

**Existentialist trends in *The Beautiful Ones* by Ayi Kwei Armah
and *De Niro's Game* by Rawe Hage**

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that with the exception of the cited references, this work is a result of my own original research. It has not been submitted in whole or in part to any other university.

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DATE.....

DATE.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife and Children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank the Almighty God for his grace, love and mercy that has been bestowed upon us.

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the main characters of the novels: *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) by Ayi Kwei Armah and *De Niro's Game* (2006) by Rawe Hage to discover cases and occurrences of existential predicament. Specifically, it looked at how both writers exhibited alienation and also how their characterization affected freedom of choice. A comparative literary research involving the descriptive method is applied. Information is gained wholly from the novels in question and other publications related to the two books. Beginning from the interest on the concept of Existentialist thought, the researcher uses the Existentialist theories in order to find out the existential aspects of the novels, especially on the major characters in both texts. The study seeks to find out how existentialism was used in the both books and unravel how these writers from different backgrounds expressed the concept.

Existentialism has both theistic and atheistic forms. Theistic Existentialists consider God to be 'the source of one's being', 'the ground of all being', or 'one's ultimate concern'. Religious existentialists include Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel, Martin Buber and Paul Tillich. The atheistic existentialists' presuppositions and belief systems preclude anything supernatural or any idea of God. Atheistic existentialists include Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Simone de Beauvoir and Albert Camus.

Ultimately, it is concluded that the main characters of both novels had to defend their existence in unfortunate events that they had no control, a critical aspect of existentialism. Moreover, in their struggle to survive in very crucial moments of their lives, the main characters at one point or the other find themselves battling feelings of alienation or hostility, anxiety, and nothingness which are all existentialist them .

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Existentialism is thought by many scholars such as Marcel Gabriel, Martin Buber, Tillich Paul and Jaspers Karl to be the twentieth century's most influential literary and philosophical drive that emphasizes on individual existence. It was started in the philosophical and scholarly works of Sartre and Camus. It centers around pursuing on one's faith to attain individual truth. Existentialism manages the issues of the importance and motivation behind life on earth, with people finding the world as hostile in nature. Existentialism is a proposition, a viewpoint which lays assertion on the reason and significance of human life in this world. The basic theory of existentialism is a reflection on the genuine presence of the person as the fundamental and most significant certainty, rather than a reliance on the theories of abstractions, which advances the idea that people are altogether affected by abstract beings, for example, divine beings, gods, angels or devils. The central principle is that man is what he makes of himself; he is not predestined by a God, society, or by biology (Sartre, 1977).

In *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Jean Paul Sartre explains that the concept is a philosophical concept or approach, which states that human life is essential, and that an environment and human subjectivity are the implementation of every truth and every action of a human being. Where subjectivity in this case means that an individual acts based exclusively on how he feels about a situation, circumstance or person (23). He again clarifies that man truly exists; he plans and creates his own future. In order to reach this future, man must act consciously (Sartre, 1977).

The word “existentialism” originates from the Latin expression *existere*, *ex* means ‘out’ and *sistere* means ‘making stand up’. This means that an act or activities taken that makes an individual stand out in society (Dagun 1990: 19).

As with other philosophers, existentialists preached their thoughts about the meaning of Existentialism through their writings. However, various existentialists had different perceptions and definitions about the topic hence it is difficult in determining the exact definition of it. Thus, in order to comprehend the meaning of Existentialism, it must be examined into details. Gabriel Marcel stated that Existentialism is too complicated to expound, therefore the best scholars can do is to explain major concept of it but not to frame or put up a standard explanation or definition (Strauss, 1984).

As commonly acknowledged, man is formed in a different way from God’s other creatures. Man is given the rational capability to face the uncertainties in life. Unlike animals, which have no fear and concern about limitations and want, man always makes continual efforts to satisfy his wants and deal with his weaknesses. Animals are satisfied if they can eat well, find a comfortable living environment, and reproduce. They never pay attention to their surrounding environment. On the other hand, man is never satisfied with his material conditions; he always wants to make bad situations in his life better, and improve on the positive ones regardless of whether this would eventually fulfill him or not. All of his life is a struggle to do the best in order to find and realize his life existence. Dagun, (1990) opines that an individual can be said to exist when his acts, plans and being is toward a better life. As an individual turn out to be less troubled with life’s problems, they always try to pursue every kind of better options. Human existence is thought to be authentic when man is able to choose and decide without restrictions who and what he will become (Dagun, 1990).

Thus, freedom is very vital to man, as it can be said to be human existence itself. Soren Kierkegaard believed that an individual's existence is not stationary (Hasan, 1973). This implies that man always tries to move from prospect to certainty. As man enjoys freedom, this drive to the progress takes place and is centered on himself. In freedom, a man's action is not influenced by any external forces and he takes choices that will be to his advantage. In other words, man's existence itself is found and exists in his individual freedom. It can therefore be agreed on that freedom of an individual is of ultimate importance to all existentialists (Warahadi, 2008).

The concept of existentialism has been widely accepted as many renown and modern writers display the idea very vividly in their writing. In Walker Percy's Novel, *The Moviegoer*, Binx Bolling, the main character of the novel feels that his life is unfulfilled. On his 13th birthday, he runs away from his prestigious family in search of his true self and identity. He is joined by his cousin and together they set out on a pilgrimage to discover themselves.

In a less dramatic twist, *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahnuik sends modern existential writing to another level. In spite of the fact that Palahnuik's work is more noted for its intrusive and vulgar style, he is additionally acclaimed for his existential investigation of society's generalizations. In his first novel, an anonymous hero experiences a constant sleeping disorder and a dreary work. At the point when he meets strange and confounding Tyler Durden, the two men engage in very dangerous wrestling games in secret bars as a means to handle their depression and mental illness. and uncover the threats of our advanced world.

In a rather action-packed Novel, *Your Fathers, Where Are They? And the Prophets, Do They Live Forever?* by Dave Eggers is centered around an unknown man who suffered a mental breakdown. Amidst a crazy breakdown, a man who battles to sort out the world and his agony resorts to capturing and examining individuals as he continued looking for peace and answers.

To respond to the entirety of the inquiries burdening his mind, he goes to everybody from past associates, to cops, and space explorer, and a U.S. representative. In a relinquished army installation off the California coast, Thomas is resolved to get to reality, regardless of what the cost.

Modern existential writers display existentialism in modern scenes and settings. Similarly, although written under very different contexts and settings, the books, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *De Niro's Game* both have some level of existential predicament. It can be observed that the main characters of both novels find themselves in situations they cannot control and these affect their decisions and their lives. The thesis will attempt to identify and discuss how the two writers' express alienation and how their characterization affects freedom of choice in their respective novels.

It tends to be said that existentialism is a way of thinking that concerns itself about the presence of the individual and his mission to find self and the significance of life through unrestrained choice, decision, and duty. It implies that in attempting to find whom and what a man is during his lifetime, a man will settle on choices according to his own convictions, emotions, conclusions, without thinking about an objective form of truth. Be that as it may, every personal decision or choice consistently has an outcome. The existentialist in this manner believes in being liable for each decision or choice that must be made (Satre, 1977).

Existentialism has likewise been depicted by Nicola Abbagnano (19), an Italian Existential Philosopher, as "a quest for being" It is a pursuit for truth, honesty and pure existence in a world filled with deception and absurdity. In sharp contrast to Christian and Muslim Existentialists who certainly believe in God or a superior deity without doubt have faith in God) and believe that spirituality has impact on physical activities. Existentialists such as Alberto Moravia, an Italian Existentialist writer, believe there is no God, no calling, no human nature,

no eternal life, and no intrinsic order to the world. Simply put, man exists in an irrational world and must solely take responsibility for himself. (Pacifici, 1955).

Again, in his writing, "*Existentialism is a Humanism*", Sartre states, "Man is free, man is freedom...we are left alone, without excuse" (41). Man should acknowledge the freedom to frame his own existence without the thought of destiny or a foreordained human nature. Sartre characterizes the manner in which this responsibility is shown through characters in existential writing: When the existentialist expounds on a weakling, the person composes that the weakling is responsible for his shortcoming. Hence, the character isn't feeble on the grounds that he has a powerless heart or mind... he is such because he has made himself a weakling through his demonstrations. (Chiusaroli, 2007).

As indicated by Sartre, existentialism is a convention that makes human existence possible and affirms that each reality and each activity highlight an environment and a human subjectivity (Sartre 1977: 18). In his book, Sartre also explains the term Subjectivity. Subjectivity here means the liberty of a person or individual to indicate or decide what he will be or not (Sartre 1977: 23). Moreover, Sartre also splits existentialism into two categories. The first is the Christian or religious existentialists and atheist existentialists (Sartre 1977: 20).

The religious existentialists believe that production precedes essence. They compare the production with a manufactured object such as a book or a paper knife. They consider that the book or paper knife is produced by a craftsman who has the idea of the object. This means that the concept of production precedes the essence of the object like a book or paper knife. They have a strong belief that a man would produce a paper knife first knowing what purpose it would serve. Religious existentialists believe that this is same with human creation. God created man following certain techniques and a conception (Sartre 1977: 20-21).

Contrarily, atheists' existentialists believe that existence precedes essence. They believe that if there is no God, then there is a being in whom existence precedes essence. Atheists believe that there is no God who preprogrammed the destiny of man; hence, being must exist before essence. That being is a man; man, first exists, at that point he emerges on the earth and afterward he experiences himself. He just a short time later characterizes himself. In the event that man as existentialists imagine him can't be characterized, it is on the grounds that in any case he is not anything. He will not be anything until some other time. At that point he will be what he thinks about himself. In this manner, there is no predefined human nature because there is no God who has a concept of it (Sartre 1977: 22-23).

Fuad Hasan states that Existentialism is an investigation that puts together its exploration with respect to a person. A human in philosophical examination is viewed as a free independence. He acknowledges that an individual has a distinction from God's other living manifestations. Accordingly, it is just individual that exists (Hasan, 1973:5).

Long (1972) makes a study of specific parts of existentialism relevant to education with extraordinary focus on informal education in the primary schools of Great Britain. He found out that contemporary emptiness as far as the deficiency of old convictions, qualities and objectives has affected a far-reaching sensation of anxiety, estrangement, loss of personality and meaninglessness. This calls for the improvement of an educational system stressing on self-awareness, the ability to choose and take responsibility for consequences of one's choices; that is, an education stressing individualism and activism, simply put; existentialist education.

Literature and philosophy are actually very different scopes of academia although they may be both be classified under humanities. The difference is obvious as philosophy concerns itself with the human being and stress on the life of the individual, while literature on the other hand, focuses its attention on the events and characters living in the works made by its author.

However, these two very different fields have a close connection as literature is often created as a manifestation of philosophy or ideas. Therefore, philosophy and literature have one shared characteristic which is free thinking. “Frequently literature is thought of as a form of philosophy, as ideas wrapped in form, and it is analyzed to yield leading ideas” (Wellek & Warren, 1956).

From the above discussion, it is right to say that literature can be seen as a text that reflects intellectual history. Usually, unambiguous statements either show the loyalty of an author to a particular philosophy or philosophies, or establish that he or she has had some contact with philosophies or at least that he is conscious of their overall assumption (Wellek & Warren, 1956).

One of the fundamental issues in philosophy, just as literature is human life. Existentialism is a fascinating point to examine as it sees man's understanding about himself and how the vast majority endeavor to discover opportunity in their own reality (Azhar, 2013).

This thesis examines the themes of existential predicament in the novels *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *De Niro's Game*. The thesis shall also look at how the central characters of the novels exhibited freedom of choice in varying situations.

The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born by Ayi Kwei Armah is a novel that accentuates on the corruption and dishonesty that prompted the political nuisance and instability in Ghana during the 1960s, before the oust of Kwame Nkrumah, the country's first president. The central theme, be that as it may, is the residents, who have no obvious understanding of the corrupt acts done by the Parliamentarians, and they cheer for them paying little mind to the harm the government is doing. As per Ayi Kwei Armah, corruption was wild during Kwame Nkrumah's system, and the individuals who decided to stay honest and incorruptible carried on with hopeless lives. (Armah, 1968).

The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born is centered around an unnamed character, the man. The beginning of the novel follows the man all through one of his every day shifts at the railroad station where he deals with the traffic as it goes through. Every day starts with a journey to his workplace. Despite the fact that the work is tiresome, the man is seriously mindful of the characteristic and sporadic natural environment that surrounds him, differentiating the bogus, filthy, disregarded station with sights of the sky and ocean, acknowledging places unharmed by man.

The Novel *De Niro's Game* is a story about George and Bassam, two friends growing up in Lebanon. The story does not only describe the difficult situation these two find themselves in but also that of many young people around the world in conflict areas where life and survival is only by chance and the value of life is highly disregarded. The two lived in a world where violence was seen as the only means to survive and solve problems. Also, these young men growing up in such a world were confident in their strength, weapons and guns that they were mostly responsible for their own deaths in many cases (Ali, 2012).

The story brings to light the means of two friends living in Beirut during the Lebanese civil war. The militias that took over and control parts of the city are nothing just more than powerful organized gangs that besiege the city with bullets and bombs. The city, as described by the novel had grown into nothing but a lawless place of crime, war and violence. Consequently, young people growing up in the area are pushed into crime and violence (Gana, 2006)

This thesis will therefore look at how the writers of the two novels express the theme of alienation in their novels and also how their characterization affects freedom of choice. It can be noted that the events in *De Niro's Game* are based on an extreme case of civil violence whilst the circumstances in *the Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* are foregrounded on acts of

civil unrest in which violence is mostly absent but creates a top-down negative effect on the citizens.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The thesis entitled is conducted on the maiden literary works of Ayi Kwei Armah and Rawe Hage. Starting from the researcher's interest on both the novels and Existentialism thought, the dissertation tries to look at how the authors in their own unique ways present the various themes of existentialism in their books. Specifically, it shall look at how the characters exhibit existential predicaments in their quest to realize their existence and the struggle to gain freedom of life.

The researcher shall try to look at how the political situation in the two countries' post-colonial era affected the citizenry and how both writers presented the situation in their novels. This study shall contribute to existing literature on existentialism and shall serve as a reference point for comparative studies between Ghanaian and Lebanese novels.

