

Chinua Achebe's Political Legacy to the African intellectual: A Discourse Analysis of Ikem Osodi's "The Tortoise and the Leopard: A Political Meditation on the Imperative of Struggle." in *Anthills of the Savannah*.

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Abstract

This article analyzes an address to university students in a postcolonial context of socio-political unrest. Delivered by a poet to the emerging generation of intellectuals, this metaphorical discourse intends reaching far enough to effect behavioral change in the immediate audience and beyond. A fictional speaker being an artistic creation of the author, s/he conveys (in a variety of ways) but the latter's feelings, ideas, wishes, and impressions. Thus, as reliable as Ikem Osodi proves, he actually speaks on Chinua Achebe's behalf and advocates intellectuals' revolutionary action for positive social change. Through him, as the present study demonstrates, Chinua Achebe enlists the active participation of university students as literate future political leaders in the implementation of **radicalism as the way and the means to social stability and dignity**.

0. Introduction

The present study looks into an excerpt from Chinua Achebe's last novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, set in the fictional West-African Republic of Kangan with its capital Bassa. This excerpt, running from page 153 to page 161, covers a speech that Ikem Osodi, one of the protagonists in the narrative, delivered to the Bassa University audience, a speech which demonizes him to the authoritarian military regime and ultimately triggers his murder. As revolutionary as Ikem's lecture is, it testifies to the author's political commitment and, therefore, deserves the label 'Achebe's political legacy'.

Extended from a folktale, Ikem's address connects historical culture with postcolonial factuality. Indeed, "The Tortoise and the Leopard" is initially told by an old man from the drought-stricken province of Abazone, and it runs as follows:

Once upon a time the leopard who had been trying for a long time to catch the tortoise finally chanced upon him on a solitary road. *Aha*, he said; *at long last! Prepare to die*. And the tortoise said: *Can I ask one favour before you kill me?* The leopard saw no harm in that and agreed. *Give me a few moments to prepare my mind*, the tortoise said. Again the leopard saw no harm in that and granted it. But instead of standing still as the leopard had expected the tortoise went into a strange action on the road, scratching with hands and feet and throwing sand furiously in all directions. *Why are you doing that?* Asked the puzzled leopard. The tortoise replied: *Because even after I am dead I would want anyone passing by this spot to say, yes, a fellow and his match struggled here.*

Miruka (2003: 22), it is a 'vehicle through which the society passes down its wisdom and commentary to future generations, (with a particular) focus on important facets of lives'.

So, the tale by the old man actually passes down to the youth the universally acknowledged need for the oppressed to **struggle absolutely**, no matter how powerful the oppressor is.

Otherwise retold and commented to Bassa University students by Ikem Osodi, the story metaphorically puts on contextual features of the current socio-political situation, calls for verbal interaction between the story-teller and the audience and, consequently, turns into a **discourse** as Trask (2007: 76) describes the latter. As such, it submits to discourse analysis.

1. Methodology

As a method of text interpretation, Discourse Analysis aims at bringing out meaning as fuelled by the discourse production context. Mucchielli (2006: 96) contends that the initial objective of Discourse Analysis is to determine the psychological attitudes of the discourse producer. The latter assertion fits the best since the present study intends to unveil Achebe's attitude behind his character's words. Brown and Yule (1983: 27) recommend that the discourse analyst take a **pragmatic** approach to the study of language in use and consider the context of discourse occurrence. Furthermore, according to Levinson (1983: 35), Pragmatics associates language functions with language users. Therefore, the ongoing analysis proceeds from context description, through pragmatic assumptions, to discourse meaning.

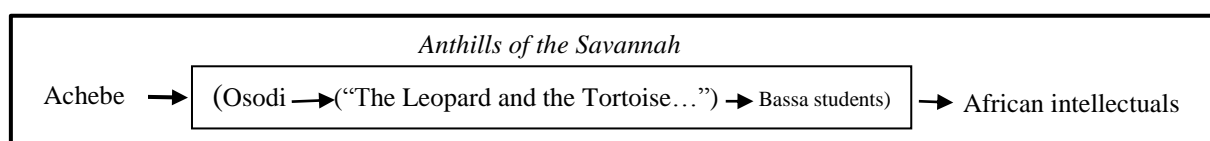
2. Context

A rough description of discourse 'context' refers it to circumstances and physical environment in which verbal communication occurs. Among its contents, Brown and Yule (1983: 27) mention the speaker, the hearer, the place, and the time. Inasmuch as they are decisive in meaning deciphering, they each deserve careful scrutiny.

