

1 A Stylistic Appraisal of Ayi Kwei Armah's the Beautiful Ones
2 are not yet Born

3 Dr. Acheoah John Emike¹

4 ¹ Federal University

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6 **Abstract**

7 The paper examines language use in African fiction through a stylistic appraisal of Ayi Kwei
8 Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born. A fiction which ponders on the corruption
9 that pervades Ghana even after independence, the novel reveals interesting societal vices
10 through the hero, The Man. This study mainly investigates the stylistic features in the novel
11 hinging heavily on the theory of cohesion in discourse, and reveals that various stylistic
12 features are used by the novelist to communicate the writer's thematic concerns. They
13 include substitution, repetition, conjunctions, digression, temporal abridgement and figurative
14 language.

16 **Index terms**— stylistics, stylistic analysis, fiction, cohesion.

17 Introduction ajime ??1996) asserts "that the genre of the short story cannot be defined absolutely ???] its
18 most important features are that it is prose, narrative and fictive" (36). Literature is governed by norms, and as
19 a writer conveys his messages to the reader, he applies such norms skillfully (stylistics). In The Beautiful Ones
20 Are Not Yet Born, Armah presupposes fictively shared knowledge between him and his readers, and proceeds in
21 the narration 1. It is the author's communicative goals and illocutionary strategies that enable the reader relate
22 the work with states-of-affairs in the world.

23 It should be noted that in employing the tools of stylistics in textual-property investigation, the linguist and
24 the literary critic do not have same goals and approaches; while the linguist is concerned with how a piece of
25 literature (for example, the literature of Law) exemplifies the language-system, and treats literature as "texts",
26 the literary critic is concerned with underlying significance and artistic vision of a writer, and so treats his work
27 as "messages". However, stylistic criticism combines some aspects of both "texts" and "messages" and treats
28 literature as discourse. Unlike grammar or syntax that is limited to a discrete sentence, stylistics incorporates
29 chains of sentences.

30 The various approaches to the study of style explain factors which inform the use of idiosyncratic, regional,
31 pragmatic or occupational choices of words (as in the diction of Legal Advocacy discourse). This study examines
32 in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, grammatical components and issues of meaning and this is the case
33 in any stylistic investigation of both linguistic and literary properties of texts of various kinds.

35 **1 II.**

36 **2 Stylistics, Style and Rhetoric**

37 Stylistics is simply the study of style. In stylistics, texts of various disciplines can be seen as "language in
38 action". Defining stylistics therefore presupposes a clear understanding of the term "style", which refers to the
39 way language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose. Style relates the critic's concern
40 of aesthetic properties with the linguist's concern of linguistic description. As a vehicle of communication, style
41 consists of five parts: the encoding of the message, the transmission, its realization as a signal, its reception and
42 its decoding.

6 CORPUS 1:

43 There are three significant views to the study of stylistics: dualism, monism and pluralism. Dualism
44 distinguishes between the "manner" of a text and its "matter"; this distinction is between "textual expression"
45 and "textual content". Dualists therefore restrict style to those choices which concern "manner" or "form" rather
46 than "matter" or "content". Scholars of the Monist School contend that expressions cannot be separated from
47 their content. Pluralists view language from a functional perspective, arguing that the functions performed by
48 language are numerous and speakers' choice of words are germane to the dynamics of social functions which
49 language performs; this implies that speakers' linguistic choices depend on their communicative goals in various
50 contexts and situations 2. "Style" derives from Latin "stylus" which means "a pointed object". It later meant "a
51 pointed object used for writing". Today, style is known as "a manner of writing". ??akuade (1998:13) cites "that
52 in medieval period, style underwent the same theoretical classification as rhetoric". During the period, style was
53 classified into three strata: a. The low (plain) style; b. The middle (mean) style; c. The elevated (grand) style.

54 Each of the above levels was linguistically and extra-linguistically unique and motivated. "Persuasion", the
55 business of rhetoric was also the concern of style besides writing.