This study focuses its analysis upon two significant problems, which lead to the objectives as stated below.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How do the writers portray the alienation in the lives of the main characters?
2. How does the interplay between existence and freedom of choice affect characterization in the novels?

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To find out how the writers portray alienation in the lives of the main characters.

2. To analyze how the interplay between existence and freedom of choice affects characterization in the novels.

1.5 Scope of Research

This research is, first and foremost, based on an existential analysis of the two novels, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Born*, written in 1968, and *De Niro's Game* written in 2006. It deals with how these two authors, Ayi Kwei Armah and Rawe Hage portray the theme of alienation in their novels and how their characterization affects freedom of choice. The study looks at how the theories of existentialism, as propounded by Kierkegaard and Sartre are used in these two novels. The analysis will be mainly based on the central characters of both books and periodically mention minor characters when needed.

1.6 Significance of Study

The research will provide further knowledge about the concept of existential predicament and how it can be represented in works of literature.

The comparative analysis of these two books will propel the understanding and perspective on the existential vision of the two authors. comparative analysis has various advantages. Most importantly, it has its own significance as investigations of writing and abstract analysis. It gives certain similar perspectives on the idea of existentialism as far as a brief look at human existence. Sahin (2016), has focused on the significance of comparative research analysis to comprehend one's own writing adequately. It is therefore motivating and worthwhile to explore the concept of 'Existentialism' with reference to the novels *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *De Niro's Game*.

This thesis shall try and analyse the difference and similarities in text of the two regional settings and look at how existentialist concepts such as freedom and alienation are portrayed by the two authors.

The findings and outcome of this study is meant to give additional theoretical input in this area of literature. Thus, the findings of this study are anticipated to be useful to the literary studies, mainly on the existentialist aspects of both novels. Essentially the investigation of this subject has some significance for the person who has interest in literary work and who are engaged with researchers who mean to do a further research on similar issues.

The books, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *De Niro's Game*, are two texts which illustrate the sufferings of average citizens in times of civil unrest. *The Beautiful Ones* is set in immediate post-colonial Ghana, which ends in a coup of Dr Kwame Nkrumah, caused by high rates of corruption and poverty. *De Niro's Game* on the other hand is set in a time of civil war between factions in the country of Lebanon. The novel is characterized with bombings, murders and an unfamous massacre.

This study shall undertake a thematic comparative analysis of the two books. The thesis would aid students studying Literature in English to understand the theoretical background of existential predicaments. The study would be beneficial to academia, as it would provide empirical findings on the analysis of the two textbooks. It would therefore serve as a reference point for future study and at the same time fill research gaps since existing research although espousing on existentialism in both the African and non-African Arabian context has shown little on a comparative study on existentialism between an African and non-African Arabian novel. Also, this research is significant as Ghana and Lebanon have very strong bilateral relations but there is evidence of little comparative literature between these two nations. Although Ghana and Lebanon have over a hundred years of bilateral relationships, which is

evident by Lebanese owning many establishments in Ghana, very little comparative research has been made on their works of literature

1.7 Justification of Study

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the use of theories of existentialism by writers in their literary works. This thesis specifically looks at the novels *The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born* and *De Niro's Game*. While many existential theorists have defined existentialism differently, this thesis shall conduct its analysis using the theory of existentialism as propounded by Soren Kierkegaard and Jean Paul Sartre.

The two texts were chosen because of the culturally diverse nature of their settings. Also, with fifty years between the publication of the two books, the study would give an opportunity to analyze the writing styles of modern and immediate post-colonial writers. Also, *the Beautiful Ones are not Born* is a globally award-winning novel with *De Niro's Game* being a less known work of literature; this will allow for the analysis of a masterclass work with a lesser known novel.

The theme of existentialism was chosen because existentialism has gained great grounds in the world of literature, with many writers and analysts delving deep into the subject area. With most existentialism theories revolving around the uncertainties of life, freedom, alienation, fear and anxiety, the thesis shall explore all of these concepts in its theoretical framework and discussion of results. The choice of an African and a non-African Arabian novel for comparison presents a great way of comparing two different writing forms and identifying how their writers blend the theories of existentialism in their writings.

Also, the study focused on the major characters because there were many minor characters in both novels and it would be impracticable to focus on all of the minor characters. Also, there

is a lot of information on major characters that can be used in the study, unlike the minor characters, who are sometimes just mentioned but a few times in the whole novel.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This study is ordered into four distinct chapters. The first chapter handles the introduction of the thesis by espousing on the history and background of the chosen concept of existentialism; it also outlines the objectives of the study and research questions. It details on significance of the study, methodology, scope and limitation of the study as well as the study's organization, which outlines the arrangement of chapters in the thesis.

Chapter two highlights on the literature review and the theoretical framework used in the study. The Literature review and theoretical framework focuses on reviewing various literatures on the concepts of existential predicaments and also review other studies done on the two books in question. It looks at theories and studies that will be used in the analysis of the study.

Chapter three presents and discusses the empirical results of the study and also attempts to answer the objectives of the study. It contains the findings of the study. Chapter four deals with the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study

1.3.1 Methodologies

1.3.2 Research Design

Employing qualitative and description methodology, this study will be conducted by using comparative analysis. A comparative analysis will be undertaken between the two books: *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *De Niro's Game*. This study uses comparative methodology because it allows for the direct comparison of variables (Campbell, 2015) although it has been argued that comparative methodology does not always give the accurate

results as on the ground (Lijphart, 1977). Comparative methodology allows for a side by side comparison of more than one work of literature based on a selected theme or themes and this allows for detailed analysis and specific outcome.

1.3.3 Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher becomes the primary instrument to get data (Endraswara, 2004:5). That is why in this case the researcher is an observer. This is due to the fact that the human being, in this case the researcher, is the only tool with substantial adaptation to understand and decipher the varying situations and outcomes that will be run into while conducting a qualitative research in natural setting. (Guba & Lincoln Stainback, 1988).

1.3.4 Data Collection

The researcher shall begin this process by reading the novels, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *De Niro's Game*. The two novels will serve as the primary source of data for the research. Secondary data will be obtained from journals, books and other documents related to the two books. In order to obtain accurate interpretation of the materials, the researcher will read actively.

1.3.5 Data Analysis

There are four phases in processing the qualitative data in which all the phases are inseparable steps and have a close relationship, they are:

The first phase is Description Phase. In this case the data are classified as based on the research problems. The second one is Analysis Phase. In this phase the researcher applied the Existentialism approach on the data which is gained from the novel. The third phase is Interpretation Phase. This phase discusses the analysis based on the objectives that have been

formulated. The last phase is Evaluation Phase. This phase functions to recheck all steps whether all coherently develop or whether the ideas and supporting ideas are already organized well, and then the researcher take conclusion.

1.3.6 Ethical Issues

Due to the nature of the research, the researcher shall solely obtain information from the two novels and other publications related to the novels. Hence, there shall not be interviews or questionnaires and the only ethical issue the researcher will be mindful of is the proper referencing and citation of materials used.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Although the literature presents these themes in a variety of contexts, this review will primarily focus on studies related to *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *De Niro's Game*. This chapter reviews the literature on the concept of existentialism as well as texts and studies already conducted and related to existentialism. It discusses the concept from different perspectives and with the view of giving a theoretical and empirical foundation to the study. Many theories have been proposed to explain or at least try to explain existentialism. Although there is a myriad of literature which covers a wide variety of such theories, this review will focus on the renown and major themes which emerge repeatedly throughout the literature reviewed. This review shall also include a detailed look at analysis made by scholars on the two novels being studied and also the socio-cultural and political situations in the two countries that influenced the writing style of the authors.

A number of scholars have conducted studies and reviews on the two selected novels. All of these scholars looked at the books from their own perspective and choice thematic areas.

In "An Analysis of the Political Themes in Ayi Kwei Armah's Novel: *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*" (2014), Eric J. Irungu highlighted that the author wrote on the high level of corruption after Independence. Corruption as described in the novel was so serious as it was disgusting. Official took bribes without shame and it had become a thing of a day. People who did not do evil stayed away not because they wanted to do right but just because they didn't have the guts and opportunity to do so. The writer focused on the political themes of the novel; meanwhile, this study shall go past than that in the analysis of the existential themes in the novel.

Etse Awitor in, “The Aesthetic of Decay in Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Meja Mwangi’s *Kill Me Quick*” (2014) stated that the writer of the novel used words full of stench and decay. She suggested that Ayi Kwei Armah in his novel did little to hide the morale decadence and corruption that had infiltrated almost all the sectors of Ghana’s economy at that time. Whiles, Awitor stressed on the extreme language used by the writer, this study shall look at the existential messages sent out in the expression of these harsh language.

Femi Abudurin (2017) additionally contended in the article 'To Steal or Not To Steal, Literary survey of Ayi Kwei Armah's, 'The Beautiful ones are not yet conceived', that, With regards to the main character, the character of the man was questioned in many instances throughout the novel, knowing very well that he would be well respected by society, make his family happy and he himself be happy, only if he could do what people asked him to do. The man was able to control himself throughout the novel and was stuck to his principles and values, never for once acting as he should not. The man resisted all temptations but the novel also made it clear that it was not that he rejected all things, but he just could not really get to them, and that led to the confusion of the soul. Carlos Battaglini analyzed the existential theme of the novel by focusing on the major character, however this study shall also include the analysis of the other major characters such as the Teacher, the Man’s wife and Rama Krishna.

Besides, Fredua Agyemang (2010), in his article 'When will the Beautiful Ones be Born? - A Review of Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born*', Emphasized that Ayi Kwei Armah used *The Beautiful Ones* to set precedence for his succeeding books. Thus, the answers to the various questions Armah raised in his first books were answered in the succeeding books. ‘The Beautiful Ones in Africa are those who know *the Way, the Path* and not the *Ostentatious Cripples*; they are *the Healers*’. The author in his novels sought to address pressing issues of the day such as freedom, corruption, the environment and overall well-being of individuals.

Fredua in his article tried to link the story of *The Beautiful Ones* to the rest of Ayi Kwei Armah's Novel, meanwhile, this study will be focused entirely on *The Beautiful Ones*.

In regards to *De Niro's Game*, Mathura Karunanithy (2012) in her paper, "*Masculinity and Trauma in 'De Niro's Game'*", described Bassam, a main character in Rawe Hage's *De Niro's Game*, as a person who expressed his trauma through masculinity. Thus, Bassam used masculinity as a coping mechanism during war. The absence of communication and alienation on the part of Bassam shows a breakdown of social structures that would have otherwise served as a support system. Whilst this article focused on masculinity as a result of fear of the war, this study shall focus on how the war caused alienation and affected the freedom of the main characters.

In the article, *National Trauma and the 'Uncanny in Hage's Novel De Niro's Game*, Abdelfattah Ali (2012), described the novel as a clear picture of suffering and pain that civilians, especially children and women go through during conflicts. This is seen in the violence meted out to women and children during the civil war as described in the book. This study shall go beyond the violence and suffering and rather look at how the civil war caused the characters in their novels display existential features.

According to Nigel Beale (2017) in his article 'Book Review: *De Niro's Game* by Rawe Hage, the novel's subject matter and hush surrounding the Lebanese civil war makes it a significance contribution to history. He further mentioned that the writer of the novel does well to avoid conclusions, choosing sides and also presents the wickedness of war and man with vague and abstract characterization. The novel however emphasizes on the evil of systemized religion of any kind but rather encourages secularism. By openly opposing religion, the novel becomes a book against religion, that creates channels of conflicts, not only in the Arab world but globally.

James Sallis (2019) in his review of *De Niro's Game* espoused that in terms of writing style and language used, the novel describes at most the consequences of the Lebanese civil war and its effect on the already broken people of Lebanon at the time. The novel gave a lot of details of the civil war and it severally mentions gang battles, murder, robberies, petty crimes and the infamous 1982 massacre of Palestinians by Lebanese militia sponsored by Israelis. It highlights bombings and events that catch up to people even in their places of shelter and the breaking apart of Bassam's world. The language used in the novel also moves from dull to sharp, passive to active, perfectly describing a world in chaos.

In a review by Edward Sars (2019), he noted that the writer of *De Niro's Game* sends the reader into the lives and story of two men in the middle of the Lebanon Civil war. The young men, George and Bassam, are childhood friends who have grown up in Beirut and are presented with the options of either fleeing the city and country into exile and safety abroad, thus self-alienating from the only home and existence they know, or remain in the war-torn city and live a life of crime and pursuit of power. The story is unfolded in a distinct and fascinating manner that blends very clear pictorial thoughts in words with a feel of the awe and strength of Arabic poetry. The novel *De Niro's Game* is an electrifying narrative of life in a war-torn area and the hope of after-war meditation.

Several studies have been done related to the relationship between Ghana and Lebanon. Gyasi Stephen (2011), in his article '*The Lebanese Effect in Ghana*' mentioned that Ghanaians and Lebanese had relations as far back as hundred years before the two modern states of Ghana and Lebanon were formed. Citizens of both countries have over the years intermarried and there are chains of businesses in Ghana owned by Lebanese, some of whom are Ghanaians by birth. Sylvia Marfo (2012) stated that unlike other immigrants, most Lebanese who came to Ghana arrived in search of a home and currently, Lebanese investments form a significant part of Ghana's main industries and commercial centers.

By the twenty first century, companies owned by Lebanese immigrants in Ghana ranged from cosmetics and construction industries to media houses and one of the largest supermarket chains in Ghana. The Lebanese had also become important actors in retail trade in the country (Akyeampong, 2006). The Lebanese in Ghana are largely considered a wealthy group, made up of businessmen and manufacturers mostly concentrated in the urban centers like Accra and Kumasi and other big town centers like Ho and Cape Coast. They are generally well-educated people and are usually naturalized citizens, or were born in Ghana to the parents of naturalized status (OECD, 2018). The Mandela Sports Academy was established in 2012, by Mohammed Issa, a Ghanaian born Lebanese, and its multicultural structure shows the seemingly natural blend and relationship between Ghanaians and Lebanese (Dubinsky & Schler, 2016).