2.1. Speaker/hearer

It should be noted from the onset that *Anthills of the Savannah* is a polyphonic novel, with a number of characters (including Chris Oriko, Beatrice Okoh, and Ikem Osodi in addition to the heterodiegetic narrator) telling the postcolonial predicament of African people. Guerin and others (1992: 307) say that '... the author of a polyphonic novel does not renounce his or her consciousness but, to an extraordinary extent, broadens, deepens, and rearranges this consciousness... in order to accommodate the consciousness of others...'. Thus, in more concrete terms, through characters interacting verbally or otherwise, the author intends to modify the readers' mind and accommodate it to his or her own.

As for the excerpt under study, two speakers overlap and blend into one. Indeed, upstream, Achebe feels, thinks, conceives ideas, and intends a message for his fellow African intellectuals. Thereafter, he endows Ikem Osodi with the right and the power to deliver this message on his behalf to the Bassa University students so that the African intellectuals they represent get it downstream as ultimate hearers/readers and make it their own. Hence, in line with Adams' (1985: 12) proposal, a pragmatic structure arises with the form and content below:



Above is schematized a communication situation involving Chinua Achebe and African intellectuals standing respectively at the productive and the receptive ends of the communication chain. Within the diegetic world, the two interacting sides are represented by Ikem Osodi and The Bassa University students respectively. Indeed, Ball (2003: 109-10)

describes Ikem Osodi as ‘the character in *Anthills of the Savannah* whose politics and aesthetic beliefs come arguably closest to Achebe’s own.’ In other words, Ikem Osodi qualifies as the writer’s ambassador and spokesman in the story. Furthermore, Achebe himself (1983: 31) blames part of the political problems of Africa on ‘lack of intellectual rigor’. Therefore, University students (these intellectuals still being moulded in the cradle) make the best focal point.

Besides, for Nair, quoted by Morrison (2007: 142), *Anthills of the Savannah* is deeply concerned, among other things, with ‘the role of the intellectuals who are striving to sustain themselves in the face of a profoundly anti-intellectual leadership’ in a context where ‘the gap between the privileged classes and the populace yawns ever wider.’ Thus, with the latter unjust reality weighing heavy in the overall message of the novel, it comes out clear that through Ikem Osodi lecturing to Bassa University students, Achebe is speaking to the African intellectuals, reminding them the role they are expected to play.

The interlocutors identified above share literacy in common but they differ in appreciation of and responses to socio-political occurrences. In fact, most African politicians and their followers praise the postcolonial period as the period of Africa’s regeneration through self-management. But Achebe holds such an opposite view of it that Lindfors (1997: 9) describes him as today’s ‘angry reformer crusading against the immorality and injustices of the African present.’ As a committed writer, Achebe has, indeed, voiced his disagreement with postcolonial African political leaders over the issue of governance. As though to confirm this attitude of the writer, Diwedi (2008: 2) describes Achebe’s fiction as carrying with it some ‘sense of increasing disgust’ for the African (political) environment. As for the African intellectuals facing postcolonial problems, Achebe (1983: 23 – 24) blames them for inactivity as can be read below:

Nigeria has many thoughtful men and women of conscience, a large number of talented people. Why is it then that all these patriots make so little impact on the life of our nation? Why is it that our corruption, gross iniquities, our noisy vulgarity, our selfishness, our ineptitude, seem so much stronger than the good influences at work in our society? Why do the good among us seem so helpless while the worst are full of vile energy?

Reminiscent of the Irish poet, William Butler Yeats, the questionings above attest to Achebe’s worries about the Nigerian intellectuals’ inaction facing the various social blights which affect their country. Yet, he personally trusts much in “Nri philosophy (which) implores intellectuals to transform themselves into ‘warriors of peace’ during periods of crisis, with proclivity for action over rhetoric” (Achebe 2012: 109). Thus, the intellectuals’ inaction puzzles, as it were, Chinua Achebe in his personal convictions about and expectations from them.

Elsewhere, in his analysis of the African socio-political problems raised by Chinua Achebe’s fiction in general, Katufya (2020: 3) extends them to all Africa south of the Sahara. Therefore, Achebe’s political legacy may be viewed as targeting not only his fellow-Nigerian intellectuals but all African intellectuals. With the interlocutors identified at both the productive and the receptive ends of the communication chain, time and space need a look, in their turn.

