



## **I. Acknowledgments:**

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I direct my thanks to all my family and friends.

## **II. Dedications:**

I dedicate this work:

To my mother and my two sisters, for their love and support, and for whom I owe a great deal achieving this research work.

To all the teachers that helped me during this work.

## **I. Abstract**

This research work delves into the analysis of two modern African literature works: *L'archeologie du chaos (amoureux)* by Mustapha Benfodil (2007) and *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* by Ayi Kwei Armah (1968). The objective of this study is to demonstrate how the theory of the grotesque can be applied to these two novels. The research employs Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque, which was expounded in his book *Rabelais and His World* published in 1965. The discussion is structured into two parts; the first of which analyzes the grotesque forms and themes in Benfodil's *L'archeologie du chaos (amoureux)*. The second part, on the other hand, is dedicated to the analysis of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* by Armah under the same theory. The two analyses scrutinize the grotesque imagery used, the language utilized, the grotesque aspects of the characters, the degradation of certain aspects, and the dethroning of both Algerian and Ghanaian societies and governments. Throughout the research, it has been discovered that there are numerous passages in both novels where the grotesque could be applied. It became evident that Benfodil and Armah were inspired by the challenges and issues their respective countries faced, and sought to condemn them while simultaneously advocating for positive change. As such, the research concludes that the grotesque serves as a useful tool in the critique of oppressive societal and governmental structures. Through the grotesque, authors can underscore the absurdity of such systems, and challenge readers to envision a world where such grotesqueries are eliminated. The study thus contributes to our understanding of the power of literature as a means of social commentary, and provides insights into the ways in which African literature can be used to shed light on the political and social realities of the continent.

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## **Introduction**

African literature was first known as an oral literature, filled with poems, myths, stories. With the colonization of most African countries, the need to preserve the oral literature became vital. Indeed, African writers taught the colonizer's language in order to be able to transcribe their heritage. Later, the authors turned to another theme of writing, engaged literature, in order to fight against the colonialism that was raging at the time, and then to denounce the problems of the post-independent countries.

Authors launched a literary movement called "Negritude", where they claimed equality between African and European cultures. Among the founders of this movement, we can cite "Leopold Senghor, Aime Cesaire, and Leon Damas". Later on, another type of literature emerged, that of testimony. In order to present Africa's reality, authors used to describe their daily struggle and life. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) can be cited as examples of this type of literature. *Things fall apart* narrates the story of Okonkwo, an Igbo villager who was obliged to exile for seven years because he has killed a villager. At his return, he found his village colonized by missionaries, He tries as best he can to get them to leave, but receives very little help from the village. He ends up hanging himself. *A Grain of Wheat* recalls the story of a young Kenyan, resisting to the British occupation, and joining the independence movement. Next generation of African Writers produced a literature called "of revolt". Authors denounced the colonialism, the corruption present in their countries, or to present the realities that Africa has to face. Ayi Kwei Armah for instance in "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Born Yet" denounces the corruption present in post-independence Ghana, with blaming those in power for the situation lived by Ghanaian people.

Algerian literature during the independence movement period was characterized by its political and social engagement, and its commitment to the national cause. It originated long before the colonial period, but it was during the French colonial period that modern Algerian literature began to take shape. After independence, Algerian writers continued to use their literary works to challenge the status quo and to demand change.

The first generation of authors was natives. They were living the hard conditions of most Algerian Natives under the French colonization. These authors first of all wanted to transmit what the Natives were going through, but to show the political maturity and engagement of a certain class of the society. The first phase of the Algerian literature was

therefore launched what is known as the « Pre-Colonial Literature ». Engaged Algerian literature was born with the first writings of Mouloud Feraroun, Mouloud Mammeri, Mohamed Dib, Kateb Yacine, and many others, who through their writings, described the life of the native Algerians, and the calvaries they carried out on a daily basis, and all the injustices they had to face every day.

After Algeria regained her freedom, authors focused on the country's internal affairs, some authors will go further in their criticism of the post independence regime. A new generation of authors succeeding to Dib, Feraoun and Mammeri emerged; they continued to struggle with the after-effects and residues of colonialism. Most of them through their work tried to denounce a certain number of social and religious taboos. The literature called “of emergency” came to fight against Islamism. Algeria during that decade has lost many of talented writers and journalists, who paid with their lives to denounce everything that was happening.

Algerian literature has continued to evolve, without, however, stopping to describe and denounce all the injustices taking place in the country. Among the authors of the new generation, we can cite Kamel Daoud, who wrote a sequel to “l'Etranger”, Kaouthar Adimi, who through her novels has also criticized the government in the regime since 1962.

Among all the writers who have written about the issues of their countries, and have tried to denounce them the best way they could are Mustapha Benfodil, and Ayi Kwei Armah.

## Review of Literature

L'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux) by Mustapha Benfodil is a notable work of Algerian literature that has received attention from literary journals and scholars. However, one of the limitations of the book's reach is the fact that it has not been translated into other languages, which has restricted the number of scholars and critics who can engage with it.

Despite this limitation, several French-language literary journals and theses have discussed the major themes and issues presented in the book. These studies have focused on the events that were happening in Algeria during the period of the book's plot, which is set during the Algerian Civil War in the 1990s. The book addresses issues such as violence, trauma, memory, identity, and the role of the artist in times of crisis. In this context, we could find many master's theses which have reviewed the book from different perspectives.

Messali Amine's thesis entitled "Fragmentary Writing in L'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)"<sup>1</sup> (2018) provides a detailed analysis of Mustapha Benfodil's novel, with a focus on its fragmentary structure and modern writing techniques. The thesis examines whether the novel's use of fragmentary writing can be considered a form of modern writing, drawing on Gerard Genette's concept of palimpsests.

Amine's analysis reveals that each chapter of the book is organized in a fragmentary way, contributing to the confusion of the reader and complicating the comprehension and coherence of the text. The author also examines the punctuation and the structure of the book, suggesting that Benfodil intentionally plays with words, sentences, and dots to create a comical effect and challenge traditional writing standards. Benfodil is also said to have "banished the rules of the French language to make a singular use of it, through new writing standards".

The thesis also explores the use of *mise en abyme* and intertextuality in the novel. Benfodil inserts quotes from other works into the narrative, as well as explicitly addressing the reader and involving the author in the writing process. These elements, according to Messali, allow the reader to understand the complete mechanism of the novel.

Overall, the author argues that Benfodil employs all the characteristics of modern novel writing in L'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux). The use of fragmentary writing and intertextuality, along with the playful manipulation of language and structure, contribute to the novel's modernity and its challenge to traditional literary norms. However, Amine notes

that the fragmented structure of the novel can make it difficult for readers to follow and understand the narrative, highlighting the complex relationship between modern writing techniques and reader comprehension.

Ait Yala Diya Kamelia's paper explores the writing styles and narrative voices used in Mustapha Benfodil's "L'Archeologie du Chaos ( Amoureux)." <sup>2</sup>. She argues that the book's text is built around the collective verb, and that Benfodil's writing style focuses on the poetic resonance of words, even if they are unable to carry the meaning of the sentence clearly. The author also makes use of La Mise en abyme, introducing a work into another work, with three intertwined stories that lead to the doubling of the narrative. Kamelia highlights the difficulty in understanding and identifying the book, which is a "fundamentally open work," and cultivates the art of rupture and suggestion of uncertainty. She describes the structure of the text as affected, constantly being refrenched and unfolded, and words as powerless to convey the meaning of history. The book, according to Kamelia, is a theater of the voice, which confronts the dimensions of the unfulfilled and tends towards silence, making invisible and indescribable to be heard. Overall, Kamelia's paper offers a deep analysis of the writing styles and narrative voices used in "L'Archeologie du Chaos ( Amoureux)" and sheds light on the complex themes and meanings present in the book.

One last work was made by Bensaid Ourida, named "Doubling of the narrators in M.Benfodil's novel" <sup>3</sup>. The study focuses on analyzing the narrative voices in the book to deconstruct the story that the narrator is trying to convey. The book is polyphonic, meaning that it has a plurality of voices in a single work, and the study looks at the different narrative techniques used by the author to create this effect. The study starts by introducing the narrators and their stories in each chapter of the book. The discourse of each narrator is then analyzed, and the authors discuss the doubling of characters and places in the book. The perspectives and narrative instances are explained, and it is noted that the narrative perspective is done through Marwan as the main character, Yacine as an omniscient narrator, and Inspector Kamel as the author, narrator, and character.

Intertextuality is also studied in the work, and the author notes that M. Benfodil has inserted a lot of literary references and citations of other authors inside the book. The lexical fields of the book are analyzed to establish the most recurrent themes, and the intertextuality is also analyzed in relation to enunciative polyphony and language function.

The enunciation is analyzed and divided into several parts, including discourse and narrative. The authors analyze passages of the discourse and the narrative found in the text and come out with a third part called 'Enunciative heterogeneity,' where the first two parts are intertwined.

The book is studied on the basis of different theories of polyphony, including those of Milan KUNDERA, M. Bakhtin, O. Ducrot, and other Scandinavian polyphonists. The doubling of the narrators and places in the book is meticulously analyzed, and the authors hypothesize that Yacine and Marwan K could both be the double of the author of the book, but they quickly reject this idea. Overall, the study provides a detailed analysis of M. Benfodil's book, focusing on its narrative techniques, intertextuality, and polyphony, and offers insights into the story that the author is trying to convey.

"The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" by Ayi Kwei Armah is a literary work that has been widely praised for its insightful and unflinching portrayal of postcolonial Ghana. The novel, which was published in 1968, is often considered a classic of African literature, and has been studied and analyzed by scholars around the world.

"African Writers Talking"<sup>4</sup> is a book that features a series of interviews with several prominent African writers, including Ayi Kwei Armah. In the interview with Armah, conducted by author and Editor Dennis Duerden, Armah discusses his creative process and the themes and motifs of "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born." Armah explains in the novel that the novel was inspired by his experiences growing up in Ghana, and his observations of the corruption and social decay that plagued the country in the years following independence. He describes how he drew on these experiences to create the characters and situations in the novel, and how he used his writing as a means of social and political commentary. Armah also discusses his use of symbolism and metaphor in the novel, and explains how he sought to convey complex ideas and emotions through imagery and language. He describes the novel's central motif of "the beautiful ones," and explains how it represents a vision of a better, more just society that has yet to be realized. Overall, the interview provides a fascinating glimpse into Armah's creative process and the ideas that inspired "The Beautiful Ones Born." It offers valuable insights into the novel's themes and motifs, and helps readers to better understand Armah's intentions for the work. The interview is an important resource for scholars and students of African literature, as well as for readers

who are interested in learning more about the background and context of this influential novel.

