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## Abstract

This research explored the relationship between Armah's novel *The beautiful ones are not yet born* (1969) and Plato's *The republic* (375 BC), focusing on its use of parody to critique Nkrumah's *Consciencism* (1964). Drawing on Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, as well as Mannheim's theory of Utopia and Ideology, the study aimed to analyze the way Armah incorporated elements from Plato's *The republic* and employed parody to critique Nkrumah's ideology while considering the influence of social classes on the ideologies he portrayed in his novel. Using research methods such as textual analysis and literary criticism, the study examined instances of stylization, intertextual references, and satirical elements in Armah's work. This research contributed to our understanding of dialogism and ideology in African literature, providing valuable insights for scholars interested in postcolonial studies and political theory. It established a foundation for further exploration of dialogical relationships and ideological critique, opening avenues for future studies on the influence of literary traditions and political ideologies on societal beliefs and narratives. The findings highlighted the successful incorporation of Plato's *The republic*, shedding light on the dialogical connections and the limitations identified by Armah of Nkrumah's *Consciencism*. Additionally, the analysis revealed that the ideologies depicted in Armah's book are shaped by the social classes present in the narrative, emphasizing the role of social dynamics in shaping belief systems and power structures.

**Key words:** Dialogism, ideology, parody, social class, utopia.

## Introduction

There have been one or two attempts to take utopian constructions literally by trying to set them up as actual communities, but the histories of these communities make melancholy reading. Life imitates literature up to a point, but hardly up to that point. (Frye, 1965, p. 324)

In his article *Varieties of literary Utopias* (1965), Frye suggested that the gap between utopian theory and practice was significant. While utopian literature provided a framework for an ideal society or community, in practice, these communities often fell short of their theoretical ideals. The idea of a utopia, a perfect society or community, has been a recurrent theme in literature and philosophy throughout history. Utopian thinkers have often proposed radical solutions to the social, political, and economic problems of their time, envisioning a society that is free from poverty, inequality, injustice, and conflict. However, the practical realization of these ideals has been elusive, and the history of attempts to create utopian communities is a mixed one, examples like the USSR and Nazi Germany or even Maoist China come to our mind.

This tendency was seen in the African context. The end of colonialism represented a major turning point in African history, while the theoretical tenants of independence were somewhat appealing, the same cannot be said about its realization, as corruption, despotism, and authoritarianism swept aside the utopian vision of community, collective action, and social and economic justice in many postcolonial African contexts. Instead of the envisioned equality and equitable distribution of resources, these societies witnessed the concentration of power, the erosion of democratic principles, and the exploitation of their own people by leaders who prioritized self-interest over the welfare of the population. As a result, the gap between the utopian aspirations and the lived realities of many African nations widened, leaving the majority of the population marginalized, impoverished, and deprived of the very opportunities and services the utopias aimed to provide.

From an idealist standpoint, the practical application of a utopia was, to a large extent, a corruptive process. Plato saw the ideal as stable, unchanging, and pure, floating in the Sky of ideas, isolated from any degenerative forces. Its descent from the sky, through its application, however, can be viewed as a reduction, a degeneration of the *eidos*. The ideal being compromised by the complexities and limitations of the real world, by power dynamics, economic systems, social norms, and individual motivations.

A major manifestation of this would be Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born* (1968), which offered a poignant critique of the African Utopia by exposing the stark contrast between the idealistic aspirations of postcolonial Africa and the harsh realities of the ground. Set in Ghana during the post-independence era, the novel delved into the disillusionment and moral decay that plagued the society, challenging the utopian visions that were once held. The protagonist, unnamed throughout the novel, served as a symbol of resistance against the corruption and moral compromises prevalent in society. His refusal to succumb to societal pressures reflected the desire for a purer, more just African utopia that had been envisioned. We used Plato's *The republic* (370 B.C) as a model in our analysis, it presented a utopian model of an ideal society that served as a cornerstone in the exploration of utopian thought. Written in ancient Greece, the work envisaged a society governed by philosopher kings, aiming to establish justice, harmony, and a well-ordered state. Being the first great critic of corruption and the democratic regime, Plato offered through his work a comprehensive blueprint for creating a utopia by delving into various aspects of governance, education, and social organization.

The purpose of this research was to identify the dialogical relationship between Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born* with Plato's *The republic* and Nkrumah's *Consciencism* and relate to the larger post-colonial. Along with elucidating the causes for Africa's post-colonial political degeneration, through a platonic perspective. We would argue that taking a philosophical approach to just governance, corruption, social justice would help elucidate the

importance of Ethos for the rulers, that corruption sprouts from the moral disintegration of ruling individuals, spreading to all layers of society. Plato offered us a framework to analyze how morally dislocated societies come into existence and how cities become degenerative.

## **Issue in Context**

Armah's work *The beautiful ones are not yet born* had been extensively studied and criticized from various perspectives, allowing us to gain insights from diverse analyses and interpretations. As a novel that had sparked a great deal of debate, it had been interpreted as describing the disappointment of African countries after gaining independence, a sense of vengeance, accompanied by pessimism and disillusionment.

It was regarded by Nnolim, in his article *Dialectic as Form: Pejorism in the Novels of Armah*, aimed to show that Armah was a writer who found joy in portraying themes of failure, disappointment, and loss through his creative vision. Nnolim referred to Armah as a "dark writer" and "writer of decadence," who enjoyed depicting images of decay and corruption, which can be disturbing to readers. He cited Achebe's famous remark on Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born* being "a sick book; sick, not with the sickness of Ghana but with the sickness of the human condition."

Kibera (1979), the Kenyan writer, also thinks Armah's first novel reveals no less than the author's total contempt for Africa itself. He called *The Beautiful Ones*, "a work of vengeance. In his article *Pessimism and the African Novelist: Ayi Kwei Armah's The beautiful ones are not yet born*. He claimed:

*The beautiful ones are not yet born* is, like Wole Soyinka's *The man died*, a work of vengeance. Armah does not seek to understand why independent Africa has been corrupted. It is assumed throughout this novel that decadence has eaten into our very bone, and history.  
(p. 64).

Kibera noted that vengeance appeared as a destructive force in the novel, perpetuating a cycle of retribution and violence that ultimately contributed to the overall pessimism of the

book. Kibera argued that the futility of vengeance was emphasized by the fact that even those who sought revenge ultimately end up suffering, with their actions only adding to the chaos and corruption of the society in which they lived. Kibera suggested that this portrayal of vengeance reflected the sense of hopelessness and powerlessness that many African nations felt in the years following independence. It is true, to some extent, that Armah's writing was characterized by dark, atmospheric, and overall pessimistic tones. However, in our opinion, such assertions confuse the means of conveying a message and the message itself. An in-depth reading of *The beautiful ones are not yet born* revealed that, formulated in Platonic manner, Nnolim and Kibera focused on the world of change and illusion, neglecting the intelligible. In fact, Armah was not a writer of decadence or vengeance, but a writer of hope and renewal.

The setting of the novel was another way Armah transmitted his message. The state of decay in Ghana had been described as a metaphor for Ghana's post-independence decay itself. The city was littered with abandoned buildings, congested streets, and overflowing sewers, all visual manifestations of the social, economic, and political chaos of the period. The novel's protagonist, a man who strived to maintain moral integrity in the face of the corruption and greed of those around him. He was portrayed as a flawed and imperfect human being struggling to find meaning in a society that had gone astray. His journey was a metaphor of knowledge.

In *the beautiful ones are not yet born* the man's futile attempts to live above the corrosive decay and corruption which doomed his world to abysmal failure: he was insulted by both his wife, mother-in-law, and other leapers after "the gleam" and was labeled either "a wicked man" "who would never prosper. Political corruption and foulness have become the normal way of life. The net had been made in special Ghanaian way that allowed the corrupt people to pass through it. A net to catch only the small, dispensable fellows, trying in their tormented blindness to jump and attain the gleam and the comfort the only way these things could be done. As Solomon in his article *A Commentary on Ayi Kwei Armah's The beautiful ones are not yet born* (1974) claimed:

That decay is natural to wood. Man's effort to arrest decay is mocked through the use of the trade names 'Ronuk' and 'Mansion' evocative of products which suddenly seem trivial in the context. Corruption become natural to Ghana and as polish cannot hinder organic rot, so no attempt at cleanliness will hinder moral rot. (p. 27).

Nkrumah's corrupt regime was being exonerated from its betrayal of the masses since the decay of natural processes and institutions were perceived to be normal and natural. A regime that resembled, in mode and intention, that of their white predecessors. It is true to some extent that, in the novel, corruption was a natural process, inherent to the Ghanaian condition. However, we asserted that such a presence of corruption is only possible because Ghana was a republic based on desires, and not on virtue. Plato warned us against the potential disastrous impact of an unfit leadership, creating dysfunctional cities based on injustice and selfish interests.

The parallels between the Ghana of Armah's time and Plato's Athens made the comparison between the two logical. Plato himself was disillusioned with the political climate in Athens, characterized by alternating periods of oligarchy and democracy. Eventually, he concluded that all existing states were poorly governed, and the only hope for justice laid in the rule of true philosophers as kings. Similarly, Armah's generation, like many Africans, was shaped by the promises of change following the overthrow of colonial rule. The era of African personality, advocated by Nkrumah, democracy, and socialism, became mere slogans. However, once these individuals gained power, they found it convenient to maintain the status, creating even more layers of deception. Sadly, life remained unchanged.

In literature and philosophy, some ideas transcended time and space, resonated in a variety of writings, and illuminated human experience. Among these enduring concepts was Plato's famous allegory of the cave from his major work, *the republic*. A metaphorical exploration of enlightenment, perception, and the search for truth, this allegory had inspired countless writers and thinkers throughout history. In the field of African literature, Armah's

novel *The beautiful ones are not yet born* reflected allegorical themes while dealing with the complexities of postcolonial Ghana. Plato's allegory of the cave invited readers into a hypothetical world where prisoners, confined in a dark cave, faced a wall upon which shadows of objects are projected. These shadows, created by a fire behind them, were the prisoners' sole perception of reality. As Wa thiong'o in *The allegory of the cave: Language, democracy and a new world order* claimed:

The 'beautiful ones,' comparable to Plato's incorruptible true philosophers, had not yet been born, but until they were born, society would continue to be ruled badly. And they could be born, because in the socratic character of the Man—that is, in his pure incorruptibility—we are shown possibility of such a birth. (1996,p. 3).

However, Plato's work *The republic* was not only connected to Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born* through the allegory of the cave; other concepts, such as the idea of the "city soul", "the ship of state" were also illustrated in Armah's novel.

This research is principally interested in expanding on Ngugi's insight into Armah's book by developing further the parallels between Plato's *The republic* and the Ghanaian republic as described by Armah. As shown above in the literature review, little attention has been given to the place of moral philosophy in Arma's book. Apart from Ngugi, most of critics have placed emphasis on the sensible world. We have shown that indeed, the theme of corruption, bribery, injustice are put into relief in the novel. But what is often overlooked is the bright side of the coin, that is, the intelligible world. As we shall see, the intelligible is related very closely to Utopia. Utopia, as we shall see, has a double etymological meaning, "nowhere" or "everywhere" and "the island of happiness". As a utopian writing, *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, we shall argue, is not pessimistic as a surface reading may show, but a book full of hope. Hope, we shall content is a dominant hallmark of Utopia, by contrast with ideology.

As we deal with the utopian dimension of *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, we shall address some questions present in Plato's *The republic*, what is justice ? Who is the happiest man, the one who does injustice or the one who sticks to justice no matter what ? How can we

better see justice in the soul? How can a state promote justice? How did Consciencism, a Utopian thought fail? What could be Plato's insights into the Nkrumean experience ? We shall delve into these matters as go through our analysis.