2.2 Time/ space

Substantial to the description of context, time and space mingle and interweave so tightly that neither of them can do without the other in the occurrence and the study of events.

They ultimately refer to the locale, with every social occurrence that modifies it for better or for worse. *Anthills of the Savannah* is, in fact, set in Kangan, a fictional West-African republic whose political problems and debates are described by Inness (1992: 152) as close not only to those of Cameroon, Nigeria, and Ghana, as the name phonically suggests, but also to those of other African states. Those problems and debates are but social occurrences which modify the Kangan space in such a way as to make it worse and worse. For, space, as Leeuwen (2008: 88) sees it, is ‘an objective order, existing separately from, and prior to, human action.’ So, carried out otherwise, still human action under resonant political leadership can positively transform space.

The period of time is, of course, the postcolonial one. Considering time in connection with discourse, Leeuwen (2008: 75) quotes Norbert Elias saying that it is a ‘product of timing, the activity of measuring one kind of activity or event sequence against another kind of activity or event sequence.’ On further explanation, he asserts that time ‘relates to each other the positions of events in the successive order of two or more change continuums.’ In other words, time accounts for the succession of events as they lead to a situation planned by some human action. Thus, it appears that the continuums under consideration here include the unhappy ones that make the political changes from the colonial through the civilian to the military postcolonial rules all unsatisfactory.

A look at contemporary African History informs that in most Sub-Saharan African states, the postcolonial period is riddled through with socio-political unrest resulting first from the political amateurism of the civilian rulers who took over from the white colonizer, and secondly from the authoritarianism of the soldiers who overthrew the civilians in the pretence of order restoring. Paradoxically, the latter sets off a new nightmarish era, with the major protagonist turned into an ‘incompetent savior’, as Okechukwu (2001: 123) qualifies him, trampling upon all the basic rights of his people. Frustrated, everyone wishes the military revolution came to an end and gave way to a different political dispensation.

Anthills of the Savannah, the seat of “The Leopard and the Tortoise”, briefly alludes to the civilian rule but enlarges more on the military one which came as a revolution against the former. In its initial account by the old man from Abazone, the story stages the powerful leopard preparing to kill the weak and innocent tortoise. The latter accepts to die but of **stoic** death, making room for the future generations to later acknowledge it as such. Transferring the case to that of his impoverished people and their powerful rulers, the old man concludes: ‘My people, that is all we are doing now. Struggling. Perhaps to no purpose except that those who come after us will be able to say: *True, our fathers were defeated but they tried*’ (*Anthills* 128). In this way, the story-teller recognizes the oppressed people’s weakness facing the all-powerful and oppressive rulers.

The present analysis extends this case to Ikem Osodi recounting the same story to the students of Bassa University in the authoritarian political dispensation of post-coup Kangan and, further away from fiction, to Chinua Achebe in conversation with African intellectuals. Because conversation amounts to verbal interaction, it brings these participants into a situation of communication where a common background knowledge is needed for mutual understanding between them and, as a matter of fact, some pragmatic assumptions for a fuller interpretation of their discourse.

3. Pragmatic assumptions

Pragmatic assumptions refer to basic notions functioning as tools of a pragmatic interpretation of discourse. Among them, both Levinson (1983) and Huang (2007) mention

deixis, presupposition, implicature, inference, reference, and speech acts. However, for the purpose at hand, the present analysis retains but presupposition and implicature.

3.1. Pragmatic presuppositions

Etymology would fairly identify presupposition with knowledge (about some specific matter) which is commonly shared by both speaker and hearer and which is prior to their verbal interaction. In the framework of Discourse Analysis, however, Brown and Yule (1983: 29) recommend the use of ‘pragmatic presupposition’, which they define as a set of assumptions the speaker holds as unchallengeably accepted by the hearer in the course of their conversation.

“The Tortoise and the Leopard” is told at the moment when the suspectedly rebellious Province of Abazone insistently demands assistance from the suspicious central government in Bassa. Beyond the surface words of the story, sounds an urge for the powerless people to fight stoically on. Retold and commented at Bassa University, the story eulogizes the recommended fight and turns the initial urge into a direct call for a second revolution against the first one that yielded military dictatorship. This gestational counter-revolution at the center of the discursive interaction between Chinua Achebe and the African intellectuals rests on a number of presuppositions which, pragmatically speaking, blame all members of society for passivity and lack of right performance in the task of nation building and development. Chief among them are inequality of social classes, difficulty of sincere dialogue, paramountcy of speech freedom, and mysterious power of the weak or the trickster. Below reads a description of them as facts that the speaker holds as undoubtedly known to the conscious life of his audience.