"Ayi Kwei Armah: Radical Iconoclast"<sup>5</sup> is a critical study of the works of Ghanaian author Ayi Kwei Armah, including his influential novel "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born." The author of the study, James Gibbs, provides a detailed analysis of Armah's writing, exploring the themes, symbolism, and political and social commentary in his work.

The author argues that "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" is a powerful critique of post-independence Ghanaian society, and that it represents a call for radical political and social change in Africa. He examines the novel's use of symbolism and metaphor, showing how Armah employs these literary devices to convey complex ideas and emotions about corruption, decay, and social injustice.

In addition to analyzing "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born," Gibbs also provides an overview of Armah's life and career, and examines the larger social and political context in which his writing emerged. He argues that Armah's work is deeply influenced by the Pan-Africanist movement and the struggle against colonialism and imperialism in Africa.

Overall, "Ayi Kwei Armah: Radical Iconoclast" is an important contribution to the critical study of African literature, and provides readers with a deeper understanding of the political and social themes that are central to Armah's work. It is a valuable resource for scholars, students, and anyone interested in exploring the complexities of African literature and the social and political issues that it engages with.

"The Postcolonial African Novel: A Critical Reader"<sup>6</sup> is an anthology of essays edited by Ato Quayson that explores various postcolonial African novels, including Ayi Kwei Armah's "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born." The book features several essays that offer critical perspectives on Armah's novel, examining its themes, literary techniques, and historical and cultural contexts.

One essay in the anthology, for example, explores the novel's portrayal of corruption, arguing that Armah uses the figure of the unnamed protagonist to criticize the pervasive corruption that characterized Ghanaian society in the aftermath of colonialism. Another essay examines the theme of identity in the novel, showing how Armah uses language and imagery to explore questions of individual and national identity in postcolonial Africa.

The essays in the anthology are written by a range of scholars and critics, and offer a diverse set of perspectives on Armah's work. They draw on a variety of critical approaches, including Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial theories, and highlight the novel's significance as a work of African literature.

Overall, "The Postcolonial African Novel: A Critical Reader" is an important resource for scholars, students, and readers interested in exploring the complexities of postcolonial African literature. The essays on Armah's novel provide valuable insight into the cultural and historical context of the work, and offer critical perspectives on its themes and techniques.

Professor Riche Bouteldja's doctoral thesis, titled "The Signifying Ananse and the Quest for Literary Tradition in Ayi Kwei Armah's Fiction," offers a detailed analysis of Armah's work, specifically focusing on the role of the grotesque in his novel "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born."

In his thesis called "The Signifying Ananse and the Quest for Literary tradition in Ayi Kwei Armah's fiction"<sup>7</sup>, Pr. Riche explores the concept of the grotesque and its significance in Armah's novel. He argues that the use of the grotesque in the novel serves to critique the corruption and decay of postcolonial Ghanaian society, and to expose the failures of the ruling class in addressing the needs of the people.

The author also draws on the work of Ralph Ellison, specifically his novel "The Invisible Man," to conduct a comparative analysis of the two works. He examines the similarities and differences between the uses of the grotesque in the two novels, and argues that both authors employ the technique to expose the injustices and inequalities of their respective societies.

One of the key contributions of Pr. Riche thesis is his exploration of the role of the trickster figure of Ananse in Armah's work. He argues that Ananse serves as a signifier of the African oral tradition, and that his presence in the novel highlights the importance of oral storytelling and the need to preserve and maintain African literary traditions.

Overall, Riche's thesis offers a rich and nuanced analysis of Armah's work, providing valuable insights into the novel's themes, techniques, and cultural context. His comparison with Ellison's work also highlights the significance of the grotesque as a literary technique for exposing social and political injustices, and underscores the importance of African literary traditions in contemporary literature.

As this review has shown, many studies has been conducted on the book “ L’Archeologie du Chaos ( Amoureux)”(2007) by Mustapha Benfodil and “The Beautiful Ones Are Not yet Born” (1967) by Ayi Kwei Armah. Although the literature presents these themes in a variety of contexts, and a theme very close to the one’s studied in this thesis; this paper will primarily focus on a study of the books “ L’Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)” ( 2007) and “ The Beautiful Ones Are not yet Born” ( 1967), referring to the Grotesque theory developed by Mikhail Bakhtin developed in his book “ Rabelais and his World” (1965).

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Messali, A. (2018). Fragmentary writing in M. Benfodil (Literary thesis). Abderrahmane Mira University, Bejaia.

<sup>2</sup> Ait Yala, K. (n.d.). The itinerary of "Archeologie du Chaos Amoureux" by M. Benfodil: The stakes of narrative voices [Article]. École Normale Supérieure de Bouzareah.<sup>3</sup> Bensaid, O. (2012). Doubling the narrators in M. Benfodil's novel (Magister's thesis). University of Mostaganem, Mostaganem.

<sup>4</sup> Dathorne, O.R. (Ed.). (1972). African writers talking (Studies in African Literature). Heinemann Educational Books.

<sup>5</sup> Larson, C. (2007). Ayi Kwei Armah, radical iconoclast. Ohio University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Nayar, P. K. (Ed.). (2009). The postcolonial African novel: A critical reader. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

<sup>7</sup> Riche, B. (1998). The Signifying Ananse and the Quest for Literary tradition in Ayi Kwei Armah's fiction (Doctoral dissertation). Mouloud Mammeri University.

## Issue and Working Hypothesis

From the review of literature, and due to the diverse themes which are present in the two books, it has been made clear that many literary studies and criticisms had been devoted to the study of *The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born* ( 1967) and *L'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)* (2006), from different perspectives mostly cited in the review of literature above. The works of Mustapha Benfodil and Ayi Kwei Armah have been subject to extensive literary analysis and criticism, yet, to our knowledge, the use of grotesque features in their respective has been overlooked. This study seeks to explore the use of grotesque elements in these works and how they function to critique the political and social systems in Algeria and Ghana, respectively.

It is hypothesized that the grotesque elements used in the novels serve as a means of criticizing the governments and societies of Algeria and Ghana in a way that is both subtle and powerful. Specifically, the use of grotesque elements such as exaggeration, irony, and metaphor allows the authors to reveal the absurdities and injustices of their respective governments and societies while simultaneously entertaining and engaging the reader. Through an analysis of the novels using Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque; it is expected that a deeper understanding of the authors' intent and message will be gained, and it is anticipated that the use of grotesque elements in the novels will be found to be an effective and subversive tool for social and political critique. By analyzing these grotesque features, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the authors' social and political commentary and how they were able to do so without facing oppressive retaliation.

## **Methodological outline**

As for the methodological outline, the discussion of the dissertation is divided into two main chapters which deal with some Grotesque features in the novel. The first chapter is will be devoted to the analysis of the

I intend to write my memoir through the IMRAD method. My dissertation begins with an introduction which summarizes the works and the authors who have marked the Algerian and African literatures; it also restrains our review of some literature written on Mustapha Benfodil, as well as his work and Ayi Kwei Armah works. I have initiated my issue and working hypothesis along with methodological outline for the work. Besides, the material level provides us with the biographies of Mustapha Benfodil and Ayi Kwei Armah , along with summaries of the two novel and the theory.

After enumerating the results of the research, I will move to the most detailed part of my memoir, which is the discussion section. Indeed , I will study in particular the grotesque in M.Benfodil's "l'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)" And in Ayi Kwei Armah's " The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born" in the light of Mikhail Bakhtine's theory on the grotesque. Finally, we will end up with a conclusion that will sum up the main problematic that we have risen along our work.

## **II. Methods and Materials:**

### **1). Methods.**

#### **A). Summary of the Grotesque by Mikhail Bakhtin:**

Mikhail Bakhtin made a critical study of the French writer "François Rabelais", judging that the latter's work was misunderstood. Bakhtin decided to focus his book on the main works of Rabelais; He thus developed some concepts already presented by Rabelais. The book is divided into seven chapters. In this book, the author deals with various concepts first introduced by Rabelais in his works; we will focus on his concept of grotesque realism, which is a literary style that defines the body in literature and society. Analysing the work of Schneegan, a German writer, Bakhtin adds his personal touch to the grotesque, and corrects in the same occasion the theory of Schneegans, in a whole chapter dedicated to the grotesque images of the body and its sources, where he exposes how the body is used in literature and society.

Bakhtin explains that the grotesque body should not be seen as a negative thing, even when it is exaggerated and hyperbolized. He sees the grotesque body as never finished, always in the process of becoming, in the contrary of the classical body which is finished and closed; he believes that the Grotesque body is never finished because it continues through the other bodies. All what was seen as normal in the classical canon, was transgressed in the grotesque ; thus, urination and defecation were seen as normal in the grotesque. Katerina Clark writes in « Mikhail Bakhtin » (1986) that ‘the image of the body is related to carnival time, which is free and becoming because it shares the carnival’s set towards space as something free, unconfined, constantly overcoming limits’<sup>1</sup>.

If the grotesque was seen as disgusting and abnormal in the romantic period, the way it is perceived has largely changed in modern literature; the abnormalities of the grotesque were perceived in a normal way, and were even made fun of. Bakhtin corrects the usual conception of the Grotesque. For him, the grotesque implies a violation of the existing order, turning it upside down. The grotesque was used during carnival, in order to reverse the social hierarchies, and to put everyone in the same social status, whether it is physical grotesque, or status degradation. Grotesque degradation can be perceived through the integration of animal’s body parts into human ones, or throughout some combination of human parts. In Gogol’s “ the Nose” (1836), we are told the story of a man who has lost his nose, and is searching in all St Petersburg for it, while the latter has started a life of its own.<sup>2</sup>

Bakhtin believes that life and death are connected, that death only means a new life coming, that's why, according to him,

The grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body[...].Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body-all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old and new body. In all these events the beginning and end of life are closely linked and interwoven.<sup>3</sup>.

All what was seen as abnormal in the normal world, was authorized in the grotesque; thus, copulation, elimination, defecation, and all what was considered as inappropriate and dirty, was normalized in the grotesque genre. If death is associated with birth in the grotesque, it is because the grotesque body is always regenerated through other bodies, there is no end to it. The immortality of the ancestral body of mankind is rhetorically proclaimed<sup>4</sup>. Death in the grotesque body is never the end; on the contrary, the body is renewed at each new birth. Bakhtin gave the example of the pregnant hag, to illustrate the relation that death has with birth. In this example, he describes an old senile woman, carrying life inside of her; he calls it "pregnant death, a death that gives birth"<sup>5</sup>. According to Sue vice in "Introducing Bakhtin": Bakhtin follows Rabelais in seeing.