56 There is a traditional perspective that style and a writer's personality are inseparable; the Latin terms "Stilus
57 Verum Arquit" (The style proclaims the man) corroborates this view. Obviously, a person's style of speaking
58 or writing is immersed in a diachronic context which invariably, he shares with other speakers or writers who
59 embrace same social dialectics with him. This position makes the individualistic view of style a problematic
60 position. Banjo (1982) defines stylistics as "the exhaustive study of the role of language in literary works". In
61 stylistics, we find a meeting point between literary and non-literary study of texts. Stylistics is a registration of
62 a writer's artistic prowess in the communication of themes, and this is achieved through the manipulation of the
63 linguistic repertoire at the disposal of the writer. Selecting or ordering language, as well as deviating from the
64 norm is essentially the concern of style. Distinction exists between stylistic, grammatical and non-stylistic choice.
65 Enkvist (1964) asserts that appropriateness depends on context 3. Leech and Short (1981) posit that style can
66 be applied to both spoken and written, both literary and non-literary varieties of language, but by tradition, it is
67 particularly associated with written literary texts. Abraham (1981) opines that the characteristic of a work may
68 be analyzed in terms of certain parameters: its diction, or choice of words; its sentence structure and syntax;
69 the density and types of its figurative language; and its rhetorical aims and devices. Leech (1966) distinguishes
70 two scales of institutional delicacy: the register scale and the dialect scale. The register scale handles various
71 registers or roles of linguistic activity within society, distinguishing, for example, a spoken language from a written
72 language, the language of advertising from the language of science, the language of respect from the language of
73 condescension. The second distinguishes the linguistic habits of various sections of society differentiated by age,
74 social class, sex and geographical area. The two scales have a meeting point in terms of their ability to produce
75 complete stylistic-analyst approach to textual analysis.

76 Vocabulary modification is the most obvious and accessible aspect of style. Halliday et al (1964) proposes
77 Field, Mode and Tenor as highly general concepts for describing how the context of situation determines the
78 kinds of meaning that are expressed. Field is the total event in which the text is functioning together with the
79 purposive activity of the speaker or writer. It incorporates the subject matter. Mode is the function of the text in
80 the event including therefore both the channel taken by the language spoken or written, extempore or prepared
81 and its genre or rhetoric, "phatic communion" and so on. Tenor refers to the type of role interaction, the set
82 of relevant social relations, permanent and temporary, among the participants involved. Field, Mode and Tenor
83 collectively define the context of situation of a text.

84 3 III.

85 4 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

86 Halliday's (1971) conceptual tools for the analysis of discourse, facilitates the textual analysis of selected samples
87 from the novel, The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born. He opines that substitutions, conjunctions, repetitions,
88 ellipses and other linguistic properties make texts cohere. The rhetorical functions of such linguistic devices are
89 obvious as will be seen in the subsequent sections of this study. According to ??alliday (1978), text refers to any
90 passage, written or spoken irrespective of the length that constitutes a linguistic entity. See Fakuade (1998:24)
91 who cites that "texture", "tie" and "cohesion" characterize texts.

92 IV.

93 5 Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Corpora

94 We consider the stylistic features in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born as evident in our twelve corpora
95 below:

96 6 Corpus 1:

97 You see, we can share,' he said, as he came up to the man. But only the unending rattle of the bus answered
98 and absorbed his words. The man in the back seat just sat and his eyes just stared, even when the conductor
99 brought his cigarette to within about a foot of his face.... Then a savage indignation filled the conductor. For
100 in the soft vibrating light inside the bus, he saw running down from the left corner of the watcher's mouth, a

101 stream of the man's spittle. Oozing freely, the oil-like liquid first entangled itself in the fingers of the watcher's
102 left hand, underneath? the watcher was no watcher after all, only a sleeper (p.5).

103 **7 Corpus 2:**

104 I know people who won more than five hundred cedis last year. They still haven't got their money.' 'Have they
105 been to the police?' 'To help them get their money?' 'You're joking,' said the messenger with some bitterness.
106 'It costs you more money if you go to the police that are all.' 'What will you do?' the man asked. 'I hope
107 some official at the lottery place will take some of my hundred cedis as bribe and allow me to have the rest.'
108 The messenger's smile was dead. 'You will be corrupting a public officer.' The man smiled.'This is Ghana,' the
109 messenger said ? (pp.18-19).

