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RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN THE NOVELS OF CHINUA ACHEBE

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other University or Institution.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the rhetorical strategies utilized by Chinua Achebe in creating his five novels: *Things fall Apart, No longer at Ease, Arrow of God, A Man of the People* and, *Anthills of the Savannah*. Focusing on stylistic elements in the novels, the study acknowledges that Achebe adopts a deliberate method of telling the story so as to achieve particular effects. The critical approach accounts for the author's awareness of his craft and audience. Utilizing theories of rhetoric, there is an effort to reconcile the uniqueness of strategies adopted and their intended political, emotional, linguistic, and intellectual effects on the reader. The integration of theory and reflections on style leads us to recognize that Achebe did not just write for writing sake; he had a deliberate persuasive intention. In the process of accounting for this relationship between the style and the reader, this study strives to identify the textual elements that establish the patterns in the discourse sequences in which each of the novels of Achebe is organized by examining the rules of the text's generative systems; the particular conventions on how the Achebe texts generate sense/meaning. The word strategy in this study has military connotations implying the direction of movements or operations in a literary campaign; both artistic and ideolological. Each of the Achebe novels is seen as a literary maneuver that has a name and a justification for the categorization in rhetorical terms. The compositional ingredients that characterize the novels are sought out and, at the same time, their relation to typical usages and their singular uniqueness and purpose for use stressed. In the end the study attempts to trace and account for the developmental patterns and shifts of emphasis in the storytelling strategies in the novels of Chinua Achebe in an endeavor to evaluate whether the style the author adopts is integral to his worldview and instructive to the reader.

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I say immense thanks to God.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Alice Nduku (my lovely daughter).

ALISO

You have made me learn a lot.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Opening Remarks

In studies about the African novel, it is inevitable to invoke the name of Chinua Achebe. Since the publication of *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, Achebe is regarded as the father of the modern African novel in English. There is a lot of writing about the author which has resulted largely from the thematic problems raised by his works.

There is a tendency in such scholarship to avoid a close analysis of the art of the Achebe text itself. The features in the texts that assert a unique way of stating the point have generally been glossed over.

For each text, the writer has a method or methods that he utilizes to fulfill the readers' expectations (emotive and metalingual). The present study is an attempt to account for the methods adopted by Achebe to give his novels a distinctive style of expression.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Achebe's novels have persistently been read against the political and cultural debates that they apparently address. This practice has gradually overwhelmed the permanent fact that Achebe is first and foremost an artist. This quality is the most distinctive and enduring feature about the author. The present study seeks to prioritise stylistic elements in the novels, especially, the rhetorical strategies that the author uses to make his works have their distinguishing aesthetic qualities and effects.

The discourse elements that the author utilizes in crafting the narrator, characters, themes and setting are imperative in understanding the novels. There is need to explore the process that Achebe uses to create these narrative variables and the method of meaning creation which is what the study of rhetoric is about. The place of the reader also needs to be adequately established. This requires an examination of the construction elements that mark the intersection of rhetorical practices and imagined audience.

The dialectical function of language in African literature has been noted by commentators of African literature. Ngugi wa Thiong'o has addressed the question in *Decolonizing the Mind (1986).*Concerning Achebe, his style of writing has been read as a discourse that attempts to adapt to the politics of change from the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial politics. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin have examined this factor in *The Empire Writes Back.* Chinwe Christiana Okechukwu in her *Achebe the Orator* has conducted a study on Achebe's epistemic power of oratory in advancing his arguments about the African encounter with the West.

These studies portray Achebe as an artist involved in the salvage of Africa's mutilated ego. Such a methodology in the study of the novels represents an appreciation of how literature can be a tool for fighting the inferiority and subordination of the African personality from the confines of the colonial process. The novels of Achebe have thus been largely treated as disguised politics and anthropology.

While acknowledging that literature can be of service to cultural and political debates, the present study of the rhetorical strategies in the novels of Chinua Achebe contends that there is

need to recognize what is literary from what is polemical and hence, the need to engage in a systematic and analytical attention to the style of the language of the text itself.

1.2 Objectives

The study sets out to achieve the following:

- Identify the style used by the author in creating his texts.
- Ascertain how the style works to produce a particular meaning and effect.
- Highlight the signaled role of the reader in the meaning creation process.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

While reading the novels of Chinua Achebe one will contend that there is a conscious procedure of meaning-creation at work. This process depends on the author's manipulation of the available linguistic material for artistic ends. A study of the modes of presentation used by Achebe in his novels acknowledges that he adopts a function to language for the effect he intends his works to persuade. Thus, his novels speak to us with particular effects.

These effects are delineated as persuasion, emotional effect, and clarity. This is the area of rhetoric. Chinua Achebe then is taken in this study as a craftsman who is deliberately selecting words and, through conscious arrangement, generating the rhetorical force intended for any sentence. Such a reading would expose the novels to qualities that make them fit into a particular genre yet, simultaneously, extrapolate the uniqueness of their style.

It is thus important that we understand the forces directing Achebe in his particular usage of language. Aristotle, in *The Poetics*, has recognized this notion of genres or kinds of literature and the reader's expectation of each. If any text creates an effect upon a reader, it is because it is manipulating--not merely meeting--the reader's expectations. The study of Achebe from such a standpoint, therefore, would be interested in the styles he employs and their effect to the communicativeness of the novels. Style derives from familiar usage arranged for special effect and thus, there is need to investigate the different and special usages employed by Achebe in an effort to create a particular attitude to the reader.

1.4 Scope

The study will focus on Achebe's five novels namely, *Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease, Arrow of God, A Man of the People,* and *Anthills of the Savannah.* The novels constitute the primary material of investigation. Achebe's essays will be referred to since in them he gives direct explanations of his artistic bias. However, it is in the novel where he executes the claims he makes in the essays through the creation of characters, scenes and situations that embody his artistic and socio-political vision. To a reader a novel provides an illusion of life rather than the essay whose rhetoric is polemic and less subtle.

Principally, the research will revolve around the strategies used by Achebe to create character; it will dwell on the style of creation of the novels' heroes, since, all the novels of Achebe except *Anthills of the Savanna* have a dominant central character around whom the action revolves. In the novels Achebe is able to trace the development of a character over a substantial period of history and this gives him an opportunity to explore their world view against a living career

unlike in his short stories where he concentrates on a single event in a character's life. Thus though he has created enduring short stories the discourse that his novels avail is more suited for an appraisal of rhetorical strategies because in the novel, it is possible to thoroughly interrogate a word view from many angles: in a bid to persuade a reader to adopt an abiding attitutude towards the subject.

1.5 Definition of Terms

It is appropriate to define some terms as used in this work because while some are familiar in daily usage, their application in literary criticism demands that their treatment be contextualized. Some of these are:

1.5.1 Archeological Approach

This is a kind of writing which takes emphasis on ethno-archaeological and related research. This is occasioned by the absence of universal interpretive principles. An archaeological interpretation takes into account the essential specificity and local nature of cultural situations.

1.5.2 Carnivalesque

This term refers to a fictional approach that subverts the assumptions of the dominant technique or impression through humour and chaos. It is associated with the writings of the Russian critic Mikhail Bhakhtin who in *The Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* and *Rabelais and his World* likens carnivalesque in literature to the type of activity that takes place in typical carnivals of popular culture. In these festivals, social hierarchies of everyday life are profaned by voices and energies hitherto suppressed. In a novel it is characterised by an endless testing of ideas and a

demand for dialogic equality. The novel in this context functions as a site of resistance to authority and a location where possible political and cultural change can take place. Thus there can be carnivalization in literature which involves familiar and free interaction between people, the welcoming of eccentric behaviour, carnivalistic misalliances or the uniting of categories normally separated for example young and old, heaven and hell and the allowing of sacrilegious events to occur without consequences. Bakhtin believed that these are manifested theatrical manifestations of expression in literature. The representations of characters and events in a carnival way are ultimately a function of rhetoric.

1.5.3 Discourse

The term refers to an extended communication dealing with a particular topic. In literature, the study of discourse would refer to the analysis of language use beyond the sentence. Discourse analysis beyond the sentence entails elements of language style and its relationship to the individual author's unique vision. The communicative act in discourse thus presumes the existence of an addresser and an addressee.

However, in literature, the communicative situation is not a straight forward relationship between two parties--the versifier and the interlocutor--where the readers can converge on the writer upon the text--forming the traditional communication triangle. The text itself creates a narrative persona--quite distinct from the author--and the context may represent not one perspective or point of view, but several. These differences are achieved through voicing and the author's choice of expression and its method of articulation. In our study the term Discourse is not, solely restricted to linguistic features but also extra-textual context of communication in which meaning

is generated. This will inevitably draw in the historical and cultural context against which the novels were written.

1.5.4 Rhetoric

The traditional conception of rhetoric is two pronged. On the one hand, it examines how language persuades and uses style to articulate what could be said differently. On the other hand, it is the study of the nature of language--the rules, figures and tropes--that govern a particular 'speech act' rather than ornamentation to meaning. Paul De Man in his *Semiology of Rhetoric* advocates for the second view and it dispenses with eloquence or persuasion. However this is done in grammar and not in literary criticism.

Such a methodology to the study of an author as persuasive and eloquent as Achebe would be disingenuous since it fails to acknowledge the nature of literary activity where aesthetic elements are indispensable. This is justified by the reflection that the use of language--and more so in literature--is determined by three variables: grammar, rhetoric, and usage. While grammar is the study of what is permissible in a particular language, rhetoric is the art of what is effective. The artist, to achieve a desired effect, must manipulate the usage and seek the most effective rhetoric for usage. Achebe can thus be seen as occupying the place of a user of a language whose grammar is known but which has to be modified for the desired aesthetic effect.

Remembering that a rhetorical question does not really intend an answer, one may unconsciously stigmatize rhetoric as suspiciously sophistical. For this reason, the word is likely to be associated in our memories with elocutionary posturing and floweriness of speech.

Traditionally, rhetoric meant the art of oratory. Gradually, it came to mean the art or science of persuasion. Since it is apparent that we all use language to persuade--ourselves as well as others--in so far as we have a hearer or a reader, we seek to influence someone to take a certain attitude toward what we say. Therefore, all the marshalling of an argument, the structuring of a statement, the shaping of a paragraph, the choosing of a word toward a purposeful end is rhetoric. The foregoing suggests that while the author is aware of what the grammar of a language permits, one makes an effort create the best effect in communication. Rhetoric is therefore style with a purpose.

1.5.5 Manicheanism

Manicheanism is widely applied as a philosophy or attitude of moral dualism describing the struggle between a good spiritual world of light and an evil material world of darkness. Originally it was a Gnostic religion founded by the Iranian prophet Mani. The word Manichean has come to mean dualistic presenting or viewing of issues in a black and white fashion.

1.5.6 Monologism and Dialogism

The word monologism is associated with single mindedness. It is a position of consciousness that is finalized and deaf to the others responses. Dialogism on the other hand recognizes the existence of another voice(s) and point of view which is eclectic.

1.6 Literature Review

The immensity of critical works on the novels of Chinua Achebe demands that the present study should take its discrimination right from the outset. The corpus is expressly on writings that critique Achebe and his style. The justification for this is borne out of the need to remind ourselves that we are dealing with Achebe the craftsman. This leaning is inspired by an interest in the artistic process from which other attendant literary variables spring. Expressing his relationship to his subjects and his location within context in *Morning Yet on Creation Day,* Achebe says:

> One arm of the cross we sang hymns and read the Bible night and day. On the other my father's brother and his family, blinded by heathenisms offered food to idols. That was how it was supposed to be anyhow. *But I knew without knowing why, that it was too simple a way to describe what was going on…* What I do remember was a fascination for ritual and the life on the other arm of the crossroads. And I believe two things were in my favour – that curiosity, and the little distance imposed between me and it by the accident of my birth. The distance becomes not a separation but a bringing together *like the necessary step a judicious viewer may take in order to see a canvas fully and steadily*. (65).

The writer's admission here tallies with what many readers of his texts experience**: ‘‘**that they know what is going on without knowing why." More importantly, the writer's reflection is even more succinct: "that it was too simple a way to describe it." This is a reflection of a writer who sees his role as that of a responsible rhetorician, capable of capturing the subject with its proper

rhetorical insinuation. From the same extract, the author talks of a *judicious viewer* taking a step back to *see the canvas steadily and fully*. The last part is a comment about an aesthetically calculating mind. It invites the reflection that the author is interested in the *how* the text works.

According to Achebe, 'Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten'. (5**).** Proverbs are idiosyncratic usages and the interpreter of the strange must first reduce the strange and incongruous, and even attitude--that is not obvious or agreeable--by giving it a name, like proverb, irony. Naming helps readers in confirming rather than abusing their expectations. Achebe's novels are preponderant with proverbs and deviations. That Achebe succeeds in so doing suggests that he is conscious of his craft and not merely his subject.

Taban Lo Liyong's directive in the preface to *The Uniformed Man* is highly instructive on the kind of attitude a critic would lend to African literature. He says that:

> Rather than approach a story or a novel with the usual outlook, looking for introduction, exposition, rising action etc., up to the climax, you just concentrate on each word, phrase, or sentence and learn what it has to say or admire the way it is put together, or get the titillation from it. Don't postpone your enjoyment to the end. (pp.xii -xxiii)

This reflection, though general about literature, has the structure and meaning of individual syntactic units in mind. It reminds the reader that there is a function to the presence and arrangement of even the basic syntactic unit, the word, and thus, there is enjoyment of the process that need not be sacrificed or postponed in our quest to isolate moral values or themes.

This further suggests that there is need to conduct a critical evaluation of the process at work in the creation of the novel.

In this regard, Berth Lindfors comments that Achebe is a disciplined craftsman in full control of his art (3). He refers to the writer as 'a gifted ventriloquist', who is capable of differentiating his characters by individuating their speech (4). Achebe's simulation of the African idiom in the speeches of Obierika (*Things Fall Apart),* Ezeulu and Nwaka, *(Arrow of God)* and the Chairman of The Umuofian Progressive Society (*No Longer at Ease*) are rhetorical devices worth noting. Further, Lindfors explains the appropriateness of ending *A Man of the People* with a military coup by calling this device "a literary parable". By so doing, he elevates the text from a mere prophesy on Nigerian history to a device capturing a sense of history. We note here that it is very important to go beyond the name of the device and expose its significance as a tool for communication. Thus, it is not adequate to simply isolate the rhetorical devices without linking them to the attitude the author intends to persuade the reader to adopt.

Declaring that Achebe through *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* has succeeded in striking a tragic note, Abiola Irele identifies Okonkwo's inflexibility as a mark of his tragic flaw. The interest is on character in tragedy and not how it has been presented. The function of the author's style is important since there is a method that tragedy uses to communicate to readers. As Aristotle has pointed out in *The Poetics,* tragedy is not merely what happens but more importantly how it is created by the author. We therefore need to account for the method which makes *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* tragedies.

In an attempt to show that the texts of Achebe can be read closely and within context, David Cook, in his analysis of *Things Fall Apart*, observes that, the text is an epic achievement in which the whole is greater than the parts (65). Cook means that the different parts of the text cannot be appreciated out of context. In his interpretation of the stature of Okonkwo, he explores the paradoxes that define the epic character. A rhetorical appraisal of such a study would not be adequate without considering the author's chosen attitude and his assumed audience. The ending of *Things Fall Apart* with the District Commissioner's derogatory and diminutive assessment of Okonkwo's status invites such a reading.

While observing that Achebe is discussed more than any other African novelist, Simon Gikandi posits that his works constitute important interpretive spaces. Gikandi further points out that "nevertheless Achebe has suffered the misfortune of being taken for granted" (2). His complaint is that the very intricate and deep structures informing the Achebe narratives are rarely examined. The critic is calling upon for engagement with what he calls "the problematics of the text" (2).

Further, Gikandi argues that in every novel Achebe has written to date, what we know about the culture of the Igbo or the Nigerians in general is less important than how we know it. These reflections are issuing from a mind conscious of the effect of language, writer, reader, text and narrative strategies, the threshold of rhetoric. His theoretical position is borrowed from Edward Said's *Orientalism*: a method that prioritizes narration and nationalism. Gikandi is thus urging us to study the effect of language on the writer and the reader which is a stylistic problem.

In an interview with Robert Serumaga, Achebe was asked if he had done any research in the history of the society before writing *Things Fall Apart.* Serumaga wondered whether Achebe could describe the way he worked with language to create an impression of authenticity in the way his characters speak or in his creation of Igbo-English transliterations. Achebe pithily responded to the negative.

However, he contended that there is a way he could feel that one way of describing things was right and another one not. A reading of *Things Fall Apart* would suggest to the reader that the narrator has at his disposal a cultural manual with a handbook for example on masculinity with notions of who is man and woman amongst the Igbo. It also suggests that the author has at his disposal a psychological treatise about Igbo views on fear and love, among other things, to define Okonkwo. Achebe seems to have had a compendium of Igbo ethics and anthropology of Igbo proverbs and maxims. This suggests that the author had a cultural reference on Igbo art as his foundation for writing his novels.

Charles Nnolim has conducted a criticism of Achebe's *Arrow of God* and with some reasonable arguments against complacency tried to trace the source material for the text. Using considerable chunks of 'evidence' from an unpublished pamphlet by Simon Alagbony Nnolim entitled *The History of the Umuchu*. He claims that Achebe lifted everything--almost verbatim--from this text which predates *Arrow of God* by thirteen years. However invaluable such investigations could be, the problems of source-study in literature ought not to be used to devalue the author's creative efforts and the ability to breathe life into material hitherto non-fictional. If *Arrow of God*

springs from a non-fictional source, it becomes even more imperative to study the nature of the rhetoric used in the fictional transformation.

C. L. Inness' response to Nnolim is more of a reading aimed at safeguarding Achebe's reputation but it indicates that a whole range of comments can be made on Achebe's art without necessarily disparaging or praise singing A rhetorical appraisal of this novel would grant it a distanced reflection if the text is to be recognized as a generative composition. More importantly, one is bound to speculate that Achebe has at his disposal the kind of artistic interpretation that his material would permit. The rhetorical appreciation would focus attention to the method and the narrative and not merely to the source material.

In an incisive but scarcely elaborate comment on the language and Action in the Novels of Chinua Achebe, Gareth Griffiths has summed up that the earlier texts (*Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God*) are examples of autobiography of self-definition. According to Griffiths, for Achebe: ''The very choice of language involves him in a deliberate public stance; his use of dialect or of phrases in his native language are cultural as well as rhetorical devices, while his movement from one register to another in the recording of speech is a direct sociological comment.'' (70). Though such a comment is apt, the critic concentrates on giving the history of Achebe's rhetoric. He says that *Things Fall Apart* is Achebe's elaboration of the 'depth and value and beauty' of Igbo life using the tools gained in the act of destroying it (70). He sees *No longer of Ease* as the distance between what is defined as the inadequacy of the proverbial language to function effectively in a world whose demands are phrased in directly opposed terms (ibid). Commenting on Achebe's technical shift in A *Man of the People* from the

direct intervention of the narrator and the proverbial commentary as major controlling rhetorical devices, Griffith documents Achebe's next level of rhetorical growth through Odili Samalu's observation on the speech habits of the Nanga family.

> Mr. Nanga always spoke English or Pidgin. His children, whom I discovered went to expensive private schools, run by European ladies, spoke impeccable English, but Mrs. Nanga stuck to our language – with the odd English word thrown in now and then. (79)

The critic argues that this is the dilemma which Achebe faces by being isolated from one simple allegiance to any one culture. He succeeds in tracing the historical development of Achebe's rhetoric. It is also important to account for the transition from the author to the intended readers within the context of literary history. In rhetoric, we assume that there is a writer initializing the process and a reader at the reception.

The tragic ramifications of the traditional social code that Okonkwo epitomizes are what Solomon O. Iyasere studies in his "Narrative Techniques in *Things Fall Apart."* (477) Iyasere's study develops an argument through a juxtaposition of the actions and values that bring out the ironies and paradoxes of the Umuofia society all around one character, Okonkwo. The limiting of his study to a mere duality of values as the sole method of meaning evaluation oversimplifies the complex Achebe idiom. This first reading response is similar to that of Donald Weinstock and Cathy Ramadan who suggest that the childhood story of the quarrel between earth and sky, a fable told to Nwoye by his mother, forms the basic reference in meaning generation. Just one fable cannot--despite its symbolic and allusive power--form the threshold of a text's semantic

force. When C L. Innes contends that Achebe's art is "ever so concealed" (140), he is appealing to our appreciation of the cryptic possibilities suggested by the ironies, allusions, aversions and confluences in the Achebe texts. The finality of Weistock and Ramadan needs to be debunked by following the cues of Innes. Criticism of the Achebe text would do well to see the texts as systems and structures of meaning rather than mere transcription of one form of expression into another. This contention is inspired by the reading of A.G. Stock who seems to suggest that when put beside Yeats *The Second Coming" Things Fall Apart* derives its meaning on analogy. Such a claim would suggest that Achebe's novel can be studied by relating it to other texts from which it springs. The formal logic of the poem by Yeats would be a starting point in understanding Achebe's rhetorical indebtedness.

Achebe's use of details, what or the "supporting scenery of a story", informs Bu-Buakei Jabbi's reflection that 'this probably helps to attain structural coherence or perhaps helps to create a distinctive quality to the society being described. (139) This critic further observes that, Achebe used the same background utilized in *Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart* to write about the same society yet produce stories which are different. This kind of criticism acknowledges Achebe's sense of setting. Achebe's background information and the story in the texts is not mere anthropological patching. We need to account for the societal codes and symbols since it is part and parcel of the whole aesthetic scheme that has to be amalgamated in studies seeking for a thorough appreciation of the texts' rhetoric.

A thematic reading of Achebe's texts easily obscures the aesthetic angle as is evident in Felicity Riddy's analysis of Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*. She agrees that language is one of Achebe's

major themes. She invites us to investigate the reasons why language is related to values. Since English and Igbo are not merely different ways of saying the same thing, one is bound to account for the expression of the different attitudes towards life that each particular usage claims. For example, Obi is disillusioned ostensibly since he cannot linguistically size up the situation comprehensively. He is laconic in his use of the English language and yet, his command of the Igbo lore is faltering. Upon his return, he seems unable to muster the use of any of these two languages which is symptomatic of an inability to gain control of his situation**.** No wonder he fails. This seems to be Riddy's conclusion. The author's assignment of a paradoxical linguistic facility to his major protagonist in the text suggests that language forms character and the rhetorical implications of a speech act need to be studied.

Much misreading of Obi Okonkwo's role in Achebe's rhetorical commitment has been occasioned by the expectation among critics that this latter-day Okonkwo is supposed to be the character who finally manages a synthesis of his Igbo origin and exposure to Western education. Such an expectation emerges from the fact that there are some elements in Achebe's early novels (*Things fall Apart* and *No longer at Ease*) to suggest a sequel. The sequel inspired readings may assist in tracing the affinities and departures of rhetoric.

The perceptive philosophical reading of Roderick Wilson traces Achebe's dependence to T.S. Eliot's *Journey of the Magi*, *The Wasteland and The Hollow Men.* (160) Wilson promises in the introduction to dwell upon the conflict between traditional beliefs and Christianity. This recourse is afforded by the deceptive simplicity of Achebe's texts. The technical devices informing T.S. Eliot are important in understanding the writings of Achebe that have been inspired by the

former. Emmanuel Obiechina notes that, "Achebe's handling of his subject matter in *Arrow of God* has immortalized historical realities that the characters face in 'Africa's relentless drama with the West'. His study is humanistic in that it is interested with the historical dimension of the text. The drama between Africa and the west is not only historical but also artistic. M.M. Mahood, picking up from where Obiechina left gives us an image laden statement about Achebe's art.

> Furthermore, four years later, *Arrow of God* showed the horse to be alive and kicking and Achebe, very much in the saddle. Here was a taut, nervous prose, a real stylistic advance on the rather static archaisms of *Things Fall Apart* and the nerveless English colloquialism of *No longer at East* (sic). It reflects a society in which words still have inherent power and have not yet become arbitrary labels. (202)

The critic's sentiments to begin with are quite journalistic and pompously so. Mahood does not even go ahead to account for the "nervous prose", "a real stylistic advance", "static colloquialisms" or "nerveless English". It is this kind of reading that stylistic analyses of Achebe may pick from and give an account of the author's rhetorical development.

Robert Wren has attempted a comparative study of *Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God* and Joyce Carry's *Mr. Johnson.* He invents the term 'pleiotropism' as a metaphor to describe the way a single aberrant or mutated gene produces a living monster. In Mr. Johnson's road, the aberrant game is simple. However in the Achebe novel, it is multifaceted. Achebe has expressed disgust towards Joyce Cary's *Mr. Johnson* and critics ought to account for the artistic differences that make Achebe write against Cary.

David Carroll attempts a character study of the protagonists of *A Man of the People* and demonstrates the way the 'idealist' Odili Samalu is pitted against the 'realist' Chief the Honorable M.A Nanga, M.P. Carroll's study is inspired by the problems of political morality that these two characters engender. His study is grounded on the proverb about a man taking things away until the owner finally notices. Carroll's study shows that even a proverb can be a reference point of narrative construction. In commenting on rhetorical shift from third person narration to the first person point of view, executed in the novel, Carroll posits:

> Now the conflict of values is reflected in the technique of narration. In *A Man of the People* the dialectic is pressed upon us continuously as we seek to balance the unreliable narrator against a flawed title-hero he is seeking to denigrate. (257)

The text has for long been read as a political parable and Carroll here is reminding us that the technique of narration is itself a signal to a conflict of values.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o comments on Achebe's role as a teacher. Taking cue from the latter's perception of his responsibility as a novelist, Ngugi shows his concern for the novel's narrator and gives a hint at the new dimension from which Achebe is to be read. He says:

> Now in the new novel, the teacher talks to his people directly. He has lost patience. He retains self-control in that he does not let anger drive him into incorrect rage and wild lashing. Instead he takes his satirical whip and raps his pupils with anger, of course, sometimes with pathos verging on tears, but often with bitterness, though this is hardly discernible because below it flow compassion and zest for life. (280)

This creative commentary, written with the narrator in mind, exposes Ngugi's close reading of the strength and execution of satire in *A Man of the People.* It is thus important to study the strategic stylistic dynamics utilized in achieving these ends. There are signals in the text that can help us study the novel's satirical mode.

Simon Gikandi's deft analysis of *A Man of the People* pays close attention to the ideological environment in which the novel was produced. He sees the text as an attempt to fashion a "...master narrative to explain the post-colonial situation." (105) The highly illuminating study concentrates on the novel's total strategy and a study of individual movements within the text can help construct the ironic discourse of the whole.

The character development of the trio (Sam, Chris Oriko, and Ikem) forms David Carroll's thrust in his analysis of Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah.* This is done against the beckoning of political ideology rather than an artistic casting. The polyphony afforded by the three lead characters is one of Achebe's ambitious acts of literary rhetoric. The multi-voicedness of the text forms an abiding critical interest. Gikandi furthers the argument to the level of hermeneutics. He argues that: "And the initial question to pose here, as a form of entry into Achebe's text, is this. Why does the author need to justify the function of this narrative?" Achebe has adopted polyphony of voice in this narrative and its implications would be a fitting starting point in answering the question posed by Gikandi.

Ezenwa-Oheato evaluates the metaphor of power in the novel and bares the socio-economic implication of symbolism in the text. The critic expounds on matters of choice of form and narration. However, an attitude of hero worship on the part of the critic is preponderant. In *The Biography of Chinua Achebe,* he does a painstaking collection of the journalistic quotations in praise of Achebe and his texts, leaving the reader to suspect that the critic is vouching for a prize on behalf of his subject. Nevertheless, Oheato exposes the fact that the metaphor of power can be understood through the writer's narration strategies.

'Language, Foregrounding and Intertextuality in Anthills of the Savannah' is a deconstructionist article by Omar Sougou that tries to compare Achebe's *Anthills* with his earlier novels, essays and poems. (Hodge, 35) Though the article regrettably does not mention any essay or poem by Achebe, it nonetheless suggests that the language of the book "owes much to intertextuality rather than an independent rhetorical force" (45). It is this suggestion that informs our present interest.

Patricia Allen picks on the theme of the urban African woman and the rhetoric of resistance. Though these Barthian aspects of the 20th century woman foregrounding are legitimate, they endanger the autonomy of the text as an art form. They heavily suggest an activist or propagandist agenda on the part of the artist. In the same league Chimalung Nwanko sees the novel as Achebe's attempt to "soothe ancient bruises by placing Beatrice at the centre of narration". Nwanko argues that this character presence in the text is Achebe's update on the role of the woman in African experience. The critic's tone suggests that the previous Achebe had been a literary male chauvinist- an attitude proffered by many feminist readers of *Things Fall*

Apart, Arrow of God, *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the People*. It is the challenge of our task here to ascertain whether there is rhetoric of chauvinism in the novels of Achebe that *Anthills* seeks sooth.

On a different note, Raoul Granquist reads the novel using the lens that history has assigned the Eurocentric response to the African text. The inevitable mention of Achebe's Igbo background, the Nigerian situation and reformist cultural aesthetics characterizes the commentary, which is an illustration of the need to evaluate the claims of artistic antagonism between the African text and its European counterpart.

D.H. Kiiru's reading of the novels of Achebe is an illustration of how a writer's attitudes and experiences--the social forces--can shape a work of art. His analysis gains impetus from the reflection that writers--specifically Achebe--are known to have opinions (non-literary) about why and how they write. Achebe has previously indicated that he was led into indignation by Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Carey's *Mr. Johnson* among others. *In Home and Exile* the writer says:

> I will begin this segment with a question on what did I do with my experience of classroom rebellion over Mr. Johnson? Anyone familiar with the gossip in African literature may have heard that it was this book that made me decide to write. I am not even sure that I have not said it somewhere myself, in one of these occasional seizures of expansive ambition we have to sum up the whole world in a single, neat metaphor. (37)

Further down, we realize that we have to rely on Achebe's word to get the reasons for his becoming a writer. His attitude towards art and other social fronts that shape his responses in fiction are succinctly captured in *Home and Exile* and this invites us to re-read his novels with an eye upon the style and its function.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

When a concrete performance is to be examined, say a novel, discourse theory will inevitably be utilized. As Philips and Hardy have observed, discourse analysis not only comprises of a set of techniques for conducting structured qualitative investigations, it also involves a set of assumptions concerning the constitutive effects of language. Literary formalism, structuralism, narratology and semiotics will complement it. These theories have a basic interest on how linguistic structures are designed in the text and the effect of such choices to the reader.

As Walter Ong has illustrated, the language of the text constructs an implied reader. In '*The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction*', he argues that, "the writer must construct in his imagination, clearly or vaguely an audience cast in his role". Further, he says, "the audience must correspondingly fictionalize itself". These observations, greatly influenced by T.S. Eliot's *Tradition and Individual Talent* suggest that novels establish an author-reader intimacy by calling upon the latter to adjust to the demands of the writer. This is a narrative requirement inherited from oral performance. During the 19th century writers like Fyodor Dostoyevsky invoked the nervous 'dear reader' to signal their awareness of the reader's role in their text. The practice of assigning a work to its readers is also present in *The Bible* with the gospels

purportedly written to certain people and of course, the letters of Paul to the nations he visited are just reader-tailored.

Texts continually assume a role-playing correspondence. If it were possible to visualize an author talking to the self, there is enough justification to imagine that Achebe conceives a reader in rhetorical signals. This fellowship is inevitable in literary texts. As Stanley Fish has observed, a general assumption in literally history is that of the existence of interpretive communities in which the reader's experience and expectations account for the style the author will adopt in the making of any text. Thus, the narrator in the Achebe text has an attitude towards the narratee. The narrator in the text either supports, attacks, queries or promises the narratee information thereby strongly implying the narratee's character. The caveat here is that the Achebe discourse has a method of producing its own readers if the meaning is to be fully deciphered.

The theoretical push is here geared at combining both text and reader oriented theory. Umberto Eco's *The Role of the Reader*' argues that some texts are open and invite the reader's collaboration in the production of meaning, while others are closed and predetermine the reader's response. Our present activity aims at utilizing a theory that accounts for the codes available to the reader in determining the meaning of the text. This study is ultimately semiotic.

Ferdinand de Saussure observed that constructional acts set into pace rhetorical procedures in texts. Structural features thus contribute to generative processes and inter-relations. However, our theoretical position though stemming from Sausserian-based structuralist theory that describes the literary work as a closed formal network, further proceeds to account for the

relations of the text with its interpreters. This procedure will bring into play extra-textual variables involved in meaning creation.

This approach considers Achebe's art as a distinct form of language that the artist has chosen for a particular purpose. Our theoretical push is taken from Algirdas Julien Greimas, who sees the relationship between narrative entities, and the character of the entities in themselves. This brings us to the structuralist poetics of Jonathan Culler, which states that one must attempt to explain how it is that works can be understood; the implicit knowledge, the conventions that enable readers to make sense of them, and the formulations involved.

However, classical structuralism will not adequately study the whole range of writings by Achebe. A settled or fixed structuration presupposes the creation of hierarchies for example beautiful/ugly categorization. This will tend to privilege one of the two at the expense of another. A thorough interrogation of the hierarchies might undo the structure like the victor/loser categories governing the characterization of Okonkwo and Amalinze in *Things Fall Apart*. It might be discovered that this categorization does not cater adequately for an analysis of meaning creation in the text.

Thus the study will inevitably apply post-structuralist thought. Jean Jacques Lacan's reflections on the strategies of condensation and displacement (originally methods of deciphering dream logic) are added since, even though the writer creates consciously, some tropes pervade his work. These tropes allow Achebe to say one thing but mean something else. Paul. De Man's theorizing on the tropes, which accompany rhetorical treatises, will be utilized. This theory assumes that

language is essentially figurative, and the language that authors use is either for literary or critical purposes. Thus, since language in novels is not literal in reference, we will have to identify with the Bakhtin School whose conception of discourse recognizes language in use.

As the title indicates, my study has to do with the meaning of the term rhetoric in discourse particularly what happens in the novels of Chinua Achebe. Such a theoretical understanding implies the relationships between the discourse and all that produces it. This theoretical approach assumes that the activity of writing leaves in it traces, signs or indices that we can pick up and interpret. These traces are such as the presence of a first-person pronoun to mark the oneness of character and narrator, or the tense of verbs to indicate when the action occurred relative to narrating of the action, not to mention more direct and explicit attempts by Achebe to persuade the reader using signs in the text as intermediaries. It is thus not a study of the narrative but the relationships in narrating: the relationship between the narrative and the story it recounts plus the location of the reader.

Analysis of the novels will thus essentially be a study of the relationships between three categories: the time of the story and the time of the discourse expressed; the way in which the story is perceived by the narrator, and the explicit and explicit presence in the novels of the reader. The adoption of literary theory in this study is thus aimed at giving a reasoned account of the elements of storytelling, their combination and articulation in the novels and their persuasive objective.

1.8 Hypotheses

The study tests the following hypotheses**:** First, when we speak of a style in the Achebe text, one may as well name it identify the parts that make it and specify the features and operational

relations that make it distinctive. Secondly, the discourse of a novel can set out its own testable assumptions and move on to provide the meanings. Thirdly, it is possible then, to account for the function of these stylistic choices in the communicativeness of the Achebe novel.

1.9 Methodology

Research on this project will majorly be library based. The researcher will read the texts of Chinua Achebe as the central focus of analysis. Theoretical works dealing on the topic will be read and reviewed. Internet facilities will be utilized to download journal articles, book length studies and dissertations relevant to the topic. The analytical process will strive to account for the semantic structure of the texts.

There will be three basic inclusions to this task. First, the study will name the rhetorical strategy being employed by the author. The naming will focus on the privileged structure of meaning creation and specify its features. By so doing, the approach will inevitably establish a paradigm class that justifies the choice of the semantic feature that enjoys a privileged position in the structure. The next step will be to view each text as a category writ large, that is, as a strategy for dealing with a situation--both artistic and sociological. The word 'strategy' in this study has military connotations implying the direction of movements or operations in a literary campaign. I will strive to identify the textual elements that establish the patterns in the discourse sequences that work to form a logic of structure in which meaning is organized. Thirdly, the study will not only describe a corpus but also formulate some rules of the texts generative systems. At this level, the study will be aiming at assigning particular conventions on how the Achebe texts generate sense/meaning.

Each of the Achebe texts is seen as a literary maneuver that has a name and a justification for the categorization. The method thus aims at a kind of criticism that codifies the Achebe lore. The compositional ingredients that characterize the Achebe texts will be sought and at the same time, their relation to typical usages and their singular uniqueness in forming a rhetorical inclination for the author and an attitude in the reader.

The strategies used by Achebe to create the heroes and a setting for the action in the texts will form an integral part of inquiry while the voice or point of view adopted in telling the stories will follow. Since the rhetorical circuit involves a source and an addressee, the place of the reader will be accounted for.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MONOLOGIC APPROACH OF HERO CREATION IN *THINGS FALL APART*

2.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the main protagonist of the novel as a product of an act of writing and reading which creates the hero. The chapter looks at the language, the idiom (the technique) that Achebe uses to structure Okonkwo as the central figure *in Things Fall Apart.* The objective is to account for the central character's way of crafting, the strategies utilized to create the hero and the purpose for their use in the novel. The hero is here taken as an act of narrative construction.

Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* has outlined some of the common patterns running through hero myths or the story structure. Campbell calls this common structure the 'monomyth' and he supplies the names for its stages starting with, 'the call to adventure; a stage motivated by the hero's oddity or possession of some ability or characteristic that makes them feel out of place. In Okonkwo's case, his poor background and physical strength forms the motivation for the call to adventure. After heeding this call the hero enters the next stage called 'entering the unknown'. According to Campbell, this stage takes the hero away from 'Home'; the outside world of greatness in Okonkwo's case which has its rules. The test of heroism is learning to respect the rules and their endurance since heroism is in the journey and not in its end. These tests according to Campbell form the 'Supreme Ordeal' which presents the obstacles that the hero has journeyed to overcome and where his power is to be shown. Once this obstacle is overcome, there is a release in tension and relief followed by reward and the journey home. The journey home also presents its homebound obstacles. The hero triumphs and the challenge is to

preserve his original world with the 'elixir' he has achieved through the journey using his body and spirit.

Things Fall Apart does not follow this classical pattern of hero development and actually it is the narrative of a return journey. The narrative starts with the confirmation of Okonkwo's heroism and his reward with recognition plus the responsibility of his custodianship of Ikemefuna, the communal war trophy. Thus a traditional study of heroism would entail a focus on heroic reverse motifs. However, Achebe's story telling interest is on the archetypes appearing in the hero's journey of return. These archetypes that Campbell has called 'threshold guardians' are the forces standing at important turning points of the narrative and its hero. The threshold guardians in Achebe's novel are the traditional and modern gatekeepers and the hero's own fears and doubts. The storyline is thus secondary in this novel as the visible central character-hero is created in a way that his image apparently tends to obscure the traditional monomyth storyline strategy; already, the character is a hero before the commencement of the narrative. The implication is that the telling is beyond the individual character. The interpretation of the hero emerges as the primary rhetorical assignment. It is not the story of an existence but a narrating of a consciousness. Achebe has adopted a monologic strategy of narration. Bakhtin in *The Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, defines this strategy:

> Monologism, at its extreme denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another I with equal rights (thou).With monologic approach (in its extreme pure form) another person remains wholly and merely an object of consciousness, and not another consciousness. No response is

> expected from it that can change anything in the world of my consciousness. Monologue is finalized and deaf to other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any force. Monologue manages without the other, and therefore to some degree materializes all reality. Monologue pretends to be the ultimate word. It closes down the represented world and represented persons (293).

In creating the hero from a monologic position, Achebe presumes that the ultimate word and the truth about Okonkwo have been made and the truth about his (narrator's) world view is closed. There is no open-endedness since the perceiving consciousness is single and unified. The making of the hero is in itself a final result or summation. The author has assumed that Okonkwo's heroism is a definitive conclusion. The text begins with assertions that suggest a final context about the hero in which both the universal (communal) and individual assessment of Okonkwo's heroism are merged, concentrated and resolved within a unitary composition whose motivation is to illuminate the greatness of the character. For this to be sustained, the author has adopted a thesis about Okonkwo.

2.1 The Monologic Thesis

It is imperative that we establish the nature of a thesis and, in particular, the thesis of the hero of *Things Fall Apart*. A thesis is a statement or an opinion that is discussed in a logical way and presented with evidence in order to prove that it is true. It is apparent that a thesis is a strategy of forming the controlling idea in an argument. In rhetorical terms the idea in a novel is its argument. Sheridan Baker in *The Complete Stylist* says the following of the controlling purpose of the essay:

> You can usually blame a bad essay on a bad beginning. If your essay falls apart, it probably has no primary idea to hold it together. What's the big idea? We used to ask. The phrase will serve as a reminder that you must find the big idea behind your several smaller thoughts and musings before you start to write. In the beginning was the *logos*, says the Bible, the idea, the plan, caught in a flash as if in a single word. Find your *logos*, and you are ready to round out your essay and set it spinning (41)

In adopting this definition from an essay, we may say that a thesis in a novel is a general statement that controls the development of literary composition. In other words, it predicts the restricted topic. In *Things Fall Apart,* the thesis for the hero is that: Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villagers and even beyond (1).This sentence may be paraphrased to state that Okonkwo was famous. However, the adjectival qualification 'well known' makes it a subjective formation as it carries a positive undercurrent. This thesis serves to get through irony and twists. It is natural to expect definitive and generative sentences in the formation of the thesis in the novel. The second sentence in paragraph one serves to complement the definitive role of the first. His fame rested on solid personal achievements (1). This defining technique actually starts the story which gives the name of the hero as Okonkwo. By using a thesis, Achebe ensures that there is no ambiguity about who the hero is and the accompanying authorial attitude. The beginning too exhibits an awareness of the reader thus the author is inaugurating a persuasion.

The thesis exhibits a dialogic interaction: answerability or response to a previous utterance. Primarily the thesis about Okonkwo affirms and makes presuppositions about the hero. The 'expressive intonation' of the narrator carries with it a positive evaluative attitude. The

generative purpose of sentence three is very significant. It starts with, 'As a young man of eighteen....' This not only provides the historical impetus of the text since the author is now entering a contract with the reader to explain what was before eighteen and after, but also locates the character as a ready-made and irrevocable. The author seems to be assembling evidence to back up his thesis. The organizing centre strives to court trustworthiness. The use of the thesis in this novel consciously elevates the hero's valor above other narrative variables like the setting and theme. The author trains the lens of his focus to the hero figure almost exclusively. This style is what sustains the eponymous texts like *Dr. Zhivago* and Joyce Carey's *Mr. Johnson*. Achebe's novel could easily have been titled after its hero as the Kiswahili translation, *Shujaa Okonkwo* has demonstrated. The Kiswahili word *shujaa* literally means a brave person, champion or conqueror and not merely the lead character or male protagonist. Okonkwo is conceived as such a hero.

In *Things Fall Apart*, the thesis evaluates the hero in several ways: First, it gives the notion of how the hero appears to the world "well known". This is a statement about his standing on the external social evaluation plane; the world saw him as strong and successful. Shortly afterwards, the thesis approaches the question of how the world appeared to the hero. He had no patience with unsuccessful men (1) and, most fundamentally, it answers the question how the hero appeared to himself; he was self confident and believed that he was one of the greatest men of his time. Thus in the formation of the thesis of the fictional hero, Achebe forms a central point of view about Okonkwo through authorial opinion and the hero's self assessment. This forms the totalized image of the reader's perception. Achebe is exercising the technique of extreme monologism in narrating Okonkwo.

The thesis through this convergence creates a summary and singular focus on the character and subsequently, the identification of Okonkwo does need further justification. The mention of the name alone conjures the image of the character. This thesis has obligated the author to seek a conciliatory tone to its premise since it is a contract he enters with the reader after the initial proclamation.. Whether Okonkwo later becomes infamous, for that is what he ends as, becomes secondary and the reader is persuaded to have a sympathetic evaluation of the hero; his fame and greatness remain a constant. This attitude is established by using a thesis in an act of *narrative pacing* that makes the hero graphic and separate. Achebe's pacing is achieved through glossing over anything insignificant while concentrating on the important elements of character. The author further delineates the hero's significance by describing him only in exciting communal activities like the wrestling contest which is described pithily and from which the hero emerges as a victor:

> The drums beat and the flutes sang and the spectators held their breath. Amalinze was a wily craftsman, but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water. Every nerve and every muscle stood on their backs and their thighs, and one almost heard them stretching to breaking point. In the end, Okonkwo threw the Cat. (1)

This description apart from it being the establishment of setting captures the climactic moment of the entire chapter by the repeated use of the word 'and' to demonstrate a movement of urgency. Above all, it establishes the character of Okonkwo by psychologically aligning the hero with the readers' approval for a victor.

The nature of the thesis here is that Okonkwo's character is presented with an intensifying progression. After Amalinze's prowess is mentioned Achebe quickly uses the conjunction 'but' to signal that he is shifting to a description of a more significant character. The "wily craftsman" is up against a character "as slippery as a fish in water." The choice of adjective qualifiers is instructive in the formation of a reading attitude towards the characters; while Amalinze is *wily*, Okonkwo is *slippery*. The former is sly and scheming while the latter is smooth. The description uses such details as the bodies of the wrestlers not just to evoke the *genius loci* (atmosphere of place) but also to create a biased perception of the hero. The periodic sentence that ends this paragraph is equally summative "In the end, Okonkwo threw the Cat". No details are given about the wresting but the reader can feel the tension and suspense and the sentence comes as a relief. Though short, this sentence has antecedents in the character of Okonkwo.

The author registers in the same wrestling scene that the old man agreed that that the fight was the fiercest since the founding of Umuofia. The thesis is thus not about Okonkwo the individual, but a socio-historical event. The image of the character is venerated by the invocation of a communal consciousness.

Chapter one of *Things Fall Apart* is a preamble of what the text has to offer. In it Achebe uses the preface form in a straight forward monologic direction. In the novel the author makes an effort to manipulate our expectations of the statement he makes about Okonkwo. After praising Okonkwo in the first paragraph, the author ends the chapter with saying that Okonkwo was respected and that is how he came to look after the ill fated Ikemefuna. We are told in advance

that Okonkwo is absolved of the murder of Ikemefuna because the latter is after all *ill fated*; a sacrifice from another village meant to avert a war. Thus, the hero is at liberty to perform the ironic salvation of another clan and for purposes of peace, so the argument seems to suggest; after all, the lad was fated to be killed. This removes the killer from any direct responsibility for he is just but an agent of fate and a great man too.

The prefacing thesis is developed through economy and it is significant to note that the character of Okonkwo reaches us through naming; an element of summary. The first word of the novel is 'Okonkwo' and Achebe does not add the name of his father or the character's title. He is not Ogbuefi Okonkwo, Egwugwu Okonkwo or Okonkwo Unoka. In his second novel, *No Longer at Ease*, the hero is given two names, Obi Okonkwo. Achebe does this summary in his first novel so as to underscore the conclusiveness of the world of *Things Fall Apart;* that the ultimate word of that world has been spoken. Significantly, it evokes a world view that emerges from a singularity of a consciousness. The technique of the introduction not only sets out the authorial attitude but also pre-empts the readers' bias.

2.1.1 The 'Archeological' Approach

Isidore Okpewho in his book, *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart: A casebook*, has asserted that it would be hard to find many institutions in the English-speaking world that have not listed the novel (*Things Fall Apart*) in courses across the humanities and the social sciences. According to him, ...the novel occupies an important place in critical as well as cultural discourse because it inaugurated a long and continuing tradition of inquiry into the problematic relations between the West and nations of the Third World that were once European colonies.(3). Emmanuel Okoye

has written a whole volume on the encounter between traditional Igbo religion and Christianity in the novels of Chinua Achebe which concludes that Achebe has done his research and his depiction of colonization of Igbo land is historically accurate. Fiction, however, cannot be judged by its mere historical verifiability. If we consider the novel as historiography, it is not just the details of culture and of incident that we must consider. The writing of a novel on historical events has two components: it depends on verifiable facts and it arranges these facts into a narrative.

We are interested in how Achebe establishes his narrative authority and constructs a world view which has lost its original integrity. In *Things Fall Apart*, the narrator relies on the legend of Okonkwo to start the narrative. The narration ends with a decision taken by a historian to recount the process whereby a whole world was overturned. The projected book, *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger,* wonders whether to make Okonkwo's death a chapter or a paragraph. Thus there are two competing authorities of storytelling in the text. On the one hand we do not question the narrative we have just read about Okonkwo from Achebe who has taken the duty to present the character within a setting. On the other hand, the district commissioner's view is false because has not established his own credentials as an historian of Igbo land. Thus we deconstruct what is said by the district commissioner while reconstructing what the author channels as a world view in that his plausibility is centered on the correspondence of history with an adequate image of the human experience of the world in the fictional figure of the hero, Okonkwo. For this purpose Achebe has utilized the legend motif.

The legend is spelt out at the beginning and the narrating motivation is to unearth it. The festivals, ceremonies and historical events in the novel cast Achebe as relying on an archaeological approach to place Okonkwo within context. According to Charles Bazerman:

> Reconstructive disciplines attempt to reconstruct what people did during past events. These disciplines rely on previous accounts of the same events in reports of related information (340).

Though these are not written records, we must constantly consider issues of context of meaning, interpretation, reliability, purpose and bias of the creator of the text and its hero. Okonkwo seems to emerge from a primary legend and thus we may look at *Things Fall Apart* as reconstructive literature. The legend in the text is however interpretive rather than constructive. Even before the story commences, the legend is already a *fact.* Achebe is thus utilizing an interpretive approach to generate new statements and perspectives of knowledge. To establish this, Achebe has to use evidence – sometimes - from the past to amalgamate cultural and historical details that reveal little of Okonkwo's character but help in creating an interpretive perspective for the reader.

It emerges that Achebe finds it profitable to adopt the methodology of the discipline of anthropology which instructs the author to guide the reader in interpreting the hero against a cultural and historical set of values and realities. This discipline has developed techniques of finding, identifying and dating. But this is not the ultimate objective of the said discipline. Much more important, it has developed a method of relating these individual objects to others found in the same place or are in some other ways similar. Bazerman observes that:

> Thus an archaeological dig starts to provide significant meaning only if all the objects and physical traces fit together to create a total picture, both of what was happening at a single time period and what happened before or after as revealed by traces found at other layers of the dig. Moreover, these digs are compared with other *digs* found from similar places or cultures. Careful analysis for example will reveal whether a toe bone found in one place belongs to the same species as a shin bone found in another site. (342)

In the case of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* the greatness of Okonkwo and that of his village is arrived at through comparative and historical casting against other characters and villages. Since he is the central hero in the novel, all the other attendant narrative variables may be seen as artifacts that help us to not only reconstruct the hero but also avail an interpretation of the meaning of his actions and world view. The author significantly orients a semantic privilege toward his hero and thus we have to consider how well the details of the hero fit the possible interpretation. Consequently, for Achebe to verify any interpretation of Okonkwo, he has to constantly refer back to the hero through quotation (the text quotes Obierika after Okonkwo's suicide), paraphrase, summary, description, narration, comparison and contrast (Okonkwo is constantly compared with other characters overtly and covertly like the comparison with Amalinze the Cat and the contrast between him and his father Unoka), examples and causal analysis. A classic case of causal analysis is the sub-text about Okonkwo and Ikemefuna; his greatness made him connected with the lad's fate. This is the leading impression created by the narrator and the view which the narration intends to persuade the reader to adopt within a plurality of voices that see the relationship differently.

In the exploration of the hero against the victim, Ikemefuna, Achebe brings out the multiple facets of the implication of heroism in the Umuofian society. In fact it is tempting to see the killing of Ikemefuna as the central event in *Things Fall Apart*. It reflects on the hero both from inside and outside in a suspended humanistic and cultural debate about character. Though Okonkwo killed Ikemefuna and proved to the elders that he was not afraid of blood, Obierika, an elder too says that it didn't have to be Okonkwo to do the killing. Previously Ezeudu, another elder, had warned him not to have a hand in the killing since the boy called him father. Actually, Ikemefuna was socially the son of Okonkwo though not so biologically.

The concerns of these elders could be interpreted as the voice of the community in cultural matters. From an anthropological point, these are the voices of tradition. These voices are however superseded by a discussion about the death of Ndulue and his wife Ozoemana. The hero doubts that Ndulue was a strong man since he was known to confide everything to his wife. The other elders do not agree with Okonkwo and actually confirm that Ndulue led Umuofia to war in his youth. Discussion about the death of Ndulue quickly substitutes and supplants discussion about the death of Ikemefuna. This silences the dialogue about the significant turning point in the narrative. This act of silencing is a monologising strategy that seeks to align attention to Okonkwo's masculinity simultaneously downplaying communal morality. However, we have to understand Okonkwo's act against a cultural/historical background that validated such an act as desirable in the first place. From an inside view, Achebe digs into the psyche of the hero and portrays Okonkwo as suffering from guilt-induced depression but this he can discuss with his friend Obierika in an argument where the truth is relative. Later, when Okonkwo kills the government messenger, it is pure murder. The question arises then: when does the hero become

the criminal? The veracity of this question can only be arrived at through casting the hero against culture and history. Both killings are culturally heroic and cognizant with Okonkwo's intractable character. However, historically the legality of the former killing is debatable while the latter is judged unlawful since the locus of the meaning of heroism has changed.

2.1.2The 'Propagandist' Purpose (Approach).

We cannot start to imagine that we can read the minds of authors to find out what their true purposes were. However, externally available clues can reveal much about their intentions. Achebe's overall purpose determines the techniques he uses. In rhetorical terms, the author's purpose is manipulative (propagandist- as well as advocacy). We have previously seen in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* that Achebe wrote in order to tell his audience that Africans did not hear of civilization from the West. In his memoir, *There was a Country*, Achebe says that his major objective and role as a writer in Africa was (is) … to challenge stereotypes, myths, and the image of ourselves and our continent, and to *recast* them through stories-prose, poetry essays and books for our children (53). The author is thus not only out to interpret on behalf of the reader, but also to give straight information to back up this interpretation. The word *recast* implies not only a different informational perspective, but also an accompanying variation in stylistic orientation.

Achebe's creation of Okonkwo from a rhetorical standpoint should be read as what Achebe is *doing* and not what Achebe is *saying*. The former is more deliberate and suggests a conscious execution of an act of literature; it suggests a premeditated programme. The author uses compositional devices that strengthen a monological control of his ideology about the hero while

at the same time eliminating or weakening divergent voices giving the narrator the role of stage direction. When Okonkwo enters the narrative he is "well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond." The use of the qualifier *well* to modify the adjective *known* suggests that the hero is positively famous. This is the plot position but the sujet position is that Okonkwo is already dead. The plot of the novel starts with the wrestling scene but the story/sujet position is twenty years earlier when Okonkwo's fame was the dominant perception of Okonkwo among the members of the Umuofian society. The reason Okonkwo is dead is deliberately delayed in the structuring of the plot. Achebe has utilized an advertising skill which makes the reader get attracted to Okonkwo and feel like being Okonkwo. This in itself is not sinister but the truth is that, every time Okonkwo commits a mistake, we are bound to excuse him if not feel for him. As a matter of fact, Achebe delegates what Okonkwo has to feel to the reader.

> Propaganda like advertising makes us forget reason. Propaganda may serve to further political ambitions, to drum up support for questionable government policies, or to confuse political discussions by deflecting attention away from the real issues. (Bazerman 141).

In the opening paragraph of *Things Fall Apart*, the narrator presents praises on Okonkwo. He is: *well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond.* His *fame* rested on *solid personal achievements*. As a *young man of eighteen* he had *brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat…in a fight that the old man agreed was the fiercest since the founder of the village engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights* (1). The effect of these praises is to cause the reader to love Okonkwo but the truth is that the reader has been given an

introductory dose of admiration in a setting akin to hysteria; a wrestling match where everyone, the reader included, identifies with the victor. This structurally occurs before Okonkwo commits any abomination like the killing of Ikemefuna and the beating up of his wife during the Week of Peace. However, the reader is invited to absolve him from responsibility through authorial manipulation.

Obierika's observation that though the oracle ordained it (the killing of Ikemefuna), it did not say that Okonkwo was the one to do it reaches the reader as wise but just that; wise. It is not a statement about how the reader should judge Okonkwo. It doesn't classify him as a character type since it focuses on what the deity is silent about. The author is thus monologising his perceptions about the hero by rendering the words of Obierika ineffective and silencing the debate about Okonkwo's participation in the killing. The author's omniscience is openly privileged.

Achebe starts his propagandist scheme by flag waving**;** playing on strong masculine African feelings. By praising Okonkwo, he makes him look dominant and patriotic with the interests of his society (the nine villages and even beyond) at heart. He also arouses these feelings of admiration to his readers and the propaganda scheme is inaugurated. With a reference to Amalinze's long, undisputed dominance, he labels Okonkwo's win as great without details of Okonkwo's subsequent matches.

In the same introductory chapter, without detailed evidence and support in the description of Unoka, Okonkwo's father, Achebe *labels* him by highlighting his incompetence. The narrator

repeats these labels of inferiority throughout his description of Unoka. He is called "lazy and improvident and, quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow" (2).The fact that Unoka was a talented speaker and musician is overshadowed by a deprecating analysis of a character who irresponsibly lives in a restlessly aggressive and realistic universe and hence a failure. Anything else said about Unoka is propaganda for the benefit of Okonkwo. When Achebe finally says in chapter one that, "Among the Igbo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten'' the narrator is ironically referring to Unoka without acknowledging it. The narrator takes on the colouration of Unoka by imposing a strong moral judgement on him while avoiding the same in his description of Okonkwo.

It is Unoka alone who launches the proverbs that *Things Fall Apart* relies on. From him we get the following: He always said that whenever he saw a dead man's mouth he saw the folly of not eating what one had in one's lifetime (4). He also says that: Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them. (6) Unoka would have been a very successful character had Achebe not used *name calling* about him. Unoka puts his creditor Ukoye, off guard with the allegory of the sun shining first on those who stand before it does on the kneeling. Ukoye has no response but to submit to the guru-like logic of Unoka. Yet Unoka's stature has to remain diminished for purposes of highlighting Okonkwo's greatness. While expressing his disappointment with his son, Nwoye, Okonkwo tells Obierika that the boy was unmanly because there was too much of his mother in him. Both of them can actually see a lot of Okonkwo's father in the lad but the narrator does not allow the two to say it. It is a thought that is mentioned but suppressed. Instead of addressing this ghost by discussing Unoka, both characters start talking of Okonkwo's latest show of manliness, the killing of Ikemefuna. This

makes Obierika complicit in this propaganda scheme as he makes Unoka a person not worth talking about thus reinforcing the hero's prejudice.

The other proverb that is used to introduce the hero Okonkwo refers to him as having washed his hands so that he could eat with kings and elders. However, this belongs to the narrator and not to Okonkwo. Okonkwo, unlike his father, was incapable of speaking properly let alone in proverbs. It is worth noting that this proverb is alloyed so closely to the character of the hero to an extent that he seems to own it.

'Okonkwo's proverb' belongs to authorial subjective intervention and is done for the benefit of the hero whom the writer intends to paint as powerful; a hero who not only triumphs against strong wrestlers but overcomes grim paternity. The propaganda, approach thus seeks to surround Okonkwo with an aura of success superimposed against strong and weak challengers whom Amalinze and Unoka represent.

These other characters mentioned in novel function as mere backdrop material. In the making of the hero image an authorial monologic subjectivity renders these characters as mere patchwork in a collage canvas whose central focus is Okonkwo's greatness. Other characters have to be sacrificed in an effort to illuminate the prominence of the hero. Any positive trait in them is deliberately downplayed in purely propagandist ways for the benefit of Okonkwo.

2.2 The Epic Style

Perhaps the main theme of this novel is the recognition of greatness. The narrator seems to recommend to the reader that failure to achieve this recognition might suggest a distortion or a kind of non-reading since the hero is larger than life. That is why in the final chapter Obierika's voice is used as a fitting postscript to the hero's death. That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog (147). Okonkwo is presented with economy of detail and dramatic foresight carving the image of an extra ordinary figure. His story is introduced like an epic narrative and recalls great battles in which the hero resembles an epic hero. There is a mark of epic style in the first chapter in which there is a link between Okonkwo's wrestling prowess and his custodianship of Ikemefuna, the compromise for war:

> As the elders said, if a child washed his hands, he could eat with kings. Okonkwo had clearly washed his hands and so he ate with kings and elders. And that was how he came to look after the doomed lad who was sacrificed to the village of Umuofia by their neighbours to avoid war and bloodshed. The ill fated lad was called Ikemefuna. (6)

This is an explanatory tag that intrudes into a developing narrative. The plot would do without it but the author proffers it right from the onset so as to make his intention known, that he intends to make Okonkwo his significant character and he explains the reason in epic style. Achebe uses the *bilndungsroman* technique about a young man who not only has achieved heroism in wrestling but is also wealthy, and has the luxury of being offered the responsibility of keeping a war trophy on behalf of his community.

Calling Okonkwo a child who had washed his hands is both figurative and literal. In African lore it would imply not only a young man who had shown great industry but also a supposed under-achiever who has defied great odds. It also carries an element of authorial sentimentality. This element is present in the epic of *Sundiata* in which a physically disabled character rises to become the community's hero.

The other epic sign Achebe puts when creating the hero takes place during the planting season when some farmers committed suicide due to frustration yet Okonkwo held on despite the fact that he had obtained his yams on credit. There are echoes of the epic in the speech Okonkwo gives to Nwakibie the successful farmer and creditor:

> I have brought you this little kola. As our people say, a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness. I have to pay you my respects and also to ask a favour. But let us drink the palm wine first (14).

The character is aware of his greatness irrespective of parentage and circumstances and is not afraid of proclaiming it even before the greats of the community. The reader is rendered the role of the willing witness to a praise singer. Later, his speeches are soldierly and entirely martial particularly insisting that he despised weak men and women. Phrases like, 'roaring fire,' are used to describe Okonkwo and Achebe does not relent in giving the picture of masculinity whenever he describes his hero.

Okonkwo, like the epic hero, is a man of 'either – or' propositions. He is a man of simple absolutes simply contrasted. He is unable to appreciate the paradox that cowardice and courage are aspects of a single state though of course he illustrates the paradox perfectly. The vehicle of this duality is Obierika who comments on Okonkwo's uncertainties but with no success. As Browner has pointed out the outlook of an epic tragic hero in such a strategy is: The struggle to be like oneself and the closeness of the heroic to the monstrous.

In discussing Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Browner calls this "the heroism of one who can say, "I am conqueror to "subdue his worthiest self," This is a recurrent Shakespearian strategy and it puts Achebe's Okonkwo in the same league with other tragic heroes like Othello. The classical parallel can be an allusion to Sophocles' Oedipus. In these allegories, Okonkwo like Achilles achieves his moral and dramatic development as an epic hero in privacy and the scene and circumstances of his suicide parallel a moral tragedy.

To involve the reader's participation, the death of Okonkwo turns out to be matter of public character. The brief speech by Obierika underscores the hero's code in *Things Fall Apart*. This audience involvement is unlike Achebe's definition of epic tragedy in his *No Longer at Ease* when Obi Okonkwo explains tragedy in Graham Greene's *Heart of the Matter*. According to Obi, tragedy is private*:* A real tragedy takes place in a corner, in an untidy spot, to quote W.H. Auden. The rest of the world is unaware of it (36).

The language of the last chapter is proof that Achebe is not interested with the psychological and social disintegration of Okonkwo. Though the character commits suicide and commits an

abomination against the land, he will be buried by strangers and the clan will perform a cleansing ceremony. Previously, Okonkwo had inadvertently killed a clansman and paid with seven years of banishment from the clan. His suicide is motivated by the fact that his clan has betrayed him in the war against the new colonial order. It is not out of remorse that he took his life. Of course in terms of plot, it is the fall from greatness but it introduces a perverse irony: is one great enough to take one's life? For in his death, Okonkwo is more an assertion of his heroic self and the acceptance of the damnation of that he well knows is his due.

It would be risky to expect readers to regard Okonkwo as a saint (after what he has done and said) but Achebe's language is expressive of a technique designed to unveil the paradox of the mystery of the process that turns something good into a destructive force. Okonkwo was great but his heroic greatness is also his heroic blindness. This paradox thus forms a convergence in a monologic consciousness of the author whose consciousness from the very beginning is finalised and closed off.

2.3 The Manichean Paradigm

In colonial and postcolonial politics it is assumed that the colonizer mostly succeeded in producing a situation of radically opposing perceptions. Where the colonizer sees a terrorist, the native sees a freedom fighter as was the case in Kenya's freedom war and in South Africa where this Manichean opposition played its political role. In literature authors may apply the same technique to illustrate their point of view and commentator alignment.

In *Things Fall Apart*, we see this Manichean approach at the close of the narrative where the District Commissioner tries to characterize Okonkwo. He says that one could almost write a whole chapter on him. "Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph at any rate" (148). The Manichean opposition is aroused by the fact that, Achebe, the creator of the hero, has written enough material to sustain more than a page. Even the title of the book the District Commissioner had chosen to write about these people, *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, Is equally Manichean because it directly counteracts *Things Fall Apart* and Okonkwo. The novel by Chinua Achebe does not expose the primitivism of the tribes but celebrates the culture of Africans and neither does it show the necessity of pacification. What the District Commissioner has in mind is anti heroic. He is impatient to understand the people and is apt to evaluate a whole culture basing his conclusions on a subjective view buttressed by occasional sensational events like the slaying of his messenger.

It follows that one has to presume that the forces at work in the novel are the insider and the outsider view in the colonial debate. Achebe by writing *Things Fall Apart* and creating Okonkwo as the hero is being informed by a Manichean quest to re-write the African novel. The narrator's attitude towards the hero avoids a negative evaluation which is inspired by an anti-imperialist stance; the text is written from an African point of view. In his memoir, *There was a Country*, Achebe, while acknowledging the educational role his English professors played in his days as a student in Ibadan University, contends that they (imperialists) taught him what they knew and not necessarily what he wanted to know. The text thus assumes a defensive attitude by affirming the hero's greatness.

Therefore, the author has conceived his novel as his own story about Africa, about Nigeria and about himself. The textual evidence for this assertion is summed up in the final paragraph of *Things Fall Apart* which renders an analysis of the white District Commissioner's attitude towards the natives. Significantly this comes after Obierika (one of the author's mouthpieces) tells the District Commissioner that Okonkwo was one of the greatest men in Umuofia whom the latter had driven to death**.** Obierika's words and the District Commissioner's leanings are not mere contrasting, but a Manichean regime on the part of the author since it not only affects what is said of Okonkwo but how it is said as well. Contrast in rhetoric in this novel is Manichean as a strategy in crafting. It not only affects point of view but also diction. The hero of *Things Fall Apart* is created from the Africanist side of the Manichean divide. A thing falling apart implies that the society was once intact and functioning before a force made it to collapse. It disabuses the need for pacification and deconstructs the charge of primitivism amongst the African tribes.

2.4 The Hero and Marginality

This is a strategy that controls the author's approach in describing the values, attitudes and opinions held by other characters about the hero**.** Okonkwo originates from the lower class thanks to his improvident father and thus he tends to be marginal. The hero found himself in the periphery of many systems, including his own. This marginality enables him to seek adaptation to the cadre of titled men to which he aspires to achieve his vision. The marginalized has to establish a measure of economic security and independence and by this we acquire unequivocal pride as a self made man (Singham, 95). The following except fully illustrates this:

> When Unoka died he had taken no title at all and he was heavily in debt. Any wonder then that his son Okonkwo was ashamed of him? Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father. Okonkwo was clearly cut out for great things. He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible success in two inter tribal wars. (6)

Okonkwo has thus adapted to the heroic level through hard work and he gains accommodation into the elite group of the tribe. However, this accommodation seems cynical and superficial because the author maintains his low status when Okonkwo unleashes tension and insecurity upon his family and hence his position is constantly threatened.

According to Singham, the hero being socialized in a marginalizing culture makes it difficult for him to exercise proper tension management (97). This seems to be the control mechanism in making Okonkwo a tragic hero. It is reinforced by the reality that the tribe has an unwritten constitution that is rigid and will bear upon the hero regardless of his title. After killing Ezeudu's son, inadvertently, the hero has to suffer a constitutional exile of seven years to his motherland. There is no consideration of his status in society and thus the author deepens Okonkwo's marginalization:

> The only course open to Okonkwo was to flee from the clan. It was a crime against the earth goddess to kill a clansman, and a man who committed it must flee from the clan.

> The crime was of two kinds, male and female. Okonkwo had committed the female, because it was inadvertent. He could return to the clan after seven years. (87)

This represents the author's convenient way of resorting to constitution in resolution of conflicts as far as the hero is concerned. In creating the hero, Achebe utilizes procedural questions that are pointed towards legal matters. The author through Obierika poses these questions but these do not lead fundamentally in solving the frustrations and anxieties of the hero. They only lead to more complexities. Obierika asks:

> Why should a man suffer so grievously for an offence he had committed inadvertently? But although he thought for a long time he found no answer. He was merely led into grater complexities. He remembered his wife's twin children, whom he had thrown away, what crime had they committed? (87)

In a marginal situation the anxieties aroused in the hero are thus manifold, reaching to irrational responses to issues. In Okonkwo, the author uses the psychological aggression defense mechanism for the hero right through the novel.

As the novel starts, the author has made the reader identify with the hero but as the plot progresses, the narrator uses the strategy of withdrawal. This is what Okonkwo's exile serves. When one takes Okonkwo as the embodiment of his culture, the picture that comes up is that of anomie and rage. Achebe uses the economy, society and psychology as character determinants of the hero figure. *Things Fall Apart* creates Okonkwo through an act of authorial marginalizing in

that throughout he is described as operating outside the mainstream roles or expectations. As a matter of fact, Okonkwo is seated on the margins and not at the centre of the crowd when he performs his final public act; the slaying of the government messenger. Here the marginalizing is literal but structurally, it marginalizes the hero even in the mind of the reader.

The Umuofia crowd broke into tumult and left Okonkwo. Instead they questioned the wisdom behind the killing of the messenger. Therefore Okonkwo's final picture is that of a man alienated; a picture diametrically opposed to the entry scene in chapter one where we see a picture of a man embraced.

2.5 The Heroic Other

From the beginning of *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo shows autonomy, defiance and general inscrutability that characterize him throughout the novel. Achebe portrays his acts of brutality in a reverse causal sequence. His brutality does not grow out of an earlier mistreatment but it seems that he takes the wicked initiative to create brutality. Lermontov, in *Hero of Our Days* observes, that:

> We never see the hero in the process of becoming. We are presented with the hero as he is mature and fully active in his and the affairs of his community. The genesis of the hero's rage is more important than its expression (280).

The heroism of Okonkwo is however put against a counter-interpretive plane by the author and other characters. The man of physical expression in Okonkwo is contrasted with Obierika who is

a man who could think about things. The hero of *Things Fall Apart* can be seen as the conflict between personality and society and it seems that the conflict can be defined more accurately in terms of temporality. The basic clash is between the values of permanence and the values of change. The mythical permanence that the hero represents is challenged to integrate itself with the ongoing process of change. No wonder one old man reflected that:

> 'Looking at a King's mouth,' said an old man, 'one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast.' He was talking about Okonkwo, who had risen so suddenly from great poverty and misfortune to become one of the lords of the clan. The old man bore no ill will towards Okonkwo. Indeed he respected him for his industry and success. But he was struck like most people by Okonkwo's impatience in dealing with less successful men. Okonkwo knew how to kill a man's spirit. (19)

It is not that Okonkwo has to get into the stream of history and change but that he must because his seven years of exile have eroded part of his mythical identify as a masked spirit. He takes revenge on the government messenger as an attempt ultimately to subdue the temporal to the eternal. His participation in temporality however is extralegal and fatally frustrating. Time had little altered Okonkwo he was the same man in permanence within a world of temporality hence he is excluded. As a figure he gradually reverts to the status which his heroism emerged. He remains out of date and the figure from the heroic past ends in suicide. Okonkwo's development is thus a literary bilndungsroman in reverse motif. Obierika's statement at the close of the narrative misses the developmental insight in that it shows Okonkwo as a man more sinned against and is merely a sympathetic guide for the reader:

> Obierika, who had been gazing steadily at this friend's dangling body, turned suddenly to the district commissioner and said ferociously. That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia, you drove him to kill himself and now he will be buried like a dog. (147).

This view by Obierika (who is now uncharacteristically ferocious) is the hypothetical reader's view but it fails to acknowledge that this novel is about the problem of contrasted vision albeit the impossibility of adapting decisively to one or the other mode of visualizing the present. Obierika is deeply implicated in the heroic struggle but he is tamer and unlike Okonkwo can call to mind what has been done. It is a question of the hero, the commentator (heroic other) and the reader.

As the heroic other, Obierika contributes nothing to the development of the hero's character except forming the contrastive frame and recollections. However it is important to note that even the reporter/observer is not immune from a participation in the violence of the novel. When he is musing over Okonkwo's exile, he remembers his wife's twins whom he had thrown away in the forest alive though he contended that they had committed no offence. The 'other' does not actively participate in the drama of the narrative.

Obierika as Okonkwo's friend shares the heroic stage with the latter as a parodic representation of the hero in minor key. Achebe allows Obierika to restrain himself so that our speculations on what alternative actions Okonkwo could have involved himself in are kept within the mark. The involvement of Obierika dramatizes the ironies in hero creation. Obierika is present at the high

points of Okonkwo's crises right to the end of the novel and he serves as the ironic mirror in the character and vision of Okonkwo. It is the restraint versus self assertion regime in Achebe style.

Obierika thus is the hero's imaginative other and this character enables Achebe to present the hero questionably and avoid dogmatic assertions about the hero. This serves to provide the hero with an ironic critique purging the readers' mind of the narrator's near heroic stereotypes that he invests on Okonkwo at the beginning of the novel.

Obierika is there to announce the death of the stereotype of the hero. Achebe reveals Okonkwo's capacity for moral suffering thus humanizing the hero. In mourning Ikemefuna and committing suicide it reveals an emotional depth rarely glimpsed in him:

> Okonkwo did not taste any food for two days after the death of Ikemefuna. He drank palm wine from morning till night and his eyes were red and fierce like the eyes of a rat when it was caught by the tail and dashed against the floor. He felt like a drunken giant walking with the limbs of a mosquito. Now and then a cold shiver descended on his head and spread down his body. When did you become a shivering old woman, Okonkwo asked himself, you are known in all nine villages for your valour in war. How can a man who has killed five men in battle fall to pieces because he has added a boy to their number? Okonkwo, you have become a woman indeed. (45)

After this somnambulant soliloquy, Okonkwo springs to his feet, hangs his goat skin bag on his shoulder and heads to visit his friend Obierika. It is here that Okonkwo meets his alter ego in

Obierika whom after an argument on the wisdom and foolhardiness of Okonkwo's participation in the death of Ikemefuna, gives out a sageful reflection:

> You know very well Okonkwo that I am not afraid of blood; and if anyone tells you that I am, he is telling a lie. And let me tell you one thing, my friend if I were you I would have stayed at home. What you have done will not please the earth. It is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families. (46)

Here the author conspicuously underlines Okonkwo's heroic nemesis by making Obierika say that if he were Okonkwo, he would have acted differently. The irony here is that in the quest to please the earth goddess and also in a bid to prove his fearlessness Okonkwo achieves the opposite, thereby becoming a hero of misadventure who inevitably exposes his heroic otherness.