## Methodology

### Utopia and Afrotopia

“Utopia”, coined by More (1516), was a fictional island society that embodied his vision of an ideal society, the island of Utopia was described as a place where all citizens have equal access to education, healthcare, and a comfortable standard of living. He was inspired by the explorers of Vespucci and Columbus, as well as the scholar Poliziano, in his writing and political philosophy. Vespucci and Columbus had both made voyages to the New World, and their descriptions of the indigenous peoples and their societies influenced More’s vision of a utopian society, also influenced by Poliziano’s writings on the ideal society and his promotion of classical learning. The ideas of these men can be seen in More’s own work. He was familiar with Plato’s Republic, which outlined a vision of a just society that was governed by philosopher kings. Both Plato and More imagined alternative ways of organizing society but they differed in the way they presented that fiction, More’s *Utopia* was more explicitly critical of contemporary European society, while Plato’s *The republic* was more concerned with abstract philosophical ideas. More, worked on a tradition of thought that goes back to ancient Greece and was nourished by the myth of the Golden Age, as well as the myth of Cockygne. However, today the word was used more broadly to refer to earlier texts, as well as the tradition of thought that explored imaginative solutions to reality. It was a concept that described an idealized society that was free from the problems and issues that existed in the real world. Utopias are usually created as models for how society could be improved and to motivate people to fight for a better future. While a perfect society may not be achievable in reality, utopias can be used as a source of inspiration and a way to encourage social and political reform.

The word utopia was the milestone for the creation of new words, among them: eutopia, euchronia, and dystopia. The term “eutopia” was often used interchangeably with “utopia”, which referred to an ideal society that existed only in the imagination. However, “eutopia” was

described as a society that was achievable and realistic, while “utopia” was used to describe an impossible society. Projecting utopian aspirations into the future implied a change in the nature of utopia. From eu/utopia, good/non-place, we moved to euchronia, good place in the future, euchronia was born out of a change of mentality that shaped the optimistic worldview that prevailed in Europe at the time. If utopia was generally considered “too good to be practical”, then dystopia was “too bad to be practical”. Dystopias were characterized by fear, oppression, and lack of freedom. The term dystopia was not only used for imaginary places that were worse than real places but also for works that described such places.

The Senegalese writer Sarr explained that the development of African societies required fundamental modification in the way Africans saw themselves and their place in the world. He called for a rejection of predominant Western narratives of progress and development and a renewed emphasis on traditional African values, culture, and ways of life. He highlighted the importance for Africans to create and undertake the “long process of trial and error” and abandon unsuccessful transplants. Africa must heal itself, he suggested:

African scholars must take responsibility for a way of thinking that would have a bearing on their own destiny by founding a scientific discourse that comes from the material life of their own socio-political contexts. (p. 145).

Afrotopia has always been associated with the future, so the creation of what was called “Afrofuturism” was fundamental. Afro-futurism expressed concepts of black identity and freedom through art, creative work, and activism, envisioned a liberating future for black lives. They sought to create a space for black people to imagine a better future, that was not constrained by their past or mainstream Western narratives. Both concepts encouraged black people to recover and reshape their history, present and future in whatever way they can, which celebrated their culture and identity.

Socialism was an important aspect of some African utopian visions, it was a political and economic ideology that promoted a system in which goods and services were produced, distributed, and exchanged. However, it was more a mental conditioning, or an attitude of mind

established to achieve rational relationships and harmony in society. This ideology was owned and controlled by entire communities rather than by individuals or corporations. The goal of socialism was to create more equality. In Africa, this strategy was developed in the post-colonial period.

In his article *African Socialism : Scientific or Utopian ?* (1967) Armah suggested that African socialism was a response to the need for post-Independence leaders to maintain a sense of unity among diverse populations while retaining control over the structures of power inherited from colonial rulers, often acting in a contradictory manner, projecting revolutionary ideals through words while practicing a form of conspicuous consumption and maintaining an authoritarian hold on their societies. *The beautiful ones are not yet born* is a follow-up to this article in which he criticized Ghana's independence. Nkrumah, its first president, also nicknamed the Osagyefo, which means "redeemer" in the Akan language, believed that socialism could lay the economic and social foundations for an independent Africa, and he worked hard to unite all African peoples to create a strong, unified continent. He established the foundations of what came to be known as "Nkrumahism" and defined it as the ideology of a new Africa, independent and completely free from imperialism, organized on a continental scale. His most important contribution to the African project was his magnum-opus *Consciencism* (1964) in which he defined as philosophical framework emphasized the synthesis of African, socialist, and humanist thought to guide African nations toward social and economic progress. However, the failure of his project is often outlined in *The beautiful ones are not yet born*.

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 they did not have. We were ready here for big and beautiful things, but what we had was our own black men hugging new paunches scrambling to ask the white man to welcome them onto our backs.  
(1968, p. 94)

Another key figure was Nyerere, who argued that African societies were traditionally communal, and that this communalism could be used to build socialist societies. He initiated

one of the most famous socialist experiments in Africa, the Ujamaa policy in Tanzania. He believed that collective organization would help to prevent poverty from arising and the only solution was work, where everyone worked together to strengthen the community and elevate it to the highest level, the project had a strong emphasis on agriculture as the pillar of the Tanzanian economy, equality reigned and there was no room for exploitation, as Nyerere claimed:

In a really socialist society no person exploits another; everyone who is physically able to work does so; every worker obtains a just return for the labour he performs; and the incomes derived from different types of work are not grossly divergent. (Nyerere, 1968, p. 15).

## **Pan-Africanism**

Pan-Africanism was a movement that emerged in response to Africa's and its people's historical oppression and exploitation. It promoted African solidarity and self-determination, as well as the celebration of African culture and identity. Pan-Africanists believed that through uniting Africa, colonial systems could be dismantled, and prosperity achieved. Prominent African philosophers and leaders such as Senghor and Lumumba were critical in the advancement of Pan-Africanist philosophy. Following WWII, the movement gained traction, as seen by Nkrumah's successful assembling of the first All-African Peoples' Conference in 1958. This meeting welcomed representatives from all around the continent, reviving the pan-African movement. As Wamba-dia-Wamba in *Pan Africanism, Democracy, Social Movements and Mass Struggles* explained:

The horizon of Pan-Africanism was to develop into a form of internationalism and emancipatory politics. The latter starts from the conviction that things are not to remain so because they are so: people may live differently in favour of a political consciousness which is an active, perspective attitude to reality, politics and a prescriptive invention. (Wamba-dia-Wamba, 1996, p. 10).

Pan-Africanism was not solely shaped by political leaders; African theorists and intellectuals also played a crucial role in its development. Figures such as Fanon, and Nkrumah, contributed significant theoretical frameworks for understanding and advancing Pan-Africanist

principles. Fanon's writings on decolonization and the psychological effects of colonialism provided valuable insight into the liberation struggle. Nkrumah's concept of "African Personality" emphasized the need for African nations to shape their destinies based on their unique cultural and historical contexts. Nkrumah's obsession with Pan-Africanism was illustrated in *The beautiful ones are not yet born* with the constant references to the African political iconography, with *The Atlantic Caprice* being its starkest example, as described in this passage:

Swinging time at the Atlantic- Caprice. Young juicy vaginas waiting for him in some hired place paid for by the government. Important people must relax on weekends. The week is filled with so much killing work. Speeches to prepare. On moral uplift. Socialism. Revolution. Dedication. Interviews to give. The role of the old man in the emancipation of everybody else. (p. 105)

## **Ideology & Utopia**

Mannheim's understanding of ideology was complex and multifaceted. On the one hand, he shared the Marxist view that ideology was a tool used by the ruling class to maintain their power by presenting a distorted version of reality that justified their interests and maintained the status quo.

The concept "ideology" reflects the one discovery which emerged from political conflict, namely, that ruling groups can in their thinking become so intensively interest-bound to a situation that they are simply no longer able to see certain facts which would undermine their sense of domination. (Mannheim, 1949, p. 68)

He also believed that oppressed groups may develop their own utopian visions of a better future, which may distort their perception of the present reality. Guided by a wishful representation of reality, Mannheim characterized their thinking as "incapable of correctly diagnosing an existing condition of society." (1936, p. 68). Mannheim's understanding of ideology in *Ideology and Utopia* (1936) encompassed both a particular and a total conception. The total conception, or *Weltanschauung*, referred to an all-encompassing view of the world adopted by a given group that reflected the general ideas and thought systems of a historical

epoch. According to this conception, an ideology was an interdependent structure of thinking typical of social systems that could not be reduced to the aggregated and psychologically comprehensible views of concrete individuals. Mannheim argued that the social situation in which a thinker was embedded influenced the very structure of their thought and that the origins of ideology could be traced to the group and even mass attitudes and views.

The particular conception of ideology assumed that truth criteria were universal, allowing for discussion between proponents of different worldviews. It did not view an adversary's entire thought as ideological, but only certain specific arguments that could be deliberately misrepresented by individuals. Unlike the total conception, the particular conception was concerned with the individual.

During his intellectual career, Armah held a critical stance towards the African leadership, he objected that it was mined with corruption and self-interest. He argued, similar to Mannheim, that the African ideologues, like Nkrumah, used their political aura and utopian ideas to create ideological systems that would maintain and reinforce their interests. The ideology & Utopia dichotomy can be witnessed in *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, particularly at the time of the *coup-d'état*.

## **Dystopia**

The first recorded use of dystopia dates back to 1868, and was found in a parliamentary speech by John Stuart Mill who attempted to name the idea of "dystopia," as opposed to utopia. Often used interchangeably with "dystopia" or "negative utopia," as opposed to utopias often characterized by oppressive social or political structures and environmental catastrophe; the constituents of a better world, making people aware that the future could be worse than the present (the death of utopia). Humans shifted from the hopeful dream of Victorian optimism to the age of confusion into a nightmarish of the twentieth century.

The dystopian premise was observed in Christianity. Both the Old and New Testaments contained descriptions of the Apocalypse, the end of the world, and the millennium that influenced later Christian thinkers. Humans were created in a perfect state but fell from grace due to the original sin. These explanations usually assumed a future where evil forces prevailed and tried to conquer humanity, leading to a world of misery, persecution, and despair.

The African dystopia was always related to colonialism, the settler invaded and exploited the native colonies, creating a historical imbalance that was utopian for the settlers and dystopian for the natives. The role of the African colonies was to absorb the excess population and feed the autonomous economy. Many African dystopias depicted worlds in which political and economic institutions established by colonial powers persisted or even increased, leading to widespread of inequality, corruption, and violence. As a result of these invasions, many African cultures were destroyed, which caused the destruction of their religions and the disappearance of some myths that contained almost utopian elements. In the context of decolonization which was closely related to utopian thought and practices, dystopia can be defined as a failure of the utopian project. Nkrumah's vision of a unified and just Africa, which could be considered utopian, did not materialize in the way he had envisioned. Instead, the novel presents a society that has strayed from the ideals of its independence struggle, marred by corruption and moral degradation. *The beautiful ones are not yet born* serves as a cautionary tale and a critique of the post-independence reality in Ghana, highlighting how the failure to achieve the utopian goals of independence can lead to the emergence of a dystopian society marked by moral decay, corruption, and social unrest.

Another example of this way the the concept Ujamaa discussed before which was to be a revolution for the African world was in the end a total failure, the project failed due to some important factors, the clash of classes, Tanzania was a rural country, far from being a country with a mentality of competition or a capitalist thinking but nevertheless during the creation of this project this mentality was born, people faced the exploitation and domination of the poor

peasantry by the bureaucrats and the rich capitalists farmers. Another cause was the fact that the poor didn't have the necessary attributes skills and education to participate in the process of modernization and development..