110 V.

111 **8 Point of View**

112 "Point of view" refers to the manner narratives are told. It makes clear the place of the narrator in the story.
113 The trio "person" "mask" and "narrator" form a novelist's narrative media as he attempts to enact realism into
114 his story 4 .

115 Ayi Kwei Armah's The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born is told with the third person omniscient Volume XIV
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117 narration; this narrative device presupposes the use of personal pronouns (he, she, they as well as proper
118 nouns which name the characters as certain comments are made about them). The use of third person pronouns
119 necessitates alienating the writer from the story. However, the omniscient narration device in the novel affords
120 the writer the opportunity to register his supremacy over the characters as he is all-knowing, observes and reports
121 their actions from the rare.

122 We note that the narrator experienced the situation, and has appreciable knowledge of it. This allknowing
123 capacity is exhibited in the way this narrator remarks on each character and it is of stylistic relevance; it facilitates
124 proper characterization of the macro-structure 5 . The third person omniscient narration also affords the writer
125 the opportunity to enact his overriding message. Fowler (1981) opines that "Linguistic structure is not arbitrary,
126 but is determined by the functions it performs". Difficult as it is, a novelist has to take a position, even when
127 he uses the third person omniscient narration that is encumbered with the principle of detachment 6 . Through
128 omniscient point of view, Armah unfolds his awareness and attitude towards the cankerworm, "corruption", which
129 has become institutionalized in his society, and he sustains the registration of this awareness.

130 It is worthy of stylistic attention that in the above text, the writer alludes hinging on the shared knowledge
131 he has with his characters and his extra-text audience (readers) on the spate of bribery and corruption in the
132 society as evident in the activities of the police. He paints the picture of a police force ridden with lack of
133 uprightness and insensitivity to integrity. From the rare, he makes us know that the citizens whose lives and
134 property the police are supposed to protect do not repose any confidence in such degenerated police force. We
135 note the narrator's stylistic strategy of using intra-text audience (characters) to expose and lampoon the societal
136 vice in which people serve personal interests rather than their nation. The ironical question, ("Have they been
137 to the police?"), in Corpus 2 is a stylistic communicative (illocutionary) strategy that probes the addressee to say
138 what the omniscient narrator already knows about the disposition of the police.

139 Interpreting the text presupposes locating the link which the words therein have with the structure of the text.
140 The fact that the story is narrated via the third person/omniscient narration does not make it illogical to use
141 first person pronouns; the narrator uses these pronouns to make reference to the exact words of The Messenger.
142 The narrator uses Informative speech act as a constative (See Austin 1962) to state that corruption pervades the
143 society. Also, the utterance, "Have they been to the police?" is an indirect speech act (question) used satirically
144 7 .

145 Abrams (1981:62) evolves the "showing" and "telling" methods of characterization in narratives. We note
146 that the stylistic potency of the telling method over the showing or dramatic method is that the former affords
147 a writer the opportunity to enact his evaluative remarks on the actions and utterances of the characters as the
148 story unfolds whereas the latter only leaves the reader making inferences or deductions from what the characters
149 say and do 8 . In exploring the advantages which the telling method affords the writer, the omniscient point of
150 view enables the writer to capture a wide range of characterization possibilities as he clings to his didactic and
151 thematic concerns.

152 **9 Corpus 3:**

153 "checking the coins against the tickets, he began to count the morning's take. It was mostly what he expected
154 at [?] was certainly easier, but at the same time not as satisfactory as in the swollen days after pay day" (p.1).

155 **10 VI.**

156 **11 Reminiscence**

157 The term "reminiscence" refers to the use of recall as a narrative strategy as it applies to the experiences of the
158 characters. In the novel, we are aware of what has been the past experience of people in Ghana shortly and late
159 after salaries have been paid. The experiences being narrated may be that of a particular character or a society.
160 However, the use of reminiscence connects the reader with the plot and characterization. Through reminiscence
161 we are informed on page 95 about the unfortunate experience of Zacharias Lagos who for a period of time enjoyed
162 the "booty" of his job before he was caught.