At the close of the narrative, Obierika the hero's alter cast expresses foreseeing Okonkwo's demise and he proves himself a reliable foil when he validates his insight by the telling the District Commissioner that he and the clan cannot burry Okonkwo after the suicide because it is an abomination for a man to take his life. His body is evil and only strangers may touch it. Thus the 'other' is present at the moment when a comment about the hero has to be given even after the hero is out of the plot. Achebe has brought in this character so as to evaluate the hero from within the societal consciousness which still reveres Okonkwo but treats any suicide equally nonetheless. In his conversation with the District Commissioner, Obierika is not talking of Okonkwo's suicide as the death of a criminal but as an abomination of an Umuofian.

Obierika's intuition and the existential otherness are not spurious. The hero and his other do share a resoluteness of character; both seem to have taken fate into their own hands; they both exhibit rapture and fearlessness in their struggle with men and fate in the process of self definition. Okonkwo tries to justify his actions through external considerations while Obierika reiterates his existential resolve through painting the picture of the hero in alter relief. However, the other does not completely eclipse the fronted hero and the final scene of the novel shows this other affirming the hero. Therefore, though this mirror has been present all along the narrative, the author collapses it into a unity with Obierika's final assessment of Okonkwo. This seems to be Achebe's structural and rhetorical principle in creating the hero of *Things Fall Apart.*

2.6 The Hero and the Crowd – (the Dynamics of the Carnival.)

The hero in *Things Fall Apart* is a type of leader who arises in response to a colonial situation. He operates in a mass of people who heretofore have not been socialized in dealing with Western style politics and hence he cannot inspire in them the passion for action as he could previously have done in tribal affairs**.** When Okonkwo singlehandedly slaughters the court messenger he inevitably has to deal with the dynamics of the hero and the crowd.

Prior to his action, the clan had congregated at the village square and Okika was manipulating the hunger for the revenge of the humiliation the elders of Umuofia suffered at the court of the white man. He uses religious symbols thought appropriate for maintaining the allegiance of the population to the goal of revenge. However, Okonkwo overestimates his charismatic appeal and assumes leadership of the fighting clan. The strategy at work here is putting the hero to falsely imagine personal charisma whereas the white administration is constantly denying his

legitimacy. He also intends to transform his values into the values of the society which is an aim fraught with probability**.** Because he does not accept the legitimacy of the colonial authority he is placed by the author outside the crowd:

> At this point there was a sudden stir in the crowd and every eye turned in one direction. There was a sharp bend in the road that led from the market place to the white man's court and to the stream beyond it. And so no one had seen the approach of the five court messenger, until they had come round the bend**,** *a few paces from the edge of the crowd*. *Okonkwo was sitting at the edge.* (144, *emphasis mine*)

It is imperative to note the placing of Okonkwo at the edge of the crowd during this climactic phase of the narrative. One would have expected him to be in the middle of the crowd with other elders of the clan but Achebe puts him on the edge for dramatic purposes. His characterization as a person who does things alone and expects the others to join him in his cause can be termed as a *Ceasaristic approach* in crowd dynamics. Franz Neumann has explained such an approach:

> In some situations, the dictator may feel compelled to build up a popular support to secure a mass base either for his rise to power or for the exercise of it, or for both. We may call this type of hero-crowd relationship Ceasaristic dictatorship which as the name, indicates is always personal in form. (236)

Achebe places Okonkwo at the periphery of the crowd and stresses the personalistic nature of Okonkwo's approach to crises which show the hero as being in pseudo control of an anxiety

situation. The character's action rather than manipulating anxiety for control of the action of the crowd tragically turns it into a mob leading to his alienation and subsequent suicide. Achebe thus uses the dynamics of hero-crowd relationship to not only provide a release, albeit a neurotic one, but also paint a convincing portrait of the tragic hero of *Things Fall apart.*

Okonkwo acts alone though he had expected the crowd to join. But he overestimated his charisma. This is in complete contrast to the opening of the narrative where his fame "spread like a bush fire in the harmattan''. Singham has said the following about the requirements of a charismatic hero:

> One of the fundamental requisites of a genuinely charismatic leader is his ability to politicize and mobilize the mass, not merely to propagandize them. To mobilize means to involve the mass to some extent in both the decision-making process and the discussion and formulation of issues so that their commitment is not superficial. (311)

At the moment when the crowd is being worked up to the status of political mobilization, the government messenger appears within Okonkwo's reach and he executes his character singlehandedly without a thought of the consequences in a classical case of hamartia. However, the society is changed and not as responsive as it had been in its glorious past of inter-village wars and wrestling contests. The rules at work now are individualistic. The societal impulse has snapped and things have fallen apart. No one joins Okonkwo in this act of courage that reminds one of old Umuofia turned inside out. The act and crowd reaction pushes Okonkwo to commit

suicide. The reader thus realises that all along the character has been conceived with the society in mind.

Chapter one of *Things Fall Apart* ends by celebrating Okonkwo's greatness and crowning it with his role as the custodian of Ikemefuna whom he later kills as if on behalf of his community. At a personal level, this act gets him personally depressed but he gets over it. He only needs to invoke his strength and success in his community and the kill is just his latest show of manliness. It does not affect his hero status in the novel or his veneration in the eyes of the society he lives in. His killing of the government messenger at the close of the story begins his exit from the text. Okonkwo heard voices asking: why did he do it? (145). This is an expression of fear amongst the crowd and simultaneously a registering of a judgement from Okonkwo, the hearer. While addressing the District Commissioner who had come to *arrest* Okonkwo after his suicide Obierika affirms that: That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia, you drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog (147).The reflection this invites about the character and his style of formation is that, had Okonkwo killed the messenger in private or amongst fellow men of title in a remote place like the forest, he would have borne it and lived another day. However, the crowd is what defined him all along the narrative and on this occasion, they scattered in all directions an act that suggests that his heroism and death is not private but an allegory of a society fallen apart. Achebe has therefore utilized the hero as a metaphor of public character. When the clan scattered in fearful tumult heroism fell apart.

2.7 Conclusion

The strategies of hero creation in *Things Fall Apart* have been worked out to delineate a character who is the patent of the novel; the novel could easily be titled *Okonkwo.* His presence or absence defines the narrative and the plot apparently outlines the story of an individual. However, Achebe has cushioned the hero against a strong societal backdrop. At the same time the context is cushioned within the narrative of the hero. The amalgamation of these two narratives is done in a method that seems to prioritise the credibility of the hero.

There is a deliberate artistic manipulation of the author's omniscience above that of the narrator and the reader. The consciousness of the author and the hero override other divergent voices in the narrative. The truth of the represented world in *Things Fall Apart* is found inside a singular location. Therefore the reader's participation is realising that what is represented is not an individual but a distillation of communal character. This distillation is monologic in that in the process of affirming a prioritized and finalised point of view, other voices in the dialogue of the narrative are silenced or considerably minimalised.

CHAPTER THREE

DISCOURSE AND DIALOGIC RELATIONSHIPS IN *NO LONGER AT EASE*

3.0 Introduction.

Narration in No *Longer at Ease* is dialogic in nature and open ended. The hero in the novel is realized through a consistent dialogic performance that affirms Obi's independence, freedom, and indeterminacy. The narrator does not exercise extreme omniscience and the author does not provide a finalized point of view. The beginning and close of the novel are characterized by phrases of indeterminacy. The judge presiding at his corruption case uses words that express puzzlement with Obi. 'I cannot comprehend how a young man of your education and brilliant promise could have done this' (2). If the learned judge is unable to understand the hero, the reader wonders who to rely on. Similarly the thoughtful British Council man says, 'I cannot understand why he did it'. Later at the closing of the narrative the narrator representing the authorial position notes that:

> Everybody wondered why. The learned judge, as we have seen, could not comprehend how an educated young man and so on and so forth. The British Council man, even the men of Umuofia, did not know. And we must presume that, in spite of his certitude, Mr. Green did not know either. (154)

These quotations summarize the spirit of the narrative's development and authorial attitude towards the protagonist in *No Longer at Ease.* The author's discourse about Obi Okonkwo is an analysis of a character who has a complete conviction of who he is and is capable of

convincingly expressing his political and historical position. The hero has opinions which the author does not recant. He therefore has a voice and does not come out as a voiceless product of the author. Rather than endorse or renounce the values of Obi, Achebe seems to engage with them. Moreover, the author is unwilling to acknowledge any bias with finality. The author seems unwilling to proffer a strong authorial verdict about the protagonist.

3.1 Author/Character Dialogic Relationships

It is as if Achebe is not talking *about* Obi but *with* Obi. No one can give a valid opinion about Obi Okonkwo; not himself, the narrative personae and neither the author. The hero here resembles a Dostoyevskian character in the way he relates to the author. The hero of *Notes from the Underground* typifies this strategy in which the author suspends his judgement even covertly. Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* says:

> The hero interests Dostoyevsky not as some manifestation of reality that possesses fixed and specific socially typical or individually characteristic traits, nor as a specific profile of assembled features which, taken together can answer the question "Who is he?" No, the hero interests Dostoyevsky as a particular point of view on the world and on oneself, as a position enabling a person to interpret and evaluate his own self, and his surrounding reality (47).

The important and fundamental feature here is the way the character is created and perceived. In the case of Obi, the main problem is how to perceive him. He is created as a point of view; he is

a dialogue on the world and on himself. Such a rhetorical commitment on the part of the author requires special methods of creation, characterization and artistic persuasiveness.

Obi's dilemma *in No Longer at Ease* is based on the idealism and optimism of a generation of Africans which sees its political project as the conception of a new Africa whose expectations are not grounded on colonialism or African culture. His anxieties are grounded on the need to fit usefully in a community of two worlds with equally important but antagonistic expectations. In 1960, one could recognize these needs but take them for granted and non-topical depending on the politics of the time. Thus the text side steps historical topicality to dwell on the hero's romantic idealism juxtaposed against the reality he is forced to reckon with once he steps into Lagos, the metropolis of the new Nigeria and a microcosm of Africa. In view of the foregoing, the hero is presented as the point of view and not an answer. The readers' critical expectations have to be suspended and for Achebe to achieve this also suspends his omniscience, what could be called an avoidance of an author's essentially egotistical distortion (Bakhtin xxxv) of character and values in a novel.

3.2 The Hero as Point of View

The author's role after the introduction of the hero seems to resemble that of a film director. He constantly reduces authorial discourse and substitutes it with analytical dialogue from the characters in the text thus assuming the role of an observer-commentator on what is happening rather than being the source of critical evaluation of Obi. In the novel, Obi and other character personage are more opinionated than the authorial voice. The author develops Obi without imposing a moral judgment on him. Achebe further does not exercise inside views and thus

avoids an author's monological control in narration. Bakhtin in his study of the nature of discourse observes that:

> Those elements out of which the hero's image is composed are not features of reality, features of the hero himself or of his everyday surroundings, but rather the significance of these features to the hero himself, for his self consciousness (48).

This will imply that, it is not the author or narrator who has the last word on the hero. The author in such a situation prefers to withhold a finalizing statement about the hero and leaves it upon the hero to contemplate the world around him and hopefully comprehend his situation according to his social position, the degree to which he is sociologically typical: habits, spirituality, ambitions, and political idealism. Even his very physical appearance becomes an aspect of his own introspection and self consciousness and Achebe's representation and visualization of Obi turns out to be in fact a function of this hero's self consciousness. Achebe does not offer a thesis (definition) of Obi exclusively but allows all traits to enter into the field of vision of the hero himself and thus what the author ends up doing is representing Obi views and consciousness.

Even in his earliest years as a primary school pupil, Obi is presented by the author with this knack for reflecting on what history and politics meant to him. He had written a letter to Adolf Hitler during the Second World War. He was only eleven years old but still a subject of the British Empire. Such an action from a boy was a sign of great audacity and will. Nigeria being a British colony could not allow its subjects to act treasonably since it was at war with Germany. Subjects in the protectorate were supposed to idolize and protect the empire. For his action, Obi got off with only six strokes of the cane on his buttocks:

> The headmaster at the time had pointed out, almost in tears, that he was a disgrace to the British Empire, and that if he had been older he would surely have been sent to jail for the rest of his miserable life (7).

By getting away with this treasonable act the narrative denies the headmaster the power to give a definition of Obi. The six strokes of the cane do not necessarily redefine Obi own self critique about the Second World War. It looks like a routine and mundane school activity and it leaves the visualization of Obi intact and pure. Thus Achebe is depicting not the ordinary primary school pupil, but the self willed, self conscious mind. When the Umuofia Progressive Union wanted to get a candidate to send to England to study, the choice was not difficult since Obi was naturally brilliant as his credentials showed. That he had once written the letter to Hitler did not act as an impediment and in fact his name was often invoked as a celebrity in the mission school where he had once schooled.

Thus from the outset, there is a clear attempt by the author to avoid an authorial closing off of character and while character traits may remain unchanged in Obi they are transferred to the visualization of the character himself and therefore they cannot finalise or close him off in a simple definition. Accordingly, the reader's visualization occurs after Obi has evaluated the ideas and formed an opinion. Talking to Joseph his cousin, after his return from England, Obi offers his own view about Hitler after so many years:

> What was Hitler to me or I to Hitler? I suppose I felt sorry for him. And I did not like going into the bush every day to pick palm kernels as our "win the war effort".... and when you come to think of it, it was quite immoral for the headmaster to tell little children every morning that for every palm kernel they picked they were buying a nail for Hitler's coffin. (34)

Even at his young age, Achebe is already depicting the self consciousness of Obi. The character's field of vision forms the essential part of his characterizing profile. By so doing Achebe translocates the headmaster's finalizing definition and turns it into an aspect of the hero's self definition. Obi sticks to his conviction that involving children in the war with Hitler was immoral.

The Umuofia Progressive Union sent Obi to England to study law so that he could represent them in land disputes but on arrival in London he chose to study English. Here the character once again avoids an automatic satisfaction of the fantasies and aspirations of his kin to pursue his own creative desires. The author allows the character to further cultivate his own free will. Out of this, we see a character who is resistant even to communal mandate to be their representative in the white man's world. For him to sustain his own identity as a modern and decolonized African, he has to exist in a cultural cul-de-sac which he has to define on his own terms.

It is therefore not without reason that Achebe makes Obi Okonkwo to engage in poetry writing and reflection which is a kind of discourse with experiences both in London and in Lagos. Achebe says that it was in England that Nigeria first became more than just a name to him. That was the first great thing that England did for him (12).However, back in Lagos after four years

Obi found out the Nigeria he had thought about never existed. He had written a nostalgic poem about his motherland, the Nigeria he had in mind while in England:

> How sweet it is to lie beneath a tree
> At eventime and share the ecstasy of jocund birds and flimsy butterflies;
> How sweet to leave our earthbound body in its mud,
> And rise towards the music of the spheres,
> Descending softly with the wind,
> And the tender glow of the fading sun. (16)

This romantic vision is shattered by the shanty sights of Lagos with its uncollected garbage. He sums it up that he had tasted putrid flesh in the spoon. He expresses his disillusionment in poetic images showing the influence of the literature and especially romantic poetry he had chosen to read in London. His kinsmen had expected him to study law so that he could come back and help them in land cases but he chose to study literature as a way of engaging the questions in his life in discourse. The lines from T.S.Eliot's *The Journey of the Magi* which Achebe has used to derive the novel's title seem to summarise Obi's depressed vision of his homecoming. Obi could not even understand why his girlfriend Clara chose her dressmaker from the slums. Despite all these conflicting stimuli Obi is keen to maintain his own view. Shortly afterwards, as he is driving out of the slum, he almost runs over a cyclist who is riding carelessly on the road. It is instructive that the cyclist has his ambition written on the back of the bicycle, FUTURE PRESIDENT. This is what Obi's eye leads the reader to register with a sense of irony.

Obi comes back to Nigeria with his idealism about his imagined pristine country but the signals he gets are completely different. What with his girlfriend's love for slum dressmakers and the uncollected garbage. And to add on to this, his feeling of perplexity is deepened by his realization that Lagos, a microcosm of Nigeria, is two cities in one. He likens this with twin kernels separated by a thin wall in a palm-nut shell. Sometimes one of the kernels is alive while the other is dead. He perceives reality with symbolism.

The hero's reaction to all this is to read poems to his girlfriend. Even his suggestion to introduce her to his friend Christopher precipitates a response from Clara that she did not know why he wanted her to meet people she did not want to meet, a thing Obi reckons as pure T.S. Eliot still brings out the theoretical romantic vision of the character even to matters of personal relationships. The way Obi foregrounds his artistic creations and those of other poets constitutes a personalized view and a method of inquiry. For instance, as seen in his response to Clara's concerns, his first reaction is to associate her question with poetry and to note the alliteration in her question. For him, the reflections of others have to pass through his personal point of reference before he can open up to the other.

Obi's reflections about Nigeria are on this theoretical plane. When he meets his friend Christopher, a graduate from the London School of Economics, they can only engage in polemics about: corruption, nepotism and patronage of Nigerians. They figure that one could get a job regardless of the mediocrity of credentials. They suspect that they are also losing their identity to the bandwagon. The only thing they can do to re-assert their identity is to eat pounded yams with their fingers and not feel uncivilized. The quest for identity is however constantly

being undermined by the environment and the people around Obi. For instance, Zacchaeus, Obi's houseboy, has made up his mind to resign as soon as Obi married Clara. And Zacchaeus is doing so because he cannot stand her sending him for errands which is un-African for a man. And this is not the only cultural challenge Obi has to deal with on his own. He is supposed to project and maintain an image of a privileged member of his society and show gratitude to his kin who taxed themselves to educate him while maintaining a personal emotional equilibrium against all the odds.

The author makes Obi impervious to anyone's counsel and we have to wait until the hero proffers his own interpretation about himself or his environment. Obi therefore seems to carry theories of his own (independent of the author's and characters in the novel) about Nigeria. Most of his theories were formed abroad while he was a student. He has theories not only of the white man but also of his old African. He theorizes that corruption in Nigeria would persist until the old guard was replaced by young graduates from universities. This theory developed in a paper he had presented to the Nigerian students' Union in London was strong enough to survive the surprises and realities of his homecoming.

During his interview at the Public Service Commission where he was boarded for a job, Obi meets the board chaired by an Englishman. The chairman was interested in modern poetry and the modern novel which the other three knew nothing of while the fourth was asleep, all Africans.

It is significant that Achebe makes the chairman and Obi start the conversation with issues ranging from Graham Greene to Amos Tutuola. But from the outset, Obi dismisses the thirty

minute engagement as a lot of nonsense, but however a learned and impressive kind of nonsense. significantly though, there is a good reason why Achebe makes the two discuss Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* which Obi takes as a story about himself badly written. Obi says that it is one of the best novels about West Africa he has read because the European police officer in the narrative commits suicide. To him, this is a happy ending. This shocks the white chairman who suspects that Obi is talking of another book. The title itself reminds one of the Joseph Conrad's *Heart of darkness,* a classic by Europeans standards, but a racist text from the eyes of a Pan-Africanist. He actually suspects Obi of seeing race in literature. Therefore, Obi is obliged to explain.

What Obi expounds about his theory here is however literary than racist. He revisits Aristotle's theory of tragedy and argues with it that there is really not a purging of emotions in a real tragedy; that a real tragedy happens in private where no spectator has access. To illustrate this, he quotes H. Auden and Charles Dickens' *A Handful of Dust*. This reminds the reader that *No Longer at Ease* is answering questions raised by its predecessor, *Things Fall Apart*, about the suicide of Okonkwo, Obi's grandfather. Obi goes back to the authority of his traditional folklore and remembers the sayings of an old Christian convert from his village (supposedly his own father Nwoye), who suffered calamity after calamity and compared life with sipping a bowl of wormwood a little at a time endlessly. The intractability, loneliness and solitude of the tragic experience is Obi's definition of tragedy. To him art and artistic technique have a history which is inextricably tied to socio-political history. To the white man art serves to lull the conscience of racist vision. This does not elicit any more questions from the other panelists except from the member who had been sleeping through the interview. He asks Obi whether he was looking for a

job so as to take bribes. This question annoys Obi and he answers that he did not think it was a useful question, a response that prompts the chairman to end the interview with some mock severity. Joseph, Obi's cousin, thinks that the latter's conduct at the interview was suicidal like the proverbial man who challenged his personal god to a wrestling match. Obi observes that the assessment is characteristic of colonial mentality.

Again Achebe is delegating the role of self-definition to the character. What the author does to the character is to make him illuminate himself from a personal point of view as the legitimate voice of reality. Those alongside Obi and external cannot serve as determinants of the hero's vision and Achebe does not grant them an explanatory function. The hero, as a point of view in the novel, is the dominant source of the rhetoric of *No Longer at Ease*. Obi achieves this by constantly re-asserting his self-consciousness based on what he has absorbed himself from his observation and his studies about the world to form a point-of-view.

What the dreamer and the underground man do in Dostoyevsky is to make themselves objects of their own introspection. What *No Longer at Ease* does is not to finalize the character of Obi but to place him in open–endedness. He seems to create a vicious cycle for the character. Thus Obi's real life does not necessarily define him but it represents a spur for the fusion of character and art into one. Accordingly, Obi is not merely expressed but represented. His voice does not fuse with the narrator's. He is not the agent of the narrator's voice but a frame upon which Achebe asks pertinent social and political questions without offering answers. This does not mean that the umbilical cord uniting the author and his hero is completely absent because this would resort to a personal document on Obi's side technically turning the character into the author. On the

contrary, the author has consistently attempted to avoid a monologic closure as a strategy of artistic unity. According to Bakhtin:

> The construction of that authorial world with its points of view and finalizing definition presupposes a fixed external position, a fixed field of vision. The self–consciousness of the hero is inserted into this rigid framework, to which the hero has no access from within and which is part of the authorial consciousness defining and representing him and is presented against the firm ground of the external world. (52)

Dostoyevsky seems to renounce all monologic premises that a character might hold exclusive to himself in the portrayal of the hero and his world. Achebe on his part primarily seems to suspend his own world-view in favour of Obi. The reader and the other narrative personae realize that there is literally nothing new we can say about Obi that he does not know himself. For example his and the typicality of people around him, his social group and even the psychological profile of himself and others seems to be at his disposal. Significantly also, he seems to be aware of his tragic side and all the possible moral definitions that his personality has assumed since he was a young child in primary school to his adulthood. Therefore for Obi any point of view from without is rendered useless in advance right from the beginning of the text. This perception is soaked into Obi himself who has to agonize with his reality. To deal with this, he tries to keep a step ahead of what others think about him (every other point of view on him). From the beginning of the text, he seems to anticipate the possible definition or evaluation others might make of him:

> All that stuff about education and promise and betrayal did not catch him unawares. He had expected it and rehearsed this very scene a hundred times until it had become as familiar as a friend.' (2)

This is not merely a character trait of; it is the strategy governing the author's construction of his image. The tendency to leave the final word on obi seems to be Achebe's design. Obi's discourse about himself and the world is what characterizes the point of view in *No Longer at Ease.* What the author and others know about Obi only serves as raw material for Obi but these are only external stimulants.

3.3 Self Clarification and Self Revelation as a Strategy in Creating Point of View

To arrive at an evaluation of Achebe's artistic design in *No Longer at Ease*, we have to qualify the text as a progression of symbolic settings about which Obi is to give his judgment. That is the function of the court scene that opens the narrative. Obi Okonkwo seems to have posed his opinion on himself, the judges and every other person interested in his case. He looked indifferent and almost as an observer to the drama about him.

The judge starts by admonishing one of the counsels for being late for the hearing. He is dramatizing the whole scene with acts of solemnity right from his gaze at his victim to the jargon he utilizes like calling the excuse of the counsel's car break down *a problem of locomotion,* Obi responds to this bombastic performance with an ash smile and scuttles back to indifference. He is the observer through whom we critique the court scene. The civil servants who had attended the much hyped hearing had secured permission from their work through malingering, a pet subject of Obi's opinion of the Nigerian civil servant.

The pragmatism of Obi Okonkwo is constantly counter-posed with the empty drama and pomposity of those around him. During his reception from Europe everybody turned dressed in European suits except Obi, the guest of honour who appeared in his shirtsleeves. The Secretary of the Umuofia Progressive Union who reads the welcome speech, uses words which Obi himself knows but can only despise yet the crowd is impressed with the secretary. He calls a European education *quest of the Golden Fleece* and also refers to Obi's achievement as *unprecedented academic brilliance.* He further calls the ambition of Umuofians as the quest to join the *comity* of other towns in their march towards political *irredentism*, social equality and *economic emancipation*. He sums it by saying that, "the importance of having our sons in the vanguard of this march of progress is nothing short of *axiomatic.* He speaks the English from the *Pierian Spring* of knowledge. Obis English on the other hand is simple. *He spoke is and was*. The crowd is said to have clapped out of politeness, thoroughly unimpressed with Obi's diction. This is a statement of the reversed irony with which Obi viewed event and personality.

Obi by his tame speech seems to be engaged in an act of self-clarification. He occupies the point that sees beyond the mere verbal display. Later we are to learn from the same chapter that in his early days, Obi was actually called by his classmates as "The dictionary'' (33). He always had a running nose too, a thing that reminds the reader of Achebe's biography by Ezenwa Oheato where Achebe had similar physical characteristics. In school, Achebe was also nicknamed 'Dictionary' and his first novel is (*is and was)* in diction.

Obi chooses to spend the night in his cousin's house, a one-room affair. Despite his cousin's objections, he insists that he did not really care what people had to say and that, our people have

a long way to go. (33) In their conversation at supper at a hotel, Joseph is always ordering for more beers which Obi objects to. In this he is issuing a judgmental statement about the people's love for alcohol, showiness and senseless boisterousness.

Achebe seems interested in Obi Okonkwo's clarification of an own internal discourse. For Obi to achieve this verisimilitude of his own character outside the laws of other people, he inevitably has to argue with other characters and consequently violate the field of vision of other voices in the text. He has to clarify events essentially on his own and avoid the tone and truth of others. In a quest for this he approaches the confessional mode. But *No Longer at Ease* cannot superficially be called confessional to any point since the author does not adopt a first person narration style. However, the responses that Obi avails to his dilemma seem like the stage directions of an author. There is no direct authorial discourse and this seems to be a deliberate artistic design. The issue here is that Achebe presents us with a character who is interested in not just what is happening, the content, but more significantly a character interested in discovering how his personality measures up against corresponding new realities of a new Nigeria. Accordingly, he puts himself in the centre.

In Obi Okonkwo, we see a revolution against externalized approaches to defining the man .Obi revolts and explains his own revolt according to the image of himself he has created, which is to say, he is against the notion that there is nothing more in him than the traditional and expected. He rebels against cultural predeterminism because he has seen the falseness of such a communal consciousness. In *The Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin observes:

> A living human being cannot be turned into the voiceless object of some second hand, finalizing cognitive process. In a human being, there is always something that not only he himself can reveal, in a free act of self consciousness and discourse, something that does not submit to an externalizing second hand definition. (58)

Unlike the monologic nature of *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe is groping with a style that celebrates lack of completeness and uncertainty about the central character. The last paragraph in the novel sums up this ambiguity of points of view which are uncertain.

This paragraph of uncertainties seems like a pastiche in the on-going narrative. A reader would ask whether the author also wondered why and hence we return to the clarifications of Obi Okonkwo himself since the author is also at a loss. Obi is in a furious battle with external definitions of his personality in the mouths of other people and he seems bent on proving these definitions untrue. He is thus engaged in a polemic that he is at liberty to violate the senseless regulating norms of his environment. This struggle ultimately becomes an important part of the tragic motif in Obi's life. Achebe realizes this by putting Obi Okonkwo in crisis after crisis, socially, morally, politically and economically. During these crises the true personality of the protagonist is revealed through a dialogic penetration of his motives and expectations. Obi Okonkwo's point of view can be seen against the degree of reciprocity to issues that touch upon his most idealistic realm, the man in the man tries to assert this idea of the man himself.

We will cite several instances where Obi expresses his thought against a second point of view to illustrate his own individuality: About the old custom of bride price, he insists that he will not

even pay a single coin. Anyway, senior service or no senior service, I am not paying five hundred pounds for a wife. I shall not even pay one hundred, not even fifty. (38) He is keen on rendering his opinion about the capitalism that was being exercised by parents when marrying off their daughters. For him who was expected to be a role model, the answer was just to do away with the practice altogether. These foreshadow many of the cultural battles Obi was to face with his intact idealism.

On his first visit to Umuofia after his interview, the bus driver with whom Obi is travelling in is stopped by traffic police and bribes his way out. Obi protests that the police had no right of taking money from motorists and his straight look at the officers makes them exact a higher bribe from the driver; ten shillings instead of two, a thing that earns him rebuke from the driver and fellow travellers. Obi here offers his explanatory point of view albeit using a reference to a Greek legend in which Hercules cleaned a stable holding 3000 oxen. The stable had been kept unclean for 30 years by King Augeus. In the legend, Hercules cleaned the filth in one day by diverting a river through it:

> What an Augean stable!' he muttered to himself. 'Where does one begin? With the masses? Educate the masses? He shook his head. 'Not a chance there. It would take centuries. A handful of men at the top or even one man with vision–an enlightened dictator. People are scared of the word nowadays. But what kind of democracy can exist side by side with so much corruption and ignorance? Perhaps a half way house–a sort of compromise. (40)

These reflections about the masses and the need for education or an enlightened dictator to turn around the realities of corruption are all given by Obi in response to other travellers who may signify the greater Nigeria and beyond. The traders in the bus are singing all the way about career girls and also about a man who seized his in-law and killed him. They talk in the same song about a fisherman whose canoe suddenly began to speak in English. Obi Okonkwo had never previously thought of the wealth and logic of that common refrain to folklore. He could now offer his exegesis by propounding that the man who killed his in-law was practicing the height of treachery and abomination while the canoe that spoke a foreign language to its paddler was exercising betrayal. He sums up this as the world turned upside down. (42) This is his point of view.

On arrival home, he is welcomed by the whole village and though there are many chairs most people sat on their goat skins. Even those on chairs first spread their goatskins showing to Obi that though things were changing, the old tribal and ancestral charter held supreme. However, through the speech of Odogwu, one of the elders, we see the presaging of the change of times where traditional great titles no longer mattered and greatness was now in the things of the white man. Ironically several informed members of the audience had informed the gathering of how young men who travelled to London came back with white wives who inevitably left them sooner than later or worse still turned them against their kin while they stayed. These words are meant for Obi Okonkwo and how he is expected to behave but he is yet to show them Clara, his girlfriend.

It seems from the onset that everyone in Obi's pre-London days has expressed the expectations of him and this is taken as the truth that must prevail. However for Obi Okonkwo, this truth is to be tested against his personality. On the one hand, the truth is predetermined and predicted, on the other, it is to be countered by the sheer strength of personality and resolve. The community approaches Obi Okonkwo in a completely undialogic manner as though they are social psychologists. Their disappointment is basically a conflict of analysis. This seems to be the stylistic motif in producing Obi's point of view. In Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* Alyosha analyzes Snegrev's emotional state in the same way but Liza replies:

> Listen, Alexey Fyodrovich. Isn't there in all our analysis-I mean your analysis... No, better call it ours-aren't we showing contempt for him, for that poor man in analyzing his soul like this, as it were, from above, eh. In deciding so certainly that he will take the money? (271-2)

This forms an analogous comparison with Obi in that Liza sees the impossibility of penetrating the depths of personality from outside. In Achebe's novel, it is only Obi himself who can have this insight. In the discussions between his father and other elders who have come to welcome him there is outright dialogism. Odogwu called Obi a reincarnation of his grandfather. Though he is convinced that the ancestral charter still prevails, Isaac Okonkwo is convinced that dead men do not return. There is a silent mutual agreement that the topic should rest at that. The question does not end without Obi's insight about the verbal prowess of his people during a debate. Obi almost felt ashamed and guilty studying and speaking in English to the owners of the language as though he had none of his own. However, on his return to Umuofia he shows pride

in Igbo language and wishes the English could come to Umuofia and witness the art of conversation. He is actually opining through inference that the past generation could speak of culture and its content. But to him, what impresses him is the art of speech and not the ramification of its content. On this instance, Obi is exercising explanation of his point of view to linguistic issues and a glancing swipe at colonialism. Even talking about his intimate encounters with non-African girls in London, Achebe says of Obi that, there was always part of him, the thinking part, which seemed to stand outside it all watching the passionate embrace with cynical disdain. (63) This is a statement about the character's double vision dominated by reason against action. When Clara, his girlfriend, tearfully suggests that they could not get married because she was an outcast Obi answers that it is nonsense and goes ahead to buy her an engagement ring in defiance. Joseph tells him that it is against custom. Obi is greatly pained for being equated with a stranger to his customs; he is self-opinionated and always ready to give his defining point of view. He opines that:

> It as scandalous that in the middle of the twentieth century a man could be barred from marrying a girl simply because her great-great-great-great-great father had been dedicated to serve a god, thereby setting himself apart and turning his descendants into a forbidden caste to the end of time. (65)

Joseph tries to challenge his point of view by telling him that he was only a pioneer but he reminds him that a pioneer is someone who shows the way. For Obi progress means liberation from defined cultural responsibility. For him, tradition has instilled its followers with a false

psychology in the guise of genealogy. With regard to Dmitry's trial situation in *The Brothers Karamazov* Bakhtin says that:

> All who judge Dmitry are devoid of a genuinely dialogic approach to him, a dialogic penetration into the unfinalized core of his personality. They seek and see in him the factual, the palpable definitiveness of experiences and actions, and subordinate them to already defined concepts and schemes. The authentic Dmitry remains outside their judgment (he will pass judgment on himself). (62)

What is important here for Achebe is not the philosophical side of the character but the form in which to present him in crises. When Obi is annoyed, like when the President of Umuofia Progressive Society talks of his Clara as the girl of doubtful ancestry, Obi loses his temper and storms out of the meeting angrily without words. This reminds the reader of Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart* and how he would initially react to threats with action before thought. But Obi, his grandson, has a point of view which he himself has to explain.

Obi actually does not like the prospect of working with Mr. Green either. Green's white secretary tries to be friendly but Obi is suspicious that she has been planted to investigate his attitudes. He doesn't mind Mr. Green knowing his opinion but he wants do the telling himself, not through an agent provocateur. A man called Mark attempts to bribe him to secure his sister's scholarship but Obi declines the temptation though he needs the money. He even declines a sexual offer from Mr. Mark's young sister in exchange for a scholarship. Obi Okonkwo's life is thrown into progressive crises starting from Mr. Green's reminder about the car insurance and

his insinuation that even educated Nigerians had not reached the level of thinking about tomorrow. Then there is the matter of the disturbing electricity bill and the income tax. This he tries to solve by getting a bank overdraft which his girlfriend Clara disapproves of and becomes moody about being left from the picture. His consolation is the poetry of A. E Housman but his point of view at this time of crisis is summarized by the poem he had earlier written in England:

God bless our noble fatherland,
Great land of sunshine bright,
Where brave men chose the way of peace,
To win their freedom fight.
May we preserve our purity,
Our zest for life and jollity.
God bless our noble countrymen
And women everywhere.
Teach them to walk in unity
To build our new nation dear;
Forgetting region, tribe or speech,
But caring always each for each. (94)

This poem written in youthful idealism sums up Obi's point of view in this time of emerging crises. It speaks of nationalism, courage, love for life, unity, and friendship. Significantly it also shows that the person is awake to inherited sources of modern attrition like tribalism and tribal values for which caste prejudice belongs.

By using Obi's poem verbatim, Achebe is expressing an author's artistic intention not to enter into the character's whim. He allows the logic of Obi Okonkwo to reveal itself with minimal interrogation on the author's part in an effort to preserve Obis point of view. This point of view represents Obi's inner logic and independence as an artistic choice. By so saying, we may assume that Achebe is avoiding his own point of view by representing the subjective point of Obi with sympathy, But Achebe does not merely avoid an antithesis to Obi's point of view but rather he leaves him to resolve the author's and the character's ideological positions without offering a definitive authorial position. This point of view carries its counterpoint.

3.4 Counterpoint in Point of View

In the book, *On Language of Artistic Literature,* V. V. Vinagradov (1950) refers to the plan for counterpoint in literature:

> It seems that for me, a man of strong and fixed convictions, the most difficult thing to write as Shakespeare wrote: he portrays people and life without saying what he himself thinks on the questions that are resolved by his characters in a way appropriate for each. Othello says 'Yes,' lago says 'No' Shakespeare says nothing, he has no desire to state his love or lack of love for a 'yes' or 'no.' (5)

Vinagradov is responding to the writing of Chernyshevsky's novel, *The Pearl of Creation*. He comments on the author's avoidance of a subjective point of view of the author himself. This does not mean that Chernyshevsky had no authorial position. The issue here is not the absence of

but a radical change in the author's position. However, in this position, the author allows the character to reveal and substantiate the rightness of his own position. This is the *objective* position taken by an author to deliberately betray his own finalizing evaluation of character. The author seems to tell the reader to judge for himself the conflicting claims of the author, the hero, and other narrative personae. This closely approaches the polyphonic novel. To illustrate my claim on the difference between the dialogic and the monologic nature of *No Longer at Ease*, I will revisit Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe's first novel is monologic and seems like a finished report about the hero. The author is located in a high decision making position. The author does not withdraw from his omniscience. The author's point of view is dogmatic and excludes all argumentation within the text. Even the dialogues of characters pass as maximally authentic and incontrovertible.

Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* knows everything about Okonkwo. He has a unified vision of who the hero is and how he will end. He only juxtaposes, contrasts and evaluates the hero against other characters who are located outside the internal consciousness of the hero and gives them the whim to finalize him. Be it Obierika his friend or the white District Commissioner. To add on to this Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* appears to have surplus material which he uses to create a finalizing meaning of the life and death of Okonkwo. The hero does not understand what the Achebe knows and cannot see himself dialogically against his environment. Thus Achebe utilizes a monologic function in character creation using his own field of vision. Okonkwo is not even given the chance to evaluate the wisdom of his death and Obierika is used only as the author's mouthpiece. Thus the total effect of the text is that of finality thanks to the author's exclusive field of vision and the surplus material at his disposal, which the characters cannot see

themselves or understand. This defines the monologist text as opposed to the text that is capable of offering counterpoints.

In the counterpoint strategy of *No Longer at Ease*, the author extends his own point of view on the character, Obi and especially to his consciousness. One expects a response from Obi about authorial evaluation and this leads to a firsthand evaluation in which the character is allowed the last word. On this strategy, the authorial voice and the other personae encounter an internal resistance on the part of the main character. There is nothing that happens to Obi that he does not seem to understand. Nothing is located outside his consciousness. Thus Achebe encounters Obi and his words on a single dialogic plane. The author's point of view encounters that of his character on the same level. The author avoids external visibility including culture questions on worldview.

Achebe has allowed Obi to see and know the essential things that would have held as surplus in his fiction (the traditional set up, the meaning of independence and the role of the earlier educated elite). The entire work looks like a narrativised dialogue between the author and the character as participants with the author acting as the organizer but not the source of the final word. That is why we get glimpses of Achebe's biography traversing the character of Obi Okonkwo. In Obi's discussion with Mr. Green's secretary, Miss Tomlinson, both seem to agree that Green had some positive values as opposed to the stereotyped colonial administrator role he was supposedly expected to exhibit. However, Obi inflects that Green is only interested in Africa of the steward boy and the garden boy. Obi reflects that his boss must have come to Africa

originally with the ideal of civilizing brutes. That is why in a flash of insight, he remembers his Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* which he had read for his degree. Obi reflects on Conrad's text:

> By simple exercise of our will, we can exert the power for good practically unbounded. That was Mr. Kurtz before the heart of darkness got him. Afterwards he had written: Exterminate the brutes! It was not a close analogy, of course. Kurtz had succumbed to the darkness, Green to the incipient dawn. But their beginning and end were alike; I must write a novel on the tragedy of the Greens of this country, he thought, pleased with his analysis. (97)

Here, there are echoes of the Achebe himself. He has expresses these views in *Hopes and Impediments* and *Home and Exile.* This brings Achebe into contact with his character in a dialogic field of vision. Achebe creates an information bearing character through interior monologue so as to avoid a dialogue rhetorically performed. Achebe seems to be in an exercise of propounding his polemics and introducing some surplus material like Miss Tomlinson merely to carry the story forward. These echoes of the Achebe in the character of Obi form a kind of micro dialogue between the two. For Obi, it can be called an interior dialogue.

After Obi's exegesis he receives a package from Clara ostensibly aimed at bailing him out of his financial stress. Her fifty pounds meant for Obi's resettlement of his overdraft is stolen the same day from the latter's car thus further plunging him into more challenges when one thought they were abating. The process towards tragedy is irresolvable and unfinalisable though punctuated with Obi's lighthearted encounters with his friend Christopher who is rather liberal about sex

with girls and bribery for scholarships. Obi took sex and bribery seriously but suspected that he was being naive. It is a source of inertia within an apparently strong personality pose.

When he takes leave for Umuofia to see his sick mother, a band of young women who have been singing at a funeral pass by Obi's home and sing a song which reminds Obi of the village life that he had missed. Though his father had protestations against heathen songs, his mother supports. That his father does not protest vehemently strikes Obi as ominous indeed. The women sing of the value of kinship and the uselessness of money which is Obi's dilemma. It is noteworthy that the song that Obi cannot argue with is rendered by a neutral external voice which resembles the chorus in Greek tragedy. Here, there is counterpoint but neither the hero nor the authorial voice can claim credit.

Though Obi is not a catechist and a devout Christian like his father and tends towards agnosticism he constantly finds himself trying to defend the values of Roman Catholics in his conversation with his friend Christopher about the celibacy of the young Irish nuns. Most fundamentally, in his argument with his father about the wisdom of marrying Clara, the counterpoint is replayed. Gikandi calls this episode, the most ironic and melancholic moments of the text in which a convert like Isaac Okonkwo uses the bible to rationalize ritual ostracism through the story of Naaman the leper. (121) Isaac Okonkwo also recalls in the same breath his youthful rejection of genealogy and tradition by deserting his father Okonkwo after the killing of Ikemefuna. His recounting of the history is meant to warn Obi against disobeying him but the father is equivocating. Achebe uses the catechist to offer a counterpoint at that moment. Significantly, Obi knows the story of Ikemefuna even before then.

For this reason, Obi cannot accept the present state of his mind as final though he is getting mixed signals. He is desperately searching for something that can trigger off the inevitable reaction between him and his father. Figuratively, he is searching for an interpretation to his heritage. Obi's macro dialogue is reinforced by his friend Christopher who though very liberal in sex matters seems to remind him that though he is educated society has not yet reached a stage where one could marry an outcast woman. This brings the reality to Obi that he could probably be ahead of his times.

Concerning Clara's abortion, the doctor who accepts to do the operation reminds Obi that it is not medicine and they are all criminals. Clara's abortion puts Obi in a spin and in mad desperation he remembers the irresistible pessimism of A. E Houseman. However, though he picks up the book to read, he ends up reading his romantic poetry about Nigeria that he had written in London two years before. Again Achebe is involved in counterpoint macro dialogue with Obi in his time of crisis.

The immorality, cowardice and compromise of opting for abortion instead of a marriage, though earns him a name from a patient whom he irritates at the hospital. She calls him a beast who has no nation. During these crucial times, Achebe employs dialogue between, Obi, Clara, Christopher, the doctor and the patients to provoke a battle and an interruption in Obi's train of thought. At these points, one voice is being interrupted by another but both seem to be issuing from Obi's double. It is for this reason that Obi agrees with Mr. Green and Ms. Tomlinson that there are too many holidays and leaves in Nigeria but he quickly counters by saying that all these

soft conditions were devised by the Europeans when they were in privilege but they think Africans don't deserve them now.

After his mother's death, one elder in the Umuofia Progressive Union stresses this counterpoint strategy while discussing Obi's conduct. Obi does not attend his mother's funeral and the elder says that, wherever something stands, another thing stands beside it. (145) This is in reference to the historical tragedy of his grandfather Okonkwo whom Isaac Okonkwo had also condemned and justified as due. As though to underline the micro dialogues in the text, Obi's kinsmen come to console him in his city home and one Nathaniel tells the fable of the tortoise whose bid to escape the burden of his mother's funeral was foiled by people through cheating him that his father's palm tree had borne a fruit at the end of its leaf, in itself a monstrosity that brought tortoise home. These words are meant for no one else but Obi Okonkwo. It actually makes him feel guilty. But the guilt is quickly succeeded by a feeling of total peace and he feels like King David after the death of his son. It is a kind of peace borne from tragedy which brings one peace beyond understanding. Here we are being shown that even feelings have an ironic counterpoint. After this recollection, his parents and the clan become matters philosophical and his philosophies give him a kind of pleasure. He can now explain away stressful and conscience pricking ideas because as the Achebe says, he too had died and beyond death there are no ideals and no humbug, only reality. (151) This counterpoint to idealism starts a completely new phase in Obi's life. The protagonist now starts accepting accepting money from candidates who all have the minimum educational requirements and are on the scholarships short-list anyway. He does it as a routine activity but though it evens out his financial problems, it does not make him happier at all. For him every incident is a hundred times worse than the one before it. Thus,

everything is projected against Obi in order to offer all possible evaluations and points of view on his personality. All other points of view intersect within him and he comes out with his own. He seems to be a character in perpetual argument with himself and the police arrest at the end of the novel seems like a convenient way of Achebe relieving the never-ending tension in the hero and the reader. However, it seems almost unmotivated by Obi Okonkwo's essential character. It is outside his point of view and hence its appropriateness in ending the drama of Obi Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease.*

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter an examination of the strategy of allowing the character latitude in point of view has been analysed. Achebe has deliberately allowed Obi to foreground his own world-view without offering a firm authorial verdict on the viability of his biases about the character. Achebe appears to be conducting a discourse with Obi rather than making him appear as the final product of a decided authorial view.

The validity of Obi's point of view in cultural and political issues though not fully endorsed by Achebe is left for the reader to judge. Achebe avoids a subjective point of view of the character by allowing him to perform acts of self-clarification in which the author does not provide a strong antithesis. At the end of the narrative the author's defining opinion of who Obi is and what the reader has to think of him is left to the reader; it is not expressly suggested and a climate of an open–ended and reciprocal point of view is created between the author, narrator and, the reader.

CHAPTER FOUR

AMBIVALENCE, AMBIGUITY AND MONOLOGISM IN *ARROW OF GOD*

4.0 Introduction

The discourse in *Arrow of God* is not only a discourse about Ezeulu, the hero and his immediate environment, but also a discourse about a world view. Achebe does this by utilizing a character who is not only cognizant about his personal situation, but an ideologist as well. Ezeulu's ideology is captured in the following words he uses to justify sending his son Oduche to the Whiteman's school despite being the chief priest of Ulu, the traditional god of his people:

> The world is changing" he told him. 'I do not like it. But I am like the bird Eneke-nti-oba. When his friends asked him why he was always on the wing he replied: men of today have leant to shoot without missing and so I have leant to fly without perching." I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying had we known tomorrow. (47)

These are typical of the words that Ezeulu uses in the text. An affirmative sentence is followed by its negating counterpart signaled by the use of 'but' and 'but if'. This signals an ambivalent philosophy of life on the part of the character and an accompanying artistic outlook on the part of the Achebe.

Ezeulu's discourse about the changing world merges with a confessional discourse about his dislike for it oneself. This is evident right from the start of the narrative when Ezeulu is figuring about his age. Ezeulu did not like to think that his sight was no longer as good as it used to be and that he would rely on somebody else as his grandfather had done when his sight failed. (1) Put against the cultural background of the world he inhabits, this confession cannot be taken at face value but must also be subject to a metaphorical interpretation. The losing of sight that Ezeulu fears much is not just the physical loss of sight but also insight and the philosophical foundation against which his society had stood. This is reinforced by the observation that presently he was as good as a young man but as a clincher the narrator says that he was better because young men were no longer what they used to be. That is why whenever he greeted them he tensed his arm and surprised them with the firmness of his grip.

Again, this is symbolic in that the present generation and its environment are weakening, a thing foreshadowed the moon he sees that day is, as thin as an orphan child fed grudgingly by a foster mother.(1) Ezeulu sees the weakening of the coming generation in images of catastrophic premonition. The vision is not only personal but also cosmic. He thus chooses to confront it with ambivalence. Achebe's artistic choices are characterised by casting his hero against the contingents of history and the biases of his personality. Ezeulu's words to his son Oduche, underline this ideological and artistic motion of the rhetoric of *Arrow of God.*

It is necessary to set African reality within its historical context. The anthropologists of the colonial period did not do this. Under the influence of Malinowski, the whites were particularly ahistorical. Indirect rule in Africa which the white man tries to implement in Arrow of God however suspected a history of African institutions. To the whites, these institutions are not very

influential. The Africans too suspect that the way of the whites has something to offer. The result is an absence of clarity of action to all participants of change whether black or white.

The consequence of this synchronic approach was to greatly strengthen the impression of a complete otherness of African societies. According to Basil Davidson, Logically enough, they began to be called 'the undeveloped peoples'; for development supposes history, and they were said to have none. (2) Against this background, David Carroll sees mutual misinterpretation as in fact the chief structural device in *Arrow of God.*

4.2 Ambivalence and Ambiguity

Achebe is not using ambivalence in the work at some points but ambiguity. After the lost war with Okperi, Ezeulu interprets the intervention of Winterbottom as the validation of the punishment of his deity Ulu whom Umuaro had challenged. Winterbottom thinks that change came about after the white administration had gathered and publicly destroyed the guns of the feuding sides save for a few mementos he had reserved. For the Igbo, the violence and accompanying humiliation is the work of Ekwensu the bringer of evil but Winterbottom attributes this thinking to palm wine. Psychologically, this is just like saying the same thing only one is couched in spiritual terms while the other is pseudo-empirical stereotype.

The white man then is the agent of Ulu since he punishes Umuaro on behalf of Ulu, Ezeulu's deity. In fact, Winterbottom, talking about the land case, observes that all witnesses perjured themselves except Ezeulu. This is not diluted by his seeing Ezeulu as a fetish king. He has a theory that the Ibos in the past assimilated a small non-negroid tribe who resembled the Red-

Indians. This merely because Ezeulu was light skinned, almost red. Again, Winterbottom is using the stereotype.

Winterbottom like Ezeulu longs for the old ways. He expresses this through his conversation with Clarke who is a moderate fellow whiteman in the colonial administration. When the latter tries to criticize a racist and conservative attitude for the natives expounded in *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, a fictional title mentioned in *Things Fall Apart* and attributed to Allen, another white character in the colonial administration, Winterbottom supports the racist Allen against Clark's more progressive and accommodative attitude toward the native. Like Ezeulu, he is clutching to the past in his dealings with his junior officers. For him, Indirect Rule, Clark style, is too insecure. He wants nothing short of total pacification. He even warns wright who was in charge of road construction in the colony against his liberalism and easy going attitude towards native women. He is a rigid colonial figure just like Ezeulu is a steadfast custodian of his deity Ulu. Both know that the world is changing yet they are guardians of rigid institutions. The Africans are at home with the rich texture of traditional life while the whites are running to the security of a stereotype. Yet both accept that change has come.

Ironic parody is used as a vehicle of ambivalence to contrast Ezeulu's rituals at the colonial Government Hill with the three white administrators who present different points of view about similar subjects. So long as the world-views of the two sides become unintelligible to each other, they act in the same way in the face of the unknown. For the Africans, it is rituals and rites while for the whites it is myths and use of force. Ambivalence is the new source of confidence and power to the leading characters since no one is absolutely sure of the truth.

The complacency and ignorance of the D. C at the closing of *Things Fall Apart* is continued in *Arrow of God* where the white ruler, exercising Indirect Rule, has created his own rituals and mandate. But of significance is that there is a demonstration of a new confidence in powers. The introduction of Captain Winterbottom himself as an old coaster of fifteen years parallels that of Ezeulu the old man. But while the latter is looking for confirmation of old rituals, the former is looking out for nothing but the great danger of Africa, symbolically captured by mention of the African weather. The unwary European who bared himself to it received the death kiss! (30).The danger is not simply the weather; it has its symbolic import. The symbolism is most visible at night when Winterbottom hears the inexplicable sound of the adjacent African world. He is the observant/listener and alienated outsider. "He would wonder what unspeakable rites went on in the forest at night, or was it the heart-beat of the African darkness? Could it be the throbbing that came from his own heart-stricken brain? (31) This reminds one of the views of Marlowe in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe revisits his pet subject of the European point of view vis-avis the African.

The priest is against the war with Okperi but Nwaka convinces the people to fight. Ezeulu says that no matter how strong a man is he should not challenge his *chi*. Nwaka replies that when a man says yes, his *chi* says yes too. The war goes on and the land is finally given to Okperi by the whiteman who stops the war by breaking the guns of the contestants. There is a crisis of choice and a contest of the divine versus the political who are the new gods. It is only Ezeulu who ironically sees this. In the dialectic of power within the tribe, the significant change from *Things Fall Apart* is that the villagers have to come to terms with events which occur from an alien rule.

These events are now both powerful and permanent. Ezeulu is the intermediary between the human world and the spirit world. The narrator's description of the character is impersonal and shifts from focusing on the frightened villager to the divine intermediary inhabiting a mysterious world.

The family drama of chapter one where Ezeulu is arguing with his son Edogo about a carving the latter is making for a man of Umuagu becomes both private and public. The interaction between the individual and community whose climax is the Ritual of the Pumpkin Leaves further underlines this. Even the rivalries of Ezeulu's wives are given release and the unity of the chapter lies in that Achebe rallies fears and uncertainties into this larger ritual to be performed at the public square. According to Carroll, Achebe has lost none of his skill in capturing the tension of communal Igbo rituals, with their strong mingling of fear and delight. (96) But the dominant emotion is the simultaneous conflicting feelings toward persons and things. For Ezeulu his role is to interpret for Umuaro the will of the god and to perform the two most important rituals in the life of the villages: the Festival of the Pumpkin leaves and that of the New Yam Festival. Therefore, the dilemma in the new dispensation is whether he should be king or servant. This ambivalence plays itself out not only to his fellow villagers but also to the white administrators and ultimately shapes his response as a character. It also controls the author's portrayal of the hero: the author is ambivalent.

4.3 Monologising the Text

Monologism in literature is a strategy of amalgamating discourses into a single semantic unity. In the presence of the monologic principle ideology as a deduction-as a semantic summation of

representation-inevitably transforms the represented world into a voiceless object of that deduction. The positioning of represented material is always under strict authorial control. According to Bakhtin, It can be a simple illustration to an idea, a simple example, it can be material for ideological generalization (as the experimental novel), or it can exist in more complex relationships to the final result. (83)

Elements of ideological monologism are present in almost every representation, however modest in *Arrow of God.* These deductions have formal functions in creating the structure of the novel as monologic. Though characters may contradict each other-and contradictions are present in the novel-the governing authorial accent does not collide but remains a single voice. There is a unity of formal viewpoint even in the philosophical deductions. This amalgamation is the semantic foundation of the text. The characters as agents of this monologic approach are entirely unselfish in so far as they go ahead to reveal even the deepest corners of their personality. Ezeulu's domestic life is an open book and Nwaka is allowed to boast of his wealth and still Winterbottom is allowed to convey his worldview of the African and so are the converted Christians. These are characters of the idea in Achebe's novel.

However, what is most significant is that what Achebe represents is not just the ordinary qualifications or actions of the character but rather the index of the person, the privacy of his personality. For example, the British had the idea of installing warrant chiefs as a form of Indirect Rule without destroying the African atmosphere. Captain Winterbottom is the man mandated through dictatorial memoranda from the Senior Resident at Government Hill against his better judgement. To the captain, an old coaster in British African administration who was on spot and knew his African and understood what to do, these overruling seniors were simply,

starry eyed fellows from headquarters. (58) This pejorative phrase assigned to Winterbottom represents the author's position. Winterbottom is forced to experiment with appointing a warrant chief James Ikedi for Okperi which proves a failure and also echoes an author's position. Ikedi misuses his powers and actually undermines the African atmosphere by taking any woman who took his fancy and ignoring paying of bride price. He is the picture of a despot amongst his people. This makes Winterbottom scoff at the ways of his own administration and makes him impatient and angry in his position. Indirect Rule was creating native extortionists like Chief Ikedi. For example in the local road programme, people had to bribe Ikedi to avoid the destruction of their compounds.

Winterbottom sees this as elemental cruelty in the psychological makeup of the native. Ikedi even goes ahead to get his people to make him a king or *Obi*. He is now called His Highness Ikedi the First Obi of Okperi. The author reconciles with Wintabottom's indignation by observing that the Igbo abominate kings in the first place. The captain has to follow orders from his seniors nonetheless. But there is one thing he is not ready to compromise: he would not stop speaking his mind even if it is at his own cost. All along, the interpretive voice seems to be reflecting back on the Achebe who knowingly says, 'I told you so'. The other significant decision is that in the matter of native chiefs, 'he was not going for any of these, mission-educated smart Alecs (60) These adjectives belong to an authorial semantic position. For Umuaro, the captain's mind is settled on Ezeulu courtesy of his confidence in Ezeulu after the latter took the right position against his clan in the land dispute with Okperi. What is represented in Winterbottom is his personal devotion to an idea of a colony and the author recapitulates through syntactic choices so as to round off the monologic objective of the art.

In the monologic tradition, the idea of a character has to go through the dialogic nature of human thought. The idea is delegated to the individual by the author but it lives through contact with other consciousnesses. That is why even monologues in *Arrow of God* are infiltrated with dialogic undercurrents. The consciousness of an individual becomes not a solitary voice but a battlefield of voices. Even monologue is shot through with interior polemics from different points of view. Ezeulu and Winterbottom are prone to ideological monologues which seem to self test, self verify, self confirm and, self repudiate with a central voice mediating to create an image of a character around an idea. This monologic idea seems to be detecting in it not only the individual voice but the dialogic relationship between voices. The dominant voices in the novel are heard as well as their opposites and their future worldviews. The unuttered future worldview is very important concerning the plot of *Arrow of God.* This unuttered world view can only be deduced through analyzing the semantic implications of the author's word choice.

Monologism is also achieved through dialogue. Though dialogue is not very preponderant in *Arrow of God*, it is deftly applied especially in times of crises. To underline the importance of dialogue in the text. It is one of the devices used to create the picture of Ezeulu and his relation to his world:

> It is good for a misfortune like this to happen once in a while, he said,' so that we know the thoughts of our friends and neighbors. Unless the wind blows we don't see the fowl's rump. (61)

This is in response to the scandal people are spreading after Oduche has imprisoned the sacred python in his school box, a new type of abomination. Crises are worked artistically into images and actions which provoke other people to speak. The incorporation of event and comment gives rise to the great dialogues of the novel thus allowing Achebe to take episodes as prototype for his artistic and philosophical ideology.

Achebe brings ideas on a borderline of dialogically intersecting consciousnesses and world views which are estranged and deaf to each other and forces them to quarrel thereby leading to the final analysis which now becomes the monologic event. To achieve this, he ensures that no part of dialogue is privileged. To illustrate this, when Ezeulu is arguing with his wife about the whereabouts of Oduche, after the boy has committed the python sacrilege, he lets Ugoye (the wife) wonder why Ezeulu is planning to kill his son for doing what he had taught him to do in the first place, albeit learning the ways of the whiteman, to which Ezeulu replies: "You must be telling me in your mind that a man who brings home ant-infested faggots should not complain if he is visited by lizards. You are right.'' (61)

Ezeulu concedes to the logic of his wife's arguments thus negating Chinyelu Ojukwu's (284) assertion that the woman's opinions are never sought. When Ezeulu's in-laws come to take back his daughter Akueke who has fled from her violent husband, he allows them to talk and talk although he objects to wife battery. Their dialogue is also not devalued by Achebe who intends to issue the monologic assertion that families should stick together. His role in these dialogues is to organize the voices into a monologue. Even the banter of children storytelling sessions are rendered in *Arrow of God* as semi-voices of the dominant monologic viewpoint.

Achebe's strategy in the novel is not to move from idea to idea or episode after another. Rather, he moves from orientation to orientation. Even positive agreement amongst characters in the novel is dialogized towards the monologic which is ambivalent. In *Arrow of God*, discourse about the world merges with discourse about the character's own self. The truth about the world according to Dostoyevsky is inseparable from the truth about personality. (78) The categories defining the life of Ezeulu's acceptance or non acceptance, rebellion or reconciliation become the basic categories for his thinking about the world; the principles that govern his personal life become his world view and thus this personal life and world view are fused to become the principal artistic activity in *Arrow of God.* Ezeulu's life mirrors Achebe's world view.

Achebe adopts a monologic artistic approach in dealing with Ezeulu and thus once he places an idea in the hero's mouth it becomes Ezeulu's reality. The ideas placed in the mouth of Ezeulu are three fold: his social type as an individual, his intellectual rumination and the expression of his spiritual realm. This rhetorical characteristic of fusion becomes Ezeulu's image. Consequently, Ezeulu becomes the carrier of Achebe's ideas in systematically monologic expositions. As the novel ends, it becomes the systematic world view of Achebe himself. This is what he states in the preface to the 2008 edition of the novel:

> For had he been spared Ezeulu might have come to see his fate as perfectly consistent with his high historic destiny as victim, consecrating by his agony-thus raising to the stature of a ritual passage-the defection of his people. And he would gladly have forgiven them

In the preface, Achebe does not recognize someone else's thought or ideas as objects of his art and representation of Ezeulu. The thoughts of Achebe just like Ezeulu are not represented but affirmed. We can always hear the thoughts of Achebe in the context of the work. Other thoughts and ideas that do not fit into Ezeulu's world view are either polemically repudiated by Achebe or they fail to characterize. When young men pressed their hands upon greeting Ezeulu, they got surprised when he pressed back and proved more energetic and younger than they had imagined. Though seemingly only a physical gesture, this has got symbolic undercurrents about Ezeulu's position in society. In the speeches of Nwaka, Ezeulu's adversary, Achebe ensures that the former presents a seemingly damaging evaluation of Ezeulu only for this evaluation to be followed by a dismissive rejoinder by the latter. Stylistically thus, in Achebe's monologic novel, thoughts are either affirmed or repudiated. This is the artistic structure. Ezeulu's madness at the end of the novel for example is derived of the power to signify anything; it is not an authorial verdict on the fate of anyone who chooses the ambivalence of Ezeulu. It happens before the resolution of the conflict in the novel albeit the defection of the people to Christianity, and thus it simply becomes a psychical fact completely detached from the main plot. It does not characterise Ezeulu as a victim of the defection. Throughout, Ezeulu and Achebe are ideological monists and Ezeulu is spared of the sordid denouement.

Ideological monologism found its clearest and theoretically most precise expression in idealist philosophy; the affirmation of existence transformed into an ideal unity of the consciousness. For literature, the important thing is not the philosophical side of the question but rather the transformation of monism of existence into the monism of point of view and its application to

art. As far as the creation of *Arrow of God* is concerned, idealism recognizes only one principle of individualization. This principle does not recognise the element of error. Right from the outset of the narrative, true judgments are not attached to a personality like Ezeulu but correspond to some unified monologic context to which the author seems to belong since he allows the character to philosophise ambiguously to issues that the author has omniscient access to. For example, Ezeulu's sighting of the moon seems delayed for at least three nightfalls and his physical sight seems challenged by age. In fact, when he finally sights the moon, he reaches for his ogene nervously. Even the shape of the moon is not a complete affirmation but it is doubted by Matefi, Ezeulu's wife who thinks that it sits awkwardly. Even the children who are singing welcome to the new moon soon get into banter arguing whether the moon kills people. At the end of the children's exchange, Achebe tells us that Obiageli the lead child soloist' turned everything into a song. (3) Thus, it is possible in a song to imagine and postulate a unified truth that requires plurality of several principles each seeking to contribute. The artistic and ideological truth in *Arrow of God* is realized at the point of contact of several consciousnesses. Leonid Grossman in *Poetika Dostoevskogo* states that:

> In essence idealism knows only a single mode of cognitive interaction among consciousness: someone who knows and possesses the truth instructs someone who is ignorant of it and in error; that is, it is the interaction of a teacher and a pupil which it follows can be only a pedagogical dialogue. (53)

Grossman explains the nature of philosophical monologism and not artistic monologism. In Achebe's creative act, we do not hear the expressions of a single consciousness but there is unity

of many. It is like listening to the spirit of the nation or the spirit of history in which the idealism is not a monologic omnipotence or utopianism. There is unity of differences united by a single principle-the acknowledgement of the validity of differing interpretations-which the author's point of view is.

In Achebe's curious ambivalence, all ideas are merged into a unity of his sight. The unconfirmed ideas are distributed among the heroes but these heroes, like Nwaka and Wintabota, are socially typical or like Clarke individually characteristic manifestations of thought. The one who seeks the sole ideologist in the whole novel is Achebe himself. By so doing Achebe creates a single accent in the text and strives to make everything secondary seem as a contradiction of his world view; no wonder, his preface explains his closure to the narrative; it silences any contradictions. Thus we are left with the authorial idea.

4.4 The Authorial Idea in *Arrow of God*

Since we have qualified the text as monologic and issuing its ideology from the author, we have to analyze how this authorial idea is arranged and how it performs in the reader. Firstly, the authorial ideas and style are the principles of visualizing the world. Ezeulu's life in the novel epitomizes this principle; the principle of duality, "where something stands, something else stands also", "the world is a mask dancing…''. This is the principle behind the single-toned quality of the work.

Secondly, the idea is represented as more or less a distinct deduction derived from presented material. This is where the other heroes of the text come in; Nwaka in particular is a product of

this deduction strategy. He seems to comment deductively on what Ezeulu does, in a repudiatory tone though. Thirdly, the authorial idea finds direct expression in the ideological opposition of the hero before he gets psychically challenged.

In the first strategy, which is based around the episode of the land war between Umuaro and Okperi, the narrator visualizes his worldview by telling the reader that "Ezeulu often said that the dead fathers of Umuaro looking at the world from ani-Mmo must be utterly bewildered by the way of the new age'' (15). He sees the world as having gotten conceited to the level of challenging a personal god like the little bird *nza*, after eating and drinking to its fill. The bewildered position of the gods is rendered by Achebe through Ezeulu's explanation about the inappropriateness of and lack of justification for war with Okperi. Ezeulu gives a historical rendering of how Umuaro should respect Okperi land and avoid war using evidence from oral history. This evidence is exhaustive and traditionally empirical. He declares that he is not to have a hand in the war if it was to be.

However, Nwaka, an eloquent man of title turns this upside down. The man of title comes from a lineage of wealthy individuals unlike Ezeulu, the priest of Ulu. Ulu as the most powerful deity had been bestowed to the weakest village in Umuaro to avoid blatant class differentiation and caste formation in a traditional African act of social balancing. But significantly, this man of title and a lord of wealth contradicts Ezeulu by saying that although the latter could be right, the lore of the land was beyond many fathers. After Nwaka's speech, it is truly evident that his eloquence, logic and changed circumstances have totally destroyed Ezeulu's speech. Nwaka now becomes the hero of the moment and his ideas swing many the truth.

The author's perceptions are spread amongst different speakers who all deduce their thoughts from Ezeulu's speech. As Umuaro chooses to send Akukalia also known as Kill and Despoil to speak for Umuaro, an old man reminds him of rectitude. Again here the idea is given ambivalence by the old. Ezeulu sees Ogbuefi Egonwane's ambivalence as equivocation. "Like carrying water and fire in the mouth at the same time." To him, idealism is idealism, no rectitude. Ironically, it is the fiery Akukalia who sees the power of the whiteman above that of traditional deities when he compares the prosperity of Umuru market to Eke due to the introduction of white man's merchandize. It is Akukalia who first propounds metaphorically the superiority of the new order in the analogy of two fighting children. As he rounds up his talk about his envisaged mandate as an emissary of war to Okperi, ''when a man of cunning dies a man of cunning buries him.'' (21) This is the truth of ambivalence. Akukalia rebuffs all traditional courtesies and his mission is clearly warlike. He reminds one of Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart.* In a similar suggestive fashion, Akukalia breaks Ebo's *Ikenga* in his impatience and impudence. The latter shoots him dead. An abomination is followed by an abomination, the work of Ekwensu, a traditional deity.. Again, the stylistic maneuver here is that of incident representing ideology and its rebuttal in which the reverse event is as valid as the cause.

Ezeulu then comes in to round off Achebe's scheme of rhetoric. After Akukalia's death, he gives a speech proclaiming that in the present world, there is no longer head or tail in what people do. There is meaninglessness and aimlessness and impudence. But still, this is not a closure! Nwaka calls upon his support and offers a counter ideology that Ezeulu wants to be king, priest and

diviner at their cost. He is sure the king of Umuaro would definitely not be from Ezeulu's village, a classic case of *argumentum hominem*.

The ambivalence at work here is the difference between traditional mandate and modern realities. A price had to be paid by the loss of the tradition through its very assertion. The two villages go to war and Wintabota, the whiteman, steps in and breaks all the guns of Umuaro except four. Akukalia's brother dies a result of the land dispute as well and thus, though Umuaro feels revenged by killing a few Okperi, its military power is also lost. This also is an assertion that Ekwensu at work. By their loss of kin and weapons the voice of the Achebe returns through Ezeulu who foresees the ruin of the world.

This third and final monologic position belongs to the author who through the hero foretells the coming of the new dispensation and the tragic end of the old. According to Bakhtin in the monologist novel, a unity of viewpoint must weld into one both the most formal elements of style and the most abstract philosophical deductions (83). Significantly, the use of proverbs and symbolism by both Ezeulu and Nwaka though different in perspective is united in its form of articulation. It is like the voice of a single character who decides to assume the character of the other without altering the form. What alter are the philosophy and the hero and this is where the author comes in to monologize his ideology omnisciently. The ideas of Achebe are spread throughout the novel in the form of sayings, maxims, and arguments or placed in the mouth of Ezeulu.

4.5 The Dialogic Impersonal Aphorism

In *Arrow of God*, there are characters whose words are characteristic of aphoristic thinking. Even when a character is defending an untenable position he is generously aphoristic in the form of proverbs and witty observations. Ezeulu says that "a man who knows that his anus is small does not swallow an adula seed" (172). He also says that 'The man who sends a child to catch a shrew will also give him water to wash his hand.'

These aphorisms belong to Igbo folklore but they also underline the ideology of the text that traditional wisdom is also legitimate. They are brief exchanges but very analytical and integral to the overall idea of the novel, summarized in Ezeulu's statement to his son Oduche about a changing world:

> The world is changing', he told him. 'I do not like it. But I am like the bird Eneke-nti-oba. When his friends asked him why he was always on the wing he replied: "Men of today have learnt to shoot without missing and so I have leant to fly without perching." I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying *had we known* tomorrow. (47)

These features underline Achebe's polyphonic approach to discourse. He envisages a world yoked together by different semantic orientations but with a singular goal. These dialogic aphorisms function as the resolution of artistic and ideological quests for the author. This means

that he takes care not to lose sight of the ideological and stylistic tone of the narrative. Through the aphorisms Achebe monologises his text. The ideas in the aphorisms function for the characters as the monologic principles for seeing and grappling with the world and thus the author uses them to channel the heroes of the text towards his objective. The monologism lies in Achebe's ability to bring these relationships into cognizance of judgment which he renders at the end of the novel:

> So in the end Umuaro and its leaders saw the final outcome. To them the issue was simple. Their god had taken sides with them against his headstrong and ambitious priest and thus upheld the wisdom of their ancestors-that no man however great was greater than his people; that no one ever won judgment against his clan. (233)

However in keeping with the ambivalence of the text, Achebe provides another counter aphorism in the form of the fable of the lizard who ruined his mother's funeral with his own hand. Meaning that by Ulu, the god, upholding the truth and destroying the priest, he has also brought disaster to himself since the timing is inappropriate and people are prone to take liberties; they abandoned him in favour of Christianity.

When Wright wants to increase his labour force to complete the road between Umuaro and Okperi, Wintabota's aphorism is that "the labourer is worth his hire'' (79) This is despite Wright wanting permission to use slave labour. Moses Unachukwu the overseer of the laborers says that there is no escaping the whiteman. He has come, knocked on the door, and even if there is no

seat for him, he has brought his own stool; an impersonal aphorism about the conquest of Africa. He adds that ‘’When a house falls the ceiling is not left standing’’ (87).

The age group representative Nweke Ukpaka advises his colleagues to cooperate with the white man. Though his age mates are angered, he tells them not to give the whiteman a reason to punish them. Why? “Because the very house he has been seeking ways of pulling down will have caught fire of its own will” (88). After the whipping of Obika due to lateness to work after a night of alcohol drinking, Ezeulu concludes that the death that kills a man begins as an appetite (91); a pointed aphorism on the effects of alcohol addiction and how it is making the Africans lose focus. But Obika is acting just like Ezeulu in choosing Ofoedu the drunk for a friend. His father had befriended Winterbottom to his peril.

Edogo, while thinking of Ezeulu’s character and why he seemed to differ with other people, had forgotten the aphorism that “if a man sought for a companion who acted entirely like himself, he would live in solitude’’ (95). Talking of who is to blame about Obika’s whipping, Ezeulu is ambivalent. But Akaubue says that they should first chase away the wild cat, afterwards they could blame the hen (101). Ofoedu is an old man and has the traditional authority that age begets. As he observes wisely, the woman who started cooking earlier had more broken utensils. But in a finalizing observation to mollify Ezeulu without blaming his children he concludes that “Whatever tune you play in the compound of a great man there is always someone to dance to it” (102). This is an aphorism whose semantic content is summative in its acknowledgement of the ambivalence of greatness.

These aphorisms provide logical bases of argument. They can construct a thesis and its antithesis. The aphorisms in *Arrow of God* though coming from folklore are delegated to characters or appear as authorial positions and their purpose is to concretize arguable positions. Achebe in the creation of his aphorisms uses the dialogic approach. As Bakhtin says, they must clothe themselves in discourse, become utterances, become the positions of various subjects expressed in discourse, in order that dialogic relationships might arise from them.183)

In *Arrow of God,* these dialogic relationships distinguish language styles of characters, they characterize them. The older generation of Ofoedu, Ezeulu and Nwaka is aphoristic. The younger generation is not except the leaders of age groups like Nweke Ukpaka. These dialogic aphorisms emerge not only between conversations but also in internal monologues when characters are engaged in intellectual investigation of phenomena in their mind. This would suggest that they take the nature of double-voiced discourse in an effort to apprehend the world more authentically. When a speech act characterizes a personage, it defines the person. This resembles the Gogolian Skaz utilized in *The Government Inspector* where Lestakhov's self-important speech mannerisms characterise him as a trickster. I *Arrow of God*, it is the content and mode of speech presentation that not only carries the message but the character. But this person is not alone in the narrative, there is inevitably the rejoinder.

