losambe (1987) opines that Brempong “worships Whites with perverse fanatism” (209). Brempong’s conversation leaves Baako’s “with a feeling of anxiety that would not go away. Although he tries to relax, staying in his (seat) and looking out into the darkness below” (Fragments p. 83). Brempong’s attitude of acting like a white man also seems to adversely affect Baako. “These escorts are idiot. You should have told him u were meeting a white man… Eeeeei! Our white man, me saw you wave! We saw you! This big man has come again. Oh they have made you a white man complete!” (Fragments p. 85-86). After Baako witnesses the drama, pomp and pageantry to welcome Brempong home from abroad, “he begins feeling a study tension in his groin” (Fragments p. 87) before he even goes to meet his family. When Baako is finally taken to the asylum, Brempong’s cargo mentality continues to haunt him as it plays a role in his disillusionment “I have to be. I wouldn’t be here if I’d known that. That wouldn’t be a crime” (Fragments p. 231). Baako continues to blame himself for not being able to satisfy the
materialistic demands of his family as Brempong is able to. Although Brempong can easily be seen as one of the minor characters his influence in Baako’s final disillusionment cannot be overlooked.

_Mr. Jefferson [Why Are We So Blest?]_

Although Professor Henry Jefferson is described as an Africanist, he is one of the whites who take undue advantage of Africans and exploit them to the advantage of the white race. He does all he possibly can to convince Modin that accepting the offer of Mr. Oppenhardt is the best thing that can happen to him. Even when Modin comes to the realization that he and the other Africans are merely being exploited and turned against their own people, Professor Jefferson still tries to convince him to think otherwise.

Professor Jefferson called me. The man is strange. He is absolutely certain I am going to change my mind. I have told him I thought before I made up my mind, but he thinks it is only a matter of time before I realize I have made a mistake. He says I have done a very destructive thing, not only to myself, but to Mr. Oppenhardt. That is strange to me. When we arrived Professor Jefferson repeatedly told me I have done a terrible thing. “Mr. Oppenhardt will accept an apology” he said. “He is a big hearted, a very big man” (Why Are We? p. 129).

His attempts to convince Modin to apologize and accept the offer of Mr. Oppenhardt fails in spite of his persistence. He almost kills Modin when he catches him having an affair with his wife. “Mrs Jefferson says her husband kept stabbing me till the other dancers came and pulled him away ……. she tells me about her husband’s anger, his despair, his wanting death first for himself, then for her, finally for my unknown self” (Why Are We p. 156-157). The above is indicative of the fact that even before professor Jefferson catches Modin and his wife having an affair, he has already harboured intentions of killing someone. So catching Modin having an affair with his wife only provides an outlet for him to bring his evil intents to reality.
An assessment of the roles played by Koomson, Brempong and Mr. Jefferson reveals that their actions do not help the various protagonists. This is a similar trait with all of them. Koomson and Brempong’s actions are however indirect because they do not try to convince their protagonists to change their stance against the societal norm. But Mr. Jefferson tries to convince Modin to change his stance by encouraging him to apologize to Mr. Oppenhardt and to accept the scholarship. He again gets physical with Modin by stabbing him several times almost to death. These actions perpetuated by Mr. Jefferson on Modin is a variation because neither Koomson nor Brempong does anything of such magnitude to their protagonist.

Just as there are male characters who make life unbearable for the protagonists in the discussion above, there are female characters that also oppose the “anti-social” behaviours or the protagonists. The study will look at the roles played by Oyo, Efua and Aimée.

**Oyo [The Beautiful Ones]**

Our first encounter with Oyo reveals a dissatisfied and unhappy wife. She feels she deserves better in life and does not understand why the man won’t simply use his position to make life luxurious for the family.

The man walks into the hall, meeting the eyes of his waiting wife. These eyes are flat, the eyes of a person who has come to a decision not to say anything; eyes totally accepting and unquestioning in the way only a thing from which nothing is ever expected can be accepted and not questioned. And it is true that because these eyes are there, the air is filled with accusation, but for even that the man feels a certain tired gratitude; he is thankful there are no words to lace the tension of the silence (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 41).

It is obvious from the above that the number of times that Oyo has either argued with or urged the man to act corruptly in their favour is numerous. She has even learned how to use her eyes to
accuse the man without having to say anything. She can be described as a very dynamic woman in the sense that throughout the best part of the novel, she is seen harassing her husband and constantly nagging him simply because the man refuses to use his position to their advantage. But after the coup, she quickly turns around and praises her husband for not partaking in corruption.

He went back into the hall and stood quietly beside Oyo. She held his hand in a tight grasp then in a voice that sounded as if she were stifling, she whispered, ‘I am glad you never became like him’. In Oyo’s eyes there was now real gratitude. Perhaps for the first time in their marriage life the man could believe that she was glad to have him he way he was (The Beautyful Ones p.165).

The man who is a “chichidodo” suddenly becomes a hero. Most of her encounters with her husband are unpleasant and it looks as if the man can hardly have any meaningful conversation with her without her referring to his anti-corrupt behaviour. “And like an onward Christian soldier you refused?” (The Beautyful Ones p. 43). When the man tries to reduce the tension in the house by trying to recount to her the events of his day, she flares up and makes the conversation unpleasant for the man “Ah, you know, the chichidodo is a bird. The chichidodo hates excrement with all its soul. But the chichidodo only feeds on maggots and you know, the maggots grow best inside the lavatory. This is the chichidodo” (The Beautyful Ones p. 45). She can be described to be unsupportive because irrespective of the fact that she does not agree with her husband’s moral stance against corruption because of her personal interest, it is her duty to stand by him. But she is rather seen making life unbearable and uncomfortable for him at home. To the extent that there are times when the man finds it difficult to come home after work because of her. She does not make secret of the fact that he is nothing but a disappointment to her. She can also be described as being very materialistic to the extent that she is sometimes uncaring towards the man.
And in his restlessness he rose and went quietly through the door and his sat there not even staring after him, not even asking where he was going or when he would come back in the night, or even whether he wanted to return at all to his home. (*The Beautiful Ones* p.47).

She is always measuring the man against Koomsom and goes further to say that Estella “has married well” (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 42). She is a constant source of unhappiness to the man.

“Sometime ago I could see it like that; the man said. But these days I say to myself that that is only childish. I asked to get some strength for another day when I could see it like that.

“What has happen to change your ways of seeing things?”

“Oyo”

“Why, is she expecting another baby?’

“That is not. That’s not it all’

“So what else did she do?’

“She told me about her way of looking at these things. From that day even the strength I used to call up to support myself has vanished”. (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 58)

Her reaction to the man’s decision has such negative influence on him to the extent that the zeal with which he fights corruption completely disappears. She succeeds in making the pressure on the man unbearable. She has no sympathy for her husband’s honesty but rather despises him for it. Oyo is someone who embraces the western culture and see’s everything foreign as the best. This can account for the reason why she tries to stretch her hair before Koomson and his wife’s visit. “Oyo put the comb back among the coals, then lifted up her head and said: of course it is painful. I’m just trying to stretch her hair before Koomson and his wife’s visit. Oyo put the comb back among the coals, then lifted up her head and said: of course it is painful. I’m just trying to stretch it out a bit now, to make it presentable” (*The Beautiful Ones* p.129) and even goes further to ask for high quality drinks to offer her guests (Koomson and his wife) even when she knows that the financial situation in her home is not the best. Although Oyo can easily be described as
being a materialistic, unsupportive and a nagging wife, it is evident that these negative traits are strongly influenced by the events in her life. She is subjected to abject poverty whiles her fellow women like Estella lives in wealth and luxury. She can be said to be a dutiful wife and this is demonstrated in how in spite of their level of poverty, she always manages to feed the children and does not make them go hungry even though she can use poverty as an excuse to say that food is insufficient for the children. She for examples feeds them before asking the man to take them to a mother’s place. She also makes sure that there is always food for the man when he returns from work. “The table has food on it. The man moves forward and sits at it” (The Beautiful Ones p. 41). Irrespective of the fact that Oyo is always seen complaining about their level of poverty, she does her best to always feed the entire family. “The man came home from work tired but not unhappy. Oyo had given him a supper of fish and kenkey, and with a good appetite he began to eat” (The Beautiful Ones p. 53). Oyo can therefore be said to be a dutiful wife and mother even through her strong motive of wealth acquisition by all means makes her impulsive and irrational sometimes. There is no single instance where readers find her doing or saying anything to support her husband in his quest to be anti-corrupt. And because she lives with the man, her unsupportive behaviour greatly affects the man adversely.

**Efua [Fragments]**

As with Oyo in The Beautiful Ones, Efua a character in Fragments, plays as influential role in the life of the protagonist, Baako. She is a character through whom the traits of greed, self-interest and narrow mindedness are typically exemplified. Through her, Armah articulates in closer form what a mother expects from her son who returns from abroad in the Ghanaian
society. Our first encounter with her is at the beach where she first meets Juana. During their conversation, she speaks of a son who has gone away. “Oh the woman touched her belly gently: he went away to study. He will come back a man. A big man” (*Fragments* p. 56). Before Baako’s return from his journey overseas, Efua states clearly that he will come back a big man although she admits that he went to America to study. When Baako goes to see her at the school where she teaches when he arrives in Ghana, she feels excited to see him after his long absence. But just some few minutes afterwards her long-awaited materialistic expectations starts showing up.

“When is yours coming Baako?
“What?” he asked surprised.

“When yours, your car, so that my old bones can rest” (*Fragments* p.107).

So materialistic is Efua to the extent that she will not miss any opportunity to take advantage of any available opportunity to make money. Even though she knows for a fact that Baako only went abroad to study, she still does not limit her materialistic expectations of him. Another instance where her greed is displayed is when contrary to the traditional norms, she names Arbana’s baby before the traditionally approved time damning all the consequences. Even when the baby dies, she still finds another way of making money out of that incidence. Ayuk (1984) reaffirms this stance by saying “human life nothing in this society of misplaced loyalty and status and moneycounts more than the soul” (41). She does not hide her high expectations of Baako even when she is aware of the fact that Baako returned from America just after his studies and did not get any opportunity to work there. Almost all the encounters between Baako and his mother are unpleasant experiences to Baako. Efua is always seen exerting pressure on Baako to ensure his compliance to their societal norms no matter how much Baako refuses.
“Anyway”, she said, “you know you are the MC today”.

“Yes. What do I have to do?”

“I am not the one who has been abroad to a university”, his mother said, smiling full into his face.

“What I went to learn is different” he said.

“Well, there won’t be too much to do. I wish you had brought a tux, or at least a suit though. It would have been so fine”.

“I’m not an ape”

“What a strange thing to say!” his mother said.

“Why else would I wear tuxes or suites in thus warm country except to play monkey to the white man?”

“But for a special ceremony like this…”

“I’m going to wear clothes that won’t choke me”

“Oh Baako”, his mother said, with real hurt in her voice, “I was only thinking of the best. Baako, what happened to you” (Fragments p.145).

A large percentage of the disillusionment that Baako feels stems from the materialistic expectations of his family, and his mother, Efua, is a major contributing factor to this. His mother expects him to conform to a certain societal standard which Baako finds rather absurd. Efua sees nothing wrong with her demands and feels that Baako is rather the odd one. “Oh Baako, his mother said, with real hurt in her voice, “I was only thinking of the best. Baako, what happened to you.” (Fragments p.145). Her disappointment in Baako’s non-conformist attitude is so deep-rooted that in order to let Baako see how much harm he has caused with his anti-corrupt attitude, she takes him to her building which she hopes Baako will return from America to complete.

These stones and the sand, they are mine. I started all this thinking I was building something you wouldn’t come and find too small. I was hoping you will would come to me, take joy in the thing I had begun but will never end, and finish it. (Fragments p. 256).
She has Baako’s life planned out in such a way that anything contrary to her expectations seems to be abnormal. It is not surprising therefore that when Baako resigns from his work at Ghanavision, she becomes completely shocked and mistakes Baako’s disillusionment for mental illness, and orchestrates his admission at an asylum. She is the main obstacle and the greatest problem Baako has in maintaining his values.

Aimée [Why Are We?]

The discussion of female characters who are against the protagonist continues with Aimée in Why Are We?.

In the Bareau, she moved as if control were something alien to her nature and her behaviour, her words and gestures as she talked. All gave a strong impression of a destructive wilderness of lack of self control” (Why Are We? p. 62).