## **Platonic theories**

### **Platonic Dialogue & Justice**

Nearly all of Plato's works portrayed characters in a dialogue with Socrates, his master, as its main character, the embodiment of Plato's ideas. The dialogues were progressive, following a "dialectic", its settings were generally prosaic (a courtyard, a drinking party, a walk around the city). The characters were also diverse in their status, knowledge, upbringing, depicting the daily archetypes that were present in Classical Athens. The structure of the dialogue often allowed for a dialectical exchange of ideas between the characters, with various themes discussed: Justice, Virtue, Rhetoric, and so on. Solely based on the Socratic Method (*elenchos*), a philosophical technique that involved asking questions to uncover the underlying assumptions and beliefs that inform a person's thinking. The process progressively led to an "epuration" of the different arguments, a dialectic process of "refinement", until reaching "truth". Socrates saw his role as helping to spread ideas. Like a midwife, he didn't provide ideas himself but helped bring them out of the minds of those he talked to. He argued that people's perceptions of the world were often wrong or incomplete and that the role of philosophers was to help them to generate new and better ideas. He did this by asking probing questions, challenging assumptions, and finding contradictions in the interlocutor's arguments. By engaging in this dialectical process of questioning and answering, Socrates hoped to help those he talked to better understand the subject at hand. He saw himself more as a facilitator than a teacher, helping others to realize their ideas and insights. In Plato's *Thaeteus* (370 B.C.), Socrates appared himself to a midwife, who, through the means of dialogue, gave birth to wise souls.

In the first book of Plato's *The Republic* Socrates responded to Thrasymachus's definition of justice as "the advantage of the stronger" by arguing that rulers could make mistakes and their interests might not always align with those of the people they ruled. He suggested that justice had to be something objective that could be discovered through rational inquiry, rather than simply what the ruling body said it was. Socrates offered counterexamples to Thrasymachus's argument that injustice was preferable to justice, arguing that justice was necessary for the functioning of any society and led to a happier and more fulfilling life for individuals.

### **The sun of Independence and The Platonic Cave**

Kourouma's *The sun of independences*, a novel written in 1968, was a powerful commentary on the legacy of colonialism and the struggle for independence, as well as its connection to Plato's Cave allegory, the latter a metaphor for the human condition of the trapped individual who also cannot see the truth of the world. The allegory of the cave and *the sun of independences* of Kourouma shared a common theme, the quest for truth. In Plato's allegory of the Cave, prisoners are trapped in a cave and forced to look at shadows on the wall, which they mistake for reality. Unknown to them there was a world beyond the cave, and when one of the prisoners was released and exposed to the real world, he experienced a profound transformation and sought to share his knowledge with others. Likewise, in Kourouma's *The sun of impedances* Due to his adherence to the customs and beliefs of his tribe, Fama, the protagonist of the story, becomes a victim to them and was eventually forced to abdicate his throne and his hostility to the colonial powers and family intrigue. However, when exposed to the outside world, he was not like that more joy in life. Both works deal with the struggle for independence the people in the cave were metaphorically trapped, just as the people of Guinea were oppressed by their colonial rulers. Both emphasized the need for personal emancipation and the importance of fighting for freedom. In *The sun of independences*, Fama's disillusionment with the corrupt government and his path to revolution challenged assumptions

about the state of Guinea and its politics. Fama was a hero who comes up against an incomprehensible world, he no longer recognized himself in the new Africa. This feeling was a factor of tragic disarray. But, like a fatality, the new face of Africa pursued him and stood everywhere in his path. His death, which followed his decision to cross the border despite everything, remained in this a free act. Similarly, *The republic* challenges assumptions about reality itself, encouraging readers to question what they think was true and to seek knowledge beyond the surface. The quest for freedom in this allegory was not just a physical escape from the cave but also a mental and spiritual escape from the illusions that enslave them.

Both Korouma's work *The sun of Independences* and *The Allegory of the Cave* by Plato dealt with the pursuit of independence and the difficulties of overcoming societal limitations. The works stressed the significance of gaining knowledge and finding oneself in order to attain freedom, and encourage readers to critically examine their beliefs and assumptions. Despite their distinct settings and writing techniques, the works shared similar themes and provided meaningful observations about human nature.

In *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, references to the Sun of independences are plenty to outline the inconsistency between the independent ideal and the reality of the ground.

And to the waiters in the rain the end of the expected message was always this, "Have faith in us. We know the white man and his ways. Have faith in us. Plan R. Plan X. Plan Z." Better to go home and not go standing in the sun ever again. Better to let the clowns talk to each other and the white men they love with so much fire. All curiosity about the old men who wanted to be new leaders died, and men thought once again of new ways to make despair bearable, and those who could enjoyed it. (p. 97)

## **The Rings of Gyges and the City-Soul**

Plato's myth of Gyges challenged the traditional belief that morality was innate and that people were inherently good or evil. In the myth, Gyges possessed a magical ring that made him invisible and he used it to commit unjust acts without fear of punishment. In Plato's *The republic*, the myth was introduced in response to Thrasymachus's defense of the idea that might make right and that committing injustice was more profitable than suffering it. Thrasymachus

also claimed that justice was established by the weak to defend against the strong. Although Socrates refuted these arguments, Plato's brothers, Glaucon and Adimante, remain unconvinced. In the second book of the *Republic*, Glaucon took Thrasymachus's position and challenged Socrates to demonstrate that justice was not only good for its consequences but also for its own sake. He used a thought experiment to illustrate his point and questions the notion of virtue and justice.

In response to Glaucon's challenge to define justice and explain its superiority to injustice, Socrates proposed the "city-soul" analogy. He argued that the city and the individual have the same structure, but the city was larger and therefore easier to observe. We needed something observable and big, the city served as a tangible representation of the soul, which was not directly observable. Socrates asserted that the city was not just a collection of individuals living in proximity, but a distinct entity with its own character and soul. He linked the city to a human being, where an individual's soul guided their actions, the city's soul determined its character and direction. Socrates led the interlocutors to the construction of a city in speech based on the premise that if they were able to observe the emergence of justice write large (in the city), they may arrive at the definition of justice at the individual level. According to Plato, the city-soul analogy had implications for organizing society. Just as the ideal city required a specific structure to function effectively, a just society must be structured to allow individuals to fulfill their roles and contribute to the common good. This necessitates educating and training individuals to perform their roles effectively, similar to the philosopher kings who must be trained in philosophy and wisdom in the ideal city. In *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, references to the ring of Gyges are used, for example: the bus driver's theft while thinking that he wasn't observed or the timber merchant's tentative to corrupt the man.

### **The Ship of State**

In Plato's work *The republic*, the ship of state was a powerful metaphor for a state or society as a whole. The boat represented the city, and the navigator represented the governor or

leader of the city. The sailors on board represented the citizens, and their actions and attitudes directly affected the success or failure of the city. Socrates told a story in which a ship belonged to an ignorant man who knows nothing about navigation. Left to fend for themselves, the ship's sailors battled each other to see who could take control and be the pilot of the ship, the knowledgeable persons who looked upwards against the politically competitive persons who looked horizontally. The allegory emphasized the need for rulers to be guided by reason and knowledge, not self-interest. In Armah's novel *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, the allegory of the ship of state was echoed in the image of the bus. The bus represented the state or society, the passengers were the people, and the driver was the leader or ruler. Riding the bus symbolized the state's path towards progress and development. Like the ship in Plato's *Republic*, the bus was in danger of being misled by corrupt or incompetent leaders. Driver, initially portrayed as an intelligent and just character, gradually became corrupt and selfish. The behavior of the bus driver stands in stark contrast to the wise ruler envisioned in Plato's *Republic*. Instead of steering the bus towards the public good, he steered it to destruction. Both Plato's allegory of the ship of state and *the beautiful ones are not yet born* used the state as a symbol for a collective entity that needs virtuous and wise leadership to succeed. These allegories underscored the significance of individuals who prioritized the welfare of the community and who resist the corrupting effects of power and personal gain.

### **Types of Governments in *the Republic***

In books VIII and IX of *The republic*, Socrates told a story instead of presenting philosophical arguments or historical analysis. The story unfolded in three parts, each of which described a different type of government. First, Socrates described timocracy, which was ruled by those who were driven by a love of honor. This type of regime was characterized by conflicted individuals, like Glaucon, who valued public honor in public but worshipped gold in private (p. 264).

Socrates described oligarchy as a regime ruled by the wealthy few, the oligoi, who were corrupt and divided the city. The rich ruled, and the poor were disenfranchised, leading to constant conflict within the same city. Socrates noted that virtue was in tension with wealth in an oligarchy, revealing how wealth could corrupt individuals and societies alike (p. 266). As the regime became more corrupt, it became defenseless, and the rulers refused to arm the poor, leading to a weak and vulnerable city (p. 269). The oligarchs were also happy to extend credit to the poorer citizens, creating a “credit-card city” and impoverishing those who were already disenfranchised (p. 269).

Socrates also noted that the individual citizen was like the regime, with the son of the timocrat witnessing his honor-loving father loses all his money. The son turned greedy and vowed that he would never suffer the same fate as his father. He made money the highest good and subordinated all of his other desires to his love of money, becoming a sort of “squalid man” and neglecting his education (p. 271). Money love was paralyzing, and the thought of spending any of it caused him to tremble for his whole substance (p. 272).

Socrates was insightful about the psychological cost of money-love. He carefully depicted how deadening money love could be, illustrating the impact of wealth on the individual and society alike. Through this discussion, Socrates revealed how oligarchy and the love of money could lead to corruption, division, and conflict within a society. He underscored the importance of balance and virtue in any regime, highlighting the dangers of excess and the psychological cost of money-love.

Finally, Socrates described how democracy emerged from oligarchy. The oligarchs were unwilling to discipline the youths who spent money because they became rich by encouraging the youth to spend freely (p. 274), which led to the impoverishment of young people. Some high-powered individuals also became impoverished and sat idly in the city, “hating and plotting against those who possessed what belonged to them ... gripped by a love of change” (p. 274). A class of citizens emerged that revolted against the oligarchs, leading to the creation

of a democracy. Democracy was characterized by the celebration of freedom (p. 275), the protection of privacy (p. 276), the creation of conditions for diversity (p. 276), the affirmation of political equality (p. 277), and a lack of a rigid conception of a good life. As such, democracy was characterized by a kind of “formlessness.” Through this story, Socrates provided insights into the psychological dynamics of different types of governments and how they could emerge from one another.

From the above-mentioned political systems, it seems clear that the type of government present in *The beautiful ones are not yet born* is the oligarchy, the instability provoked by this type of governance is mostly stressed in the event of the *coup d'état*.

### **The Philosopher and the Cave**

Plato's *The republic* introduced a group of prisoners who spent their entire lives locked in a cave, facing a blank wall. The only things they could see were the shadows of people and objects cast on the wall in front of them, caused by the fire behind them. These men knew nothing but shadows, so they believed shadows were the only reality. However, one of the prisoners was eventually released and was able to turn around and see the flames and objects that created the shadow. Then he realized that the shadows he had seen all his life were hallucinations. The myth of the cave was often interpreted as a metaphor for the philosopher's journey in search of knowledge and truth. Prisoners represented people trapped in ignorance, unable to move beyond the fantasies of their limited perspective. A released prisoner represented a person who had broken free from the shackles of ignorance and was able to see the world as it was. The journey out of the cave symbolized the process of enlightenment and the difficulties involved, while the sunlight represented the ultimate goal of true enlightenment, the sky of the forms. As such, philosophers were those who freed themselves from the shadows of the cave in order to find the truth through contemplative life. In that regard, Yunis (2007) observed:

it depicts conventional values (according to which philosopher kings are preposterous) as unnatural, and it explains the fact that the unnaturalness of these values has generally gone unnoticed. The cave image also portrays the acquisition of philosophical values (according to which philosopher kings are appropriate) as a natural process, akin to the healthy, if sometimes painful, physical process of rising to the light and air, of gaining mobility and sharpening the powers of perception.