4.6The Rejoinder

When Ezeulu visits his friend Akuebue, he sees the absurdity of people shooting guns to scare away spirits which had attacked a man. His critical observation is that if shooting in the air was a panacea for illness, then any wealthy man who could afford gun powder would live forever. But

the villagers seem to still grope around blindly with reality despite the presence of logic. The ambiguity of Ezeulu as the custodian of the traditional charter and its critic comes to the fore. The rejoinder here is intrapersonal. The discourse between Ezeulu and Akuebue takes the shape of statement and rejoinders. While Akuebue blames Ezeulu for the divisions in Umuaro and the white man's interference, the latter replies that it is actually the Africans who showed the white man how to defeat them; as was the case with Abame, where the Whites had plundered with help from the local people. To Ezeulu, the dialectic aphorism is that "the man who brings ant-infested faggots into his hut should not grumble when lizards begin to pay him a visit. (134) To him the natives are to blame and there is no room for scapegoating him.

Though the dialectic rejoinders might sound defensive as when Ezeulu responds to Akuebue about his decision to sacrifice Oduche to the white religion, Ezeulu's replies rhetorically indicate that the author is ready to tackle the old double-directed discourse with a new principle:

> I am not the man to dispute any of the things you say, Ezeulu. I am your friend and can talk to you as I like; but that does not mean I forget that one half of you is man and the other half spirit. And what you say about your father and grandfather is very true. But what happened in their time and what is happening today are not the same; they do not even have resemblance. Your father and grandfather did not do what they did to please a stranger…'This stung Ezeulu sharply but again he kept a firm hold on his anger.
>
> 'Do not make me laugh, he said. 'If someone came to you and said that Ezeulu sent his son to a strange religion so as to please another man what would you tell him? I say don't make me laugh. Shall I tell you why I sent my son? Then listen. A disease that has never been seen before cannot be cured with everyday herbs. (135)

The author now assumes a distance for a changing perspective. He is now about to enter the world of hopelessness that the native is getting into. Ezeulu, like the ancestral charter and tradition he represents is almost bound to be deserted by all even his friend Akuebue. He has to revert to his self.

From the double-directed discourses between Ezeulu and Akuebue, Captain Winterbottom's summons change the dialectic into the finalizing speeches which need no rejoinders. So far, this discourse has been in the form of a direct and unmediated objective oriented presentation in the hope of changing Ezeulu. Now that things have already changed with the entrance of the discourse of the whiteman, the discourse of conquest, Achebe adopts a new rhetorical strategy. The centres of discourse were previously discernible and argumentative. What follows is the self- sufficient discourse which needs no rejoinder. The character's speech is the final threshold. It becomes expressly subordinated after the entrance of Wintabottom's Chief Messenger. The man from Okperi is impatient with dialogue and Ezeulu too is dismissive of the messenger's sense of importance:

> The Chief Messenger did not seem pleased with the trend of the conversation. In his mind he was angry with this man in the bush who put on airs and pretended to be familiar with the District Officer. His escort sensed this and made desperate attempts to establish his importance. (138)

From this stage in the plot, the discourse dispenses with any rejoinders and ambivalence. When Ezeulu starts moving away from the traditional setting to enter the dictates of the white man, the conversational approach to discourse is silenced.

4.7 The Subordinating Discourse

Subordinating discourse works towards dispensing with ambivalence. The author's discourse after the white man has taken over and decided to imprison Ezeulu, contrary to the double-directed discourse, is now directed towards its own straightforward meaning. According to Bakhtin the creation of the subordinating discourse dispenses with rejoinders. It has a direct referential task:

> Its stylistic treatment is oriented purely toward an understanding of the referent. Should authorial discourse be treated in such a way that it is felt to be characteristic or typical for a specific person, a specific social position or a specific artistic manner, then we have stylization. (187)

In this strategy, the direct speech recognizes only itself and its object; it is maximally adequate to itself; it does not need a rejoinder as a rejoinder does not change things the slightest. For Achebe, the intruding speech (like the speech of Nwaka) is merely incorporated into the architectural whole because it is indispensable in plot formation otherwise we would only get a dictatorial speech of Ezeulu. The various influences penetrating the discourse do not alter the main

discourse. The main discourse is about the stubborn choices Ezeulu makes regardless of advice or censure.

The stylistic treatment of this single specified discourse functions as if the author has the ultimate authority. This authority is both thematic and semantic. It is a deliberate suppression of ambiguity and appears like the direct speech of the author. The author's intention-carried by the narrator-is realized in direct discourse without the help of other people's words. In this strategy, interrelationships between authorial speech and Ezeulu's speech begin to approach the interrelationship between two rejoinders in a dialogue. This is what the discourse evolves to after Ezeulu is summoned by Winterbottom to go to Okperi. He calls the clan to tell them of his assignments and as usual Nwaka gives his speech too. The two speeches look like an oratorical competition in the style found in *Julius Caesar* where Brutus and Mark Anthony engage in argon.

In discourse terms, these are direct-oriented speeches and not rejoinders. Ezeulu hints at this when he says to his clansmen who have congregated to discuss the white man's summons that:

> When I called you together it was not because I am lost or because my eyes have seen my ears. All I wanted was to see the way you would take my story. *I have and I am satisfied.* (147, emphasis mine)

Ezeulu is categorical that his calling of Umuaro is not for any dialectical purpose though Nwaka tries to steer it towards that. This speech by Ezeulu however closes up the double-directed

intentions of the author's discourse and the destiny of the character takes on a new singular look. Ezeulu adds: *Now as for what I shall do I had set my mind on it before I asked Ikolo to summon you*. But If I had done anything without first speaking to you, you might turn round and say why did he not tell us?(148) He also goes ahead to say that when time for speaking comes, Umuaro will speak until it is tired and perhaps it will be discovered that there are better orators than Nwaka. The authorial speech that comes after this is that Ezeulu had taken the decision to go to Okperi alone and he was not going to change. As in direct-oriented discourse, there is no further room for refutation, confrontation or supplementation. The relationships in the speeches are now not a question of agreement/disagreement, affirmation/supplementation or questions/answer. Accordingly if there is a future clash-as it ultimately comes-the represented positions are supplemented to the higher ultimate authority of the author.

When the two policemen come to arrest Ezeulu, they find him already departed to see the white man. Their speech is a command and even the bribe they solicit from Ezeulu's homestead is unequivocal. They announce that one has to appease the footprints of a masked spirit when it visits him. Akuebue agrees with them. "Very true, said Akuebue, the masked spirit of our day is the whiteman's and his messengers. (156) There is no argument and Akuebue's affirmation of the greatness of the Whiteman is unequivocal. This is not out of fear; the style of discourse has now changed course to the single directedness. There is no ambiguity now about how to view the masked spirit contrary to Ezeulu's previous philosophy.

Captain Winterbottom falls ill after dispatching the police to arrest Ezeulu. His sudden sickness after this order is noted by John Nwondika, the Igbo second steward to Captain Winterbottom as

an affirmation of ancestral powers. His analysis goes unchanged. In fact, it is an authorial input. Notably, the story of Ezeulu's magical power is now being told in the same tone as Winterbottom's sickness. The belief in the power of the unknown is not questioned. Even the policemen who have gone to arrest Ezeulu have to see the local *dibia,* a medicine man at night. The narration is now on an unequivocal track. Significantly, it starts with an eschatological note about the fallibility of the characters and symbolically the old dialectic mode of speech interrelationships. The narration gets objectified and has minimum ambiguity. This objectified discourse is not just directed towards the characters but to the author as well. There is no difference between them once they have accepted that the spiritual realm is in control. In this style, the author does not penetrate the speech of characters. He seems to be watching from without and letting the story take its course.

4.8 Self Directed Parody

In the rejoinder, the opposition to a character comes from another character, the parody is from without. In the self-directed parody, the parodying of character is not externalized but characters are involved in a self-directed lampoon. What a character says does not require a rebuff from another character though it is contrary to the portrait of the character when compared to previous presentation. In this technique, the author seems to observe the character from without. We note that Achebe plunges Ezeulu into a dream during his first night at the Government Hill. He sees the people rebelling against his authority and that of his grandfather. This parodies Ezeulu and he is to blame no other voice but that of the self. The parody is single directed. Even Nwaka who he had previously engaged in double directed-discourse appears in the dream and challenges Ezeulu's power. In the dream situation, the rejoinders we get are the waking up of the priest with

a start. There is no comment on the content of the dream. However, the author observes that the priest woke up with a start "as though he had fallen from a great height'' (162). This symbolism is positively instructive on the author's intentions. The dream is not a mere dream but a vision to the character. Achebe says that it had all taken place not in the half light of a dream but in the clarity of the middle day. When Ezeulu tries to interpret the dream the author calls it a deliberate diversion; the dream needs no interpretation. Ezeulu then plunges from a pre-occupation with the other characters to his relationship with Ulu his god. Akuebue confirms that it is not beyond Ezeulu to engage his god. This retreat to the self hardens Ezeulu against the people of Umuaro. He longs for the Whiteman to detain him longer so that Ulu could settle his case with Umuaro. He loses his status as priest and now becomes just an arrow of God, the agent of retribution to a marauding and boisterous society.

Clarke and Wade, the Englishmen who are staying with Ezeulu are confronted with a sacrifice by the roadside which has the English florin, the head of George the Fifth, as part of the paraphernalia. Wade removes the English currency from the juju but Wright who is to inherit Winterbottom is unhappy with the monstrous desecration of someone's sacrifice. He does not say it though. Achebe in an internal monologue shows the disturbance that Wright anticipated in having to enforce Indirect Rule without hurting the African environment. The African environment is now quite amalgamated with the English as the presence of the florin suggests. There is no other way of interpreting the symbolism in the sacrifice.

Achebe also prophetically parodies the status quo in the absence of the old order. In Ezeulu's absence, Edogo, the eldest son but not Ezeulu's favourite, has taken over the Ezeulu's Obi and gone ahead to ostracize Nwafo, Ezeulu's preferred son from his father's hut. For the first time,

the favourite is not welcome into the house. Achebe does this through a distanced omniscience in a discourse that is quickly avoiding dialogue. Though Nwafo is concerned about the new moon, there is no one to beat at the Ogene and his timidity and lack of mandate hold him back. This parodies the future African society where the favorite of that day would be ostracized and the custodians of culture would be timid.

There is no irony taking place in the Government Hill in Okperi. Ezeulu seems to be enjoying his visit to his motherland and his contact with John Nwondika, a man from a rival village. When Akuebue visits Ezeulu, he even conducts a blood bond between Edogo (Ezeulu's son) and John Nwondika. While Nwondika is explaining how he came to work for the white man, restates Ezeulu's vision of sending Oduche to learn the ways of the white man. In rendering Nwondika's story about the wisdom of knowing the dance of the season, there is no interruption in narration and the author, just like Ezeulu needs no support or disagreement. That belongs to others at this stage of the novel. Ezeulu and Akuebue no longer engage in dialectics; they seem to be now at the mercy of the author with whom they share a philosophy about the conduct of women in their customs.

Ezeulu refuses the white man's offer to be a warrant chief. Instead, he wants to keep allegiance to Ulu but his refusal is not a disagreement in the discourse since, without knowing it, the white man is being his ally in his spiritual fight with Umuaro. His enemies misunderstand him for the refusal but dialectically they are on his side unknowingly. Nwaka dismisses it as inherited lunacy and the narrator concurs. Significantly, Ezeulu's release from prison is quickly followed by a report by the Secretary of Native Affairs on Indirect Rule in Eastern Nigeria which officially

stops the appointment of warrant chiefs in new areas. This then ends the discourse and dialectic of paramount chieftaincy for both Ezeulu and the whiteman. The discourse is expressly single directed and the plot also follows cue. Therefore, the narrator functions as a compensational substitute for the author's message. It is a strategy of concealing dialogue.

4.9 The Hidden Dialogicality

In his book on the characteristic features of Italian language Leo Spitz observers that:

> Our practical everyday speech is full of other peoples words" with some of them we completely merge our own voice, forgetting who they are, others which we take as authoritative, we use to reinforce our own words; still others finally we populate with our own aspirations, alien or hostile to them. (175-76)

This seems to be the rhetorical strategy that Achebe adopts in the concluding chapters of *Arrow of God* after Ezeulu returns from Okperi. In this strategy another discourse is produced without new insinuations. But it acts upon and influences and determines the authors discourse in his pursuit of the final and hidden polemic. The referential discourse is implied but not reproduced. In the last three chapters of the novel the discourse sharply senses its listener, reader, and critics who have already seen what has happened. The narrator is restating what the reader already knows but giving a signal that it should not be taken as a straightforward train of events:

> The people of Umuaro had a saying that *the noise* even of the *loudest events* begin to die down by the second market week. It was so with Ezeulu's exile and return. For a while

> people talked about nothing else; but gradually it became just another story in the life of the six villages, *or so they imagined*. (196, *emphasis mine)*

The author seems to anticipate objections, evaluations and points of view. This is not merely on the content but also in the style: The totalized literary polemic. The noise of the loudest event is the narrative and its style of telling which has already been accomplished. But the author has the last word as is implied by the narrator's use of the words, or so they imagined.

Ezeulu leaves Okperi dressed like a man of title but on the way a storm destroys all external arraignments. This rain further depresses his humiliated position and also it becomes another grievance against his people. However, he is comforted by Ogbuefi Ofoka who refers to Nwaka and sums up the argument that if an enemy speaks the truth, it remains the truth nonetheless. Nwaka is not present but traces of his words are there. So, there is an invisible speaker and a hidden dialogue. Ezeulu replies to this hidden dialogue by re-stating to Oduche, his Christian son, that he should learn the ways of the white people until he can write with his left hand: He had to seek the power of literacy regardless, the wisdom being that a man ought to learn the dance prevalent in his time.

There is the voice of Ulu in chapter sixteen which answers Ezeulu's questions emphatically. Ezeulu is reminded by his god that he is only an arrow in a bow. The disputes he has with people are not his but matters for the spirits to settle. The chapter ends with an authorial observation that Ulu had taken sides with the white man from the beginning and all else was just

Ulu's design. The narrator however tells us that the priest was half-man, half-spirit. Now that the spirit world is at ease, it is the human side to be left in dilemma. It is a question of choice.

After the intervention of Ulu in the discourse, life goes back to normal for the characters but the plot is not yet at its pinnacle. People go back to their daily chores. The scenes around Ezeulu's life continue getting complicated. Obika, his son, relapses to his palm wine. His temper is uncontrollable during the unveiling of the mask of his age group at the village square. During this ceremony, Otakekpeli, the most wicked and dreaded medicine man in Umuaro appears at the Ilo seated like a python in readiness to fight with a leopard. This is symbolically a setting for the war of spirits. The witch is welcome to try his hand against the mask of power and aggressiveness of youth. Obika throws him into the bush. However, in the same festival, Obikwelu, a youthful ram slayer fails to grasp his matchet after he throws it up. Worse still, he fails to slaughter the ram with one blow as is expected. The crowd boos him. The spirits of the village seem unresponsive to the assertions of the youth.

The narrator in these episodes is entirely uninterrupted in his analysis of the dwindling prestige of the ancestral mask. In fact, even women and children have lately known the man playing the masquerade, a thing that Umuaro had previously taken great precautions to conceal and very much unlike the scenario in *Things Fall Apart*. The general failure of this fanfare throws into relief the verity of the old methods that are no longer reliable and the narration too looks like a parody of the previous discourse. The discourse of power is symbolized by this youthful age group called Otakagu which fails to impress the crowd. Even Edogo, the carver of the mask, is

apprehensive that has not carved the correct mask for the occasion. But the carnival mood of the people seemingly silences any insights from within.

The mask festival which is the last in the novel seems to expose a loophole in the traditional system. The loophole can be detected in the absence of the authorial inflection and the delegation of the narration to a narrator. The technique of the author becomes descriptive and there is minimal dialogue or authorial commentary. It is like a lull before a storm. Significantly too Chapter Seventeen sidelines the hero of the text and he is also an observer. In this chapter the narrator treats Ezeulu as any other man in the festival and his status as the chief priest is silenced. The text at this stage utilizes anthropological explanatory tags about traditional festivals. We must have it in mind that this comes after tradition has been challenged by the white man and Ezeulu has been defined by his god as merely an arrow. Therefore, what follows can only be expected to be a form of spiritual dissipation out of tune with the times, in itself an aspect of narrative irony. The descriptive mode hides within itself previous discourses.

4.10 The Internal Dialogization

Much of the dialogue in *Arrow of God* is a narration of a dialogue inside the character of Ezeulu. In this way, Achebe is able to construct not only a dialogue between the hero and his god Ulu since the deity can only be presented as a voice in the characters mind but more significantly, other characters in the dialogues with Ezeulu function as mere frame characters because none of them manages to change Ezeulu at all. It is like Ezeulu is listening to an internal voice and its counterpart.

Ezeulu after a long time decides that he is going to take revenge against Umuaro through the Feast of the New Yam. Though Ulu has warned him not to interfere, that it is not his fight he takes it as a private conflict. But Ulu puts him in an ambiguous position since a priest without a role is not a priest. The paradox is that Ezeulu is performing a role by not performing it. Ulu says:

> I say who told you that this was your own fight to arrange the way it suits you? …. Go home and sleep and leave me to settle my quarrel with Idemili….. now you tell me how it concerns you. I say go home and sleep. As for me and Idemili we shall fight to the finish, and whoever throws the other down will strip him of his anklet. (194).

After this divination by the deity, Ezeulu feels energized like one intoxicated by palm wine. He knows that he is no more than an arrow in the bow of his god. He considers now with hindsight that even Oduche's action was part of Ulu's plan. The white man who is also Ezeulu's friend could as well be an ally of Ulu in his war against Idemili, the priest of the python. His took his exiling as a weapon by Ulu to fight the priest of the python whose envy sought to destroy him so that his python may again come to power. Ezeulu thus remains the arrow of god and is faithful. Ulu had also warned him not to do anything to please his friends. These reflections emerge from Ezeulu through internal dialogue in which his previous explanation for his action to send Oduche to school is also clarified. Thus this internal dialogue leads to the disintegration of the double-voiced discourses of the preceding plot. Ulu's discourse with Ezeulu reduces the fluctuations of ambiguity thus orienting the novel to its title. Henceforth, any discourse and interrelationships would be uni-directional in vindicating the premise that Ezeulu was the arrow of God.

Subsequently, the author gives us the significance of the New Yam Festival and its implications: It is the most important festival in Umuaro; it also acted as a census count in that in its enaction, every man in Umuaro brought a yam to the shrine of Ulu and the elders conducted a population census. More than this, it was also the day that all the minor deities in the six villages which did not have their own special feast were brought by their custodians to stand in a line outside the shrine of Ulu. The festival also brought together gods and men. The New Yam festival thus is the ultimate carnival in the life of Umuaro and the most significant event in the year. It is against this background that the dialogization style is to be exercised. In this finale we bring in the definition of prose as observed by Bakhtin:

> The possibility of employing on the plane of a single work discourses of various types, with all their expressive capacities intact, without reducing them to a common denominator-this is the one profound distinction between prose style and poetic style. (200)

Accordingly, after Ezeulu fails to announce the Festival of the New Yam Feast for the fourth day, despite having seen the new moon, his assistants visit him to reckon why he has not done so. In a deliberate authorial parody, the assistants who speak are rash and tactless. They only irritate Ezeulu who has just returned home from seeing his friend Akuebue, with whom he always conducted profound dialogue with tact. Ezeulu dismisses his assistants to go back to their villages with the message that he has never needed to be told the duties of his priesthood. Shortly afterwards, Nwafo and Obiageli, Ezeulu's favourite children are singing outside his Obi about

how to scare away a python-the fetish of Idemili. This is to remind Ezeulu he has nothing to do in the war of gods.

After Ezeulu's refusal to name the date of the New Yam Festival, men of title come in to appease him in vain. Their speeches are characteristic of the delicacy and composure of men of title and all titled men were present except Nwaka. Nwaka's absence is important because the author has already dispensed with his kind of discourse, the double-directed discourse. Now they want to convince Ezeulu with wisdom and logic. Anichebe Udeozo says:

> We know that such a thing has never been done before but never before has a white man taken the chief priest away. These are not the times we used to know and we must meet them as they come or be rolled in the dust. (211)

This echoes the earlier philosophy of Ezeulu about how to watch a mask dancing but now he is impervious to the village's belated logic. The logic here comes as an authorial position invested in a character but for purposes of plot, Ezeulu rejects it though the elders are wishing to take the abomination on his behalf. After trying all manner of diplomacy the elders realize that Ezeulu has just told them what they have failed to listen to all along, that he has become the whip with which Ulu flogs Umuaro.

The discussion about the dead customs of Umuaro and the impossibility of kingship preoccupies the elders and Achebe uses it as a summary to the impossibility of change from without. The elders are calling for reconciliation while Ezeulu is adamant and they observe that a priest like

Ezeulu leads a god to ruin. Ezeulu's failure to override the spiritual with the temporal ostracizes his family. It even gives a chance for the Christians to take away all Umuaro to church because any delay in the yam harvest would mean death. The Christians promise immunity from the wrath of Ulu. It is ironically a clash of spiritual realms in which one is reticent while the other is flexile; true to the spirit of British Indirect Rule in West Africa. The irony is that, even Nwaka, the hardened critic of Ezeulu takes his son to the Christian school but in true Achebian irony, it is the son who least among his children is likely to become a good farmer. It is also an ironic sacrifice. The new dance is that people can now harvest their yam without the fear of Ulu. They need not take only one yam to the church but as many as one wanted and the sacrifice could also be in the form of cash. Previously this could have brought laughter to Umuaro but with the changed times, it is no longer a laughing matter.

This is the wisdom that Ezeulu had sent his own Oduche to learn from the white man and ironically he fails to accept it. Ezeulu knew all along about the futility of his inaction but now he calls Oduche and starts accusing him of not being a good informer. Ezeulu in his tirade to Oduche parodies his earlier dialogue with the boy about the decision to join the white man. It is a poor parody contaminated with proverbs of anxiety and diatribe. He compares Oduche with the lizard that ruined his mother's funeral.

Achebe now utilizes the distancing technique of putting Ezeulu in a dream in which the spirit of death is stalking his compound while he lacks the resolution to wrestle with it. This coincides with the rites of Amalu's second burial and Obika is to play the night spirit, Ogbazulobodo for Amalu's funeral rites to be complete. Obika dies in the act and there is a mixture of reality and

dreams in the tragedy of Ezeulu and his god Ulu. Before his death, Obika, playing the spirit repeats in the surreal voice of the sprit all the proverbs in *Arrow of God*. Achebe uses his death as a symbol and an epilogue to the narrative of culture which he crowns by making his lead character mad.

The significance of Ezeulu's madness in manifold: First, the discourse of the text is out of tune with the ideology of the character as his ambivalence has been debunked. Ezeulu seems to develop in a reverse fashion and he has no power to halt the disintegration. This is a technique of developing tragic characters who suffer from hamartia. The hero of the text is spared of life but he cannot witness nor participate in the resolution of the plot. Here, Ezeulu resembles King Oedipus. Secondly the juxtaposition of an internally imploding culture being challenged externally by Christianity and Western values with a crumbling family of the priest is bound to madden a system that has for generations withstood external challenges. The external force is represented by Captain Winterbottom who recuperates despite prophesies about his annihilation by Ezeulu's power. His followers like John Nwondika also prosper in starting a new life outside the kitchen of the white man without plunging back to the past ancestral mandate which they however continuously uphold with reservations.

Achebe concludes his novel in an explanatory style. He is giving out moral after moral of the story in the fashion of oral narrations which of course the novel is not. The story in the novel ends with the return of Winterbottom from England. He is fully recovered and gets married to the doctor who was treating him. Ezeulu is no longer in the story and Winterbottom has no hope of hearing about him and neither is this necessary though. The narrative from a classical sense of

a story as defined by E. M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* ends with that event. The principle of causality in plot formation allows the narrative to progress and stylistically the ambiguities and ambivalences of the story are given a monologic treatment. This ties up the narration to a singular authorial centre.

4.11 Conclusion

The reason Achebe has revised the original text with a preface justifying his original conclusion is to echo the validity of ambivalence captured in Ezeulu's' words: The world is a mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you do not stand in one place. This is an apt symbol of capturing a world view in which there is a conflict of the control of authority.

The style Achebe has adopted develops Ezeulu whose social, intellectual and spiritual position is contested by traditional African and western forces of change. After exposing the ambivalence of both sides, Achebe adopts a monologic position in which the authorial voice unambiguously offers his stand. In the final two paragraphs, Achebe becomes the reader and not the storyteller. The penultimate paragraph marks the end of description as a method of presentation. Thereafter, the discourse is a summary of what has been learned from the story. He makes deliberate authorial entries like, so in the end… and If this was so… (231), as introductory markers for his final paragraphs. This is a deliberate act of summing up the monologic semantic authority of the narrator. The narrator actually assumes a reader's position in surmising the tale. He is intent on evaluating and dominating over the reader in an effort to establish an unambiguous interpretive conclusion.

This philosophically could be seen as a convenient way of conducting the discourse of possession or dominance. It is a discourse of struggle and he has decided in advance who the victor is. Therefore, he gathers together all voices into a single speech centre and a single authorial consciousness. The last sentence is a totalizing monologism which states that any yam harvested in the fields was harvested in the name Christ.

The reader remembers the words of Ivan Karamazov in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* whose proposition was If God does not exist then everything is permissible. For *Arrow of God,* the message is that in times of extremity, any deity who chastises its priest gives the followers a chance to take liberties. Achebe ends his novel with Ezeulu's madness and the people rush to Christianity but the text seems at this point to suggest that the final word has not been said. The new dispensation with its religion and government are just the new mask dancing and the discourse continues perpetually. The resolution is thus ambivalent.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Rhetoric of Double Refraction in *A Man of the People*

5.0 Introduction: A Stylistic Dialectic

The technique of Achebe's style of narration in *A Man of the People* can be called a dialectic of double refraction in which a first person hero/narrator, Odili Samalu is pitted against a title hero, Chief the Honourable M.A. Nanga. M. P. The hero/narrator reflects upon himself and at the same time he reflects about the title hero who is his social and political opponent.

The author's rhetorical assignment in this novel is an effort to balance the delicate needs of a reader who has to travel along with the narrator without feeling fatigue of a hero/narrator's self-righteousness. The reader also has to receive a believable picture of the title hero who has to pass through the same secondary prism of critique. In this text, the author creates the narrator and the narrator creates the title hero. The title hero has to live within the dynamics of the narrator's definitions; the narrator has to affirm or renounce the title. Thus as a text, *A Man of the People* reaches the reader through a resultant prism of evaluation. It cannot be called a reflection but a refraction since the author has created a medium hero/narrator medium.

In the introductory paragraph, Achebe obliquely expresses his concern for a medium and it informs the reader that it is not merely an introduction but an unstable exposition. Achebe is careful enough to underline that it is actually the technique he intends to render the story, creating a thesis about the title hero then presenting an antithesis not only through narration but more significantly through a narrator/character. For a character to occupy this position, Achebe

compels the narrator to give a justification for the act of narration. It is the author's rhetorical skill of engaging the reader in narrator-reader discourse. Thus Achebe is not the only one exercising skills of rhetoric in the text. His narrator is doing the same hence the double refraction. The narrator is a self who is a product of an organizing contingency hence he exists as a product of reciprocity between an author and a character. This is a dialectical relationship in that both the author and narrator are making choices that affect their relationship in the narrating process. Whatever the narrator/character says thus receives an authorial undercurrent in the form of a concealed argument. It is imperative to quote the introduction in its entirety:

> No one can deny that Chief the Honourable M. A. Nanga, M.P., was the most approachable politician in the country. Whether you asked in the city or in his home village, Anata, they would tell you he was a man of the people. *I have to admit this from the outset or else the story I am going to tell will make no sense.* (1, *emphasis mine)*

The introduction guarantees curiosity thus facilitating the reader's journey through the implication of the labyrinth of sociological, political, psychological, moral and artistic relationships-all packed into one paragraph. The reader would wish to know why it is undeniable. Achebe further simulates sympathy for the narrator who is apologetic and cautionary and is able to admit from the outset that the title hero was popular. The introduction also pushes an image of the ordinary into the imaginative and promises a story. We feel that we are about to engage with a narrator who has a story to tell and needs our ear. He also seems to have said, Dear reader, listen patiently.

The introductory paragraph is a reminder that we are reading Achebe the artist and listening to his message. For him, literature by no means merely serves for entertainment. In the *Novelist as a teacher*, he says that art for art's sake is unacceptable. For him, the novel is not just an artistic goal; he has in his mind the social novel; the socio psychological everyday life novel. Thus we enter a contract of narrative intentionality. The narrator expresses his objective of rendering a sensible story.

Achebe has chosen a first person narrator as his agent and entered the possible world perspectives of that person's life history which is a multi-dimensional space with many nodes of possibility. The narrator advances from one node to another by bringing about or allowing one of the alternatives available at each node. Thus we have to be keen on what he chooses to reveal or conceal at every movement of the text. The first person narrator in this text is subject to the reader's scrutiny chiefly because of what he prefers to reveal. Von Wright, writing on the logic of preference says that:

> Every description of an action contains in a concealed form, a counterfactual conditional statement. When we say for example that an agent opened a window, we imply that, had it not been for the agent's interference, the window would, on that occasion, have remained closed. When we say that an agent prevented a door from closing we thereby intimate that 'otherwise' for example had it not been for the agent, the door would have closed on that occasion. (Qtd in Lebomir, 56)

In order to know how the world changes, but also how it would have changed, from one occasion to the next, we have to follow the agent who invites us to do so. In A *Man of the People*

the agent-narrator is Odili Samalu through whom we see the events of the story. Achebe foregrounds this strategy right from the outset. The intentionality of the author and the narrator are merged and interwoven into one in the last sentence of the first paragraph. The distinction between the author and the narrator is concealed. The distinctive narrating voice emerges later.

The introduction is more author motivated and less imperative for plot development. The main characters in this text are Chief Nanga, the Minister of Culture and title hero and Odili Samalu, the school teacher and hero-narrator. These two characters occupy seemingly opposite ends of the political spectrum. The former is a popular realist and a political survivor. The latter is a fastidious idealist and an alienated man. The conflict is one of the perceptions of political morality between the two. The title, *A Man of the People* cannot be dismissed as purely cynical on the part of Achebe because, as we shall see, it contains half truths. While evaluating it, David Carroll has said that:

> The relationship between these two men, a strange blend of fascination and repulsion, dramatically and colourfully defines the problems of its (relationship) past and looks to the future for material rewards. (120)

This seems to be the guiding ideological concern of the text. It also controls the rhetoric Achebe has chosen to utilize plus its function. He starts by carnivalizing his novel; the defining moments of the novel are not personal, involving Odili and Nanga alone, but their dealings and the drama it generates are deliberately communalized. These defining moments are rendered as comic underlying the satirical mode of the novel. Comedy at the communal space is carnival.

5.2 The Carnivalization of *A Man of the People*

The novel contains elements of the carnivalesque precisely due to the method of narration. In a serio-comical genre like the one in the novel, there is a strong rhetorical element right from the start. The narrator says, whether you asked in the city or in his home village, Anata, they would tell you he was a man of the people. (1) The 'you' is a preposition marker that invites the reader into the narrative. The narrator also calls Nanga 'a man of the people' after referring to him as 'approachable politician.'

This is an element of joyful relativity characteristic of a comical mode in which there is a weakening of the one-sided rhetorical seriousness which would otherwise have created a singular meaning and an exasperating dogmatic first person narrator. The movement from approachable to a man of the people is a shift in diction that carnivalizes the rhetoric. It thus invites us to define and explore the serio-comic origin of the carnival in *A Man of the People*:

Firstly, the serio-comic is presented not in the absolute past like in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* but within the plane of the present day; in a contemporary zone. The first sentence signals this with tense, No one can deny that… (1) Heroes are deliberately contemporized to be in contact with the present. This characteristic radically changes and influences Achebe's sense of time and values. The reader feels that Odili and Nanga are present-day entities.

Secondly, a serio-comic simulates the tone in the narration; there is a simulation of narrator/reader conviviality. It also makes a wide use of inserted genres like, retold dialogues, between Nanga and Odili, paradoxically reinterpreted citations as when Odili is citing public

opinion in the first paragraph, living dialects and jargons, Pidgin English and the inevitable authorial mask. The author has deliberately steered the language use in the text towards a level that is up to date with the target reader. Thus it is in the realm of the serio-comical that we may attempt to approach the relationship of words in the novel.

Achebe's rhetorical choices in *A Man of the People* have defined significance in the development of the narrative. There is an ambitious attempt to approach the Socratic dialogue and the menippean satire. The Socratic dialogues are transcriptions of a remembered conversation which can be framed by a brief story. Plato in *The Republic* freely uses this creative arrangement. The style is simply a means of counterposing a voice that pretends to know the truth against another that presumes to know within a climate of a naïve confidence. Achebe brings the narrator at the start to collide with the reader and as a result a truth may be born; a motivation for the telling is created. The narrator is a teacher in the true Socratic fashion as he acts like the narrating teacher-voice. Thus his contact often assumes a monologic character. Achebe however senses that this monologism content will destroy the dialogue of the novel. The text has to follow the basic Socratic dialogue which involves the syncris and the crisis.

> Syncrisis was understood as the juxtaposition of various points of view on the specific object …. And a crisis was understood as a means of eliciting and provoking the words of one's interlocutor forcing him to express his opinion and express it thoroughly. (Bakhtin, 110)

Since the first paragraph, A *Man of the People* invites a dialogic intercourse between the sensitive reader and the narrator. Achebe inevitably has to effect a plot which dialogizes the

claim that Chief Nanga was a man of the people. The search for this truth then automatically makes the author envisage a hero-ideologist in conversation with his pupils. Thus, in a Socratic dialogue mode, the author is a participant. For instance, in Plato's *Apology*, the situation of the trial and expected death sentence determines the special character's mode of speaking. It is the summing up and the confession of a man who stands on the threshold. In *Phaedo* the discussion of immorality is determined by the situation of impending death. In both these cases, there is the tendency to create the extra-ordinary so as to force truth out of a person's mind and expose the thoughts of a character. One is about a confession, the other about death. This is what can be described as life on the threshold.

The threshold moment in Achebe's text is that Koko had taken enough for the owner to see, an image that sums up the excesses of the political class represented by Chief Nanga who accordingly sets off the narration of Odili Samalu which actually commences before the plot of the novel starts. Achebe has characteristically worked out the language of the novel in symbolic forms, from mass activities to individual acts. He transposes what cannot be adequately expressed in literal forms into amenable concepts. This trans-posing is what we call the carnivalization in *A Man of the People.* As Bakhtin has defined it:

> Carnival is a pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators. In carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act. Carnival is not contemplated and strictly speaking, not even performed, its participants live in it; they live by the laws as long as those laws are in effect. That is,

> they live a carnivalistic life. Because carnivalistic life is life drawn out of its usual rot, it is to some extent life turned inside out the reverse side of the world. (122)

In this definition, anything that prohibits or restricts anything that determines order is non carnival. Bakhtin notes that what is suspended first is:

> All hierarchical structure, all forms of reverence and its accompanying emotion; any form of inequality between people in a system. People who are in life separated by hierarchy enter into free and familiar contact. (123)

This seems to be Achebe's rhetorical strategy in the novel in which he tries to analyze the populist strategies of the post-colony through the eye of a populist. The guiding momentum in *A Man of the People* is mass action and mass action can only be achieved in a carnival setting.

Thus theme and style merge in the carnival strategy. This is aptly captured in chapter one where Chief Nanga is visiting Odili's school. Despite his titles and hierarchy socially, the villagers moved in and virtually took over. (1) In the same episode, four or five dancing groups were performing in the school compound. Even though the narrator is high minded and does not care too much for women dancing, he is inevitably pulled into the carnival of the song and Grammar-phone, the soloist, praises Nanga in proverbs in the same way Odili has introduced him in the opening paragraph.

The hierarchy of the hunters' guild is also subverted in the carnival spirit. Members never previously came out except during outstanding events or during a funeral of a member. But now

here they are in the carnival. Their prestige is suspended. Unlike in *Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart*, such masks would have caused terror and mayhem. The crowd simply applauds their mock severity. Odili observes that they are also using their guns and gunpowder, while others reserved it for the arrival of the minister. Despite Odili's critical eye and attempted distancing at the height of such ignorance and ridiculousness of the villagers having to spend expensive powder for the minister, he can only hope for a miracle; the carnival celebrates cynicism. Even rituals of past festivals are here paraded for mere entertainment. Odili's discomfort is swallowed in the mood and he even remembers his father's wisdom that no sensible man would spit out a juicy morsel which good fortune placed in his mouth. The theme of the moment is celebration and insight is seen as an eccentricity. Ironically, the carnival spirit encompasses eccentricity.

Odili describes the crowd after the minister's arrival in a carnivalized perception. He captures the feverish excitement. The arrival caused a tumult; the hunters threw their guns about with frightening freedom; the dancers 'capered and stamped; and the air was dusty. The physical image of the minister is also carnivalized: He is wearing gold chains and a damask thus affecting a casual semi-comic image. The crowd cheered as he fanned himself against imaginary malevolence. Actually, this fanning is comic parody for authentic malevolence. To underline the infectiousness of the carnival, Odili ends up in double refraction.

> The man was still as handsome and youthful-looking as ever-there was no doubt about that. …The minister had a jovial word for everyone. You could never think-looking at him now-that his smile was anything but genuine. It seemed bloody minded to be skeptical (8).