The above is Solo’s first impression of Aimée as he meets her and Modin. She seems to carry this impression of destruction and lack of self control and even goes ahead to make it practical as the novel progresses till the end where she drives Modin to his untimely death.

“I turned to go. There was a pair of black underpants at the foot of the bed. I threw them to Aimée.

“Keep your pants on”

“They aren’t mine”. She said

“What do you mean?”

“They’re Carol’s. She took them off. Don’t you remember?

“She wanted you, not just anybody” (Why Are We? P. 85).

For someone who claims to be in love with Modin, she finds absolutely nothing wrong with allowing her friends to sleep with Modin. Aimée exploits Modin sexually and even allows her friends to do same to him. It is the desire to exploit Modin sexually that drives Aimée to follow
Modin on his revolutionary mission. It has been established that Oyo, Efua and Aimée are female characters who stand in the way of the protagonists against the stance they (the protagonists) have taken. Although this is a similarity with all the three characters discussed, Aimée’s situation presents a slight variation. This is because both Oyo and Efua are related to their protagonists but Aimée is not related to Modin. In fact she is white and he is black. Another constant is that the actions of these characters adversely affect the protagonists, Aimée’s actions still remains different from the actions of Oyo and Efua because it is only through Aimée’s actions that the protagonist dies.

“Modin started bleeding… I reached him and without thinking of what I was doing I kissed him. His blood filled my mouth. I swallowed it… I asked him.

“Do you love me?”

He didn’t answer me

“Say you love me, Modin please” he wouldn’t say a word to me. They untied him and didn’t do anything to him” (Why Are We? p. 288).

Aimée is so selfish and destructive that she wouldn’t permit anything to destroy the purpose for which she follows Modin. Lokangaka Losambe (1987) supports this view with the assertion that “one sees in Aimée the gem of Modin’s final destruction” (211). Even at the point of Modin’s death, she feels no compassion for him but rater asks him to help her achieve her unfulfilled sexual desires. She exploits Modin to her advantage even at the point of his death.
CHAPTER THREE

THEMES
This chapter will focus on an in-depth analysis of the themes that Armah explores in the novels under study. Armah’s fame as a writer stems from the explicit and vivid approach he uses to explore his themes. The constants in Armah’s themes are corruption, greed, colonial mentality manifesting in the cargo cult, and exploitation. But they become variables in their various manifestations in the different novels.

Corruption

Corruption is a central theme in most of Armah’s works and this theme will be discussed in all the novels under study. The Beautiful Ones is very popular for the graphic manner in which Armah treats the theme of corruption. According to Alexander Dakubo Kakraba (2001) “the book is deliberately crafted to sound vulgar for a purpose.” In Kakraba’s view, “it is used as an electroconvulsive tool to deliberately shock the reader to draw attention to the decadence and corrupt behaviours Armah exposes and condemns in the novel” (306). Armah’s use of strong and vulgar language in his first novel can be said to be metaphorical. This might be because corruption is a negative and rotten practice which halts the development and progress of any country. He is of the view that corruption is indeed filthy and this filth must be described in detail to wake readers up to the harsh realities of its destructive nature. For example in describing how politicians like Koomson waste government funds in luxurious places, he writes: “he came here often, but only like a white man or a lawyer now. Swinging time at the Atlantic-Caprice. Young juicy vaginas waiting for him in hired places paid for by government” (The Beautiful
Instead of simply writing that young girls are paid to stay with politicians at expensive and luxurious hotels, such as the Atlantic-Caprice, Armah rather resorts to describing these girls as “young juicy vaginas.” Armah’s choice of words will no doubt capture the reader’s attention since it is quite uncharacteristic for people to blatantly make reference to the private parts without putting it figuratively. Furthermore in talking about the corrupt nature of politicians, he writes, “how were these leaders to know that while they were climbing up to shit in their people’s faces, their people had seen their arseholes and drawn away in disgust laughter?” (Beautifull Ones p. 82). Instead of the ordinary everyday language to describe the corrupt nature of Ghanaian politicians after independence, vulgar language such as “juicy vaginas, shit, arseholes” is rather used. In another instance when describing the wood of the lavatory downstairs, Armah writes:

Apart from the wood itself there were, of course, people themselves, just so many hands and fingers bringing help to the wood in its course towards putrefaction. Left-hand fingers in their careless journey from hasty anus sliding all the way up the banister as the owners made the trip from the lavatory downstairs to the office above. Right-handed fingers still dripping with the after-piss and the stale sweat from fat crotches. The calloused palms of messengers after they had blown their clogged noses reaching for a convenient place to leave the well-rubbed moisture. (Beautifull Ones P. 12-13).

It is evident here that the detailed description of the filth of the wood from the lavatory downstairs is symbolic, in the sense that Armah is using this to highlight the corruption that goes on in the office. It therefore comes as no surprise when in spite of the man’s refusal to accept the bribe from the timber merchant in order to help him transport his timber; his colleague simply takes it and helps him with whatever he needs. It is evident that anytime Armah describes a corrupt incident in the novel, he goes ahead to give vivid descriptions of filth to drum home the point of corruption he is about to make or has already made. For instance right after describing
how some of the passengers want to cheat the conductor of the bus fare, Armah describes a lot of filth the entire duration of the journey.

Dust and perpetual mud covered over the crushed tomatoes and rotten vegetables, eddies from the open end of some fish head on a dump of refuse and curled up scales with the hardening corpses of the afternoon flies around...past the big public lavatory the stench claws inward to the throat. Sometimes it is understandable that people spit so much, when all the decaying things push inward and mix all the body’s juices with the taste of rot...hot smell of caked shit split by afternoon’s baking sun, now touched by still evaporating dew”.

(The Beautiful Ones p. 40).

All this vivid description is given right after the corrupt attitude of the passengers is detected by the conductor. One can therefore infer that this long description of detailed rot and filth is only meant to give attention to the corrupt behaviour of the passengers. Stewart Crehan (1995) believes that these vivid descriptions are deliberately used by Armah to uncover the decay that society usually covers with shiny surfaces. Simone Simonse (1982) also throws more light on this paradox by saying that “money puts a heavy shine over the city but if you look closer the shine is merely a veil that covers the process of decay” (474). For instance, the refuse bins which has the bold and reassuring inscriptions “Keep Your Country Clean By Keeping Your City Clean” (The Beautiful Ones p. 65), is piled with a lot of rubbish around them. There is an obvious contradiction between what is written on the bins and the sight one is confronted with. Simone (1982) sums up this contradiction by saying that “shine and freshness form a varnish that hardly conceals the decay underneath” (474). It comes as no surprise when after this long narration describing filth and rot, the man’s wife endorses corruption by harshly criticizing him for not taking the bribe offered by Amankwa the timber merchant. She becomes irritated at the man’s non-conformist attitude. “Why are you trying to cut yourself apart from what goes for all of us? ... But you will be eating it with us when it is ripe?” (Beautiful Ones p. 42). Commenting on the unpleasant situation the man finds himself in his family because of his anti-corrupt stance,
Richard Priebe (1976) asserts that “the protagonist’s wife and extended family, especially the mother-in-law, urge the man to disregard standard of decency and honesty and jump on the merry-go-round fuelled by corruption and the lust for power” (41). It is commonplace for readers to feel disgusted at the detailed description of rot and filth but it is a deliberate approach Armah uses to make readers despise the act of corruption itself. Armah’s passion to highlight the theme of corruption in *The Beautiful Ones* is so strong that it is explored right from the beginning of the novel when readers encounter the bus conductor. “And he had fingered the coins in the bag, and in the end placed in the giver’s hand a confusing assortment of coins whose value was far short of what he should have given. The happy man had just dropped the coins into his shirt pocket. He had not even looked at them” (*Beautiful Ones* p. 3). Here, Armah depicts how corruption has engulfed the society to the extent that a mere conductor even cheats passengers of some few coins for his selfish interest. The passengers also try in their own way to cheat the conductor. Although they know they have to pay the bus fare before taking their seats, some of them try to avoid paying and go ahead to take their seats until the conductor shouts “Get down! Get down! Have you paid and you are sitting inside?” As if they have been expecting this all along, the people inside climb meekly down and hold out their money to the conductor” (*The Beautiful Ones* P. 39). Corruption seems to be such a normal thing to the extent that the man’s refusal to cut corners in order to help the timber merchant transport his timber is misinterpreted as an act of sheer wickedness on his part. “Contrey why you try to do me so? You don’t want me to eat contrey? Okay. Take yourself. I get man who understands. Ei, my friend why you want to play me wicked? …You are a very wicked man. You will never prosper Da” (*The Beautiful Ones* p.107). Comparing the attitude of the man with that of his society, Richard Priebe (1976) concludes that “the man confronts the futility of being good in a corrupt world” (103). It is the
order of the day for everyone in the man’s society to use any corrupt ways as a means of survival. Anyone who does not join in the practice is rather seen as being the wicked one. Corruption has become so normal to the extent that the man’s blatant refusal does not deter the timber merchant at all. He simply falls on the next available worker (the man’s colleague) who willingly helps to transport his timber. Derek Wright (1985) sees an apparent contradiction in the behaviour of the society of the man. He holds the view that “the paradoxical result is that self-seeking individualism becomes the new communal faith, and anyone with a surviving spirit of community is cut off from the body which his beliefs are intended to serve” (87). Armah is of the view that corruption has very deep roots in the society to the extent that he develops a very suggestive though straight forward metaphor for the colonial and post-colonial political situation in Africa. “The bus is the modern, yet corrupt machinery of a new African state; the passengers are the exploited masses; and the conductor is a politician whose power is contingent on his ability to victimize the masses” (*The Beautiful Ones* p.108). Corruption has penetrated the entire society of the novel to the extent that even law enforcing officers are not insulated from partaking in it. “Constable, he said, as he got to the police man, my passengers. They’re in a hurry”. One of the police men looked up and said, “is that so?” the driver pointed to the bus…. Continue” (*The Beautiful Ones* p.182). Even in the full glare of the passengers and in broad day light, police officers who are supposed to enforce the law take bribe from the driver as if it is a normal practice. This is not the only instance in the novel when police officers are described as corrupt. When the messenger at the man’s office wins the lottery, he becomes afraid that his money might not be paid to him. He declines the advice of the man to report the incident to the police because “it costs you more if you go to the police” (*The Beautiful Ones* p.19). Koomson on his part also embezzles state funds to the admiration of his society. According to Richard
Peck (1989), Armah is greatly disappointed in politicians who are rather supposed to act as saviours. In his view, “Armah devotes considerable attention on the failed osagyefos who are the politicians…the political saviors have failed” (34). Nobody seems to question how Koomson gets the money to live his extravagant life, but the admiration he receives from Oyo and her mother simply sums up how the man’s society see nothing wrong if people who are placed in positions of power use their power corruptly for their selfish gains. Ode S. Ogede (1993) takes a look at this corrupt attitude from a different perspective. He opines that “corruption became pervasive. The leaders run away from the responsibility of good government to alleviate the pain of the majority, and threw societies into chaos, giving the new generation of African writers’ material for their work” (794). Ogede solely blames the politicians for the corruption in the society. He shares similar sentiments with Armah by attributing the corrupt nature of the masses to the irresponsibility of the political leaders. Armah’s harsh and vulgar description might be as a result of his disappointment in politicians after Ghana’s struggle for independence.

A lot found it impossible to survive the destruction of the world they had carried them in their departing heads, and so they simply went mad, like Home Boy, endlessly repeating harsh, unintelligible words of command he had never understood but learned to obey in other people’s countries…Some went quietly into a silence no one could hope to penetrate, something so deep that it swallowed completely men who had before been strong: they just plunged into this deep silence and died. Those who were able picked up the pieces of shattered worlds and selves, swallowed all the keen knowledge of betrayal, and came with us along the wharves in search of some humiliating work that could give meaning to the continuing passage of unwelcome days (The Beautyful Ones p. 65).