A lot of research has been done on many thematic areas between Ghana and Lebanon This thesis, a comparative study between books authored by a Ghanaian and a Lebanese seeks to study the theme of existentialism in a Sub-Saharan African book and a non- African Arabian book.

An Overview of Ghanaian and Lebanese Literatures in the Post-Colonial era

Ghana gained her independence on Wednesday, the 6th of March, 1957, a historic feat for the nation as it plunged the nation into a transition from what can be described as dark colonial times to a prospectively glorious post-colonial era. Unfortunately, the high expectations did not materialize as the newly independent Ghana saw very little changes. Rather, a new group of elite politicians and bureaucratic office holders rose to replace the colonial government but the living conditions of the ordinary Ghanaian never changed. (Ammeri and Ghebbi, 2017).

In the novel, *No Sweetness Here*, Aidoo vividly exposes the disappointment that arose due to the inability of the struggle and independence of the nation to in any way improve the lives of the ordinary citizen except that of senior government officials and politicians. In the same

manner, she, like many of the writers who came before her, like Armah and Awoonor, is concerned about the welfare of the society and also show how women in poorer areas of Ghana in the post-colonial era.

The Housemaid by Amma Darko is a Ghanaian novel which tells the intertwining stories of several women. It centers around Efi, a young housemaid working for Tika — a rich unmarried woman, and the plot she has schemed to steal her employer's wealth. After Efi pretends to have unknowingly fallen pregnant at the request of her relatives from a poor rural Ghanaian village, her mother and grandmother blame Tika for not looking after Efi and demand recompense. As tensions escalate, these women are tested to see how far they'll go to protect what's theirs, or what they believe should be theirs. This novel is a great portrayal of the sometimes-stark differences between urban and rural life in post-colonial Ghana. Amma Darko's portrayal of a young woman's apparent willingness to sacrifice her integrity to grasp onto city life is outstanding and unique. The novel portrays the socio-cultural setting after independence and the rural urban migration flow that was heavily influenced by lack of opportunities in the villages.

Harmattan Rain by Ayesha Harruna Attah narrates the lives of three generations of women in a Ghanaian family. As Ghana is gaining its independence, Lizzie-Achiaa is learning what it means to come of age as a woman whilst continuing her quest to find her missing lover. Some years later, in the aftermath of the successive coups, Lizzie's daughter Akua starts out her independent life as a new, single mother. Finally, Akua's child Sugri leaves an overprotective mother and goes to university in New York City where she must grow into her own self. Besides delving into Ghana's political history and Ghanaian society, Ayesha Harruna Attah deftly explores what it means to be free through the main characters' eyes. Her book, which

touches extensively on existentialism, looks at the social and political climate of Ghana after its independence. It gives examples on how people, especially women embraced themselves for change.

Definition of a Miracle by Farida Bedwei narrates the life of an eight-year-old girl named Zaara who has cerebral palsy. After moving away from a tiring life in the UK to Ghana with her parents, Zaara seems lost in the middle of a society that doesn't understand her condition. People attribute her cerebral palsy to a spiritual cause and so Zaara is taken to numerous healers to be cured. All the while, her multicultural family starts to crumble due to incessant fights. *Definition of a Miracle* is an own-voice, coming-of-age story with a charismatic main character. Faced with adapting to Ghanaian culture, trying to fit in as an outsider and dealing with family problems, Zaara nevertheless retains her charm and likability throughout the novel. The novel portrays a modern yet very traditional and mystical Ghanaian society even after independence. The construction of hospitals and clinics, by both the colonial governments and the successive post independent government did not help alter the traditional views of Ghanaians that they have held for hundreds of years on spiritual caused of diseases.

Syrine Hout in her book-length study *Post-War Anglophone Lebanese Fiction*, in which she battles that the after war age of Lebanese writing is particular as a kind, to the extent that both Anglophone and Francophone authors are concerned fundamentally with "the exposing of two legends: the re-visitation of a brilliant age of a romanticized Lebanon and the submissive impersonation of a probably prevalent Western way of life" (9). The heroes in this kind, Hout recommends, "neither romanticize their nation of source nor shed their past to grasp unquestioningly a Western method of living" (Hout, 2012).

Rashid al-Daif is one of Lebanon's generally unmistakable and productive essayists. Brought into the world in 1945, al-Daif is a writer, artist, and Professor of Modern Arabic Literature

(with a doctorate from France) at the Lebanese University in West Beirut. Eight of al-Daif's 13 works of fiction (12 books and one assortment of short stories), initially distributed in Arabic, have been converted into English or potentially French just as into different dialects. Distributed in 1999, al-Daif's *Azizi al-Sayyid Kawabata* (Dear Mr Kawabata) describes what has been considered as one of the emotional snapshots of contemporary post-war Lebanese writing. He is famous for innovatively narratively the repulsions of the war and the nuances of the human emergency while additionally admitting a thwarted expectation with direct political commitment and with the fantastic story of Marxism (Nikro, 2012).

Fatema Mernissi, one of the most punctual Lebanese female authors focuses on Islam's mentalities to ladies and the job ladies play inside the religion in her work. Her first work *Beyond the Veil* (1975) is an unmissable content in the field of woman's rights and Middle-Eastern investigations, investigating ideas of female sexuality inside the social, strict and memorable setting of Islam in Lebanon and the Middle East in general. A significant number of her works look at ladies' circles and actual spaces. *Doing Daily Battle* (1991), a meeting arrangement that were distributed, saw her meeting a scope of ladies from various financial foundations and ways of life to introduce a real, adjusted image of the real factors of womanhood in the Middle East. Her books and distributions fundamentally displayed the back-organizing of ladies in Lebanon in the Post-Colonial period and the battle of ladies to have a voice in the Islamic world.

Broadly recognized to be a pioneer in ladies' writing in the Middle-East, Layla Baalbaki was one of the primary scholars to give ladies a voice in Arab writing, zeroing in basically on female issues. Her 1958 novel *I Live* is a work a long ways relatively revolutionary, spinning around a youthful Lebanese lady as she endeavors to arrange her position on the planet; making progress toward political, social and monetary freedom. It sets the pace for young women to strive to live a better and independent life, other than the life of despair and suppression that

occurred on post-colonial Lebanon, where women were regarded a minority sect and were denied many benefits enjoyed by men.

2.2 Existentialism in African and The Middle Eastern Novels

Early African writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Nii Ayi Kwei Armah wrote a style of monothematic literature where their themes were mostly born out of the long-standing cultural conflicts and political tensions between Africa and the West. These are themes on institutional breakdown, political corruption, decay of African cultural values in the preference of western cultures, revolutions and rebellions and the adoption of the western materialism. Perhaps, Ayi Kwei Armah and Wole Soyinka's literary works had more closeness on the individual and the concept of existentialism (Steele, 1982).

Wole Soyinka for instance believes that a privilege of wisdom grants man the ability to define truth, and to outline existence for other people. Hence, whereas he does not request that man succumbs his essence to social forces and powers, he completely subscribes to a self-created authority deriving from wisdom. This therefore creates profound theory of egoism; one that approves truth by oneself and asserts that others should be ready to accept this self-created authority. Not even the deities or spirits are competent for worship in this long-running trial in self-invention and reformation. Hence, in amplification of this opinion, Soyinka contemptuously writes of the divine 'Without the knowing of divinity by man, can Deity survive' (Ugwuanyi, 2011).

Existentialism was first introduced into Swahili literature by the Tanzanian author, Euphrase Kezilahabi, who acknowledged to being motivated by Western existentialists, such as Camus and Beckett (Bernarder 1977: 49). Kezilahabi's second novel, *Kichwamaji*, was published in 1974. The title plays with the twin meaning of the word kichwamaji. On one hand, kichwamaji refers to hydrocephalus, a brain condition which leads to the overgrowth of the size of heads

in children and causes a series of neurological issues. If the ailment is not treated, about half of hydrocephalic children die. On the other hand, kichwamaji refers to a person who is not well adapted in his or her community. In the novel, Kezilahabi uses hydrocephalus as a medical condition but also as a symbol for the alienation of present-day East African intellectuals from their cultures and communities (Mwangi, 2007). In the novel, a letter shows how Kazimoto ultimately loses the essence of his own life - a characteristically existential situation. He has uncertainties about human purpose: he sees no distinction between man and beasts, even bugs. Next to the philosophical discussions between the characters of the novel, Kazimoto's observations about the world, and the question of guilt and remorse, the novel ends on an openly existentialist note in the question of the irrationality of life (Diegner, 2002). Kazimo commits suicide and he leaves a will that highlights the misery of his existence;

I killed myself. I do not want to produce another baby with a birth defect. In addition, I do not see any difference between me and insects or animals. Intelligence! Intelligence! What is intelligence? In my life I have never met anyone who believes that God exists. There are people who are afraid of death and falling into hell. I saw them many times. No one is to blame for my death. Before I die, I confess in front of the world that I killed my baby without a touch. (195)

Existential scenes will be found in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Readers will review the scene in the penultimate section of the novel when the gathering of the individuals of Umuofia is impolitely hindered by couriers from the area magistrate. The couriers are gone up against by Okonkwo, who has taken a situation at the edge of the social occasion. At this point in the novel we have just recognized the focal hero as a man of not many words and an unpredictable disposition:

“Okonkwo stood looking at the dead man. He knew Umuofia would not go to war. He knew because they had let the other messengers escape. They had broken into tumult instead of action. He discerned fright in the tumult. He heard voices asking: ‘Why did he do it?’ He wiped his matchet on the sand and went away”. (145).

Okonkwo’s final severance from his society lies in the peculiar contrast suggested in his knowing that the tribe will not go to war that based on their bewildered question: “Why did he do it?”. The author in this scene beautifully portrays alienation in existentialism, rendering the character lonely and rejected by his own kinsmen (Quayson, 2011).

With respect to existentialism in Arabic writing, Egyptian rationalist Abd al-Rahman Badawi (1944), in his paper, named al-Zaman al-Wujudi, deciphered as 'Existential Time', analyzed how time shapes singular presence. He contended that "genuine presence is that of the person". The individual is the subject that requires opportunity. The importance of this opportunity is the very presence of probability.

Idris Suhayil in 1953 distributed his semi-personal novel, al-Hayy al-Latini, interpreted as 'The Latin Quarter', in Beirut, Lebanon. In his self-depicted existentialist work, he manages the individualistic uneasiness and clashes of an Arab scholarly who is faltering among convention and innovation (Al – Mousa, 1993) 6. Melding Arab patriotism with advancement, Suhail Idris was famous for his advancement of French existentialist writing through his interpretation and distribution of works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. At that point, numerous Arab patriots learned people discovered existentialism to be a way of thinking that could fill in as a response to socialism. Like many other eastern students, he starts his journey to France with a fantasy about the west. Later, he falls in love with a French girl and even comes to love Paris. However, at the same time, he has an inner struggle. He cannot determine his right place: would he have a better life in the west with the French girl

or in the east with a traditional girl who adheres to the eastern culture? Finally, he prefers the east with its values and traditions (Nazemian & Hosseini, 2018).

Salama Musa, an Egyptian ideologue in 1961 published *al-Adab lil-shab* in 1961, a document that embraced Sartre's philosophies. He was frequently prosecuted because his writings were seen to be against the teachings of Islam as he wrote on the irrelevance of spiritual beings but rather stressed on individualism. In *al-Adab lil-shab*, Musa embraced atheistic existentialism, which belittled the role of God in the life of an individual. This was directly against the teachings of Islam and thus Musa was arrested many times by Egyptian authorities. (Di Capua, 2007).

Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, a prolific humanist, in his publications, rejected the individualism of existentialism by acknowledging the importance of God (Allah) in the welfare of man, but commended its protection of freedom. His rejection of individualism was clearly in line with his strong bond with Islam. Taking sides with religious existentialists, Abass noted that the freedom of man is important but should be bordered by godly principles. He also stressed that beyond Sartre, existentialism was a substantial and complex philosophical tradition (Di Capua, 2012).

This research review's purpose is to help the reader understand how the different aspects of existentialism has been presented in already published books, both African and Non-African Arabian. It also looks at relationship between Ghana and Lebanon, the countries of origin of the writers of the two authors in question. Lastly, it looks at previous analysis made by scholars on the two novels in question, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *De Niro's Game*. From the review, it can be seen that both African and Non-African writers portray a significant level of existentialism in their novels, although the socio-cultural and political structures of these two regions are very different.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This section of the work deals with the theories of existentialism set out by Soren Keirkegaard. The theories of existentialism shall be discussed under two broad topics; The Three Phases of Human Existence and the Five Points of Existentialism Discourses, these theories are being employed by the thesis in its research and analysis. Although many philosophers and scholars have written extensively on existentialism, this study will focus on the theories of Soren Kierkegaard because he is considered the pioneer and founder of existentialism, therefore, subsequent philosophers and scholars are likely to have worked on his concepts and provided further details or arguments.

The theoretical framework explains the path of a research and grounds it firmly in theoretical constructs. The general aim of the framework is to make research findings more meaningful, acceptable to the theoretical constructs in the research field and ensures generalizability. And makes sure that It assists in stimulating research while ensuring the extension of knowledge by providing both direction and impetus to the research inquiry. It also improves the empiricism and rigor of a research. Thus, it is no overemphasis for Imenda (2014) to say that the theoretical framework gives life to a research.

2.3.1 Human Existence

According to Soren Kierkegaard only the human beings has existence. Only human being really exists, he is different with other God's creatures like animals and plants. To exist therefore means to be aware of existing, know oneself and be able to make decisions on one's own predisposition.

Basically, human existence is based on factual, individual, personal and subjective actions. These human characteristics are unique with every individual and each man perceives and acts differently even in the same circumstance. (Panjaitan, 1996:6).