(p. 22).

## **Polyphony and Heteroglossia**

Bakhtin analyzed Dostoevsky's novels in "Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics" (1984a) and his essays in "The Dialogic Imagination" (1981), emphasizing the importance of dialogism in the novel. He sustained arguments about the dialogical character of the novel, supplemented by concepts such as polyphony, heteroglossia, double-voiced discourse, and hybridization. These concepts worked together to enhance our understanding of Bakhtin's view of language and its intertextual nature. For Bakhtin, Dostoevsky's works represented the pinnacle of dialogic literary creation. He viewed Dostoevsky's characters as fully developed voices, each with their own unique perspectives, beliefs, and experiences. Through the interplay of these different voices, Dostoevsky created a multifaceted and nuanced portrayal of society and human experience. Polyphony referred to the simultaneous combination of diverse and often conflicting voices, which created a rich and complex portrayal of the world. Bakhtin believed that this approach to literary creation was epitomized by the novels of Dostoevsky. Speaking of the author, Bakhtin declared:

constructs the hero [character] not out of words foreign to the hero, not out of neutral definitions; he constructs not a character, nor a type, nor a temperament, in fact he constructs no objectified image of the hero at all, but rather the hero's discourse about himself and his world. Dostoevsky's hero is not an objectified image but an autonomous discourse, pure voice; we do not see him, we hear him; everything that we see and know apart from his discourse is nonessential and is swallowed up by discourse as its raw material, or else remains outside it as something that stimulates and provokes. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 53)

Bakhtin viewed characters in polyphonic novels as fully developed ideologues. His view of the polyphonic novel stood in contrast to the traditional realist novel, where the author

typically presented an objective, authoritative voice that mediated the interactions between characters. In the polyphonic novel, however, all characters had equal weight and agency, and their discourses were presented as equally valid interpretations of the world.

The term “heteroglossia” was derived from two Greek roots: “hetero,” meaning “other” or “different,” and “glottis,” meaning “tongue” or “voice.” Thus, heteroglossia can be understood as the presence of multiple voices or tongues within a given context. Bakhtin believed that heteroglossia was a fundamental characteristic of all languages and discourses. He argued that no language or discourse could be considered monolithic or homogeneous, as it always contained within it multiple voices, perspectives, and discourses. Heteroglossia, for Bakhtin, was not simply a matter of linguistic diversity, but rather a reflection of the complex social, historical, and cultural processes that shape language and discourse. Different social groups, classes, and individuals have their own distinctive ways of speaking and writing, which are influenced by their experiences, values, and ideologies. Bakhtin believed that the interaction between these diverse voices and discourses was the key to understanding language and culture. He argued that through the dialogic interaction of multiple voices and perspectives, individuals and communities were able to create new meanings, values, and understandings of the world.

at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the coexistence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These “languages” of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new typifying “languages”. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 28).

## Results & Discussion

### Results

Relying on a dialogical and sociological methodological apparatus which incorporated Bakhtin's concepts of stylization and parody, along with Mannheim's understanding of the relationship between utopia and ideology, our research aimed to outline the nature of the dialogical elements between Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born* with Plato's *The republic* and Nkrumah's magnum opus, *Consciencism*, particularly in the context of political theory, and to identify the relationship between ideology and utopia in Armah's novel. As previously mentioned, Plato's *The republic* was widely regarded as the model of utopia, presenting an ideal society governed by philosopher kings. Armah, within a dialogical context, stylized Plato's *The republic* on a formal level by skillfully incorporating elements such as Platonic myths and the Socratic dialogue. This deliberate stylistic choice established a dialogue between the two works, enabling Armah to engage with and reinterpret the themes and ideas presented in Plato's work within the unique context of postcolonial Africa. By drawing on the allegorical and philosophical elements of *The republic*, on the conceptual level, Armah stylized *The republic* by incorporating the concept of justice, with a specific focus on social justice and freedom, through his characters engaged in dynamic clashes of opinions, dialogues, and vivid imagery that captured the complexities and tensions surrounding the pursuit of justice and freedom. Through dialogical interactions, the characters embodied different perspectives and ideologies, allowing for a nuanced exploration of these themes. This analytical approach allowed for a deeper understanding of how Armah's novel critically engaged with and challenged African ideologies, particularly Consciencism, which he openly parodied through the juxtaposition of the protagonist's disillusionment with the ideals propagated by Nkrumah's ideology.

## Discussion

### On Polyphony and Ideology

In Armah's book, *the beautiful ones are not yet born* the characters were in perpetual ideological conflict, each character represented an identity and mentality very specific to him even far from the convictions of the other, and several times these differences collided in several scenes in the several conflictual events engaging the man against Oyo, the Teacher, and Koomson. The polyphony in *The beautiful ones are not yet born* extended beyond the individual characters' voices with various narrative techniques being incorporated to enhance the polyphonic nature of the text. This included the use of direct dialogue, interior monologues, and stream-of-consciousness passages. These techniques further contributed to the richness and complexity of the narrative, providing insights into the characters' thoughts, emotions, and motivations. Through the polyphonic structure of the novel, Armah presented a nuanced and multifaceted depiction of postcolonial Ghana. The diverse voices and perspectives in the text allowed readers to engage with the complexities of the sociopolitical landscape, including issues of corruption, moral decay, and the struggle for personal and societal transformation.

The character of the man was a virtuous and philosophical character. Throughout the novel, he exhibited a strong sense of morality and integrity, refusing to succumb to the corrupt practices that surround him. The man worked as a railway clerk and faced a significant moment. A corrupt politician or businessman offered him a large bribe, hoping to gain special favors. Despite the tempting amount of money and the societal pressure to participate in bribery, the man firmly rejected the illegal offer, "Look, I mean it. I offer you three times. Is good money." "I know."

"Then take it."

"No."

"You refuse?"

“Yes.”(p. 36).

In situations where others’ state of mind and the decline of Ghana were noticeable, it became clear that the most terrible and incorrect action was not just attempting corruption, but indeed its refusal by the man, seen as an abnormal act, for the both politician who wondered, “But what is wrong?” the visitor asked again. “Wrong?” “Yes, my friend. Why do you behave like that?” “I don’t know,” the man said.”(p. 36). Or for his wife Oyo who was very angry at her husband for not having given in to dishonesty and the corruption that reigned “And like an Onward Christian Soldier you refused?”(p. 51). The irony hid her disappointment.

These conversations in the novel revealed a common tendency among the side characters to embody Plato’s chained dwellers in the allegory of the cave. In Plato’s allegory, people were locked in a dark cave facing a wall, where they could only see the shadows of objects cast by the fire behind them. These shadows symbolized the illusions and lie that people often mistake for reality. However, one man managed to break free from his chains and made his way to the outside world, where they encountered the light of truth. The man’s refusal to participate in corruption served as an awakening to the true nature of his society. By rejecting deceptive appearances and holding on to his principles, he demonstrated the importance of moral discernment and the pursuit of genuine enlightenment. This parallel emphasized the shared quest for a deeper understanding and alignment with truth, as both the man and the freed individual in Plato’s allegory strive for a higher level of comprehension that is, the contemplative life.

The man in Armah’s novel *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, was a philosopher because he constantly questions the world around him. He did not just accept things as they were, but he wanted to understand why they were the way they were. The experiences and observations of the society around him contributed to his philosophical vision. He witnessed the degeneration and moral decay of his environment, prompting him to critically examine the underlying causes and consequences. He knew that these actions were honest, but he did not

understand why people condemned him for honorable actions. “I might even get angry with Oyo about it. And yet, and yet, it’s me who feels weird.” (p. 63). All this questioning made the character philosophical and reflective.

The man’s profound disillusionment with society, shaped by the strange and corrupt environment he encountered, has significantly influenced his development. His mentality encompassed a longing for authenticity, a critical examination of societal norms, and a hopeful idealism that aspired to transcend the prevailing culture of corruption. However, he was also a man of contradictions, balancing his idealism with a realistic perspective. Despite his hopefulness, there was a touch of cynicism within him, reflecting the complexities of his character. Nevertheless, he remained a dreamer, resolute in his belief that a better world was possible, even in the face of adversity. Unlike the teacher who started as the man with a hopeful thinking of a better Ghanaian society but ended differently, abandoning all hope of a better world, and sinking into the most total loneliness.

Like the man Teacher was a character mixed between hope and despair throughout his life, starting by being disappointed with the turn of events after the invaders left Ghana, but thanks to a rather atypical meeting with Maanan, his vision of things changed after this one brought her back to a political speech where this one ended up pleasantly surprised, “I stood there staring like a believer at the man.” (p.101), the teacher regained hope after a speech filled with promises and hope for the future and success of Ghanaian society.

As we said above the man and Teacher were linked, their feelings of hope and despair resembled each other, both were connected to Plato’s allegory of the cave. Teacher and the people were trapped in a world of illusion, seeing the world as it was, not as it could be. However, Teacher was different from the people in the cave, because he was aware of the deceitfulness of his reality. He knew that the world was not as it seemed, consequently, he was trying to find a way to escape from it. It is clear by Teacher’s cynicism that he was one of the few that saw the ideal, among the few who escaped from the Cave, for he once contemplated

the ideal. However, he fell back into despair and did not continue to fight, returning to the cave unlike the man, the teacher gave up his quest for freedom, “No. I have tried to be free, but I am not free. Perhaps I will never even be.”(p. 64). Dialogic elements also hint to the Socratic dialogue and irony as the continuous stream of questions and answers laid the ground to the man’s development. However, to the difference of Socrates, Teacher was nothing more but a questioner, a doubter, without providing any insights towards change. His passivity and acceptance of the status-quo stopped him from becoming a full-blown Socratic figure, as he abandoned his character to the ambient rot, swallowed by the comfort of the cave, losing his faculty of Maieutics. To a deeper level, Teacher could be described as a spineless Socrates, who wasn’t condemned to death by a jury, but by his own regrets.

Teacher’s passivity and despair in *The beautiful ones are not yet born* stem from the empty words and promises made by Ghanaian politicians and leaders. This deceptive rhetoric have shattered his hope for a better future for the country. The teacher witnessed a prevailing culture of corruption and avarice among those in power, with Koomson serving as a personification of these self-serving leaders.

Koomson was depicted as a wealthy businessman who ostentatiously displayed his material possessions and indulged in a lavish lifestyle. He embodied the exact opposite of the man’s moral integrity, serving as a stark contrast to the protagonist’s steadfast refusal to yield to corruption. Oyo and his mother perceived Koomson as their potential savior, someone who could rescue them from poverty. In contrast, they placed little importance on the man, rendering him insignificant in the eyes of his own family. The poignant statement, “And then Koomson comes, and the family sees Jesus Christ in him. How can I ever feel like a human being?”(109) highlighted the profound impact of Koomson’s influence, leaving the man feeling diminished and questioning his own worth. But in reality Koomson was far from the long-awaited messiah, for his actions were motivated by personal gain, willing to engage in unethical practices to further his own interests. He contributed to the perpetuation of the corrupt system, leading to

the decay and moral degradation of the society throughout the story. Koomson's life completely changed after a *coup d'état*. During the coup, all the leaders of the country were ousted from power. Ironically, it was Koomson's downfall and flight that instill a newfound sense of hope in the man, highlighting the transformative power of unexpected events.