163 **12 Corpus 4:**

164 Zacharias Lagos, living so long here that he had forgotten he was ever a Nigerian. Working for a Sawmill and
165 getting, in the days of pounds and shillings, ten pounds twelve a month? when he was caught people called him
166 a good, generous man, and cursed the jealous man who had informed on him.

167 **13 VII.**

168 **14 Temporal Abridgement**

169 The time gap between occurrences in some narrations are not indicated, and this is essentially part of verbal
170 artistry. The writer of a novel uses temporal abridgement to curb inflated suspense and engage the reader's
171 deductive reasoning (inferencing) 9. For example, we do not read about the various experiences or developments
172 that revolve around Zaharias Lagos' disposition at his work place, before we are suddenly told that he was
173 eventually caught. In abridging time and ignoring durational happenings, the writer leaves the readers pondering
174 on possible developments.

175 **15 Corpus 5:**

176 There would always be only one way for the young to reach the glean? eating the fruits of fraud (p.95).

177 **16 VIII.**

178 **17 Metaphor**

179 Through the use of figures of speech, literature takes language to a higher dimension, using it to seduce and
180 enchant. Scholarship acknowledges that the goals of the literary artist include teaching the readers and appealing
181 to their sense of linguistic admiration. In The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, we see the writer's aesthetic
182 matrix in the use of the following figures of speech:

183 We note that in narrations, metaphors are ideologies-built images 10. ??brams (1975) opines that in a metaphor
184 a word, which in standard (literal) usage denotes one kind of thing, [?] instead of comparison".

185 In the text below the tenor of the metaphor is "fruit" while the vehicle is "fraud":

186 It is obvious that images are instruments of metaphorical expressions, and they are tied to writers' authorial
187 statements. In playing with the reader's sense of hearing (phonological features) through the choice of the
188 words "fruits" and "fraud", Armah is theme-driven; "fruits of fraud" is thematically appropriate as stylistic
189 unusual collocates because the central message of the novel is "that corruption pervades the society". Another
190 metaphorical device in the novel is thus: Corpus 6:

191 Outside, the sight of the street itself raised thoughts of the reproach of loved ones, coming in silent sounds
192 that ate into the mind in wiry spirals and stayed there circling in tightening rings, never letting go (p.35).

193 The extract above shows the linguistic prowess of the author who relies on metaphor in capturing the intense
194 concern which the character has for his povertystricken nuclear family members. Literal language may not be
195 able to convey the atmosphere which the use of "silent sounds that [?] wiry spirals and stayed? in tightening
196 rings [?]" conveys in the text 11 .

197 **18 Corpus 7:**

198 ? coming in silent sounds that ate into the mind in wiry spirals and stayed there? (p.35) IX.

199 **19 Personification**

200 The use of the expressions "silent sounds that ate" and "[?] and stayed" is a transfer of inanimate attributes
201 (personification) to the abstract noun, "sounds".

202 Rhetorical elements in The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born perform dual functions: they convey speakers'
203 illocutionary goals and create linguistic flavour 12. The following rhetorical devices abound in the narration:
204 ??orpus 8: These were the men who had finally, and so early, so surprisingly early, seen enough of something in
205 their own lives and in the lives around them to convince them of the final, futility of efforts to break the mean
206 monthly cycle of debt and borrowing, borrowing and debt (pp. 21 & 22).

207 **20 X.**

208 **21 Repetition**

209 Although repetition is capable of phonological effects in literary works, it concretizes and draw readers' attention
210 to writers' message; repetition is for emphasis. The elements which exemplify repetition in the above extract
211 are the alternated ("debt and borrowing", "borrowing and debt"). The writer uses this device to capture the
212 "repeated" experiences (cycle) and practices of the people of Ghana during Passion Week.

213 **22 Corpus 9:**

214 "Have they been to the police?" 'To help them get their money?" (p.18) XI.

215 **23 Rhetorical Questions**

216 We note that rhetorical questions are used in the narration as a result of the linguistic presuppositions which the
217 characters have with one another, or as a result of writer-reader shared linguistic presuppositions. Rhetorical
218 questions in the novel are theme-laden and are indirect speech acts. The decoder of Corpus 9 understands it as
219 an indirect speech act13.

