

To:

My parents and grand parents

My sisters and brothers

Lisa Ammar Khodja

My friends and classmates

Hakim

To my parents

Maiga Hadeye Oumar

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ABSTRACT

The present comparative study examined the theme of alienation in two literary works namely, Armah's first novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child*. The analysis of the two texts is undertaken from a comparative perspective by using Pascale Casanova's concept of Literary Affinity as it is elaborated in her book, *The Republic of Letters* and Harold Bloom's concept of "Alienation", which is developed in book that bears the same name, *Alienation*. The two concepts represent the theoretical framework on this comparison dissertation. The main objective is to examine the context in which the two novels are produced, draw parallels between the two authors' lives and literary careers. In addition, we compare the novels' structures, settings, and the characters' experiences of alienation. The comparative study shed light on the ways on which alienation manifests through oppressive social norms and study their impacts individuals psyche in the selected novels. Our comparison also revealed that Harold Bloom's Concept of "Alienation" is clearly displayed in the two narratives through the profound sense of dislocation, estrangement, and disillusionment experienced by the main characters in their specific sociopolitical and cultural contexts. The comparative analysis demonstrates the presence of analogies in feelings of isolation, marginalization, and loss of identity. By applying Bloom's alienation, we compared the characters' struggles, their relationships, and the societal factors that contribute to their sense of alienation. Finally, through this comparative analysis, similarities and differences in the manifestation of alienation are highlighted by examining its deep moral and emotional impacts on the selected novels' characters in relation to their role and place in society.

Key Words: Alienation, literary affinity, family, society, identity.

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General Introduction

One of the main advantages of Comparative Literature is that it provides important insights into the perspectives and themes explored by different authors across different periods, cultures, and genres. In the following analysis, we intend to undertake a comparative analysis between two prominent writers, Doris Lessing and Ayi Kwei Armah, who are both outstanding literary figures and influential writers in their significant contributions to literature through their artistic commitment and their desire to reform their respective societies. By drawing parallels between the former's, *the fifth child* (1988) and the latter's *the beautiful ones are not yet born* (1968), we aim to uncover the similarities and differences in these two literary works with emphasis on their ways of dealing with alienation through setting, characters and themes. The main objective of this comparative study is to contribute to a broader appreciation of their literary selected works and to shed light on the comparable literary themes that transcend geographical boundaries.

At first glance, the two authors appear so different. Doris Lessing is a British author who lived from 1919 to 2013. She is well known for her captivating storytelling and incisive exploration of social and political issues. She is awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2007, displaying her significant contributions to the literary world. Doris Lessing's works revolve around themes of gender, race, colonialism, and the struggles faced by individuals within societal structures. Her notable works include *The Golden Notebook*; *The Grass is Singing*, and *Memoirs of a Survivor*.

From a different context, Ayi Kwei Armah, is a Ghanaian novelist. He was born in 1939. His writing exhibits a strong commitment to addressing postcolonial African experiences and interrogating the legacy of colonialism and its effects. Their powerful critiques of neocolonialism, cultural identity, and the effects of globalization characterize his novels. His

notable works include, among many others, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, *Fragments*, and *Two Thousand Seasons*

By undertaking a comparative study of Doris Lessing and Armah, we also aim to explore the common thematic threads running through their selected novels, such as alienation with its impact on identity construction, and social structures, which control the human destiny. Lessing and Armah are distinguished writers who spoke directly about their first-hand experiences of alienation as writers and intellectuals at a time when they were dissatisfied with the constraints that they felt while their generation seemed to accept it blindly. They share a comparable vision of freedom. Additionally, we will analyze their distinctive writing styles, narrative techniques, and the ways in which they engage with the socio-cultural contexts of their respective backgrounds. Through this comparative analysis, we hope to gain a deeper understanding of the diverse sorts of alienations that Lessing and Armah represent. By examining their two selected works side by side, we can explore how their writing reflects and responds to the complex historical and social realities of their times. Yet, before starting the comparison, it is useful to start by the literary criticism devoted to the two selected novels.

Review of Literature

Ayi Kwei Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born* and Doris Lessing's *The fifth child* have received a lot of criticism and have been studied from different perspectives. The former, for instance, has been examined by Mavis Thokozile Macheke in his article entitled: "An evaluation of post-colonial African leadership: a study of Ayi Kwei Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born* (1968) and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*. Throughout her analysis, the critic explains how post-colonial African leaders have shifted from democratic leadership to an autocratic type of governance. The article discusses the forms of corruption that plagued African countries by the end of colonisation. The African successive governments departed from cherished values and ideals of Africans struggle, thus, causing socio-economic

disillusionment of an independent African society. The post independent political leaders, adds the reviewer use their privileges to enrich themselves at the nations and people expense. The author maintains that:

The celebratory mood of independence in Africa evaporated because of the problems of cynical leadership, mass apathy and despair. The colonial encounter left the legacy of capitalism and its related system of exploitation. After independence, some Africans thought that they were welcoming victory in its fullness but their fellow blacks use their power improperly, replicating the colonial forms of repression (Academic Journals <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJEL> International Journal of English and Literature. 5(1), p.14.

Consequently, the African people still wait for freedom and better future, which thwarted by the post-colonial African governments. Their mismanagement and their abuse of power caused and continue to cause damage, which hinders development and wealth, which remains in the hands of few selected individuals while the majority remains poor (Ibid).

Another interesting study has been undertaken by of Leonard Kibera; it is entitled “Pessimism and the African novelist: Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The beautiful ones are not yet born* (2016). The author writes, “Armah wonders why post independent Africa has been so corrupted”. Throughout Armah’s novel, the decadence and violence spread everywhere. The reviewer refers to Ghana’s Coup of February 1966, a sort of changing of the guards, which merely completed one more vicious circle. He adds that

This preconceived judgement on our morality becomes the starting point of the novel. Consider, for a moment our encounter with the old regime as the bus conductor savours the ancient stink of the newly issued note: “Fascinated, he breathed it slowly into his lungs. It was a most unexpected smell for something so new to have: it was a very old smell, very strong and so very rotten that the stench itself of it came a curious, satisfying pleasure”. (Armah, p, 3).

According to the reviewer, no chance is conceivable because society does not learn from its mistakes. Time has stopped. Or at the very least Armah’s bus which represents a microscopic vision of the entire country, vanishes at the start of the book before resurfacing under a new regime and the same mood (<https://journal.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/002198947901400109>)

More critical works have been devoted to Doris Lessing's *The fifth child* (1988). We can refer, for instance, to Xiaoyan CAI's article entitled, "Reading the Maternal in *The Fifth Child* by Doris Lessing" (2010) who its author argues that *The fifth child* is a horror story that narrates the mother's sufferance that she faces when she is pregnant and her family experiences a metamorphosis when Ben was born. The goal of these stories is not simply entertainment, but also regeneration, as she states that Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* is a "horror story" of a middle-class family's gradual disintegration by the birth of a goblin child Ben. Set up in the swinging 1960s England, the Lovett's strive for their dream of idyllic domestic happiness: an old-fashioned family with many children. All seems happy and well until Harriet gets pregnant for the fifth time. She suffers through an arduous pregnancy to give birth to Ben, who comes out deformed, gnome-like, supernaturally powerful and violent. As he grows more different, his family gradually falls apart, only his mother remains, desperately struggling in her mother role. Ben, as the story ends, turns out the head of the local young drifters and always looks for people of his own kind.(Comparative LiteratureEast-WestJournal,13(1):73-81, Oct, 20110 .1080 /25723618.2010.12015574)

Moreover, in another paper entitled, "Cycle of Rejection: A Psychoanalytical Reading of Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child*", Widad Allawi Saddam explores the novel from a Freudian perspective. She examines how Doris Lessing uses psychological insights to establish a relationship between individuals and society in general. The author is points out that when people who is reject the dark side of human nature. They decline into barbarity. To illustrate her idea, she is refered to the mother in *The fifth child*, who harbours the feeling of disgust and rejection towards the new born baby which results in more conflict and rejection in the novel. The author maintains that:

Ben first becomes depressed and aggressive; he hurts the people and animal who come close to him. On the other hand, he challenges this reject by making friendship with other boys in the neighbourhood, and then he becomes their boss, because he finds his match. His mother thought that they were stupid, awkward and unable to match their contemporaries. The more people

become dissatisfied of their life, the more they destruct their life (Al-Ustath Journal for Human and Social Sciences Vol. (59) No. (3) (September -2020, p, 43).

The passage expresses Ben's alienation, his estrangement, and isolation from family and society. Such a psychological condition forces this character to be violent, as he feels detached, marginalized, and out of place.

Issue and Working Hypothesis

The literature review reveals that many critics have studied the two selected novels. Yet these critical studies have not examined Ayi Kwei Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born* and *The fifth child* of Doris Lessing together. Despite the amount of criticism, the two literary works received, to our knowledge, no previous study done on the two novels comparatively. To fill in this gap in research, we think it therefore important to conduct a new study that consists of drawing parallels between these two novels. We shall emphasize is the possibility of establishing literary links and connections between two authors, who have not been studied comparatively. To achieve such a purpose, we shall read both novels using the theoretical concept of "Literary Affinities" by finding differences and similarities in the two novels, as we cannot prove the existence of any influence or direct contact between the two authors.

More precisely, our comparison based on the concept of "Literary Affinities" by taking into consideration the differences and similarities in the two novels contexts, the two narratives settings, characters, and themes. In addition to this comparative approach, we shall draw parallel between the ways in which the two authors deal with the theme of alienation. To do it, we shall appropriate and try to apply Harold Bloom's insightful critical ideas and analysis of the concept of "Alienation". Bloom explains this concept with reference mainly to the emergence of modernist literature in the early 20th century, which writers represent such as T.S. Eliot, Franz Kafka, Samuel Beckett, and many others. Alienation in their works brought forth because of disillusionment and fragmentation. The works of this period reflected the

alienation caused by the social, political, and cultural upheavals of the time. We will use Harold Bloom's theoretical ideas in our comparison of the same theme in the two selected novels.

Method and Materials

The comparison of the two novels, as already mentioned, will be based on the concept of "Literary Affinities" as there is no clear indication of a possible influence between the two authors. Therefore, we appeal to Pascale Casanova's theory of literary affinities, as developed in her book entitled, *The Republic of Letters* (2004), published as "La République mondiale des lettres" in 1999. As a French literary critic, cultural theorist, and sociologist, her interdisciplinary analysis came as a reaction and a critique to the study of influence. She argues that the study of literary indebtedness in field of literature creates a sort of hierarchy that gives importance certain languages and literary traditions over others, thus, perpetuating cultural and economic dominance.

According to Pascale Casanova, the concept of "Literary Affinity" solves the problem as it examines the connections and analogies that may exist between different literary works, authors, and traditions. She points out that literary affinity is not solely based on aesthetic criteria but is influenced by socio-political factors, such as the historical relationships between countries, the circulation of literary works, and the dominance of certain languages and cultural centers. By using this concept of literary affinity, we can go beyond the limited and traditional ideas of national literatures and expand the understanding of world literature. Casanova also stresses the importance of taking into consideration the global flow of literary works and the transnational networks that shape the production and reception of literature. The following passage illustrates the point:

A literary work can be deciphered based on the whole of the composition, for its rediscovered coherence stands revealed in relation to the entire literary universe of which it is a part. The singularity of individual literary works therefore becomes manifest only against the background of the overall structure in which they take their place. Each work that is declared to be literary is a minute part of the immense "combination" constituted by the literary world as a whole (Casanova.2004, p, 3).