3.1.1. Inequality of social classes

Rulers and people naturally belong to different social classes. Within any social space, Bourdieu, quoted by Bonnewitz (2002: 42), notes a hierarchical organization based on an unequal distribution of **capital**. Bourdieu himself (2002: 53-58) describes capital, in its various forms, as providing an individual with esteem, honor and recognition from others, and granting him/her a **dominant position** in society.

The speech under study here clearly sets the dominant ruling class behind the leopard, with all its speed to catch up a prey and all its strength to crush it. Opposite are the dominated people behind the tortoise, with its idle nature which makes it easy to catch and take or shove off. Looking at such possibility, Lynn (2017: 67) attests, ‘Against the larger, deadlier leopard, ..., the tortoise is vulnerable, which confers him an underdog status.’ Thus, the setting presupposes that the dominant ruling class overuse their power to bully and repress the powerless masses.

It is widespread conviction that freedom from oppression must be first undertaken and fought for by the oppressed themselves. As Bassa students, or African intellectuals, list peasants, workers, market women among the proletariat, they reveal to Ikem, or Achebe, their awareness of economically antipodal classes in their country, with the rich and ruthless governors on one side and the poor oppressed governed on the other. Involved in such a situation, they feel, like the rest of the poor class, the necessity for change. One of the ways to positive change is negotiation which, in the present case, does not work smoothly as it is shown next.

3.1.2. Difficulty of sincere dialogue

The situation described above indirectly shows a gulf between the rulers and the ruled, a gulf which, in a clear-cut way, separates the rich and powerful from the poor and weak. The former, as Lynn (2017: 16) asserts, ruthlessly wields political power, with no regards whatsoever to the latter's essential needs. Thus, with man's natural aspiration to more capital and easier life, it appears that the two categories hold one another in suspicion and they are not in good terms though they have to evolve together.

To unravel social injustice as the bone of contention, action by the unprivileged is needed, primarily and preferably in the verbal rather than in the muscular form. The former implies dialogue, the latter physical struggle or, in the extremity, mass revolt. Dialogue, as Achebe (1988: 16) insists, 'requires two people and cannot be replaced by even the most brilliant monologue.' The ruthlessness of Kangan's rulers surely makes no room for any dialogue between them and the masses. Therefore, only one way to social justice remains open to people: physical struggle, with virtual culmination into mass revolt.

3.1.3. Paramountcy of speech freedom

In its international recognition, speech freedom implies that any member of society has the right to speak out his/her mind without interference. Whether people choose the verbal or the muscular form to claim for social justice, speech always accompanies their action. However, Keyinde (2008: 4) notes, 'In Nigeria, like in many other countries of the world, freedom of expression and the press/writer is an exception rather than a rule.' The idea alludes to a society where people are free to say everything as long as it pleases and praises the ruling class, a society where criticism against the government is banned altogether.

In the expectation of the Bassa students attending Ikem's lecture, a writer as story teller cannot at all be denied the floor. Their response below, in connection with the current condition of the first teller of the "The Leopard and the Tortoise", confirms:

'That story was told me by an old man. As I stand before you now that old man who told me that incredible story is being held in solitary confinement at the Bassa Maximum Security Prison.'

No! why! Opposed! Impossible! And other sounds of shock and anger flew like sparks and filled the air of the auditorium.

(Anthills 153)

The excerpt above winds down to the audience's astonishment at the arrest of a storyteller. Such a response testifies to the students' basic conviction that a storyteller should by no means be put under arrest. This conviction qualifies as a presupposition that storytelling, as including speaking one's own mind, deserves maximum freedom. Any voice that would tend to inhibit freedom of speech should face resistance.

3.1.4. Mysterious power of the trickster

A trickster challenges and deceives authority. African mythology and traditional folklore use a variety of tricksters under the form of small animals: the spider, the tortoise, the cat, the hare, etc. Common to them is an idle being which mysteriously contrasts with brilliant achievements in terms of resolution of conflicts with the stronger or the more powerful. As they adopt these tricksters, modern African writers either make them characters or they endow their human characters with the tricksters' ability and savoir-faire. Indeed, speaking about tricksters in modern African literature, Ojaide (1992: 51) confirms, "Animals ... are not just

animals but human representations, so are characters modeled on them representatives.” In the same vein of thought, Dathorne (1974: 28) sees in trickster stories a personification of certain qualities, attitudes, and ideas rather than an actual description of animals. So, whatever animal the story features, an equivalence avails between the animal’s psychological characteristics and the human ones.