It is evident here that during the struggle for independence, a lot of the citizenry had to suffer a lot of terrible and traumatic experiences all in the hope of a better life after independence. “When the war was over the soldiers came back to homes broken in their absence and they themselves brought murder in their hearts and gave it to those nearest to them” (The Beautyful Ones p. 64). Life after independence was nothing compared to what they hoped for. People fought with the
hope that living conditions would improve after independence. “How horribly rapid everything has been, from the days when men were not ashamed to talk of souls and of suffering and of hope, to these low days of smiles that will never again be sly enough to hide the knowledge of betrayal and deceit there is something of an irresistible horror in such quick decay” (The Beautiful Ones p. 62). Armah writes that Ghanaians nurtured the hope that giving political power to a fellow Ghanaian could guarantee a better life for the masses but the opposite became the situation. “We were ready for big and beautiful things, but what we had was our own black men hugging new paunches scrambling to ask the white man to welcome them onto our backs” (The Beautiful Ones p. 81). Although it is obvious that Armah’s preoccupation in The Beautiful Ones is to emphasize how corruption has become a norm in the society in which the man lives, it is evident that he lays the best part of the blame on the politicians.

The anger came out, but it was all victim anger that had to find weaker victims, and it was never satisfied, always adding shame to itself. It is really so easy for a friend to begin treating a friend as a criminal to be feared. It is difficult to sit and with something you need desperately but do not have, it is difficult to sit and watch a friend keep this thing until the time comes when he will need it. There was nothing we could do, after robbing those who had been kind to us, except to lie down with the feeling that things were not right. It was like rushing down mossy bottoms of steep gutters from the hills with nothing to stop us. Only the gutters this time had no end, and the speed long before had become something far more than we could bear. (Beautyful Ones p. 69).

According to Armah, the failure of the politicians has brought hardship to the people and this greatly contributes to their corrupt conduct. Everyone is desperate to acquire wealth and the means the individual uses does not seem to matter. To emphasize this view, Stewart Crehan (1995) asserts that “the novel’s opening emphasizes dimness, darkness and oppressive weariness; it is as if we had descended, not only into a world of political defeat and post-independence disillusionment, but into a kind of mental twilight, a world of sleepwalkers that exists below the threshold of a full waking consciousness” (106). Creham shares similar sentiments with Armah
in the sense that he also opines that the attitude of politicians after independence caused a lot of
disappointment to the masses. “How long will Africa be cursed with its leaders? There were men
dying from the loss of hope, and others were finding gaudy ways to enjoy power” (*Beautyful
Ones* 80- 81). Bill Ashcroft (2009), however, holds a contrary opinion. Although he agrees with
Armah that African politicians have not been at their best in helping in the progress of the
continent after independence, he believes that Armah’s expectation from politicians is too much.
According to Ashcroft, Armah is “deeply pessimistic about the post- independence African
regimes. Yet that dystopian view of the present betrayal of Africa by its leaders is closely
connected to the utopianism that emerges in his works” (709). Ashcroft believes that the entire
corpus of Armah’s works is dedicated to criticizing politicians. He opines that “the deception of
rulers and governments is a familiar theme for Armah and in most of his novels, they are given
the large measure of the blame for Africa’s dependent state. Whether kings who have sold their
subjects into slavery or political leaders who have adopted, without question, Western habits and
values, the rot begins with power” (709).

From the discussion above, it becomes obvious that corruption is not limited to politicians such
as Koomson and public officers such as the policemen, it is a cancer that has permeated the
entire society of the novel to the extent that ordinary citizens such as the bus conductor and the
timber merchant have all accepted it as a way of life. Armah lays the greater part of the cause of
this behaviour on the politician. Corruption is such a dominant theme in Armah’s first novel that
he begins and ends the novel with it.

As discussed in *The Beautyful Ones*, the theme of corruption is also pre- dominant in *Fragments*.
Armah continues to expatiate on this theme in his second novel though in a more subtle and less
vulgar manner compared to his first novel. Baako’s encounter with the Secretary of the Civil
Service Commission upon his return from abroad is one of the episodes Armah uses to explore the theme of corruption.

“You better know I’m a busy man” said the Junior Assistant picking his teeth with a dry nib.

“A very busy man. I can’t waste time like this… you want to be serious with me?”

“I want to know what’s happening to my papers.”

“You want me to help you?”

“I’m not asking you for help, I filled the forms …”

“Ah, weeeell.” The junior assistant rose, shrugging. “You understand me. You can come and see me when you decide you want me to help you. And don’t come here just to waste my time. I’m a busy man. I have my post” (Fragments p. 115).

The Junior Assistant to the Secretary of the Civil Service Commission wants Baako to bribe him before he does what he is supposed to do for him. He becomes furious when Baako does not understand that his asking Baako to go and come several times is indicative of the fact that he wants Baako to offer him an amount of money. For someone who claims to be very busy, it is surprising that “when Baako walked out into the sun and the dust of the official car park outside that he saw the Junior Assistant to the Secretary of the Civil Service Commission standing outside in the shade of a nim tree, smoking and chatting contentedly with one of his colleagues” (Fragments p. 115 - 116). Baako does not understand that all he is being asked to do is to give money to the Junior Assistant for his papers to be processed accordingly. It is not until he goes to see Ocran out of frustration that Ocran explains to him that “that’s what they say when they want a bride” (Fragments. p. 121). The Junior Assistant to the Secretary of the Civil Service Commission is so corrupt that he blatantly refuses to do his work without being bribed. As if the behaviour of the Junior Assistant to the Secretary of the Civil Service Commission is not enough, the Principal Secretary clearly shows that he does not see anything wrong with how the Junior
Assistant does his job. “We don’t have modern systems here. This country does not work that way. If you come back thinking you can make things work in any smooth efficient way, you’ll just get a complete waste of your time, it’s not worth bothering about” (Fragments p.123).

Instead of punishing his subordinate for his corrupt conduct, he (the Principal Secretary) rather makes Ocran and Baako look as if they are asking for the impossible. Through these characters, Armah highlights the corrupt nature of officials who are in state institutions in *Fragments*. Armah depicts how individuals use their positions corruptly to cripple the laid down bureaucratic systems, thereby forcing the desperate citizens to act corruptly. One only wonders what would have happened to Baako’s documents if Ocran had not intervened. The theme of corruption is further exemplified in Uncle Foli’s attitude during the time of pouring libation before Baako’s journey abroad. “The pig Foli, in spite of the beauty of the words he has spoken, remained inside his soul a lying pig. A shameful lot more than a whole half bottle of the drink had remained unpoured … the shriveled soul, the better to keep what remained of the drink for his own parched throat” (Fragments p.18 - 19). For his selfish interest, he sprinkles just a few drops of the drink as libation with the sole intention of keeping a greater quantity for himself. When he even has to pour a drink for Baako, the one for whom the drink is meant, “he went and took from among his many shiny things…a very small glass” (Fragments p.18). Derek Wright (1985) comments on Foli’s corrupt behaviour by opining that “libation is a pretext for Uncle Foli’s bibulous indulgence” (88). According to Wright, the slightest opportunity anyone gets is used corruptly for their selfish gain. Through Foli’s behaviour, Armah reveals how desperately corrupt Baako’s society is. This is because a simple traditional act of pouring libation is even an opportunity for Foli to be corrupt. Naana had to intervene for the right thing to be done. At Baako’s place of work, corruption is such a normal phenomenon that when he (Baako) tries to
draw Asante-Smith’s attention to the reason why the television sets are brought, he is rather made to feel odd. “By the way, the sets are being distributed today. The highest officials from the residence and the presidential secretariat will get theirs first, then the Ministries. Senior officers here at Ghanavision will get what’s left” (Fragments p. 216-217). It is obvious from Asante-Smith’s statement that high government officials all engage in this act of corruption because after the order had been given for the distribution of the sets, none of them is seen returning the sets. When Baako tries to remind Asante-Smith: “what about the scheme to put the set all over the country?” (Fragments p.217), he is simply ignored. The corruption that goes on at Baako’s office affects him so badly that it forces him to resign from his job. Bodil Folke (1987) aptly captures the reasons why he thinks Baako becomes insane and opines that “Baako’s illness is repeatedly attributed to his repulsion against his corrupt, money-obsessed elite classes. His concerns are certainly piqued by the corruption he encounters in his family and among the people with whom he works.” (61). Richard Priebe (1976) supports this assertion and says that “Baaako does not fit into modern Ghana which he finds dominated by the values he came to dislike while in America, and his family will not let him lead the modest but incorruptible life which he knows is his only option if he wishes to stay sane” (41). Armah reveals the behaviour of top government officials who use their positions corruptly for their selfish interest. Corruption is so prevalent to the extent even Juana who is a foreigner easily forewarn Baako that there is no way the television sets will find their way to the villages.

“The electric grid should be finished next month”

“Where did you hear that?” she asked him

“We had a production meeting”

“One month here seems to mean five years” she said, and it disturbed her that he didn’t smile
“It’ll be good to see sets actually in the villages”

“They’ll be waiting centuries, more likely, I’m afraid,” she said. Baako, you expect too much” (*Fragments* p. 187).

Juana who is even a foreigner, seems to have been exposed to the corrupt practices in the society to the extent that she can easily tell Baako that the decision made at the production meeting to send the television sets to the rural folks will not materialize. And true to her words, it never came to pass. In *Fragments*, corruption is highlighted by the lackadaicility with which public officials do their jobs. Armah portrays how bureaucratic bottlenecks prevent government machinery from operating smoothly, thereby causing the masses to suffer.

“There’s been an accident on the river,” he said solemnly.

“Oh yes?” the engineer asked calmly, “The fools”

“It’s serious” Baako cut in.

“Of course,” the engineer said. He stared carefully at a crease in his starched white shorts, then slowly flicked at something, a loose end of thread or a floating speck. “it’s always serious. They are just like animals”

“I thought we were going down” Baako said.

“Going down? Where? The engineer asked.

“To the river. The dead man…”

The engineer ignored his words, looking at everyone there in turn… “I joined the PWD twenty-three whole years ago. I was patient, and waited, that’s why I have my present post” (*Fragments* p. 198-200).

Instead of the swift response with which Baako expects the engineer to attend to the accident, the engineer sees no sense of urgency and rather blames the accident on the “foolishness” of the drivers. When Baako tries to draw his attention to the fact that the behaviour of the drivers is due to the unfavourable system which he (the engineer) can easily change, he rather becomes upset. The attitude of the engineer does not surprise Juana
“It was like the Chief Engineer at the other ferry, at Yeji,” she said. “The doctors here know things are a mess. But they accept it. Like some hopeless reality they can’t even think of changing, except to make the usual special arrangements for Senior Officers, friends, what have you. They told me I was wasting my time talking of a changed approach. A couple of them got very hostile. A couple of them said I was wasting their time. Just like at the ferry” (*Fragments* p. 192).

Derek Wright (1985) aptly captures this by opining that “the system does not work at all, and since no new system has evolved to replace the obsolete one, its normal capacity for corrupt abuse and perversion is magnified” (87). In Wright’s view, people in positions of power have created a lot lackadaiccity in the system and they capitalize on such loopholes and use them as avenues for their corrupt behaviours. He goes further to reiterate that “hard work is a myth manufactured by leisured autocracy, a euphemism for organized idleness, briber, connivance and secret theft that install a corrupt few in prosperity” (88). The system according to Wright has been designed in such a way that it creates a very liberal avenue for those in positions of power to be corrupt. In another instance when Brempong returns from abroad, a government vehicle which is supposed to be used for official duties is sent to pick him from the airport. “Just as it turned left, the big band break lights went on behind it, and its number plate shone clearly: GV109” (*Fragments* p. 91). There is nothing official about Brempong’s return from abroad but the society sees nothing wrong with his use of a government vehicle. On the contrary, he is rather seen as someone who knows a lot of people in big places. And he is rather admired for it. Corruption is so deep-rooted and normal in Baako’s society to the extent that Juana knows it will be a Herculean task for Baako if he intends to fight it. “You’re going against a general current…it takes a lot of strength” (*Fragments* p. 151). As if Juana knows that Baako’s fight against corruption will be futile, she constantly warns him to exercise restraint and caution in his anti-corrupt ambition. Pallavi Bhardwaj (2015) vividly describes the situation Baako finds himself by opining that Baako “finds himself in a society that is immersed in corruption adhering
to unethical values” (45). According to Bhardwaj, Baako “is involved in a selfless and corrective crusade for social redirection and leads a vanguard that warns the society and offers unsocialized advice to those in power to restore sanity in post independent society thriving on wrong values” (45). Just as corruption has engulfed the man’s society in *The Beautiful Ones*, Armah again shows how it has also crippled state institutions in *Fragments*.

Although it is widely acclaimed that Armah’s preoccupation in *Why Are We?* is not corruption, a careful study of the novel reveals that the theme of corruption is not left untreated in the novel. This theme is highlighted right from the beginning of the novel when readers are confronted with the harsh realities of the devastating effects of the war in Laccryville. Even though the war is over, the masses are still suffering.