The old as the mother and the new as the son'. The very combination of death and birth for a 'degenerated' reader might be a potent moment of abjection: it confuses important boundaries, and brings to the fore any fear the subject might have that the counterpart to the mother's life-giving abilities are the ability to take life away again<sup>6</sup>.

Bakhtin goes further in his analysis of Rabelais's works, by giving the example of Pantagruel, who was born by killing his mother. He writes "for instance, the first death renewing the earth's fertility and the birth of Pantagruel which caused his mother's suffocation"<sup>7</sup>.

Bakhtin believes that “the essential principle of grotesque realism is “degradation, that is, the lowering of all what is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract, it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body”<sup>8</sup>. Degradation here is not negative; degrading to the material level means to transfer all what is official and high down to earth, in order to mock it and to make it unofficial. He writes “To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better”<sup>9</sup>. Degradation has a positive and regenerative aspect, it brings new life; by destroying, it regenerates everything. In the Carnival, degradation was used to put everyone in the same level, bringing everything to the earthly level; therefore, kings by being degraded, were put in the same position as peasants. Harold Bloom wrote in the *Grotesque* “The principle (of degradation) is not synonymous with destruction which implies finality and death. Instead, degradation leads to eventual elevation.”<sup>10</sup>

Bakhtin writes in *Rabelais and His World*: “Exaggeration, hyperbolicism, excessiveness are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style.”<sup>11</sup>

Exaggeration is a key concept in the grotesque; the exaggeration of body parts is very recurrent. We find body parts that are increased, others that are being decreased. The concept of the deformed and exaggerated body is very recurrent in the grotesque; the grotesque images of dismembered bodies are comic, but should not be perceived as negative. Mutilation and dismemberment are current grotesque features. Parts of the body are substituted with other parts, or are being replaced by animals’ features. In Gogol’s “the Nose”<sup>12</sup>, we are told the story of a nose which has become detached from its owner, and which leads a life of its own. This work openly criticizes the relationship people have with their appearance, and the importance they attach to it, and is considered one of the pillars of the grotesque in literature.

Hyperbolicism is also a main concept of the grotesque; Hyperbole is a figure of speech, which consists of an exaggeration of ideas in a speech. Comparisons are frequently used in this concept, making it more vivid; therefore, we find in this concept different forms of comparisons, in order to generate a comic effect. Bakhtin wrote “The majority of grotesque numbers are striking and produce a comic effect through hyperbole (the quantity of food and wine absorbed, etc.)”<sup>13</sup>.

Decrowning was a common ritual during Carnival. The hierarchies were reversed so as the peasants took the King’s place, and vice versa. « Under this ritual act of decrowning a king lies the very core of the carnival sense of the world, the pathos of shifts and changes, of

death and renewal. Carnival is the festival of all-annihilating and all-renewing time »<sup>14</sup>. The Kings were then mocked, and made fun of, while the peasants were acclaimed. All the highest positions are removed, putting everyone on the same level “regal vestments are stripped off the decrowning king, his crown is removed, the symbols of authority are taken away, he is ridiculed and beaten »<sup>14</sup>.

Language in the carnival is very different from the everyday's one. Bakhtin writes “Wherever men laugh and curse, particularly in a familiar environment, their speech is filled with bodily images”<sup>15</sup>. Grotesque language is described as non-official, giving everyone the opportunity to speak the same language, whether they are nobles or peasants. Bakhtin goes on by saying:

“The body copulates, defecates, overeats, and men's speech is flooded with genitals, bellies, defecations, urine, disease, noses, mouths, and dismembered parts. Even when the flood is contained by norms of speech, there is still an eruption of these images into literature, especially if the literature is gay or abusive in character. The common human fund of familiar and abusive gesticulations is also based on these sharply defined images.”<sup>16</sup>

Body parts images are used with language, in order to create an abusive one. During the grotesque people swore using body parts, insulted by not paying attention to their language, as well as to the people around them, because everyone was on the same social level, that is why language was not holding such an important place in the marketplace.

Characters can be seen as Grotesque if they both induce empathy and disgust. Quasimodo from “Notre Dame de Paris”<sup>17</sup>, written by Victor Hugo is the best example one can cite. He is deformed physically and has tons of infirmities, but that does not stop us from feeling empathy for him. Other examples may be cited as well, such as Frankenstein's Monster<sup>18</sup>, the beast in beauty and the beast.

## **End notes**

- <sup>1</sup> Clark, K. (1986). Mikhail Bakhtin. Harvard University Press. (P 303)
- <sup>2</sup> Gogol, N. (1836). The Nose. The Contemporary Magazine
- <sup>3</sup> Bakhtin, M. (1984). Rabelais and his World. MIT University Press. (P 317).
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid, (P 367).
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid, (P 25).
- <sup>6</sup> Vice, S. (1997). Introducing Bakhtin. Manchester University Press. ( P 175).
- <sup>7</sup> Bakhtin, M. (1984). Rabelais and his World. MIT University Press. (P 352).
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid, P 21.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid, P 17
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid, P 303.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid, P 19.
- <sup>12</sup> Gogol, N. (1836). The Nose. The Contemporary Magazine
- <sup>13</sup> Bakhtin, M. (1984). Rabelais and his World. MIT University Press. (P 464).
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid, P 10.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid, p 319.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid, P 319.
- <sup>17</sup> Hugo, V. (1831). Notre Dame de Paris. Pockets Editions.
- <sup>18</sup> Shelley, M. (1818). Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus. Flammarion Editions.

## **2). Materials:**

### **A) - Biography of Mustapha Benfodil:**

Mustapha Benfodil was born in Relizane, in November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1968. He has started Mathematics studies, before he changed to journalism. He received many prizes for various works he published, in particular “To the Health of the Republic” written in homage to Tahar Djaout. He wrote several plays; among them, *Zizi dans le Metro* (2001), *ça va merder à l’Elysée* (2002), and *Clandestinopolis* (2008) which has been the subject of several readings.

He wrote several successful novels including *Zarta! (Le Déserteur)* in 2000, *Les Bavardages du Seul*, published in 2003 published in Barzakh Editions, which he received the prize for the best Algerian novel at the 1<sup>st</sup> novel festival in 2004. He published a novel called *l’Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)* in 2007 at Barzakh Editions. He was awarded the Mohamed Dib’s Award in 2020 for his book called *Body Writing, Vie et Mort de Karim Fatimi, écrivain (1968-2014)* ( Barzakh Ed).

Mustapha Benfodil lives in Algiers and works for the newspaper *El Watan*.

### **B) - Biography of Ayi Kwei Armah:**

Ayi Kwei Armah, born in Takoradi, Ghana, in 1939, has lived in various places all along his country’s coast and in the forest belt in the interior, as well as in the extreme north. He was educated at Achimota School in Ghana, and then spent a year at Groton School in Massachusetts before going on to Harvard, where he earned a B.A. cum laude in Social Studies. He has worked as a French-English translator in Algiers, as a scriptwriter for television in Ghana and as an English teacher in Navrongo School, Ghana. Mr. Armah has also written for several publications, among them *The New African*, *Drum Magazine*, *Atlantic Monthly* and *The New York Review of Books*. He is currently a translator-editor on the staff of *Jeune Afrique* in Paris.

In his first novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, published in 1968, Armah criticized the corrupted system of the newly independent African nation. In his second novel *Fragments* (1970), Armah tells the story of a young Ghanaian who returns home after having spent some years in the United States. The novel describes mostly disillusionment and moral decay. He wrote *Two Thousand Seasons* in 1973, where he borrowed language from African dirge to somehow mourns the past of Africa destroyed by the colonizers. All of Armah’s

novels have a relation with decaying of Africa, and the colonizers who are for many in that decaying. The struggle of independent Africa, and the quest of young Ghanaian for a better life are recurring themes in all of Armah's works.

### **C)-Summary of l'Archeologie du Chaos ( Amoureux)**

The book begins with the story of Yacine Nabolci, who discovers his sexuality when he sees for the first time his step mother's crotch. His hatred and frustration for women will be born right afterwards, and he will spend his life running away from them. Don Juan and a conspirator. He will use his charms to bring down the current system, with friends he met at university; they will create a charm commando to get his daughters pregnant, to have a Trojan horse inside. We then discover that Yacine's story is fictitious, written by a budding writer, we are introduced to his history.

Yacine is very sociable, and has no trouble making friends and charming all the ladies he meets. Marwan is his opposite, he hides in his "cave" in search of the much desired inspiration to finish his novel, where he openly criticizes the current power. Through Yacine's story, we are brought to know Marwan's story, told in fragments in his "logbook", we will know who he is, why he is so obsessed with his book, and why he is determined to keep it. Like his character, Marwan intends to infiltrate power, but like Yacine, he intends to achieve this through art. With his friends, they have drawn up a document in which all sorts of rules of their perfect Algeria are set out. In the end, Marwan dies trying to give birth to his manuscript, he is said to have had a literary heart attack, and died of a word overdose.

Finally, the last narrator of the book is an inspector named Kamel, in search of the case that will make his career take off, who has been under arrest for some time. Showing determination in front of his superiors and colleagues who think it is a suicide; Kamel el Afrite will not hesitate to relaunch the case, to question Marwan's entourage, and to do all possible research to elucidate the investigation.

In this book, we will be led to meet three characters, living in three different social backgrounds, with three pasts and histories, all living in an Algeria assaulted by the government, and all dreaming of change and freedom. Braving all the prohibitions and taboos of the society to be able to taste some freedom, and to be able to live their youth as they want, we are introduced to a generation that dreams of a modern Algeria, far from the restrictions imposed on it

#### **D) – Summary of *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* :**

Ayi Kwei Armah, wrote in the *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* about post-independence Ghana, under the regime of Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of independent Ghana. The book relates the story of two families, and more precisely, two householders: The Man, who remains anonymous throughout all the book, and one of his old classmates, Joseph Koomson.

In post-independence Ghana, which has adopted Socialism; corruption and bribery are common currency. Some ministers and senior officers have taken advantage of this situation in their favor and got richer thanks to it. This is the case of Joseph Koomson, a government minister who became rich and offered himself a life of dreams by taking as much as bribes as he was given. Armah considers Joseph Koomson to represent all the corruption present in the country after the independence.