As referenced above, human existence is supposed to be true when the individual freely picks who and what he will turn into. Existentialism is connected much with human's freedom. Freedom is essential for every individual. As commonly known, Kierkegaard is the founding father of Existentialism, thus he is regarded as the father of existentialists. Kierkegaard says, on a basic level person is individual, and individual itself is indistinguishable with freedom. For this situation, "individual" is the keyword for human to state "yes" or "no" to accomplish something. Each human – every person will make "his world" in view of his free decision totally. It is regardless of an authoritarian family strategy, the oppressive political framework or from the socially abnormal culture regulation, however human life itself depends on one center, that is self-existence. This is the genuine existentialism of human who can decline to acknowledge the choice passed on by authority. (Honneth 1994)

Kierkegaard says, in principle human being is individual, and individual itself is identical with freedom. Thus, an individual is not complete without the freedom to do and not to do. An individual should have the free will to choose between 'yes' and 'no', and also be able to decide what he wants to become. Therefore, human existence is largely centered around self-existence; where man chooses freely without fear or favor. This is the true nature of a truly existential individual. (Crowell, 2014)

Essentially, as referenced in many parts (areas) of this thesis, Existentialism which was spearheaded by Kierkegaard is showed up as a response of Georg Wilhelm Hegel. Thus, in view of this reality Hegel disregarded the situation of every person, besides human is not assumed as a free individual any longer.

As per Kierkegaard, the Hegel's way of thinking above is only an abstract idea from the truth. There is no concrete exposition about the free human existence, only abstract ideas exist. That is the reason, in his works he wrote;

“Each age has its characteristic depravity. Ours is perhaps not pleasure or indulgence or sensuality, but rather a dissolute pantheistic contempt for individual” (Soren Kierkegaard).

As a reaction of human disparagement that has been done by Hegel, Kierkegaard then clarified human existence. Hence, every human being has his own unique personality and not a manifestation of the absolute mind only. Thus, a human is not only what he thinks he is but also has an influence from a superior power. In the view point of Kierkegaard, Hegel ignored human existence in all. Then, Kierkegaard says that every individual is said to be exist.

“So then, a human being and surely a living human being is an existing individual...But if he is a human being, then he is also an existing individual”._(Patrick L. Gardiner,1983)

In spite of the fact that they are inconsistent to one another, Kierkegaard admitted Hegel as a huge intellectual. Incidentally, an individual may settle on decision not in a rational manner, but rather additionally dependent on free emotions. Indeed, in our everyday lives, human conduct is not just founded on the good judgment, yet it tends a lot to the irrational way as well. As such, in doing actions human is not a pure rational creature, however human likewise dependent on emotional thought. (Davenport 2012)

Kierkegaard (as indicated by Zainal Abidin, 2003:130) additionally states, in this world each person is assuming a significant job and each accept a part as an actor. Subsequently, to turn into an actor on this phase of world, each person must be included and focused on their free choices. Identified with the above assertion, Kierkegaard suggests that each individual fundamentally ought to have an effective pledge in each occasion that occurred. So that, in this

circumstance he cannot turn into an uninvolved eyewitness, rather that he should be a functioning actor in every situation.

2.3.2 Kierkegaard's Three Phases of Human Existence

The Existentialism idea appeared at the start of nineteenth century. In reality, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was the first philosopher considering that he expounded on Existentialism, so he is notable as an establishing father of Existentialism. Since his time, existential approaches to deal with theories about existence have developed incredibly in impact and furthermore showed up in many forms affected by various scholars and masterminds. By and large, a few authors who lived before Kierkegaard are viewed as having been worried about a similar topic. All these prior and later writer's works have impacted the advanced world – and maybe by beyond what we can know. After the Second World War there was an increase in zeal among scholars and the intellectuals for insightful thoughts related with existential ways to deal with life. (Azhar, 2013)

As a thinker and scholar, Soren Kierkegaard, has numerous works that affected numerous different philosophers, for example, Martin Heidegger, Sartre, and even the 20th century scholar, Karl Barth, just as Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Here are a portion of Kierkegaard's sensational works; *The Concept of Irony with Constant Reference to Socrates* (1841), *Either/Or* (1843), *Fear and Trembling* (1842), *The Concept of Dread* (1844), *Stages on Life's Way* (1844), *Philosophical Fragments* (1844), *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments* (1846), and *various Edifying Discourses*.

Soren Kierkegaard was a religious man. Actually, Kierkegaard's philosophy appeared as a reaction of Hegel's opinions that perceives man as passive creature, passive observer. As a religious man Kierkegaard believes that God has predestined the life of man, so man is just a role player in God's creation. Kierkegaard strongly disagrees with Hegel's philosophy. Hegel

believed in rationality, which is the opposite of existentialism. Kierkegaard divides Human Existence into three phases, they are; aesthetic phase, ethic phase and religious phase (McDonald, 1996). Although there are three phases of human existence, this review shall only deeply analyze the aesthetic and ethic phases because they will be used in the analysis

2.3.3 The Aesthetic Phase

Zainal Abidin (2003:134) states that, the aesthetic stage is the stage that human's direction of life is set out toward getting joy completely. At this stage, human consistently overwhelmed or constrained by his sexual nature, indulgence, and it is likewise set apart by temperament. Besides, the aesthetic man ordinarily lives for himself, satisfaction, and live for his personal circumstance. Other than that, stylish man is a man that lives with no spirit, no future, and lives with no substance. In this world he will in general be a follower, and in his life, he relies much upon public pattern that presently created. Despite the fact that, those practices are not founded on any passion, aside from just precisely to know and attempt. The aesthetic man can be identified with a person to the extent that the individual has no interest, responsibility, and no enthusiasm of life.

The aesthetic man just has a function as film goer of life. In addition, he just has a part as a passive observer and acts without before force to do so. For this situation, Kierkegaard takes Don Juan, a mainstream Spanish fiction persona known for his profligate nature, to act as an illustration of human stylish, because of the_way that Don Juan has no responsibility and enthusiasm in his life. Besides, he has no affection and ability to tie an agreement of marriage with any young lady as he believes that, adoration and marriage are boundaries for his freedom, so it very well may be shortened his happiness (Zainal Abidin, 2003:135). In his book *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard says:

“Don Juan is an image which constantly appears, but does not gain form and substance, an individual who is constantly being formed, but is never finished of whose life history one can form no more definite impression than one can by listening to the tumult of the waves” (Soren A. Kierkegaard, 1971:91).

The above illustration is portraying the aesthetic existence with a questionable condition. On the other word, the aesthetic man has not balanced out yet. As referenced previously, in this stage the individual consistently thinks about the significance of life's delight and seeks after joy with limitless things, as though it can leave him glad. But indeed, in reality, he feels spiritual emptiness and his life is constantly troubled (Ostina Panjaitan, 1996:33).

The true way of aesthetic presence is set apart by disesteem of good standards. There is a readiness just to appreciate the whole encounters of passionate and sexual cravings. Thusly, he generally opened with them and he much will in general loathe all of limitedness that constrained him to pick. In any case, he will show up to the knowledge, that everything has its breaking point. At last, he should decide and pick, regardless of whether he stays hopelessly or move to the higher period_of life through the free activity of decision and self-duty where he can appreciate freedom. (Bell 1989: 45)

The free decisions will top the freedom up, and it is only precisely on record as a mean of being. That is the reason, Kierkegaard accentuated that individual needs to pick, regardless of whether he needs to live stylishly or he needs to live morally, or across it (the moral circle) into the religious (Soren A. Kierkegaard, 1974:8). “...every aesthetic view of life is despair, and that everyone who lives aesthetically is in despair, whether he knows it or not. But when one knows it...a higher form of existence is an imperative requirement” (Soren A. Kierkegaard, 1974:197).

If a man lives with gratification and has no energy, enthusiasm or eagerness, so then what really occurred in their spirit? Misery! Then again, the aesthetic man has no guide and direction in this existence. Aesthetic man doesn't have a clue what his objective in his life is, expected to, as clarify over, his life relies much upon the public pattern that right now create in the general public. As Kierkegaard says, the aesthetic man is a man can't decide his decision of life, on the grounds that there are endless choices of life that proposals in the general public. For this situation, when he can't choose his decision, there are just two prospects, those are; kill his self and the second is proceed onward to the higher period of life, that is ethic stage. (Evans, 2009)

In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Born*, Kofi Billy, a minor character, commits suicide because he is unable to decide the best alternative after he is unable to deal with his own life. In *De Niro's Game*, Bassam, fed up with life and struggle in war torn Beirut decides not to continue in a life of endless tragedy but to move to Rome, a city of peace and stability.

2.3.4 The Ethic Phase

Here, it is like man repented from the aesthetic stage, that the ethic man will accept virtues as a guide of life, and afterward pick it as lifestyle. Though, hedonism will be avoided and he acknowledges virtues, humanism esteems, and appreciate them completely. In this stage, there is affection of life dependent on humanism esteems that he picked freely. In the relationship or marriage, he feels that marriage itself is the initial step to transform from the aesthetic stage to the ethic stage. (Khan, 2007)

“Therefore, only when one regards life ethically does it acquire beauty, truth, significance, firm consistence; only when a man lives ethically does his life acquire beauty, truth, significance, security; and only in the ethical life view are the auto pathetic doubt and the sympathetic doubt set at rest” (Soren A. Kierkegaard, 1974:276).

Besides, the ethic man doesn't just live for his self, yet additionally for humanism values. The ethic man's spirit has been shaped, with the goal that his own life doesn't rely upon the public pattern any longer. The fundamental of his character will be framed solid and genuine. In addition, the essential of his life depends on his own spirit, and his compass' life is a general humanism esteem. So at that point, quickly and certainly, he says "no" to each open pattern that created in the general public. (Gates, 1960)

Kierkegaard (in Abidin, 2003:136) accepts Socrates as the case of an ethic man. Socrates was engrossed with his own self and musings to the degree he was condemned to death for defending his convictions for the magnificent humanism esteems. He was the individual who rejected on control power system that disagree with the widespread humanism values.

In any case, the truth of the matter is, Socrates didn't show up at the ethic stage. So at that point, felt remorseful due to his limitedness, moreover he failed to satisfy his humanism summons effectively. He didn't arrive at the higher stage, that is the religious stage, where God is the most significant for everybody, and disappointment is same with transgression. For this condition, the ethic man will perceive both his weakness and sin as a human being. At long last, he needs to pick one, regardless of whether still in ethic stage or decline it, and move to higher stage that is the religious stage. Thusly, godly man will fit in this stage without necessarily believing in God (Huybers, 1985:52). Thus, Kierkegaard feels that the ethic stage is just as a temporary stage to the religious stage.

In the novel *De Niro;s Game*, Bassam at a point is fed up with life as a thug in war-torn Beirut and is poised to start a new life, an indication of his move to transition to a better life, devoid of crime and thuggery. In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, the character Teacher is said to have at a point given up on the things of this world and moved to a world of seclusion. He decides to move on to a higher phase that is incorruptible.

2.4 Five Points of Existentialism Discourses

Gordon E. Bigelow, a lecturer of philosophy, in his book *A Primer of Existentialism* defines the straightforward assertion of essential attributes of Existentialism. Through this book he says that it is a risky activity to be done, due to the fact there are a few sorts of Existentialism and distinctive meaning of it, however he judges that there is an area of agreement to it.

Besides, in that book he groups existentialists into two classifications, they are; religious existentialists and atheistic existentialists. The ungodly existentialists reject God, since they accept that the general thought of God presents danger to freedom, self-rule of the person and integrity of mankind. The godly existentialists firmly accepted that there is no human life without God's presence. (Allsid, ed. 1964:203). The overall discourse of Existentialism applied in differing degree to specific existentialists are clarified beneath;

2.4.1 Existence Precedes Essence

All that exists on the planet has Essence. We can say something like seat, stone, bloom, and trees. As these things have an Essence, it tends to be characterized as the quality, which is controlled by all that exists in this world. In any case, it is just the individual who has existence. Unique in relation to Essence, existence gives more accentuation on its flawlessness of its state of being alive. Hence, it very well may be said that existence is a higher priority than essence and must be before_the essence. Sartre's renowned meaning of existence expresses that existence implies that the individual starts as nothing and simply after wards becomes something and structure their Essence through their picked arrangements of activity (Eliade, ed. 1987:222).

Kierkegaard expresses that the most significant for an individual is his being. However, his existence is consistently in the process to be something, as individual consistently moves from probability into the real world. This cycle is conceivable on the grounds because he has his

own freedom. Consequently, human life exists in human freedom, and this freedom exists in human activity. He additionally says that having an existence implies having guts to decide his own life (Dagun, 1990:50).

A man is said to live in the event if he exists amidst emergency. Hence, man's self-presence is perceived from his specific experience that separates him from others. Existentialism gets its name from an individual man's existence, his specific experience of life (Allsid, ed. 1964:204).

The existence of a man can be seen from different sides. From an external perspective, a man seems, by all accounts, to be simply one more common animal and from inside, he is a whole universe, the focal point of mystery, along these lines, Existentialism stresses on the subjective or personal, as opposed to objective or impersonal. Man is supposed to be equivalent, yet existentially run his own kingdom, which separates him from another person. (Glattfelder, 2019)

Human life is reasonable just regarding a person's being and his specific experience of life. Consequently, to comprehend the existence of man, we cannot simply like him from his actual appearance or his outside. It should be acknowledged from his conduct, his disposition toward society, and above all else, his experience of life or his inside. It can along these lines be said that a man lives or has existence, as opposed to man has Essence, and each man's insight of life is interesting, profoundly unique in relation to every other person, and can be seen distinctly as far as his contribution throughout everyday life. To put it plainly, it is a man who chooses and decides his existence himself through his experience that he has in life. (Stallknecht, 1955)

2.4.2 Alienation or Estrangement

At some point, an individual loses his own Existence and feel Alienation or Estrangement. It is expected to differ depending of issues that he faces in his day to day existence. There was a partition between physical or non-rational and rational parts of human. Individuals begin to

love and give need on the logical part, the brain. man is supposed to be amazing when he gets and utilizes his rational part well. Rationalist even says "Cogito Ergo Sum," I think, hence I exist. Everything makes individuals attempt to utilize their objective part well and create it to get some advancement throughout everyday life. The effect is that there is improvement in individuals' life, a decent and present-day innovation, and some advancement in industry. (Abidin, 2003)

This condition notwithstanding, additionally offers danger to human existence. Individuals will in general get themselves together with a specific gathering just to have recognition and be evaluated by others. Managing this, Kierkegaard expresses that: " A crowd in its very concept is the untruth by reason of the fact that it renders the individual completely impenitent and irresponsible or at least weakens his sense of responsibility by reducing to it a fraction " (Hasan, 1973:27).