We understand from the above excerpt that writing a literary work interprets when studying the relation to the entire literary traditions to which it belongs. The distinctiveness of each individual literary work comes to sight when examined within the larger framework in which it produces. Thus, every literary work is an integral part of the vast "constellation" formed by the literary world. According to her, "Rival languages compete for dominance; revolutions are always at once literary and political" (Ibid. p, 4). In sum, through her work, Pascale Casanova provides a thought-provoking and illuminating perspective on the political struggles that describe our modern world, as they appear via the changing aspects of publication, circulation, and translation.

More importantly, what makes Pascale Casanova's concept of "Literary Affinity" relevant to our comparative study of Doris Lessing's *The fifth child* and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born* is that it helps us to explore the interconnections between the two selected literary works, which belong to two different traditions and cultures. Her ideas are significant to literary and cultural studies, particularly in the fields of comparative literature and world literature while her ideas have sparked debates and discussions about the politics of literary canonization, cultural globalization, and the relationship between literature and power. Hence, her theoretical insights will contribute to our understanding and comparison of the historical, political, and cultural aspects of the two novels.

In addition to the comparative approach, which stresses the possibility of finding convergences since it is difficult to determine direct influence between Armah and Lessing, the argument is that it is probable that both authors' works to be inspired by comparable intellectual and literary movements of their time. Lessing and Armah lived in a period marked by decolonization movements, anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles, and the exploration of African and postcolonial identities in literature. They may have also been influenced by broader

intellectual liberator movements (Feminist for Lessing and Marxist for Armah), which led them to deal with comparable themes as well as the main concerns of the time.

Ayi Kwei Armah and Doris Lessing's Life Itineraries

There is a critical agreement between literary critics that Doris Lessing and Ayi Kwei Armah are famous authors. Their literary outputs suggest thought-provoking works that reflect and address complex social and political thorny questions. The two writers contributed, through their literary works, to enhance the reader's understanding of the human condition. Both describe the impact of colonialism through the struggles for individual and collective individuals for better future. Their writings have a great impact studied and appreciated by readers and scholars around the world.

Ayi Kwei Armah is a Ghanaian writer and intellectual known for his influential contributions to African literature. He was born on October 28, 1939, in Takoradi, Ghana. Armah's works often explore themes of social and political injustice, cultural identity, and the impact of colonialism on African societies. Armah completed his early education in Ghana and later attended Achimota School, one of the country's leading educational institutions. In 1959, he received a scholarship to study at Groton School, a prestigious boarding school in Massachusetts, United States. He went on to pursue higher education at Harvard University, where he obtained a bachelor's degree in sociology in 1963. After completing his studies, he returned to Ghana and became actively involved in the political and social movements of the time. He worked as a scriptwriter for Ghana's national radio station and as a teacher in various schools across the country. His experiences during this period greatly influenced his writing, as he witnessed first-hand the struggles and challenges faced by his fellow Ghanaians. In 1968, Ayi Kwei Armah published his novel, *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, which explores themes of corruption, moral decay, and the disillusionment of post-colonial Ghana. It gained critical acclaim and established Armah as a significant voice in African literature. Armah

continued to write prolifically, publishing several other notable works, including *Fragments* (1970), *Why Are We So Blest?* (1972), *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), *The Healers*" (1978), and *The Eloquence of the Scribes* (2006).

His writing style characterized by its lyrical prose, deep philosophical reflections, and a blend of traditional storytelling with modern narrative techniques. Throughout his career, Armah's works praised for their poignant critique of post-colonial African societies, their exploration of African cultural heritage, and their call for self-awareness, self-determination, and societal change. In his essay, entitled: "Ayi Kwei Armah's Intellectuals of the African Renaissance" (2011), Fouad Mami points out that Armah's writings have been influential in shaping the discourse on African identity and the struggles faced by the continent. In addition to his literary endeavours, Armah has been involved in various educational and cultural initiatives. He has taught at institutions such as the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Ghana, and he has been a vocal advocate for African cultural preservation and decolonization of education. Ayi Kwei Armah's contributions to African literature have earned him numerous awards and honours, including the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best Book in Africa (1989) and the Gwendolyn Brooks Centre Contributor to the Arts Award (2000). His works continue to inspire readers and writers alike, as they delve into the complexities of African societies and the human condition.

Doris Lessing (1919- 2013) is a British novelist, poet, playwright, and short story writer. She known for her deeply insightful and often politically charged works that explore themes such as feminism, social inequality, and human relationships. Lessing's writings span a wide range of genres and subjects, reflecting her versatility as a writer and her engagement with the world around her. She grew up in British colony, which had a significant impact on her worldview and later influenced her writing. Lessing received a limited formal education but

developed a deep love for literature from an early age. She left school at the age of 14 and began working as a nursemaid and later as a telephone operator.

Despite her lack of formal education, she continued to educate herself through extensive reading and became an autodidact. At the age of 19, Lessing married Frank Wisdom, and together they had two children. However, the marriage did not last and she separated from Wisdom in 1943. Lessing moved to Salisbury (now Harare) and became involved in left-wing politics and communist activities. Her political engagement and her experiences in Africa would significantly inspire her writings. In 1950, Lessing published her first novel, *The Grass Is Singing*, which gained critical acclaim and established her as a prominent writer. The book examined racial tensions and the oppressive nature of colonialism through the story of a white farmer's wife in Rhodesia where she grew up. This was followed by a series of semi-autobiographical novels known as *Children of Violence*, which chronicles the life of Martha Quest, a young woman navigating the complexities of personal and societal change. Lessing's works often call into question the conventional notions of gender and explores feminist themes. Carole Klein's analysis of Doris Lessing's biography (2000), reveals that "Doris Lessing broke the rules in both her personal life and within the accepted mores of literature".

One of her most influential and controversial novels, *The Golden Notebook* (1962), deals with the complexities of female identity and the challenges faced by women in a patriarchal society. The book characterized by its innovative narrative techniques and regarded as a feminist classic. Over the course of her career, Lessing continued to produce a diverse body of work that included novels, plays, poetry, and short stories. Some of her notable works include *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973), *The Good Terrorist* (1985), and *The Fifth Child* (1988). It is important to point out that her writing evolved over time, exploring new territories and experimenting with different styles and themes. In 2007, Doris Lessing received the Nobel Prize in Literature, becoming the eleventh woman and the oldest person to receive the prestigious

award at the time. The Nobel Committee recognized her as an author "who with scepticism, fire, and visionary power has subjected a divided civilization to scrutiny. Doris Lessing's contributions to literature and her fearless exploration of social and political issues left a lasting impact on the literary world. Doris Lessing left a rich and thought-provoking body of work that continues to resonate with readers around the world.

Our comparison of the two writers' lives and literary careers show that Doris Lessing and Ayi Kwei Armah are comparable in many aspects. It is true that each has his own style and they wrote in different cultural environments, but they share a commitment to deal with social and political issues in their works. Both use literature to denounce social injustice, political abuses and the impact of political systems on individuals and societies. They also use a critical discourse to debunk the power structures and the consequences of oppression. Moreover, Lessing and Armah endow their characters with complex psychological traits. Both offer a deep exploration of their minds, their feelings, their motivations, fears, and desires. Their psychological analysis contributes to the reader's understanding of the human condition. Last but not least, Lessing and Armah have in common the importance of identity and cultural heritage. If Lessing describes the complexities of women within collective identities from a feminist point of view, Armah deals with his identity as a colonized within the context of changing social, political, and cultural circumstances in Africa. Though each author has his specific thematic concerns, they similarly address social, political, and psychological complexities through their works. Using philosophical ideas and symbolic representations, Lessing and Armah use their literary outputs to call into question cultural assimilation, the loss of traditional values, and the search for a sense of belonging.

Throughout our comparative analysis, we shall also put emphasis on the theoretical guidelines provided by Harold Bloom's theory of alienation as developed in his book entitled *Alienation* (2009), which we shall apply, as we mentioned previously, to our analysis of the

novels settings, characters and themes. Harold Bloom is a prominent literary critic and scholar, who examined the concept of alienation in his exploration of individuality, anxiety, and the struggle for self-expression. His book provides insightful tools to understand the themes of alienation found in literary texts. It explains the role of alienation in a variety of literary and dramatic texts such as J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, among many others. His critical analyses suggest useful insight into this theme.

Harold Bloom maintains that the term alienation can be useful in different contexts and situations; defined as "A condition of being estranged from someone or something" (Bloom, 2009, p.2). However, its meaning is associated to different fields of research such as psychology, sociology and many others disciplines. In social psychology, for instance, it refers to "the person's psychological withdrawal from society". This kind of alienation causes the person's isolation from other people. In literature, adds Harold Bloom, it links to "the psychological isolation from community and society". Alienation can also be related to the idea of Karl Marx linked to labour and the "capitalist mode of production". He asserts that this system of production transforms the labourers into "machines" and makes the individuals isolated from society and alienated from one another. Bloom views such kind of alienation as "the economic separation of man from his fellow man" (Ibid, p.2).

More significantly, alienation represents experiences by individuals within society or from themselves, which takes place across different periods and cultures. The theme of alienation, according to Harold Bloom, includes characters who feel detached from their environments, society, or even their own identities. They suffer from oppressive feelings of being different, misunderstood, and marginalized. Their inner conflicts cause a profound sense of loss, loneliness and despair. Bloom links alienation to questions of identity, belonging, and the impact of social structures on individuals allowing them to gain a deeper understanding of

the ways in which writers have explored the profound sense of alienation felt by individuals in various contexts and eras.

The objective is, by following Harold Bloom explanations; we attempt to show the theme of “Alienation” is a recurring theme in both selected novels. Both Lessing and Armah explore the experiences of characters who feel detached, isolated, or estranged from their surroundings or society, but the reasons of the characters’ alienation differ, as we shall prove it in the Discussion part.

Summary of the Two Novels

a- Summary of *The beautiful ones are not yet born*

The Beautiful ones are not yet born, as mentioned earlier, focuses on the decaying life in post-independence Ghana. The story lasts between Good Friday 1965 and February 25, 1966 (the day after the fall of Ghana’s president, Kwame Nkrumah). It narrates the story of an unnamed man (referred to simply as “the Man”) throughout his struggles to adjust to life in a new political established order. Much of the central plot of the novel centres on this alienated man’s efforts to fight corruption. The narrative tells about the internal conflict as the man reflects on the materialism, moral decay, and disillusionment of newly independent Ghanaian society. The man also reflects on recent colonial history and the traumatic legacy of war and violence. As a high school-educated civil servant for the national railroad, he is torn between two contradictory desires. On the one hand, he wants to provide a comfortable life for his wife and children. On the other hand, he repulsed by what is happening around him. The bribery and corruption affect him, which accompany almost every public transaction. He refuses to surrender to fraud and corruption but, because this decision hurts his family, he cannot even feel proud of his own honesty. The novel follows the protagonist through a day and half of his life. Nothing extraordinary happens. Armah depicts the daily life of a common man experiencing a kind of deep mental distress. He is the witness of the decaying and dirty urban

landscape, which is full of trashcans, outhouse, and crumbling buildings. As the narrative progresses, he lives in a persistent turmoil as he torn between his desire to believe that life is beautiful and his fear that corruption and decay are inevitably a part of the human condition. In short, he represents the condition of Ghana in the mid-1960 a country, which is supposed to be independent, but quickly collapses because of it political leaders' succumbing to greed and self-interest.

b- **Synopsis of *The fifth child***

Unlike Armah, Doris Lessing put emphasis on woman questions within societal norms through Harriet. From a feminist point of view, the author illustrates how her environment isolates the female character; she feels judged and ostracized because of Ben's unusual behaviour. Through Harriet, Lessing explores the burden of women in a conservative society. The story revolves around the Lovatt family's attempts to maintain normalcy are continuously thwarted by Ben's disruptive presence. Doris Lessing's *The Fifth child* was published in 1988, meaning two decades after that of Armah. Her short novel is classified as a contemporary gothic horror story, which focuses on the birth of an abnormal baby, called Ben. The narrative explores the story of an insensitive couple towards the plight of their last son. David and Harriet have difficulty in accepting their fifth child, who is very different from the others. His abnormality causes acute problems for the family. As Ben grows bigger and scarier, Harriet finds she cannot love him. David, his father, cannot even touch him. Similarly, his brothers and sisters are afraid of him. Therefore, no family members accept him. Harriet and David experience a dilemma; they are torn by their parental instincts and their shocking reaction to this savage and unlovable child whose existence shatters their peaceful and idyllic world. It derives from the two novels' summaries that the two narratives have in common the theme of alienation, which examines the consequences of the individuals' isolation and the weight of their disconnection from their social groundings.