The ongoing analysis has already identified the leopard and the tortoise as the ruthless rulers and the oppressed people respectively. Much of the latter’s action targets freedom from oppression. Thus, even the ‘strange action’ into which ‘the tortoise engages’ facing the leopard amounts to claiming for self-assertion and liberty. Lynn (2017: 68) confirms, “Playing with dirt, engaging in all manner of socially proscribed activities... discloses the character’s longing for physical and psychological freedom.” This allows for action to be taken, in whatever way, against oppression by even the more powerful than oneself. It should be noted, however, that action, especially collective action, always needs a leader to give it positive orientation. That leader, in turn, needs the right psychological stamina to properly influence the group and involve them into the action.

Oral traditional folklore makes part and parcel of African culture. The background knowledge of any person with African cultural breed includes morals and recommendations of oral tradition. Therefore, the trickster’s physical negligibility as contrasted with its brilliant performances is not new information to Bassa students, nor does it surprise them anyhow. Its narration by Ikem serves the purpose of first recalling and second encouraging the audience to believe in the possibility for the weaker to defeat the stronger.

Summed up, the presuppositions above recall a social situation in which, more than before, the masses are made **aware of** and **fed up with** their dominated social position. Appropriate means, ranging from dialogue to mass revolt, are, therefore, needed to shade the yoke of oppression by the selfish political rulers. For the latter purpose, sound leadership, coupled with collective and coordinate action, would yield positive result despite the masses’ weakness and overt lack of capital. In some way, the presuppositions above amount to all the wrong that people are aware of. This wrong requires solutions which the implicatures below present in the form of recommendations by Ikem Osodi to Bassa University students or, better, by Chinua Achebe to African intellectuals.

3.2. Interpretive implicatures

Though purely and technically pragmatic, the concept ‘implicature’ facially relates to ‘implication’. Brown and Yule (1983: 31) pose it as ‘accounting for what the speaker can imply, suggest, or mean, as distinct from what the speaker literally says.’ Indeed, a combination of words in a chunk of discourse may mean far more than the combination of the primary semantic values of the words making up the speech. Inasmuch as this secondary meaning depends on context and all the presuppositions around it, it roughly corresponds to an implicature and it calls for some response.

In the light of the presuppositions discussed earlier above, Ikem’s rendering of “The Tortoise and the Leopard” as a discourse opens to a set of interpretive implicatures which ultimately uncover Chinua Achebe’s political legacy to the African intellectuals. In line with the presuppositions, these implicatures, or hearer’s/ reader’s interpretations as Brown and Yule (1983: 33) otherwise describe them, turn around and respond to the very four points raised as pragmatic presuppositions.

It should be reminded, at this juncture of the analysis, that Chinua Achebe generally shows himself disappointed by the impact of African intellectuals’ action on the life of their

respective nations. Yet, he still relies on them for the improvement of social life. The recommendations Ikem Osodi makes to Bassa University students **implicate** Achebe's own convictions as to the salutary roles to be played by the African intellectual in the building of Africa's welfare. Summed up in "*I think I should take advantage of this forum to propound the **new radicalism** which I believe we should embrace.*" (Anthills 158), these implicatures involve a code of socio-psychological conduct which Achebe wishes the intellectuals adopted with the view to implementing his new radicalism. That code recommends the following: productivity, audience-floor extension, meritocracy, and mass struggle. Below reads the explanation of each of them as an implicature from Ikem's/Achebe's discourse.