We have another character named The Man , who works as a clerk and struggles to feed his wife and his three children. He is proposed bribes at many times, but has never accepted any of them, because he wants to remain honest. Never taking into account the remarks and reproaches of his wife and his mother in law, who would like to have a better life, like that of Estelle Koomson, Joseph's wife, the man remains firmly attached to his values and refuses to have anything to do with corruption.

After the coup d'état of 1966, all the people who had had any relation with the government were tracked down and some were murdered. Joseph Koomson found refuge in the man's house, which hid him from people who were looking for him, and later, helped him to escape. The man, his wife and family were relieved that he had stayed honest, and had taken no bribes. According to Armah, the man represents the average Ghanaian citizen, who had remained honest.

### III. Results.

To thoroughly analyze the use of grotesque theory in *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born* and *L'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)* by Benfodil, we have delved into the works to identify the similarities and differences in the authors' use of the theory. By utilizing Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* as our framework for analysis, we were able to understand the use of exaggeration, irony, and metaphor to criticize the government and society without fear of repercussions.

In *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*, we noticed that Armah criticizes the corruption of the Ghanaian government and Nkrumah's adoption of the socialist system post-independence. Through his use of grotesque theory, Armah was able to convey the absurdity of the government's actions, including the protagonist's interaction with corrupt officials and their lavish lifestyles. Similarly, in *L'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)*, the author employs political satire to mock the Algerian government and denounce the societal issues that have plagued Algeria for years. The use of grotesque theory in both works allows the authors to shed light on the political and societal injustices without being silenced by those in power.

Through our analysis, we conclude that the use of grotesque theory in both works was effective in highlighting the absurdity of the political and societal systems. The authors utilized the theory to create exaggerated scenarios that allowed readers to understand the gravity of the issues at hand. While the works differ in their focus and context, they both successfully employ grotesque theory to criticize the systems that oppress their respective societies.

## **IV. Discussion:**

To begin our discussion, we must remember that most of Africa's countries have been through colonialism that has lasted a long time. As a result, after their independence, most of African writers have written about the building of their newest independent countries, and the struggle they were going through; The beautiful ones are not yet born and *l'Archeologie du chaos amoureux* are among the masterpieces that reflect the above-mentioned issues. The discussion of the topics covered are carried in two chapters. The first chapter analyses *l'archeologie du chaos amoureux* under the grotesque theory. It is suggested that the theory could be applied to numerous passages of the book as this latter ironically depicts the Algerian society and system, and exposes the nonsense, and injustices that Algerian people are going through. The second chapter is another analysis of the beautiful ones are not yet born using the same theory, as the author exposes the corruption and moral decay that plagued Ghana after the independence.

### **Chapter One: Analysis of Mustapha Benfodil's "L'Archeologie Du Chaos (Amoureux) » :**

#### **Introduction:**

In this work, it is proposed that Mustapha Benfodil's "*l'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)*" (2007) contains a significant number of passages where Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the Grotesque can be applied. Mustapha Benfodil depicted ironically the Algerian society and system, and exposed the nonsense, and injustices that Algerian people are living. It is for this reason that the aforementioned novel will be analyzed under the theory cited above, highlighting the passages that can be seen as grotesque, along with an analysis of them.

#### **1. The Grotesque Body:**

The author recounts the biggest discovery he made in his life, the day everything changed for him, his personal big bang<sup>1</sup>. At 17 years old, Yacine discovers for the first time the crotch of a woman. He described it as being the most wonderful thing he has ever seen, but the most hideous as well. "The divine light escaping unctuously from a woman's crotch"<sup>2</sup>. The character is described as being very quickly confronted with the image of the sublime wound<sup>3</sup>, thus awakening to his sexuality. Yacine was terrified, of discovering the most

wanted treasures. Mikhail Bakhtin thinks that women are related to the “bodily lower stratum”, as they are the source of life, they bear life inside of them and give life, they also are a source of destruction, because the womb brings down to Earth

The character became obsessed with what he had seen that day, and wanted at any cost to re-examine it, on someone else’s body. “Downward and Upward” should normally represent something spiritual and high, but the grotesque degradation made them degrade their spirituality and brought them down to earth. Bakhtin believes that upper bodily stratum is associated with heaven, and therefore, the head which is the source of thinking, and the bodily lower stratum represents all what is degraded, brought down to earth, therefore it represents earth and the lower parts of the body (genitals and bowels). The focus of the grotesque body is made on the fall down to earth from heaven which is both represented by the upper bodily stratum to the lower. Yacine, by discovering his step mother’s wound, went down from thinking straight with his head, and full mind, to feeling with his genitals. He went from the upper bodily stratum to the lower. He fell from heaven to earth (from the upper to the lower bodily stratum). This fall from heaven to earth reminds us of the fall of Adam and Eve from Eden, for they sinned, they were punished by being banished from heaven. And just like Adam, Yacine was banished from the upper layer of the body because of a woman.

The book describes how Yacine murdered his little sister, and how his mother died of grief as she took her own life, because she had lost her baby forever, and her son, whom she would never find again. “I fell on the little doll in flesh and suffocated her. All I heard was the fine crackling of her being like a soft twig crushed by the spring”<sup>4</sup>

The character did not seem to realize the seriousness of what he had just done, for him, he simply claimed his mother’s love, which was rightfully his, until the latter took her own life, eaten away by sorrow, pain and remorse, saying:

my mother did not forgive Me.

She never forgave herself.

She sank into madness. Until one day a dark angel came to the house and invited her to die. He took her by the waist and helped her up the escalator to the Nether.

She died of Camelia’s grief. My Fault <sup>5</sup>

Bakhtin wrote that Death “is always related to Birth; the grave is related to the earth’s life-giving womb”<sup>6</sup>. Birth here takes a different form from the one Bakhtin talks about. We are no longer talking about physical birth, where life succeeds death physically; we are rather talking about something more abstract. The death of Yacine's mother gave rise to hatred in him. She had gone forever, leaving him alone to face the world; his hatred for women, for his father, and for everything that had a relationship with his mother was born. He said , “ Now even her hatred is gone. I even miss her love. The Slut, the bitch, the traitor ! Like all women by the way... My mother abandoned for abandoned child”<sup>7</sup>

Yacine talks about death in abundance, especially after seeing his mother killing herself because of him. Death has become a big part of his daily life; for him "death is the antidote to life"<sup>8</sup>, as if life was a poison that needed to be cured by death. We can see that the character has no obvious fear of death, and that on the contrary, he is mostly afraid of living. “Death is the antidote to life; death is the antidote to decay and aging. To avoid pain, one must stop living. It is necessary to heal to live.”<sup>9</sup>. This is consistent with Bakhtin's analysis of Kayser's vision of death. “He ( Kayser) asserts that the grotesque expresses not the fear of death, but the fear of life”<sup>10</sup>.

As this self-portrait hung above my bed to always remind me of the ugliness of my face illustrates. And the ugliness of my soul. And the absolute ugliness of the world. And the ugliness of God. And the ugliness of everything! Of everything! Of everything! Like this self-portrait; a caricature of my build: head in disorder, hair in battle, a black heart as a brain, emaciated face, hollow and scarred cheeks, toothless mouth, with, at the end, ashes crumbling from a toasted cigarette. In place of the nose, a penis. A soft and tired penis. A perfect self-portrait of my tormented soul too<sup>11</sup>

The author in a caricature, describes himself, or rather describes how he thinks others perceive him. His face is degraded to the point where it becomes unrecognizable. The caricature represents a head in disorder. The author of the logbook is described as being pensive and lost in thought all the time. His hair is in a mess, the top underneath suggests that the author was not taking care of it, and was not taking care of his physique as well. A black heart instead of a brain. Through our reading, we see that the author doesn't have many friends who come to visit him to get to know how he is doing, they only come for interest; but

the heart instead of the brain might suggest that he thinks a lot with his heart, but he is black because he is unable to feel anything. Instead of his nose, we find a penis, which takes almost a quarter of the caricature. At first glance, one might think it's because the author is so frustrated that he can't charm any woman, but the truth is quite different. The nose is undoubtedly one of the most common grotesque images. Indeed, the nose often represents the phallus. According to Bakhtin, "the nose had usually this link with the phallus"<sup>12</sup>. The nose has the ability to detach itself from the rest of the body, and to be independent from it.

During our reading, we notice that the nose has become detached from its place, and is replaced by a penis. Bakhtin wrote that "[...] they are predominantly subject to positive exaggeration, to hyperbolization; they can even detach themselves from the body and lead an independent life, for they hide the rest of the body, as something secondary (The nose can also in a way detach itself from the body.)"<sup>13</sup>.

The author creates an image of himself that is very dark and pejorative and very grotesque at the same time. At first glance, this caricature looks like a doodle that looks like nothing, but if we concentrate a little better, we can clearly see that the author of the logbook is suffering a lot, that he feels lonely and helpless.

Of the Marwan hidden. Broken. In the center, my inner black hole. Around, the orbits tangled with my thoughts. Likewise no light does not escape the overwhelming gravity of black holes in the cosmos, no good mood escapes from my black soul. A drawing of cyanide<sup>14</sup>.

Yacine attended the funeral of his father, killed by a lung cancer; he visited his family one last time, remembering why he left them in the first place. As he said goodbye to his dying father, he noticed that his step mother was pregnant. In the grotesque, ambivalence is a major key as images of birth and death are present. Endless chain of body life, it holds the parts in which one link joins the other. While Yacine's father is slowly dying, his wife carries an heir, so that his name and blood will continue to exist even after his death. Death is, like this, only a new beginning, it is a renewal, it is not negative, and it is not frightening, just because it is the unknown. Death is considered permanent, because if one dies, one's son stands before him, an immortal body. The link between life and death is ambivalent in grotesque realism. As the grotesque body is never finished, death is only a new beginning, where new pieces are being added each time; a body that is never finished, never finished; it

is rather a continuous, progressive body, a body in the making where new pieces will always be added

Marwan died giving birth to his work, it is said that he died of an overdose of words, a literary heart attack. His heart stopped giving birth to his book, which he wrote with a spear, as if he knew that the angel of death was waiting for him at the end to relieve his suffering. Indeed, the death of the mother allows the birth of the infant, each blow to the old helps the new to be born. . "The Caesarean section operation kills the mother, but brings the child into the world"<sup>15</sup>. Marwan died anxious, lost, tired and waiting for the delivery of his life's work.