The Structure of the Dissertation

At the methodological level, we intend to undertake our comparison of the two novels by following the IMRAD method. Our dissertation is composed of four parts which contains an introduction that presents the topic we are concerned with, the review of literature, and our building hypothesis, and the chosen perspective or method to approach the two texts. In other words, it includes a review of some of the critical studies written on the both works and raises our issue and working hypothesis. In methods and materials section, we shall define, first and foremost, the concept of “Literary Affinity”, according to one of its well-known promoters, Pascale Casanova, with reference, mainly to her book entitled, *The World Republic of Letters*," published initially in 1999, before its English version of 2004, which explores the interconnectedness of the global literary field. Moreover, we shall also define the concept of “Aalienation” with reference to Harold Bloom’s explanation and its use in different contexts. After that, we shall summarize the two novels of Ayi kwei Armah and Doris Lessing respectively in a brief way and try to compare the two authors’ lives and examine some biographical similarities and differences. It follows the results part and discussion of both novels. This last part organized in two main chapters, which deals with the ways in which alienation comes to sight in the two novels. The first chapter will be devoted to a comparison of the two novels settings. Then, we move to a comparison of the characters of the both works by drawing some parallels between them in pairs. The second chapter will be devoted to the main themes common to the two texts. We shall also examine the plots, the structure of the two novels, and the two writers’ style (man, woman). Our dissertation ends with a conclusion that sums up the main ideas that we dealt with in this piece of research. It is followed by a select bibliography, which contains the cited works.

Results

Our comparative study of *The beautiful ones are not yet born* and *The fifth child*, we have noticed the recurrence of the theme of alienation. By applying Pascale Casanova's concept of "Literary Affinity" and Harold Bloom's concept of "Alienation" as discussed in his book, *Bloom's Literary themes: Alienation* (2009), we have mainly compared his concepts of alienation, but within a limited scope as it is used in various forms throughout many novels. According to Bloom, alienation takes a variety of forms; it can be from the self, from marriage, from family, from society, and from cultural belonging. We concluded that *The beautiful ones are not yet born* and *The fifth child* present examples of alienation in different forms.

In the first chapter, we have made a comparison in the novels' settings and then, we have analysed the characters of both novels in relationship to the theme of alienation. We have drawn parallels between the characters in *The beautiful ones are not yet born* and *The fifth child* in relation to the ways alienation has been displayed. In fact, Ayi kwei Armah and Doris Lessing describe the characters of their narratives as alienated individuals who suffer and struggle with the surrounding conditions that affect their beliefs and make their lives difficult. We found out the existence of similarities between these two works through the following characters: 'the Unnamed man' and 'Harriet', 'Sister Maanan' and 'Ben', 'Kofi Billy' and 'the Four Children', 'Teacher' and 'David' in relationship to their alienation from themselves, from marriage, their family, the society and cultural belonging. We found analogies in the two novels' characters and themes. In other words, our comparative study reveals important convergences in the two novels, which are psychological and sociological alienation from self, from family, from marriage and from cultural belonging.

Discussion

Chapter One

The following section is divided into two chapters with a number of subsections for each; we intend to compare, first, the contexts in which the two novels were produced. Parallels will follow between the writers' life trajectories with emphasis on their literary careers and achievements. The first chapter revolved around the comparison of the narrative structures, the two author's style and narrative techniques, and the settings. The second chapter will be devoted the study of characters and themes with focus on the concept of Alienation. Following Harold Bloom's concept of alienation, we shall examine the psychological and emotional aspects of this theme as used by Armah and Lessing in depicting characters in their struggle to get a place in the world, grappling with feelings of emptiness, existential crisis, and a loss of purpose.

Comparison of the two Novels' Contexts

Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born* was published in 1968. When compared to *The fifth child*, we notice many common points. First, as Doris Lessing, Armah describes the tensions between personal integrity and the pressures to conform to his society's expectations. In the words of Derek wright, Armah lived through turbulent times:

“Though too young to absorb the full import of his country's wartime upheavals and post-war social unrest, the strikes, unemployment, and the shooting of demonstrating ex- servicemen back from the colonial war, he passed his most impressionable years during this period of crisis, and its violence and nationalist hopes, which caused tremors among both the Takoradi workforce and the Achimota students, clearly left their mark on him and are harrowingly documented in the retrospective sixth chapter of his first novel. (p.1).

This novel reflects on such context. The author uses an unusual anonymous character to explore the impact of corruption, moral decay, and the struggle for personal integrity in post-colonial Africa. As Ben, the unnamed character lives on the fringe of his society, he feels rejected by his own family (wife and mother in law). The novel is set in an unnamed African country shortly after it has gained independence from colonial rule. The protagonist of the story is an unnamed

man, referred to as simply "the man." He works as a railway clerk and depicted as an honest and principled individual who is disgusted by the pervasive corruption and moral degradation he witnesses in his society. The man's personal struggle revolves around maintaining his integrity and refusing to participate in the corruption that has become a daily and normal practice. People who do not hesitate to compromise their values for personal gain surround him. His behavior surprises his friends, family members, and even his own wife. His refusal to conform to the established order forces him to live in isolation far from his corrupt and corrupting environment.

From the title of the novel, *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, we understand that the author uses it as a symbol to present a bleak image of the post-independent Ghanaian society. The title stands as a metaphor for the despair, the alienation of the main character, who deprived of any hope of a better future, opts for isolation, and forced by the social norms to be a marginal. However, despite the persistent corruption added to the prevailing moral decay, by the end of the narrative, the unnamed character resists and preserves his integrity and honesty. Armah conveys a message of hope and suggests that there are still individuals who strive for a better society because they resist the predominant norms. As Doris Lessing, Armah shapes his narrative in a meditative way; he presents a bleak picture of a man facing the hardships of his newly independent country. Comparable to Lessing, Armah explores the complexities of personal hardships, the consequences of social and political corruption on the lives of honest people, and the challenges faced by those who refuse to conciliate their values.

Last, but not least, the convergence between *The fifth child* and *The beautiful ones are not yet born* is that both narratives are powerful critique of the social norms. Armah describes the decay in a post-colonial African society while examining the struggle of an anonymous character, to keep his honesty in a changing society.

Published in a different context, Lessing's *The fifth child* was published two decades later, in 1988 and its narrative examines a variety of themes such as the role of the family, the impact of the social changes on the individual life of people, and the marginal status of those who do not respect the established order. The story tells about a family during the period of late 1960s and early 1970s. The events happen in suburban England and turns around the Lovatts, a middle-class couple named David and Harriet. At the beginning, they enjoyed a happy life and seem to be a perfect family. Suddenly, their lives disrupted when Harriet becomes pregnant with their fifth child, Ben. From the first moments of his birth, Ben appears to be unusual when compared to his brothers and sisters. He is strange in his way of being while his animalistic nature worries his family mainly his mother, as he does not correspond to the normal image of a normal child.

The context of the story revolves around the social expectations and their impacts on individuals, who do not follow the conservative family structure and norms. More precisely, Harriet, the mother, makes great efforts to link her maternal instincts with the unusual nature of Ben, as she confronts criticism and isolation from her family, friends, and society. The novel, thus, addresses questions about the responsibility of parents, the boundaries of familial love, and the importance of their integration in one's family and social environment. Ben stands as a rejected child, the "other," representing the unusual, the ugly, and the unacceptable that society often puts on the margin as he does not conform and fit into the established norms. Ben's existence dislocates the idea of a perfect family, as he is not a "normal" child. His double alienation interpreted as a critique of the society's oppressive structures that does not accept the abnormality of Ben.

Furthermore, Doris Lessing, through Ben, describes the tensions in the traditional family structure. Harriet and David's happy marriage disturbed by the birth of a "monster", which turns down their expectations. Therefore, they find it difficult to cope with Ben's

presence. They live in daily conflicts, which added to the resentment, and a sense of helplessness towards Ben. The novel, then, highlights the collapse of family bonds and the hardships of the two parents, who feel isolated and unable to connect with their own child. The context of Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* echoes the tensions and struggles arising from societal expectations, the desire for acceptance, and the impact of being and be seen different from the others. Lessing explores the complexities of family attitudes towards a strange child including their impact on his behavior and his role in the society.

We can also link Lessing's narrative to the sociopolitical climate, which prevailed during the 1980s. A period that saw the rise of conservatism, the growing influence of neoliberalism, and the impact of the Reagan-Thatcher era. These political shifts brought about changes in social values, family structures, and cultural norms. Moreover, written by a feminist, *The Fifth Child* tackles thorny issues related to women's roles, rights, and the societal pressures faced by mothers. Lessing's work often challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations placed on women. Throughout the narrative, she calls into question the traditional nuclear family model with the strain placed on a seemingly perfect family when they encounter a child who does not fit societal expectations, raising questions about familial obligations and the limits of parental love. In her analysis of Doris Lessing's, *The fifth child and in Ben in the World* (2011), Björn Sundberg argues that:

“The novels describe a patriarchal socio-political system, which allows discrimination and oppression of people who are weaker than others in a psycho-social sense. I claim that such a system of social order compels the characters to adjust to society's norms and conventions. Moreover, I assert that patriarchy as a socio-political system, supported by traditional masculine attitudes, presupposes suppression of feelings, of passion and of love among all kinds of people and that it also sustains gender inequality, stable social classes, all kinds of violence and oppression, which can be derived from society's patriarchal structures (Björn Sundberg, (p,8).

It appears from our comparison of the two novels' contexts that, through the main character of Ben, and the man, Doris Lessing and Armah explore the social oppressive norms and their

consequences in creating alienated individuals. Both writers examine the fears and anxieties of an outsider, being the "other" within society and the distress of feeling to be different. The character of Ben, the fifth child, challenges societal norms and disrupts the family's sense of harmony, reflecting the unease and uncertainty that pervaded society during the 1980s. Similarly, Armah paints the predicament of an anonymous alienated character who seeks a place in a rotten post independent world, but his honesty reinforces his marginality. By considering these common aspects of the sociopolitical and cultural climate of the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, we can better understand the contexts in which Doris Lessing and Ayi Kwei Armah wrote *The Fifth Child* and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* respectively. The two novels reflect on the changing dynamics of politics, family, women's rights, societal fears, and social concerns.

Comparison of the Novels' Structures and Settings

The beautiful ones are not yet born by Ayi Kwei Armah and *The fifth child* by Doris Lessing are two novels devoted to the description of modern a society and the difficulty of the characters to cope with it in relation to alienation. Both novels deal with themes of alienation and the various pressures exerted on the characters. However, the two novels differ in terms of setting and narrative techniques. While Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born* takes place in post-colonial Ghana during the 1960s portraying a corrupt and decaying society through the man, who struggles against corruption, Doris Lessing's *The fifth child* is set in a contemporary suburban environment, somewhere in England. The story events focus on problems faced by a family after the birth of uncommon child. The setting represents a conservative family, which is transformed into a symbol of isolation and dysfunction as the novel progresses. The residential setting mirrors the tension between societal expectations of family life and the reality of the characters' experiences.