220 **24 Corpus 10:**

221 So the conductor had not lowered his eyes. Instead he had kept them fastened to the hungry eyes of the giver
222 of the cedi, and fed them with admiration. He had softened his own gaze the better to receive the masculine
223 sharpness of the giver's stare (p.2).

224 References are words whose meanings can only be discussed by referring to other words in the text, e.g. person
225 pronouns. As references, the person pronouns "his" and "he" in Corpus 10 refer to "the conductor".

226 **25 Corpus 11:**

227 Have you ever seen a bigman without girls? Even the old ones,' the seller laughs, 'even the old men' (p.37).

228 **26 a) Substitution**

229 Stylistic features are crucial in effective communication 15 . There is clausal substitution on Corpus 11 as the
230 encoder has omitted "even the old ones have girl friends" without communication breakdown. He had opened his
231 mouth slightly so that the smile that had a gape in it would say to the boastful giver, 'Yes man. You are a big
232 man.' And he had fingered the coins in his bag, and in the end placed in the giver's hand a confusing assortment
233 of coins whose value was far short of what he should have given. The happy man has just dropped the coins into
234 his shirt pocket. He had not even looked at them (p.3).

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236 **28 b) Conjunction**

237 Halliday et al (1971) evolves four categories of conjunctions 16 : and in all this time he met no one (additive).
238 Yet he was hardly aware of being tired (adversative). So by night the valley was far below (causal). Then, so
239 dusk fell, he sat down to rest (temporal) -(Halliday, p. 239).

240 **29 Different kinds of conjunctions are on Corpus 12:**

241 so that the smile that had a gape [?] (causal) -And he had fingered the coins [?] (additive)
242 Corpus 13:

243 "In this office the clerks go home at fourthirty."Oh, I know,' the teeth said. 'I know, but I thought he would
244 stay after work" (28).

245 **30 c) Lexical Cohesion (Usual Collocates)**

246 We find the piling up of usual collocates: "office" "work" and "clerk" as in Corpus 13.

247 **31 Corpus 14:**

248 Money Sweet Pass All Who Born Fool Socialism Chop Make I Chop Courtney Broke? You Broke Not So?...
249 Pray For Detention Jailman Chop Free (P.105-106) d) Pidgin Elements Pidgin English elements are partly used
250 to give the work lighter tone or comic effect, but they are elements that subtly put the reader on sober reflection;
251 they are used to lampoon social vices and make allusions 17 .

252 **32 Corpus 15:**

253 [?] the conductor walks away down the road. In a few moments the waiters can hear the sound of his urine
254 hitting the clean-your-city can. He must be aiming high. Everyone relaxes visibly. The poor are rich in patience.
255 The driver in his turn jumps down and follows the conductor to the heap. His sound his much more feeble (p.39).

256 **33 e) Digression**

257 A narrative technique, digression aligns conversational turns with the mainstream of the narration. Armah uses
258 digression to draw the readers' attention to his authorial positions. Through the omniscient narrative device,
259 digression is used to concretize and reinstate the thrust of the narration 18 .

260 By successfully hitting the clean-your-city-can, the conductor represents the Ghanaians whose inordinate
261 ambition informs corruption and lack of uprightness in that society. This conductor's disregard for the law,
262 informed by his awareness that the formulators of the law, "that the city should be cleaned", are themselves
263 polluters (though corruption) of the city, makes him urinate on the clean-your-city-can. In the narration,
264 digression is linguistically and thematically rooted. The writer seems to capture binary representations of people
265 in the society: the rich and the poor; the corrupt and the upright; the smart and the honest 19 . Armah subtly
266 engages the readers into making inferences from the fact that the sound of the driver's urine is feeble unlike that
267 of the conductor.

268 It is therefore of stylistic significance that at different points of the narration, even at unexpected points, the
269 narrator is able to draw the readers' attention to his thematic concerns. Stylistic instruments are used in the
270 novel as a theme-sustenance strategy 20: XII.

271 **34 Conclusion**

272 Fiction presupposes authorial use of diverse narrative techniques, and this process is messagedriven as every
273 literary writer communicates central and subthemes through the agency of linguistic and extralinguistic elements.
274 Thus, Armah succeeds in conveying his thematic pre-occupations in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*.