This attitude, though momentary in Odili creates a carnival sense called carnivalistic misalliances, in which a free and familiar attitude spreads over everything. In it, the participants who were once self enclosed-like the narrator-disunified or distanced from one another by a non carnivalistic hierarchical world-view -like having a minister in a village crowd-are drawn into carnivalistic contacts and combinations. The carnival at the start of the narrative brings together almost every actor into the drama of the text in the conviviality of the political meeting. It weds and combines the sacred with the profane, the great with the insignificant, and the wise with the stupid. For example, the proprietor of the school, Mr. Nwege, always has traces of snuff in his nostrils but the minister does not mind.

Though Odili has aspersions against the minister, he cannot fail to admire his sharpness of memory when he remembers him as his pupil in Standard Three. After a show of affection, even the proprietor has the grace to call Odili one of the pillars of his school. The minister understands the dynamics of crowd politics and uses it on Odili who admires him in spite of the latter's intelligence. He recognises Odili from the rest of the staff members and this is bound to flatter him and work on his vanity. He admits that the minister's presence had such an effect that if he were himself superstitious he would say that the minister had made use of a charm. Ironically, superstition enters into the narrative later when the shopkeeper steals a blind man's walking stick to make charms. And the political rallying point of the novel is that the charms of the thief have been exposed and the owner can see the thief. The significance of superstition is taken as a leit motif. This can only be possible in a carnivalized world-view in which nothing is taken for granted.

The journalist accompanying Nanga is also part of the carnival scheme. Nanga ensures that he creates echoes of the carnival in his reporting. He instructs him to write, "it is a mammoth crowd." (10) Later the journalist is told to write that, ''It is an unprecedented crowd in the annals of Anata.'' to which Odili refracts in correct grammar for the benefit of the minister. "This gentleman (Mr. Nwege) says it is the most unprecedented crowd in the annals of Anata.'' Odili not only corrects the grammar, but adds a qualifier though he meant it tongue in cheek. Tongue in cheek is also integral in a carnival in which there is a suspension of hierarchy and prejudice. The minister calls Mr. Nwege 'Sir' to underscore that though he is the dignitary he is also participating. Nanga even speaks in Pidgin English. "You see wet in idle talk. How many minister go fit answer sir to any Tom, Dick and Harry were senior them for age? I asked you how many?" (11)

The carnivalization unsettles Odili's attitude towards Nanga and in fact he feels embarrassed for assuming such a judgmental position when everyone else is immersed in the gaiety of the moment. It forces him to re-evaluate the meaning of modernity vis-a-vis pride. He sees his own pride crumble against the pragmatism of the politician's lack of modesty. In Nanga's party, is his private secretary, a beautiful girl with a B.A degree from Cambridge. However, she looks compromised to Nanga style. Nanga observes that his people should drop their pride and press for their share in the national cake, an obvious allusion to corruption, tribalism and all the self-interests of post colony. Again, admirers of Nanga call him Owner of Book despite his attitude toward education and his use of hackneyed phrases. He confirms Odili's private thoughts by telling him that he is wasting his talents. To Nanga, joining him in the city instead of choosing

the idealist vocation of teaching in a bush school was a better option. This ushers in Odili's friend Andrew Kadibe who comments on Nanga's illiteracy B.A Minus opportunity. Momentarily Odili feels scandalized. Achebe has put Kadibe's voice on the scene so as to highlight Odili's growing complacency. It should have been Odili's responsibility to tell Nanga this but the narrator has adopted a disquieting silence.

Mr. Nwege's prepared speech is booed and he is reminded of his shameful past. In a carnival spirit, even ridicule of the school boss is permissible. On the contrary, the minister's speech sounds spontaneous and effective. Against these contradictions, Odili remembers how Nanga had previously contributed to the defeat of the Minister of Finance, a PhD in Public Finance during the Odili's university days. The House of Representatives had rejected the Finance Minister's blue-print for solving a financial crisis occasioned by a slump in the coffee market. The populists had rejected his proposal and demonized him for his good intentions. Demonstrations were held to denounce him but university students had participated in his defence.

The *Daily Chronicle*, an official newspaper, had carried an article dismissing the Finance Minister and the miscreant gang of university professionals. Other newspapers took the same editorial policy. They called university-educated professionals, demnable, ungrateful, and alienated. The Prime Minister who had led the condemnation of the finance minister was praised in flattering. The parliament and the public through the media called the PhD, Doctor of fork your mother. (6) Significantly, the Minister of Culture, Mr. Nanga was also recorded in the *Hansard* calling for the killing of the PhD minister colleague. It seems that the media delights in

glee and absurdity, a primary characteristic of the carnival. It appears that this absurdity was intentional and politically inspired. The carnival nature of this episode lies in the burlesque-type demotion of the high-standing ones.

Odili's eye can also notice Mrs. Eleanor John who is also in the minister's party. She has a history of one who rose from rags particularly after joining Nanga's party. She is one of the queens of the carnival. She is heavily painted and perfumed and her credentials are plenty of good looks and determination. Odili watches the ladies in Nanga's party and sees an outrage. He wonders about Mrs. Nanga whom he had thought of in his younger days as a sophisticated woman with modern trappings. However in the carnival of the day, it is only Odili who can notice the anomaly of publicly parading ones extra marital partners and passing it as a laudable achievement. It is the irony of a social transgression acting as a prop for one's popularity. Odili is a hero living in a world of double refraction. His seesaw existence is because Achebe has chosen him to be the hero/narrator and hence he has to make mental and physical forays to both worlds in an effort to objectively explore the irony of the novel's title. Achebe has created a hero/narrator who has to create the title hero with his own accompanying bias.

5.3 The Hero/Narrator Familiarization

The strategy Achebe chooses to move his narrative after the introduction is familiarization, a concept closely linked with the carnivalistic mesalliances. The familiarization is both literal and literary. Upon moving to the city, a free and familiar attitude spreads over the values, thoughts and world-view of Odili. This is different from the judicious hero/narrator presented in the first chapter. It is the consequence of the hero's close proximity to Nanga.

The thoughts of Odili are transposed from the abstract to the concrete. The rhetoric shifts to the dialogic line of developments. This transforms the style of the novel. With regard to the characterization, the logic of misalliance exercises a powerful influence in determining the author's position with regard to the two antagonists who are brought into familiar contact. Odili admits that the philosophy of patronage or stoop to lick any Big man's boots created a problem for him. It challenges his sense of autonomy. His autonomy is however carnivalistic in the sense that it is contaminated with sensuousness. For example, he nurses the vanities of having to go to Europe for further studies on one's merit but the primary motivation is to partake of the accompanying niceties like white girls and white submissive taxi drivers. The intellectual objective is shrouded in fantasies of immaturity. The carnival mood has infected him and he hopelessly tries to rationalize to the reader why he chooses to spend his holiday with the minister in the capital. It was the minister himself who came back to the post-graduate question at the end of the reception without any prompting whatever from me. (17) This is not a convincing rationalization. Odili is unwilling to take responsibility for his weakness but it is however necessary if the reader's sympathies with the hero/narrator are to be sustained. Already he has unashamedly and without any modesty showed off his self-estimation as a naturally brilliant man who attains academic excellence without prompting. This is not different from Chief Nanga's braggadocio. Odili even fails to heed Mrs. John's warning about Nanga's bedroom manners. We would call Odili naïve but since he has already proclaimed himself to the reader as brilliant we can only correlate his lack of foresight to the prevailing carnival mood. He is now in league with the praise singers and a step behind the populist journalist and the feminist but practical Mrs. John.

However, Odili is telling the events in retrospect and like the critic he poses as at beginning of the novel, he quickly expresses his objection to the way Nanga had ignored Nwege. He also scoffs at the indifference of the members of the teaching staff who delighted in laughter and enjoyment of beer. The irony here is that Odili seems to endorse his sense of indignation and other people's buffoonery simultaneously. He even rebukes his half-literate cook, Peter for buying and reading irrelevant books yet forgetting that Chief Nanga and Mrs. John are no more but facsimiles of Peter. Significantly though, his houseboy is reading a book called *How to Solve the Fair Sex*, later to become a theme in Odili's life.

In the hero/narrator familiarization technique, the Achebe unveils his own challenges of point of view when Odili is talking to Andrew about Elsie, his girlfriend. This can confidently be called the author/narrator/hero identity in the text. The dynamics and psychology of the writing process and an author's task at characterization are captured but cushioned within the monologue of Odili:

> Well Elsie, where does one begin *to write* about her? *The difficulty of writing this kind* of *story* is that *the writer is armed with all kinds of hindsight which he didn't have when the original events were happening*. When he introduces a character like Elsie, for instance, he already has at the back of his mind a total picture of her; her entrance, her act and her exit. *And this tends to colour even the first words he writes*. I can only hope that being aware of this danger I have successfully kept at bay. As far as is humanly possible I shall try not to jump ahead of my story. (24, emphasis mine)

This admission stylistically crumbles the author/narrator distinction. It becomes an autobiography on the apart of Achebe and since he calls it hindsight, the reader is persuaded to believe the story about Elsie. The story of Chief Nanga however remains suspended but Achebe has to carnivalize Nanga's entry into the novel so as to create this illusion of suspension. Achebe here is stressing the constraints of rhetoric. He is keen on stressing on the confusion of ambivalence which a carnival situation might bear. The mechanisms of projection in the narrative take a clear and unambiguous path. In Freudian psychoanalysis, a child may exhibit the altruistic aspect of the ambivalent object relation. The fear that the object will be lost beyond repair prefigures crucial aspects of mature relationships. In dealing with his characters, Achebe is expressing this anxiety otherwise he would not be afraid of jumping ahead of his story. Achebe seems to be trying to maneuver out of the axiological axis his narrative is taking. The reason for this is that though the narrative is through Odili, the interactions are multiple and their complexity demands justifications for subjectivity.

The questions about the challenges of writing about Elsie are important in the sense that Odili is made to give his assessment of someone whom he has plainly fallen in love with and who could lead the reader to surmise Odili's true nature. He is no longer distanced but he has to give his assessment within a multi-person world which has swallowed him. In the multi-person world the agents pursue their acting in the same modes as they do in a one person-world, as rational or irrational, deliberate or impulsive. Whether Odili maintains practical reasoning or loses control in his interactions is speculative but Lubomir in *Heterocosmica* (106) has observed that, agents

locked in a feedback circuit of emotional escalation gradually lose control of their interaction. (106)

There is a rich source of narrative dynamic here derived from Achebe's confession of the writing challenge. The previously dominating carnival mode is now being placed in the sphere of the struggle for power as a motivational factor in the multi-person narrative. From the festival mood of Chief Nanga's visit which was homogenous even in voicing, we now enter a constellation of personages but with a single narrating persona. Thus, Odili is now capable of talking about Elsie as a willing accomplice to easy-going sex and he also has the liberty to call her boyfriend daft and a Casanova. He also now has the capacity to rationalize that he went to live with Nanga chiefly for the convenience of sexual activity with Elsie. He unveil his eccentricity of entertaining pretty inane and cheap thoughts which however, linger and stick in his mind, like the radio jingle advertising an intestinal worm expeller which he got stuck to.

The hero/narrator is underlining the significance of what others might consider mundane. However before Elsie's introduction, he underscores his puzzlement with Nanga's history and his evolution: from liking his nickname, B.A. Minus opportunity in 1948 to his disgust at those with intellectual bearings in 1964, to Nanga's secret anticipation of the glory he would receive from his honorary Doctor of Law arranged for him by a small back street college in the United States. Odili is speculative that the minister had not yet fully convinced himself of the importance of education. If he is double guessing Nanga's disregard for education, he implicitly doubts his own reliability as a critic of what Nanga represents. Familiarity has blunted Odili's

sensibilities. Through familiarization, the hero/narrator is gradually emerging from the naivety of the carnivalesque. However, he is getting immersed into inertia.

5.4 The Carnival Double and Inertia as Technique

Odili creates a double profile until late in life. When he was a school boy another child referred to him as a killer because his own mother had died in his birth. He excuses himself for having not responded to the insult by claiming that he learnt of the meaning of a fellow child's pranks later in life. He also has the love-hate relationship with his father whom he first describes poignantly but later blames for his polygamy and love of palm wine:

> My father was a District Interpreter in those days when no one understood as much as 'come' in the white man's language. The District Officer was like the Supreme Deity and the interpreter the principal minor god who carried prayers and sacrifice to him. Every sensitive supplicant knew that the lesser god must first be wooed and put in a sweet frame of mind before he could undertake to intercede with the Owner of the Sky.
>
> So Interpreters in those days were powerful, very rich and hated. Wherever the D.O'S power was felt and that meant everywhere, the interpreters name was held in fear and trembling. (28)

Despite having this knowledge as a child, that an interpreter was powerful, very rich and hated, Odili opts to spend his midterm holiday with one of his friends five miles away. The boy's father chases him away at night because he hates his interpreter father. Odili ought to have known better. His characterization follows this pattern. There is a personality force that pulls him back

from making crucial decisions on time. The psychoanalytic explanation for this split personality is that Odili has fond as well as repugnant memories of childhood bathing in him. Though covertly proud of his father, he has expressed his disdain for the latter's proclivity for polygamy. His father was also an interpreter for the white man and in those days the interpreter was not only feared and respected but also hated with equal measure. The father represents the old elite who are still unyielding and are taking full advantage of their tradition. This is a case of putting the hero in a situation of double heritage which is later reflected in his development. It forces inertia against forward movement. Odili has to perform penance to his father to avoid a curse though he might not entirely believe in the old ritual. It is with this background that he joins Chief Nanga in the capital, Bori.

He arrives at Nanga's house exactly a month after the expected date of invitation: an element of inertia in decision making. He also proclaims that he had a choice of where to stay but here he is at Nanga's house. He is remotely aware that his stay could be uncomfortable but he is not decisive. He always keeps retracting decisions. His childhood had not prepared him with the power to stand his ground. This arrival though apprehensive is turned by Nanga into a carnival of jolting hugs and the taxi-driver who brings to the Nanga's residence is also sucked into the mini-festival underlining the all inclusiveness of a carnival setting.

The keen Odili eye however notices the strata that the city has created. This is illustrated by his analysis of the language use habits in the Nanga house: Nanga speaks in English or Pidgin; the children use impeccable English; while Mrs. Nanga speaks the native tongue. The language issue rings out the multi-person nature of the narrative. It is noteworthy that Nanga had used

pidgin in the Anata festival. It is the language of the people. Here at home, his peopleness is ambiguous. Stylistically, this ambiguity functions to delay a subjective evaluation of Nanga by Odili.

The inertia continues after their visit to Chief Koko, Minister for Overseas Training. The minister is so paranoid about locally made coffee that he believes he is poisoned and he almost kills his cook. Odili is in favour of leaving Chief Koko's compound but he waits for someone to ask him to do so. No one does. This inertia also makes him excuse Mrs. Nanga's lack of indignation at the prospect of Nanga's expected new wife though not long before this he has expressed displeasure with his own father's polygamy. Odili up to this stage is not wholly formed. He is prone to doubt and hypnosis. Money and sex can easily blind his perspicacity. He even oversimplifies Nanga's hold to power by recourse to a weak argument about human nature: I quote it here in its entirety because of its implications to the development of Odili, the plot and also the author's position:

> A man who has just come in from the rain and dried his body and put on dry clothes is more reluctant to go out again than another who has been indoors all the time. The trouble with our new nation-as I saw it then lying on the bed-was that none of us had been indoors long enough to be able to say 'To hell with it'. We had all been in the rain together until yesterday. Then a handful of us-the smart and lucky and hardly ever the best-had scrambled for the one shelter our former rulers left, and had taken it over and barricaded themselves in. And from within they sought to persuade the rest through numerous loudspeakers, that the first phase of the struggle had been won and that the next

> phase-the extension of our house-was even more important and called for new and original tactics. It required that all arguments should cease and the whole people speak with one voice and that any more dissent and argument outside the door of the shelter would subvert and bring down the whole house. (37)

This comes to the reader through Odili's own rumination powerfully captured in images and almost in a lofty dream. He makes these summative analyses while lying on the luxury of the bed at the home of Chief Nanga thus implicitly offering Nanga an unsolicited justification. This should awaken Odili abruptly both literally and ideologically. But these elevated thoughts as he derogatively calls them are superseded by sensual fantasies of Elsie, his girlfriend. The implications of these thoughts are what hold *A Man of the People* as a relevant text in post-colonial studies.

The style of the rhetoric has to be accounted for first: The man in Odili's reflection is Mr. Nanga and the rain is an allegorical image of the newly independent African nation with its limitations. In the reflection, there is a hint of the need for revolution against the opportunists of independence, the tricksters who cling to political power. Odili has concretized his philosophy but he self-subverts with his sensual fantasies:

> Needless to say I did not spend the entire night on these elevated thoughts. Most of the time my mind was on Elsie, so much so in fact that I had to wake up in the middle of the night and change my pyjama trousers.

He further subverts his own reflections when he doubts and thinks it silly to imagine Nanga, the charming outdoor man, going to office at eight. To the reader, going to the office at eight even for Nanga does not sound silly. It actually makes the reader suspicious of Odili's interpretive reliability. Achebe seems to soak Odili into irredeemable self denunciation, the inertia.

However, Odili admits that his dream was eye-opening and confirmatory of his theories and of others about the decadence of the new regime. There is also an autobiographical note of Achebe with the reference to watching of the unveiling dome of Kilimanjaro at sunset which he has referred to in his *The Trouble with Nigeria.* To Odili, this is an image of dream interpretation, but the implication has to wait. This is a story-telling strategy of postponing a narrative foreclosure and Achebe drifts again to the mundane affairs of Odili's view of Chief Nanga's wife and the amorous nature of Nanga. Odili's dreamy ideology does not include this. Actually these come as an interruption to a polemic.

Achebe timely rescues the narrative from becoming stale with the allegory of the massacre of rats that Odili had participated in earlier. The idea of annihilating the rats was full of ingenuity but the children, including Odili, saved the small rats for future games. To them, the fight with rats did not have an ideological connection and neither does Odili see it as part of his preparation for the methodology of dealing with modern politics. He is too cozy at the feet of Chief Nanga to do the connection. From here, the narrative strategy becomes a memoir. This occurs after Odili has managed to start overcoming the inertia of narrating the story forwards.

5.5 The Memoir Technique in *A Man of People*

Historically, the memoir has been seen as a sub-category of the autobiography. However, the difference is mainly on form whereby the autobiography tells the story of a life while the memoir is shorter and tells a story from a life. If a character engages in a rendition of events from life, then we have a fictional memoir since the art of the genre is originally nonfictional. The memoir is a personal journal entry which is only possible when one is present as events unveil. It is a participatory recounting even by mere observance. Achebe adopts this technique when Odili has settled in Nanga's house. The tense and tone of the narrator imply the here and now. It is not a story from Odili's past but it is from a narrative present. This technique signals Odili's entry into a new phase of the narrative where events do not just happen to him; they have implications. Odili confesses that he at last is receiving the facts of his thesis about the nature of political privilege in a post-colony first-hand:

> We complained about our country's lack of dynamism and abdication of the leadership to which it was entitled in the continent, or so we thought. We listened to whispers of scandalous deals in high places… But sitting at Nanga's feet, I received enlightenment; many things began to crystallize out of the mist. (39)

At this stage, Odili assumes an eye-witness position. His insights are derived from live dialogue or real observation. It is no longer a question of foresight or hindsight. Achebe creates a situation in which the reader is reading from the narrator's daily diary. Odili is now in a position to listen in as Nanga makes telephone calls to cabinet colleagues to cut deals.

The first significant entry involves a road to be constructed before the elections and the Minister for Transport seems to be hesitant and hence inconveniencing Chief Nanga's campaign strategies. After a phone call, Nanga confides to Odili that he is not amused. By becoming a confidant of Nanga and being the innocent companion, Odili's narration becomes a memoir and the reader is now eavesdropping in a personal narrative. Odili assumes the role of the interpreter of the implication of what happens to him and the happenings around.

Odili however summarizes the insights and proposition of his memoir to the reader. For instance, the building of the road would improve Nanga's chances of re-election and it would also facilitate Nanga's quest for personal wealth as he had already ordered ten buses to ply the route. Of course the press wouldn't know any of this but the reader is privy to all these underhand dealings courtesy of Odili's memoir. Thus by becoming Nanga's confidant and innocent companion, the narration now reaches the reader from a more immediate source. This makes the narrative not just informational but persuasive as well. Achebe seems to be telling the reader that: You have been hearing things about Chief Nanga. Judge for yourself whether he is really a man of the people. This is an author/reader contract being facilitated through a narrator.

Odili notices the illogicality of John the American who visits Nanga. John is an expert who is advising the government of Chief Nanga on how to improve its image in America. In a dialogue about racism, Odili witnesses John's American self-righteousness and claims of superiority. At the same time he notices that John's wife Jean is surreptitiously looking at Chief Nanga seductively. Odili even gives a finalizing assessment of Nanga's African cook who pretends not to be a cook courtesy of his European menus.

Odili through Achebe's memoir technique is getting liberated from illusions. From this stage onwards, he is at liberty to recount events personally. The character/narrator distance is shortened. A memoir, if not carefully handled, can turn out to be characterized with subjectivities. However, the narrator's new-found closeness to the minister acts as a control strategy. At this stage the two are friends and Odili's reflections are simply witty and intelligent and not issuing from any bitterness; so far Nanga has not personally wronged Odili. This is a deliberate authorial position that even allows Achebe to enable the narrator to give interpretation to apparently innocent gestures and statements of other characters that would pass somebody else as routine events. For example during Jean's dinner party Odili found the small talk between the white women present to be sarcastic. Nanga's suggestion that Agnes is she, who must be obeyed, occurs to the narrator as a quotation from Rider Haggard. Nanga is alluding to and justifying his amorous intentions towards Mrs. Agnes Akilo, the barrister. When it comes to Odili's interpretation of African art especially the African mask, it exposes the white people's ignorance of Africa with his informed aesthetic appreciation. The beauty of the memoir style adopted here by Achebe is that it gives Odili the opportunity to be listened to. Mrs. Nanga has dismissed such discussions as nine pence talk and three pence chop. However Odili says:

> And I don't know whether this happens to other people, but the knowledge that I am listened to attentively works in a sort of virtuous circle to improve the quality of what I say. For instance when at a certain point the conversation turned on art appreciation I made what I still think was a most valid and timely intervention.(49)

The listener Odili is referring to in this quotation is not just the other characters in the text but also the reader of the narrative. It is noteworthy that the memoir style adopted here in the novel obliterates the previous narration inertia and uncertainty on the part of the narrating voice. The narrator is even now bold enough to say that whites are disappointed when they fail to meet their authentic natives in Africa. The memoir affords him a distanced position to evaluate the event around him beyond what is personal. Odili is voicing a protest against racial stereotyping and does so with finality borne of real and immediate experience. He ends up having sex with Jean, the American after a dinner. She later drives him round the backstreets of the city as though she is a local resident. He is skeptical of her intention and figures that she intends to show him how dirty his city is. Achebe does not mention the sex act but cushions it in acts of a narrator's self-censorship and masking. However, despite this carnival, Odili is capable of noting Jean's self-righteousness. He is even outrightly defensive when she tries to suggest that African streets should be named after important women as it is done in France and Britain. In Bori there are streets named after Nanga and Odili says that this is Africa and not Europe. The memoirist is capable of documenting emphatic observations about white interference and the danger of contaminating the African cause. He ends this awakening by ensuring another round of sensual contact with this agent of external contamination as though in ritual purification. It is significant that he enters this event in his memoir as a marker of personal conquest and as a symbol of closure to naiveté.

In these instances, we see Odili interacting with a world larger than the one-person world. He is now in contact with interpersonal relations and social representations. Odili is now capable of psychological involvement to events and persons around him. He is however powerless to his

unconscious motivation which has its own dynamics. He has already mastered power over the white stereotype by his symbolic defrocking of Jean the white lady and his informed exposition about African traditional masks in front of white people. However he is yet to marshal power over Elsie and Chief Nanga. In a way, Achebe is trying to revisit the journey of his literary career through *Things Fall Apart, Arrow of God* and *No longer at Ease.* Whereas the previous novels adequately deal with tradition and colonialism, *A Man of the People* and Odili are now probing the nature of post-colonial power. At this stage, Odili exercises power through his relationship with Elsie. It is symbolically the rhetoric of political power. He can access the nurse's quarters late at night because he is in a long American car and a minister's flag. We get to the politics of emblems and rituals of power. We get this signal when Odili says to the reader: Anyone who has followed this story at all carefully may well be wondering what became of Elsie whom I said was one of my chief reasons for going to Bori. Well that chief reason had not altered in the least. (56)This signals a shift in rhetorical focus. He is talking of a return to the story of his girlfriend Elsie but as the tone of the introduction sounds, that motivation is taking a new significance. The reader is not convinced that it was the narrator's chief reason. He has already entered Nanga's sphere and the attitude towards women and Elsie's story at this moment lacks the idealistic moralizing of the previous narration. In fact, it is full of obscenities and cheap sexual innuendo.

Within this emerging discourse, Achebe salvages Odili when he figures that he has ambitions of writing a novel about the coming of the first white man to his district. This reminds one of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart.* It is an illusion inspired by his friend Chief Nanga is going to open the first book exhibition by local authors. This return to intellectual issues takes Odili away from exclusive talk about his girlfriend and brings the reader back to the ideological thrust of the text.

But stylistically, the inclusion of Elsie makes the memoir more humanly authentic and less self-righteous.

Odili describes Mr. Jalio, the author of *Song of the Black Bird,* quite disparagingly. He describes the writer's non-conformist dress, in itself a statement of liberated individualism, with obvious condescending commiseration. Nanga thinks that Jalio is a musician and that his book is a song. Odili joins in excusing this literary ignorance of the minister as a show of witticism. Odili's taste for power has blunted his sensibilities and he has acquired the condescending attitude of Chief Nanga. His attitudes are facing a test of reality against idealism. He is no longer critical but merely indulgent; he cannot be critical of Nanga even when the latter mentions fictitious British authors whom he hoped Nigerians would emulate. For Odili, the level of compromise is almost complete due to this proximity to power; he cannot intelligently respond to Nanga's misconduct and ignorance; he is afraid of letting his carnival friend face the humiliation and embarrassment due to him. Odili's failure to perform a castigatory role for Nanga's mistakes returns the reader to reflect on the honesty of the narrator when he claims that Elsie was his chief mission in Bori. In this memoir technique, the author has invited the reader to evaluate the narrator.

In chapter seven Odili says: Chief Nanga was a born politician; he could get away with almost anything he said or did. (65).This is an ironic twist in the memoir. The memoirist senses that his subject lacks critical evaluation and could be mere recording. The great rhetorical shift here is that the narrator for the first time starts reading faces and analyzing discourse and action, just like a writer does. Odili does an evaluative analysis of the sleeping arrangements Nanga has made for his girlfriend and suspects mischief. He also figures about the limited vocabulary of the

minister. He misuses words like comported, and fatal with impunity. Odili starts to note these things with a bell of alarm in his mind. At night, Chief Nanga has sex with his girlfriend as Odili listens helplessly. His inertia comes to the fore once again but he realizes that Elsie is actually enjoying the infidelity with Chief Nanga. For the first time the narrator is genuinely annoyed. Chief Nanga tries to mollify him with promises, ironically promises of more sex partners. Odili has however seen the vanity of this carnival and ways of treachery. He decisively flees from the house to live with Maxwell Kulamo an old friend from his days in Grammar School. Max is a struggling lawyer but still a Marxist idealist as his name obliquely suggests. Marxism now takes over in the power structure of the ensuing narrative. The motivational axis shifts from the private domain of the memoir to the political multi-person world. The narration hence changes from being a memoir in an effort to reflect this new level of consciousness on the part of Odili. The joy of a carnival existence is silenced and the technique has to reflect this narrative shift.

5.6 Crowning and Decrowning

We may say that so far, the narrative has crowned Chief Nanga through Elsie. He has symbolically taken the crown from Odili but the latter is now conscious of his humiliation and is determined to opt out of the clutches of Nanga. This drama is being played within the dynamics of a carnival. The logic of the carnival drama operates through crowning and decrowning of hierarchies and therefore the next phase of the narrative is predictable. According to Bakhtin:

> Crowning and decrowning is a dualistic ambivalent ritual, expressing the inevitability and at the same time the creative power of the shift and renewal of all structures and order, of all authority and all hierarchical position. Crowning already contains the idea of imminent decrowning. It is ambivalent from the very start. (240)

The implication is that whoever is crowned has to be decrowned. Just like Odili is crowned by Elsie, so is he decrowned by Nanga. This is not mere ritual in politics. It has its logic. Odili supposes that all these ins and outs in a way worked to shape his later decisiveness. At first in characteristic naivety, he thinks that he should take away Nanga's parlour wife. This is the emotion of revenge which Achebe suppresses for it is not consequential in the grand scheme of Odili's personality development. It is Max his friend who forces him to face the reality that things will continue in the same way for as long as intelligent people like him left politics to the Nanga. Odili's objective in the plot has to be political regardless of the personal side-shows represented by his love life.

Max introduces Odili to party politics almost without a break from the humiliation he experienced from Nanga. The party of Max is the Common Peoples Convention (CPC) which alludes to a unity of the underdogs. The style of rhetoric now assumes a simple gaze at reality without the inertia to action. Odili henceforth does not offer justification for thought or action instead he now offers analytical realistic reasoning. Max carefully narrates that his Marxism is not the vulgar type. He is careful that people will not start calling his group communists who wish to have everything in common including their wives.

The introduction of new characters: Max, Eunice, the trade unionists, a doctor, a writer, a lawyer and, a newspaper columnist realigns the rhetoric of the text. There is even a white man in their midst. The inclusion of new characters obligates the technique to rise above the memoir since the narrative is no longer personal. Now, thanks to the introduction of the intellectuals, hilarity is replaced by intellectual humour as comic relief to serious discourse. For instance, the white man

from Eastern Europe advises the rest to come out of their tower of elephant tusk. (77)The trade unionist defends his trip to Russia by telling the others that, if you look in one direction your neck will become stiff. (79) Ezeulu in *Arrow of God* has told Oduche the same thing but in the rhetoric of ambiguity. However, in the context of *A Man of the People*, the narrative has arrived at a stage where there is no room for equivocation. Max is a poet just like Obi of *No Longer at Ease.* His poetry moves Odili to tears with its allusions to the description of the motherland. Max's father is also an Anglican priest like Obi's. There is thus an apparent intertextuality of the writings of Achebe in *A Man of the People*. The writer has not forgotten his earlier heroes and their philosophies. The rhetoric is now multi-personal and multi-voiced. Even Odili's prime position as the lead focus of narrative point of view is decrowned.

Odili's loss of Elsie is the completion of the ritual of his decrowning. It is also the ritual of coronation of chief Nanga. However, this is a dualistic ritual; through it, a new coronation glimmers. Odili notes that Nanga has no right to cheat him and figures that manhood requires that his tormentor pay in full measure. Notably his diction now contains words like rights and manhood and his voice is now functional. There is now clarity of pathos and plot situations which welcome rapid change.

Stylistically though, Achebe substitutes the double refraction of the narrative into analytical ambivalence so that the future decrowning does not become a purely negative exposition of personal morals. The decrowning assumes a socio-political ring. He introduces other intellectual minds in the narrative so as to transcend the single Odili story which is almost losing its artistic character and becoming naked journalism. A case in point is the linguistic eccentricity of the

Eastern European and his punctuation of his speeches with the word yes spoken with the accent of a question. This is not only an element of stylization but also a marker of semantic plurality. There is now an increasing density of analytical tools and Max is not apologetic of facts. He sums up the lessons to the maturing Odili and explains the presence of an assistant minister of the government. The assistant minister is a true nationalist and not a sellout as Odili is prone to conclude. Odili recoils at this due to his previous personal and painful experience with Nanga who is a government minister. But Max points out that one does not have to commit suicide every day he felt unhappy with the state of the world. Thus, openly, it is no longer the story of Odili alone.

The decrowning also happens with traditional symbolism. Previously in Bori, Odili had translated the shaking of a woman's fist as a sign of great honour and respect. When he gets back to Anata, he sees the same symbolic act from a woman now directed towards Josiah's shop. This time, the symbolism is decrowned and becomes an abomination As Josiah has taken away enough for the owner to notice. These words come from Timothy, a Christian and a carpenter who still believes in traditional magic. That Josiah had stolen a blind man's walking stick to lure all villagers into capitalistic loyalty is not beyond Christian belief. Achebe here is distilling the rhetoric of history and politics through a new Odili:

> I thought much afterwards about that proverb, about the man taking things away until the owner at last notices. In the mouth of our people there was no greater condemnation. It was not just a simple question of a man's cup being full. A man's cup might be full and none

be the wiser. But here the owner knew and the owner, I discovered, is the will of the people. (86)

Odili however goes back to his grudge with Nanga. He is out for sentimental revenge. Unfortunately, emotional needs and ideological compulsions seem to clash in the narrator in the meantime. The plot and narration change in a typical Gogolian style. It is a technique called the Skaz by Boris Eikheinbaum while discussing Gogol's *Dead Souls*, Gogol says:

> Everything transforms itself quickly in man; before one has a chance to turn around there has already grown up within him a fearful cankerworm that has imperiously diverted all his life sap to itself. And more than once some passion-not merely some sweeping ground bringing but, sneaking in for something insignificant -has developed in man born for great deeds, making him forget great and sacred obligations and see something great and sacred in insignificant gewgaw. (194)

Revenge has made Odili to become a man of passion, exposing him to embarrassment in trying to woo Edna, Nanga's parlour queen. Achebe in *A Man of the People* nonetheless is intent on saving his hero from his lowly ambition in lieu of a grand passion. He wants to salvage him from fixation to emotional fancy in favour of political involvement. Odili technically has to be saved from overinvestment in trivia. When Odili visits Mrs. Nanga on Christmas Day to see Edna, he finds a drunkard who calls himself V.I.P, (Very Innocent Victim), demanding a beer from Mrs. Nanga. This relative has the brains to partake of Nanga's affluence as a V.I.P and connect his own squalor with the minister's up-coming four storey houses. Odili initially dismisses this as

the inventiveness and wit of his people to get a drink. He is unable to view the wider picture of unexplained riches that the drunk can see. Achebe revisits the masks that have populated his novels. The mask at Nanga's home that Christmas Day is a little askew and pot bellied. The symbolism is almost literal. It is held in restriction by attendants reminiscent of *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God.* Though the rope restraining the mask gets undone the crowd helps the mask's attendants to put it back. One might have expected this sudden access to freedom to be followed by wild rampage and, loss of life and property. On the other hand the mask tamely puts his matchet down and helps his disciples retie the rope. Then he calmly picks up his weapon again and resumes his harmless dance. The crowning moment of a mask, its sudden access to freedom, is undermined with its apparent tameness. Here the contrast is obvious.

Odili could only dish out money in his political campaigns to the attendants who sang a single a Sunday school chorus and not a war song. The images of power have been undermined irrevocably and Odili ought to note this with alarm. Conversely, his passion for trivia blinds his insights. The turning point in the rhetoric of power comes through ironically when Odili advises Edna not to marry Nanga and even dares to touch her waist. He realizes that he has at last become decisive and the rhetoric changes with an author-aided sign-post. While I was making these little private and deliberate decisions in my quiet little corner of Anata, great and momentous events were at last-after long preparation-ready to break and shake all of us out of our leisurely ways. (99)

This realization is not only on the multi-personal level but also on the stylistic level for the author whose narrative now assumes a biographical note with an accurate recording of dates of events, their implications and possible results. The narrator now seems to be reconstructing the

story from documented evidence in the form of reports and journalistic interpretations. The first one is of the scandal about import duties on certain types of textile goods. It turns out to be a ploy planned by the government. The plot involves Nanga together with foreign companies like the British Amalgamated. We for the first time get the narrative of kickbacks in international business. The narration now sounds like a reading from a report of an inquiry:

> As the whole world knows, our minister of Foreign Trade, Alhaji Chief Senator Suleiman Wagada announced on New Year's Day a 20 per cent rise in import duties on certain types of textile goods. On January 2nd the Opposition Progressive Alliance Party published detailed evidence to show that someone had told the British Amalgamated of the minister's plans as long as October and that they had taken steps to bring in three shiploads of textiles by mid-December. (100)

This revelation comes to the Odili who remembers that Chief Nanga had held the same Trade Ministry portfolio two years before and had benefitted from similar corrupt deals as was the reported by The *Daily Matchet*. Nanga had built three seven-storey flats for which he had leased to the British Amalgamated at fourteen hundred pounds a month. The flats were curiously registered in the name of Nanga's wife. Odili observes that these and other stories, previously told in innuendo, had caused so much public protests to eventually force the Prime Minister to resign. Odili had previously not connected Nanga's flats with corruption.

The language of revolution takes over; strikes and chaos even rumours turn into reality; the Prime Minister resigns. The atmosphere in the country is now carnival once again. The scandals that were daily exposed in the newspapers-far from causing general depression in the country-

produced a feeling akin to festivity. (100) It is an exhilarating moment for the common people who thought they had nothing to lose, certainly not corrupt people in government. It is the ceremony of decrowning earlier mentioned. The celebrants now are the former spectators who have lost their lethargy. The politicized Odili now drives a Volkswagen and has eight hundred pounds for his campaigns to oust Chief Nanga. He is now in a position to confront Edna's father and actually writes a letter to Edna telling her that she must not marry Nanga. This juxtaposition of Odili's private affair now taking on a formal levity and the public political mood is Achebe's style of amalgamating together the semantics of power in which the individual represents the whole.