> There are children every morning, even before I am up, they are there waiting for me to open my window, waiting to receive anything I may care to give them…When I have nothing to give them the children grow sullen and resentful. More than few times the oldest among them have thrown stones against my door out of the anger of their disappointment (*Why Are We?* P. 15-16).

Children are starving and have to survive on the benevolence of people because their mothers cannot afford to feed them. “When asked about their families they talk about their mothers. “About their fathers they all give the same answer: Mon père? Il est mort” (*Why Are We?* p.16). The effect of the revolution is very devastating to the extent that it has left even the children traumatized. The manner in which they respond to the whereabouts of their fathers is quite uncharacteristic of children. One cannot tell whether they really understand what death means or they have learnt to accept it as part of their lives.

> There are the real beggars, the grown-up ones. I did not know, and I do not think anyone knows, how many there are in all. There must be at least one for every block, and there are thicker concentrations of them in front of the larger shops and around busy places like the underpass beneath the large square near the university. It is impossible to tell who among these were beggars before the
revolution, and who were beggared by the hemorrhage itself” (*Why Are We?* p. 16-17).

The picture Armah paints at the beginning of the novel is gloomy and all that readers see are the devastating effects of the revolution. Solo’s description of the fatherless children and numerous beggars left behind by the revolution is quiet disturbing. Laccryville is a town where hunger, poverty and all the negative effects of war are evident. “Those who offer themselves up to be killed, to be maimed and driven insane, those who go beyond what is even possible for other human beings in their pursuit of the revolution” (*Why Are We?* P. 26). Apart from the negative effect of the revolution on Laccryville itself, those who participated in the revolution have their own share of suffering too. “All the best ones died. And many of those left are cripples” (*Why Are We?* p. 26). The terrible situation in Laccryville distresses Solo. He ends up being hospitalized with fever of the conscience. At the hospital, he meets a one-legged man whose predicament summarizes the whole devastating futility of the revolutionary aspiration. According to Peter Thomas (1973) the novel clearly shows “Armah’s own feeling about the history of revolution in general and about the present condition of ‘emergent’ Africa” (82). This view is further confirmed by Simone Simonse (1982) who also asserts that the novel “argues the absolute impotence of the African revolutionary intelligentsia” (475). All the negative images readers are exposed to due to the revolution are in sharp contrast with what goes on at the bureau. “What goes on inside the Bureau itself, however, will always be a different matter. On first coming in there I thought I had found the thing I was looking for. Only later, when the romance I had gathered within myself had been killed by all that was true around me there” (*Why Are We?* p. 48-49). Because of Solo’s terrible experiences in Laccryville, he is hopeful that on getting to the bureau, he will see people working seriously on behalf of the suffering masses but this hope is dashed.
The lower office gives at least a vague impression of austere dedication. There is little that is incongruous with the claim that it is the working place of the people caught in the life-and-death struggle. This impression the upper office destroys immediately. The floor there is covered with a thick blue carpet. There is no desk-only a set of deep armchairs around a polished circular table. On the wall across from the entrance is a painting. It is a Parisian scene, a bridge in the twilight. The left wall has a bar, beneath which is a refrigerator (Why Are We? P. 50). The scene at the Bureau has no link with what the people are going through. There is a sharp contrast between the life of the masses and the people who claim to be working on their behalf in the fight for the revolution. Sackey (2014) opines that “Ngulo performs his revolution behind an office desk with envelopes and stamps, while fighters die every day on the field” (97). Even though Manuel enjoys a more luxurious life than Ngulo, and even keeps a “white-haired American woman”, Armah puts both Ngulo and Manuel on the same pedestal because they both stay alive and are not “maimed” or “driven insane” or “go beyond what is even possible for other human beings in their pursuit of the revolution” (Why Are We? p. 26). Through these characters, Armah portrays the corrupt nature of Africans in positions of power who use their positions corruptly to their selfish advantage. Sackey (2014) shares similar sentiments with Armah by opining that:

By the end of the revolution, the militants, the real “essence” of the revolution have been destroyed. What is left is a waste land of the crippled, the drugged, the sick, the young, and the old. The corrupt ones, the opportunists, like Manuel and Ngulo, capitalize on this general waste and step in the shoes of the white masters. Neither the militants nor the people gain. Freedom from white domination means power and affluence for the few, disease, poverty and want for the many. An example of such “freedom” is the sad independence of Laccryville (98).

Through this, Armah portrays how the struggle for independence in various African countries is similar. The masses have to struggle amidst bloodshed and toil. But when independence is gained, the masses are enslaved by a few corrupt officials. These officials live in affluence and wealth while the masses, through whose blood and sweat independence is won, live in abject
poverty, deprivation and filth. Armah further elaborates on the theme of corruption when an African leader, Ndugu Pakansa, aligns himself with the whites for his selfish interest and neglects his own people in their quest to fight the white man. “That he, who had travelled outside, to the lands where the white people had made the things to command power with, had he not learned to make some of those things in his wonderings among the enemy? Ndugu Pakansa was silent” (Why Are We? p. 40). His people thought he could be very instrumental in helping them fight the white man, they asked him to “come and be one of the eyes of the new thing growing up among our people, the thing that could save us. Ndugu Pakansa sat there silent” (Why Are We? P. 40). He is unwilling to fight the whites because he has a white woman as his friend. “I told him he could stay in the town, the thing the white race had built for their own purposes” (Why Are We? P. 41). Because of the privileges he enjoys from the whites, he is reluctant to be on the side of the black people in their quest to fight against the whites. “Ndugu Pakansa said he needed time to think about what had been said. I asked him what was there to think about? I asked him what animal was there that needed to take deep thought before deciding to fight its own destruction” (Why Are We? P. 41).

It is evident that corruption is a constant feature in all the novels under study. However, Armah’s treatment of corruption in Fragments is distinct from how the theme is treated in The Beautiful Ones and Why Are We? His treatment of corruption is distinct in the sense that he does not lay the blame of corruption on politicians in Fragments. Armah’s attention on corruption in Fragments is basically on the lackadaisical nature people do their work and how they always want to use their positions corruptly for their selfish interest. This is clearly exemplified in Asante-Smith, Brempong and the Engineer. In his first and third novels, Armah lashes out at how the masses are made to suffer in the quest to liberate their countries from the rule of the whites.
while a few people take unfair advantage of to enrich themselves. He again highlights the devastating effects of war on the masses in these novels. In *The Beautiful Ones*, Armah devotes much attention to the theme more than he does in *Fragments* and *Why Are We?* He lays much emphasis on how corruption has penetrated deeply into the entire society. In spite of the fact that Armah lays much emphasis on the theme of corruption in these novels, he also stresses on the role the politicians play in cultivating this negative behavior in the masses.

**Materialism**

The discussion continues with another major theme which is central to the novels under study. Materialism is a common theme in all the novels although it appears in various manifestations such as greed and the cargo cult mentality. In Armah’s first novel, materialism appears in the form of blacks craving for things which are foreign. Armah’s frustration is that in spite of the negative treatment meted out to the blacks by the whites, blacks still find it prestigious to be associated with whites. They do all they possibly can to acquire imported items and feel that anything Western or foreign is of superior quality. Oyo’s desperate attempt to stretch her curly African hair to make it look soft and western because her husband cannot afford to buy her a wig, is one of the numerous instances in the novel to buttress this stance.

Oyo came out of the kitchen holding her iron comb in her hand. ‘Jesus!’ he said when he saw her, ‘you aren’t going to do that, are you?’

“I am!” she came out of the kitchen with one of the covered basins, then went back in and in a few moments the man could smell the burning hair. Feeling quite vague inside he went to her and stood watching the oily smoke pouring out and up of her hair.

“That must be very painful”, he said. Immediately, he was wishing he had not said it. Oyo put the comb back among the coals then lifted up her head and said,
“of course it is painful. I’m just trying to straighten it out a bit now, to make it presentable”

“What is wrong with it natural?”

“It’s only bush women who wear their hair natural” (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 129).

Oyo is prepared to go through the torture of straightening her hair with a hot iron comb in order not to be seen as a “bush woman” even when the man sees nothing wrong with her natural hair. Their society adores women who go the extra mile to wear wigs and adorn themselves with clothes which are European. When Koomson and his wife visit the man’s family, Estella makes it pointedly clear that “local beer … does not agree with my constitution” (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 131) and when the man asks “what sort of constitution” (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 131) his mother-in-law “sprays him head to toe with a flaming look” (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 131). As if Estella’s refusal to accept the local beer is not enough, she goes ahead to tell them that “the only good drinks are European drinks” and that “these make you ill” (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 132). Instead of condemning Estella’s attitude, Oyo and her mother see nothing wrong with it but are rather embarrassed that the man is unable to afford foreign drinks to give their visitors. When the man and Oyo go to visit Koomson in his house, Koomson makes a deliberate attempt to impress them by mentioning a variety of foreign drinks for them to choose from. “Oh you must choose,” said Koomson. “There is White Horse, you know. Black and White, Sea grams, Culbeys dry” (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 147). But for the interruption of the man that “anything will do”, Koomson would have continued mentioning the names of foreign drinks to the admiration of Oyo. Armah makes a great attempt to dwell extensively on how Koomson, a political figure and his wife who are rather supposed to promote African products, use and endorse foreign items and lifestyles to the disadvantage of the African economy. OjongAyuk (1984) aptly characterizes this by saying that “Koomson, as a party man and Minister, is driven by a uniformed chauffeur. He no longer
wants to keep the company of his fellow-dockers; his friends are white men, lawyers and merchants with whom he goes to enjoy” (42). Apart from the man who makes his distaste for foreign items clear, the rest (Oyo, her mother, Estella, Koomson) are of the opinion that anything foreign is of high quality and foreign ways depict civilization. Although many critics attribute the lack of progress in the man’s society to the irresponsibility of its political leaders, such as Koomson, John Lutz (2003) holds a contrary opinion. He asserts that “if the world depicted in The Beautiful Ones can be characterized by the abject failure of its political leadership to collectively imagine and implement a true socialist community, it must also be understood as a society imprisoned in a hopeless and repetitive dialectic between an all-encompassing desire for material possessions and a pervasive condition of psychological and physical improvement” (95). Lutz is of the view that a fair share of the blame should be laid at the doorstep of the society because members of the society are also materialistic. Ojong Ayuk further comments on this opining that Ayi Kwei Armah “emphasizes that the decay and the halting of the onward march of the African revolution in many countries especially Ghana stems from an excessive lust for material goods with which the privileged few want to surround themselves, to the total exclusion of all other considerations” (34). While Ayuk opines that the lack of progress in Africa especially Ghana stems from the materialistic desires of the political leaders, Lutz thinks that this materialistic nature is not limited to the politicians alone. His view is that the masses are equally guilty of this conduct. Greed is also central in Armah’s thematic concerns. Without greed, there is no materialism because all the materialistic ambitions are spurred on by greed. In The Beautiful Ones, he shows why because of greed, family ties which are supposed to be held as very important are easily marred. The man’s relationship with his mother-in-law is strained to the extent that when the man goes to leave his children with her “he had no desire to go inside
the house and sit down trading unfelt greetings with his mother-in-law” *(The Beautiful Ones* p. 122). This strained relationship between mother and son-in-law is due to the fact that the man refuses to use his position to satisfy the greedy demands of his family especially his mother-in-law. “Aaaaah, Koomson has done well, we must say it. He has done well for himself and for his family too” *(The Beautiful Ones* p. 139). Although one can say that Oyo’s mother does not understand that the means by which Koomson gets his wealth is foul, it can be argued that it is only greed that can influence an elderly woman of her caliber to compare her son-in-law to another man who is rich. In the Ghanaian tradition, a mother-in-law accords her son-in-law respect but the man’s situation is totally different from this tradition. Armah highlights how because of greed an elderly woman such as Oyo’s mother who should be a custodian to such a beautiful tradition, throws it away all because of greed.

‘I must say’, the old woman began at last, ‘I must say that there are men somewhere in Ghana who at least know how to take good care of their own’ *(The Beautiful Ones* p. 139).