275 The various stylistic methods the writer uses in the novel: point of view, reminiscence, temporal abridgement,
276 textual cohesive devices, digression, figurative language, among others, interacts with his ideological underpinning
277 on the issue of corruption in society. We note that fiction writers do not just ignore writer-reader shared knowledge
278 even when they make use of the omniscient narration point of view. They align with their audience but stick to
279 their message; achieving these two ends is essentially stylistic prowess. Our effort in this study accentuates the
280 fact that in literary works, meaning transcends the signification for which formal linguistics is known; meaning
281 is taken to be a function of the relationship which this signification and the value these elements take on as
282 elements in a pattern created in the context. Notes 1. Allan (1986) primary and secondary illocutionary acts.
283 In asking, "Have they been to the police, both primary and secondary illocutionary acts are performed, of which
284 the primary act is an illocutionary force of condemning. 8. In this way the analyst can see beyond the writer's
285 spectrum; critiques on various literary works have been illuminating to their authors. 9. See Ahmed in Fakuade
286 (1998:36-37). 10. Levinson (1983) opines that metaphors have deleted predicates of similarities; we note that
287 this amplifies their potentials to capture narrator's thematic concerns in prose narratives, and in other genres of
288 literature. 11. See Fakuade (1998:85). 12. However, the former is more crucial to communication via speaking
289 or writing. 13. Fakuade (1998:17) posits "that language use (style) is governed by a wide range of contextual
290 factors, including social and physical circumstances, identities, attitudes, abilities and beliefs of participants and
291 relations holding or supposed to be holding between participants". 14. Linguistic presuppositions are semantic
292 (lexemedependent) while extra-linguistic presuppositions are pragmatic (social context-driven); Adegbija (1999)
293 is illuminating in this regard. 15. It is understood therefore, why scholars opine "that style and content are
294 inseparable". 16. See Osisanwo (2003). 17. In fiction, allusions are made to individuals and societal practices,
295 and in doing this, writers and textual characters rely on the belief that such stylistic choices are understood; the
296 choices have potentials to pick events that relate to them from the world. In Searle (*Ibid.*), this is word-to-world
297 direction of fit as in assertives. 18. We see how the conductor's action was taken up and related to the sub-themes
298 of the novel through the digressive technique indexed by the expressions "He must be aiming high" and "The
299 poor are rich in patience" which seem to disconnect from the topic of discourse. 19. The conductor is in the
300 category of those who are smart, corrupt and dishonest. 20. There is progression in narration when the plot
301 and message are located and held unto by the readers. Irrespective of the narrative strategy employed by the
302 novelist, the beginning and end of the story should not be bereaved of his thematic preoccupation (s).

303 XIII.

304 **35 Works Cited**

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¹ Author: Department of Language and Communication Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Federal University, Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State, Nigeria. e-mail: actualemike@gmail.com

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Figure 1:

”what” is said and ”how” it is said; however, the informants of these two ends are ”contextual variables” which are dynamic.

3. The characters in a narrative, like the omniscient narrator, hinge on context for normative (linguistic) appropriateness. For more insights on context phenomena, see Austin (1962). According to him, the total speech acts in the total speech situation, is the only actual phenomenon worthy of the analyst’s investigation.
4. Fiction is preoccupied with the dialectics of social reality. This is crucial as literature does not exist in a vacuum; it is a product of the writer’s existential experiences.

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contends that literary writers succeed in their work when the readers are able to locate the writers’ world -spoken -of. This position captures Bach and Harnish (1979) who opine that in a

linguistic community (of course Ghana, the setting of Armah’s novel counts as a linguistic community) effective communication is achieved when speakers

[Note: © 2014 Global Journals Inc. (US) -A Stylistic Appraisal of Ayi Kwei Armah’s the Beautiful Ones are not yet Born and hearers have mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs). We also note that writers of literary works communicate with what Bch and Harnish label CP (Communicative Presumption). 2. Leech’s view of style as the dress of thought (Cf. Leech 1981:3) makes it clear that the concern of persuasive speech is the relationship between]

Figure 2:

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