The rhetoric now involves conscious calculations on the part of Odili. He even knows the number of miles he has to cover so as to become an M.P. He has a final voice in all this. He even tries to win alliances with Mrs. Nanga, a miscalculation though. Mrs. Nanga does not like to be dethroned, yet she does not mind a co-wife. Achebe here is still holding on the validity of the traditional point of view amongst the illiterate, against the educated and enlightened. Odili is not cowed in his campaigning personal and political crusade and even dares Edna's father to strike him with a matchet. Edna's father, now made docile, propounds the wisdom of cowardice comparing Odili with a tick which was challenging the bull from whose back it filled its belly. To the older generation, the power of Nanga has acquired the status of a personal god. In the rhetoric of power however, Achebe has succeeded in bringing in the precursors of dialogue across the socio-political divide that can result in the ouster of the dominant by the underdog. That Edna's father sees Odili as a tick on the back of a bull alludes to his own status and position in the conflict of the novel.

Odili though has to reckon with goons hired by Chief Nanga to frustrate the dialogue. He experiences this through the hypocrisy of the handshake scene at Anata when he announces his candidature. In the end the handshake turns out to be a kick on Odili's back from a disgruntled Nanga supporter. Odili falls and lands on his hands eliciting boisterous laughter from the crowd. This is a carnival scene but the laughter is not the end in itself. Odili retains his composure in the face of provocation. He has acquired a sense of humour and courage as is evidenced by his reply to Mr. Nwege when the latter sacks him from his school. His philosophy now is: As a rule I don't like suffering to no purpose. Suffering should be creative, should give birth to something good and lovely. (104) There is an introduction of a sense of pragmatism in his attitude.

There is a rhetorical purpose for the inclusion of the low-brow characters like Mr.Nwege and Edna's father in this phase of the narrative's development. It is an effort to retain the patterns of oral narration which are threatened by the revolutionary rhetoric. Odili says that he was about to thank Nwege for obligingly setting fire to a house that was due for demolition. Edna's father gives an oral narration comparing Odili with Nanga using the allegory of a tick who is foolhardy to challenge the bull on whose back it fed. Odili also involves the reader in the narration as Odili asks rhetorical questions ostensibly aimed at the reader. After displaying his courage and figuring out exactly the motive behind why he wanted Edna, whether for his own sake as a revenge scheme or part of his political activity, he asks the reader: Funny, wasn't it? (108) After this rhetorical question directed to the reader, he asks himself a question as well: How important was my political activity in its own right? (108) The narrator proffers the answer by saying that perhaps, it was just as well as that his motives should entangle and reinforce one another. Achebe

is justifying that the semantic materials in the text: author, narrator and, reader have equal weight in the quality of their contribution in the rhetoric of decrowning. It is a deliberate manipulative strategy of pulling interpretive participants into the text. From this profusion, as Odili observes, someone might see the sense and say: No Nanga had taken more than the owner could ignore. This reminds the reader that the shopkeeper's action at attempted witchcraft is a running motif in the novel. It is the philosophy of giving the common people hope through enlightenment. The rhetoric of hope comes with juxtaposition; Nanga and Josiah are replicas of the common foe. Odili ruminates over the negative transformation that politics can bring. He is driving at the same spot where a goat had caused him a bicycle accident previously but he is now in his own car and not a bicycle. There is a sense of déjà vu but his level of sensitization helps him comprehend the irony. He can even now sympathetically assess his father's failure to declare the exact number of his progeny and how such an attitude reflected the reality of national census.

Significantly though Odili is entering serious politics, Achebe does not forget the love affair. This is an effort at maintaining verisimilitude otherwise the closing stages of the narrative would be implausible. In the political reality of the day Odili's attitude changes though and he turns negativity to his advantage. He is even thrilled at posters denouncing him. The firmness he demonstrates with his bodyguards shows a character whose mind is keen on avoiding blackmail and anarchy. He refuses to give them money and turns down their plan to burn Nanga's car. This sharpness of focus stylistically means that free multi-personal interactions of persons are suspended. The carnival observes a minute of silence, as yet.

His next dealings with his father are meant to justify his maturity. The diction of the author changes to signal this maturity when Nanga visits his home and tries to buy him out with money and a scholarship. Odili senses Nanga's, counterfeit affability. (115) His father is approached by Nanga for intercession. They both take some whisky and Odili can detect the joviality in his father's tone. This puts him on guard. His father's talk is a monologue in support of Nanga. Odili cannot participate as the father is always interjecting to silence Odili into a useless one-sided debate. Odili remains miraculously unruffled and his response to threats, entreaties and bribery is negative. Achebe does not forget though to inform the reader, however rather unconvincingly, that Odili is thinking of Edna all along. At this point, Achebe's attempts at personalizing the discourse are weakened by the reader's awareness of Odili's already diversified and nationalized vision and point of view.

Odili keeps his moral integrity in spite of accusations from his father and Max as well. He is firm that he should not take any dirty money. He is steadfast in his mission of clear conscience regardless of his colleagues, relatives and elder to take Nanga's money. His moral force supersedes legal and traditional persuasion. It brings out the theme of the decrowning of self-interest with moral convictions. Investing Odili with such convictions seems to be the Achebe's ideology of creating a narrator of change. Achebe lets Odili engage Max in a dialogue on the morality of dirty money. Then, he restates the same morality in a narrator-author voice to underscore the seriousness of the change in Odili:

> I am sorry, Max but I think you have committed a big blunder. I thought we wanted our fight to be clean. You had better look out, they will be even more vicious from now on and people will say they have a cause. (126)

Odili rephrases the same argument in reference to common sense which is what the populace knew and understood. For Odili, a man who makes himself vulnerable through dishonour is unforgivable. For Odili, it is like carrying on a surreptitious love business. This not only applies to politics, but also to Edna, his love target whom the author uses figuratively; the progression of the love story is also a parallel of the political story. The real point according to Odili is to inspire terror in the Nanga's despite their pretentious tricks. Odili supersedes double-refraction though he is nonetheless humanly recapitulative at times but effectively self redemptive. His idea about good-looking women and educated professional ladies is prejudiced after his experience with Nanga and the loose lady lawyer. To Odili, they try to look better and always fail. This prejudice excludes Edna and sounds like a convenient rationalization for his fixation on her. Edna is not as educated as the women he was meeting. With Edna, the Odili is still using double standards and hence he is yet to acquire a clear vision of the role of women in his ideology.

Achebe in A Man of the People is obligated to travel the length with his hero-narrator and so he creates a scene between Odili and Edna where Odili refuses to be annoyed by her rebuff. Now playing the political activist, he has to be more focused and accordingly he pushes Edna out of his objectives. In humanly terms, and for purposes of focus in vision, Odili writes to Edna confessing that man is sometimes prone to getting brutalized by circumstances. His interests are now to be purely political and weaned. He lately finds out that his allegiance is to his ideals and

the common people. He even takes a renewed interest in his houseboy, Boniface. He misses sharing in the diction of the common person. Boniface liked using words like: Foolis-man and Tief-man. This is invective but it is aimed at Chief Nanga and his ministerial colleagues whenever their names come up in the news. Odili has to endorse this participation of the ordinary people and even delight in their language use. Thus in the carnival situation, the linguistic hierarchy is undermined.

5.7 The Deconstruction of the Idiom

The reader of Achebe's novel detects that even the title of the text is being subjected to a series of deconstruction. In the first paragraph, the narrator says that people called Chief Nanga, A Man of the People. The narrative that follows this idiom progressively deconstructs that axiom. The conclusion to the text does not necessarily mean that Nanga was the opposite. Such a conclusion on the part of the reader would be a misreading of the text. On the contrary, a total evaluation of the text shows us that there is another way of interpreting the idiom other than the literal. Otherwise the author would have outrightly entitled the novel as *An Enemy of the People.* Curiously this is a title of a text by Henrick Ibsen.

The title of the narrator's father also undergoes deconstruction. Previously, as an interpreter, he was feared, respected and hated. Those were the times of *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God.* In *A Man of the People*, whose action takes place after independence, he is an insignificant person and is actually foolish in the eyes of police extortionists working for the new post independence order. Similarly, the so called national cake is never shared; it is only promised, but not entirely denied. The new idiom is significant when Nanga moves water pipes from

village to village and back and forth as a pre-condition for support and as a plan to hoodwink voters to vote for him so as to share the national cake.

Achebe offers an explanation for a case of deconstruction when the narrator discusses the mass media especially the radio in the context of elections. The narrator refers to the radio, our national crier. Before this, Achebe sets the stage by showing how much ancient traditions have been undermined and their meaning changed. One night, the traditional crier's gong performed an oddity to the village:

> In the past, the crier had summoned the village to a meeting to deliberate over a weighty question or else to some accustomed communal labour. His business was to serve notice of something that was to happen. But this night he did something new: he announced a decision already taken. (134)

The decision is that every man and woman in Urua and every child was to vote for Nanga in the election. This message is taken up by the national radio the following afternoon. Achebe gives this information of the historical transformation of the crier and the gong so as to put the reader within historical contexts and also underpin the oddity of being told something you already knew. What is of political significance and further deconstruction is that the crier has the ability to magnify the message in the several languages and even in English. Odili finds himself participating in this oddity as well. He has an appetite for news and he also chooses to attend Nanga's inaugural rally in disguise and alone.

Here Achebe revisits the carnivalesque again and it is as though Odili is partaking in mock reality. Odili concedes that he does not know what put it into his mind to attend the rally. In a carnivalesque situation, an apparent appearance of lack of clear purpose in action is a typical carnival theme. The sheer hilarity of it is its justification. The meeting is beckoning with sounds and drums and everyone is participating including the ostracized Josiah. Even when Odili in disguise receives abuses from the crowed for pushing for space, he just stays put.

This meeting is a carnival in which Nanga is similar to Nwaka of *Arrow of God* with his wealth, women and title and people's attention. The results are also strikingly similar. Nwaka tries to destroy Ezeulu. Odili will get a reckoning from Nanga. It is a friendly crowd according to Odili and there is no need for the police. Odili is involved in an internal discourse but inviting the reader to share. At this stage the discourse more or less sharply senses its own listener, reader, critic, and reflects in itself the anticipated objections, evaluations, points of view, crises and possible good luck:

> I don't know what put it in my head to go to Chief Nanga's inaugural campaign meeting. Did I want to learn some new trick that I could use in my own campaign against him, or was it naked curiosity-the kind they say earned Monkey a bullet in the head? Whatever it was, I went. (136)

It is a quality of stubborn revolt to reason that dominates the narrator's voice here. He is in an ambiguous situation and he knows it yet he allows ambiguity to propel him. In itself this ambiguity is Achebe's hidden polemic. He is out to deconstruct the idiom of political participation. Previously attendance to a political rally would be a matter of curiosity and if one

got injured in the process it would have gone merely as an accident incurred during a local festivity. That would be the justification in a carnival sense. For Achebe to deconstruct this notion, he allows Odili to float within a world of semantic possibilities. It turns out that Odili's attendance to this campaign rally is neither to satisfy curiosity nor to learn new campaign tricks. If Odili goes on stage to tell the people his point of view, he knows that the people would only laugh at him with their ready-made perceptions. They would also most likely summarize their words with a few blows to the head. If he doesn't go to the podium to speak, he will nonetheless be found out and beaten by the mob. Either way, the result will be the same. So, the idiom hangs in suspended open-endedness.

Josiah, the ostracized shopkeeper, is the one who notices Odili and tells Nanga. Odili is now called the thief yet it is Josiah who has occupied that position so far. Josiah is crowned and Odili is decrowned and further mocked by Nanga to the applause of the crowd. Ironically, the decrowning privately crowns Odili by fortifying his sprit above that of Nanga: I seemed to see him from a superior, impregnable position. (139) Nanga ironically concedes this crowning of Odili and calls him: Odili the great. The entire parodying he throws at Odili to the laughing crowd is actually not empty platitudes but true celebration of greatness. Odili is allowed to make a speech which turns out to be an unfinished sentence: I came to tell your people that you are a liar and… (140)This sentence does not need to be completed to make sense. It structurally functions as a complete rejoinder to the first paragraph in the novel. Odili had admitted that Nanga is a man of the people until he tells the story. He is momentarily silenced from the story through the beating he receives after this announcement. Structurally the story has come full

circle with the pronouncement of that unfinished sentence which ironically finishes the sense of the promise of the novel's introduction.

This high point of the narrative proceeds with an unconscious Odili. It is the defining moment in the text and the last thing the narrator sees before he starts to render his story in retrospect. However, vivid in his mind is that he saw Edna pushing to save him from being physically harmed by Nanga. The latter pushes her and she falls embarrassingly on her buttocks. Odili is assaulted to the applause of crowd, and the policemen turn round and walk away. Edna's embarrassment and the Odili's injury are mere entertainment to the crowd that is merely attending a carnival festivity. On the other hand this ushers in a new facet to the semantics of the idiom of a man of the people. From a personal and a socio-political sense the idiom self destructs.

The event ironically registers the crowning of Odili. When in hospital, the police change guard in an act of making amends. To them, they are guarding a criminal but in reality they are protecting a patriot. The turban which must have been a bandage on his injured head makes him look like an Alhaji-not a mean position in Islamic religion. The idiom of pre-election times has received considerable deconstruction. It jolts the notion of what it means to be a man of the people. The narrator's unconsciousness seems to be a moment of reflection for the author, narrator and, the reader as well.

5.8 The Epilogue Technique

Achebe through Odili who has regained consciousness tells the reader that he has heard it all and the narrative to follow is familiar. He says this as though the plot is over but ironically the epilogue happens to be the climax: The events of the next four weeks or so have become so widely known in the world at large that there would be little point in my relating them in any detail. (140) Achebe prepares the reader for the denouement just like he prepared in the introduction. The difference is that contrary to the fears of the first paragraph, he has nothing to admit. The epilogue is essentially a reconstruction of events from the perspective of Joe the trade unionist and from Odili's father. The narrator is recounting in retrospect. It is election day and Max has been assassinated by agents of chief Koko and Eunice has murdered Chief Koko using her pistol. This event triggers a revolution first seen as a confrontation between Max's body guards and chief Koko's thugs. Then Nanga's thugs ravage Anata and in the whole country similar election thugs take cue. This voiced hearsay account is replaced by the authorial voice doing a post-mortem of the crisis and the change of power. Achebe dismisses political commentators who think that the assassination is the cause of the coup by calling it sheer poppy cock: The people themselves, as we have seen, had become even more cynical than their leaders and were apathetic into the bargain. 'Let them eat' was the people's opinion. (143)

Achebe through opines that what brought down the government was the post-election anarchy of unruly mobs and private armies. Their taste for blood in the elections made it easy for them to turn against their masters. Achebe warns: let's make no mistake about that. (184) The public is so apathetic to politics that it has become cynical and politically ambivalent.

Even the young army officers who staged the coup are mere opportunists of the unrest and dislocation of the people; they had no commitment or moral obligation for taking over. Even the acceptance of Odili by Odo, Edna's father, lacks a moral or political base on the part of the latter. it is like a man using the philosophy that a bird in hand is better than none. After losing Chief Nanga as son-in-law, he had no choice. In a deconstructionist sense, Odili does not become a man of the people to replace Nanga. He is also just a convenient second best to Odo. If we relate this personal event to national politics, the marrying of a wife from a reluctant father-in-law portends a political future based on shaky foundations. To Odili though, Edna's presence is now no longer symbolic but literal. It is not a dream but the reality of Odili's firmness of character. Eunice is released from prison and Max is declared a hero of the revolution. This declaration is further put under the critique by Odili who sees it as hypocritical of the people who twist their loyalty overnight. They lack enduring principles and are hypocrites.

The epilogue is explanatory in rhetoric. Achebe explains through Odili that it was not about the proverb of a man taking enough for the people to see. These are clear oversimplifications that can only be village lore. Odili has witnessed the complacency among his people who create idioms only to delight in the ridicule of the same. To Odili and Achebe, the picture is different. For example Max he was not revenged by the village or the nation but by the woman who loved him free of charge. Odili's dream is to start a school in his village in honour of Max. By calling it, a new type of school, I hasten to add. (148) the narrator brings in the urgency of the message of the novel, *A Man of the People*, its ideology and philosophy of rhetoric. Odili is not ready to haggle over Edna's bride price but insists on paying up all expenses quickly. This is the idiom of a new kind of school of thought, a philosophy of revolution based on a firm resolve to break with

the past because a coup might be followed by a counter revolution as Odili parenthetically observes and everyone would be at a loss.

5.9 Conclusion

The carnival style in *A Man of the People* critically evaluates the people's apathy and cynicism towards post-independence politics and the conditions that would make it possible for a villain to become a hero. Achebe has adopted a hero/narrator as a strategy of minimizing an authorial one-sidedness in storytelling.

Towards the close of the narrative, Achebe usurps the narrator-reader dialogue of the novel and transforms it into an authorial explanatory monologue where the hidden polemic is the urgency of a revolution to jolt the people out of complacence. These strategies function effectively in resolving the challenges of point of view in what it means to be a man of the people in post-colonial Africa.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 STORYTELLING AS AN IDEOGRAMATIC TRIUMVIRATE

6.1 Introduction

The title of Achebe's fifth novel, *Anthills of the Savannah* is an ideogram which defines the relations between the craftsman, Achebe, his task to fashion the raw material of experience-his own and that of others-in a kind of procedure that exemplifies a proverb. A proverb stands as it were, on the ruins of an old story. It is thus the remnant upon which a moral can be inferred about a happening. Seen from this perspective, the storyteller and his story have counsel. They join the ranks of teachers or even sages who rely not only on their own experience but reach out to the experience of others who know or whom they have met even through hearsay to create a complete image of an entire life. As Walter Benjamin has observed in his *Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov:*

> The story teller: he is the man who could let the wick of his life be consumed completely by the gentle flame of his story. This is the basis of the incomparable aura about the storyteller…The storyteller is the figure in which the righteous man encounters himself.(14)

This reflection points to the nature of every story. It contains overtly or covertly a practical purpose which may be in the form of a moral, advice, proverb or maxim. Achebe in his fiction seems to have sensed that the counsel purpose of the story was beginning to become old-fashioned because communicability of experience is decreasing as is the case in *A Man of the*

People, Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease and *Arrow of God.* Their lead protagonists are silenced at the close of the narrative and no one is left to tell the tale. *Anthills of the Savannah* is thus a step further in consequence of lack of counsel either to oneself or to others. The counsel of a proverb is less an answer to a question than a continuation of a story which is unfolding. To seek this counsel, the author and his novel would first have to tell the story or rather allow the situation to speak. To implant instruction in the novel, as a proverb does, Achebe has resorted to a modification of the bilndungsroman of *A Man of the People* so as to avoid the fragile justification that bilndungsroman alloys experience and expression. The storyteller takes what he tells and makes it the experience of those who are reading the tale. Experience is indispensable for information to sound plausible.

In *Anthills of the Savannah,* the events are related by the three lead characters but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left for the reader to interpret these connections and thus the narrative achieves more than biographical amplitude. The narrative, like a proverb, does not expend itself. Achebe offers no explanations for what Anthills are. He concentrates on the narratives of the triumvir: Chris Oriko, Ikem Osodi and Beatrice, who are also character/narrators and witnesses and hence gives the proverb the resemblance of a seed which has a multiple germinative power.

Achebe in *Anthill*s as we have said has forefeighted psychological shading by allowing the characters to relate their own stories with a considerably diminished omniscience on his part. This strategy thus becomes the prop to the ideogram's place in the mind of the reader. It aids in the integration of the story to the reader's experience. The three narrators are engaged in the

same metaphor of *Anthills of the Savannah* and their experiences are the same only that their stories have different points of reference. Achebe seems to have realized as Walter Benjamin says:

> Storytelling is always the art of repeating stories and this art is lost when the stories are no longer retained. It is lost because there is no more weaving and spinning to go on while they are being listened to. (5)

Achebe's strategy therefore is to give the story a transmission power and form. The structure hence looks like a sequence of images set in motion inside the characters' life even when their story is about their death. Thus, the stories of the three characters are embedded in a form of fictional report which is conveniently chronological and resembles a historiography. Achebe is not an historian but a historyteller, the chronicler. The distinction between the historian and the chronicler is that, the historian is bound to explain in one way or another, the happenings he deals with. The chronicler while concerned with an accurate concantation of definite events has no burden of demonstrable explanation. The place of this task is taken by interpretation; an effort towards embedding history into the inscrutable course of affairs of human beings and their world.

The choice of the image of anthills looking over the scorched wasteland of the savannah is eschatological and naturalistically motivated and Achebe parades sub-storytellers who unambiguously characterize the course of the West African country, Kangan in a web of multicolored worldviews held together by historical, spiritual and secular bonds. The ideogram

is thus polyphonic. The polyphonic orientation of the image is the storytelling orientation in a novel of remembrance in which Achebe evaluates the reminiscences of his appointed storytellers. The first remembrance is rendered by Chris Oriko, the Commissioner of Information; the second remembrance is assigned to Ikem Osodi, the editor of the *National Daily Gazette* while the third comes to the reader through Beatrice Oko, Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Finance who is also the girlfriend of Chris. The unity of their origin intellectually, professionally and socially, in memory, invokes the *theatrium mundi* in which Achebe keeps changing hands in storytelling. At the close of the text, Beatrice emerges as the sole survivor of the company in their quest for meaning and righteousness. The task of the present study is to analyze the method in which Achebe utilizes the ideogram in fashioning meaning by the use of an image which is beyond an individual and whose suggestiveness is solemn. It is a move away from the strategy of depicting the hopelessness of the protagonists in the face of the unmanageability of the political situation. This is the strategy of rendering alienated psyches exploited in *A Man of the People* and in Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born*. David Caroll has observed that: Achebe's rejection of this form of literary modernism reminds us very forcibly that he is and always has been struggling to find a fictional form flexible enough to engage directly with the recent history of the country. (167)

Achebe's strategy is the realistic fictional mode but more significantly it is distilled through the viewpoints of three protagonists in what appears to resemble a documentary reporting of the nature of military power. It is in itself a diagnosis of the state of the nation after the coup de etat that closes his earlier novel, *A Man of the People.* The three characters through whom the documentary is crafted have theories about authority and its abuse. In this strategy, Achebe picks

up the generalizations of power-abuse, directly addressed in his other book, *The Trouble with Nigeria,* and uses sophisticated characters in addressing the new form of patronages and its implications. The rhetorical assignment is basically the creation of the story which forms the primary task of my present engagement. Thus, we ought to justify first why this novel is a story in the first place and further justify the appropriateness of its strategy.

6.2 Anthills, as Sequence, Contingency and Causality

The first question is generic. Does the novel contain a story and a plot? In other words is it a narrative? The argument since Aristotle's *The Poetics* is that events in narratives which make up novels are correlative and enchaining. The sequence of these events, so runs the argument, is causative, not simply linear. The causation may be covert or overt or to say it otherwise, implicit or explicit. E.M. Forster argues that there is a difference between a story and a plot. In his famous illustration found in *Aspects of the Novel***:** The king died and the queen died-is a story; the king died and the queen died of grief-is a plot because it adds causality to the story. Interestingly, the human mind is structured in such a way that it seeks structure and will impose or even improvise one even a mystical casual link to any story. Humans do so in their natural efforts to seek coherence in nature. Even with feelings, humans may turn mere sensation into perception. In a narrative the deep structure of a story has a plot inherent in it which might not be manifest on the surface structure; so is the image of anthills in a scorched savannah.

The structure of *Anthills of The Savannah* is both explicit and implicit. The three narratives of the characters, Chris, Ikem and Beatrice could easily substitute each other on the linear scale. This could because the reflections of the three characters are happening simultaneously. The reason for this could be that Achebe is narrating of events that have already happened and hence

the plot is not based on probability where an event leads to another. Paul Goodman says the following in reference to poetry:

> The formal analysis of a poem is largely the demonstration of a probability through all the parts. Or better, in the beginning anything is possible, in the middle they become probable; in the ending everything is necessary. (14)

In Achebe's case, Goodman's is an important insight in that it allows us to see the working out of the plot of the novel. Achebe's technique is a process of narrowing the possibility in the analysis of an ideogram such that the ending becomes inevitable. This also affects the narrator's position. The insights of the triumvirate are rendered in the first person narrative position then Achebe adopts a third person omniscient narrative position so as to bring out the moral of the ideogram.

The narratives of the three characters start around the same events where His Excellency, the military leader is presiding over a cabinet meeting and he is interrupted by a delegation of Abazonians who have come to voice their protest against the government's neglect of their drought-infested land. This is brought out through the eye of Chris who characterizes himself and his position in the interpretation of the ideogram:

> I have thought of all is as a game that began innocently enough and then went suddenly strange and poisonous. But I may prove to be too sanguine even in that. For if I am right, then looking back on the last two years it should be possible to point to a specific

> and decisive event and say: it was as such and such a point that everything went wrong and the rules were suspended. (2)

This is a portrait of a person with insight but unable to figure out when things went wrong. He can see possibilities from his actions but he is full of inertia and is sanguine. Chris is a detached individual who looks at his cabinet colleagues with disenchanted clinical interest. His only justification for being in government is that had he left earlier, he would not be writing about it and no one else would be. he shelters his self-justification to art. He is there to mentally document the events he does not believe in yet his presence keeps the cabinet intact. It is his own paradox which lacks any causal power for narrative action but pure narration. He further opines that:

> But I have not found such a moment or such a cause (for leaving) although I have searched hard and long for it. And so it begins to seem to me that this thing probably never was a game that the present was there from the very beginning only I was too blind or too busy to notice. But the real question which I have often asked myself is why then do I go on with it now that I can see.

The story of *Anthills of Savannah* does not coincide with the plot of the narrative because it is not linear. The character owns that he could not be writing this if he did not hang around to observe it all. In authorial terms, Achebe through Chris is implying that the story of the anthills has been present and his text should not be expected to be in the same league with other narratives like *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* which recount a particular historical period

or *A Man of the People* which traces the development of Odili's consciousness in the post-colony. Achebe's plot technique as Chris intimates is about a subject that is cyclical. The plot lacks the certainty of his essays in *The Trouble with Nigeria* which states that :The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership.(1) To Achebe's *Anthills,* the trouble is no longer simple or square but a paradox; as enigmatic as an ideogram.

Thus the plot indicates that we are not merely looking at time but the illogicality of time. That is why the statements of Chris are stasis statements and not events. For the action of the plot, the character of Chris is not that of the effecter but the affected and the beginning of the novel is not the traditional story genesis but a narrative event. We may thus ask what an event is. According to Boris Tomashevsky, in Tzevan Todorov's *Theorie de la literature*:

> If the action is plot-significant, the agent or patient is called a character. Events are neither actions (acts) nor happenings. Both are changes of state. An action is a change of state brought about by an agent or one that affects a patient. (269)

The character Chris is not just an individual but a happening that entails a predication in which he is the focused existent or the representative image. This is the reason Achebe changes the tense from the past to the present simple. After the disagreement with His Excellency about his suggestion that the president visits Abazon, Chris describes the scene as an observer viewing a motion picture:

> He is in Mufti as he now tends to be more and more within the precincts of the Presidential Palace. A white dashiki tastefully embroidered in gold and its matching trousers. By contrast many of my colleagues especially the crew from the Universities aspires to the military look. Professor Okong wears nothing but Khaki Safari suits complete with epaulettes. It is amazing how the intellectual envies the man of action. (4)

After this motionless observation, the narrator switches to the past tense. Thus another discussion of beginning, middle and end is subverted by tense shifts. In *Anthills*, there is really no end in anything, biologically, socially or historically. This text is strictly not a story but a disclosure or a story-as-discourse. What Achebe is doing is to clash sequence and causality. The story is thus not a mere sequence in the literal sense of action following action. What holds together the narratives of the novel is the principle of contingency. This is a novel conception of narrative which appreciates the need for a new improvisation that takes into mind that a novel without a plot is a logical impossibility. Barthes uses the term hermeneutics to illustrate this function:

> In modern plot of revelation, however, the emphasis is elsewhere; the function of the discourse is not to answer that question (what will happen) nor even to pose it .Early on we gather that things will still stay pretty much the same. It is not that events are resolved (happily or tragically), but rather that a state of affairs is revealed. (48).

In *Anthills of the Savannah* the development strategy is in the first place that of unraveling, afterwards it takes the shape of revealing. Achebe's revelatory plot in the novel tends to be

character-oriented. It is concerned with the dealings of the novel's existents and events are reduced to an illustrative role. Whether Chris and Ikem, two of the triumvir die is crucial but their attendance of cabinet meetings or writing revolutionary editorials and their love lives only reveals their character.

In the first movement called: Chris Oriko – First witness, Achebe reveals the character as a sensitive but reserved observer who feels emasculated by the power of the soldier whom he mistakes for a civilian president. He therefore acquires a cynical attitude towards the affairs of the cabinet. Chris in chapter one tries to explain and justify the high handedness of His Excellency by saying that he knew him for a long time before the military coup and his main fear was his unexplainable fear of mass actions like demonstrations. Chris even suggested that they employ Okong who was famous with populist ideas and diction that would aid in mollifying a restive populace. the president no longer trusts anyone except the Director of State Research Council (SRC), in itself a kind of state intelligence agency. Okong like the others has become a psychopath and a flatterer. He flatters His Excellency: Your Excellency is not only our leader but also our Teacher. We are always ready to learn. We are like children washing their bellies as our elders say when they pray. (18)

Okong blames the president's woes on Ikem i the editor of the *National gazette* on tribal bases. Okong also implicates his colleague Chris in the conspiracy to disgrace the president. This leads the narrator to reflect on the phoniness of formal literacy and uses the professor as illustration. The narrative is now centered on His Excellency whose opinion is : My semi-literate uncle was right all the way when he said that we asked the white man to pack and go but did not think he would take with him all the utensils he brought when he came. Professor. (9) The professor is

the greatest advocate of tribalist ideas in the text and one is reminded of *The Trouble with Nigeria* where Achebe states that:

> Nothing in Nigeria's political history captured her problem of national integration more graphically than the chequered fortune of the word tribe in her vocabulary Tribe has been accepted at one time as a friend, rejected as an enemy at another, and finally smuggled in through the back-door as an accomplice. (5)

Okong is the illustrative referent in Achebe's novel who personifies this condition. He does characterize himself in very few sentences and Achebe aptly brings in the Attorney General to the debate. The Attorney General though not disagreeing with Okong's view proclaims that his legal training obligates him to look for facts and not for conjecture. Achebe is involved in the creation of self-evident referents to his theory of Nigeria. For a narrative to have verisimilitude, it has to base its premises on either public opinion or common sense. Moreover, as the image of anthills suggests, the story stands on the ruins of a scorched savannah and as Jonathan Culler suggests in *structuralist poetics* that the norm of verisimilitude in established by previous texts and not only actual discourses, but the texts of appropriate behaviour at large. Verisimilitude is an effect of corpus or intertextuality hence intrasubjectivity. It is a form of explication, pointing from effect to cause and even reducible to a maxim or even a proverb or an image like we have the image of anthills.

In the utilization of the intertext, Achebe presumes that the reader's common sense in active and overt explanations become implausible. Achebe's essays in *The Trouble with Nigeria* are

explanatory. The repetition of the same themes in *Anthills of the Savannah* is illustrative. The silent acknowledgement of the readers' awareness gives the novel a kind of decorous plausibility of persuasion. The motivation for the lack of explanation is similar to that of Dostoyevsky's creation of Raskolnikov. Achebe like a movie producer cuts out unnecessary details which would insult the reader's intelligence. Achebe does not show what we could easily figure out for ourselves and the presumption is that the reader has read before the text experience and can identify sub-texts within the novel. This privileged selection involves an arrangement of narrative kernels and satellites.

6.3 Kernels and Satellites

Readers of Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* may wonder at the logic of the connection between the three main characters' narratives. The truth is that Achebe has established a logic of hierarchy in which some events and the characters involved are more important than others in the interpretation of the ideogram of anthills**.** According to Barthes each major event is called a kernel. A kernel gives a narrative moment the status of a hermeneutic code. Kernels are narrative moments that give rise to cruxes in the direction taken by events. They are modes or hinges in the structure, branching points which force movement into one or two (or more) possible paths. Chris can resign or decide to stay in the cabinet; Ikem can as well decide to write anti-establishment editorials or toe the line of the status quo and Beatrice may choose not to leave all options open or become the sex object to His Excellency.

A satellite is not crucial and can be deleted without disturbing or altering the logic of the story. Satellites are the choices available but not the crux of the plot. This is a deliberate attempt by the

author to show that the interpretation is three-fold and the rest are supportive material supplementing the central idea. Since this distinction is merely a psychological reality in the mind of the reader, Achebe has decided to name these kernels in chapter titles. He has deliberately done this operation in an effort to steer away from digression. The important thing is that all the kernels are interconnected and you cannot tell the story of any without implicating the other. Being the principal narrator/characters makes it prudent for Achebe to utilize the three as his kernels in the triumvirate interpretation of all the satellites around the ideogram of the anthill.

Achebe's exploitation of the satellites creates the suspense and surprise of the plot elements. Ikem's attitude towards women is dramatized through the use of these choice satellites. At his core, Ikem is the intellectual in the triumvirate. His dealing with Elewa, his girlfriend, produces scenes of suspense and surprise. For example, he debates with himself whether he delights in wife battery. He is addicted to listening to his neighbour's violence on his wife and actually misses it. The neighbours have nicknamed the wife beater as Mr. So Therefore because that is the classic answer they get from the police when they call to report the violence. It is surprising that Ikem would enjoy such violence but this is presented as a satellite position:

> Do you miss it then? Confess, you disgusting brute, that indeed you do! Well, why not? There is an extraordinary surrealistic quality about the whole thing that is almost satisfyingly cathartic. (34)

Ikem further justifies his attitude towards the complacency of women in their suffering when he lets his girlfriend take a taxi home at night after love making. The girl protests that the night is dangerous and Ikem should drive her home himself to which he declines. He philosophizes that

women should not sleep out of their houses but at the same time he is full of fantastical praise for her love making technique. His attitudes are very cynical and self-justifying. He actually pays tribute to the inventor of the hot shower and the paper stapler. Ironically, the paper stapler is used by the government as an instrument of torture for perceived dissidents. Ikem denounces his ancestors for not being inventors simply because he cannot link them with his two instruments of self deceit and selfishness: The hot shower and the stapler.

The highest spectacle of suspense of choice is when Ikem attends the public execution of dissidents at the beach. He gets a glimpse of what authority can do and realizes that authority can even dictate public taste which he instinctively recoils from:

> I had never expected that Authority should excel in matters of taste. But the ritual obscenity it perpetuated that afternoon took me by surprise from the pasting of a bulls eye on the chest of the victim to the antics of that sneaky wolf of a priest in sheep's clothing whispering God knows what blasphemies into the doomed man's ear to the doctor with his stethoscope rushing with emergency strides to the broken, porous body and listening intently to the bulls eye and then nodding sagely and scientifically that it was all finished. Call him tomorrow to minister to genuine human distress and see how slow he can be! And how expensive. (41)

Ikem here reveals his kernel through the eye of an observant critic. He figures that the people are glorifying their own humiliation. The murder on the beach is the murder of the nation. One of the convicts proclaims in messianic style that he shall be born again. The event changes

Ikem's perception of power and in his next editorial, he militantly asks the president to abolish the spectacle to which the latter obliges. Ikem permanently adopts new unrestrained convictions and this presages his doom. The kernel opens up his eyes and gives him the conviction and momentum of his gift of the garb foreshadowed by Chris in his report of Ikem's "Hymn to the Sun" (30). Ikem finally, courtesy of this kernel incident decides to stop being an observer but an actor himself.

The signal that Achebe proffers for Ikem's new status is that the narrator/character stops his characteristic discourse of uncertainty. Previously his discourse almost always started with the word: perhaps, when expressing his continued socializing with the dictator, Sam: Perhaps I am altogether too sanguine but… perhaps I am so indulgent about Sam's imitation. (50) He is no longer in doubt that Sam has learnt nothing else from African presidents other than the absolute exercise of power. The Kiswahili word Kabisa he so fondly uses means complete or absolute. Ikem thus learns that it was time to end his empty musings and relations. That the end of socialization is not important in itself but its timing must be becomes Ikem's practical philosophy. Prior to this decision, his actions and attitude are peripheral and cannot move the plot hence he is a satellite. After his decisive act he becomes a Kernel. Subsequent to the kernel having been given shape by the satellite, Achebe then adopts a third person omniscient narrator who brings back Chris and Beatrice to the plot before embarking on Beatrice as the final narrator- character.

6.4 Order, Duration and Frequency

The problem of narrative discourse has been discussed by Gerald Genette in his analysis of time relations in the novel. He distinguishes between order, frequency and duration. This has implications on the placing of event and character in novels. It even becomes more pertinent when the character assumes a narrator position or when a narrator/character occupies a satellite or kernel function in the narrative. The problem is particularly real in *Anthills of the Savannah* whose compositional mode is like a cinematic montage or cutting. Cuts sometimes signal flashforwards; ellipsis or flashbacks; analepsis which makes the text anachronous. The events in the plot are spatially removed from the story in the novel and are not anticipatory and thus they must be explained technically to fill in the gaps. Achebe thus introduces Beatrice to propel the narration and fill up these interpretational gaps because the other narrator/characters are absent in the narrating present.