Koomson was a symbol of the pervasive corruption and materialism that had become prevalent in Ghanaian society during Nkrumah's rule. The novel suggested that the corruption and materialism of the Nkrumah era were not simply the fault of a few individuals. They were instead a reflection of a broader societal problem. The novel argued that the political leadership of the time was responsible for creating a climate of corruption and materialism. And among the people who fell into the trap of lust for luxury and power, there was Oyo, who was obsessed with the luxurious life of Koomson.

Oyo was a complex character who embodied the aspirations, dreams, and fears of individuals living in a corrupt and materialistic society. She was also hypocritical, as she initially resented the man for refusing to engage in corruption and bribery, as expressed in the quote, "And like an Onward Christian Soldier you refused?" (p. 51). However, she completely changed her tune at the end when Koomson became a fugitive, saying, "I am glad you never became like him." (p. 194). Her tone was full of reproach and contempt for the man's honest gesture. She was also a jealous woman, her envy was fueled by the presence of individuals like Koomson, who embodied the wealth and success she desired. This jealousy created a rift in Oyo's relationship with the man and highlighted the power of external appearances and societal pressures. It also underscored the larger themes of materialism and the influence of social status within the novel.

Oyo could also be seen as a parallel to Eve from the biblical narrative. Both Eve and Oyo faced the repercussions of their actions. Just as Eve's decision to eat the forbidden fruit led to her expulsion from paradise, Oyo's jealousy and desire for a different life strained her relationship with the man, causing tension and dissatisfaction within their marriage. Oyo also

shared certain parallels with Xanthippe, the wife of Socrates in Greek philosophy. Both characters embodied the challenges and complexities of being married to individuals with strong philosophical or moral convictions. The link between Oyo and Xanthippe remained in their positions as spouses to individuals who prioritized their intellectual pursuits over material and societal expectations. Both women face the difficulties of living in a world that did not align with their partners' values and aspirations.

The characters of the man, Teacher, Koomson, and Oyo in *The beautiful ones are not yet born* had vital roles in depicting the complexities and challenges encountered within a corrupt society. Together, these characters highlighted the harsh realities and moral dilemmas individuals faced in a corrupt world, ultimately provoking reflections on the nature of personal integrity, societal values, and the pursuit of a better future.

In *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, the country's social context emerged as the most subtle character whose development continued throughout the story. As the novel progressed, it became clear that Ghana struggled to live up to its promise. The country's social reality had a profound impact on each character, serving as the primary driver of their shift, whether positive or negative. The man, Teacher, Oyo, and Koomson all changed by conforming to the social reality of the country. As the story went on, the more characters became frustrated and disillusioned. They discovered that Ghana was not the nation they imagined it to be. But increasing dissatisfaction and individual acts of resistance offered glimmers of a possible renewal and transformation, suggesting that post-colonial Ghana might have a better future. The rise of corruption, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the disillusionment of the people, and the fall of Nkrumah's regime all shaped the characters' lives, their relationships, and their hopes for the future. A major turning point in the story was the military coup that ostracized Nkrumah and his disciples from power. The occurrence of a military coup was seen as a moment of "stasis" or the destruction of an old order to be replaced by a new order. The

coup represented a significant turning point in the novel, as it disrupted the existing power structures and ushered in a period of uncertainty and change.

## **Setting**

The setting played a significant symbolic role in both the characters and the circumstances in Ghana. Each location carried a certain meaning, and each temporary circumstance served a purpose. The Atlantic Caprice was a multi-layered, symbolic name. It symbolized the narrator's observations of Ghana's affluence, corruption, and disillusionment. The hotel served as a stark warning about how difficult the path to a better future might be. The word "Atlantic" in the name alluded to the ocean that divided Europe and the Americas from Africa. Particularly in light of the transatlantic slave trade and the colonization of Africa, the Atlantic Ocean has significant historical and cultural significance. It symbolized the influences and links that exist between Africa and the West.

Throughout the hotel's upper floors, a distinctive and highly meaningful light shone. The contrast in symbolism between this light from the Atlantic Caprice and the star on the Ghanaian flag can be interpreted in contrasting meanings. The star on the Ghanaian flag symbolized togetherness and hope, representing unity among the Ghanaian people and optimism for Ghana's potential. The star on the Ghanaian flag served as a powerful symbol of an unattained ideal within the context of Ghanaian independence. The allusion to the sky of forms also suggested that this ideal remained elusive, residing in an abstract realm detached from the harsh realities of post-independence Ghana. Just as Plato envisioned the perfect forms as unattainable in the physical world, the star on the flag signified an unfulfilled utopia that seemed beyond reach.

The events of the book took place in Accra, Ghana's capital, following the country's independence. Accra served as a microcosm of the social, political, and economic dynamics within the larger Ghanaian society. The city was portrayed as a place of stark contrasts, with

affluent areas inhabited by the wealthy. However, it also served as a metaphor for the degradation and despair perceived by the protagonist in Ghana. Accra was characterized by overcrowding, pollution, and squalor. The buildings were old and dilapidated, reflecting the deterioration and decay that the protagonist witnessed in the country.

The Passion Week, which according to its original interpretation referred to the week before Easter, an important time in Christian religious tradition that commemorates the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, *The beautiful ones are not yet born* completely vanished this ideological significance of Passion Week, it has transformed into a consumerist holiday where people may look to buy sophisticated items in order to feel safe and at home, “knowing somewhere in the back of his mind that the expensive things he was buying would deepen the agony of his next Passion Week” (p.134). But materialism can also result in a feeling of emptiness and discontent since people may never feel as though they have enough of anything.

### **The mythic method in *The beautiful ones are not yet born***

As suggested before, Nnolim's analysis of Armah's work in his article *Dialectic as Form: Pejorism in the Novels of Armah*, predominantly focused on the aesthetic elements and the joy Armah found in portraying themes of failure, disappointment, and loss. It is true, to some extent Armah's aesthetical identity was deeply rooted in scatological styles of representation, but essentializing the author to that aspect of his work would mask the philosophical implications of his use of scatological imagery. We would argue that Armah politicized it, reflecting the deep philosophical overtone of *the beautiful ones are not yet born*. Such stance, taken in parallel with Plato's *The republic* which it stylized, directly hinted to his theory of forms. In Platonic metaphysics, the world as experienced by most people was in perpetual change, and as such, untrustworthy. To that, Plato paralleled the world of forms, unchanging and pure. We would argue that the author chose this style of expression in adequation with his message which is inherently Platonic. In our analysis of Nnolim's approach,

we inferred that although it provided some insights into the aesthetical significance of hopelessness and rot, it still neglects, the hidden meaning, the eidos. Indeed, our reflection led us to a conclusion: the role of the aesthetical components in the novel are deeply philosophical, as Armah distils through them hints of hope, ideal and renewal. As such, Armah cannot be considered a writer of decadence, but as a socratic figure. We would even assert that Armah heavily used elenchus, the socratic irony by employing a tone that completely differs from his message, without going against it.

The use of the mythic method in the *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, drew a remarkable dialogical connection between the novel and Plato's *The republic*, as the author skillfully incorporated elements of mythology, symbolism, and allegory to convey deeper truths and explore the themes of Justice, corruption and just governance. Through a masterful blend of storytelling and philosophical inquiry, Armah presented a stylized narrative that engaged with various mythical and philosophical concepts. In particular, the novel drew upon the myths of the cave, Gyges, Er, and the figure of Charon, as well as the notion of the river of Unmindfulness, all of which were central to Plato's discourse on justice, the afterlife, the human condition and Soteriology. According to Gakawandi (1977):

In the world of the novel, wealth and power have become the principal pursuits and the inevitable result the situation is a complete disregard of any moral or social considerations in the drive to satisfy individual desires. (p. 102)

The bus scene at the beginning of the book was a depiction of this phenomenon, symbolizing the corruption and decay that has taken hold of Ghana in the years following independence. The bus was crowded and stifling, and the passengers were all eager to reach their destination. However, the journey was slow and arduous, with the bus constantly breaking down, with the passengers forced to endure the heat, the dust, and the noise, reminding them of the poverty and squalor that surrounds them. The bus driver received a bribe from a passenger in the form of a cedi, the Ghanaian currency. The cedi was a small, dirty piece of paper, but the

bus driver shamelessly smelled it with relish, before getting caught by wide staring eyes, which fill the bus driver with shame.

The eyes frightened the conductor. Even the mere remembered smell of the cedi was now painful, and the feeling in his armpit had suddenly become very cold. Was this the giver turned watcher already? Had his own game been merely a part of the watcher's larger game? Vague fears of punishment drove their way into his mind. He had not thought it possible that so many different shapes of terror could come to him in such a little time. (Armah, 1968, p. 4)

Illustrations of the mythic method extend to most of *The republic's* allegories. The bus scene, for instance, evoked the conditionality of justice upon punishment, hinting directly to the myth of Gyges. Plato drew from various aspects of Greek mythology and philosophy in his dialogues, with an emphasis primarily on exploring philosophical concepts and ideas rather than retelling specific myths or discussing mythical figures in detail. In the second book of *The republic*, Glaucon and Adeimantus proceeded to give their opinions on how people generally see justice in society. Thrasymachus maintained throughout his argument that justice lacked actual or intrinsic worth for the person who practiced it, regardless of the advantages it provided to others. According to them, the typical sense of justice among ordinary men and women on the street was in some respects consistent with this claim. As a result, justice was frequently upheld unwillingly. If given the option, most individuals would choose not to carry out the responsibilities of justice if it weren't for their concern over potentially worse outcomes. To illustrate his argument, Glaucon used the myth of Gyges, in which an innocent shepherd named Gyges discovered a magical ring that granted him the power to become invisible at will. With this newfound ability, Gyges was able to indulge in his darkest desires without any fear of being caught or punished. He used his invisibility to commit various immoral acts, including seducing the queen, plotting against the king, and ultimately seizing the throne for himself. Armah, through aesthetical elements like imagery and tone, provided this sense of invisibility in which injustice thrived, with the Bus driver in Gyges's clothes, hinting to the general sense of impunity that corrupt leaders inspired.

Another illustration of the mythical method would be the myth of Er. As recounted in Plato's *The republic*, it served as an allegory that delved into the concepts of judgment, justice, and the consequences of one's actions in the afterlife. Er described how upon death, individuals traversed to a place known as the "demonic place," where newcomers and those who had completed their 1,000-year journeys converged. It served as a transitional space where souls awaited their judgment. Within the "demonic place," a momentous process of judgment took place. Each soul's fate was determined based on their past deeds and character. The allegory presented three distinct outcomes, shedding light on the divergent paths souls might undertake in the afterlife. Firstly, the just souls, whose lives had been characterized by righteousness and moral virtues, ascended upward and to the right. They were bestowed with a reward beyond human imagination: 1,000 years of "inconceivable beauty." This ethereal experience signified a profound state of bliss and harmony, where the just souls reveled in the splendor of their righteous choices (p. 348). On the contrary, the souls who had been unjust in their earthly existence descended downward and to the left. In this lower realm, they endured 1,000 years of punishment, although the precise nature of this retribution remained unspecified. Nonetheless, the myth conveyed the idea of facing the consequences and enduring the repercussions of their wrongful actions, similarly, Koomson's escape in *The beautiful ones are not yet born* related to the concept of judgment and the fate of souls after death as depicted in Plato's *The republic*. It described the journey of souls after death and their destinations based on their actions. Koomson attempted to escape with the help of a man by digging in a latrine filled with feces. This can be seen as a metaphorical representation of his journey through the afterlife. The latrine symbolized the lowly world of Hades, representing a state of moral degradation and impurity. According to the myth of Er the just souls went upward and to the right, where they experienced a period of inconceivable beauty. This can be compared to Koomson's desire to escape through the window of the latrine, which could symbolize his aspiration to reach a higher realm or a better existence. However, Koomson's attempt to escape through the window was thwarted by the bars, preventing him from accessing the realm of beauty and transcendence.