As far as *The beautiful ones are not yet born*'s setting is concerned, the events are set in post-independence Ghana, primarily in the capital city, of Accra, which symbolizes the whole country. The city portrayed as a vibrant but chaotic place where the hopes and dreams of the newly liberated Ghanaians clash with the realities of corruption, disillusionment, and moral decay. Armah describes the environment of Accra, depicting its bustling streets, crowded markets, and the stark contrast between the wealthy neighborhoods and the impoverished slums. The author skillfully portrays the social and economic disparities that exist within the city, highlighting the struggles of the common people who are trying to survive in the face of poverty and inequality. Through this rural setting, the author contrasts the simplicity and traditional values of village life with the complexities and challenges of urban existence.

In terms of narrative techniques, *The beautiful ones are not yet born* employs a more introspective approach. The novel delves deep into the protagonist's inner thoughts and struggles, providing readers with a detailed exploration of his alienation and moral conflicts. The narrative style is reflective, as it appeals the reader's attention to the protagonist's quest accepted by his family and society. In the course of the protagonist's day, it becomes clear that corruption is everywhere. The first chapter begins with a description of a bus conductor who systematically steals from his passengers by giving them too little change. In chapter two, the protagonist banter with a messenger who has just won the lottery, and who will have to bribe someone just to get his hands on his prize money. In chapter three, the protagonist encounters corruption directly. While working alone in the railway office, he receives a visit from a timber contractor, Amankwa. Amankwa wants to bribe someone to ensure that his cut timber finds a place on the trains and carried to the port. Trying to conduct his business honestly, they inform him that there is no space on the trains. Even though he sees empty trains leaving for port every day.

The protagonist steadfastly refuses to accept the bribe, incurring Amankwa's wrath. Though he has done nothing more than behave honestly, the protagonist feels like a criminal: "Everyone said there was something miserable, something unspeakably dishonest about a man who refused to take and give what everyone around was busy taking and giving" (p.31). Despite his own choice the man felt so bad, he goes to see his friend the Teacher to confide in him, he tells him how his wife and his mother in law considers him. The man suffers a lot because of the gaze of others, which pushes him to isolate himself. He alienates himself from everything.

The Fifth Child, on the other hand, employs a more straightforward and traditional narrative technique. The story is told in a linear manner, focusing on the external events and the gradual deterioration of the family's harmony. The narrative style is characterized by a realistic and descriptive approach, allowing readers to witness the escalating tension and the family's struggle with their alienated child.

While both novels explore the theme of alienation, *The beautiful ones are not yet born* focuses more on societal and political alienation, depicting the protagonist's struggle against a corrupt system. In contrast, *The Fifth Child* delves into the alienation within a family unit, exploring the challenges of accepting and understanding a child who is fundamentally different. It can be said that *The beautiful ones are not yet born* and *The fifth child* differ in their settings and narrative techniques. *The beautiful ones are not yet born* is set in a post-colonial Ghanaian society and employs an introspective narrative style, while *The Fifth Child* is set in a contemporary suburban environment and adopts a more traditional storytelling approach. However, both novels examine the theme of alienation and its impact on individuals and society.

The beautiful ones are not yet born published in 1968, is the first novel of a Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah. It centres on post-independence Ghanaian society during the period of the Passion Week in 1965 and February 25, 1966 (the day after the overthrow of Kwame

Nkrumah, Ghana's first president). The narrative tells the story of an unnamed man who struggles to reconcile himself with the reality of post-independence Ghana.

The novel *The fifth child* is set in a different place and time, but the same alienation characterises its setting. England is the country in which the narrative is set, a country that historically, goes through extensive and profound social, political, and economic transformations over the period of time over which the story takes place. London is the setting for the novel's early scenes, in which Harriet and David meet, court, and marry. It portrays a place that they, at least, want to escape from its busyness, crowdedness, violence, and noise. We have also David and Harriet's house when they begin planning their lives together. David and Harriet envision having a large family in a house big enough to accommodate not only their children but also friends and relatives coming to visit. They find such a house a relatively short distance from London, and for a while use it as the basis for building their dream. It describes the changes of a happy life of the married couple, Harriet and David Lovat, because of the birth of Ben, their fifth child.

Comparison of the Novels' Characters Unnamed Man and Harriet

The unnamed man and Harriet are the central characters of the two novels; they have different occupations and work in different places. The unnamed man in Ayi kwei armah's novel is the protagonist, typically referred to Armah as the «man » by Armah, leads mostly uneventful life as a worker at a railway station and family man in postcolonial Ghana. In term of alienation of a person from the society, we can refer us to the Man, who is insulted by people in his society for not being in corruption. This is because corruption in Ghana society has accepted as a social norm. The man refuses to give into the corruption that surrounds him. His wife Oyo calls him "Chichidodo" as the following dialogue show it:

“He is getting it.’ Flat finality.

‘All right,’ says the man. ‘Let us say I ’am not in it.’

The woman stares unbelieving at her husband, then whispers softly, ‘Chichidodooooo’” (p.43).

The comparison of the man to a chichidodo explains the way in which his wife rejects him; the chichidodo is a bird found in some parts of Ghana, the unique thing with this bird is that it hates human excrement with all its soul, but Chichidodo only feeds on maggot. The maggot the bird loves so much grow best in human excrement. The bird spends most of the time next to human excrement making faces and flapping its feathers due to the foul smell but at the same time trying to get the maggots from the same excrement. Ayi kwei Armah has used the behaviour of this bird to draw comparison with an upright man working for corrupt government. A timber merchant offers him a bribe early in the novel and he turns it down. The man's reaction has met with laughter disbelief from the merchant and with disdain and exaggeration from the man's wife, Oyo. This passage is an illustration:

“The man looks at his wife and finds her eyes fixed on his face.

‘What were you saying?’ he asks.

‘Nothing,’ she says. He grows silent.

‘Somebody offered me a bribe today,’ he says after a while.

‘Mmmmmmm!’

‘One of those timber contractors.’

‘Mmmmmmm. To do what?’

‘To get him an allocation.

‘And like an Onward Christian Soldier you refused?’

The sudden vehemence of the question takes the man completely by surprise. ‘Like a what?’

‘On-ward Christ-tian Sooooooldier!

Maaarching as to Waaaaaaaar

With the Cross of Jeeeesus

Gooing on be-foooooooore!’

The man took a long look at his wife's face. Then he said, “It wasn't even necessary” (p.43).

We understand that his wife judges him by what he did not want to take the man's offer. He does not accept it for his dignity, and he does not accept bribery coming from people, but his wife does not take it the way he does, that is why she judges him every time. The society does not support him even his own wife is against his attitude. As the narrative said when the man went to meet his friend the teacher and said to him: “*Oyo flung my uselessness at me again this night, he said*” (p.53). His wife says he is useless just because he does not want to be, corrupt

that is why the man is set apart from others in his society by his principles. His mother-in-law who questions his ability to support his family, repeatedly asking whether the children are hungry and why they do not have proper shoes causes another instance of alienation.

Over the course of the novel, the man begins to question his own moral compass, as he feels tempted by the glamour of his friend Koomson's lifestyle. However, he never personally engages in corruption. A number of people insults the man in his society for not being in corruption. This is because Ghanaian society accepts corruption as a social norm. They believe corruption to be as a means of getting rich quickly. For example, Oyo and his mother pour scorn at him that he is nobody. He comes to understand the consequence of Koomson's actions when a coup topples the Nkrumah regime, forcing party men like Koomson to flee. He assists Koomson in his escape from Ghana, but the man himself emerges from the incident with a sense of both freedom and constraint: although he has avoided Koomson's unfortunate fate, he still must return to his own tedious, tenuous existence. Everyone judges the Man for his own choices and for own good and inner peace he decides to isolate himself far from everything.

If we turn to Harriet, she is in *The fifth child*, a protagonist too, she is the wife and mother to the Lovatt family. While working as a graphic designer, she meets David at an office party and they quickly marry, buy a too expensive house, and conceive a child. Harriet's parents remained happily married until her father passed away, and she uses them as the model of successful marriage. Harriet is unfashionably traditional for the 1960s her goal, which she achieves, is to stay at home raising a large family. For a time, this makes her happy, but the financial strain of having children, coupled with troubles of their psychologically disturbed son Ben, upends the traditional happy family Harriet desired. Harriet shunned by society for giving birth to a monster, Ben. The main character Harriet, feels alienated from her family and society due to her difficult relationship with her fifth child, Ben. Ben is a child who is different from the other children in the family. Lessing portrays Ben as violent and difficult to deal with. This

difference drives a wedge between Harriet and the rest of her family, who fail to understand the challenges she faces.

Harriet's suffering is twofold; it is first due to the pains caused by her foetus; the pregnancy is harmful to her. She also feels in pain and live it alone and in silence because David does not care about her. He does not pay attention to her or worry about her situation. Therefore, Harriet blames herself and bears all the stress she has caused to the family. She bears the weight of her disease, pain and her husband's indifference at the same time. Overall, she keeps silence to the family's critiques: "silently addressed the being crouching in her womb: "Now you shut up or I'll take another pill." It seemed to her that it listened and understood (p.49).

As mentioned in Bloom's book, alienation, in social psychology, refers to a person's psychological withdrawal from society. In this sense, the alienated individual is isolated from other people; taken to an extreme, such psychological isolation expresses itself in neurosis. Harriet suffers from psychology problems because of her husband and family disagreements, dislocation, and isolation. Particularly during her fifth pregnancy, the family criticize her severely as she is the cause of the house's disruption.

Harriet's alienation is an example of the rift that can form between people due to their differences. In addition, how this can affect their ability to connect with each other. When we refer to self-alienation, we can say that it is also the case of the man in *The beautiful ones are not yet born* and Harriet in *The Fifth child*. As Harold Bloom points out: "in literature the theme of alienation most often appears at the psychological isolation of an individual from the community or society" (p.2). The similarities between unnamed man and Harriet is that the family and society alike reject them. They also distance themselves for them. Their alienation is because no one wants to understand them. For the case of the man, everyone judges him for his own choices and for his dignity and his inner peace. He decides to isolate himself far from everything. Similarly, Harriet, at the end of the fifth child, realizes that if she wants to carry on

living she has to leave the house in order to separate herself from the burdensome past it represents “she was a ferment of need to start a new life. As the novel demonstrate that she wanted to be done with this unhappy house” (P.153). As Harriet gazes at her aged reflection on the polished surface of the large wooden table she contemplates a more inclusive image of herself that makes her at last understands that “her passion to know more about” Ben has thought her to grow and to move on.

In conclusion, we are able to observe the alienation of the two characters; the unnamed man and Harriet are alienated in a similar way. They both have psychological problems due to the behaviour of their surroundings. They both tried at some point to isolate themselves from their societies and their families for their inner peace.

Comparison of Sister Manan and Ben

The next comparison between the two novels will be Sister Maanan in *The beautiful ones are not yet born* and Ben in the *fifth child*. Their family alienates them and the society too. Sister Maanan is a beautiful woman, she smokes marijuana (wee) and she goes mad by the end of the novel because she lost her husband in the war and after the war no one cares about her, society rejects her. Sister Maanan is a character who represents hope and optimism in an environment of corruption and social injustice. She is source of inspiration for the main character, who feel alienated from society. Sister Manan is a person who believes in kindness and justice, and she tries to make difference in the live of people around her. She is an example of how a person can stay true to their values and beliefs, even in a difficult environment. *In Bloom's Literary Themes: Alienation*, Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, Ralph Ellison tackles the alienation of the individuals from culture, and community (P.02). In term of alienation of a person from himself, Sister Maanan alienated from herself by resorting to drug abuse (wee). For example, Maanan through exploitation and neglect from her the government she is driven into insanity.