An individual normally loses his own Existence and feel Alienation or Estrangement. Existentialists said that in confronting the issue of life, human in some cases attempts to estrange from fourfold conditions; " they are convinced that modern man lives in fourfold condition of alienation: from God, from nature, from other man and from his own true self " (Alssid, ed. 1964:206).

The Alienation from God may happen when individual feels that life is hard and terrible, that his destiny that has given by God is uncalled for. He feels that God who should be an assistant for him just gives terrible weight. Person will estrange himself from God when he finds that there is no solace in having faith in God as he had been viewed as out of line or he feels that he had just been so distant from him as a result of his everything incorrectly doing. This Alienation from God is simply the most stunning impact since, in such a case that a man has announced it, he will have no confidence in Him (Dagun, 1990)

The subsequent Alienation or Estrangement is from nature. To endure, person consistently needs to relate himself to the nature. The immediate, regular, important connection of human is the connection of man to woman (Kruks, 1992).

However, how incredible the advancement is in his push to vanquish the nature, he is constantly attached to it and cannot avert himself from commitment brought about by it. For instance, in vanquishing the nature, he makes the human advancement as the type of his work to liberate himself from the nature's demand. Consequently, man at that point must be clung to his creation of civilization. Nicholas Berdyaev, a Russian Philosopher, is one of the existentialists who puts accentuation on individual Freedom, expresses that; " civilization promises to emancipate man and there can be no dispute that it provides the equipment for emancipation, but it is also the objectification of human existence and therefore it brings enslavement with it. Man is made the slave of civilization " (Hasan, 1973:63).

The Alienation or Estrangement from other man comes as the third kind of Alienation that happens to present day man. Individual is constantly called a social human being, as he in every case needs other men, and even cannot live without them. In living with other men, he gets chances to understand his self-Existence. However, there are consistently social guideline, qualities, and standards that must be complied with in living with other man. Every one of them is proved to give more danger to his Existence than advantage. At the point when person feels that all the guidelines and social norms overpowered him, he will in general distance himself from other man. (Dagun, 1990)

The third Estrangement happened at the social level and its sign is developing consternation at man's helplessness. Gordon Bigelow gives a model in this alienation and says that the most upsetting of everything is the youngster's seclusion, which encompasses him and stop any other individual to feel compassion with him (Alssid, ed. 1973:207).

The fourth sort of Alienation, man's Estrangement from his own actual self, particularly his tendency, consistently worries with the holiness of the individual human's spirit. It is just as his pre-occupation with sin and the dark side of human instinct, which must be found in part of his endeavor to work back some completion to the smoothed picture of man, granted to him by the illumination. (Bigelow, 1961)

In the *Beautiful Ones Are Not Born Yet*, the central character, the man, and his friend the teacher displayed some forms of alienation, as the teacher, especially, excluded himself from the norms of society and stuck to the path he deemed righteous. In *De Niro's Game*, both characters were alienated as the civil war in Beirut tore them apart from their families and the only world they knew.

2.4.3 Fear and Trembling /Anxiety

As it is said previously, existentialism shows up as the effect of the World War I. It comes as the analysis toward disorganized life brought about by the war and the social structure, which existed around then. It is additionally caused by the disappointment of the illumination views that bragged the supremacy of human logic, blended in with the incredible depression and the World War II. (Baert,2015)

Sartre says that the main standard of existentialism is that man is nothing else except for what he thinks about and chooses for himself Thusly, it is he who is liable for himself. Whatever his existence will be and whatever his existence offers importance to his life, it is just he who will face the result and duty. (Hasan, 1973:93)

A few existentialists like Kierkegaard, have laid extraordinary weight on the anxiety as an essential feeling which enlightens the human condition. On account of Kierkegaard and different religious existentialists, the experience of uneasiness may lead towards the life of faith by arousing the requirement for salvation. However, among atheistic existentialists, anxiety

focuses rather to lose_heart. In this fourth characteristic, Bigelow says that man is constantly mistreated by anxiety_(Alssid, 1964:208).

The tension is brought about by man's interest to settle on good decision. Therefore, he should be responsible for the ethical result he had made. It doesn't just impact him, yet additionally the general public. The duty of good decision regularly achieves such moral anxiety inside man's life. (Hasan, 1973:93).

In *De Niro's Game*, George is seen to exhibit traits of fear and anxiety. Martha Kuraninthy stated that the misdeeds and violence in the character George was a masculine way of dealing with his fear and anxieties; this, he vetted his insecurities on weakling and people he considered enemies. In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Born*, the Teacher is depicted as a person with fear and anxiety. His anxiety causes him to escape the world of corruption for the fear of being corrupted himself. This fear causes him so cut off all social ties and live a life of solitude.

2.4.4 The Encounter with Nothingness

For the man that distanced from God, from nature, from society, and even from himself, at that point what left finally is nothingness. The presence of human can't be isolated from the parts of life all in all. Accordingly, man can't estrange himself from different parts of life, for example, from the presence of God, other man, nature, and himself. At the point when an individual attempts to distance himself from the general public, he will acknowledge nothing from it. His life will be unfilled, and finally, he can't take any benefits from it. (Glattfelder, (2019

It is a result of the total alienation or Estrangement that human begins to feel extraordinary emptiness and nothingness. The modern man feels no greater predominance in having all this progress in his innovation. Despite that, he feels he marches towards the valley of nothingness. He can't locate his self-existence any longer in this world and he feels that what he had done is

futile and insignificant. In this nothingness, he has no sentiments, no dread, and feels no anxiety any longer, also there is no goal. The feeling of nothingness is the sensation of gloom and black looks (Alssid, 1964:210).

At the point when an individual is faced with the actuality that the best approach to take care of his concern cannot be found any longer on earth, he would choose to meet his demise. Nothingness will carry him to feel that he has been living to no end, that he has no motivation to live. It is out of the question for him to return or to stop, imagining that there was nothing before him and all he got is misery and real death. To evade himself from this troublesome circumstance, he needs to get the Freedom. (Hong 1993)

In the *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Manaan, after series of disappointments is made to accept that nothing good can happen to her and is drifted into nothingness, with her only consolation and hope pitched in the smoking of marijuana.

2.4.5 Freedom

Freedom is fundamental for person. Human life is supposed to be genuine when the individual picks plainly who and what he will become in his own life. Regrettably, the individual is restricted and set at a given spot, and in this way subject to all the imperatives and impacts which exist by then. Hence, his Freedom is constantly intimidated, it made him lives in pressure among finitude and Freedom. Despite the fact that, human consistently experiences tension in his push to arrive at his Freedom, he finds that he is not anything, he has no self-presence without his Freedom. Therefore, the Freedom is the incomparable value among the existentialists. (Norris, 2018)

In both novels, the main characters are seen to exhibit some levels of Freedom in their daily choices, although none was able to exhibit total Freedom. Most of their decisions were influenced by their society. In the *Beautiful ones Are Not Yet Born*, the Teacher, a character

that exhibited a very high level of Freedom, as his decision to self-alienate was because he felt the path of the masses were wrong. In *De Niro's Game*, both Bassam and George portrayed a high level of Freedom as they both chose different paths irrespective of the choices the other friend made.

The theoretical framework will be used to deeply analyze the two selected novels in respect to the objectives of the study. The theoretical framework will be used to determine how the authors of the two selected novels exhibited existential thought in their writing. In the analysis, several existentialism theories will be used and discussed but a large chunk of the analysis will be based on the thoughts of Soren Kierkegaard because he is the founding father of Existential Philosophies and most modern thoughts have roots from his philosophies.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

The authors of the novels *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *De Niro's Game*, Ayi Kwei Armah and Rawe Hage, portrayed existentialism in their writing and this reflected in the lives and actions of the main characters in their respective novels. This section analysis how both authors portray the theme of alienation in their novels and how their characterizations affect freedom of choice in their respective novels, and how these are presented in the two novels.

3.2 Alienation in the main Characters of *The Beautiful Ones Are not Yet Born*

This section of the thesis looks at how Ayi Kwei Armah portrays alienation, a key concept of existentialism, in the lives of the characters of his maiden novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. In the existentialist view, man is essentially alienated, in addition he has no basic purpose or Essence. The phrase which sums up this notion is Kierkegaard's "Existence precedes Essence" This philosophy questions the very existence of man, who can be one of two things: he can be an aimless bored wanderer or an active dynamic creator_of his own reasons for living. The concept, however, of alienation is capable of other interpretations. For religious existentialists, alienation is the result of original sin, that pristine act of disobedience which caused us to be separated from God. There is also an atheist view of alienation. It occurs when men are moved by capitalism from the fruits of their labour: when that labour is produced for the benefit of other people. In such a situation, men feel a loss of self-Essence; ultimately, they do not feel that they themselves are worth anything. (Sartre, 1977)

The Beautiful ones Are Not Yet Born the maiden and probably the best-known book of Ayi Kwei Armah. Like many post-colonial African writers, it stresses on the survival of characters in newly-birthed countries struggling for development amidst corruption and greed of its acts.

Armah's work deeply display alienation, a key subject under existentialism according to Soren Kierkegaard in his book *Either/Or*.

Sarah Jalini (2020) in the article "Neocolonialism and the resistant subject in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*" The alienation by the Man was not because society rejected him or disliked him, rather he self-isolated himself so as not indulge in evils that were commonly seen as normal. This assertion is true only to some extent because although it is true that the man chose to be mostly alone or with his other alienated friend, Teacher, it can also be realized that the condemning words of his family and colleagues further drove him into alienation.

The man's friend and only actual friend throughout the novel is the Teacher. He is a proper definition of self-alienation as he intentionally cut himself completely from the hustle and bustle of the average Ghanaian at the time. The Teacher clearly is another of Armah's characters who cannot come to terms with his existence. He has lost touch with almost everybody, thus being an alienated figure, his old friends who are now in power, his loved ones, all other human beings except the man. When the latter asked his friend, what has turned him into a human being hiding from other human beings, he replied "The things people want, I do not give. And no one wants what I happen to have. Its only words, after all (79)".

This statement from the teacher makes sense in the light of Teacher's application of the myth of Plato's cave to conditions of society where people prefer their reassuring words to the truth, he has to tell them. By hiding inside the castle of his skin, the naked man has not acted true to himself, but his excuse that there is no acceptable option available to him suggests that he does not consider himself fully responsible for his choice, and this effect, as Sartre explained in his work *Being and Nothingness (1940)*, considers this an act in bad faith. Existentialists hold on to the fact that humanity's main distinction from other creatures is the Freedom to make

choices, and these are the choices each human makes that creates his or her nature or personality. In this regard, Teacher's failure to actually choose portrays a failure to confront his existence as seen by the fact that he cannot live with the choice he has made (Atawube Yitah, 2001).

Throughout the story, Ayi Kwei Armah shows how the Teacher chooses to completely withdraw from society because it disgusts him so much, and he does this so thoroughly that he leaves no reminder of his attachment to the society. For instance, he abandons his clothes and loses interest in even music. An exhibition of self-alienation and complete cutting off from surrounding; what Soren Keirkegaard describes as an encounter with nothingness. Teacher, in this situation wants to do nothing with his society and hence cut off everything he considers material or will corrupt him. (Atawube Yitah, 2001).

It can be noticed that at the existential level, the teacher is an example of an individual in the novel who suffered a reductive effect that led to making a choice that represses part of him (Ahzar, 2013). In his interpretation of Sartre's views of this matter, Stuart Hampshire (1983), in *Morality and Conflict*, suggests a person hesitates between two very contrasting ways of life and sets of virtues, and he has to make a very definite and final determination between them. The determination is negation when there is a decision, a person chooses an option and lead to denying oneself the other options and normally the individual will feel that the choice has killed or repressed, some part of him.

Fratz Fanon (1967), in his *Black Skin, White Masks* states that "that the effective disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities" Thus, it is until the black man has no desire of economic dependence on family and society that he can be self-alienated. Thus, as far as Teacher has no interests and even disapproves of the corruption and evils of that time, he is in fact the best example of a self-alienated individual in the novel,

unlike the Man, who still had family ties and was under constant pressure to follow the norms of society. Teacher's choice does not repress, if not kills, a part of him for as he confides to the man, he says; "I am free to do what I want but there is nothing happening now that I want to join" (61). He makes a choice because he has to, although to him neither option – alienation or integration- can pass for a true choice. His recognition of the need and the option to make a choice between contrasting situations depicts Sartre's idea that human existence is only genuine when he has the Freedom to choose. Forced to confront "ugly things that are" he has completely lost hope in "the greatly beautiful things that could be" (79).

The teacher can be seen as not only a friend and mentor to the man but also a demonstrator of the flip side of the Man's existential situation, and therefore a concretization of a part of his conscience. Thus, while the man is of full admiration for the Teacher, for what he considers to be the naked man's exercise of Freedom but the latter confesses to the contrary.

Robert Fraser (1980) noted that in his work 'The Novels of Ayi Kwei Armah' that Ayi Kwei Armah in his novel was very blunt about the happenings in the country just after independence. The writer's inclusion of drug addicts and drunkards, which were usually frustrated young men and women showed the extent of decay and moral canker in the country. In the latter part of the novel when Manaana, another key character in the novel, introduces the narrator and Kofi Billy to marijuana, it takes them years beyond their old selves and made them see so many miles beyond all those points. Wee according to Manaana, brings its smokers face to face with the stark truth of their existence, and for Manaana, the truth is that, she, "one of the most beautiful women" (72) has been let down by her men "who have been content to do nothing and to be nothing at all, all their lives and through all ages of their suffering" (73). In the novel, Maanan's escape to insanity seems to confirm the argument by the existentialist that the most important questions in life are not accessible to reason. And therefore, no objective, rational basis can be found for making decisions. (Sartre, 1977)

Naturally, then, it would be expected that such disappointment would make her lose faith in the possibility of attaining happiness from her men but she goes on “trying after happiness again, in those ways that were to destroy her so utterly in the end” (75). What is important is that Maanan searches for her false happiness the only way she has always done, that is, with wealthy, especially expatriates, although she is aware that there is no happiness in the present or in the future. (Atawube Yitah, 2001).