3.2.1. Productivity

The most striking and real characteristic of the victims of class inequality transpires through poverty or inconsistency of economic capital. Ikem's address points to peasants as the most deprived of economic capital which abounds scandalously in the hands of workers and civil servants. In actual fact, the latter produce nothing as compared to peasants; yet they lead an easy and luxurious life as can be read below:

When your fat civil servants and urban employees of public corporations march on May Day wearing ridiculously undersize T-shirts and school boy caps ... hardly do they realize that in the real context of Africa today they are not the party of the oppressed but of the oppressor ... For they are the very comrades who preside over the sabotage of the nation by their unproductivity and fraud, and that way ensure that the benefits of modern life will ever remain outside the dreams of the real victims of exploitation in rural villages. (Anthills 159)

The words above testify to the speaker's derision of the civil service and all the bureaucracy at the top of society. He blames it for budgetary excesses which further deepens social inequality in favour of the mass exploiters who, in addition, deflect the nation's income. Below runs an illustration:

Let's take the Electricity Corporation of Kangan as one example out of many. What do we see? Chaotic billing procedures deliberately done to cover their massive fraud, illegal connections carried out or condoned by their own staff; theft of meters and a host of other petty and serious crimes including, if you please, the readiness at the end of the day to burn down the entire Account and Audit Departments if an inquiry should ever be mooted... To blame all these on imperialism and international capitalism as our modish radicals want us to do is, in my view, sheer cant and humbug... it is like going out to arrest the village blacksmith every time a man hacks his fellow to death... (Anthills 159)

Above reads Chinua Achebe's threefold stance. First, he blames most economic crimes on workers of public corporations embezzling on public funds. Thus, they actively contribute to further economic impoverishment of both the country as a whole and the lower class of productive people in particular. Second, he prompts his audience to dismiss altogether the idea that holds the Western world responsible for Africa's poverty. Last and conclusively, Achebe indirectly bans the masses' reliance on rescuers other than themselves. Therefore, they need sound organization for the purpose of attuning national consummation to the height of their productivity.

As a first step towards the implementation of his new radicalism, Chinua Achebe, through Ikem Osodi speaking to Bassa University students, advises the African intellectuals to act in such a way as to level down the excessive bureaucracy which amounts to

unproductivity and which breeds parasites. In clearer terms, Achebe wishes the African intellectuals would put into place a new political leadership which grants more capital to the true working class than it currently does to the unproductive bureaucratic social class.

3.2.2. Audience-floor extension

The audience-floor relationship allows for members within a social group to speak to and to listen to each other. However, modern societies with parliamentary systems endow spokespersons with the power to speak and even think on behalf of an entire group. Thus, a teacher or a lawyer could rightly speak on behalf of peasants or merchants, sometimes without really grasping the extent of the problem they are facing. Through Ikem's demonstration below, Achebe (1987:156) exemplifies this unjust type of representation:

‘... Will peasants in this hall please stand.’

There was... laughter from all corners of the auditorium, especially when another three-piece-suited gentleman got up and offered himself.

‘No, you are not a peasant my good friend. Sit down. I want a proper peasant ... Well, ladies and gentlemen it does appear we have no peasants here tonight. Perhaps they don't even know we are having this meeting ... I m told ... that there is something called a proxy form which you send nominating somebody else to stand in for you when you cannot yourself be present. Is there anybody here carrying such a document on behalf of peasants? Mr Chairman, was any proxy form delivered to you?’ ...

‘Very well. I think we should leave peasants out of the discussion. They are not here and have sent no one to speak on their behalf...

‘Market women, my dear girl, are in the same category as peasants. They are not here either...

The speech above ultimately brings into question the representation system whereby an individual would speak on behalf of a social category to which s/he does not actually belong. It suggests, instead, that social categories speak each for itself about its own concerns and that others in due time listen with equal attention. However, to harmonize dissonant views, spokespersons should arise but from within each social category.

The emergence of such society as described above would definitely perfect communication, with the floor ordinally given to every social class for a **consistent** presentation of its **real** problems. In this way, dialogue between classes would be established.

3.2.3. Meritocracy

Meritocracy amounts to ruling or holding a position by merit. Thus, the concept stands against the attribution of command roles in the light of ethnic, religious, or whatever breed. Speaking about meritocracy, Achebe (2012: 78) contends that ‘whenever merit is set aside by prejudice of whatever origin, individual citizens as well as the nation itself are victimized.’ Indeed, the discourse under analysis presents Kangan or African people as **victims** of some economic, social, and political injustice due partly to meritocracy being trodden on by widespread prejudice which involves even the intellectuals. Thus, behind Ikem to Bassa students, he speaks to the African intellectuals in the following terms:

... students are in my humble opinion the cream of parasites ... Perhaps someone can show me one single issue in this country in which students as a class have risen above the low, very low, national level. Tribalism? Religious extremism? Even electoral merchandising. Do you not buy and sell votes, intimidate and kidnap your opponents just as the politicians used to do? ... Are you, as you should be, more competent than those of our countrymen and women not nearly as lucky as yourselves ...? Do you not form tribal pressure groups to secure lower admission requirements instead of striving to equal or excel any student from anywhere? Yes, you prefer academic tariff walls behind which you can potter around in mediocrity ...