Oyo’s mother is consumed by greed to the extent that she does not miss the slightest opportunity to cast insinuations at the man all in a bid to draw his attention to the fact that his attitude accounts for the reason why her daughter and grandchildren are living in poverty and that is why she blatantly calls him a “useless man” *(The Beautiful Ones* p. 139). Commenting on the greedy nature of the society, Lutz (2003) writes: “wealth dominates the lives of individuals and holds uncontested sway over all aspects of social existence. The desire to consume has created all forms of individualism responsible for the fragmentation of all social bonds and a collective experience of social isolation” (95). The man’s mother-in-law’s not alone in her greedy ambition to compel the man to use his position to satisfy her greed. Oyo also frustrates the man in her own way.
‘This life has treated her well’…….
‘Where is koomson getting all the money for this boat? He asks
‘He is getting it’ that finality.
‘All right’, says the man ‘let us say I am not in it’.
‘The woman stares unbelieving at her husband, then whispers softly
‘chichidodoooooo’ (The Beautyful Ones p.42 – 43).

Evidently, Oyo is pushing the man to use his position to acquire more than he earns because she is greedy. Although the man attempts to draw her attention to the fact that Koomson is not using the appropriate means to acquire his wealth, Oyo is so consumed by her greedy desires that she makes it obvious she simply does not care where the man is getting his wealth from. Ayuk (1984) “Values are essentially material. Accordingly, a hero is someone who amasses a substantial lot of blessings and the means by which he has obtained them are irrelevant” (36). In Ayuk’s view, the man is not a hero and has even lost his respect as a man in his family and society at large. It comes as no surprise when his mother-in-law blatantly abuses him as well.

Materialism and greed take centre stage in Fragments. Many critics opine that Armah’s intention is to highlight the materialistic nature of the Ghanaian society after independence. Ayuk (1984) supports this view by saying that Armah’s emphatic portrayal of the materialistic nature of the society stems from his shock upon his return to Ghana. According to Ayuk, “With the dawn of independence in Ghana, Armah, returning to his country, was shocked to realize that independence was the fellow-traveler of both materialism and Westernization… materialism therefore became the new religion” (33). Murphy (2008) holds a contrary opinion. Although Murphy agrees that Armah’s preoccupation in Fragments is to emphasize the greedy and materialistic nature of the Ghanaian society after independence, she thinks this materialistic behaviour is attributable to the after effect of the slave trade. In Murphy’s view, “Ayi Kwei
Armah’s second novel *Fragments*, is largely focused on the rampant consumerism of postcolonial Ghanaian culture; but I argue that, more significantly, it constitutes Armah’s exploration of the twentieth-century effects of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, of which materialism is but a symptom” (55). Readers first encounter with Efua highlights her materialistic expectations for Baako. “Oh,” the woman touched her belly gently- “he went away to study. He will come back a man. A big man… I cannot understand all my hopes went with him, and he was going to leave me here, like an old woman on the shore, struggling to take my snuff in a hurricane” (*Fragments* p. 56). Even before Baako’s arrival, his role of providing materially for his mother is already outlined for him. It therefore comes as no surprise when Efua, in order to ensure that nothing goes contrary to this expectation, goes to see a prophet to pray for the safe return of Baako. Although Efua admits that Baako “went away to study,” and not to work, she contradicts herself by saying that “he will come back a man. A big man.” A big man not in the sense that he would have grown but a big man because he can afford to give her material things that will make her happy. It is not surprising that in the midst of Efua’s excitement on seeing Baako upon his return, she enquires when his car will be coming.

He caught his mother’s face from time to time when he looked in Fiifi’s rearview mirror and saw her sitting in one corner of the back seat. She was smiling now, completely at ease in the enfolding luxury of the red leather upholstery.

“When is yours coming, Baako”

“What?” he asked, surprised.

“My, your car, so that my old bones can also rest” (*Fragments* p. 106-107).

It becomes obvious here that Efua’s excitement of seeing Baako has nothing to do with the fact that he has been away for a long time, but her happiness is due to the fact that her materialistic desires will soon be fulfilled. Although much emphasis is laid on the materialistic expectations of the family, Pallavi Bhardwaj (2015) holds the view that Armah is merely using the family to
represent the society as a whole. According to Bhardwaj, “in *Fragments*, family is a microcosm of the society on the whole, as the traits of greed, self-interest and narrow-mindedness manifest themselves through different individuals” (45). It is not Efua alone who expects Baako to fulfill her materialistic desires, the entire society expects nothing less of anyone who has travelled abroad than his ability to meet the demands of his family and society. Commenting on this societal canker, John Lutz (2003) asserts that “wealth dominates the lives of individuals and holds uncontested sway over all aspects of social existence. The desire to consume has created all forms of individualism responsible for the fragmentation of all social bonds and a collective experience of social isolation” (95). In the instance when Baako goes to visit Fiifi in his office on his arrival in Ghana, Christiana, Fiifi’s friend quickly tries to strike an acquaintance with Baako because she also holds the view that a been-to is someone who has returned with a lot of money. “Oh by the way,” she said at the door, “if you can’t escape, send the new been-to to see me. I hope he brought his car” (*Fragments* p. 103). It is rather unusual for anyone to return from abroad without a car, it is therefore not surprising that Efua sees nothing wrong with expecting her own son to also return with a car. It is rather seen as a norm in the society. “The member of the family who goes out and comes back home is a sort of charmed man, a miracle worker. He goes, he comes back, and with his return some astounding and sudden change is expected” (*Fragments* p. 150). It comes as no surprise when Baako feels lonely and withdrawn from his society perhaps due to this changed societal ideologies. Bouteldja and Sabrina (2013) write that “right from the beginning, he isolated himself from his community which reproached him due to the fact that he did not bring the cargo expected from the “been-tos” like him” (237). Baako becomes aware of the harsh realities of the demands of his family and society and pours out his frustration on Juana.
Now it’s taken modern form. The voyage abroad, everything that follows; … But the hero idea itself is something very old. It’s the myth of the extraordinary man who brings about a complete turnabout in terrible circumstances. We have the old heroes who turned defeat into victory for the whole community. But these days the community has disappeared from the story. Instead, there is the family, and the hero comes and turns its poverty into sudden wealth. And the external enemy isn’t the one at whose expense the hero gets his victory; he’s supposed to get rich, mainly at the expense of the community” (Fragments p. 150).

Baako’s disappointment at the materialistic demands of his society is from the fact that in the past, a man was considered a hero if he does something worthy for his community. He laments that these ideals have been reversed and now people are hailed if they are able to use their positions to satisfy the materialistic demands of their families at the expense of the entire society.

Commenting on the reversed values of the society, Kofi Owusu (1988) writes that: “it is this society, with its convoluted values gone terribly awry, which passes judgment on Baako…society’s unreasoning “reason” condemns Baako’s reasoned “unreason” as “madness” (363). Owusu laments about the reversed values of society where what is wrong is rather seen as right while the right automatically becomes wrong instead.

“You regret the fact that you studied abroad, then?”

“No,” he said laughing. “The same thing worries those who stayed here and went to Legon or Kumasi or Cape-Coast. Not so fiercely, perhaps, but I’ve seen some of these fellows. They talk some, and do a lot of drinking. Purposeless, like to keep away things they daren’t face. Spend money like some kind of suicide” (Fragments p. 150).

Although much emphasis is laid on the expectations from a been-to, Baako draws attention to the fact that it is not limited to the been-to alone. Once a young person graduates from the university, the society expects such a person to get enough money to satisfy the material needs of his family members. These demands of the family and society have devastating effects on the individuals as, according to Baako, some of them are forced into excessive drinking and reckless spending. Pallavi Bhardwaj (2015) shares similar sentiments with Armah by writing that “when
family, the miniature representation of society, adopts an unsympathetic posture to the individual’s righteous efforts, it often ends in mental unrest or violence” (46). Armah throws light on the societal expectations of the graduate and the been-to for that matter.

“A been-to, returned only a year ago. His mother waited a long time, and now this happens to her”
“He was very quiet.”
“Is it true that he was a graduate?”
“Yes, a been-to.”
“We saw him walking to the bus every morning, so we were not sure.”
“Strange he didn’t have a car.”
“They could at least have given him a bungalow.”
“Strange.”
“Strange” (Fragments p. 248-249).

This clearly spells out what the society expects of a graduate. And so knowledge that Baako is a graduate and a been-to but has neither car nor bungalow and rather stays with his mother and picks the bus to work every morning, makes it easier for them to see him as being abnormal. It therefore comes as no surprise when nobody defends him as he struggles with his abductors before he is finally captured to the asylum. Perhaps it is the knowledge that Baako is both a been-to and a graduate that fills him with so much apprehension.

“And you still don’t find it hard going back?”
“Oh no. No. but I understand you. I have learned to take precautions; myself… 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 waste, useless” (Fragments p. 71).

Brempong heightens Baako’s anxiety by clearly outlining the materialistic expectations of the society and spelling out what is expected of a been-to. Just as Armah does in The Beautiful Ones,
materialism in *Fragments* also takes the form of blacks seeing foreign items as superior to local products. “You see this” Brempong had brought out his lighter. “Where in Ghana would you find a thing like this? ... I bought it in Amsterdam, at the airport, actually. Beautiful things there, Amsterdam. Tape recorders. I took one last year, and it has never given me any trouble” (*Fragments* p. 71). Brempong’s opinion that anything foreign is of superior quality is also the opinion of the entire society. Local products are detested to the extent that people are respected by how foreign they look. Armah continues his quest to understand the black’s fascination with whiteness. There are numerous incidents when he comments on women who wear wigs in an attempt to look foreign or exhibit their Europeanists traits. In his description of the two stewardesses at the airport in Paris, “one of them was black and wore a wig that had a single bleached strand leading its general dark brown mass” (*Fragments* p. 62). Although he gives a lengthy description of the hair of the black stewardess, he says nothing about the hair of the other stewardess who is white. This is a reiteration of how Oyo tries desperately to stretch her natural hair in order to make it look a little foreign. As if repeating the wig incidense in *The Beautiful Ones* is not enough, Armah seems to dwell extensively on this attitude of black women in *Fragments* as well. Upon Baako’s return to Ghana he goes to visit Fiifi. On entering Fiifi’s office he sees his friend “talking relaxedly to a woman whose back and wig were the only things visible to Baako” (*Fragments* P.101). In another instance, on his return flight to Ghana, Baako tries to find a comfortable seat beside the window. “As he did so he noticed four seats in front of him, the generous mass of a wig protruding above the tall back of the seat itself, a shiny black in the gray-white light within the plane. Beside the wig, a hand suddenly shot upwards and sideways, its blackness cut off from the blackness of its coat sleeve by a lucent white cuff” (*Fragments* P.66). Armah’s disgust for black women wearing wigs is so strong that he simply does not say
anything about these women except to refer to their wigs. In another incident, a lot of African women are seen looking in admiration at “a couple of Africans with successfully bleached skins looking a forced yellow-brown” (Fragments. P.129). These desperate attempts by African women to look European rather wins the admiration of the society as being black is rather associated with primitivity. Brempong’s fascination with whiteness is simply overwhelming. Apart from accusing Baako of not looking like a “been-to” simply because he (Baako) still maintains his identity as a black man, he (Brempong) prefers to be described as a white man. “These escorts are idiots. You should have told them you were meeting a white man” (Fragments p. 85). Armah shows how blacks themselves look down on their race as inferior and are desperately willing to do anything to be associated with the white race.

Éeeeeei! Our white man, we saw you wave, we saw you wave
“The bigman has come again
“Oh, they have made you a white man”
“Complete!”(Fragments P. 86).

The society is not proud of its black identity but rather hails anything white as superior. It is therefore not surprising that to welcome Brempong back home he is addressed as being white instead of a traditional praise song to welcome him. Traditional practices and customs which are supposed to be held in high esteem have been altered. In the opinion of Derek Wright (1987) “the traditional order fights a rearuard action from underneath a deadening weight of subversive subterfuges and obfuscations. Ghanavision's Asante-Smith camouflages his sycophantic opportunism as traditional respect for elders, and the traditional group economics of the family system become a facade for parasitic dependence” (176). During the naming ceremony of Araba’s child, a traditional African event, Efua is unhappy that Baako will not wear “a tux or at least a suit” (Fragments P.144). Here, it becomes obvious that through Baako, Armah vents his
frustration at the blackman’s desperate attempt to be associated with anything foreign or white, as Baako angrily retorts that he is “not an ape to the utter dismay of Efua. Efua represents the Ghanaian society which has thrown away its values and customs and is desperately trying to be white. “What a strange thing to say…but for a special ceremony like this” (Fragments p. 145). Efua reiterates that because the ceremony is special the ideal attire to wear should be something foreign. This idea obviously stems from the superior position enjoyed by anything white. Although Baako stands his grounds and asks “why else would I wear tuxes and suits in this warm country except to play monkey to the white man?” (Fragments P.145). Efua does not become convinced and still sees nothing wrong with her demand but rather gets hurt when Baako reminds her that her “sacred ancestors laid down the word that we should sweat in stupid suits and tuxes for such ceremonies” (Fragments P.145). The mention of ancestors does nothing to change Efua’s perception that anything white is superior.