Maybe, like the man, Maanan exists the only way she knows how to, not daring into the unknown, but it is also possible that she chooses that option because, in the case of the Teacher, there is nothing else worthy of her attention, or her action could be due to both reasons. The uncertainty surrounds the reasons for Maanan’s action is part of the novel’s ambiguity in expressing existentialism in its characters (Armah, 1968)

If the use of marijuana opens Maanan’s eyes to the truth of her life, in Kofi Billy’s case, this effect has dramatic consequences as he chooses suicide as a mean for his withdrawal forever from the society that has not only been alien to him but also “impossible to hold” (78). This is the point at which finds himself before his suicide. Ironically, while in Sartre’s *Nausea*, Roquentin’s encounter with his own nothingness leads him to make great progress in life, thus by channeling his life experiences as a means to justify his existence. However, in *the Beautiful Ones*, Billy’s encounter with his existence leads him to commit suicide, a permanent withdrawal from his society and this also wipes away his existence. As Soren_stressed, the encounter with nothingness is a feeling of despair and desperation which occurs when an individual is alienated from society and even God. However, different individuals make different choices in withdrawal as to the next step when they encounter nothingness.

As events in the *Beautiful Ones* unfold, individual action takes form of withdrawal of several kinds; the external exile of Koomson, the madness or mental withdrawal of Maanan, and the

spiritual yoga of Rama Krishna. The Man is always seen to be engaged in social or moral withdrawal as he chooses to be exempted from the seemingly normal corrupt or decayed way of life of the people of Ghana at that time. The Teacher is seen to however have a more withdrawn life as he has shunned family and social life, which the man is still tied to. The fact that every instance of withdrawal in the novel constitutes an existential action is not only indicative of its underlying contradiction, but also of its paradoxes. (Armah, 1968)

A detailed look at the different types of withdrawal shows more inconsistencies in the various kinds of withdrawal from society by the characters. Teacher on the extreme hand was totally withdrawn from society and reduced contacts with other people, while the Man on the other hand was just withdrawn from activities and acts he considered evil but mingled and associated himself with others. Out in the late-night darkness, while trying to shake off thoughts about his wife comparing him to the chichidodo, the Man remembers his longtime friend Rama Krishna, a Ghanaian who “had taken that far off name in the reincarnation of his soul after long and tortured flight from everything close and everything known since all around him showed the horrible threat of decay” (48). Thus, in the flight from the corruption around him, “he plunged with all his body into the yoga others take to be a mere aid to this life” (48). Rama lived on exercises and ate only honey and vinegar and relied on reading the Holy scriptures. He even “saved his semen to rejuvenate his brain by standing on his head a certain number of minutes every night and dawn” (48). However, his illusions of immortality and escape from decay only lasts for a short while, and he dies very young.

In conclusion, it can be seen in the analysis above that the writer of the novel, Ayi Kwei Armah portrayed alienation quite remarkably in his characters, notable amongst them The Man, the Teacher, Rama Krishna Kofi Billy and Manaana. These characters at certain points of their lives withdrew partially or completely from society or a part of it. This was largely due to the fact that they believed that society was either on the wrong part or was not fair to them. As Soren

Kierkegaard put forward, an alienated individual is one that is able to stay away from certain norms and duties of society. The characters of this novel exhibited unique characteristics in absurd times and acted differently from how society expected them to act or was the normal response to such situations.

Alienation in the main Characters of *De Niro's Game*

Rawe Hage in his first novel, *De Niro's Game* made a name for himself as an existential writer. Amongst the many sub-themes of existentialism, he expressed in his novel the theme of alienation. The novel talks about two friends, Bassam and George, caught in the middle of a civil war in Beirut, Lebanon. In a critical analysis of the novel, it can be seen that Bassam and his friend, George, pass through a series of situations and circumstances that evidently puts them in conflicting situations. This section of the thesis looks at how Rawe Hage expresses alienation in the lives and actions of the main characters, Bassam and George as they are faced with decision making moments in the face of rising conflicts in their society. The novel portrays Bassam as a fatherless young man who is very reserved and liked to keep to himself but was very aggressive when provoked. Together with his friend George, they find unique identities for themselves in the chaos of the civil war in Beirut. As both encounter a hard life during the war, it becomes obvious that Bassam struggles to find his place in the midst of the chaos whilst George is determined to rise through the ranks of a powerful militia. In the middle of the war, the two friends take on different paths towards their preferred existence and become alienated at some points in the novel.

Accordingly, Hage's novel portray individuals who have been alienated and exiled both within and without the boundaries of their homeland. Their victimization and alienation are due to exile from their families and societies or displacement due to the civil war, as well as the

castrating conditions of poverty and social injustice. They become wandering gangs, who go from place to place, alone and in search of genuine social ties.

In *De Niro's Game*, the writer focuses on the individual pursuit for justice and he portrays this in the manner by which his characters challenge the opposing forces that destroy their homes, yet they refuse to be victimized, to capitulate or compromise their principles. They retain their voices and assert their individuality (Abdel Nasser, 2016). They feel alienated and separated from the rest of society. They rather felt safe in gangs and tried to build self-confidence by adopting gangster lifestyle. Although they belonged to gangs that could be seen as family, inside they missed their real family and sometimes felt lonely. In the novel they are described as:

“War is for thugs. Motorcycles are also for thugs, and for longhaired teenagers like us, with guns under our bellies, and stolen gas in our tanks, and no particular place to go We were aimless, beggars and thieves, horny Arabs with curly hair and open shirts and Marlboro packs rolled in our sleeves, dropouts, ruthless nihilists with guns, bad breath, and long American jeans. (p. 17)

Abdel Nasser (2016) in his article *Shape-Shifting as a Quest for Liberation* wrote that the alternative identity of characters in *De Niro's Game* can be seen in the careless ways by which they take chances with their life. Russian roulette, a game often played by Lebanese youth in the novel symbolizes war-decreed choices and resolutions. As alienated as they were, they felt their life was theirs and they took unwarranted risks, even with their lives.

" We all agreed to participate. It was our choice, we each spun our gun barrels, and we each had four chances out of five. We all acted out of our convictions, and out of passion"(232-3).

Bassam in the middle of the novel finds himself tangled in a plot where the leader of the militia, Colonel Gemayel is assassinated and every one blames Bassam's socialist uncle Naeem, who

had used Bassam to deliver a map to the detonators. Bassam turns from a friend to be a fugitive overnight and traveling outside Lebanon appears to be his only chance to safety. At this point, Bassam is an alienated individual as he is wanted by the same people he used to find safety and shelter around. Kierkegaard describes an alienated individual is one who has lost his existence and feel that life is unfair; that even God is unfair. Bassam thus is forced into alienation and goes on the run to avoid being killed (Hage, 51).

Rawe Hage in his novel also portrays self-alienation, a distinct form of alienation, a key concept in existentialism according to Heideggerian, a German philosopher and existentialist, which is a feeling of strangeness or abnormality in one owns environment. This feeling can also be interpreted as an 'I don't feel at home' way of sensation and can be seen in the lack of communication for Bassam which can be associated with a breakdown of several social structures that would have otherwise been a support system for him; as during the war, Bassam lost or got separated from family, relatives and friends. According to Hunt, Coleman and Burnell, in their publication 'Developing A Model of Narrative Analysis to Investigate the Role of Social Support in Coping with Traumatic War Memories', friendship, family and the stable community give unwarranted support for individual communication and thus prevents alienation. Hence, lack of communication due to societal breakdown or lack of coherence is seen in *De Niro's Game* in several instances. (Burnell, Hunt and Coleman 2009).

According to Nasir Abass Nayyar (2016), the existential side of fear of war is flooded with fighting against the very circumstances of dropping our being to dust or flinging into the depth of madness. Thus, fear of war can actually cripple individuals into lesser versions of themselves.

Kierkegaard in his *Five Points of Existential Discourse* mentioned that fear oppresses the individual and how the individual handles this fear or anxiety is a question of morality. A

fearful individual becomes dreadfully mindful of the very question of his or her existence; an enquiry that never finds scope in the tales of wars. The question of existence is different from the problem of living. Living is similar to hiking on a safe road, but for existence lost in jungle is better. Fear also sends individual to be in hiding, especially during conflicts or at times when individuals feel their life may be in danger. Throughout the novel, it can be realized that Bassam was largely on the run and was an alienated individual.

There are many instances of physical violence in *De Niro's Game*, including Bassam beating Nijab, a militia soldier, and his friends sent by George (100) and Bassam killing Rambo, the macho man who tortured him earlier in the novel (171). Furthermore, Bassam's gun is an interesting tool of violence when interpreted along Foucault's theory of violence, a French philosopher and historian, as a means of breaking away from fear. Alienated individuals are usually in a defensive mode as they believe the society may not embrace them or even worse harm them. Also interesting is the duality of personality that complicates the power relations associated with the gun, it is a manifestation of masculine powers and strength, yet it is a tool through which the men hide their fear and anxiety (Mustafa 36). Even after fleeing Lebanon and arriving in France, Bassam still feels alienated and uses the gun as his only piece of strength, masculinity and identity, as he notes: "I felt secure with weight of my gun in my bag" (Hage 204), resounding Marthura Kuranithy's assertion in 'Masculinity and Trauma in 'De Niro's Game' that men may hide or try to control their fear and anxiety by initiating a masculine defensive mechanism.

Bassam later convinced by Rhea and Roland to get rid of the gun (232). When Bassam agrees and leaves his gun in the river, he feels an "unbearable lightness" (232). Bassam feels marginalized by the people, "everyone here affected a nonchalant air of importance, a kind of modern pseudo-aristocratic persona. If only I had my gun, I thought sadly, I would shoot them

on the steps of their places” (249). In his isolated and alienated position, Bassam envisions that though being an illegal immigrant he would reorient the power struggle by eliminating the powers that oppress him (Hage 37). In this way, masculinity is a form of regaining power for Bassam. He used physical violence in response to people and groups that try to intimidate him. Though Bassam initially gets rid of his gun, he goes back after a few days to the empty house where he hid the gun for it. This makes him feel safe again and restores his sense of strength. In this formation of thought, inflicting physical violence on others is a masculine attribute that is a strategy to resist anxiety. In this violent way, an alienated Bassam can be free from feelings of inferiority or despair.

Mustafa (2011) argues that a violent approach is a part of power play as the individual seeks to gain power from another individual or group. Bassam uses violence as a means to feel empowered, as Mostafa notes that violence “can develop into a set of actions to break free from oppressive situations where the individual is struggling against own essence” In this opposition, the gun is both a tool of violence and a part of discourse of power relations as it becomes an integral part of Bassam’s identity as an individual.

There are changes in the way Bassam communicates as he moves to live in France. For the first time in the novel Bassam uses the first person and describes his feelings. Rather than be silenced by this suffering, Bassam conveys the tension of not telling Rhea or Genevieve, relatives of George who live in France, his story: “I felt a pang of guilt for not telling them, everything I knew, but the words would not come to me ” (201). Though Bassam is not ready to fully express himself, he narrates his feelings and tension of not being able to talk-all the while using the first person to describe his feelings. Arguably, Bassam moves away from the initial site of suffering and can therefore express himself with fewer remaining traumatic symptoms. In the transitions away from the suffering of living and the choas, it is evident that

Bassam is able to express himself more as he can communicate his feelings and even sleeps better (205).

Though Bassam still needs his gun to feel secure, in his telling his story, he engages in a practice often very beneficial to suffering alienated individuals. Alienated individuals, especially those who were forced into alienation are usually characterized by fear and suspense. They are always on the alert and resort to self-defense as a means to survive. While not completely free from suffering, Bassam begins to discuss his feelings and perspective in a clear manner in comparison to the rest of novel.

“Yes, I said, and I told her about killing Khalil, and about our money scams, and our silent quarrels, and about George joining the militia. I told her about Monsieur Laurent, and Nicole, and my torture. . . . I continued talking about the massacre at the camp. I described to her what George had told me about the lights, the dog, the birds, the cadavers that piled up and rotted, the axes, the rivers of blood I told her about the night her brother took me under the bridge”.
(pp. 272 – 273)

On the other hand, in the other parts Bassam interacts with people predominately using his masculine identity as he threatens people, flirts with Rana, fights and bullies people in the apartment complex. Though his narration may not be completely whole and true Bassam’s narrative voice points to how the story of violence and its horrors can be narrated in a multiplicity of ways as the novel *De Niro’s Game* re-counts the way a young man can create his identity within the context of civil war. It shows ways which suffering and chaos have both silencing and explosive effects on how people express themselves. The process itself of communicating and the telling of the story of George to Rhea is the form of releasing the pain and misery Bassam had within him. As he is narrating the story of the civil war to the reader and to Rhea, Bassam undertakes a process of empowerment against alienation, anxiety and fear

(Mustafa 40). As Mostafa notes “Hage seems to be fascinated by the characters who are aware of their marginalized social position, and it is in this way that Bassam leaves to Rome. In Arab literature, narratives themselves are a voice against the sufferings faced by war (Peterson 13)

To sum it up, it can be seen that Rawe Hage expressed alienation deeply in his novel *De Niro’s Game*. The characters were forced into alienation due to conflicts and societal marginalization. His two main characters, George and Bassam were in different scenes that portrayed the existence of young men living in war-town areas and the individual decisions they took to survive conflicts. These two characters, at certain stages of the novel had to take what was then seen as illogical decisions to survive. Although George for most part of the novel fell out with Bassam and was under the influence of orders from the militia, even under command, his personal desires and wants drove him to higher heights in the militia. Bassam on the other hand, in contrast to George, refused to join the militia after so much pressure and torture, fled the country for Rome, where he always wanted to travel to. Bassam was forced into alienation for most parts of the novel whilst George was rather on the other side and this can be seen in his quest of power which made him always aligned to a cause.

3.2.1 Section Two

This section of the thesis answers our second objective and looks at how the interplay between existence and Freedom of choice affects characterization in the two novels. According to Soren Kierkegaard, the Freedom of choice is the fifth and relatively the most important of the Five Discourses of Human Existence. He argued that for a man to actually exist, he should be able to define his existence by making decisions without the influence of other people and society. Thus, an individual truly exists when he is free to choose.