This can be interpreted as a reflection of his unjust actions and moral shortcomings, which hindered his ascent towards a higher state. Instead, Koomson was left with no choice but to go through the latrine itself, representing his descent into the realm of punishment and suffering. This can be seen as a consequence of his unjust behavior and the karmic retribution he faced in the afterlife.

Koomson's boat escape in *The beautiful ones are not yet born* bore a resemblance to the myth of the ferryman from Greek mythology, particularly the figure of Charon who served as the ferryman of the underworld. In Greek mythology, Charon was responsible for transporting the souls of the deceased across the river Styx, which acted as the boundary between the world of the living and the realm of the dead. The myth of the ferryman symbolized the transition between life and death, reflecting the belief that souls had to offer payment or tribute to Charon in order to be ferried across the river and gain access to the afterlife. Failure to pay the fee resulted in the souls wandering the shores of the river Styx as restless spirits for a hundred years. This myth carried profound symbolic meanings, representing the final journey and the passage from the earthly realm to the realm of the dead. It also emphasized the notion of justice, underscoring the idea that there were consequences or requirements for crossing into the realm of the deceased. Furthermore, it served as a poignant reminder of life's transitory nature and the inevitability of death. Similarly, Koomson's escape can be seen as a parallel to the myth of the ferryman.

The arrival of the new military government in Ghana, seeking to eradicate corruption, acted as a catalyst for Koomson's flight. He, being a corrupt minister, faced the consequences of his actions and sought assistance from the protagonist, a railway worker. Reluctantly, the protagonist agreed to aid Koomson in his escape. Guided by the desire to leave the country and escape the repercussions of his corruption, Koomson boarded a fishing boat at the docks, while the protagonist returned to shore. In combining these narratives, we see the convergence of themes related to justice, consequences, and escape. Koomson's escape paralleled the journey

across the river Styx in Greek mythology, as both represented a critical passage from one realm to another. The ferryman myth and Koomson's escape served as poignant reminders of the moral implications of one's actions and the pursuit of freedom from the consequences of corruption. Through the interweaving of the myth of the Ferryman and Koomson's escape, profound questions arise about the nature of justice, the consequences of wrongdoing, and the pursuit of redemption. Both narratives explore the complexities of human behavior and the desire to escape the clutches of corruption, themes of accountability, the transient nature of life, and the yearning for justice and liberation.

In the final chapter of *The beautiful ones are not yet born* the scene of the man swimming to the shore mirrored the concept of the "river of Unmindfulness" discussed in Book X of Plato's *The republic*. As the man stood on the banks of the river, he contemplated the vast expanse of water before him, knowing that he had to embark on a difficult journey to start anew. Taking a deep breath, the man dived into the water, swimming with all his strength. Just like the souls in Plato's philosophy, the man faced the challenges of the current and his own exhaustion. Yet, he persisted, driven by the determination to reach the shore and leave behind the burdens of his past. Eventually, after what felt like an eternity, the man finally reached the shore, collapsing in exhaustion but filled with a sense of victory. This moment echoed the concept of reincarnation and the cleansing of the soul discussed in Plato's philosophy. The man's journey through the water symbolized the transition between lives, akin to the souls drinking from the river of Unmindfulness to forget their past experiences. Plato's belief in the cyclical nature of existence aligned with the man's journey. Just as Plato suggested that the soul went through cycles of birth, death, and rebirth, the man's arrival at the shore represented a new beginning. He had overcome the challenges and arrived at a place of safety, ready to embark on a fresh chapter of his life. Moreover, the man's swim to the shore resonated with Plato's emphasis on the pursuit of wisdom and the attainment of true knowledge. By leaving behind the memories and knowledge of his past life, the man embraced the opportunity to focus on the

present and strive for a deeper understanding of the truths and principles that governed existence. A parallel between the man's physical journey and the spiritual journey of the soul can be outlined. Both symbolized the pursuit of renewal, the letting go of the past, and the embrace of new possibilities. The man's arrival at the shore signified the completion of one cycle and the beginning of another, reflecting the transformative power of starting afresh and the potential for growth and self-transformation.

## **Personal Justice and Eudaimonia**

Definitions of justice are numerous throughout the ages, for some, it lies in equality, for others, in equity. For Sophists, justice itself does not exist at all. Personal justice, according to Plato, was the harmony and appropriate order of the individual's soul. He contended that the soul was made up of three components: spirit, desire, and reason. When these three components were in a hierarchical relationship with one another, with ruling reason and guiding the other components, personal justice results.

Plato believed that when reason, the intellectual part of the soul, triumphed over the spirited and appetitive aspects, then people were just. Reason, which was a term for wisdom and understanding, should serve as a guide and control on our desires and impulses. When logic rules, a person behaves in a way that is consistent with moral attributes like wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. "Have we not discovered that justice, taken in isolation, is the best thing for the soul, taken in isolation, and that the soul is obligated to act justly whether or not it has the ring of Gyges and, in addition to the ring, the helmet of Hades?"(p. 345) Gyges challenged the belief that morality was innate and that people were either good or evil. Gyges used a magical ring that made him invisible in the story to commit awful crimes without being concerned about consequences. The helmet of Hades was a supernatural head covering that rendered its wearer invisible.

In Book 10 of Plato's work *The republic*, Socrates discussed it and made a comparison to the effectiveness of philosophy. However, there was still one crucial and contradictory aspect to Socrates's philosophy: "The just man should have the reputation of being unjust, and the unjust man the reputation of being just" (345). He believed that the ignorant majority may view the true philosopher, who has knowledge and understanding of the forms, as being unjust. He argued that this is so because the unjust man was frequently viewed as being strong and intelligent, while the good man was viewed as being weak and foolish. And this represented the unfolding of the story of *The beautiful ones are not yet born* concerning the man, throughout the story people treated the Man with suspicion and distrust. They saw him as a threat to the status quo. They were afraid of his ideas, and they were fearful of the change that he represented. The paradox was evident in the treatment of the protagonist. The unjust actions of those who engaged in corruption were often praised, admired, and rewarded within the society, while the just actions of the man, rooted in personal integrity and adherence to moral values, were ridiculed and misunderstood. This was why the question of how we can live a happy life while being just or being unjust in *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, was very important. The answer to that question lied at the end of the novel, with the unjust man being ostracized and the just man being finally accepted, respected and loved, which makes the novel a theory of knowledge.

### **Social Justice and Tripartite**

The fairness of the social order was something that social justice was interested in. It was founded on the notion that society should be organized so that all of its members benefit, not just a select group of wealthy individuals. Exactly what Ghanaian society in *the beautiful ones are not yet born* has not done where equity and honesty were not in their fundamental values. Although the two ideas were sometimes perceived as distinct ideas, they were closely related. Social justice was necessary for personal justice to be attained, yet none was possible without the other. And it was the abandonment of this primordial concept that caused the

downfall of the reign of Nkrumah. A truly just society requires that we preserve each person's rights and design a system that works for everyone. Socrates argued that justice was necessary for the functioning of any society and led to a happier and more fulfilling life for individuals, and going against the idea of Thrasymachus who claimed that justice was established by the weak to defend against the strong. In his quest to define justice and emphasize its superiority over injustice, Socrates introduced the "city-soul" analogy (p. 49). He proposed that a city resembled an enlarged version of an individual's soul, possessing a parallel structure. The city, due to its larger scale, provided a clearer and more observable depiction of the soul. In Plato's *The republic*, the concept of the tripartite division of the soul was introduced. It consisted of Nous (reason), Thumos (spiritedness), and Epithumia (desire). These aspects of the soul played a crucial role in understanding human behavior and character. According to Plato, reason, represented by Nous, governed the passions and desires of Thumos and Epithumia. When reason was in control, individuals made virtuous choices and acted in accordance with moral principles. However, if desires overpowered reason, it led to an imbalance, irrational behavior, and moral flaws. The city, reflecting this tripartite to a macro-level, mimicked the effects of the organization of the soul politically, for a just society is the one led by the Nous or reason. An illustration of this disharmony can be seen in the example of the policemen, who were meant to uphold the law and maintain order, were shown to actively engage in corrupt acts. They used their positions of authority to extort money from individuals, disregarding justice and fairness.

For Armah, Nkrumah's Ghana betrayed the division, with the appetitive parts being on the top of the polis, With the Atlantic-Caprice as the symbol of corruption and materialism on top of a hill, overseeing the city. Its pristine white walls and lavish interior contrast starkly with the poverty and squalor nearby. It attracted the city's affluent elite, seeking refuge from the daily grime and hardships. However, behind its luxurious façade, corruption, and bribery thrived. Faced with this abundance of corruption, the man expressed irony by saying, "Let them smile, this place is kind to them, so let them smile. In another country they would be in jail.

Here they are hero". (p. 129). A response that was not one of hopelessness but one of anger towards these leaders. As demonstrated by the man holding Koomson's hands and describing them as "ideological hands, the hands of revolutionaries leading their people into bold sacrifices" (p. 153).

Solomon in his article *A Commentary on Ayi Kwei Armah's The beautiful ones are not yet born* stressed the impossibility of the man to navigate the moral realm, for his efforts were comparable to putting polish on organically rotten material. However, we would assert that such analysis neglects the idealistic nature of the novel. *The republic* and *The beautiful ones are not yet born's* link provided with a framework through which we could outline the idealistic undertone of Armah's writing. Indeed, the world of the sensible is, for Plato, a world of corruption, decay and rot. However, the world of the ideal is perfect, stable and unhindered by any form of corrosive forces. As such, Armah hinted to that realm, by orchestrating a spatial setting that is characterized by change, instability.

In his article, *The Allegory of the Cave: Language, Democracy, and a New World Order*, wa Thiong'o claimed that society lacked both moral courage and intellectual integrity since the incorruptible true philosophers have not yet been born. Although there was widespread corruption surrounding him, the character of "the man" changed this story because he embodied the qualities of an incorruptible philosopher. Through his actions and choices, the man challenged the notion that true philosophers are yet to be born. The man, in contrast to the other characters, was unaffected by his dishonest surroundings. He pushed back against and contested social norms. wa Thiong'o argued that true philosophers were those who would dedicate their lives to serving society and commit to overall well-being, upholding their ethical obligations and having an incorruptible nature. Armah, on the other hand, presented a protagonist who, despite being a regular man, a railway worker with limited formal education reflected philosophically about the world in which he lives. Armah's novel demonstrated that one does not need to possess any special rank, position, or power to become a philosopher. Even though

this behavior was not rewarded in his society, "the man" repeatedly rejected bribes and the pull of material gain throughout the book. We would argue that the title *the beautiful ones are not yet born* does not negate the existence of philosophers in Ghana, with the man being the incarnation of the Socratic character, but that Armah, just like Plato, stressed the importance of political involvement of philosophers. Plato understood that philosophers, once having tasted the world of forms, couldn't come back to the public place, for it was ruled by passion and gain. However, Plato stressed the importance of the politicization of the philosopher, for he was the key to the Utopian Kallipolis. It can be seen in Armah's *beautiful ones are not yet born* that the political system doesn't allow "the man" to become a philosopher king, and the moral parameters of the Ghanaian political arena doesn't allow a philosopher to navigate it. *The beautiful ones are not yet born* hinted at the political birth of the philosopher, not as a theorist but as a practitioner of virtue in the public place and by extension in the ecclesia. The narrative was set in a moment of economic and political upheaval in Ghana, and "the man" resisted constant pressure to act contrary to his moral convictions. He must consistently battle these pressures in order to maintain his integrity, even at a great personal sacrifice, as he sought to become a philosopher king.