This was a rich crowd of guests.... Woolen suits, flashing shoes, ... an authentic cold-climate overcoat from Europe or America .... and a magnificent sane man in a university gown...a great rich splendor stifling all these people in the warmth of a beautiful day.... Against all that happiness there was a solitary fool walking into the midst of things wearing only reasonable clothes, a shirt ... over a pair of shorts. "At least wear something decent." The clown, being blind, had had the confidence to be impatient with the entreaty, asking, "What's wrong with this?" and watched pure surprise slide into an overbrave public smile on his mother's face (Fragments p. 259).

As if Baako’s refusal to wear a tux is not enough, Armah describes the attire of the other guests as extremely foreign to buttress that although Baako is doing the right thing by reminding his mother of what should traditionally be the norm, he is rather seen as the odd one. Kofi Owusu (1988), shares this view of Armah by asserting that those attending the outdoor ceremony in tropical Africa in “authentic cold-climate overcoat” or “a university gown” contrast with the “sanity” of Baako’s solitary reasonable(ness”). Owusu sarcastically points out the fact that the
guests at the ceremony represent society, and the impossibility of Baako’s singular attempt to reverse society to the right path is what makes them see him as insane. Pallavi Bhardwaj (2015) is of the view that this attitude of the black man forcing himself to be white results from cultural and mental colonization. He opines that: “one of the results of cultural and intellectual colonization is the cultivation of a dependent cast of mind, conditioned only to imitate” (48). In *Fragments*, Armah continues his advocacy by throwing light on the greedy nature of Baako’s society. People are so greedy to the extent that even when human life is involved it does nothing to change their attitude. Even though Araba is found bleeding and needs urgent medical attention, the nurse does not miss the opportunity to enquire about the social status of Baako.

“Are you the father?” the nurse asked, looking at Baako.

“No,” He pointed to Araba in the back. “She’s my sister.”

“Are you a Senior Officer?”

“Look, am not in the Civil Service yet”

“Well,” the nurse could hardly contain her disdain, “is the real husband a senior officer?”

“No but why are you asking?”… “I have no status” he said. He saw the nurse’s brows rise and the corners of her lips fall (*Fragments* p. 112).

The attitude of the nurse clearly shows that her extreme interest in knowing Baako’s social status only stems from greed. She only wants to know so that she can use Baako’s position to her advantage. She cannot hide her disappointment when Baako blatantly tells her that he “has no status.” She easily abandons her responsibility of being a nurse and leaves the bleeding Araba to her fate. In spite of Baako’s timely intervention of coming to Araba’s aid in the nick of time, she is still unhappy when Baako is unable to secure her a VIP ward. “He smiled at her, but she did not make even the shadow of an attempt to smile. The look of panic which had been on her face had disappeared. Now all he could see was a flat hurt look. Her lips moved once, but he
heard nothing distinct except something that sounded like “been-to” (*Fragments* p. 112). She does not even acknowledge the fact that if Baako had not quickly come to her aid at the time he did, something fatal could have happened either to her or her baby. Another instance where Armah highlights the greedy nature of Baako’s society is when Brempong admits with pride that his “mother has always wanted to have a whole bull slaughtered in her yard for Christmas” (*Fragments* p. 82). It can be nothing else but only greed that can make someone want to have a whole bull slaughtered in her yard. Traditional ceremonies which should be considered as sacred are altered for selfish and greedy purposes. In the Akan tradition, a child is named a week after its birth. Any day before a week is considered a taboo because the child is seen as a spirit which has not yet settled down until the eight day. But Efua manages to convince Araba to shift the ceremony to an earlier date than the stipulated eight day because according to her “an outdooring ceremony held more than a few days after payday is useless” (*Fragments* p. 130). Araba readily accepts this notion by even asserting further that “Ghanaian men get broke so fast these days it isn’t funny” (*Fragments* p. 130). The whole idea of Efua and Araba defying what is traditionally acceptable is due to greed. They do not hide the fact that their ultimate motive is to make as much money as they can from the naming ceremony of the child. “Why are you struggling with the calendar? Baako asked. Are you so pressed you have to make money out of the child?” (*Fragments* p. 30). Not even Baako’s objection shakes their resolve to satisfy their greed. Just as Efua and Araba will have it, greed has taken the better of them and the whole ceremony is reduced to a mere show of outward display of affluence by the invited guests. “It’s time for each and every person present on this happy occasion to rise and give a generous donation in appreciation of the birth of this happy child… he looked and saw hands in furtive haste passing and receiving money” (*Fragments* p. 264-265). Efua’s greed makes money take such a crucial
aspect of the ceremony that a very vital aspect which is pouring libation is simply overlooked.

Naana blames Baako for his inability to stop Efua and Araba from naming the child before the traditionally acceptable day. Commenting on this, Murph (2008) writes “many critics attribute Baako’s inability to function within his native society to the disturbing materialism, urged by Western standards of living, that has altered West African values” (57). Because of greed, an uncle’s authority over his nephew is simply swept under the carpet.

In his third novel, Armah dwells on America’s desire to manipulate other nationals to highlight the theme of greed and materialism. For the selfish interest of the West, a few blacks are offered scholarships. These few selected blacks are later used by the whites to exploit the masses. “Happy to get the degrees, then go home and relax on the shoulders of our sold people. The end of Western education is not work but self-indulgence” (Why Are We p. 161). Unknown to the blacks who are offered these scholarships, it is a preparatory ground for the whites to use these educated blacks to their advantage.

My friendships here have been different invitations to different kinds of death, calls to a spiritual disintegration far beyond the merely social disintegration Africa has suffered since how many centuries? This throwing out of the self, to have it caught in a direction not first determined by the self itself, the projection of our persons in alien directions, this alienation with no overt, no visible force, this is the sign that our death is complete. Europe has no need to destroy us singly anymore. The force of our own death is within us. We have swallowed the wish of our destruction (Why Are We? p. 159).

In spite of the disadvantageous position that the entire African continent is placed by Europe, some Africans see nothing wrong with the system. Although Modin sees through the lies of the Whites and tries to warn his fellow blacks, they feel too privileged by their offer. “We’re here in America, we are too healthy for breast beating, Modin. Let’s just celebrate our excellence and perhaps our luck. Me, you and all the blest” (Why Are We? p. 100). They are only interested in
taking personal advantage of being able to make it into the elite class. Unlike Modin who is able to see the “factor role” he is being prepared to play, his other African colleagues do not see their stay in America as such and when Modin tries to draw their attention to the fact that they are merely “African rarity to keep the blest entertained” (Why Are We So Blest? p. 101). Mike seems to see nothing wrong with it. Richard Peck (1989) comments on this that “Armah’s bitterness now encompasses the African intellectual as well...he hides like the slave factor of old, behind the walls of education as he sells his people into slavery” (86). Those who are also able to see through the deceit of the system make promises of changing things for the better when they are through with their studies but this never seem to happen. “Most of these foreign students—Africans, Asians, Latins, they talk all the time about what they’ll do to overturn the system once they get out of here. I don’t take them seriously. I know nobody goes through the struggle to get here so they can fall back into that communal dirt” (101). These blacks who are given these opportunities later see themselves as being more superior than their fellow blacks. They are given positions of power which they gladly use indirectly to the advantage of the white man.

Armah here laments bitterly about the fact that the blacks watch on helplessly while allowing the whites to manipulate them greedily to their selfish advantage. Richard Peck (1976) aptly summarizes this perspective in these words: “Why Are We So Blest? probes the relationship of the educated African to the masses. Through this education the African intellectual becomes a marginal figure separated from his own society but never fully assimilated into the west. Being
in touch with a new source of power he has the potential to aid his society, yet this potential is frustrated by the control of that power which the West maintains” (130).

From the discussion, it becomes apparent that materialism, and greed are constant themes in all the novels under study. This constant not withstanding, there are slight variations in their manifestations in the various novels. In *The Beautiful Ones* and *Fragments*, it is manifested in the cargo-cult mentality where Ghanaians hold the opinion that anything foreign or white is of superior quality. Thus Armah shows the frustrating extent to which the blacks will go in order to be seen as being white. The mentality that the educated individual must be very rich and influential and must be able to use his position to satisfy the material demands of his family members at the expense of the larger society, is another constant feature with the first two novels. But this is further emphasized in *Fragments* where so much is expected of the *been-to* from the society at large. Armah’s treatment of greed and materialism in *Why Are We?* is a complete departure from the first two novels. It can be said to be a variable because instead of the usual family members expecting material things from one educated member, he highlights the acquisitive and manipulative nature of one race against the other. In his third novel, he showcases how the greedy nature of the whites makes them manipulate the blacks with tempting offers such as scholarships which look very juicy from the outside but end up becoming a manipulative tool which the whites use to fuel their greed.

**Racism**

Although it is apparent that Armah’s main thematic concern is to expose the corrupt and greedy nature of the African society especially Ghana after independence, there are certain minor themes which are also common with the novels under study. Over the centuries, there has existed
a tangible tension between the blacks and the whites. This tension has over time developed into a very serious psychological problem. Armah’s preoccupation with the issue of racism starts right from *The Beautiful Ones* although in a subtle manner. Kofi Billy’s case is an example of an incident Armah uses to draw attention of the reader to this racial polarity. Kofi Billy is described as being “one of the lucky ones” but in spite of his luck, he has been “picked to do work that was too cruel for white men’s hands” (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 65). Here, Armah sarcastically draws attention to how the “so-called” lucky black man is made to do the type of work which is “too cruel for white hands”. The superiority of the white man is simply highlighted here.

He was one day moving cargo, pushing it with his giant hands across some deck when somewhere some fresh young Englishmansitting at some machine loaded too much tension into even the steel ropes on board and one of them snapped. The free ropes whipped with all that power through the air and just cut off Kofi Billy’s right leg away beneath the knee” (*The Beautiful Ones* p. 65).

Armah describes the white man as “fresh and young” to buttress the fact that blacks are made to do difficult work while the whites rather relax and enjoy from the toil of the blacks. The discrimination that exists between the black and white races is highlighted here. As if the misfortune of Kofi Billy is not devastating enough, the Englishman goes ahead to say that “he deserves it” (65). It is of no consequence to him that such a devastating tragedy has happened to Kofi Billy. This incident leaves Kofi Billy in such despair that he eventually takes his own life. The treatment meted out to Kofi Billy is symbolic in the sense that Armah uses it to buttress the devastating aftereffect of the black man’s encounter with the white man.

Armah’s treatment of racism in *Fragments* takes a different form. In *The Beautiful Ones*, his treatment of the theme can be said to be open while the same theme is treated in a subtle manner in his second novel. Juana, a Puerto Rican, though not completely white is not black either. She represents something good, especially in the life of Baako, a closer look at her character reveals
that she has an air of superiority. She is unconsciously racist because she sees Africans as abnormal people.

Apart from the woman with her hair all wild no one else had listened to the pleading sounds coming from the child...there were...how many men? Impossible to tell with any truth, except that they were a lot of men around just one dying dog...then there was a man with a torn singlet that had grown brown and through which his belly pushed into the open world, and it was not a small belly (Fragments p. 32-34).

The nature in which Juana describes the people she sees and how she narrates what she sees give the impression that blacks are not serious-minded people. In narrating the incident where a young boy’s dog is killed, the descriptions she gives to the people present at the scene confirms this affirmation. Her narration of the child who is almost knocked down by the tanker driver, shows a mother’s negligence, “from the nearest house a woman emerged, one hand dripping with the palm oil of her cooking” (Fragments p. 39). Juana paints the picture of a careless black mother who neglects the safety of her baby in a bid to prepare food for her husband. She also highlights the impatience of the driver “You foolish woman...You should have thought of that before you spread your thighs apart” (Fragments p. 39-40). In another instance, she describes how a group of women discomfort themselves by standing and rolling in the scorching sun while their leader, a man supposed to be their leader, stands at a comfortable distance where there is no sun.