Beatrice starts her first person narration with a report about a telephone call which had given her a premonition of death. From the time she takes over the narration, the analepses and prolepses of the novel take on a new shape. The narration now establishes a sense of a present moment, a narrative now. Genette distinguishes between the distance of an anachrony and its amplitude: Distance is the span of time from NOW backward or forward to the inception of the anachrony; amplitude is the duration of the anachrony event itself. (18) The narration of Beatrice is given more duration than those of Chris and Ikem. Her narrative joins the previous two anacrhonies in a mixed manner; to the narratives of the two male characters, Beatrice's rendition is heterodiegetic as it does not interfere with the interrupted story of Chris and Ikem. In a sense it completes their narratives: past, present and future. It can be characterized as a completive

intervention in the triumvirate. She is decisive and takes charge of her life and relationship with power with a singleness of will free from any official obligation or intellectual debate. She is the one who finally takes a stand at the right time without inertia or procrastination. It is through her that the ideogram is finally interpreted completely. Achebe's last rhetorical stance is the achrony which follows Beatrice's narrative. The achrony allows no chronological relation between story and discourse and the principle of inclusion is motivated by thematic concerns. Beatrice is the first to exercise an act of rebellion when she refused to take the owners seat and spurned the chauffeur who brought her as a weird consignment. She observes: I had successfully compounded my rebellion first to spurn a seat of honour and then to greet a mere driver first. That was when I smiled at myself and my puny, empty revolts, the rebellion of a mouse in a cage. (72)

She revisits the conversation of Chris and Ikem and is on the side of Ikem who is against the plunder of public funds in building monuments like the Retreat she was being driven to. She also revisits Chris' philosophy that perhaps, African reformers have to be tyrants to start with, just like it was in medieval Europe. Thus, Beatrice now analyses the other two voices objectively like one moderating a national debate. While at the Retreat, she opens her eyes and realizes that the new power brokers are the special Branch and foreigners particularly the Americans. The American journalist is particularly outrageously domineering over His Excellency. She is giving a lecture to the president and his general about servicing foreign debt and the lack of logic in the likes of Ikem who she calls Marxists. Beatrice is shocked at how the president is acquiescing and deferential in the face of an American's attack on his dignity. In

reality the president is on the side of the foreigners in attacking the African whom Beatrice personifies and recognizes.

Later, after a dance while the president expects her to add to the number of his harem she pulls him aside and wonders if she would or could walk into a White House private dinner and take the American president hostage together with his defense minister and the director of CIA. Ironically, the president failing to see her point calls her a racist and storms away. Beatrice is here to give the woman's view of the trouble with Nigeria.

After this, she decides to write down the story of *Anthills of the Savannah*. It is at this stage that the reader realizes that the novel is a fictionalized woman's autobiography. The justification is that after weeks and months of the dinner experience, she renders to the reader the experiences of the writing process:

> I had started. The discarded pages and the nearly spoilt meat seemed like a necessary ritual or a sacrifice to whoever had to be appeased for this audacity of rushing in where sensible angels would fear to tread, or rather for pulling up one of those spears thrust into the ground by the men in the hour of their defeat and left there in the cycle of their last dance together. (83)

Her story thus starts in chapter seven when she becomes possessed like a prophetess and starts to write her autobiography. For the first time she involves the reader in a classic autobiography style: My name is Beatrice, but most of my friends call me either B or BB, and my enemies

…that's one lesson I've learnt from the still unbelievable violences we went through that even little people like me could also rate enemies. (84)

The rest of the novel is the fictional autobiography of Beatrice: even the death of Chris, Ikem, Sam and the vision for the future. Achebe crafts this much concealed autobiography after the character starts narrating her story in the traditional autobiographical mode from childhood. Beatrice tries to deny that she is writing an autobiography and, significantly, this is Achebe's style of reminding the reader that regardless of the characters intentions, she is still his creation. She says:

> But I didn't set out to write my autobiography and I don't want to do so. Who am I that I should inflict my story on the world? Am I trying to say really is that as far as I can remember I have always been on my own and never asked to be noticed by anybody. Never! And I don't recall embarking even on anything that would require me to call on others. Which meant that I never embarked on anything beyond my own puny powers. Which meant finally that I couldn't be ambitious. (87)

This is an authorial cautionary technique to forestall Beatrice's importance in the triumvirate lest we forget the contribution of the other two interpreters: now dead heroes. In story terms, Beatrice is not so much worried of the act of writing as by the false charge of being ambitious. Ambition amongst women in Achebe's novels has been perverted if not non-existent. The argument the author is pushing is that Beatrice is a sensitive woman who is quite insightful and there is no equivocating on this admission. This autobiography within the novel is rendered in

discourse which is both covert and overt: first Beatrice has to deal with non-narrated stories then enter the unambiguous narrative of her life.

6.5 Non–Narrated Stories

Beatrice's autobiography offers the avenue for Achebe to fittingly digress from the common narrative of the triumvirate to study the gender dynamics of consciousness. *Anthills of the Savannah* is more than just the story of the triumvirate. It is also a rendering gender relations for which Achebe had previously been accused of neglecting in his fiction. The style of narration at this stage of the narrative appreciates that he is dealing with several temporal stages in a sequence of events: an earliest stage characterized by the past perfect tense, a subsequent period using the past progressive, a later stage using the prevalent progressive and the latest stage narrated using the simple present or present progressive signaling the future.

In the non-narrated story there is also the use of the timeless reference to point in time in statements that specify general cases for example in the saying that black is beautiful. Beatrice uses these strategies in her narration starting with her childhood, with a stern father whom she hated for beating up her mother and her metaphorical name Nwanyibuife: a female is also something. The non-narrated story here is Beatrice's background to her present convictions and philosophy of the world which she calls, Uwatuwa. She confesses that as a child she thrilled to that strange sound with its capacity for infinite replication till it become a building-block of her many solitary games.

Even in family prayers, Uwatuwa would seize her imagination and she would shout it out only to be punished by her stern father. Her father believed in whipping children into silence. He was a school master and the symbol of masculine and patriarchal hegemony in the early days. He liked calling her Nwanyi which was the female part of her name, a thing she resented. This part of her autobiography is rendered in the past perfect tense signalling the time before she realized that she was alone in the intricate world of her immediate family. This is the germ behind her sense of independence and pride even among powerful men. Her background guards her against being cheap and vulgar. Even before meeting Chris, he was in her words just a mere editor of the *National Gazette.* Her sensitivity to female foolishness-a trait in women borne of male chauvinism that makes women rate themselves lowly-is a quality she has long before her going to England and women liberation. The non-narrated story is that before she comes into contact with power, she is full of healthy skepticism and in possession of a woman's sixth sense:

> So when Chris came along I was not about to fly in his arms for the asking although I liked him…, unreasonable? Perhaps yes. But I can't blame myself for the state of the world. Haven't our people said that a totally reasonable wife is always pregnant? Skepticism is a girl's number six. You can't blame her; she didn't make her world so tough. (88)

In this except Beatrice utilizes the present timeless so as to furnish the reader not only with her background but also her present state and future narrative presence. Thus she declares that she had no reservations, emotionally, for Chris but intellectually she had to call into play her sense of danger. Achebe is thus introducing a woman's voice but noting that she is a thinking woman who has a right to be listened to and not simply be seen as an appendage of the men in the drama.

This takes place in the present tense and hence comes as a penultimate to her narrator/character role:

> In the last couple of years we have argued about what I called the chink in his armoury of brilliant and original ideas. I tell him he has no clear role for women in his political thinking; and he doesn't seem to be able to understand it. Or didn't near the end. (91)

The tenses are here mixed but the paragraph starts with the preterite: in the last couple of years. This signals an emphasis on the NOW for the 'I' character whom Achebe is trying to contemporanize for purposes of the discourse of the future. The stories by Beatrice which have to do with her life cannot be called flashbacks since they are just summary statements adduced by marks of transition. As Chartman has observed: flashbacks and flashforwards are only media specific instances of the larger classes of analepsis and prolepsis. (64) Thus in films, a flashback-forward is possible since that medium utilizes several channels of information presentations; visual and auditory, and one can keep either in the present while flashing the other even in the form of an off-screen narration like in advertisements. *Anthills of the Savannah* utilizes the image of an anthill and the narrators in a principle of organization but the characters do not flash back as they are interested with what the past has made them. So Beatrice is not the Anthill giving flashbacks or telling the tale of the fire that ravaged the savannah but the interpreter of the NOW AND HERE of the text. The interpretation she is giving is the meaning of despair. She says that giving women today the same role which traditional society gave them of intervening only when everything else has failed is not enough. For her taking women as the last resort is

belated. She parallels this with the women in Sembene Ousmane's film who take up the spears abandoned by their men.

The non-narrated stories in Beatrice's account traverse the discourse. The mention of Sembene Ousmane's film is a case in point. It reminds the reader that Achebe is aware of Plato's distinction between mimesis and diegesis; direct narration and mediated presentation. We ask ourselves the question posed by Chartman: Is the statement directly presented to the audience or is it mediated by someone-the kind we call narrator?

Beatrice assumes the narrator role more than the witness in the action. Achebe calls Chris and Ikem, first and second witnesses respectively. For Beatrice, he avoids this distinction because pure mimesis is inadequate for the purposes of *Anthills of the Savannah.* Though efforts have been made in the text to imply that events are unfolding in the story, this attempt is made much more complex since the narrative from Beatrice is an analysis of a narrator's voice and voices of previous narrators; it is the point of view of the novel.

Beatrice occupies both the positive and negative poles in narrator-presence. At the positive pole, she gives a pure transcript of her life and behaviour. This is mimesis. At the other pole, the pure diegesis, she uses the pronoun 'I' and makes interpretations: general or even moral judgments. For example she says of Ikem: I have to admit that, although he tended to be somewhat cavalier with his girlfriends and has even been called unprincipled by no less a friend than Chris, he did have the most profound respect for three kinds of women: Peasants, market women and intellectual women. (92)

Apart from this strategy, Beatrice has the facility of the minimally-mediated narration in which she records nothing beyond the verbalized thoughts of characters especially Ikem. Such minimalism is marked by tags like: he thought and he said. Viewed from this perspective, the narrator/character becomes a kind of a stenographer. After Ikem's dismissal as editor of the *National Gazette*, he visits Beatrice at night during a storm. After a minimal dialogue presented almost verbatim; mimesis, between the two, he thanks her for giving him insight into the world of women. Shortly after, he flashes out of his shirt pocket a paper which he calls a strange love letter and reads it out. The author enters this writing of Ikem in the form of a writer's diary. The narrator does not interrupt Ikem's presentation.

The letter is a polemic on the oppression of women since the Biblical *Genesis* to the present time. The entry of Ikem's letter is a studied critique of religious and secular methods of female denigration that exposes the male chauvinism of the *Old Testament*, to the false veneration and irrelevance of women in the *New Testament.* To him, in the two testaments, the woman is outside the practical positions of running world affairs; first as a temptress and then as the mother of God. In traditional folklore, Mother or *Nneka*, is supreme and hence is kept in reserve for moments of crisis.

This minimal interference to the narration allows Achebe to pursue his philosophy of art and characterization which at its core is the avoidance of any form of orthodoxy. Ikem as an editor personifies that quest to write about events differently. His philosophy resembles Paulo Freile's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* which advocates for humanism. The oppressor/oppressed praxis has to recognize the humanity inherent in the divide. This is what he calls the paradoxical cavern of

Mother Idoto. This underlines the philosophy of the future narrative which borrows from the poetry of Christopher Okigbo's *Heavensgate*. It not only spells out the methods history has used to oppress women and other oppressed inhabitants of the universe, it also spells the antagonisms between art and orthodoxy and crowns it with the paradigm of resolution. The novelist's role is also rendered in Ikem letter that directs that a novelist must listen to his characters who after all are created to wear the shoe and point the writer where it pinches.

6.6 Real Author as Narrator

The censure not to confuse the author and the narrator is commonplace in literary theory. Gibson has argued: The speaker of a literary work cannot be identified with the author-and therefore the character and condition of the speaker can be known by internal evidence alone. (70). Unless the author has provided a pragmatic context, or claim of one, that connects the speaker with the self the distinction remains primary in literary appreciation. Truly, the speaker, is not the author or author-narrator but Wayne Booth has provided us with the term Implied author: a sort of a third party. Tolloston calls this author: the second self (256) and Booth notes that, "However impersonal he may try to be, his reader will inevitably construct a picture of the official scribe. (70-71)

The implied author of the novel is hinted on by Ikem in Beatrice's narrative. Ikem proclaims the principle that invents the narrator of his letter to Beatrice and after the letter, the author presents a chapter called *Daughters* whose first entry is Idemili. In this chapter we get the legend and mythology of the deity Idemili: the daughter of the Almighty who is the witness to man's naked exercise of power. In this chapter, Achebe invokes the metaphor of power and the fate of all who aspire to be powerful. They must supplicate to Idemili. One such aspirant performs all the

rituals and gains the Ozo title-the greatest symbol of power, revisited by Achebe in all his novels-but he was lascivious and sneaked at night to fornicate with a widower only to meet his death. The moral here is that Idemili has contempt for any man who thirsts for power and authority over his fellows.

The narrator of this chapter reminds us that Beatrice was ignorant of the traditions and legends of her people due to her western upbringing. Achebe uses the words: 'as we have seen'. (105) to signal that the implied author is taking over from the narrator/character. Beatrice is a modern girl and not a product of double heritage like Obi of *No longer at Ease***.** Achebe absolves her from her ignorance in a final paragraph but this does not necessarily preclude her from the ancestral charter. She is prone to possession by traditional gods like Agwu, the capricious god of diviners and artists: this notwithstanding having gone through a Christian baptism.

This sounds like a preface to the role that Beatrice is to play in the text: that of a possessed diviner, an interpreter from this chapter henceforth. Achebe adopts the omniscient narrator position. This narrative position enables the narrator to present the story reliably. The narrator sees the characters from a privileged bird's eye view alongside the availability of their psychological states and posthumous relevance. The adoption of this position enables Achebe to return to the other daughter of the almighty, not the mythical Idemili, but the fictional Beatrice, here headlined in her baptismal name Nwanyibuife: A female is also something. This then completes the triumvirate: Chris the sanguine, Ikem the intellectual and Nwanyibuife the interpreter female who is also important as her name suggests. It is Achebe's way of retaining his favorite proverb, "where something stands, another also stands". The narrator then plunges

Beatrice into an analysis of the events that take place after the dinner at Abichi where she had been summoned by the president ostensibly to be his casual bed-mate and sex object. She turns him on then resists. She is like a reincarnation of the Almighty's daughter who checks the libido of men who have unquenchable thirst for women.

6.7 The Implied Listener/Reader

Just like we have an implied author, we also have an implied reader in *Anthills of the Savannah.* The implied reader is Beatrice. She implicitly is reading from the notes of Ikem and from her life with Chris. The narratee character role of Beatrice is the one technique though which Achebe informs us of who the implied reader is. In this novel, the implied reader is the autobiographical narratee. Her function is more or less expository in summary. Her discourse is briefer than the events she depicts. Her summarizing after she enters the narration is in the form of dialogue. It quickly goes to the gist of what happened and what was said. There is a minimal description of setting. Achebe has summarized this further by indicating that the whole story is around the metaphor of anthills left in the Savannah after a sunny scourge. This implies that there is a privileged point of view in the text. We need to differentiate between point of view and the narrative voice. A point of view is the physical place or ideological situation or practical life-orientation to which narrative events stand in relation. Voice, refers to the speech or other overt means through which events and existents are communicated to the audience. The point of view does not mean expression: it only means the perspective into which the expression is made. The distinguishing points here are that point of view is a perspective while voice is an expression. In *Anthills of the Savannah* there is a combination of the two. The character perceives and the character expresses. After Achebe adopts the third person narrative position he

ultimately brings in a second-order narrator who is heterodiegetic. This narrator is different from the three narrators who are also first-order characters within the story. The narrative becomes both perceptual and conceptual. Here then the narrator overrides the character though the character remains the centre of interest.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, there is no disparity between the characters' point of view and the narrator's expression. Achebe adopts a sympathetic mode which does not distance character and narrator in irony. Chatman says that this is one of the methods utilized by the omniscient narrator:

> Access to a character's consciousness is the standard entrée to his point of view; the usual and quickest means by which we come to identify with him. Learning his thoughts ensures an intimate connection. The thoughts are truthful, except in cases of willful self-deception. Unlike the narrator, the character can only be unreliable to himself. (157)

Achebe has created a narrator/character/ideologue after the presidential dinner at Abichi. He gains complete access to the consciousness of Beatrice. The narrator notes that: 'When she walked through the room behind the Major she was likewise able to take in as if by some unseen radar revolving atop her head every detail of the scene'.(106)The substantially important point here is that the character exhibits exactly the same traits as an omniscient narrator. Where the narrator is a different person from Beatrice, Achebe judges her actions either overtly or covertly and inferentially through metaphorical imagery.

John Austin has developed a philosophy called Speech Act Theory. In his text, *How to do Things with Words,* he outlines what sentences intend to do, an aspect he calls illocution. This is distinguished from the mere grammar or locution aspect and sentences and its effect on the reader: the perlocutionary aspect. In rhetorical terms, the role of the narrator is to perform all the three but perlocution, which is the persuasive aspect, is most imperative. The perlocutionary purpose of the novel *Anthills of the Savannah* is to teach, persuade and interpret. Depending on the reader's theoretical orientation, the text may even amuse, irritate or even frighten. The role of Beatrice is rendered as that of a prophetess in the traditional style of Chielo of *Things Fall Apart.* She can prefigure the destiny of the others with mystical authority. In her dialogue with Chris she comes up with her illocution but her perlocution is that she can see trouble building up for Ikem and Chris: she foretells their doom. She expects Chris to get the message that she suggests: his resignation from the cabinet. But he refuses. After this failure of Beatrice's perlocutionary objective, the author adopts a distanced third person narrator in the chapter entitled "Views of Struggle".

The views are given by the Master of Ceremonies from Abazon when Ikem to answer their summons on behalf of the cabinet. His view of the struggle is tampered with traditional wisdom but it gives priority to the story and the storyteller. The elder Master of Ceremonies acknowledges that all the fighters and the storytellers are important ingredients of the battle and none is dispensable. However, he caps it up by saying that if you asked him which of them takes the eagle feather he would boldly say that it is the story does. The object of the interpretation of *Anthills of the Savannah* is to give meaning to the struggle. And it is the privilege of the story to tell us this. This is the assignment of Chris, Ikem and Beatrice in the interpretation of the image

of anthills. The Master of Ceremonies speaks to his audience as though in a monologue. The narrator only interrupts with stage directions intermittedly within the speech in the hotel lounge. Achebe here adopts the techniques of theatre where the character/actor is only linked to the attentive and spellbound audience by stage directions.

Achebe has emphasized this speech of the Master of Ceremonies with italicized directions as signals of giving the speech a sense of verisimilitude so as to avoid re-writing a lecture on the nature of revolution. The narrator seems to be engaged in an act of speech transcription. The stage directions merely transform the modality of the oral presentations to that of writing. It gives the speech a sense of movement by expressing sense impressions for example: The *tense air* was broken suddenly by *loud laughter*. The old man himself smiled with *benign mischief.* (125)

The narrator performs these italicized entries so as to avoid being a stenographer. He also gives an interpretation of the audience and the speech source. These views of struggle are summarized in the folktale of the tortoise who asked leopard to give him time to scratch the earth before meeting his death. The elder interprets the moral of the story that even though the struggle might be in vain, future generations should know that their fathers through defeated tried to fight back. That is the moral of the metaphor of the anthills of the savannah. After this presentation of views of the struggle, what follows in the narrative takes on the shape of example, the first example is the chapter titled Impetuous Son. The name of this chapter is derived from David Diop's poem by the same title. It is an example of an anthill of the savannah.

6.8The Narrativised Soliloquy

The minimally unmediated speech by the Master of Ceremonies from Abazon is a presentation similar to cinema versions of drama. Since his audience never responds to his speech the presentation approaches a dramatic monologue. The content constitutes an explanation of the country's situation but the audience, unlike in a soliloquy, is addressed by someone present. Since the character is present and not merely overheard, his speech becomes narrativised due to the presence of a character, an audience and a narrator observer. The setting of this narrativised speech is HARMONEY HOTEL and Ikem though the chief guest ends up being a listener who contributes nothing in the speech but his physical and symbolic presence. The mute entity in the performance of this speech act is Ikem whom the narrator returns to by way of dialogue with a policeman. what transpires earlier in the hotel could be called a soliloquy that acknowledges an audience presence.

Achebe's use of Diop's poem *Impetuous Son* in chapter ten marks a definite shift in the psychology of the characters. The poem is an authorial entry that acts as a prologue to the characters of Ikem, Chris and Beatrice. The first is Ikem who reflects on this poem after his encounter with the taxi driver and the trade unionist who had paid him a courtesy call to apologize for blocking him inadvertently in the traffic. The narrator probes Ikem's reflections on the paradox of privilege: that his choice to live a simple life was denying other underprivileged people jobs for example, a personal chauffer. He also reflects that this paradox is rooted I n perverse premises like an insistence by the oppressed that their oppression be performed in style like being made a poor chauffeur but in an expensive car. The narrator plunges into the unverbalised mental activity of the character. The character takes refuge in the optimism of

Diop's tree. Diop's poem thus functions as a quotation that is the base of an extended enactment. There is a mixture of a character's self-reference and poetic allusion. In this strategy, there is no presumptive audience other than the character Ikem in the form of direct free thought without a shift in a dialogue which would alter the transmissional mode.

Ikem wonders why the oppressed are so tolerant and would prefer to be downtrodden in style: in a Mercedes as a downtrodden chauffeur. This is tolerance verging on admiration and as soon as Ikem opens up to Elewa, he gets the confirmation. The narrator shows the disparity between non-verbalized thought and dialogue. This warns the character to be patient but obstinate for growth. like Diop's tree in the poem, growth is gradual.

This is a classic example of interior monologue rendered with controlled association otherwise Diop's poem would be a superfluous and unnecessary inclusion in the text. These recorded speech acts-including the quoted poem-can be classified as acts of narrative soliloquy within the main narrative.

6.9 Metalepses

The narrative in *Anthills of the Savannah,* shifts from the 'I' person level to the third person level and even to the intertextual. Diop's poem rendered in its totality is one of these shifts which signals a move towards the ideology and politics of the content. After this intertext is inserted, it is the responsibility of Achebe to create a narrative which confirms the validity of the other text as an integral inclusion to the main narrative. Genette notes that: The transition from one narrative level to another can in principle be achieved only by narrating, the act that consists precisely of introducing into one situation, by means of discourse, the knowledge of another situation. (234)

In *Anthills of the Savannah,* we will extend the term metalepsis to all narrative insertions. This includes the public lecture that Ikem gives at the University of Bassa. The lecture is titled, *The Tortoise and the Leopard-a Political Meditation on the Imperative of Struggle.* Hi's lecture is recalling the oral narrative recounted earlier by the elderly Master of Ceremonies from Abazon at the hotel. Ikem's objective is to stage an intellectual coup d'état against his audience and the reader as well. He intends to renounce popular stereotypes of the notions of struggle which he is aware dominate the consciousness of his audience. His lecture is short but it invites dialogues which help to narrate not only his own character but also his interpretation of the fable of tortoise and Leopard. Ikem observes that "Dialogues are infinitely more interesting than monologues" (154) His speech is full of epithets like ,whatever you are is never enough; you must find a way to accept something however small from the other to make you whole and save you from the mortal sin of righteousness and absolutism. This justifies his position in the triumvirate. To underline his position, he further states that he did not subscribe to text-book revolution but for self-examination. His role as a writer is underscored by his assertion that as a writer he aspires to widen the scope of self examination: not to foreclose it with a catchy, half-baked orthodoxy.

This is a statement that reminds his intellectual audience of the writings of Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* and Freire's, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* especially the latter where Freire calls for enlightenment and self-examination as pre-requisites to the real revolution. Ikem reminds his listeners to figure out the wisdom of the ancestors who couched the proverb that, if you want to get at the root of murder, they said, you have to look for the blacksmith who made the matchet. (159) Thus the ideogram of anthills receives an interpretation in metalepses and the

writer's role as Ikem finally perceives is not to prescribe solutions but to give headaches.(160) This lecture, the intertext, forms the excuse for the government to arrest and assassinate Ikem for regicide. Chris is also forced to hide away to escape being killed as well. When the police come probing for him from Beatrice's flat, they are rough at first but salute as they leave. The narrator inserts the intertext of the medieval legend of Faustus selling his soul for knowledge and power. The simile of Mephistopheles is what Beatrice sees in the sardonic acts of the secret police. Achebe has thus utilized the metalepses of traditional lore, contemporary Diop and the medieval legend in the interpretation of the chaos that surround the triumvirate in their quest to unravel the meaning of the anthills of the savannah ideogram. These metaleptical insertions function as commentary that accompanies the actions of the protagonist. They are like background music in a film that is supposed to concretize the emotion. They are literally associative.

Achebe at this stage takes away Chris and Ikem from the narrative and Beatrice has a chance to learn more on how to accommodate fellow women in the struggle. These women are her servant Agatha and Elewa, Ikem's pregnant girlfriend. Though previously she abhorred Agatha's born-again status and its accompanying hypocrisy, she is now more sympathetic towards her. She also acknowledges that there is something noble in a simple luckless girl like Elewa, an attendant in an Indians' shop, to merit the adoration of a high-minded individual like Ikem. Achebe mentions his narrator at last in the form of a voice inside the mind of Beatrice, 'and in the background the narrator's voice coming through and declaiming: it is now up to you women to tell us what has to be done.' (184) This is a direct address by the narrator to the character. It underlines the need for women to have solidarity of purpose. Henceforth, Beatrice is not to be seen as an individual in the triumvirate but as a type that encompasses all the oppressed aptly captured in the persons

of the women in her life in time of crisis. The narrator here is overt in narration and no longer masked or cushioned in context.

6.10 Overt and Covert Narration

The first signal of overt narration is when the author mentions the narrative voice instructing Beatrice. Here Achebe unveils the narrator's degree of audibility in the narrative. He gives the reader a strong sense of the narrator's presence. The story towards its close is not minimally narrated. Booth has outlined the degrees of narratorhood and Chatman has revisited these strategies of narrative objectivity. Chatman says that these degrees can be discerned in indirect discourse: Three matters are of preliminary concern: the nature of indirect discourse, the manipulation of the surface of the text for covert narrator purposes, and the limitation of point of view to a particular character or characters. (196)

Achebe has extensively utilized the complexities of indirect style in which the covert narrator has surreptitiously given prominence to particular narrative elements. When shifting to overt narration he has used less obtrusive marks from description, to reports, to letters, and to stenographic entries. He also resorts to various kinds of commentary: interpretation, judgment and generalizations. Since at one point Achebe mentions the narrator, it is imperative that we also focus on the narrator's interlocutor. The narrator's interpreter is the narratee. This narratee is conspicuous and audible. The narratee is not just a mind reader of the character but an interpreter of thought. In this covert narration, none of the characters in the novel is a narrator/character. The tense of narration in this instance is in the past with introductory tags like: she said or he observed, and the pronoun is changed from the first to the third person. Ann Banfield in *Foundations of Language* has observed that: Stylistically, a reference clause can be either

identical with or clearly distanced from the surmisable words of the character, indeed, so distanced as to see only the narrator's paraphrase. (83)

With this is mind, we see the narrator in the novel simply giving an account of words or thoughts by a character. But the narratee also inevitably ends up perceiving and narrating the internal inventory of the character's mind. The narrator's access to the character's mind leads to topicalization or the movement towards giving more prominence to a narrative event or highlighting it. The narrator thus has the privilege of seeing selectively into the mind of Beatrice Chris and Ikem. An example is when the narrator tells Beatrice: careful now, Beatrice, careful. How did her people say it? Don't disparage a day that still has an hour of light in its hand.(186)The narratee is instructing the character to be careful but open-minded. This happens during the time when Beatrice is agonizing whether to have confidence in the mysterious caller who is directing her to hide Chris. The mysterious voice turns out to be that of Captain Abdul Medani, a secret confidant and supporter of the revolution of Chris and Ikem. The narrator goes into the mind of Beatrice and unveils its activity. Achebe's narrator quotes the narratee:

> What I want to know from you is how this latest bloodletting has helped Kangan in its historical march as you call it. The blood of his former Excellency and the blood of his victims. If indeed they were his victims. (219)

The narrator plunges the mind of Beatrice into the debates of the post colonial. Gikandi, in '*Rethinking the work of Mimesis'* says that:

> The most obvious sign of this gap is the persistence difficulties post colonial theory has accounting for, and providing us with, a critical language that can adequately speak about the literature of decolonization as a distinctive event in literary history. (Aldridge, 163)

This post-colonial reflection is brought in by the narrator after Chris has embarked on his journey through the Great North Road, ironically in a bus christened luxurious. He meets his death and there is a coup d'état simultaneously and the narrative of the past is symbolically closed. The journey motif recalls the discourse of Diop's poem on the nature of the post-colony. The narrator revisits in quotation the internal monologue in the mind of Chris, but it is a dialogue between the character and the narratee: and now the times had come round again out of story land…So they send instead a deputation of elders to the government who hold the jam today and hold the knife as well, to seek help of them.(210)

The narrator utilizes presupposition as a technique to bring together narrative underlinings which evoke a sense of topicalization of governance as the main problem in the text. The presupposition towards the close of the novel is that what is happening goes without saying, perforce, agreed upon by everyone including the reader. There is a sense of a vicious cycle in the sense that after the coup, the storyteller turns out to be a soldier who holds a beer bottle in his right hand and a Mark IV rifle in his left. He goes on to murder Chris when the latter tries to rescue a girl, Adamma, whom the soldier was trying to rape. The other storyteller who tells no story except for his symbolic presence is a fellow whose head was "going down side to side like an albino, though he was shiny-black like ebony" (214) Achebe seems to be involved in a search for a rhetoric of closure and his attempts to deploy symbolism are very overt. Gikandi notes that:

> There are of course novels in which the irony seems to be superseded by powerful allegories of post-colonial self-making, but even here, the moment of closure is remarkable for its inscription of the failure of what one may call a post-colonial wish fulfillment rather than the phenomenology of a happy ending. (174)

In *Anthills of the Savannah,* the birth of Elewa's child is symbolically significant in the rhetoric of hope for the future. Her naming by a woman, Beatrice, is also a post-colonial scheme to interpret the nation from a woman's point of view, in cognizant with the ideogram of anthills on a scorched earth.

Achebe halts the rhetoric of doubt through the deaths of the two characters in the triumvirate and the delivery of their messages. This is the message of hope and it is Adamma and Beatrice who hear the last message correctly from Chris. He called himself: the Last Green, in his final moment. He is referring to himself as the last of the three. And Beatrice, to reinforce the optimism of the novel contrasts her own father's lack of philosophy of death with the humour with which Chris meets his own, with a grin. The narrator finally proceeds to temporal summaries in the speech of Elewa's uncle and Beatrice's monologue. She overtly states the message from Chris, though he is dead. The prophetess can divine that: This world belongs to the people of the world not to any little caucus, no matter how talented. (232).

This interpretive perception by the narrator ties together the career of the triumvirate - the elite - and explodes its thin veneer to include the whole world regardless of class as is evident in the post-colonial logic the narrator brings out earlier, stated by the taxi-driver to Chris. The driver

tells him that for a big man to act a small man is not a small thing. This puts into perspective the inclusion of the driver and Emmanuel the student leader in the interpretation process. It supplements the interpretation of the elite.

The ending of the narrative with an apostrophe by Beatrice is significant and instructive. In a trance-like invocation, Beatrice looks at the future with an apostrophe-*beautiful*-and it is only she alone who looks entranced: She alone gazed still at something remote, a third party invisible to the rest, a presence to whom she had spoken her quiet apostrophe. (232) Achebe has used this strategy of overwhelming lead characters at the close of his plots. He does the same with Okonkwo, Obi, Ezeulu, Odili and now Beatrice. The character's invisible gaze is a narrationally implicit commentary of her present manifestation and role in the struggle. None of his characters can claim to have the power to control the proceedings of the conclusion. It is the same style that Flora Nwapa has used in making Efuru dedicate her life to a deity rather than have a child in her novel *Efuru*. *Anthills of the Savannah* not only exposes the need for a multi-layered interpretation of the present but also provides a utopian compensation for a painful history and likelihood for a fulfilling future in the symbolism of rebirth. The allusion to Kunene's *Emperor Shaka,* at the close of narration puts the text within the cannon of the continuing post-colonial and its dynamics of storytelling. The metaleptical inclusions place *Anthills of the Savanna* among the works of literature that transcend nations.

6.11 Conclusion

The strategies adopted in this novel are elaborative of the ideogram of anthills on the savannah: an image of what remains after the fire has razed off everything else in the African grassland.

Achebe's style is illustrative in the sense that the characters personify events in history. There is thus a greater verisimilitude in the portrayals in this text because what is related in the stories of the characters has already happened and the vision of the story does not depend on probability: it resides in hindsight. It is like a remnant anthill telling the story of the savanna after a fire has razed out everything else.

Achebe's choice to involve a female character/narrator in the triumvirate enables us to glimpse at the gender dynamics of consciousness. The presence of Beatrice enables the writer to bring out through a character's autobiography the reflection that women are not only witnesses but also interpreters of the African political situation. Stylistically, in *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe succeeds through Beatrice in creating a character/ narrator / ideologue. The style seems like the convergence of Achebe's artistic efforts in that it incorporates echoes of his other texts and those written by other Africanist writers like Diop and Kunene. This shows that the novel is a discourse on the ideology of the politics of the continent which is a running theme in all the writings of Chinua Achebe.

CONCLUSION

In this study I have tried to demonstrate that while developing the themes that the novels of Achebe carry, there is an attendant rhetorical assignment that the author fulfils. Accounting for the method used in telling the story is indispensable if we are to understand the narrative in totality.

As far as the creation of the central hero of the novel, I have used Okonkwo, the main protagonist in *Things Fall Apart*, to demonstrate that the process of character creation is not spontaneous or accidental but a deliberate activity driven by a persuasive intention. It involves the writer, the text and the reader with the author performing a mediating role. The participation of the reader aids in the recognition of not only the greatness of Okonkwo but also the profundity of themes in the novel. The author's thesis in the novel is the recognition of greatness and fall. If the hero is the vehicle through which this theme is unveiled, then the strategies of this hero creation have worked to actualize this end.

The authorial control in Achebe's first novel is monologic: The author has the last word on his character. This authorial attitude disappears in *No Longer at Ease* where the author creates a central character whose actions and motives are open-ended and who has a discourse of his own. Significantly, the narrator in this novel is unable to offer a closing definition of the protagonist. Though the setting of the text is the 1950s, a time of transition from colonialism to independence, the author has chosen to deal with an existential problem about the morality of personal choices contrasted with the society's expectations as a method of creating an image of the social order whose interpretation is dialogical. The protagonist is allowed to evaluate events

and happenings around him and offer his judgment. Achebe has utilized techniques that probe the character's consciousness and philosophical side. The rhetorical imperative here is that the writer is dealing with his subject in a dialogical manner where storytelling is a negotiation between the author's consciousness and that of the character.

Achebe's third novel, *Arrow of God* has demonstrated that it is possible to use a synchronic approach in telling a story. This novel is a stylistic move from the previous two novels; the authorial attitude in *Things Fall apart* is monologic, dialogic in *No Longer at Ease* and synchronic in *Arrow of God*. In this novel, Achebe's artistic and philosophical attitude reflects an ambivalent unity of consciousness. He has deliberately chosen a protagonist Ezeulu, who is not only an ideologist but a realist as well. The character sees no contradictious in matters political and cultural but a need to look at the different sides of the emergent truth: like taking different positions to evaluate a mask dancing. Hence he is better equipped to look at both sides of the situation with acceptance. The philosophy is that one has to accept that there are always two sides of a coin and whether one prefers one side does not change the facts. This in itself is an ideological monism arrived at through the acknowledgement of the truth of ambiguity.

Achebe has thus used the technique of amalgamating extreme idealisms into a unity within the character of Ezeulu. In *Things Fall Apart*, societal consciousness as the reference for truth falls apart, in *No longer at Ease* individual consciousness proves unreliable and in *Arrow of God*, cognitive individualization through a conglomerate unified monologic stance becomes the author's point of view.

In a *Man of the People* Achebe adopts a narrator-hero and therefore the author's assignment becomes that of merging an author's intentionality with that of a narrator. Since the text is a satire against the corrupt excesses of post-independence which infected all Africans regardless of class or level of education, the writer has employed strategies that weaken a rhetorical one-sided seriousness on the part of the narrator. It is an attempt to invite the reader into a conversation with the storyteller in order to side-step an interpretive self-righteousness.

Through Odili, the hero/narrator, and Chief Nanga, the politician, the author has adopted a carnival approach to the novel. The rhetorical strategy here is actually the dismantling of hierarchies between the reader and the narrator through a disruption of the distance among characters. The reader is overtly invited into the life of the narrator through the narration of the hero's personal life alongside his political ideas. By so doing Achebe has succeeded in rendering what could have been a bitter polemic into a human story with a socio-political ring.

Achebe's technique of storytelling in his last novel *Anthills of the Savannah* demonstrates an author's attempt to document the history of his country through multiple but equally privileged voices. Neither the author's voice nor that of other character-narrators in the text is overriding. The choice of three storytellers is a significant move in voicing the nature and effects of military power to a whole population. That no single voice is predominant in *Anthills of the Savannah* is instructive. The author has stylistically distributed storytelling authority to several characters and the interpretation procedure in the novel involves all characters regardless of class or intellectual orientation. This technique suggests that it is not the sole responsibility of an elite class or an imperious narrator to tell the story of Africa. The significance of this style in Achebe's art is that

it underlines the reflection that to him the novel is not only a vehicle for storytelling but also a tool for interpretation. The message from a rhetorical perspective is that interpretation is not elitist nor the preserve of the elite.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has been adopted into film and theatre. Studies on the communicative effect of these presentational modes would help in further understanding the nature and effects of the rhetorical strategies in his novels as manifested in audio-visual media. Achebe has also written poems and essays and a study of the rhetorical strategies employed in these writings would add a lot in appreciating the writer's art and its significance to the socio-political and artistic issues he addresses.

I hope that this study has contributed valid insights in favour of the thesis that the meaning of the novels of Chinua Achebe rests not only on their content but also on their craft.

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