## **Reward and Punishment**

According to the myth of Er, a soul was judged after death and transported to a location in accordance to its level of justice. The just were given a place in heaven as a reward, "those who had done any charitable act, and had shown themselves just and holy, were meant to receive on the same principle their due reward" (p. 349). While the unjust were condemned to the underworld: "thus all who had been guilty of a number of murders, or had betrayed and enslaved cities and armies, were intended to undergo tenfold sufferings for all and each of their offenses" (p. 349). and the reward of the just man in *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, was found at the end, the man who has never ceased to be just and far from corruption, received his due as it should be, the reward was first the heart of his wife, he regained the confidence and the heart

of his wife which was a very great gift for him “perhaps for the first time in their married life the man could believe that she as glad to have him the way he was” (p.194). And the other reward was the hope transmitted by the flower “In the center of the oval was a single flower, solitary, unexplainable, and very beautiful” (p. 214), the flower was a symbol of hope, he knows that he cannot change the entire society, but he believed that he could make a difference in his own small way. He believed that he could help to create a better future, The flower was a powerful symbol of hope. It was a reminder that even in the darkest of times, there was always the potential for beauty. It was a reminder that we should never give up hope.

The punishment for the person who destroyed the hopes of his people and spread chaos and corruption throughout history was also seen at the conclusion of the story. Koomson, the person who never stopped putting his wealth, his person, and his own interests above everyone else, received punishment in the worst way possible. He was no longer allowed to exercise his authority and his wealth was reduced to a mere relic of the past. The most severe consequence of these acts against his people was to be confined in the home of someone who was completely opposed to these ideas. Being forced to abandon his family and leave as far as possible was the worst punishment.

### ***The beautiful ones are not yet born as a parody of Consciencism***

In *Consciencism* (1964), Nkrumah promoted a socialist government and the independence of Africa. He emphasized the importance of conscience by fusing African philosophy with Marxism and scientific socialism underlining the role of conscience. Nkrumah promoted the African personality as the basis for self-determination, emphasizing intellectual liberation and control over systems, asserting that transforming society required more than just changing political structures or gaining independence from colonial powers. He understood that a fundamental shift in thinking, philosophy, and consciousness was essential for the redemption and development of African societies.

Social revolution must therefore have, standing firmly behind it, an intellectual revolution, a revolution in which our thinking and philosophy are directed towards the redemption of our society. (p. 78)

Nkrumah believed that intellectual liberation and a reorientation of philosophy were necessary to address the social, economic, and cultural challenges facing African nations. He recognized that African societies had been subjected to centuries of exploitation, marginalization, and cultural alienation. To overcome these barriers, Nkrumah argued that Africans needed to reclaim their intellectual sovereignty, assert their own narratives and values, and develop philosophies that were rooted in their unique historical, social, and cultural contexts. In essence, Nkrumah's call for an intellectual revolution meant fostering a critical and independent mindset, one that questioned dominant paradigms and sought to develop theories, ideologies, and philosophies that were relevant to the African experience. By doing so, Nkrumah believed that African societies could chart their own path of development, grounded in their specific needs and aspirations. Like Plato, Nkrumah emphasized the importance of education and knowledge. He believed that education was the key to liberating the African people from oppression and empowering them to actively participate in the development of their societies. Nkrumah saw education as a means to cultivate critical thinking, moral values, and a sense of communal responsibility, aligning with Plato's belief in the transformative power of knowledge.

Many African political figures like Senghor, Nyerere and Nkrumah were identified as the platonic philosopher kings. (Boadi, 2000) As such, Mazrui, in his book *The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis* (1982) compared Nkrumah to the archetypal platonic Philosopher King. This parallel was much more evident for Nkrumah who integrated philosophy to his political conduct, and traced his philosophical legacy, Consciencism, as a superior Afro-centric adaptation of Socialism, in that context, Nkrumah might be seen as the philosopher who got out of the cave, contemplated *The sun of independences*, the ideal or ultimate goal of achieving independence for African countries. Just as the sun of the good represented the ultimate truth and enlightenment in Plato's philosophy, *The sun of*

*independences* represented the ideal state of freedom, self-determination, and empowerment for African nations. However, when these philosophers re-entered the cave to assume their role of philosopher kings, they progressively succumbed to its comfort. The philosopher, having been exposed to the higher truths, willingly chose to return to the realm of ignorance and illusion. This interpretation contrasts with the traditional understanding of the allegory, where the philosopher's aim is to enlighten others and lead them out of the cave. Applied to the context of Nkrumah, it implied that Nkrumah, as a philosopher advocating for independence and social change, has been initially driven by noble ideals and a desire to free others from the constraints of oppression and colonialism. However, over time, he had succumbed to the comfort and familiarity of the existing system or lost sight of his initial goals, choosing to remain within the confines of the metaphorical cave. The attainment of this ideal African state, characterized by widespread stability, development, and equitable governance, has not been realized. Many African nations continue to grapple with issues such as poverty, corruption, political instability, and social inequalities. Nkrumah's criticisms of African leaders were part of a broader discourse on the need for accountable and visionary leadership in Africa. He called for leaders who prioritize the welfare and development of their people, challenged neocolonial structures, and promote a genuine sense of African agency and identity.

*Consciencism* was a system to navigate and reconcile the various cultural and ideological elements present in Africa, particularly Western, Islamic, and Euro-Christian influences, in a way that aligns with the African personality and the underlying principles of traditional African society. Rooted in materialism, Consciencism emphasized the importance of understanding the material conditions and economic factors that shape society. He considered egalitarianism to be the “social reflection of materialism” (p. 96), along these lines, Nkrumah defined his conception of man.

The Cardinal ethical principle of philosophical Consciencism is to treat each man as an end in himself and not merely as a means. This is fundamental to all socialist or humanist conceptions of man. It is true that Immanuel Kant also identified this as a cardinal principle of ethics, but

whereas he regarded it as an immediate command of reason, we derive it from a materialist viewpoint. (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 95)

The social-political practice in Nkrumah's Consciencism aimed to prevent the emergence or consolidation of social classes, as these are viewed as sources of exploitation and inequality. Exploitation and class subjugation contradict the principles of Consciencism. With its emphasis on egalitarianism, it sought to promote the development of individuals in a manner that ensured the conditions for the development of all individuals. It strived to avoid introducing diversities that would undermine the egalitarian foundation. In other words, individual development should not come at the expense of equal opportunities for others. Additionally, the social-political practice of Consciencism aimed to coordinate social forces in a manner that strategically mobilized them for the maximum development of society along true egalitarian lines. This involved planning and implementing development initiatives that were designed to advance societal progress while upholding principles of equality and fairness.

In Consciencism, the matter was seen as a plenum, which means it was filled with interacting forces that influenced each other. These forces existed in a state of tension, constantly interacting and conflicting with one another. This perspective acknowledged that matter was not fixed but dynamic, undergoing ongoing processes of change and transformation. From a dialectical perspective, Consciencism argued that matter could undergo categorial conversion. Categorial conversion referred to a profound and fundamental change in the nature or category of something. To achieve categorial conversion, a critical disposition of matter was necessary. This required a careful and analytical approach to understand the underlying components and dynamics of matter. By critically examining matter, its forces, and their interactions, it became possible to identify the potential for transformation and change. This understanding offered a robust framework for analyzing various phenomena, including colonialism. When applied to colonialism, Consciencism facilitated a thorough examination of the underlying forces, power dynamics, and structures that sustained colonial systems. It

highlighted the potential for transformation and the opportunity to challenge and overcome colonialism through critical analysis and strategic interventions

Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born* depicted a contrasting portrayal of Ghana in opposition to the principles of Consciencism. Armah portrayed a society engulfed in moral decay, corruption, and social degradation, presenting a stark contrast to the ideals of Nkrumah's philosophy. Our dissertation argued that Armah's book sought to parody Nkrumah's to underline the contradictions between Consciencism's political theory and its practice.

In Bakhtin's theory, parody was identified as one of the manifestations of double-voiced discourse. It represented a specific form of interaction between different voices or consciousness within a text or cultural context. Parody involved the invading voice or consciousness interacting hostilely with the penetrated discourse, forcing it to serve aims that opposed its original intention. There were different forms of parody within double-voiced discourse. In one variety, the invaded discourse was incorporated into the authorial discourse, with the invading voice using it as a tool to convey its own intentions. In another variety, the invaded discourse remained separate from the authorial discourse but became the object of a hidden polemic, influencing and shaping the author's voice. This hidden polemic involved a critical engagement with the other's discourse, inflecting the authorial voice with a subversive or oppositional force.

Bakhtin suggested that Dostoevsky's prose predominantly consisted of double-voiced discourse, encompassing different varieties, particularly the hidden polemic. Dostoevsky's works were characterized by the presence of multiple voices, each with its own intentions and perspectives. Through parody and other forms of double-voiced discourse, Dostoevsky engaged in a critical dialogue with the prevailing ideologies and conventions of his time, challenging and reshaping them to reflect his own authorial vision.

As cited before, Kibera in his article *Pessimism and the African Novelist: Ayi Kwei Armah's The beautiful ones are not yet born* viewed Armah's novel as a work driven by

vengeance and contempt for Africa. We agreed with this view, for the book's openly offensive stance towards African leadership confirmed it. However, we would add that *The beautiful ones are not yet born*,

Through parody, Armah exaggerated and subverted certain aspects of Consciencism, particularly its ideals of social and political transformation. The novel challenged the notion that the realization of Consciencism's principles would automatically lead to a better society. Instead, it presented a stark contrast between the idealistic vision of Consciencism and the harsh realities of Ghanaian society, highlighting the moral decay, greed, and moral bankruptcy prevalent in the post-independence period. By using parody, Armah exposed the contradictions and shortcomings of the political elite and their failure to live up to the ideals of Consciencism. He critiqued the empty rhetoric and hollow promises made by those in power, revealing the gap between their words and actions. Through a satirical lens, the novel unveiled the inherent flaws and hypocrisy within the political system, challenging the notion of a true implementation of Consciencism.

*The beautiful ones are not yet born* could be seen as a form of literary critique, using parody to highlight the disconnection between the ideals of Consciencism and the realities of post-independence Ghana. It questioned the extent to which Consciencism was actually able to bring about meaningful change and social transformation. Through its satirical portrayal, the novel prompted readers to reflect on the complexities and challenges inherent in the pursuit of ideological principles in a complex socio-political landscape. Major manifestations of the parodical nature of the novel can be extracted from its philosophical themes.

## **Humanism**

A major manifestation of this is the absence of humanism, a prominent theme that pervades the narrative. As seen before, Consciencism treats each man as an end in himself and not merely as a means.