The group stood packed together away from the sea, but they stood completely unmindful of the heat of the sun underfoot. Seaward from them, standing where the sun was cool and the waves still gently frothy around his feet, a man with a thick beard and a long white robe gesticulated, danced and swayed with the music, and kept it going till he himself seemed exhausted...Two women screamed deliriously and in a frenzy tore their own clothes to bits, then lay down in the burning sun and began rolling naked to the sea...Juana put her sandals back on and skirted the group, then walked on west. From time to time she looked back over her shoulder and saw the worshippers, now exhausted, successively rolling to a rest in the dry sand (Fragments p. 49-50).
All the above-mentioned incidents take place when Juana takes a break from work, in just a day. This shows how negative her impression of the black race is. Although Armah does not set out to clearly portray her as being racist, her narrations of the incidents above subtly reveal her racist traits. Her narration of the events goes a long way to depict how she sees the blacks as being wired.

Racism is a central theme in Why Are We? In the words of Edward Lobb (1992) the novel is a “largely successful attempt to probe the complex relation of colonizer and colonized - a relation which is seen…in any relationship between an African and a European” (243). Modin is a principal example of racist manipulations. He is taken out of his indigenous cultural context with the excuse that he is unique among his contemporaries; this is a form of segregation where “the bright” are incorporated into whiteness. Instead of giving equal opportunity in education to all, education is used as a tool to divide and debase blacks. So much effort is made by the white to draw Modin deeper into their milieu. But Modin refuses to accept this deliberate attempt to destroy the cultural values that make him what he is but this blunt refusal is met with stiff opposition from the whites. Modin simply refuses this attempt to be alienated from his people on the basis of being “a most usually intelligent African – the most intelligent as a matter of fact” (Why Are We? p. 96). In spite of Modin’s rejection of this racial segregation, there are many Africans who are willingly allowing themselves to be used because they are afraid of falling back into the “communal dirt” (Why Are We? p. 82). Mike, an African student like Modin feels very privileged of the opportunity given to him by the whites and is ever ready to take personal advantage of his having made his way into the elite class. “We’re here in America. We’re too healthy for breast beating, Modin. Let’s just celebrate our excellence, and perhaps our luck. Me, you and all the blest” (Why Are We? p. 100). Although Armah portrays the whites as being
destructive in their relationships with the blacks, he does not think the blacks are merely victims who are manipulated by the whites. Armah portrays the blacks as people who also aid in their own destruction. Richard Peck (1989) shares in this view. According to Peck, “the vehemence of the novel is directed as much against the blacks who collaborate in their own destruction as it is against the whites” (35). The relationship between Modin and Aimée is used to represent the two polarities. Armah makes it clear from the start that they are on different levels of existence. Aimée’s aim is to gratify herself. She is obsessed with the desire to overcome her inability to attain sexual fulfillment. She does not seem to be alone in this kind of problem. Armah uses Modin’s relationship with Aimée as a metaphor for the black man’s encounter with the whites. In Armah’s view, the encounter left the blacks with nothing but destruction. And this is exactly what happens with Modin in his relationship with Aimée. According to Lobb (1992), Aimée’s desire for sexual fulfillment goes beyond a personal fantasy. In his view, “Aimée’s fantasy, with its juxtaposition of personal and colonial situations, suggests that the personal relationships in the novel are symbolic of the larger historical encounter between Africa and Europe” (247).

“She smoked a joint and the first thing she wanted was for you to screw her”

“Another of your nympho Cliffie friends”

“She wanted you, not just anybody”

“How flattering. You’ve been telling her fables”

“Nothing that wasn’t true”…

“Everybody. Can’t get any feeling where she lives”

I laughed, “Sounds like an epidemic hit you all” (Why Are We? p. 94).

They will go to any absurd length to achieve their sexual fulfillment. In spite of Aimée’s claim to be in love with him, she sees nothing wrong with allowing her friends to also sleep with Modin. This depicts the exploitative nature of the whites. Through Aimée, the barrenness of the white
race is highlighted. It is therefore not surprising that all the white women are incapable of attaining any sexual fulfillment. According to Riche Bouteldja (2001) “In Armah’s novel, Aimée can be regarded as a representative writer of Western modernist and avant-garde tradition in search of other sources of inspiration because of its incapacity to sustain itself from within” (142). Armah uses Aimée as a metaphor to buttress the fact that the white race is insensitive and derives pleasure from controlling and torturing the black race to their advantage and personal gratification. They will go to any extent to satisfy their whims irrespective of the adverse effects it will have on the blacks. Even at the point of Modin’s death, Aimée still asks him if he loves her. Richard Peck (1989) sums up this attitude of the whites by stating categorically that “the novel is clearly racist in its relenting depiction of whites as exploitative and destructive in all their relations with blacks as it is against the whites” (35). Although Aimée rejects her bourgeoisie class and inheritance in the name of a revolutionary pursuit, she quickly returns to her native Denver abandoning all revolutionary intents as soon as Modin is killed. “They needed money. The American girl had some strange inheritance she could have had sent her, but she called money bourgeoisie and let it stay in America” (Why Are We? p.138). It therefore becomes apparent that her sole intent of joining the revolution is simply to indulge in her ego since she has already had an African adventure inspired by the need to exploit and out of sheer boredom. Racism is also depicted in the violent nature of the sexual fantasies of Aimée and Mrs. Jefferson. Aimée fantasizes about being the wife of a white settler who is having an affair with a black boy who helps around the house in the absence of her husband.

I feel things in my head, but they’re all in my head. Mental energy, who needs that?...I am looking over Mwangi’s head. He’s been silent a long time, moving in me. His head is turned away from that window. My husband has no shirt on. He still has his gun. I am forced to look at the gun. From that distance he’s aiming it into the room, at Mwangi’s head. I say nothing to Mwangi. He feels good in me.” (Why Are We? p.188).
Aimée’s sexual fantasy is violent. Her sole motif of joining the revolution is to get close to Modin so that she can experiment her fantasy. This might be due to the fact that she sees Modin as an easy prey. Even before she embarks on her “so-called” revolutionary pursuit with Modin, she recounts her experience at Kansa where she practically sleeps with almost all the political leaders. Aimée is not alone in her bizarre sexual desire, the theme becomes evident when at the end of the novel, Modin is tortured to death by white soldiers, while Aimée escapes unpunished. Mrs. Jefferson is also a perpetuator of the violent sexual desires.

First there was a noise inside the house, of glass breaking, metal dropping. I turned to look. Mrs. Jefferson held me tighter. “Don’t spoil it Modin, someone a bit drunk, that’s all.” Next, something cold and sharp hit me. It felt like a blow then, just a hard external blow. For a while I felt no inner pain. Then the object was removed and my own hot blood was rushing down the side of my neck. I got up. The object was into my chest—inept stab—then sliced my neck…Mrs. Jefferson says her husband kept stabbing me till the other dancers came and pulled him away.” (Why Are We? p. 156).

Mrs. Jefferson’s perverse sexual desire for Modin can be classified as being racist in the sense that she knows her husband will not take it lightly should he catch her having an affair with anyone. She therefore chooses to have an affair with Modin, probably due to the fact that by virtue of Modin being black, she will not be punished in case her husband does anything sinister to Modin. She knows that the violent nature of her sexual desires can only be experimented with a black man and Modin is a convenient choice. It is not surprising that when Mr. Jefferson catches them having an affair in his house, it is only Modin who gets severely stabbed fatally. Even at the verge of losing his life, both Mrs. Jefferson and Aimée insist that Modin tells them that he loves them. This clearly shows how selfish they both are. Armah uses this to show the extent which the white will go to use the black man for their selfish advantage.
The architectural structure of the Bureau is also significant in Armah’s treatment of racism. It is not by mistake that at the bottom is Ngulo, the black brother, who is made to act busy in spite of the fact that the office does next to nothing about any revolution. “Esteban Ngulo occupies the lower office … otherwise he concentrates his attention on the endless round of fixing stamps on piles of envelopes, typing out long list of addresses, and at the end of the day, carrying everything to the post office around the corner” (Why Are We? p. 51). Ngulo, who is black, is made to concentrate on boring and unchallenging routine while Jorge Manuel who is half Portuguese enjoys the luxurious and well-furnished office above.

There has always been to me something sad in the relationship of Jorge Manuel and Esteban Ngulo, the mulatto and the dark silent African. Perhaps at first, I had not wanted to think of it directly, choosing instead to see them as brothers cooperating in the long fight for our country’s freedom. But how long would it have been possible not to see that the lighter brothers drank spirits upstairs with suave travelers, while down below the black one licked the tasteless back of stamps? (Why Are We? p. 51).

While Jorge Manuel sips sweet wine, Ngulo licks the tasteless back of stamps. Armah here highlights how disadvantageous the African is in a very sarcastic manner. Affirming this view, Oluchi-Olunyan (1990) says “the occasional yoking of “white” to some unpleasantness perpetuated by natives of European or American races creates an uncompromising symbolic destructiveness represented by the geographic West” (91). Though much emphasis is not laid on the fact that Jorge Manuel “has had a University Education in Lisbon” (Why Are We? p. 50), Armah subtly contrasts this by emphasizing on the struggle that Esteban Ngulo has to go through as a blackman before he could get the little education that he is so proud of. “EstabanNgulo has never been to a university. He says he was lucky after finishing elementary school to get a job in a commercial warehouse in Kiloma, our capital. It was on the job that he learned to type using one of the company’s old machines” (Why Are We? p. 50). The unfair disadvantage of how
Ngulo is in terms of education goes a long way to show how unequal opportunities are given to the black race when it comes to education. It is therefore no wonder why Armah harshly criticizes the scholarship offered to a few blacks while the masses are left to struggle to educate themselves.

In Armah’s treatment of racism, blacks being subjected to unfair treatment by the whites is a constant feature in all the novels under study. There is, however, a slight variation in how he handles the theme in *Fragments*. This is because unlike *The Beautiful Ones* and *Why Are We?* where blacks like Kofi Billy and Modin are subjected to unfair treatment by the whites, the situation in *Fragment* varies. Juana does not set out deliberately to maltreat blacks but it is her subtle perception of the Africans in the community that can be interpreted as being racist. Racism in *Fragments* is therefore subvert while the same theme in *The Beautiful Ones* and *Why Are We?* can be said to be overt.

**Slavery**

Slavery is another theme which, although it cannot be considered as a major theme, is also dominant in the novels under study. Armah does not deal with the physical form of slavery where blacks are physically transported to Europe but looks at it psychologically. Although Armah acknowledges that slavery is believed to have been abolished decades ago, he is of the view that it still exist in various forms in the Africa. His emphasis on slavery is purely metaphorical. In *The Beautiful Ones*, he likens the chiefs who sold their kith and kin into slavery to the current politicians. Armah lashes out at the “factorship” role played by chiefs during the slave trade. He compares current African leaders with such chiefs. In a sarcastic manner, Armah chastises Koomsom for the softness of his hands to highlight the fact that if those hands were
truly working for the well-being of the masses, it would not have been so soft. Although it is
obvious that Armah’s preoccupation in his first novel is corruption, he does not miss the
opportunity to comment on the contribution made by African leaders to assist the whites in the
perpetuation of the slave trade. Ojong Ayuk (1984) comments on this by opining that apart from
the whites exploiting the blacks, the novel compels readers to “see Koomson as the latest in the
line of indigenous exploiters” (45). Ayuk laments that as if slavery is not exploitative enough,
African leaders continue their own form of the trade long after it has been abolished by the
whites.