## **2. The Grotesque Language:**

The language gradually becomes grotesque when the author starts talking about his step mother and his father, whom he doesn't particularly seem to have in his heart. The character uses a grotesque language to describe his step mother. He was in the middle of a sexual arousal, along with the puberty period, and was spending most of his time scrutinizing her, as she was the only female of his Entourage. He expressed his fascination to his discovery qualifying her as a "warm blooded animal"<sup>16</sup>. He went from describing his step mother's crotch to using very vulgar, hurtful and demeaning words to describe the latter "Kheira, the Sulphur. The tumultuous. The tease. The arsonist of phallic drills. My father. My damn father. Cursed be him! Cursed be her!"<sup>17</sup>.

The author uses a lot of hyperbole, especially in the parts of the book he calls "logbook". He uses them mostly to describe his friends. In describing his friend Nadir, he says "he fucked like an animal"<sup>18</sup>. He goes on to use a metaphor that comes up every time the author of the logbook feels bad, lost or down; he writes "I have snakes in my head"<sup>19</sup>. It is a metaphor that refers to the fact that he is not thinking clearly, that his thoughts are intertwined, and that he is unable to unravel them. The function of the logbook in middle of the first story is to sort through his thoughts and describe the author's physical and emotional state.

Bakhtin writes that when two persons establish relations, mockery and abusive words are permitted between them. For instance, abusive words can express a great sense of hatred, or affection. The author of the "Log Book", talks about one of his friends called Nadim, with whom he seems to be very close. The latter is described to spend lot of time with the author, and is described to feel like home at the author's place. He uses an abusive language to speak

about him in his absence, and does not refrain himself from using various insults: “ Sir fucked like an animal, burped and drove his bitch with the last booze [...] he allows himself, the animal, to comment on my writing”.<sup>20</sup>. Grotesque and abusive language is used in a repetitive way, mostly when the author is describing his friend. “ He really is the prince of idiots, my Nadim [...] the Animal, I don’t know what is holding me from killing him[...]”<sup>21</sup>

Marwan, speaking of his mother, uses different kind of insults and abusive words to describe her, among other things, he says "that she gets drunk like a whore, to drown her Palestinian remorse like all her companions in the petty bourgeoisie of the diaspora"<sup>22</sup>. Reading these words, one can notice that Marwan does not have a good relationship with his mother, that he only tolerates her presence out of obligation. This feeling of hatred he feels towards his mother can be explained by the fact that she has somehow abandoned him to himself. The tragic end of Yacine's mother is a representation of the fate Marwan would have wanted for his mother. He blames her for denying her Palestinian identity, and for forbidding him to return to his Palestinian roots.

### **3. Degradation:**

We find in the book all kinds of degradation, the first one is a religious degradation. The author writes:

Pretty arithmetic series at the rate of two years. Every two years, God encased my father, who worked my mother to lay a new fool on earth to lay a map of the earth that would be further weakened with the usual blablabbique: you, man, lord of the animals, crown of evolution and overpreme stage of cretinism, go, go to the earth and sow your seed, praying for it to rain - gold, preferably. go, go vicious vicar, little temporary god...<sup>23</sup>.

The character suggests that God took human form, and put a semance inside his mother through his father. This metaphor degrades something spiritual to the rank of a human being capable of giving life; it gives God the image of a mere mortal, endowed with desires and needs, and capable of helping to bring life.

We find another religious degradation in another passage, where the character refers to his thought guru Cioran. He speaks with such an admiration of his idol that he goes to compare him to a prophet, and compare his works to religious books. “ Cioran was my Koran.

Just put the "I" on the fist"<sup>24</sup>. The author makes once again a religious degradation. He gives an appellation, which normally is used only with the prophets, to one of his favorite authors, thus qualifying him as a prophet also " dixit Arthur Cravan Alayhi salam "<sup>25</sup>

Women have been degraded in a superficial way in this passage. They are described in a way that suggests that they do not possess a brain, and that everything they aim in life, is either to have some good quality time with a man, or to get married. The status of women has been degraded to some brainless creatures, who cannot think clearly.

Sexual intercourse is described to be used for other purposes than its original one; instead it has taken a grotesque form. Bakhtin explains that "[...] the three main acts in the life of the grotesque body: sexual intercourse, death throes, and the act of birth"<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, instead of having a traditional role, sex is used in a way that makes us wonder its real purpose. It is described to have lost their original purpose, and instead are used in opportunistic aims. " I don't know if the semen I planted inside that girl's womb had our Utopia's seeds, but I've got to admit it, my DNA wasted in that way hurted me a lot"<sup>27</sup>.

#### **4.Decrowning:**

Yacine and his group had long been thinking about a plan to bring down those in power who had taken away their rights. They wanted revenge, and to do so, they would attack the most vulnerable part of the system, their daughters. In their plan, the girls of the system will unconsciously participate in bringing down their daughters. In their charm commando to bring down the government, Yacine and his group aimed to bring down the system, by getting the system's daughters pregnant, with the help of Nazim who was part of the world they wanted to bring down,"

was our mole, so to speak. He had a priceless list: the names, phones and addresses of almost all the children in the nomenklatura. His parents had many of their closest friends. they went to their parties, they received them at home, they were part of the beautiful world.<sup>28</sup>.

The girls they targeted were going to contribute to the regime's downfall, and consequently to their own downfall without realizing it. According to Bakhtin, « Under this ritual act of decrowning a king lies the very core of the carnival sense of the world — the pathos of shifts and changes, of death and renewal. Carnival is the festival of all-annihilating and all-renewing time »<sup>29</sup>. Bakhtin sees the carnivalistic acts of crowning and decrowning of

the carnival king as an important component of the carnival. He states that during carnivals, a mock king is elected from the participants, crowned and was simultaneously decrowned. Consequently, a mock king might be anybody.

The G97 plan was not working the way they wanted it to, they were losing control of the situation, and there was nothing they could do about it. Bakhtin underlines the idea of constant change, renewal and the inevitable end of all authorities. By creating the G97, they hoped to reverse the situation in the country, to make things change in their favor. After all what happened in Algeria, they were thirsty for freedom, for rights; they wanted to take back what was rightfully theirs, what they thought they deserved. Nazim, who was part of the beautiful world, participated in the coup d'Etat that was being prepared, he was ready to bring down his own people and thus, to bring down himself too.

We had dinner last night with my parents at the President's house. One of his nieces was making eyes at me. We exchanged a few words in the presidential garden, but it was too brief to draw any conclusive conclusions. Nevertheless, the business is on the right track.<sup>30</sup>

The charm commando, turned into an artistic commando supposed to bring down the system peacefully. The demands of the Algerian youth, and of the people in general gave remained the same since the independence of the country. They all demanded the same thing, the liberation of the country from the mafia system that governed it.

The Anartists had no other uniform than mockery, and no other ritual than to make fun of everything, from God to the last of His saints, through politics, modernity, money, soccer and women. Jams and Slams alternated cheerfully, amidst other amusements that were invented like the poetics jousts that pitted the lyrical souls of the company against each other, or sketches and other sitcoms that you can watch on the improvised, and always ended with lines that ended with lines that were unfinished and infinite ends. I confess that this makes me entertained a lot. The atmosphere was good. It was a joyful refuge from the gloom. And a fairly safe place to get away from the madness of the firecrackers which exploded in all Algiers like over-excited corn flakes.<sup>31</sup>

Some of the points mentioned in the book, were the slogans of the popular uprising that took place on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019. The “Hirak” is the perfect example of people who rose up against dictatorial government, who wanted to profit even more from the wealth of the country, and its people. They invaded the capital, thus cancelling the decree which prohibited the popular marches in Algiers, making known to the whole world that Algeria was doing badly. The “Chkoupism Manifest”<sup>32</sup>, can be seen as a prediction to the Hirak. Most of what has been mentioned in it, is what people were asking for when they rose up. This passage of the book is all the funnier, because it’s like a kind of vision that the author had in relation to the events that were going to take place on 22/02/2019.

The Anartists must act by commando actions. A cultural commando is needed. A commando of raucous and gay taggers. We must surprise public opinion with something spectacular. Events. Artistic activism must become a happening, an event in the sky. It is necessary to reanimate society with electroshocks.<sup>33</sup>

The Anartists had in mind to change the established order in their favor, to do a thought revolution, where no weapon would be used except their voices, a pacitif revolution. This can be seen as a prediction to the revolution that has started on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, called the “Smile revolution”. A revolution made by the people, with the people, and for the people, where everyone would finally ask for what is rightfully theirs.

We learn that Marwan had launched a commando to change the system as well, just like Yacine, his character; but instead of being an insemination commando, Marwan’s commando aimed to change the rules through art, by giving people a voice, to clearly shout out the changes they wanted to see in the society. Marwan wrote decrees to make the revolution work, to make this regime disappear. “It takes an armed opposition to make this regime disappear, or a popular revolution”<sup>34</sup>. The author argues that the people have as much power as military troops, that if they want things to change, they need to start another Egyptian revolutionary, to have the army at their side, to make a change; if they cannot have it, they must make a popular revolution on their own.

The author wrote, “It is necessary to organize a popular march, it is necessary to prohibit the Ministry of the Interior from occupying the streets”<sup>35</sup>. By organizing demonstrations in the capital, people are shouting loud and clear that they are not well, that the situation in the country is getting worse and worse. The author believes that if people want real change, they

must achieve it by themselves, by invading the streets. At no time did the author talk about using violence to get what they are asking for; he only cites peaceful means to get what they are asking for. “It is necessary to reactive communism”<sup>36</sup>. The author affirms that for things to work in the new government, everyone must be given the same chances and opportunities that everyone starts from the same starting point, without any direction or help. The passage suggests the use of grotesque imagery and rhetoric as a means of political criticism and protest, as interpreted through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque. Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque emphasizes the use of parody, satire, and other forms of exaggerated or distorted representation to challenge dominant power structures and expose their contradictions and limitations. The author's call for a popular march and the prohibition of the Ministry of the Interior from occupying the streets represents a grotesque inversion of the normal order of power, where the state is supposed to protect and regulate public space. By suggesting that the people should take to the streets to protest the government's failures, the author is using grotesque imagery to challenge the legitimacy of state authority and to demand that power be redistributed to the people.

Similarly, the author's call for the reactivation of communism and the need for equal opportunities and starting points for everyone represent a grotesque distortion of the dominant neoliberal ideology that prioritizes individualism and competition over collective solidarity and social welfare. By advocating for a return to communism and a rejection of neoliberalism, the author is using grotesque imagery to challenge the dominant economic and political order and to demand a more equitable distribution of resources and power; Overall, the passage suggests that the use of grotesque imagery and rhetoric can be a powerful tool for political criticism and protest, allowing marginalized groups to challenge dominant power structures and demand change.