When a plurality of men exist in society, and it is accepted that each man needs to be treated as an end in himself, not merely as a means, there transpires a transition from ethics to politics. Politics become actual, for institutions need to be created to regulate the behavior and actions of the plurality of men in society in such a way as to conserve the fundamental ethical principle of the initial worthiness of each individual. Philosophical Consciencism consequently adumbrates a political theory and a social-political practice which together seek to ensure that the cardinal principles of ethics are effective. ((Nkrumah,1964,p. 98)

However, in the book, men in general were seen as social elevators and were not perceived as inherently valuable beings. The novel portrayed a society where individuals were driven by self-interest, corruption was rampant, and empathy was scarce. This absence of humanistic values created a bleak and morally bankrupt environment, where the well-being and dignity of individuals were disregarded. This self-centeredness and lack of concern for the common good reflected the absence of humanism. The novel emphasized the devaluation of human life, where individuals were reduced to mere objects of exploitation. The man's relationship with his relatives was a major manifestation of this phenomenon, for he was perpetually alienated from everyone around him due to his uncompromising adherence to his moral ideals and integrity. His friends, family, and even his wife viewed his refusal to participate in corrupt practices as a failure and a betrayal of their collective desire for material gain. The absence of humanism became evident in their treatment of the man, as they prioritized personal wealth and societal status over the well-being and dignity of an individual who remained committed to his ethical values. The man's refusal to compromise his integrity became a source of frustration and disappointment for those around him. He was belittled, mocked, and even alienated by his loved ones, highlighting the absence of empathy, compassion, and a genuine understanding of his motivations. The absence of humanism was further underscored by the fact that his commitment to honesty and righteousness was met with disdain rather than admiration or support. His perpetual guilt outlined the severity of his loved-ones criticism.

I felt like a criminal. Often these days I find myself thinking of something sudden I could do to redeem myself in their eyes. Then I sit down and ask myself what I have done wrong, and there is really nothing. (Armah,1968p. 63).

## **Class Struggle**

Class stratification was yet another major manifestation of the parodical nature of the novel. One of the most important manifestations of class stratification that the novel examined was economic inequality. Armah portrayed a stark contrast between the privileged wealthy elite and the impoverished. The upper class, which included government officials, businessmen, and their families, lived a life of luxury, enjoying luxuries and ample opportunities for advancement. In contrast, the underclass, composed of the working poor and marginalized individuals, struggled to make ends meet, with limited prospects for economic mobility. Armah's confrontational stance towards the Ghanaian corrupt political elite was yet again expressed through his use of imagery. An illustration of this was the presence of the Atlantic-Caprice served as a constant reminder of the pervasive economic inequality that permeated the story. Its opulent façade and extravagant amenities captivated the desires and aspirations of those longing for a taste of luxury, while simultaneously intensifying the frustration and resentment experienced by those excluded from its privileges and benefits. The juxtaposition between the lavishness of the Atlantic-Caprice and the struggles faced by the underclass underscored the profound divide in society, emphasizing the enduring impact of class stratification and the vast disparities in wealth and opportunity. A dichotomy that essentializes social status and individual value was present in the story, explicitly expressed through Oyo's mother's words.

As he turned to go, he could hear, with a terrible distinctness, the voice of his mother-in-law, assuring his son that he would not grow up to be a useless nobody, that he would be a big man when he grew up. (Armah, 1968, p. 145)

This essentialization effectively divided Ghanaian society into two distinct and opposite entities: the "big men" and the "useless nobodies." Which showcased the deeply entrenched class divisions and inequalities that persisted within Ghanaian society, undermining the principles of egalitarianism and social justice. This division highlighted the existence of class struggle throughout the story, depicting a class-stratified Ghana that stood in stark contrast to

Nkrumah's ideal of egalitarianism and social equality, as he envisioned a society where every individual would be valued and treated as an equal.

## **Ideology & Social context**

An insightful analysis of ideology and utopia can be applied, drawing upon the ideas presented by Mannheim in his work *Ideology and Utopia*. His ideology encompassed the notion that ruling groups could become deeply entrenched in their own interests, leading to a distorted perception of reality that justified their power and preserved the existing social order. Similarly, oppressed groups often constructed their own utopian visions, which could skew their understanding of the present reality. The novel *The beautiful ones are not yet born* reflected Mannheim's concept of ideology as a total conception, representing the prevailing ideas and thought systems of a specific historical period. The distinct ideologies of various social groups were portrayed within the novel, highlighting the intricate dynamics of ideology and utopia. By applying Mannheim's framework, we can explore how these ideologies shaped the characters' perceptions, motivations, and actions within the context of post-independence Ghana.

In Mannheim's framework, the man's utopian nature was shaped by his social position and the experiences of the working class. His perspective was influenced by the struggles and injustices he witnessed, which fueled his desire for a better world. Through his actions and choices, he challenged the dominant ideology that perpetuated class stratification and inequality. The man's utopian vision was not limited to personal gains but extended to collective well-being. He recognized the interconnectedness of individuals within society and believed in the transformative power of solidarity and shared values. His refusal to be swayed by the corrupt ideologies of the privileged elite reflected his utopian commitment to creating a more just and egalitarian society for all. He represented the aspirations and hopes of the marginalized, striving to challenge the status quo and envision a society founded on principles of justice, integrity, and equality.

In contrast, the rich and powerful characters in the novel were driven by their own ideological pursuits, which often prioritized their self-interests over the well-being of society as a whole. Their ideologies were designed to maintain their privileged positions and perpetuate the existing class divisions. Characters like Koomson, the corrupt politicians, and the wealthy elite, were motivated by a distorted perception of reality that justified their exploitative behaviors and accumulation of wealth. Their ideologies served as a means to preserve the status quo and consolidate their power. By subscribing to these ideologies, they reinforced the existing class stratification within Ghanaian society, ensuring that the gap between the wealthy and the marginalized remained wide. They justified their actions by perpetuating the belief that their success and affluence were a result of their superior abilities or entitlement, rather than acknowledging the systemic advantages that enabled their wealth accumulation.

Using ideology as a tool for manipulation and control, employing rhetoric and narratives that any attempts to challenge the existing social order were threats to stability and progress. It exemplified how ideologies can be used to preserve and perpetuate class divisions. Their self-serving pursuits and distorted perception of reality stood in stark contrast to the utopian aspirations of the marginalized and the man, who sought to challenge the existing power structures and create a more just and equitable society for all.

Throughout the novel, ideological forces exerted control and maintained a certain hegemony over the depicted society. These forces were characterized by corruption, moral decay, and a widening gap between the rich and the poor. The characters in the story were caught within this web of ideological dominance, struggling to navigate their lives and maintain their integrity. However, the military coup served as a transformative event, shattering the established ideological hegemony. It represented a decisive break from the existing order, offering the possibility of a new social and political paradigm. In this sense, the coup can be seen as a victory for utopian forces, as it signaled a disruption of the oppressive ideologies that had plagued society. Mannheim's theory emphasized the potential for transformative moments,

such as a military coup, to challenge and subvert prevailing ideologies. The coup in was a manifestation of the collective desire for change and the pursuit of a more utopian vision. It represented a rupture with the old order and opened up space for alternative ideologies and possibilities to emerge.

## **From Utopia to ideology**

As presented before, Nkrumah's Consciencism can be seen as a form of utopian thinking within the context of Ghanaian independence and his political philosophy. Consciencism, as espoused by Nkrumah, aimed to reconcile various philosophical and ideological strands, including African traditionalism, socialism, and scientific rationalism, to guide the development and transformation of post-colonial Ghana. At its foundation, Consciencism offered a vision of a fair and equal society where economic and social imbalances would be eliminated, anchored in African culture and values. It aimed to unite the nation's citizens and establish a sense of shared accountability for societal advancement. However, when considering its actual implementation and the difficulties encountered in turning its ideals into reality, Consciencism's utopian nature became clear.

Nkrumah called his new philosophy, "Consciencism." It shares with the Utopian impulse a sense of urgency, as well as the view that material change isn't enough, that an exact blueprint for change is hardly the point-that instead we need a whole new outlook on life, something analogous at least to a new morality, to carry out Marxian praxis, the unity of theory and practice. (Smith, 1991, p. 32)

In line with Mannheim's theory of ideology and utopia, we argue that Nkrumahism, as espoused by Nkrumah, transitioned from a utopian vision to an ideological framework due to its unrealizability. According to Mannheim, when utopian visions encounter difficulties in their realization, they often transform into ideologies, which serve as frameworks that seek to justify and legitimize existing power structures and interests. In the case of Nkrumahism, the unrealizability of the original utopian vision led to the transformation of Nkrumah's ideas into an ideological framework. This transformation highlights the interplay between utopian

aspirations, the realities of governance, and the potential dangers of ideologies becoming rigid and resistant to change as illustrated in Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born*.

## Conclusion

This master dissertation entitled *The platonic inspiration of afrotopia in The beautiful ones are not yet born* has attempted to explore the extent to which the concept of Afrotopia was present in the novel, we relied on Plato's *The republic* as a model. Through our analysis, we have concluded that the novel presented a vision of Afrotopia that was both critical and hopeful and that *The republic* of Plato served as map for understanding the novel's themes and ideas. Overall, we argued that *The beautiful ones are not yet born* offered a powerful vision of what an Afrotopian future could look like.

Our exploration began with a comprehensive analysis of Armah's novel, which served as a powerful critique of post-colonial Ghanaian society. The protagonist's struggle against corruption, moral decay, and spiritual emptiness highlighted the urgent need for a transformative vision that could raise communities and establish a harmonious society. Armah's work served as a starting point for envisioning a new African society, one that captured Afrotopia, a utopia rooted in African cultural values, identity, and aspirations.

To illuminate the path towards a better future for Ghana, we turned to Plato's *The republic* as a philosophical framework. Despite its historical and geographical distance from the African context, Plato's foundational work presented us with valuable insights into the principles and mechanisms that could guide the formation of an ideal society. *The republic's* emphasis on justice, education, and the philosopher king resonated with the quest for social progress and intellectual enlightenment essential for the construction of a better future.

Furthermore, we found parallels between Plato's tripartite division of society and Armah's exploration of different social classes in Ghanaian society. Just as Plato envisioned the ideal society as comprising the ruling class, soldiers, and producers, Armah's novel portrayed a society divided into a corrupt ruling elite, a disenchanting middle class, and a struggling working class. These divisions highlighted the urgent need for a restructuring of social

hierarchies and the establishment of a just society that values the welfare and dignity of all individuals.

In our exploration, we also identified the challenges inherent to the realization of Afrotopia. The novel *The beautiful ones are not yet born* served as a cautionary tale, depicting the obstacles that obstruct the path to utopia, such as corruption, moral decay, and the persistence of colonial legacies. However, we must view these challenges as opportunities for growth and transformation rather than insurmountable barriers. By critically examining the limitations of the current systems, embracing cultural identity, and fostering a collective spirit of solidarity, we can overcome these obstacles and strive towards the realization of Afrotopia. The parody and ironical fate of Nkrumah, as depicted in Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, offered a thought-provoking exploration of the contrast between his visionary work *Consciencism* and the realities of post-colonial Ghana. Nkrumah's *Consciencism* presented a hopeful and idealistic framework for African liberation, advocating for a unified socialist society rooted in indigenous values. However, in *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, we witnessed the disillusionment and corruption that plagues post-colonial Ghana, exposing the stark gap between Nkrumah's vision and the harsh realities of power. The protagonist's struggle symbolized the collective disillusionment and the failure of Nkrumah's utopia to materialize fully. This ironic fate highlighted the complexities and challenges that leaders face in transforming societies, reminding us of the delicate balance between visionary aspirations and the intricate dynamics of socio-political realities.

However, it was crucial to acknowledge that Afrotopia should not be viewed as a fixed or prescriptive blueprint. Rather, it should be seen as an ongoing process of collective imagination, dialogue, and continuous reflection. The journey towards a better future requires active engagement, inclusivity, and a genuine commitment to addressing the complex challenges faced by African societies. As it has been suggested by this dissertation Armah's novel absorbed many philosophical perspectives, amongst them Plato's thought and African

political theory, like Nkrumah who himself was influenced by Greek philosophy. Another pertinent perspective on the novel would go along the lines of existentialist philosophy. An existentialist study that sheds light on the disillusionment, moral decay, and the constant struggle against corruption would provide new insights on these phenomena in Armah's work. So how can characters like the man find meaning and purpose in the world?

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