Although Armah does not go straight to talk about the issue of slavery in *Fragments*, there are
hints and traces in the novel to buttress the theme as being one of his preoccupations just as he
does in *The Beautyful Ones*. “Over in the far distance, she could see the white form, very small
at this distance of the old slave castle which had now become the proud seat of the new rulers,
the blind children of slavery themselves” (*Fragments* p. 50-51). This is how Armah describes a
simple castle. His choice of words like “proud seat” and “new rulers” indicates his distaste of
African leaders who still treat their fellow Africans like slaves. And the fact that African leaders
still live in those castles, supports the fact that nothing has really changed for the masses after
slavery was abolished. Ode S. Ogede (1993) shares in Armah’s disappointment in African
leaders by reiterating that “political independence, far from ending the problems of colonialism,
was in fact intensifying these problems. As African leaders who took over from the European
masters simply slipped on the robes of their European predecessors and then marched on in their
foot prints, thus emerging the new colonialists” (794). This same castle is described in Baako’s
documentary for production which is rejected. “ON HILL IN DISTANCE, A MASSIVE
STRUCTURE OF SLAVE CASTLE.MS: SECTION OF CASTLE, GUNS POINTING OVER
VILLAGE” (Fragments P. 209-210). In Armah’s view, nothing has changed in Ghana since independence because African leaders who took over after independence are not any better than the slave masters themselves. They are still live in the castles. And this validates Armah’s assertion. He reiterates this in The Beautiful Ones when he writes “the sons of the nation were now in charge, after all. How completely the newthing took after theold” (The Beautiful Ones p.10). Ojong Ayuk (1984) writes on this attitude of African leaders “that ousting the powerful will make no difference since the newly-installed political elite were subject to the same process of rapid decay and corruption” (43).

Armah uses a different approach to discuss the theme of slavery in his third novel. He leaves the reader to imagine his or her own history as a fiction of modern slavery which appears as Western education envisaged as the planned brain drain. In this novel, Modin’s journey to the West is used by Armah to depict the life of the historical slave sold out to the West during the era of the Slave Trade. Apart from using Modin’s journey as a representation of the slave trade, the completion of his education is also an envisaged role of a latter day factor or middleman, another historical figure in the history of African Slave Trade.

Unable to deceive myself I cannot aspire to help others deceive themselves. I should help myself survive here by pretending. By bathing in this present filth is a preparation, a sacred apprenticeship, a getting ready for some larger purifying vocation but I cannot. What is ordained for us I cannot escape – the fate of the evolué, the turning of the assimilated African, not into something creating its own life, but into an eater of cramps in the house of slavery (Why Are We? P. 84).

Modin here laments how he is being prepared among other Africans to play the role of the modern day factor. Although he is able to see through the lies of the West and tries to disassociate himself by rejecting the scholarship, his involvement with white women makes this impossible as it eventually leads to his tragic death. Unlike Modin who is able to see the “factor
role” he is being prepared to play, his other African colleagues do not see their stay in America as such and when Modin tries to draw their attention to the fact that they are merely “African rarity to keep the blest entertained” (Why Are We? p. 101). Mike seems to see nothing wrong with it. Richard Peck (1989) comments that “Armah’s bitterness now encompasses the African intellectual as well...he hides like the slave factor of old, behind the walls of education as he sells his people into slavery” (34). Modin’s affair with white women is another instance where the theme of slavery is clearly exemplified in Why Are We? Inspite of several warnings from Naita “they just want to mess you up. If you’re dumb enough to treat them seriously, that just what they’ll do to you” (Why Are We p. 121), and solo, Modin still finds himself enslaved to white women. As if the gruesome encounter with Mr. Jefferson due to his affair with Mrs. Jefferson is not enough, he still goes ahead to have an affair with Aimée. “I had seen her, found her attractive in that special, almost – too-ripe way. I had not thought she would come to me like this. I too needed someone like her. I wished she were Naita” (Why Are We? p.130). He feels unworthy to be loved by Mrs. Jefferson. Modin is of the opinion that Mrs. Jefferson is “almost-too-ripe” for him so it comes as a surprise to him that she wants to have an affair with him. Edward Lobb (1974) shares a different view on Modin’s affairs with white women. He is of the opinion that Modin’s inability to stay away from white women in spite of the danger, is attributable to some forces at work within him. In his words, “Modin has intelligence to see the danger, but the forces at work within him are so strong that he continues in the same path even after he discovers Aimée’s true nature” (250). There are several times that Modin uses such words to describe his association with white women but he still finds reason to go back to them. “Nothing surprises in all of this. My life here has had a self-destructive swing all the time. Only I haven’t thought seriously about it” (Why Are We? p. 156). One simply wonders why Modin
chooses to destroy his life by having one affair after another with white women. According to Modin himself, “Mrs. Jefferson was a long free slide along slippery paths, but I did not care about the danger” (Why Are We? p. 158). So enslaved to white women is he to the point that in as much as he admits that they are nothing but death traps, he still cannot detach himself from them. It is therefore not surprising that he decides to embark on a revolutionary mission – a purely black affair – with a white woman and this eventually leads to his tragic death. The “factorship” role played by Africans in the slave trade that Armah talks about in The Beautiful Ones and Fragments in still repeated in Why Are We So Blest? “Our history continues the same. Horrible thought. I am here because I am a factor. A factor in our history. A factor in our destruction. Ah, there are no visible chains, but the carnage continues the all same” (Why Are We p. 160). Here, Armah draws readers’ attention to the fact that although slavery is not being perpetuated as it used to be in the past, when Africans were put in chains and transported abroad, the practice still continues. The modern day “factors” are those who accept the scholarships.

Factors then, scholarship holders, B.A.’S, M.A.’S, P.H.D’s now. The privileged now, the privileged servants of white empire, factors then, factors now. The physical walls stand unused now … as if slavery belonged to a past history. The destruction has reached higher, that is all. The factors pay is now given in advance and sold men are not mentioned … The easier for the givers of these scholarships, this factors’ pay, to structure the recipient’s lives into modern factorship (Why Are We? p. 161).

According to Armah, contrary to the general perception that slavery had been abolished, it has rather become worse. This is because it is now perpetuated in such a way that modern day factors are unconscious of the role they play in this modern day slavery. In the words of Edward Lobb (1974) “the African has been educated by the white man only to fill a particular need and is therefore in the position formally occupied by “factors” in the slave trade” (243). Lobb clearly shares in Armah’s view that the Africans who accept scholarships to study abroad are nothing
more than modern day factors. The castle that Armah describes as a symbol of slavery is again repeated in *Why Are We So Blest?*

The desire to go in a ship was greatest the day we went on the excursion to Christianborg Castle. The guide was such a proud man… he was proud to work at the castle … the happy guide told us that wing has been renovated at a cost of two and a half million pounds to make it fit for the president to move in. the British governor used to live there before this colony got a new name (*Why Are We?* P. 76).

Armah is reiterating the fact that apart from the change in name of the colony, nothing has changed since the slave masters left. He draws a subtle attention to the fact that “two and a half million pounds” has to be spent on renovating the castle in order to “make it fit for the president to move in”. The guide’s happiness can be said to be a metaphor representing the suffering masses who see nothing wrong with the fact that African leaders who are given power after the abolishing of slavery are still perpetuating the act in their own ways. “The guide told us it was extremely important for the president to live exactly where the British governor had lived” (*Why Are We?* p. 76). Attention is here drawn to why it is important for the president to live “exactly where the British governor had lived”. “Not only were the structures that facilitated colonial subjugation and exploitation left intact or fortified, infected by European materialism, the leaders became wild in their drive to acquire the luxury goods of Europe”. Says Ode. S. Ogede (794).

The factor role played by Africans themselves in the slave trade is mentioned by Armah.

Here is where the factor always stood … the factor - he was a very important person, the one whose job it was to get the slaves from inland … this room is where the slave dealers, stayed while bargaining with the Europeans about the price of the slaves. You have seen the thickness of the walls … that protected the factor in case some slaves escaped or there was a rebellion here. (*Why Are We?* p.78)

Right from *The Beautiful Ones*, through *Fragments* and *Why Are We?*, Armah lashes out at Africans who serve as middle men and aid the whites in the actual slavery and other forms of
slavery after the abolishment of the act. It is therefore not surprising that Armah dwells a lot on this. Armah also draws attention to the fact that Africans who play this factor role are usually well protected. In the era of slavery, thick walls were used to protect these factors while in modern slavery, according to Naita the factors are “happy to get the degrees, then go home and relax on the shoulders of our sold people. The end of Western education is not work but self-indulgence” (Why Are We? p. 161).

From the discussion above, it is evident that themes such as corruption, racism and slavery are all common with the novels under study although they manifest differently in each novel.
CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we reiterate and summarize the narrative grammar by which all Armah’s texts have been studied in this work. The constant features common to the plots of all the novels under study are the following elements:

A hapless protagonist

Corrupt environment

Forces for and against the protagonist

Protagonist then becomes an anti-hero

The end is always negative

There is no resolution at the end.

In Armah’s plot, there is always a hapless protagonist who finds himself in a corrupt environment. For instance, in *The Beautiful Ones*, the man is the hapless protagonist. His haplessness comes from his inability to convince his family and society to desist from corruption. In *Fragments*, Baako, the protagonist is also hapless due to the fact that he is also unable to convince his family and society that corruption is detrimental to the nation in spite of his numerous attempts. Modin’s situation is not different from that of the man and Baako. Although he is seen doing a lot to cause a change in his society including abandoning his education to join a revolutionary movement, he ends up being as hapless as Baako and the man. There are always forces for and against the progress of the protagonist. In *The Beautiful Ones*, Teacher is the only character who is seen to be on the side of the man. They seem to share a lot
in common when it comes to their desire to survive the corrupt environment in which they live. The characters who represent forces against the man’s anti-corrupt stance are numerous. Oyo, her mother, Koomson and his wife just to mention a few. In *Fragments*, Baako equally has forces for and against him. And just as the man, the forces against Baako also outnumber those working for him. Apart from Naana, Juana and Ocran who are on the side of Baako, characters such as Efua, Araba, Asante-Smith are seen impeding the progress of Baako. In *Why Are We?* Modin is faced with a similar situation. Apart from Naita and Solo who are on his side, characters such as Aimeé, Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson, and all the white characters are against Modin. Due to the inability of the protagonist to overcome the odds, he becomes an anti-hero. The man’s anti-heroism is due to the fact that he is unable to make his society any better than what it is from the beginning of the novel. The man’s anti-heroism is also due to the fact that he is constantly at the receiving end of abuse and insults. A trait which is uncharacteristic of a hero. Baako’s situation is not different from that of the man. Although he is seen putting in some form of resistance, trying in his own small way to challenge the wrong societal norms, he is also unable to cause any form of change and ends up with the same fate of an anti-hero just as the man. Modin also does all he can including quitting his studies at the university in order to order to effect a revolution but ends up becoming an anti-hero just like the man and Baako. The novels always end negatively with no resolution at the end. There is no resolution at the end of *The Beautiful Ones*, the anonymity of the man remains unresolved and as to whether the coup will succeed in eradicating corruption from the man’s society is an issue left for readers to imagine. The end of the novel can also be considered to be negative because in spite of the man’s anti-corrupt stance throughout the novel, it comes as a surprise to readers when he helps Koomson to escape punishment even though he is fully aware that Koomson is guilty of corrupt practices.
There are a host of unresolved issues at the end of *Fragments* too. Issues pertaining to Baako’s detention at the asylum such as: how long he will be detained there, what will happen to him after his detention and as to whether his mother and sister will ever understand and appreciate his anti-corrupt stance are among a host of issues left unresolved. *Fragments* also ends negatively with the protagonist being wrongly accused of being insane and thrown into the asylum. Modin is also unable to resolve the issue that compels him to abandon his studies in pursuit of a revolutionary movement to cause a change in his society. The novel also ends negatively with Modin losing his life tragically. It has been proven that Armah’s protagonist under study are anti-heroes because of their peculiar traits. According to *The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*, “an anti-hero is a man or woman who is a main character in a story, film, play but who lacks traditional heroic qualities, or whose circumstances do not allow for heroic action.” Armah’s protagonists possess similar traits. The man’s anti-heroic nature has been established by his inability to fight and change the corruption in his society. Baako’s anti-heroic nature is also from the fact that he becomes overwhelmed by the corrupt and materialistic demands of his family and society and is finally thrown into an asylum while Modin’s anti-heroic nature is also attributable to his inability to cause any revolutionary change. Another characteristic of an anti-hero is the fact that they are more lovable and interesting characters. They appeal to the readers because readers can relate and connect with them on a more human level. Readers can easily understand and relate with the man’s struggle with his society because corruption is a common practice now. Baako’s frustration with his family the demands of his family can be said to be a common phenomenon in most African societies where an individual who travels abroad and comes back is expected to be able to satisfy all the material needs of his or her family and society. Although Modin’s situation is a bit rare, Armah’s skillful use of words
easily aids the reader to identify with him. As has been firmly established in the novels under study, it is a constant feature that:

A hapless protagonist who lives in a corrupt environment becomes an anti-hero and is unable to overcome the odds because there are forces working for and against him. This makes the end always negative.
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