3.2.2 How the interplay between existence and Freedom of choice affect characterization in the *Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*.

The author of *The Beautiful Ones*, Ayi Kwei Armah in his novel portrayed how his central characters displayed varying levels of Freedom during a time where Ghana, the setting for the novel was in a chaotic political situation. This section of the thesis shall look at how the author expressed freedom of choice in his novel.

In the *Beautiful Ones*, the main character, an unnamed man, is presented with many challenges throughout the novel in a bid to stay away from the normal corruption in the newly independent country of Ghana. As a railway administrator. The man is tempted with bribes and gifts by merchants in order for him to do things in their favor. Although he refuses, most of his colleagues, accept bribes and mock him for his unusual acts of holiness.

“When man comes back he finds Amakwa, the timber man has already bribed the booking clerk and when the timber man sees man he scorns him, “You, you are a very wicked man. You will never prosper” (107).

When Amakwa, the timber merchant, tries to bribe the man for providing wagon space for his timbers which were rotting in the forest, the man, who actually needed the money, bluntly refused this kind of attitude adopted by the man, is considered unreasonable and thoughtless. When the Man refuses to accept a bribe, the timber merchant moves with his bribe to another railway worker in the absence of the Man. This worker, however accepts the bribe. The Man seems to be alone in his firm decision against bribes at the railway station and this shows how his decisions on what to do and what not to do was not dependent on his working environment. The man is firm on his decision and displays a very strong independence of choice at his workplace.

The Man is open about his disgust for greed and corruption and worse for politicians and high office holders who plunder money from the state coffers into their personal gains and also take bribes and have sex with women to favor them over others. He acknowledges that these acts are borrowed from the white men who once ruled the country for pleasure and it is unfortunate that black people who have taken over the affairs of the country continue to do the same and worse. Indeed, the independence of the country was political but many Ghanaians were still mentally enslaved to the white man's culture.

“We do not serve ourselves if we remain like insects, fascinated by the white people's power!”
... “Alone, I can nothing. I have nothing. We have power. But we will never see it work. Unless we choose to come together to make it work. Let us come together... However, after attainment of independence the party men lived luxurious life like the white men, fucked women, and changed them like clothes, asking only for blouses and perfumes from diplomatic bags and wigs of human hair”. (P.87)

The man finds himself in the struggle for freedom between the colonial past way of life and the modern future, between traditional customs and western impacts. The man is poised to gain Freedom in a country where people were still mentally colonized, and he did that by sticking to his African and moral values. Armah exceptionally portrayed this bitter battle outstandingly, and on such a universal level that the struggles of the man might well be identified with the struggles and choices of any one of the millions of people that live the man's life on a daily basis.

‘There is something so terrible in watching a black man trying at all points to be the dark ghost of a European, and that was what we were seeing in those days... How could they understand that even those who have not been anywhere know that the black man who has spent his life fleeing from himself into whiteness has no power if the white master gives him none? ... We

knew then, and we know now, that the only real power a black man can have will come from black people' (80) About nine-thirty the Senior Service men come in each with his bit of leftover British craziness. This one has long white nose, that one colonial white. Another has spent two months on what still "he calls a study tour of Britain, and ever since has worn, in all the heat of Ghana, waistcoats and coats (108).

Kierkegaard in his book *Either/Or* mentioned that an individual's Freedom is often limited and this has a direct relationship in the location or place of the individual. The current situation at the time of the novel limited the Freedom of Ghanaians, according to the novel, and Freedom from the colonizer did not mean the Freedom of the individuals that made up the nation. Sartre mentioned that the basis on existence for any individual is nothing but what he decides for himself. The man, despite being in an era of lawlessness chooses to stand out and not be influenced by society. The man represents one such attempt to locate oneself in this infant world, and the continuous conflict between righteousness and dignity on one hand, and the pressure to conform to the evil norms of society on the other.

The Man chooses not to surrender his Freedom when he refuses to follow the negative norms or does not allow paths to be chosen for him unless when he resigns himself to believe that this is the case, and that he is impotent to alter such imposed choices.

".. he was not burdened with any hopes that new things, really new things, were as yet ready to come out. Someday in the long future a new life would may be flower in the country, but when it came, it would not choose as its instruments the same people who had made a habit of killing new flowers". (159-60).

Fatefully, the Man, whom many academics such as Minna Niemi in her article 'Challenging moral corruption in the postcolony: Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and Hannah Arendt's notion of individual responsibility' have commended as a morally upright

individual lacks existential moral individualism. Analyzing with Kierkegaard's concepts and explanation of existentialism, the Man, in the novel, is not sure that what he is existing for is the truth for which he can live, or let alone die for, because he is too concerned about his material and emotional alienation from his society, family and friends, and this affected his freedom of choice in many parts of the novel.

For instance, in a situation when the man was confronted with a gift he could only dream about but never afford, he made this statement;

“The promise was so beautiful. It was there. We were not deceived about that. How could such a thing turn so completely into this other thing? ... What can a person do with things that continue unsatisfied inside? Is their stifled cry not also life?” (p.100)

The man cannot be described as a total free choosing individual. Despite his strong stance on not following the masses to engage in corrupt activities, he always dreams of living a good life; this his wife finds this double standard hypocritical as she describes her husband. In this logic, the individuality and Freedom of the man is not absolute but uncertain as he feels the burden of his family to provide them a better future. The man is at major crossroad flanked by the longing eyes of loved ones which trouble his mind and his own consciousness. His mind juggles between the hopes and desires of the loved ones and his inborn fears and morals. Kierkegaard noted that a man's Freedom is always threatened as he lives within a space with limitations. Thus, an individual is always in a tension between finitude and Freedom, desires to adhere to limitations and pressure from society and the want to be on one's own chosen path. His actions as he explains to the Teacher seem to be determined by both his social circumstances and his own nature. He has found himself in a society plagued with what Simon Gikandi, a professor in English at the Princeton University, calls inverted social norms in his book *Reading the African Novel* (76), and his situation is worsened, by the fact that he is too

sensitive of a Ghanaian to partake in such norms. In existential terminology, 'the Man' is acting in bad faith.

According to Sartre, humans are free and responsible for their choices and hence act in bad faith when they deny themselves this Freedom and deceive themselves into the thought that their activities are determined by their circumstances or their own natures, so that they are responsible for them (Sartre, 1977). The Man, at certain times, not only fails to make choices for himself but also apportions blame for the consequences of his actions to others and the society.

This uncertainty of character can be seen in many parts of the novel and the use of the term 'chichidodo' in reference to the man by his wife is extremely appropriate. Just as the 'chichidodo', as described by the writer, eat maggots but hates excreta, the Man has thoughts and dreams of getting wealthy and living a good life like Koomson and his wife Estella, but would not want to be corrupt or take a bribe, the means by which these characters got wealthy. This reflects the inseparability of material wealth and corruption or rot. In the novel, life happens to be the system to which the existential man must be against societal influence through his subjectivity and through passionate individual action, by acting on his or her own convictions to arrive at his own truth.

Another major character in the novel is Oyo, the man's wife, a character used by Armah to depict the character of the average Ghanaian women during the post-colonial era. For most part of the novel, she pushed her husband to accept bribes and gifts because that was how other men afforded their families luxuries and comfort. She followed the trend of wanting to look like the white woman as she combs her hair painfully for several minutes to make them stylish.

Then man comes back home from his mother-in-law to complete his arrangements and ready to receive the minister. He finds his wife making her hair so that she looks beautiful woman as

Estella, “Its only bush women who wear their hair natural” Oyo tells her husband. She continues burning while keeping on saying “If I had a wig, there would be no trouble.” replies man, “If you had a wig, I’d be in jail ” (p.128).

Oyo is seen throughout the novel pestering her husband and forcing him to provide her with items that she felt made her a modern woman, comparable to the beautiful white women and the wives of rich black men. Oyo continuously reprimands her husband for making her and their children to live in miserable poverty while their neighbors and friends were profiting from the corrupt system. She argues with him that while he remains loyal and true to his supposed ideals, he is only adhering to his principles in an isolated strain, and even in spite of his efforts to remain aloof, the system would not be affected at all, and things would continue to go on as before and “the whole society [was] behind her” (93) in holding these conventions. The man’s wife points out that the man’s indictment of corruption is essentially hypothetical, and he is only limiting himself and the progress of his family when he restrains himself of availing the fruits of corruption like everyone else.

She makes remarks about how other men were providing for their wives. In a scene she told her husband a parable;

“Life was like a lot of roads: long roads, short roads. Wide and narrow, steep and level, all sorts of roads and the human beings were like so many people driving their cars on all the roads. Those who wanted to get far had to learn to drive fast ... Accidents would happen but the fear of accidents that never keep men from driving, and Joe Koomson had learned to drive.” (58-59)

By making reference to Koomson, the wife tried to tell her husband to also engage in activities that Koomson engaged in to become rich, even if they were wrong. Soren Kierkegaard mentioned that all humans must be active role player on earth and not just mere observers and

followers. The man's wife throughout the novel exhibited an individual who observed and followed the masses. She was also a limitation to the man as she continually pressured him to forsake his freedom. She denies herself freedom by going after societal wants and demands. In Soren Kierkegaard's five Discourses of Existentialism, he mentions that a true individual is not coerced in his or her decisions by societal trends but rather decides on his or her own will.

Unable to sleep after arguing with his wife, the man goes to the Teacher, another central character in the novel. The introduction of Teacher's narrative adds a new perspective to the understanding of the neo-colonial existence and Freedom. The music he plays is "at once very far away and very African.":

Those who are blessed with the power

And the soaring swiftness of eagle

And have frown before.

Let them go.

I will travel slowly

And I too will arrive. (51)

Like the man, Teacher too, disapproves of corruption, materialism, and ostentation and the hypocritical code of conduct governing their society. The teacher had decided to totally cut himself from the corruption of society. He self alienates as a means to be free from what he termed as societal evil.

"If we can't consume ourselves for something we believe in, Freedom makes no difference at all. You see, I am free to do what I want, but there is nothing happening now that I want to join. There used to be something, and you know what I mean." (61)

Sartre argued that for a man to be totally free, he must indulge on some forms of self-alienation. This however must have a limit (Sartre, 1977). The Teacher, in a bid to stay away from the evils of society chose to separate himself from family and friends. Whilst this decision made teacher free of pressures from close relative like the man experienced, the Teacher can be said to be afraid of facing the realities of the real world. If the teacher mingled with other people and yet was able to stay by his values, that would have made him a freer individual than to hide in his tent in an attempt to avoid evil.

The man feels that the Teacher is free and unlike him is not burdened by the aspirations and hopes of his loved ones. The man, however, still wants to be loved, wants to be touched by his loved ones, and is not able to detach himself from the bonds of his loved ones. This again shows the characterizations of Armah is imperfectly free individuals in the fourth kind of alienation, as described by Soren Kierkegaard in his Five Discourses of Human Existentialism. The power to exercise his will has not rendered him free, he is still stuck there. The man acknowledges his position, however ignoring that the Teacher, who seemed perfect in his eyes also was not perfect and sometimes longed for company.

Both Joseph and Estella Koomson depict the bureaucratic hypocrisy that existed at that time. At a point Estella loudly announces her distaste for locally brewed alcohol, and repeats her assertion that local spirits “make you ill” (132). Estella’s refined tastes are put into perspective with the perpetual preoccupation of her husband, who is an exemplary figure who benefits from the thriving corruption that is prevalent in the nation, and is thus placed in immediate contradiction to the man, who stands by his principles no matter what. Estella is showcased as an individual who has chosen to imitate the lifestyle of the colonizers whilst throwing away her identity as an African, a clear indication of a total loss of Freedom. Her desire is not to be herself but like the white women seen on the street of Takoradi, the hometown of the novelist and the setting of the book.

To sum up, the analysis above indicates that Ayi Kwei Armah in his novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* shows a great interplay between existence and Freedom of choice as the characters are faced with the continual situations to make decisions that affect their existence. Indeed, although none of the characters were able to display total Freedom, Soren Kierkegaard noted that is very impossible for an individual to be totally free in making decisions as social and environmental conditions directly and indirectly affect the decisions of individuals. The major characters in the novel are seen at different scenes making illogical choices during situations, exhibiting varying levels of Freedom of choice.

3.2.3 How the interplay between existence and Freedom of choice affect characterization in *De Niro's Game*

Hage's *De Niro's Game* focuses on the friendship between two young men, Bassam and George, who grow up in Achrafiye and live there during the civil war. Like Soren Kierkegaard postulated, situations and circumstances such as war, hunger and natural disasters tend to force individuals to do things against their Freedom. In the novel, Bassam is the first-person narrator who tells of the events that he and George go through in order to survive the violent conflict.

In the novel, both Bassam and George know that in their war-torn city there are only two ways to live a life beyond mere subsistence: leave or join the militia. Bassam tries to leave, and George joins the Christian militia of Abou-Nahra, a man “into Christianity, money, and power” (51). The two central characters are faced with decisions that end their friendship in the long run. This exhibition of Freedom of choice is what existentialists classify as the most important thing in individuality.

The novel narrates of wild lifestyles cultivated by young Lebanese people including the central characters, Bassam and George. These lifestyles of the main characters, and inevitably the

lifestyle of thousands of Lebanese youth during the civil war, depicts the forced lifestyle picked up by young people during times of chaos. Their Freedom was very limited and they had very little options but to take irrational decisions to survive. Bassam and George are supposed as outcasts in their locality; they are the socially marginalized and turn into rebels during the war and whom everybody comes to resent and dread at the same time. While Bassam's father died when he was young, George never knew his French father; and he carries his mother's family name. George's mother died when he was young, and Bassam's mother dies during the events of the narrative as a result of a bomb that falls on their house. Thus, at the beginning of the novel, the two friends find relief and comfort in each other's company. They trust and rely on one another. Kierkegaard states in *The Five discourses of Human Existence* that fear and anxiety rips individuals of their Freedom. The fear of being alone, the fear of death and that of the future tends to make individuals forsake their Freedom for shelter and safety. At the beginning of the novel, both friends limit their Freedom by compromising with the needs of one another hence, there was very little exhibition of Freedom at the end of *De Niro's Game*.