In the term of alienation from family, the family rejects Ben and the society, *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe argues in Bloom's Literary Themes: Alienation* that "Alienation from family is a result of parents' neglect to their children (p.87). Thus, when parents reject their children, they reject them in turn. According to him, the abandoned children feel more alienated than orphans do because it creates in them many problems such as exclusion from youth, and the feeling of "nothingness" (p.23). As it is the case of Ben. Fifth child of Harriet and David, and youngest sibling to Paul, Luke, Helen, Jane. Ben is a living example of how he has expelled from his own family, and this alienation is due to his character. Ben is rejected by everyone the society, his family excepted his mother His aggressive nature and uncharacteristic appearance forced him not only to alienate himself from his family but also her own mother as well, who was selflessly trying to raise her fifth child properly. In addition, in this upbringing, the perception of reality and the need to take care of the family is completely lost.

Ben alienated everyone in his family, the children avoid him, lock their doors at night, and eventually all of them prematurely leave the house: "Ben would spend the hours between school's end and bedtime with the gang. For the sake of the family, through Harriet; for the children's sake... for my sake and David's. Through he seems to come home later and later" (p.119). Ben's traumatic presence acts as a principle of reality for the family. Ben makes the family bog into a muddle and break the tranquillity because he is an eccentric boy with an abominable appearance and imprudent temperament. His ferocity and brutality scares the whole family, as this excerpt shows it:

"Towards the end of the holidays, someone came bringing a dog, a little terrier. Ben could not leave it alone. Wherever the dog was, Ben could not leave it alone. He did not pet it, or stroke it: he stood staring. One morning when Harriet came down to start breakfast for the children, the dog was lying dead on the kitchen floor. It had had a heart attack? Suddenly, sick with suspicion, she rushed up to see if Ben was in his room: he was squatting on his bed, and when she came in, he looked up and laughed, but soundlessly, in his way, which was like a baring of the teeth. He had opened his door, gone quietly past his sleeping parents, down the stairs, found the dog, killed it." and gone back up again, quietly into the room, and shut the door...all that, by himself! She locked Ben in: if he could kill a dog, then why not a child?" (P.75-76).

The family including Harriet herself were abhorrent at Ben and imprisoned him at the baby's room to control him. Ben's mother forces to lock him up for their own protection because he is becoming more and more dangerous and can go after anyone in the family.

Hoping locking him up will solve the problem that is why Harriet did it. Everyone is shocked that Ben strangle the dog to death; according to the vet, the dog strangled. That is how people got away from Harriet's family after the horrible and immoral act by Ben. People went home little by little no one wanted to stay home for Christmas which made Harriet feel uneasy it was the worst year of Harriet's life, which is expressed in the passage that demonstrate the horror: "Of course, it was impossible, a small child killing a lively dog. But officially the dog's death remained a mystery; the vet said it had been strangled." (P.76).

With all of these hardships, Harriet is forced to keep an eye on Ben. In another instance, Ben escapes home and finds himself on the streets caught in the middle of traffic and Harriet who stands behind him and tried to catch up. At the same time, her despair pushes her, inevitably, to hope that a car could end the Ben's life and his problems. Harriet nearly put her head down because of that vile child as the narrative voice persists: "She was weeping, panting, half crazed, and desperate to get to him before something terrible happened, but she was praying, oh, do run him over, do, yes, please" (P.77). Everyone flees Ben because of his ferocity and aggressive needs. People find it difficult to accept him in the society and in the family because of his difference; he is not like other children. Harriet's great efforts to socialize go without results

Correspondingly, Sister Maanan, in Armah's novel, goes through the same rejection by his friends and family. As she can no longer communicate with others, she becomes more and more alienated. Similarly, Ben in Doris Lessing's novel isolated because of being different since his birth while his aggressively increases his alienation. Ben becomes a danger that threatens people approaching him. His violent acts lead people to refuse to accept him. Doris

Lessing illustrates how the children's alienation can affect the lives of their parents and turn it into a nightmare. In this case, Harold Bloom writes that when his parents have rejected a child, he rejects them in his turn. As a conclusion, Sister Manan and Ben are alienated characters since they seek to be accepted and a place in their families and society but in vain. Their families and their societies, which intensify their psychological troubles, have rejected both of them. Next to the above parallels between Ben and Sister Manan, further parallels drawn between other alienated characters like Kofi Billy and the four children

Parallels between Kofi Billy and the Four Children

Kofi Billy is a dockworker, he works in Transportation Company, he cuts off his right leg in an accident and a wood and metal one replaces it. The following passage explains the character's alienation and his inability to accept his situation:

“He was one-day moving cargo, pushing it with his giant hands across some deck when somewhere some fresh young Englishman sitting at some machine loaded too much tension into even the steel ropes on board and one of them snapped. The free rope whipped with all that power through the air and just cut Kofi Billy's right leg away beneath the knee” (P.66).

In addition to the trauma of living without a financial leg, the Englishman tells him that he deserved it because he had been playing. His situation gets worse when he is fired from the job without any compensation although he did his job well. Therefore, his unaccepted handicap added to a frustration of not being paid force to find refuge, with sister Manan, in smoking (wee) marijuana. Kofi Billy finds himself in a world of debauchery. With the Teacher and Sister Manan, Kofi Billy becomes another ill-treated victim. When he lost his leg accidentally, no one cares for him. Consequently, he commits suicide. After being the victim of a justice due to his accident at work instead of the Englishman being compassionate on the contrary he judges him as good for nothing which drives him to walk away and spend his time to drug abuse to the point where he kills himself: “it was in Sunday after that Kofi Billy's body was found. He was hanging from a sheet, down from the top bar of the finished door of a house not yet finished

then.” (p.75). Because of his many problems that he could not support, Kofi Billy puts an end to his isolation. Because of the psychological problems that the other people around him did not know what caused his loss. It was after his death that people say to themselves that he did not look like a violent person and that he was a good man.

In parallel to Kofi Billy, the four children Luke, Helen, Jane, Paul feel alienated from their parents and their brother Ben due to his difference and violence, which caused them to leave their house. Ben feels neglected by his parents, relatives, and friends mainly causes this sort of alienation from the family, according to Harold Bloom: “Alienation from family is a result of parents’ neglect to their children. Thus, when parents reject their children, they reject them in turn. (p.23). According to him, the abandoned children feel more alienated than orphans do because it creates psychological crises and a feeling of exclusion from youth, and the feeling of loneliness. As parents, Harriet and David always pay more attention to Ben and show more love to him. Such parental neglect makes the other children feel abandoned and leads them to hate their brother because their parents give Ben more time, which pushes them to keep them away from their family. When parents give more time or attention to a child than to the others, it is as if they were showing favouritism, which can push children to hate each other because it creates a differentiation among them, which can destroy a family, and children can grow up with this jealousy between them.

Harriet and David’s first child, Luke is the more alienated child. However, he tries to teach Ben certain skills and mentor him; eventually Luke asks to send him to a boarding school to remove himself from the threatening atmosphere that Ben creates at home. Luke grows up to be a natural observer like David: quiet, reliable and steady, he wants to take after his grandfather, James, and build boats.

Helen, Harriet and David’s second child. However, she also tries to teach Ben certain skills and is very kind-hearted, eventually Helen asks, at the same time as Luke, sent to boarding

school so that she might no longer be in Ben's threatening company at home. Helen matures into a cool and distant young woman who is attractive and self-sufficient. Helen alienated herself too far from the character of Ben. Jane is Harriet and David's third child. Sweet-natural Jane stays home a bit longer than Luke and Helen, and she is the only one to go live with Dorothy instead of going to boarding school. She is more practical than intellectual.

Paul is Harriet and David's fourth child, who is born sweet and good-natured. As Paul was just born when Harriet becomes pregnant with Ben, Harriet is unable to nurture new-born Paul in the same way she has the other children, a trend that continues after Ben is born, since the infant needs a significant amount of attention and care. Paul, as a result, is the Lovat child who is most affected by Ben's presence, he is regularly threatened by his younger, stronger sibling, and eventually he develops emotional "disturbances", which his parents do not take as seriously as Ben's issues. Ben even broke his arm as the passage illustrates it:

"Just after all the family had gone away, as the school term began, Paul went into Ben's room by himself. Of all the children, he was the most fascinated by Ben. Dorothy and Alice, who were together in the kitchen, Harriet having gone off to take the older ones to school, heard screams. They ran upstairs to find that Paul had put his hand in to Ben through the cot bars, and Ben had grabbed the hand and pulled Paul hard against the bars, bending the arm deliberately backwards. The two women freed Paul. They did not bother to cold Ben, who was crowing with pleasure and sprained." (p.71).

After the incident, Ben's parents realize that their little child is on the way to destroy the harmony of his family. To avoid it, Paul, the fourth, leaves the house to go to boarding school to escape the treat of Ben. Among his siblings, he appears to be the most affected by his brother's behaviour. When the new baby comes to the world, the fourth child feels abandoned by his parents, forced to sleep in the room beside the corridor, which is far away from a big bedroom while the new baby room is near it. Paul feels the distance as if he and Ben occupy different place in their parents' heart. Ben who lived in the baby's room causes Paul's alienation and increases his melancholy. As a reaction, Paul shows a hateful attitude towards Ben because his parents consume more energy and time to take care of his brother. He is convinced that they

are do not care about what happens to him. Therefore, Paul feels a sense of isolation and detachment. He sometimes takes initiative to communicate with his brother and take care of him. However, he does not understand that Ben's unusual state of mind and his feeling as the marginalized person, which augments the misunderstanding between Paul and Ben.

To conclude, our comparison of Kofi Billy in *The beautiful ones are not yet born* and the four children, namely, Luke, Jane, Helen, Paul, in *The Fifth Child* represent the state of alienated people that, according to Harold Bloom, suffer from parents' and society's neglect and rejection. Thus, all of them develop a common feeling of alienation and loneliness. They themselves reject people and ignore the world around them either by escaping it each one in his own way. Comparatively, alienation appears also through the way Armah and Lessing shape the Teacher and David, who express their refusal to get involved in the world around them

Similarities between Teacher and David

The teacher in Armah's novel is the close friend of the protagonist. He is a middle-aged man full of wisdom. Alienated by himself and the society. Portrayed as a disillusioned intellectual, who sees no hope for Ghana. He lives on the margin of his society. To forget his problems, he resorts to drugs. His pessimism let him refuse to get married. He runs away from his home and decides to live a lonely life. The teacher stands for the citizens who think life will change after the colonizer leave, only to be disappointed just after. He is also the man's friend, and they occasionally discuss Ghana's political situation and the daily life of the man. For example, when the man goes to him tonight he finds the teacher sleeping necked, reading and listening to music (p.91). The case of the Teacher's isolation from the society and the family is comparable to that of the Black Boy, Richard Wright's novel (1940). Harold Bloom's analysis of Wright's main character outlines alienation of a young Black boy who suffers from racial segregation in an oppressive American South during the early 20th century. Wright's use

alienation imposed upon the protagonist throughout his journey is comparable to that tackled by Armah and Lessing in shaping characters estranged by their culture, and community (p.24).