### **5. Grotesque characters:**

Yacine's mother is the grotesque body in its dark sense. She killed herself, because she was mourning her dead daughter, and the son she used to know, and she had lost forever, she reminds us of mortality, that every human being is born to die, and that no matter what, nobody will be able to escape death. She reminds us of the dreadful truth of life. Funerary rituals is a system for affirming the end of life, for consoling the bereaved and for asserting the bonds of community that have survived the loss of an individual member ; but above all, funerary serve to cover the naked indignity of death.

M.K, the author in a caricature, is clearly described as being physically grotesque. He describes how he sees himself, or rather describes how he thinks other perceive him. His face is described to be deformed; his friends think he is repulsive and disgusting. His face is degraded to the point where it has become unrecognizable. The caricature he had made of himself was not a fictitious caricature after all. It was a self portrait, the way he portrayed himself, as hideous and disgusting as his character. A modern Quasimodo holed up in his cellar, waiting for his Esmeralda.<sup>37</sup>

The character is described as grotesque by his behaviors as well. Marwan is said to be obsessed with Nadim temporary lovers, as he considers himself physically repulsive, and not worth of love and attention. He uses Nadim's one-night adventures to get the attention he knows he will never have. "It was in the contract [...] it's up to him to seduce them. And me to revel in their beautiful frolics"<sup>38</sup>, by spying on his frolics with his one-night stand. The character is also described to have no social life, and to be closed in on him. He has no friend, except for Nadim, and his behavior towards others a lot to do with it.

Yacine can also be considered as a grotesque character, not by his physical appearance because he is described to be handsome and charming, but because of his way of thinking, his attitude towards others. He feels superior to others, thinks he is the elite of the society, always immersed in his books, talking about conspiracy theories, and how to bring down the system.

Kamel el Afrite considers himself as a genius author; he wants to put all his energy to solve this case. Even if he has lost any credibility with his colleagues in the last two years he has worked, he thinks this is a good opportunity to prove his worth to them.

## **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, Mustapha Benfodil's "l'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)" offers a poignant commentary on Algerian society and its failings. Through his ironic portrayal, Benfodil exposes the injustices and absurdities of Algerian life. This analysis has demonstrated that the novel contains numerous passages that can be interpreted using Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the Grotesque. By applying this lens, we have been able to highlight key moments in the novel where Benfodil employs grotesque imagery and themes to expose the societal ills that plague Algerians. Overall, this work offers a valuable contribution to the critical examination of contemporary Algerian literature, showcasing the power of the grotesque as a tool for social critique.

Furthermore, the use of grotesque elements in "l'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)" is particularly effective in conveying the absurdity and chaos of Algerian society. The grotesque, as defined by Bakhtin, involves a fusion of incompatible and contradictory elements, such as the high and the low, the beautiful and the ugly, and the serious and the comic. Benfodil's use of grotesque imagery and themes highlights the contradictions and tensions inherent in Algerian society, revealing its dysfunction and absurdity.

In addition, the grotesque also serves as a powerful tool for subversion and resistance. By juxtaposing incompatible elements, the grotesque creates a sense of disorientation and destabilization that can be used to challenge dominant cultural norms and values. Benfodil's use of the grotesque in "l'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)" can be seen as a form of resistance against the oppressive and corrupt systems that dominate Algerian society. Through his use of grotesque imagery, Benfodil challenges traditional Algerian cultural norms and values, exposing their flaws and encouraging readers to question and challenge them.

Overall, this analysis of "l'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)" underscores the importance of literature as a tool for social critique and resistance. By using the grotesque to expose the absurdities and injustices of Algerian society, Benfodil offers a powerful critique of the systems that dominate it. Through this work, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and contradictions of Algerian society, and be inspired to work towards creating a more just and equitable future.

## **End notes**

- <sup>1</sup> Benfodil, M. (2007). L'archeologie du chaos (amoureux). Barzakh Editions. (p. 7).
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid, P 07
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid, P 07.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid, (P 11).
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid, (P 11).
- <sup>6</sup> Bakhtin, M. (1984). Rabelais and his World. MIT University Press. (P 50).
- <sup>7</sup> Benfodil, M. (2007). L'archeologie du chaos (amoureux). Barzakh Editions. (p. 12).
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid, P 47.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid, P 47
- <sup>10</sup> Bakhtin, M. (1984). Rabelais and his World. MIT University Press. (P 49- 50).
- <sup>11</sup> Benfodil, M. (2007). L'archeologie du chaos (amoureux). Barzakh Editions. (p. 76-77).
- <sup>12</sup> Bakhtin, M. (1984). Rabelais and his World. MIT University Press. (P 87).
- <sup>13</sup> Bakhtin, M. (1984). Rabelais and his World. MIT University Press. (P 317).
- <sup>14</sup> Benfodil, M. (2007). L'archeologie du chaos (amoureux). Barzakh Editions. (p. 77).
- <sup>15</sup> Bakhtin, M. (1984). Rabelais and his World. MIT University Press. (P 206).
- <sup>16</sup> Benfodil, M. (2007). L'archeologie du chaos (amoureux). Barzakh Editions. (p 09).
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid, P 09
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid, P 39.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid, P 43-44-61-66-77-137.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid, p 39.
- <sup>21</sup> ibid, P 74-75.
- <sup>22</sup> ibid, p 104.

<sup>23</sup>ibid,p10-11.

<sup>24</sup>ibid, p 34.

<sup>25</sup> ibid, p 118.

<sup>26</sup> Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Rabelais and his World*. MIT University Press. (P 353).

<sup>27</sup> Benfodil, M. (2007). *L'archeologie du chaos (amoureux)*. Barzakh Editions. (p 193).

<sup>28</sup> ibid, p 79.

<sup>29</sup> Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Rabelais and his World*. MIT University Press. (P 124-125).

<sup>30</sup> Benfodil, M. (2007). *L'archeologie du chaos (amoureux)*. Barzakh Editions. (p 96).

<sup>31</sup> ibid, p 135.

<sup>32</sup> ibid, p 71

<sup>33</sup> ibid, p 137.

<sup>34</sup> ibid, p 245.

<sup>35</sup> ibid, p 245.

<sup>36</sup> ibid, p 246

<sup>37</sup> Hugo, V. (1831). *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Pockets Editions.

<sup>38</sup> Benfodil, M. (2007). *L'archeologie du chaos (amoureux)*. Barzakh Editions. (p76-77).

## **Chapter Two:**

### **Analysis of Ayi Kwei Armah's "The Beautiful Ones Are not yet Born":**

#### **Introduction:**

In 1968, Ayi Kwei Armah wrote "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born", a novel that offers a critical view of Ghana's post-independence period. This period was marked by the emergence of new ruling elite, who promised to usher in an era of progress and prosperity. However, as the novel reveals, this promise was quickly betrayed by rampant corruption and a lack of concern for the well-being of the Ghanaian people.

In this second part of our research, we will explore how the novel makes use of grotesque imagery and themes to critique the post-independent Ghanaian society. This analysis will draw upon the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, whose theory of the Grotesque, as outlined in his book "Rabelais and His World" (1965), provides a useful framework for understanding the use of grotesque elements in literature.

Our task in this section is to identify and analyze the passages in "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" that can be interpreted using Bakhtin's theory of the Grotesque. We will examine how Armah employs grotesque imagery and themes to expose the corruption and moral decay that plagued Ghanaian society during this period. We will also explore how these elements serve as a means of resistance against dominant cultural norms and values, challenging readers to question the prevailing social order.

Through this analysis, we hope to provide a deeper understanding of the complexities and contradictions of Ghana's post-independence period. By highlighting the grotesque elements in Armah's work, we can gain insights into the challenges facing the country at the time, and the ways in which literature can serve as a tool for social critique and resistance. Overall, our research seeks to contribute to a more nuanced and critical understanding of Ghanaian history and literature, and to inspire readers to engage with the social and political issues that continue to shape the country today.

## 1) - The Grotesque Body:

Images of vomit, urine, copulation, dismemberment are recurrent in the *Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*. Armah by doing so, wanted to provide us with a grotesque representation of the African man. Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* writes:

Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body—all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old and new body. In all these events the beginning and end of life are closely linked and interwoven.<sup>1</sup>

Bakhtin writes: “The grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body.”<sup>2</sup> The image of the African provided, is the opposite image of the white man, complete, finished, perfect. Many body parts are mentioned, where the man is having some stomach troubles “Staring at the chart in front of him, the man hears a very audible rumble from somewhere inside him. It is followed immediately by a terrible pulling pain in his abdomen, and he thinks there is a saving plug in his anus which threatens to drop out at any moment now.”<sup>3</sup> The narrator is describing the inside of the toilet he is using, “There the wall is thickly streaked with an organic brown, each smear seeking to avoid older smears, until the dabs have gone all round the wall”<sup>4</sup>

The author by doing so, wanted to break the perfect image of the human being in general, and the one that the whites reflected. Indeed, in the Grotesque, it is the body which defects and copulates which is celebrated. Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the Grotesque emphasizes the use of degradation and bodily functions to challenge established norms and hierarchies. In the context of "*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*," the degradation of holy and sacred figures can be seen as a way of subverting the dominant narratives and ideologies that were prevalent during the post-independence era in Ghana. The white man's description of the perfect image of human beings is likely a reference to the idealized Western notions of civilization and progress, which were often used to justify colonialism and imperialism. By depicting scenes of degradation and grotesqueness, Ayi Kwei Armah

challenges these Western ideals and exposes the realities of post-independence Ghana, which were marked by corruption, poverty, and decay. Furthermore, the degradation of holy figures can also be seen as a way of challenging traditional power structures and religious institutions. In the novel, the character of the Man of God is depicted as corrupt and hypocritical, using his position of authority to exploit and manipulate others. By exposing the flaws and contradictions of these figures, Armah critiques the established power structures in Ghanaian society and encourages readers to question and challenge these systems. Overall, the use of degradation and the Grotesque in "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" can be seen as a form of resistance against dominant narratives and ideologies, as well as traditional power structures and institutions. By challenging these established norms and hierarchies, Armah offers a powerful critique of post-independence Ghana and encourages readers to imagine and work towards a more just and equitable future.