Now, don't misunderstand me. I have no desire to belittle your role in putting this nation finally on the road to self-redemption. But you cannot do that unless you first set about to purge yourselves, to clean up your act. You must learn for a start to hold your own student leaders to responsible performance; only after you have done that can you have the moral authority to lecture the national leadership. You must develop the habit of scepticism, not swallow every piece of superstition you are told by witch doctors and professors. I see too much parroting, too much regurgitating of half-digested radical rhetoric ... When you have rid yourselves of these things your potentiality for assisting and directing this nation will be quadrupled. (Anthills 160 - 61)

Hereabove, not only does Achebe **blame** the African intellectuals for their involvement in and active participation to the promotion of the sectarian behaviour which crushes meritocracy in favour of mediocrity but also, he **recommends** them quick distancing from it. In fact, the first paragraph of the excerpt points to the similarity between the laymen's and the intellectuals' approbatory attitudes towards social blights which impede nation-building. The second one, however, shows hope for correction. Indeed, it invites intellectuals to call into play their ability to understand critical situations, readjust, and guide his fellow-citizens into a new situation which contents everyone. In D'Souza's (2008: 26-28) terms, Achebe encourages the intellectuals to become leaders of their societies. He further warns them against blind application of theories and slavish imitation of past or exotic experience. He wishes the emergence of an intellectual leadership which unites people's categories in fair connection with circumstances as Sample (2005: 13) describes successful leadership. In short, Chinua Achebe advocates intellectual rigour in both the appreciation of society members and the attribution of social roles so that the right person should be in the right place.

3.2.4. Mass struggle

With a just society built upon meritocracy and an intellectual leadership dragging the masses into the right direction, a collective action like mass struggle can optimistically be envisioned and implemented in due time. "The Tortoise and the Leopard" primarily features the deprived weak under the oppression of the wealthy strong. The only liberation tool available to the former remains the struggle against the latter. Fighting, yet, requires a variety of resources to come over the opponent. Obiechina (1975: 107) alerts that 'Tortoise the trickster is consistently a person who lives by his wits, Leopard is always projected as a bully.' Thus, it follows that the masses' weakness finds compensation in wit. The latter enables them to face the strong ruler, deceive him into erroneous stance, and ultimately defeat him.

In a context of oppression, mass struggle always enlists the use of physical force which entails some form of violence, enhanced by anger. As seen by Adichie (2014: 21), 'anger has a long history of bringing about positive change.' Its contribution can, therefore, be enlisted. With all the means of national defence at his disposal, the strong ruler can and often

does reverse the course of violence to neutralize the masses. However, Achebe (1988: 37) attests that ‘... when a president pursues a terrorist the two become quite indistinguishable!’ In other words, the confused time of violent mass revolt grants equal chances of victory to both the oppressor and the oppressed. Furthermore, Achebe (1983: 50) recalls that ‘Leaders are, in the language of psychologists, role models. People look up to them and copy their actions, behaviour and even mannerisms.’ Therefore, as it logically follows, Achebe encourages the African intellectual not to fear but to face the oppressive rule, relying on both their wit and their ability to influence the masses positively.

4. Conclusion

The foregoing has screened Ikem Osodi’s address to Bassa University students as related in Chinua Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah*. Substituting the former for the author himself and the latter for the African intellectuals, the endeavour has been to highlight, by means of Discourse Analysis, Achebe’s ideological legacy to the African intellectuals as far as postcolonial politics is concerned. The analysis has considered the social, economic, and political unrest under military dictatorship which spares no one and, therefore, calls for revolution. Through Ikem speaking to students, Achebe assigns the implementation of this revolution to intellectuals. For that purpose, as he suggests, the African intellectual must play an active part in national politics, make himself a fearless and influential **leader** of the masses, and face the oppressor by all means available to them. Gikandi (1991: 125) construes that with *Anthills of the Savannah*, ‘Achebe is also calling attention for his readers to look beyond the narrated events, which are grim and pessimistic, toward the future of renewal and rebirth...’. Indeed, through Ikem’s speech, Chinua Achebe bets for an intellectually influential leadership to radically change the political culture on the continent and conduct African people out of the current socio-political quagmire into a more respectable situation.

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