A similar form of alienation displays through the portrait of David, who suffers from neglect and rejection. He feels alone because his wife does not pay attention to him; she cares only of their Fifth child Ben, which disturbs him and breaks their harmonious marriage. In addition to his family problems, David experiences financial difficulties as the narrator expresses it: “The pressure on David’s salary not, after all, a large one was mentioned” (p.46). The feeling that the family approaches misery terrifies him. He thinks that hard times are coming because of the financial difficulties especially when the grandparents do not support them anymore. Harriet confused by the situation and the fifth pregnancy worsens the couple’s conditions; the following passage explains:

“Even before the crowd gathered before the Christmas of 1973, Harriet was pregnant again. To her utter dismay, and David’s. How could it have happened? They had been careful, particularly so because of their determination not to have any more children for a while. David tried to joke, “It’s this room, I swear it’s a baby-maker!” (p.40).

When related to Bloom’s theme of alienation, Mathew J. Bolt’s essay, the author claims, “Marriage, an institution intended to unite people, has brought only further division”. He regards loveless marriage as “an alienating institution” that has “no sense of communion” (Bloom, p.198). The wife’s lack of attention transforms their relationship to a loveless marriage. Before the birth of Ben, David and Harriet enjoyed their happy life with their children, Luke, Helen, Jane, Paul. The couple falls in love at an office party after they discovered that they have many things in common; both are shy and conservatives and both wanted a large family, the following passage tells more:

“Harriet and David met each other at an office party neither had particularly wanted to go to, and both knew at once that this was what they had been waiting for. Someone conservative, old-fashioned, not to say obsolescent; timid, hard to please: this is what other people called them, but there was no end to the unaffectionate adjectives they earned.” (Lessing, p.07).

David grew up unhappy because of his parents' divorce parents. He saw his true home as being his bedroom at his mother's house in Oxford.

Therefore, he desires a different life for his children. For him, they deserve a room of their own, where they can be safe and secure, even when the family is going through turmoil. Though he and Harriet are equally idealistic in the beginning of the novel about their potential to attain happiness through a large family, David and his wife could not face the financial and familial difficulties. It was when Ben was born that all the problems started in the family. Harriet does not care of David because the fifth child, who remains her priority before everyone else even her husband, constantly preoccupies her. She spent most of her time with Ben taking care of him. Harriet concentrates all of her energy on the couple's troubled son Ben. Though David makes efforts taking actions that benefit the family, the situation does not ever improve. This wife's lack of attention leads David to put Ben in a specialized institution. Though he realizes that the suggestion of putting Ben in a specialized institution is a morally bad decision and that, he knows the institution will be cruel to Ben, he nevertheless, prefers to focus on the rest of the family. He wanted to offer his other children the possibility to live in peace and happiness. For Ben, it is in the institution, which will adopt him and be his substitute family. Once Harriet retrieves Ben from the institution against David's wishes for happiness vanish and the family starts descending back into chaos. What is left to him is to lament and blame his and the family bad fate, an outcome of bad luck and bad choices.

It concludes then that, in the two narratives, the Teacher in *The beautiful ones are not yet born* and David in *The fifth child*, demonstrate the isolation and a secluded life far from their societies. David takes his distance from his family because his wife no longer pays attention to him. All her time is devoted to taking care of her fifth child Ben. Harriet prefers to help her child rather than her husband, which pushes him to feel sadly alone. This sort of alienation related to Bloom's notion of alienation in many ways. Bloom defines alienation in relation to

social psychology as “A state of a person’s psychological withdrawal from society”. In this sense, the alienated individual is isolated from other people; taken an extreme, such psychological isolation form expresses itself in neurosis, which means that because of the gaze of society and the misunderstanding between her husband and her, Harriet had many difficulties to manage her family.

The fifth child and *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, as themes of alienation and social isolation are key themes. In his work on “Alienation”, Bloom examines how people can feel alienated from their environment, their work, and their own identity. In *The fifth child* and *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, the characters feel alienated from their environment and identity due to their difficulty to cope with their family and social problems. Additionally, the two novels show how alienation can lead to social isolation and loneliness, which can have negative consequences on the characters’ mental and emotional health. Bloom also examines how alienation can be overcome, which is also an important theme in *The fifth child* and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*”. The main characters in these novels all seek to overcome their alienation and try to find meaning in their lives.

Chapter Two:

Comparison of the Two Novels’ Main Themes

Alienation in The fifth child

The theme of alienation takes the center of the stage in Lessing’s *The fifth child*. It is not only recurrent throughout the narrative, but also appears in a variety of forms, which include alienation inside the family, from the society, from conservative values, and from an established identity.

Anxiety and Hostility inside the Lovatt Family

The story revolves, as already mentioned around a disturbed couple, Harriet and David Lovatt, and the difficulties they experience to accept their fifth child, Ben whose behavior interrupts the stability of his family and goes against his society's well-established norms. Right after his birth, Ben causes problems with his difference; he does not resemble his brothers and sister. In addition to his difference in appearance, his behavior as he grew up apart from his siblings creates a psychological conflict. Ben becomes hostile to his close family and violent with his neighborhood. He is unable to fit in the social norms.

Ben makes his mother's life unbearable. After three months of Harriet's fifth pregnancy, David rejects her because of being dissatisfied and unhappy. The husband dislikes Harriet's pregnancy and the family's joy starts to be broken. As time passes, they cease to agree on many things and a detachment from each other and self-alienation becomes more acute. Harriet wishes to invite the entire family for the Christmas holidays, but David does not want to celebrate it due to the depression of his pregnant wife since he knows that she is ill and exhausted. He believes that she will not be able to manage the event physically as well as financially they cannot pay the expenses.

Moreover, during James' potential reception of the news, everyone has joked about his or her fertility. Despite all the mocks, David and Harriet reply to the jokes with satisfaction. Doris Lessing describes how the surrounding of the couple criticize them. They are viewed as an accomplice group who share overused ideas about them, and they are unlikely to come from different parts of England and the world as well. However, all this humour had a distinction, and people looked at young Lovatts differently from the way they did before as fools or criminals. Harriet suffers during her fifth pregnancy psychologically because of the family's blaming and judgments, and the fact that the fifth pregnancy is a shock and dismay for her: "You'll have to take it easy," he said, turning away, indicates the narrator (p.44). Then, David

separates himself from Harriet and does not care about her situation, because he also blames her for it as this excerpt illustrates it:

“He might wake to watch her pacing the room in the dark, hour after hour. When she at last lay down, regulating her breathing, she would start up again, with an exclamation, and, knowing he was awake, would go downstairs to the big family room where she could stride up and down, groaning, swearing, and weeping, without being observed.” (p.48).

Life in the Margin

It is important to point out that Ben's unusual behavior does not only alienate him, but also his family members. His acts make it difficult for the Lovatt family to live at ease within the larger society. His violent explosions and lack of communication creates a gap, which separates him from people and prevent him from having friends. Despite his parents' great efforts, mainly his mother, he remains hostile to others. Even the support from psychologists does not lessen his sense of aloofness. The doctors did not find an appropriate treatment to heal or comprehends Ben's detachment to ameliorate his condition. His degrading moral state, therefore, causes another form of alienation, a detachment of his family from their environment.

The couple does no succeed in accepting Ben's behavior because it prevents them preserve their social contacts. Their friends neither understand nor express compassion to their situation. Therefore, a growing distance is created between the Lovatts and their relationships. Moreover, Ben's presence dislocates the traditional concept of family. He transforms the joy of his family members when thinking of a fifth brother into sadness and anxiety. All of them, as mentioned earlier, feel abandoned and astounded by Ben's disruptive violent behavior. The impact caused by Ben's alienation does not only lead to conflicts between the parents and their other children, but also dislocates the family dynamics.

More significantly, Ben's alienation increases Harriet's worries and causes her to doubt about her role as a mother. As her son, she becomes more alienated as she could not satisfy the needs of her husband and love and responsibility towards Ben. Harriet feels guilty of not

succeeding to understand Ben. Therefore, she is alienated as she thinks that she fails in her role as a mother.

To deduce, Lessing in her *The Fifth Child* uses many forms of alienation. They range from an alienation, both within the family and in relation to the larger society. The novel also deals with the challenges faced by Lovatt family members when dealing with an unusual child, who is fundamentally different, emphasizing the isolation and estrangement that can result from such circumstances. Lessing focuses on the familial separation that arises, as Ben grows stronger. When the members of the family realise how Ben is, they become less involved with the family and eventually stop visiting. Ben's growth and the difficulties he causes his family also have split the family. Everyone considers Ben to be a monster who creates disorder and trouble. Therefore, his family and the society alienate him as the following excerpt shows:

“The new baby had of course been offered to everyone to hold, when they asked, but it was painful to see how their faces changed confronting this phenomenon. Ben is always quickly handed back. Harriet came into the kitchen one day and heard her sister Sarah says to a cousin, “That Ben gives me the creeps. He is like a goblin or a dwarf or something. I’d rather have poor Amy any day.” (P.68).

The Family members isolate Ben; they see in his form and disabilities a big problem. Therefore, no one dares to approach him or talk to him; even his father (David) hardly touches him. The family members nickname him ‘goblin’ or ‘dwarf’. Such a rejection has a great impact on Harriet because no one likes Ben. She cannot either whenever she tries to get close to him. She finds it difficult to give up whenever she tries to play with him, because he always pulls himself out of her, and tightens himself up and stops snoring and roaring with victory and brings him back to his cage.

One another aspect of alienation is when Ben terrifies the whole family. Harriet and David especially, everyone is afraid of Ben because of the damages he causes, especially to the children around him. Lessing shows his aggressive behaviour when Ben grabs his hand and Paul pulls hard on the tracks, deliberately bending his arm backward. Paul's arm has badly

sprained, screaming and Paul crying so hard and feeling afraid of Ben and the four children have frightened on him. Hence, everyone says Ben is a savage because he acts violently. Dorothy considers him as a shame. Everyone is worrying about Ben's nature. He is he a Mongol or a dwarf. Bridget asks Harriet, "she replied violently," then Bridget has left and has not been back since. All have justifications for not coming through the summer holidays at home, as they did before, all because of Ben. Dorothy tells Harriet and David to take Ben to the institution, considering what he is doing, as the passage illustrates: "You two are going to have to face it. Ben has got to go into an institution." The narrative voice wonders: "But he's normal," said Harriet, grim. "The doctor says he is." She adds: "He may be normal for what he is. But he is not normal for what we are" (p.78). Because of Ben's critical and disturbing psychological condition and what he causes to the family, Harriet argues that Ben is in normal condition and that Dr Brett has confirmed this: "But he's normal," said Harriet, grim. "The doctor says he is", she justified. Harriet neglects her other four children because of her constant concern for Ben: After a day with Ben, I feel as if nothing exists but him. As if, nothing has ever existed. (p.79). Sometimes, it is the children who prepare the food and Dorothy always takes care of them. Paul feels that his mother abandoned him, neglected him and ignored him. He always cries and screams to get Harriet's attention. However, Harriet is fighting with Ben, and it is an internal psychological struggle. The other children neglect Harriet and exclude her.

Alienation in Lessing novel accentuates Ben's stay in the Institution, which is difficult for Harriet while it is blissful for others. David hires a car rapidly to get rid of Ben while Harriet becomes insensible. Ben soon grasps Harriet, firmly attributing his face to her. He puts his arm around her, kept her away from seeing the car, which was actually on its way, and says, "We have to do it, Harriet. We have to", Harriet screamed hard, she cried with shock, satisfaction, and gratitude to him, saying, "who was taking all the responsibility". Everyone is happy with Ben's departure in particular David and the children as if a beast were out of the house. They

very often compare him to an alien, who came from Mars as Luke explains: “They are sending Ben away because he isn’t really one of us.” Such form of alienation is, according to Harold Bloom, “belonging to another person, place or family; strange, foreign, not of one’s own.” Ben is alienated from his family, they consider him as an extra-terrestrial and he is not a member of the family. Ben has not his part in the house and in the family. They want to expel him. Everyone hates Ben due to the obstacles and problems he causes for the family.