The hand moved up. The vagina itself was harder, more resisting, almost abrasive in the sharpness of its hair and the dryness of outer skin. Wanting the satisfying moistness of a woman aroused at last, the man pushed his hand farther up and then bent it, searching for the hidden knob of flesh. But the movement had brought his wrist against his wife's belly, and the long line of a scar took the man's mind completely away from any thought of joy.<sup>5</sup>

In this passage, the protagonist of the story is described, laying next to his asleep wife; as he started touching her, he had suddenly seen her cesarean section scar, he got disgusted from it, and stopped. The woman's body, as seen by the man. The man is not attracted to her, even if she is his wife. The woman's body has always been seen as threatening, more threatening than the man's body. The body, as described in grotesque realism, is a hideous, shapeless stain<sup>6</sup>, and more importantly, is "the impenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and complete phenomenon"<sup>7</sup>

Aboliga the froh once shower the teacher a picture of an "old man-child". According to the picture, it is a baby with all the features that go with it, however, within seven years, it had died, having completed all the cycles of life<sup>8</sup>. The story of the old man-child can be related to the post-independence Ghanaian government. All the hopes that were born for a

democratic country after colonization died as soon as they were born, letting place to nothing else but despair.

Images of excrement and putrefaction are symbols of the corruption that is constantly present in the Ghanaian society. The author has made use of a grotesque image to highlight it,

Apart from the wood itself there were, of course, people themselves, just so many hands and fingers bringing help to the wood in its course toward putrefaction. Left-hand fingers in their careless journey from a hasty anus sliding all the way up the banister as their owners made the return trip from the lavatory downstairs to the offices above. Right-hand fingers still dripping with the after-piss and the stale sweat from fat crotches. The callused palms of messengers after they had blown their clogged noses reaching for a convenient place to leave the well-rubbed moisture. Afternoon hands not entirely licked clean of palm soup and remnants of Xen\ey. The wood would always win.”<sup>9</sup>

In this passage, it is described how the wood, in its way to putrefaction, was helped with the fingers of both hands. The wood symbolizes the Ghanaian government, the hands’ fingers symbolize Ghanaian people, and finally the putrefaction symbolizes the corruption present in the government. The metaphor made about the fingers leading the wood to putrefaction means that Ghanaian people have by themselves created corruption that is present in the government. The last sentence says “ the wood would always win”<sup>10</sup>, means that no matter how corrupted a government can be, it would always survive over its people. All the putrefaction existing in the book is hoever related directly to its people. Indeed, people contributed every day to the corruption and the deterioration of the country.

There is a sentence in the book which says “ as if its pieces were held together by too much rust to fall completely apart”<sup>11</sup>. This sentence can sound ironic and grotesque, because rust is not supposed to be solid, and yet, it is able to maintain everything together. This sentence is a metaphor to the corruption that was present in the Ghanaian government.

## 1. Decrowning and Degradation:

Armah in “The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born” turned the world upside down. In a last independent Ghana, where socialism was adopted; corruption and bribery had become the new watch-word. People who had remained true to their principles and integrity were seen as weak. The man in a moment of complete despair exclaimed :

What I don't understand,” he said, “is my own feeling about it. I know I have done nothing wrong. I could even get angry with Oyo about this. And yet, and yet I am the one who feels strange.” (...) “Yes. I feel like a criminal. Often these days I find myself thinking of something sudden I could do to redeem myself in their eyes. Then I sit down and ask myself what I have done wrong, and there is really nothing.”<sup>12</sup>

People who had taken advantage of the situation by corrupting the system, taking bribes whenever they got the chance to, were considered as heroes and were worshiped; “Abednego Yamoah, still free, perhaps never to be caught. Selling government petrol for himself, but so cleverly there is always someone else, a messenger, a cleaner, to be jailed, never Abednego. The whole world says he is a good man, and the whole world asks why we are not like him”<sup>13</sup>.

Bakhtin explains that during carnival, the hierarchies were reversed, and the roles were changed; thereby, a fake king was elected from the public, and was insulted and mocked; for short moments, there was no longer a higher social position than another, all hierarchies were reset to zero. In “the Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born”, there is a different form of decrowning. Indeed, in a corrupted society, where the norms have completely changed, the corrupted ones have been crowned and were worshiped by the society, while the ones who remained honest and worked with integrity felt like alienated in the society. This is the case of Joseph Koomson, a government minister, who got richer by taking bribes. He is being idolized by everyone in the society, and everyone wanted to be his friend in order to take advantage of his power; on the other hand, we have the man, a clerk who turned down every bribes he has ever received, and while everyone in his family and his surroundings reproached him so, he started questioning himself whether he has made the right choice.

In the book, the Ghanaian societies along with the government are highly criticized. Indeed, Armah by doing so wanted to highlight the corruption that post-independence Ghana was living. Decrowning and degrading the Ghanaian society, instead of crowning it, was a way for Armah to denounce the post-colonial society, along with all the problems it was facing.

Armah, contrary to his predecessors who cited positive things about Africa, has only criticized the Ghanaian colonial post government, sometimes degrading it, and other times decrowning certain elements and characters. By doing so, he aimed to transmit a dark and negative image of post-colonial Ghana, and at the same time criticize the government of Nkrumah, and the economic regime adopted by Ghana, and by most post-independent countries. To flee the regimes of the great powers that colonized them, independent countries have preferred to adopt a completely different economic system, which was supposed to put everyone in the same starting box, and give everyone a chance. Socialism was adopted by most of the African countries that gained independence, but failed in each of them, not giving these countries the opportunity to develop. The reason behind the inefficacy of this economic regime is the governments that implemented it. In Africa, the principles of socialism have not been applied as they should have been, giving more power to the people of the system than to the ordinary citizen, which has created inequality in a system that was supposed to be equal. Even if some presidents wanted to help their countries as best they could, and this is the case of Nkrumah, they failed because he was getting sticks in the wheel of his own corrupt government. The teacher, in a passage criticizes the independence, said:

How long will Africa be cursed with its leaders ? There were men dying from the loss of hope, and others were finding gaudy ways to enjoy power they did not have. We were ready here for big and beautiful things, but what we had was our own black men hugging new paunches scrambling to ask the white man to welcome them onto our backs. These men who were to lead us out of our despair, they came like men already grown fat and cynical with the eating of centuries of power

they had never struggled for, old before they had even been born into power, and ready only for the grave.<sup>14</sup>

Other elements are as well degraded. The man is constantly degraded by everyone, especially his own family, including his wife and his mother-in-law. They do not hesitate to insult and belittle him; he does nothing to defend himself, probably because he is tired. He has too often repeated that he wants to remain integrated in this corrupt environment. His wife, by blaming him for their miserable life, does not hesitate to take him down and insults him whenever she can. She degrades him, degrades the life she, and her children are living with him; she even comes to degrade his status as a man and head of the family. In the aim of belittling him, she calls him a “Chichidoodoo”<sup>15</sup>. The Chichidoodoo is an animal which hates excrement, but feeds on maggots<sup>16</sup>, to which he always remains silent and never gives an answer back to defend himself. Degradation is a recurrent feature in the book. In a passage, the man is described sitting in a bus, on his way home. The bus arrived at its destination stopped, and the bus driver has seen the man sleeping, with a drool falling from his mouth, he shouted at him: “You bloodyfucking sonofabitch! Article of no commercial value! You think the bus belongs to your grandfather?”<sup>17</sup>, as if the man has less value than his bus. This is ironical, because it appeared that in that society, materialistic goods have more value than human lives.

The Black Skin is being degraded by Black people themselves. They devalue in purpose themselves to put the Whites in value. One may think that they have an inferiority complex towards them. “My own lord, my master, oh, my white man, come. Come and take my bread. It is all yours, my white man, all yours.”<sup>18</sup>.

On the other hand, we find characters that are being highlighted. This is the case of Joseph Koomson, a government minister, the man’s old classmate. Koomson has taken a different path from the man’s one; while the man has always remained honest, Koomson made his way to fortune by taking bribery and taxes. In everyone’s eyes, and in everyone’s opinion, Koomson is a hero and must be taken as an example, as he is the perfect example of success.

Joseph Koomson was crowned and highlighted during mostly all the book, until the coup d’etat perpetrated against Nkrumah in 1966, from there on, the roles were inverted

once again. Koomson was decrowned, and went to the man's house to hide, escaping from the people who were looking for him in order to kill him. He smelled a foul odor, which is according to the man "The smell of fear"<sup>19</sup>. The man by trying to describe the smell said "His mouth had the rich stench of rotten menstrual blood"<sup>20</sup>. In fact, Koomson was decaying; all the years he has spent, living a comfy life with the Ghanian people's money were over, he was over, and he knew it. From there on, the man got crowned, and behaved like the hero he has always been. His wife Oyo, has finally seen her husband in his true light. She said: "I am glad you never became like him."<sup>21</sup>. In her eyes, "there was now real gratitude, perhaps for the first time in their married life, the man could believe that she was glad to have him the way he was".<sup>22</sup>

The Coup d'Etat and the fall of Nkrumah's regime can be considered as the death of an Era, however, it can also be seen as the birth of something new: of new hopes for the people who had had nothing at all, who were hoping for changes. Bakhtin does not consider death as an end, on the contrary, he believes that death only generates new life. In the *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, we do not talk about physical birth and death, but we are rather referencing to the death of an ideology, that wasn't beneficial to everyone; and the birth of new hopes.

"The policeman who had spoken raised his right hand and in a slow gesture pointed to his teeth. The man had seen this gesture before, several times. Usually, its maker would add the words, "Even kola nuts can say 'thanks.'" This policeman, however, was saying nothing. He was leaving it entirely up to the driver to understand or to wait. The driver understood. Without waiting to be asked for it, he took out his license folder from his shirt pocket, brought out a cedi note from the same place, and stuck it in the folder. Then, with his back turned to the people waiting in his bus, the driver gave his folder, together with the bribe in it, to the police-man."<sup>23</sup>

In the last chapter of the book, we read that the new beginning is just the past repeating itself. We can notice in the passage above, that a bus driver is giving bribes to a policeman.

## 2. Grotesque characters:

According to Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque, a character can be considered grotesque if they induce both disgust and empathy in the reader<sup>24</sup>. This is particularly relevant when analyzing the characters in "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born.". The man can be perceived as grotesque.

I beg you, let us stop joking now," the visitor said. "They are waiting for me and I must go. A man is a man. I tell you what I will do. Take that one for yourself and give the other one to your friend. I myself will find some fine drink for you. Take it. Take it, my friend.<sup>25</sup>

According to Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque, the character described in this passage can be considered a prime example of a grotesque figure. Bakhtin argues that the grotesque is a cultural phenomenon that reflects the contradictions and conflicts of a society. In particular, he notes that grotesque characters are those who challenge the established norms and conventions of their culture, and who create a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty in the reader.