Events in the novel take a violent turn when George joins the Phalange militia and becomes a powerful figure within the institution. With this major decision, George can be seen to exhibit a certain level of Freedom. It is however not a total exhibition of Freedom because, although he broke away from the limitation set by his bond with Bassam and pursued his thirst for power and strength, he was influenced externally by the attractiveness of the militia (89).

He tries to convince Bassam to follow to also join the militia, but Bassam refuses to do so, which subjects him to much violence by his best friend George and his men. Bassam, by refusing his friend's offer to join the militia portrays a great level of Freedom. By refusing the offer, Bassam, who was always dreaming about travelling to Rome, sticks to his decision to migrate and instead of joining the army, he pursues his dreams. Kierkegaard noted that the decisions of a free individual is always threatened as he is always under constant attack, either

internally, that is within his own thoughts and conscience, or externally, which is the pressure from family and friends, as in the case of George persistently persuading Bassam to change his mind.

The novel's narrative voice reflects a discourse of danger, violence and betrayal which results from and intensifies the war situation. Bassam and George perceive the history of their country and their ancestors as soaked in conflict and bloodshed. This perception also creates a limitation to both friends, but especially George, as they feel that violence is a way to survive. Throughout the novel, there is a typically ironic tone in Bassam's narrative voice, suggesting that a violent incident might flare at any moment. While George wanted to actively take part of the war and help win in, one way or the other, Bassam felt helpless in the situation and wanted to flee. His statement "I am fleeing and leaving this land to its devils" shows anxiety and fear that had forced Bassam to decide to leave Lebanon. As stated earlier in this section, fear and anxiety act as a form of limitation to one's Freedom. An individual cannot exhibit or portray total Freedom under the pressure of fear and anxiety as a logical move in such a situation would be the pursuit of safety and thereafter can an individualistic decision or a genuinely free decision be made.

George joins the pro-Israel Kataeb Party, controlled by Bashir Gemayel, where he in due course ends as one of the criminals who partake in the massacre of Sabra and Shatila. Meanwhile, Bassam stays non-aligned to the finish, and pursues to get out of Lebanon until he finally does so. George's participation in the Sabra and Shatila massacre is a turning point in his friendship with Bassam as he begins to experience flashbacks, stress, and his behavior is marked by gratuitous violence. The two friends undergo changes, yet George's situation turns worse as he ends up a cocaine addict. The turning point in their lives exhibits what Soren Kierkegaard in his book *Either/Or* describes as transitions in the various phases of human existence. At the decisive moment, George is seen to navigate into the aesthetic phase where he is concerned about his selfish needs and cares nothing about morals or morality. Kierkegaard called

individuals in the stage unrepentant and naïve. Bassam actions however puts him in the ethic phase of human existence where the repented man is not centered on himself but has acquired humanism values. However, even as he discovers humanism values, his own life does not depend on the society's activities or influence anymore. Rawe Hage presents Bassam as at least a strong and honest individual even though at the beginning of the novel he was involved in crimes.

When George joins the militia, he has an inner desire and need to prove himself within the militia institution as a man who is both fearless and feared. He murders those who might deter his progress within the institution; he steals to accumulate wealth; and he kills and rapes women and children when his fellow militia men commit the massacre against the Palestinian refugees in the camps of West Beirut. This drastic change of George, from being a character that carried a gun just to feel safe to a violent killer deeply portrays the influence joining the militia had on him. By joining the militia, George had sold out his Freedom and pledged to live under command. His killing of woman and children were influenced by his fellow militia soldiers doing the same.

Bassam, on the other hand, sees his best friend's drastic change and realizes that George has betrayed him. George conspires with the leader of his faction to arrest Bassam and torture him, and he also seduces Bassam's girlfriend, Rana, who becomes George's fiancé later on. George continually threatens the Freedom of Bassam till his death. He tried many times to persuade Bassam against his dream of fleeing to Rome. Moreover, Bassam comes to realize the dangerous and violent game in which George is entangled when George tells him about his repeated visits to Israel for training purposes and that even increases his fear and the need to flee Lebanon. Bassam exhibits a conscious effort not to refute his decision and choice not to join the militia.

In a state of violence, Bassam can only imitate the environment he is in, which reflects the larger traditional existentialist philosophers view of the role of the environment in existentialism because it unlocks up a field of options for human Freedom and creativity. Sartre serves as a model for the way he struggled with the tension between individual independence and autonomy in his early viewpoint of Freedom, and the needs of the collective as he challenged them in his future turn to Marxism. It can be seen that Sartre's struggles can be enlightening to those of who now pursue the wisdom of existential Freedom for the individual even as they confront the demands and circumstances of their environment, nation or society, a place on the collective. This is depicted in Bassam's revenge on Rambo, the man who tortured him in prison:

"I saw a BMW speeding up the hill. It was driven as if a drunk, in zigzags, like a donkey climbing uphill ... I ran after the BMW, through the pine trees, through the moist hills, through the morning dew, pushing away the loose branches...A man opened the door...It was Rambo. I walked towards him, and when he heard my steps he looked back and pulled out his gun in slow motion. I stopped. I saw his face, and my heart started to beat with sounds of death and drums. My hands stretched forward, both of my index fingers squeezed the trigger, and I shot at him". "I shot him until he fell to the ground, and the thickening fog passed us by and carried his last breath" (170-171).

Hence, in the midst of crisis, the main crisis, a civil war, the novelist portrays the various options that characters have and the path they choose to ply on in the giving of their Freedom. The two contrasting paths taken by the two once-upon-a-time best friends shows how the individual is able to make a myriad of choices when presented with challenges. This can be seen in a conversation between George and Bassam:

I will be leaving for Israel soon for some training. The forces are establishing relations with the Jews down south.

It is a mistake, I whispered.

No, Bassam, we are alone in this war, and our people are being massacred every day. And you . . . whose grandfather was butchered . . . your father killed ... you . . . you ... We will unite with the devil to save our land. How are we to make the Syrians and the Palestinians leave?

I am fleeing and leaving this land to its devils, I said.

The story reveals a nation where bombing and murder is a way of life, an environment where alliance is the only credible assurance. However, the story also reveals that the majority of the Lebanese stayed non-aligned and restrained, sadly observing with how Lebanon, their home had turned into a play area for regional and global powers and many Lebanese divided around various factions and militias just for spiritual, national, or financial reasons; further espousing the Freedom of man to make decisions and take sides during conflicts. For instance, George described Christian militia of Abou- Nahra, as a man “into Christianity, money, and power, and with thousands of followers (51).

At the center of the tale are the areas of Sabra and Shatila: organizationally it falls in the center section of the book and it serves as grounds for the ugly climax for the conflict as well as for the destiny of Bassam and George. It is the source of the effect of repetition and of accountability in ‘ten thousand’ and it is a decision and the definitive separation of George and Bassam, who in their Freedom choose different paths in the horrid situation. This occurrence is the last thing that George leaves behind him as he goes further deep-involved with the militia, and the last unfortunate incidence Bassam hears before he leaves Beirut. It is the central existential point of the novel, in determining the collective destruction and the internal mental

ones as well, which also sets the main characters of the novel at the peak of individualism, as they both choose paths that suit their personality (Mathura Kurananithy).

At the center of an internal battle is the danger of the others in death flattening identity hence George's interpretation of the massacre eliminates differences between, men, women, children, and animals. The extent at which George showed no remorse in telling the story of the massacre showed he was an individual in the aesthetic stage of human existence telling of the story, of what happened the days before. George begins his narrative appealing to diverse discourses - to heroics, "fifteen hundred lions positioned at the airport we were," (p. 175) then to religious sentiment, "The sky was glowing as if the Messiah himself showed up," (p. 175) then to Hollywood, "it was like being in a movie," (p. 176) but he cannot withstand any of them to account for the butchery, to represent what happened. (Hawreliak, 2013)

Looking at individualism and the Freedom of choice, George is distressed by war but chooses his coping mechanism as violence. In his argument, Foucault, states an opposition between elements such as Freedom and power and discusses the possibility of a subject breaking free from an organization. Foucault goes on to mention that "power is exercised only by free subjects and only in so far as they are free" (quoted in Mostafa 30) – which suggests that violence intensifies power relations. The violence to Bassam is part of a logic and an exercise: physical violence here is a normal process and a system of life (Mostafa 30).

In conclusion, Rawe Hage, in his novel *De Niro's Game*, set out his characters portraying different levels of Freedom in different circumstances. His central characters, Bassam and George, both moved from one level of Freedom to the other and then vice versa but it was Bassam who seemed to display more Freedom in decisions. George lost most of his Freedom under the command of the head of the militia and involved in evil acts just because he saw

other members of the militia do so. Bassam, however, was poised not to join the militia but rather to flee the country for a better life, which he succeeded at the latter part of the novel.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter comprises of information with respect to the summary of the study, conclusions based on the findings of the study, and recommendations for future studies or further research. It shall look at the summary of the whole thesis and shall highlight crucial information and details of the various sections of the thesis.

This thesis entitled *Existentialist Trends in The Beautiful ones and De Niro's Game* was conducted on the maiden literary works of Ayi Kwei Armah and Rawe Hage. Starting from the researcher's interest on both the novels and Existentialism thought, the thesis looked at how the authors in their own unique traditions presented the various themes of existentialism in their textbooks. Specifically, it looked at how the writers of the mentioned novels portrayed alienation and also how their characterization exhibited freedom of choice in their respective novels.

The researcher looked at how the political situation in the two countries' post-colonial era affected the citizenry and how both writers presented the situation by the use of characters in their novels.

The principal ambition of this thesis has been to explore how existentialism as a theme is represented in the literature of Ayi Kwei Armah. In *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and Rawe Hage's, *De Niro's Game*. It specifically looked at how the hardships caused by civil unrest and political stability can challenge the existence of people and how the characters of these novels reacted differently to these hardships, analysed from an existential point of view.

From the analysis above, it can be argued that alienation was fueled by political sensation and civil unrest, a diagnostic which revealed the felt contradictions of modernity in everyday post-independent life. The experience of alienation in *The Beautiful Ones* seems to draw the outside world into individual characters – their hopes and despairs and corporeal discontents are only fully sensible in relation to their utter immersion in the social system. In *De Niro's Game*, alienation was caused by a radical situation when compared to *the Beautiful Ones*, the Lebanese Civil war. The war plunged many people into alienation as the difficulties caused by the war separated families. Also, fighting and bombing killed parents leaving their children orphans and alienated from the only home they knew. The novel also exposed how youngmen who had turned into criminals were expelled by their families, also leaving them alienated. The hardship of the war and the situation in the country forced many to flee their homes and families in search for safety.

Using a comparative analysis method, the researcher examined the two novels to figure out the understanding and view of the existential vision of the two writers. This included a thematic review of both textbooks using the theories and concept of mainly Soren Kierkegaard and supported by the thoughts of Jean Paul Sartre.

From the findings and analysis, it was found out that Ayi Kwei Armah presented existential predicaments in a myriad of forms or ways in his central characters, particularly, The Man, the Teacher, Rama Krishna Kofi Billy and Manaan. These characters were seen to get to certain points in their lives where they reached crossroads where they had to decide and put their Freedom of choice to play. Fueled by the political instability, these characters As Soren Kierkegaard put forward in the Book *Either/Or*, an existential individual is a person that is able to choose or make decisions freely without any influence from society or circumstance. The characters of this novel exhibited unique characteristics in absurd times and acted differently from how society expected them to act or was the normal response to such situations.

In the same light, it can be seen that Rawe Hage also demonstrated a deep sense of existential predicament in his novel *De Niro's Game*. His two main characters, George and Bassam were in different situations that portrayed the existence of young men living in war-town areas. These two characters, at certain stages of the novel had to take what was then seen as illogical decisions to survive. Although George for most part of the novel fell out with Bassam and was under the influence of orders from the militia, even under command, his personal desires and wants drove him to higher heights in the militia. Bassam on the other hand, in contrast to George, refused to join the militia after so much pressure and torture, fled the country for Rome, where he always wanted to travel to.

In regards to the interplay of existence and Freedom of choice of the characterization of both novels, the analysis showed that Ayi Kwei Armah in his novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* presented a great interplay between existence and Freedom of choice as the characters are faced with the continual situations to make decisions that affect their existence. It was seen that although none of the characters were able to display total Freedom, Soren Kierkegaard stated that is very impossible for an individual to be totally free in making decisions as social and environmental conditions directly and indirectly affect the decisions of individuals. The major characters in the novel are seen at different scenes making illogical choices during situations, exhibiting varying levels of Freedom of choice. This could be seen in the fact that even the so-called existential characters in the novel such as the man and even the teacher, to some extent, were influenced by societal pressure.

In regards to *De Niro's Game*, Rawe Hage, in his novel set out his characters portraying different levels of Freedom in different circumstances. His dominant characters, Bassam and George, both exhibited varying levels of Freedom but it was Bassam who seemed to display more Freedom of choice in decision making. George lost most of his Freedom once he joined the militia and involved in scandalous acts under instructions or just because he saw other

members of the militia do so. Bassam, however, was poised not to join the militia but rather to flee the country for a better life, which he succeeded at the latter part of the novel.

This is to say, both novels, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Born*, by Ayi Kwei Armah and *De Niro's Game* by Rawe Hage possess the characteristics of an existential novels. Although staged in different geographical and political areas, the two novels deeply portray the existential thoughts of both writers and this is uniquely displayed in how they present their scenes, characters and writing styles.

The thesis will provide further knowledge about the concept of existential predicament and how it can be represented in works of literature to future students or researchers. It will also add to the available research texts on *the Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *De Niro's Game*.

The findings and outcome of this thesis can be used as a resource material meant to give additional theoretical input in this area of literature. Thus, the findings of this study are anticipated to be useful to the literary studies, mainly on the existentialist aspects of both novels. Practically the study of this topic has some significance for the one who has a great attention on literary work and who are involved in Existentialism studies.

In the future, it is suggested that existential studies on the two novels should be specific into thematic sections of the concept of existentialism such as alienation, individualism, fear and so on. This well help reveals the depth of how these two writers presented their novels.

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