David experiences such a form of alienation with his wife; he feels even more alienated from Harriet during Ben's residency in the institution. This excerpt illustrates it clearly:

“Again she knew from the way he lay there, not looking at her, and did not say anything more than that one syllable, that it was bad for her, that he was making decisions as he lay there. He stayed where he was for a few minutes, and then got out of bed, and went out of the room and downstairs” (p.94).

David notices that Harriet has too attached to Ben while she neglects their other children. He also holds her responsible for Ben's behaviours, believing she brought this nuisance into their lives. However, “the Institution” refers to a place where Ben has held or treated, it sounds like Harriet is able to save Ben despite facing significant challenges or obstacles. This statement suggests that Harriet is determined and resilient in her efforts to help Ben to recover. She likely faces many difficulties along the way, but perseveres through them and ultimately succeeds in bringing Ben back. It illustrates her strength and commitment to keep Ben's well-being. Harriet faces the alienation and fights to protect her family. It is important to point out that many forms of alienation displayed in Armah’s novel.

Alienation as an outcome of Corruption:

The beautiful ones are not yet born explores the theme of corruption, both on an individual and societal levels during the post-colonial Ghana. The story revolves around an unnamed alienated protagonist referred to as "the man." As mentioned earlier, he works as railway station clerk and he resists the widespread corruption and moral decay in his society. The following excerpt tells more:

“The wood underneath would win and win till the end of time. Of that there was no doubt possible, only the pain of hope perennially doomed to disappointment. It was so clear. Of course, it was in the nature of the wood to rot with age. The polish, it was supposed, would catch the rot. But of course, in the end it was the rot which imprisoned everything in its effortless embrace. It did not really have to fight. Being was enough. In the natural course of things, it would always take the newness of the different kinds of polish and the vaunted cleansing power of the chemicals in them, and it would convert all to victorious filth, awaiting yet more polish again and again and again. And the wood was not alone.” (p.12).

Throughout the passage, Armah portrays the corruption that plagues various sectors of Ghanaian society, including politics, business, and even personal relationships. The man encounters corrupt individuals who use their positions of power and influence to enrich themselves at the expense of the common people.

He witnesses bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and other forms of unethical behaviour, all of which contribute to the deterioration of moral values. As when he meets the messenger who wins one hundred cedis in the lottery, but he must pay a bribe some officials at the lottery to get the rest of his money. “I hope some official at the lottery place will take some of my hundred cedis as a bribe and allow me to have the rest.” The messenger’s smile was dead. The corruption becomes a traditional act in Ghanaian society as well the government. Armah focuses on Koomson who is a government agent; he is a wealthy and corrupt minister in Nkrumah’s government. With his desire for luxurious European products and increasing distance from ordinary Ghanaians, he represents the moral deterioration and materialism of the modern Ghanaian elite. The man has been isolated from his family when his wife and mother in law agreed with Koomson to buy ships using bribery. Man does not agree with them even his wife asks him why he tries to cut himself apart from what goes for all of them, he replies, “I did not know,” the man says very slowly, “I did not know that I had agreed to join anything” (p.42). The man feels distant from his family especially his wife, since they lure with Koomson’s influence and greediness to become rich. Which creates on him lack of confidence and expulsion from his own family, as mentioned:

“One fine day Oyo explained everything to me. I think it was when this boat scheme was first mentioned. I had asked Oyo’s mother who would pay for the boats, and with a great deal of pride she said the Minister would. Which minister? Koomson, of course. Only she called him Brother Joe. Brother! Aaah, so. I said I didn’t know Koomson had enough money to buy even one boat. Those things cost thousands and thousands of cedis. My mother-in-law asked me very patiently whether I did not know also that Brother Joe had influence. She called it influence. I had taken a piece of paper to calculate Koomson’s total salary since he joined the Party. Now I dropped the paper and said, ‘Oh, I see.’ And again, with this patience of hers my mother-in-law asked me what I had seen at last. So, I got angry enough to tell her I had seen corruption. Public theft.” (p.58).

Armah's portrayal of alienation from corruption highlights the moral dilemmas faced by individuals living in corrupt systems. Alienation appears in the psychological and emotional toll of living with integrity in a society where corruption is the norm. It raises questions about the possibility of individual resistance and the potential for societal change in the face of deep-rooted corruption. The Teacher alienates himself from his family and society, because he cannot satisfy his family needs, since he is poor. His consciousness leads him to distance himself from society because of the spread of corruption and bribery. As he opposes these deeds, he isolates himself to be alone reading books and listening to music. This conversation expresses it clearly:

“The man laughed weakly. “Don’t worry,” he said. You know what you’re about. And you understand. That’s enough for me. You are kind, said the other. I know my life is empty, one thing yours is not. Now all I do is read books of other places and other times, listen to the music of South Africa and the Congo and the Afro-Americans. And often I remember Maanan and the bitterness and the emptiness of life rise up in me. That is all.” (p.92).

The man and Teacher are friends; they struggle with the spread of the phenomenon of corruption in Ghana. They prefer to alienate themselves from their family and society because they are certain that they are incapable to take care of their family and even make change in the society. Their inability fosters their loneliness, shakes their psychological balance, and increases their alienation from the society at the same time. Harold Bloom analysed this form of alienation in James Joyce’s *Dubliners* by his reference to the disillusioned person as described by Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud: isolated, filled with inner conflict and anxiety, suppressed by institutions and cultural values, and acting out in irritated rebellion

against established order and accepted forms. Furthermore, the man and teacher's struggle improve the economic hardships that the ordinary citizens face in post-colonial Ghana. They witness the poverty and inequality that spread in his society, further deepening their sense of alienation. The vast inequality between the rich and the poor, the affluence of the ruling elite contrasts with the misery of the people and contributes to the man and Teacher's disillusionment and alienation from their own society.

Alienation from Culture and Identity in the two Novels

The other form of alienation, which comes to sight in Lessing and Armah's narratives, is that of identity. According to Harold Bloom, it is related to the clash between traditional values and the influences of modern ones, which often leads to a crisis of identity. This form of alienation appears through characters in their struggle to find their place in a changing world. They feel disconnected from their roots and unable to face the society's many changes. Both Armah's novel *The beautiful ones are not yet born* and Lessing's *The fifth child* exhibit this type of alienation from identity in different ways. In Armah's novel, alienation from identity is a significant theme explored throughout the narrative. The story is set in postcolonial Ghana during the period of political and social disorder. However, in Doris Lessing's novel, the theme of alienation from identity showed through the character Harriet. The story follows her turbulent life and David Lovatt, a couple who initially seek for a conventional family life but encounter significant challenges with the birth of their fifth child, Ben.

In Armah's novel, the protagonist remains unnamed throughout the narrative. His lack of identity contributes to his sense of alienation from his own self. He stands for the image of everyman in the society. As a railway clerk, he resists the widespread corruption and moral decay of his society. Through his perspective, Armah explores through the character the inner disorder and existential crisis faced by individuals in a society that has lost its ethical values. He argues:

“Down from the C.F.A.O., the food stands opposite the Block were all deserted, save for long orange rinds with their white insides strangely visible in the darkness, like some kind of fat worms lying around on the lip out the gutter before the road, and the less discernible corn husks that had held together now long-swallowed balls of kenkey. The man stopped uncertainly as he came to the large building opposite the stands. The Block. This was the Block.” (p.10).

Armah depicts the situation of post-colonial Ghana; the people do not care about their own country even if they are living in miserable condition. The filth is everywhere and the disorder spread in the country. The government marginalizes the citizens by its dictatorship and corruption, which appears in the character ‘Koomson’. “Koomson represents a representative of the evil seekers of the gleam who have taken on the old white ways and a new corruption to further their own wealth” (p.103).

Koomson is the symbol of the Whites’ supremacy and exploitation as well as, the former British colonizer techniques: “But not only money. Power too. And these days it is all coming together in the person of Koomson” (p.56). Koomson, has been the classmate of the man and he has been unintelligent. Nevertheless, when he joins the government, he could own money and power. The protagonist witnesses the decline of traditional values and the increase of materialism in every Ghanaian individual. The society lost its values and they look for money and comfortable life. One aspect of the man's alienation from identity is his rejection of the dominant materialistic and corrupt values of his society. He resists the desire to engage in bribery and corruption, which are widespread among his colleagues and friends as well his family. “All right,’ says the man. ‘Let us say I am not in it” (p.4). The man responds to his wife ‘Oyo’, after asking him to be part of their boat project with Koomson, but man refuses because he never accepts bribery and corruption and he surprises Oyo for a decision thus she names him ‘Chichidodooooo’.

Oyo represents the aspirations of material wealth and social status, which contrasts with the man's rejection of materialism and his pursuit of moral integrity. The tension between their different values creates a sense of isolation within their marriage, causing the man to question

his role as a husband and father. This familial alienation further contributes to his sense of disconnection from his identity. He becomes increasingly isolated as he refuses to compromise his principles and associate himself with the corrupt practices. The society rejects the man; however, he tries to integrate and participate in every movement and manifestation, desiring positive change in his country. Nevertheless, he prefers to be silent because no one listens or considering him, except Teacher who is alienated too because of his consciousness.

The author explores the deterioration of Ghanaian traditional values and cultural heritage, when Oyo imitates Estella (Koomson's wife), because of her physical appearance in order to act as a European, she says, "Yes like Estella. In addition, why not? Is she more than I?" (p.44). Estella represents the Ghana's upper class, her name taken from the beer "Stella Artois", which is a European beer and refers to the whites, it is an image of the majority of Ghanaian who neglects their culture and costumes; they are influenced by the European and whites' culture. The novel portrays a corrupt and morally bankrupt society where greed, favouritism, and dishonesty reign. Everybody participates in the bribery and corruption to get easy money and become rich because of the hard conditions of work and poverty. The excerpt shows it clearly:

"Then let us keep quiet and not get close to people. People will make you very sad that you do not have a house to make onlookers stumble with looking, or a car to make every walker know that a big man and his concubine have just passed. Let us keep quiet and watch." (p.93).

People consider the appearances and materialism of anyone for being valuable in the society. Ethics no longer has any value and the individual has no standing as a poor person. Women become a pricey tool to meet men's needs. The rich men exploit and enslave them as they earn a lot of money. The narrator tells that "Money Sweet Pass All", a title in the wall that shows the extent of the moral decay. It is also an expression, which stands for people's passion for money. With it, a person may do everything he wants. The poor and the weak become a merchandise, they cannot manifest for their rights. Such instances represent the influence and

the rise of the liberalism in Ghana and the decline of the society's values. Like Sister Maanan, she alienates herself because of the decay of moral values in the society. The collapse of infrastructure and widespread poverty serve as visible representations of the decline within society. Sister Maanan becomes acutely aware of this decay; she feels a deep sense of disconnection and alienation from her surroundings. Moreover, the novel explores the disillusionment and struggle for personal and national identity after colonialism. Armah highlights the complexities and challenges faced by individuals as they navigate a society affected by corruption, moral compromise, and the deterioration of traditional values.

Regarding alienation from identity, in Lessing's work, it is displayed through Harriet and David Lovatt, a couple who initially seek live peacefully with their large family. Yet, they encounter significant challenges with the birth of their fifth child, Ben. One aspect of alienation from identity in the novel appears, as mentioned earlier, through Ben, who is portrayed as different from his siblings. He presents excessive aggressiveness and brutality from an early age. His appearance, behaviour, and inability to conform to societal norms set him apart from the rest of the family, driving him to an acute alienation. Ben's uniqueness acts as elicit for the degradation of the family's ideal life, the painful feeling of separation from their identity as a happy family unit has emphasized significantly. All consider Ben as an unaccepted monster and savage.