The man in "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" fits this mold of a grotesque character perfectly. Despite his poverty and struggle, he refuses to compromise his values by accepting bribes, which makes him a stark contrast to the corrupt society he lives in. This creates a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty in the reader, as they are forced to question the morality of a society where bribery is commonplace. Moreover, the man's refusal to accept the timber man's bribe can also be seen as a form of carnivalization, a key aspect of the grotesque. Carnivalization is a process whereby established norms and hierarchies are subverted and inverted, creating a sense of chaos and liberation. In this case, the man's refusal to accept the bribe can be seen as a subversion of the hierarchical relationship between the timber man and the man, as the man is able to assert his own values and beliefs despite the power imbalance between the two. In addition, the man's poverty and struggle also elicit empathy from the reader, another key aspect of the grotesque. Bakhtin argues that grotesque characters must induce both disgust and empathy in the reader, creating a sense of ambivalence and uncertainty. In this case, the man's poverty and struggle

create a sense of empathy in the reader, as they are forced to confront the harsh realities of life in a corrupt and decaying society.

Overall, the character of the man in "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" is a powerful example of the grotesque, embodying the key elements of carnivalization, ambiguity, and empathy. Through his refusal to accept bribes and his commitment to integrity, the man challenges the established norms of his society and creates a sense of uncertainty in the reader. At the same time, his poverty and struggle elicit empathy from the reader, highlighting the harsh realities of life in post-independence Ghana.

The teacher in Ayi Kwei Armah's "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" can be seen as a grotesque character, as per Bakhtin's theory. Bakhtin argues that the grotesque is a type of cultural expression that embraces the bodily, material, and lower aspects of life, often juxtaposed with the spiritual, intellectual, and moral. The grotesque aims to expose and criticize the limitations and contradictions of the dominant culture and its values.

No. I have tried to be free, but I am not free. Perhaps I will never even be." The naked man turned on his side and propped himself on his right elbow, facing the man on the desk. "It was all so good, the youth and the thoughts of honest living water flowing to thirsty land, wasn't it? But what happens when you come out and you see the land wants you, not honest and living, but completely like its dead self? You didn't think I too had wondered about that?"<sup>26</sup>

The teacher's isolation in a prostitution district can be seen as a manifestation of the grotesque, as he seeks to escape the decay and corruption of Ghanaian society. However, despite his attempt to break free, he remains a prisoner of it, and his extreme isolation and nakedness elicit both empathy and disgust. His rejection of societal norms and conventions is also a characteristic of the grotesque, as he subverts the dominant culture's expectations of what a teacher should be and do. The teacher's rejection of traditional societal roles is echoed in Bakhtin's ideas of the carnival, where individuals temporarily reject societal norms and conventions and engage in behaviors that would otherwise be considered taboo; Moreover, the teacher's dialogue with the man further highlights the grotesque elements of his character. His description of the dead land wanting him as its dead self underscores the

absurdity and contradiction of Ghanaian society, where individuals are trapped in a cycle of decay and corruption. The teacher's dialogue also points to the ambivalent nature of the grotesque, as his rejection of societal norms is both admirable and repulsive.

The teacher's character in "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" exemplifies the grotesque as per Bakhtin's theory. His rejection of societal norms, extreme isolation, and nakedness elicit both empathy and disgust, highlighting the limitations and contradictions of Ghanaian society.

In "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born," Ayi Kwei Armah provides numerous examples of grotesque characters that challenge traditional notions of beauty and morality in post-independence Ghana. One of the ways in which Armah achieves this is by highlighting the absurdity of societal norms and expectations, particularly with regard to corruption and bribery.

For example, the story of the bus driver who had to pay a bribe to continue his journey illustrates the widespread acceptance of corruption in Ghanaian society. Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque emphasizes the subversion of dominant norms and expectations, and in this case, the dominance of corruption and bribery is challenged by the driver's lack of a license and his subsequent payment to the police.

Similarly, the story of Zacharia Lagos, who sold healthy wood illegally, also highlights the absurdity of societal norms. Lagos is engaging in an illegal activity, but his wood is actually healthier than that sold by the government. The fact that he is breaking the law in order to do something good underscores the contradictions and complexities of the Ghanaian society depicted in the novel.

Abenego Yamoah, who sells government petrol illegally, is another example of a grotesque character. Despite his illegal activities, he is considered a hero in his society. This contradiction between societal norms and individual actions is a hallmark of the grotesque, and highlights the absurdity of the society depicted in the novel.

Finally, Joseph Koomson is a grotesque character in his arrogance and belittling of others. His behavior at the conference he attends, where he degrades the man with many degrees, illustrates his arrogance and disregard for societal norms of respect and

professionalism. His power and influence, combined with his lack of humility, make him a particularly grotesque character in the novel.

Overall, the use of the grotesque in "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" serves to challenge and subvert dominant norms and expectations in post-independence Ghana, highlighting the contradictions and complexities of a society grappling with corruption, decay, and moral ambiguity.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, Ayi Kwei Armah's "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" offers a scathing critique of post-independence Ghanaian society, highlighting the corruption and moral decay that characterized the era. By using grotesque imagery and themes, Armah exposes the contradictions and complexities of a society that had promised progress and prosperity, but ultimately failed to deliver. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the Grotesque, our analysis has demonstrated how these elements serve as a means of resistance against dominant cultural norms and values, challenging readers to question the prevailing social order. Through our research, we have gained a deeper understanding of Ghanaian history and literature, and have identified literature as a powerful tool for social critique and resistance. Our hope is that this analysis inspires readers to engage with the social and political issues that continue to shape Ghana today and to contribute to a more nuanced and critical understanding of the country's past and present.

## **End notes:**

1 Bakhtin, M. (1984). Rabelais and his World. MIT University Press. (P 317).

2 ibid, p 317.

3 Armah AK. (1968). The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born. Heinemann Educational Books. (p 124).

4 ibid, (p 124).

5 Ibid, (p 115).

6 Bakhtin, M. (1984). Rabelais and his World. MIT University Press. (P 29).

7 Ibid, (p 318)

8 Armah AK. (1968). The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born. Heinemann Educational Books. (p 173).

9 Ibid, (P 16).

10 Ibid, (p15).

11 Ibid, ( p 01).

12Ibid, ( p63).

13 Ibid, (p 113).

14 Ibid, (p94).

15 Ibid, (p50).

16 Ibid (p 52).

17 Ibid, (p 06).

18 Ibid, (p 43).

19 Ibid, (p 192).

20 Ibid, ( p 191).

21 Ibid, (p 194).

22 Ibid, ( p 214).

23 Ibid, ( p 214).

24 Armah AK. (1968). The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born. Heinemann Educational Books.  
(p 35).

25 Ibid, ( P 64).

## **Conclusion:**

Both books are political satires that criticize political failures in their respective countries since their independence. Mustapha Benfodil's "l'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)" criticizes the dictatorship of the government since independence, which still persists in Algeria. Armah's "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" criticizes the corruption that Ghana has been plunged into since independence. The authors wanted to denounce all the injustices committed in both countries, and their works deal with the same problems and issues that have plagued Africa and the former colonies since their independence, namely corruption, dictatorship, the inoperability of the economic regime adopted by the state, and criticism of the societies of both countries.

The Grotesque features in both works are used to highlight the issues that the two countries were facing. For instance, uncrowning is used in the two books. In "l'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)," it is used to tell how the author intends to bring down the current regime put in place and thus put an end to the dictatorship that Algeria has been living under since 1962. "l'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)" relates fictitious facts, which only happen in the author's mind; he recounts how he intends to overthrow the current state by inseminating the daughters of the government's people and then launching a cultural revolution.

In "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born," the author recounts how the decrowning took place. Indeed, it tells us how the world and roles were reversed in independent Ghana and recounts facts that really happened, such as how the Coup d'Etat took place in order to stop the corrupt regime. Benfodil served us mostly religious degradations, which let us understand that the author is not on good terms with God. However, Armah degraded and belittled some of his characters while highlighting and crowning others. The characters in "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" are described as grotesque because the corrupt are seen as heroes and are worshiped by all, even if they look down on those they consider inferior to them, while the honest ones are frowned upon and are despised by all. But at no time are they described as physically grotesque. In "l'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)," the characters are described as grotesque both physically and morally. Some characters are described as physically hideous, repulsive, and associable, while others are described as feeling superior to others. This last point could fit the two books; just like Yacine, the character of Benfodil's book, Joseph Koomson, one of Armah's characters feels superior to

others and takes those he believes to be beneath him and does not hesitate to humiliate them and make them feel inferior.

The ambivalence between death and life is a feature that has been addressed in the books. In "l'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)," death and life have been addressed very explicitly. In fact, the main character's father dies, leaving an heir in the womb. We also find a death that precedes the birth of something abstract, as in the case of the death of Yacine's mother, which gives birth to his hatred for women, or Marwan's death, which gives birth to his book. Death and birth can be perceived in very different ways.

The two books, "l'Archeologie du Chaos (Amoureux)" by Mustapha Benfodil and "The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" by Ayi Kwei Armah, both use the grotesque to criticize the political situation in their respective countries. The authors highlight the problems of corruption, dictatorship, underdevelopment, and economic hardship that are rampant in many African countries. Benfodil's work is a political satire that uses a hero/antihero to challenge society and the ruling bourgeoisie. He delicately combines compassion and denunciation, drawing the reader into his revolution without them even realizing it. He uses a range of literary techniques, including irony, metaphors, exaggeration, and degradation to criticize the injustices in his country; Similarly, Armah's book is a scathing critique of the Ghanaian government, particularly under the regime of Nkrumah. He portrays how the government has plotted to enrich themselves at the expense of the people, and how corruption and dictatorship have become ingrained in the country's political system. Armah uses grotesque features to criticize and denounce the issues that Ghanaian society and government were experiencing. Both authors use the grotesque to highlight the absurdity and injustices of the political systems in their countries.

In conclusion, the authors have successfully used the grotesque to critique the political situation in their respective countries. Benfodil and Armah use a range of literary techniques to draw the reader into their narratives, and to criticize the injustices they see around them. Through their books, they shed light on the corruption, dictatorship, underdevelopment, and economic hardship that many African countries face, and urge their readers to question and challenge the political systems that perpetuate these issues.

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