Ben is far different from the children when he is growing. As the book illustrates:

“He had understood that these two, the older ones are more socially accomplished than Jane; and he ignored Paul altogether.” (p.83).

Ben isolates himself from his siblings, as well from his family and society as he recognizes that he is different from them. His isolation creates a sort of self-alienation and isolation. His family are afraid of him because of his gestures and attitude. They all agree to put Ben in the institution to get him out of the house. However, Harriet disagrees, as the book mentions:

“They looked like a pair of judges after a good lunch, Harriet thought, and glanced at David to see if she could share this criticism with him but he was staring down at the table, mouth tight, he agreed with them.” (p.87).

David's identity isolation defines by his inability to connect with Ben; he experiences a profound loss of self. He becomes increasingly distant from Ben, often choosing to spend less time at home or avoiding any interaction with his annoying son. The following passage proves the point:

“She could not banish Ben from her mind. It was not with love, or even affection, that she thought of him, and she disliked herself for not being able to find one little spark of normal feeling: it was guilt and horror that kept her awake through the nights.” That shows the Harriet.” (p.93).

Harriet does not want to put Ben in the institution. However, Ben's disability and trouble does not affect her. She seeks to find a normal feeling albeit; Ben's strange behaviour terrifies her. This shows that Harriet struggles to connect emotionally with Ben. At the same time, she remains unable to comprehend his abnormal nature.

Furthermore, Ben has been isolated in the institution. “He was unconscious. He was naked, inside a straitjacket. His pale-yellow tongue protruded from his mouth.” (p.99). He is left alone in a room filled with excrement and filth, which shows the abandonment of Ben because of his mental conditions, disability and weakness as this dialogue illustrates it:

“The summer holidays again. It was 1975. There were fewer guests; some had written or rung to say they could not afford the train fare, or the petrol. ‘Any excuse is better than none,’ remarked Dorothy.
‘But people are hard up,’ said David
‘They weren't so hard up before that they couldn't afford to come and live here for weeks at a time your expense.’ (P.74/75).

The alienation from identity also extends to the wider social sphere. Ben's presence disrupts the close-knit family dynamic that the Lovatts had previously enjoyed. His behaviour causes a continual tension and increases the conflict and distance between the family members. As Ben's behaviours become increasingly violent and uncontrollable, the Lovatt family faces judgment and criticism from society. Their neighbours, friends, and even family members distance themselves, perceiving Ben as a threat and danger. The family becomes isolated from the

community they once belonged to, aggravating their feelings of alienation. Their identity as a characteristic, the happy family breaks under the tension of social rejection and condemnation. The character of Harriet experiences a profound sense of identity alienation. The story follows the trajectory of Harriet and her husband David's lives as they build a seemingly perfect family. However, their lives take a drastic turn when they have their fifth child, Ben.

Harriet's alienation begins with the birth of Ben, Lessing portrays him as a difficult and monstrous child. Ben does not fit into the normal image of a child; he is violent, aggressive, and does not have normal human qualities. This separates him from Harriet's aspirations and society conventions around parental behaviour. As a result, Harriet feels isolated and unable to relate to her own child, causing a deep rupture in her sense of identity as a mother as she expresses it clearly:

“She said to her own children, “Please look after Amy. Never leave her alone with Ben.”

“Would he hurt Amy the way he hurt Mr. McGregor?” asked Jane.

“He killed Mr. McGregor,” Luke said fiercely. “He killed him.”

“And the poor dog,” said Helen. Both children were accusing Harriet.

“Yes,” said Harriet, “he might. That’s why we have to watch her all the time.”

The children, the way they did these days, were looking at each other, excluding her, in some understanding of their own. They went off, without looking at her.” (p.80).

Furthermore, Harriet's alienation intensifies as she increasingly marginalized within her own family and community. Her other children are afraid of Ben, and her attempts to integrate him into their family life fail. When Ben has killed McGregor’s dog, the children accuse Harriet as if it is her fault. The children isolate Harriet after the birth of their brother Ben. Considering that, Harriet occupies all her time with Ben and marginalizes them. “The naturally high-spirited and friendly child was becoming nervous and irritable. He had fits of tears or of rage, throwing himself on the floor screaming, or battering at Harriet’s knees, trying to get her attention, which never seemed to leave Ben.” (p.81). Harriet's marriage also suffers as David, her husband,

distances himself emotionally and physically from the family, leaving her to bear the burden alone. This further deepens her sense of isolation and estrangement.

Such form of alienation, using Bloom's words, comparable to "some of Jane Austen's most memorable protagonists, Esther invites in the reader an uneasy mixture of dislike and sympathy, distance and identification. Both novels highlight the profound consequences of alienation from identity. They depict individuals, who are isolated and disconnected, grappling with their own sense of self and struggling to find acceptance in a world that fails to understand or appreciate their uniqueness. The exploration of alienation in these novels serves as a critique of societal structures and expectations, shedding light on the human condition and the complexities of individual identity in the face of conformity and societal pressures. In both novels, the authors explore the idea of alienation from different perspectives, with men and women each having their own unique experiences. In *The Fifth Child*, the protagonist Harriet experiences alienation from her family and society due to her inability to connect with her fifth child, Ben. As a woman, Harriet expects to be maternal, but her struggles with Ben's aggressive behavior and her own feelings of detachment create a rift between her and her husband, children, and friends.

Lessing's fiction is deeply autobiographical, much of it emerging out of her experiences in Africa. Drawing upon her childhood memories and her serious engagement with politics and social concerns, Lessing has written about the clash of cultures, the gross injustices of racial inequality, the struggle among opposing elements within an individual's own personality, and the conflict between the individual conscience and the collective good.

Lessing's own life experiences as a mother and a feminist mirror in the novel. She has been a single mother who raised her two children on her own and was an active feminist who advocated for women's rights. In *The Fifth Child*, Harriet's struggle with domesticity and motherhood is reminiscent of Lessing's own experiences. The novel explores the pressure on women to conform to societal expectations of motherhood and family life. Furthermore, Lessing depicts

her interest in psychology and anthropology in the novel. Ben's character refers to as having animal qualities and the novel explores how society views those who have seen as different or abnormal. Lessing's interest in psychology is evident in the way she portrays Harriet's breakdown as she struggles to come to terms with Ben's behavior.

Comparatively, Armah in *The beautiful ones are not yet born*, explores the male experience of alienation in postcolonial Ghana. He uses the anonymous man to criticize the Ghanaian society. The unnamed railway clerk disillusionment by the corruption and decay of his society and feels disconnected from his fellow citizens who have succumbed to greed and materialism. He becomes increasingly isolated as he refuses to participate in bribery and corruption, ultimately leading to his own self-imposed alienation.

The novel reflects on the challenges faced by men in a rapidly changing society and the difficulty in finding a sense of belonging when one's values are at odds with those of the majority. "The judgment of the loved ones is no different from the judgment of the others; though in the lonely mind the loved ones may themselves look like a strong excuse for the failure and the fall" (P.47). The novel's main character is an unnamed railway clerk who refuses to accept bribes from his corrupt colleagues. This character's integrity is influenced by Armah's own belief in the importance of standing up for what is right, even in the face of misery. Armah's experiences during Ghana's struggle for independence also influenced the themes of self-determination and resistance to oppression.

In sum, it can be deduced that, in Lessing's novel, she uses the gender perspective to shed light on different aspects of alienation. Harriet's experience in *The Fifth Child* highlights the struggles, women face in conforming to societal expectations. However, the protagonist in *The beautiful ones are not yet born* represents the disillusionment of men in postcolonial Africa.

Conclusion

Throughout the study of the theme of alienation in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The beautiful ones are not yet born* and Doris Lessing's *The fifth child*, by using Harold Bloom's perspective on this issue and Pascale Casanova's concept of "Literary Affinities", we reached the following concluding points. The examination of this theme builds a bridge between African and British literatures. It is true that the two authors did not meet; they did not belong to the same geographical space, time or tradition, but we have found some common points when comparing their novels. We established parallels between the novels' historical contexts, authors' life literary itineraries, which troubles and alienation characterises the society.

Moreover, the brief comparison of the two authors' biographies reveals that their literary works contain fragments from their real lives, which help understanding their texts respectively. We have also found some similarities in the two narratives, which we have shortly summarized. We compared the two novels structures, settings, characters, and themes concluding that the two literary works converge in many aspects and differ in others. The comparison of characters shows that the main protagonists are alienated from family and society, as well. They suffer from otherness and loneliness. This explains how conflicts between self-expression and social demands lead to alienation. While the contexts of these novels are vastly different, the common feature of alienation and its causes demonstrated in both works.

It can be concluded that Armah's and Lessing's novel are notable works of literature that deal with the theme of alienation, but they present it differently in their narratives. Both Armah and Lessing explore the human condition and societal issues, but they do so in different ways. First, Armah focuses on corruption, morality, and the struggle for personal integrity in examining the political and social environment in post-colonial Ghana. Lessing bases her analysis on family, social conformity, and gender issue. The story follows the dilemma of a couple whose peaceful family life disrupted by the birth of a child who possesses violent and

uncontrollable tendencies. Second, the events of Armah's novel happen during post-independence Ghana, a period characterized by political and social crises. The novel reflects on the decay and corruption that pervades the society while *The fifth child* is set in suburban England and lasts over many decades. The author depicts the changing dynamics of the Lovatt family and the challenges they face due to the presence of their troubled and troubling child.

Our comparison of the two novels' characters revealed that Armah's protagonist remains nameless while standing as the moral conscience; he is a worthy man who rejects any form of corruption. All his life, he resists succumbing to bribery. Though he undergoes a great pressure from his wife and friends, he keeps his integrity. Lessing's story follows the story of Harriet and David Lovatt, a couple who initially experience joy and contentment in their family life. Their life suddenly changes dramatically by the birth of their fifth child, Ben, who becomes increasingly violent and difficult to control. It is important to point out that the two authors' writing style differ. While Armah's style is based on descriptions, which symbolize decay and the collapse of values. The prose is introspective and reflective, capturing the inner struggles of the protagonist. In other words, *The beautiful ones are not yet born* deals with moral decay as a central theme and personal integrity, and the consequences of societal corruption. It delves into the protagonist's internal struggles and his refusal to participate in a system built on greed and dishonesty. The novel raises questions about the individual's role in a corrupt society and the possibility of personal redemption.

Contrarily, Lessing's writing style characterized by its straightforward way and realist descriptions. She presents a domestic narrative that progressively transforms into a psychological and horrific exploration of the family's disintegration. The fact that both books regarded as societal reflections connects them. Armah offers a scathing critique of the moral decay and corruption in post-colonial Ghana, portraying the struggles faced by individuals who strive to maintain their integrity while Lessing tackles societal expectations, family dynamics,

and the struggle to conform to social oppressive norms. Her novella examines the conflict between an individual's desire for a conventional, happy family life and the challenges posed by a disruptive and abnormal child. Lessing also interrogates the limits of parental responsibility and societal judgments.

That is to say, our study of the two novels is neither extensive nor complete because additional studies on the theme of alienation may be carried on. Many interesting themes concerning Ayi Kwei Armah and Doris Lessing may be included. We can for instance analyse alienation from a psychological perspective by examining how these and other writers across different periods and genres depict the experience of alienation, its causes, and its consequences. It will be also interesting to consider the role of the two writers in challenging social alienation. Therefore, we invite other students to study these works using other perspectives.

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