



*Journal of Advances and
Scholarly Researches in
Allied Education*

*Vol. IX, Issue No. XVII,
Jan-2015, ISSN 2230-7540*

**AN ANALYSIS ON CHINUA ACHEBE'S ANTHILLS
OF THE SAVANNAH: THE IDEA OF POLITICS,
POWER AND BETRAYAL**

AN
INTERNATIONALLY
INDEXED PEER
REVIEWED &
REFEREED JOURNAL

An Analysis on Chinua Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah: The Idea of Politics, Power and Betrayal

Omer Sultan Sayad¹ Dr. Bilal Ahmad Dar²

¹Research Scholar, Singhan University, Rajasthan

²Assistant Professor

Abstract – This paper examines the formation patterns and functions of names in Chinua Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah, motivated by the scanty scholarly studies on names in the text. All the personal names in the text are studied and analysed, using insights from contextual models. The paper identifies four types of names in Anthills: official names, first names, nicknames and institutional/titular names. It also picks out three dimensions of these names: branching, non-branching and active-mentioned, which are associated with the types. It shows that the names have structural and formation patterns such as + title prefixing, +first name, +surname, indigenous language form, coinage, abbronymy, clipping, qualification and full form representation. It also demonstrates that the names play contextual and ideological roles such as being interactional tools, address terms, weapons of criticisms and vision projectors. The paper concludes that names in Anthills are carefully chosen to serve particular thematic and stylistic purposes.

-----X-----

INTRODUCTION

After a twenty-one-year hiatus from writing, Chinua Achebe published *Anthills of the Savannah* in Great Britain in 1987. It was published in the United States the following year. The novel just prior to *Anthills of the Savannah* was *A Man of the People*, a book that foreshadows the military coups that would figure largely in Nigerian politics in the coming years. To many of Achebe's readers, *Anthills of the Savannah* is the logical extension of this novel as it depicts the inner workings and consequences of such a coup.

Critical reception was overwhelmingly positive, and many critics regard this novel as Achebe's best to date. Achebe was already respected as one of the founding fathers of Nigeria's literary coming-of-age, so the success of *Anthills of the Savannah* only confirmed his place among Nigeria's leading intellectuals. In 1987 *Anthills of the Savannah* was a finalist for the Booker Prize, Britain's most prestigious literary award.

Anthills of the Savannah recounts the story of three classmates who get to be real figures in another administration in the anecdotal West African place where there is Kangan. Achebe addresses the course unbridled power regularly takes and shows how the wild quest for self-interest comes at colossal expense to the community all in all. Pundits note that this novel

is a takeoff for the creator in that he makes completely created female characters and proposes that the ladies are wellsprings of good quality, custom, and trust even with savagery and double dealing.

An investigation of names in *Anthills*, apart from ending the hush on the onomastic assets on the content, will loan a superior comprehension of the content, as scholarly names more often than not have close relationship with the topical distraction and vision of a creator. This work, accordingly, embarks to inspect how relevant contemplations, including topic and belief system, impact the decision of names and the utilization of these names in *Anthills*. Every one of the names in the content are chosen and examined, utilizing bits of knowledge from relevant models. Concentrate every one of the names and not just those of the characters in the novel is educated by the need to move past existing ways to deal with the investigation of names in Achebe's novels, and the way that all names in *Anthills* are elaborately and, in some cases, ideologically roused. Obviously, this last point requires the present examination.

Anthills of the Savannah is a story that depends on a political climate of awful authority and heartless fascism. It is a story that harps on the presentation of adoration, kinship, and treachery. It recounts the story of three classmates who get to be significant

figures in another military administration in the anecdotal West African State of Kagan. The different clashes in this novel spin around the essential clash between people with great influence and those with less or little power; and how every utilizations or manhandle the force he has.

The story starts with a meeting of the bureau of the military government. In the interim, a designation from Abazon made an exhibition to ask the president to buy and by visit them and witness the draft in their locale. Despite the fact that they are companions, the president (Sam) associates Chris (the chief with data) and Ikem (supervisor of the national paper) for sorting out the showing. Along these lines, he requested his men to take after each stride that these two people made. Ikem was suspended from his position of editorial manager of the national periodical since he was found on a supper party sorted out by the Abazon appointment. After his suspension, the understudy union of the University of Bssa welcomed Ikem to make a discourse on their meeting. Here he conveyed an address that is viewed as ruinous by the administration. Due to this Ikem was kidnapped from his home and killed by the military officers. Chris left his home dreading for his own security. In his fort, Chris began to reach remote journalists and uncovered the way that Ikem is fiercely killed by the military government. This is the point that the administration started to search for Chris. Chris turned into an outlaw and started his adventure toward the north of the nation, Abazon, by transport. At the point when the transport stretched around Abazon after many police checkpoints, a gathering of solidiers who are drinking brew obstructed the street. It is from these troopers that Chris found out about the overthrow that brought about kidnapping the president.

ANALYZING POWER

It is precisely the moralistic view of authority presented to us by some political philosophers that Machiavelli criticizes at length in his best-known treatise, *The Prince*. Machiavelli's *The Prince* provides a detailed analysis of a successful political strategy. In it, he concentrates on those techniques a successful politician must use - without any regard to the moral justification of the means employed - if he is to achieve his political ends. Often criticized by detractors for its lack of moral tone, nevertheless, it is a work of great intellectual integrity and consistency.

Machiavelli considers how best a leader can achieve his ends once he has determined that the ends he has identified are worthwhile, that is, 'the ends justify the means.'³ The book is almost entirely practical, and hardly speculates on the rightness or wrongness of the methods that foreshadow them. It does not contain certain theses about which political ends are good. To him there are only three things that are of great importance in political sphere; they are national security, national independence and a strong constitution. His view is that if one is to be successful,

one must pursue one's convictions not only with strength and courage but with adequate means. At any rate, Machiavelli presents a pragmatic and somewhat consequentialist view of politics, whereby good and evil are mere means used to bring about an end which is to secure a powerful state.

MACHIAVELLI AND ACHEBE

In the works of Achebe and Machiavelli we can see some striking resemblance in factors like power, trust, and promise. Machiavellian political views here related much to Achebe's view. Achebe tries to expose a political environment where the leader seizes the power and does whatever he wants with it. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli considers how best a leader can achieve his ends once he has determined that the ends he has identified are worthwhile. This was the same attitude Sam, the military head of state, displayed in the *Anthills of the Savannah*; seeing that his childhood friends would stand between him and his political ambition, he worked towards eliminating them.

Power - For Machiavelli, power characteristically defines political activity, and hence it is necessary for any successful ruler to know how power is to be used. Only by means of the proper application of power, Machiavelli believes, can individuals be brought to obey and will the ruler be able to maintain the state in safety and security⁴. This was displayed in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* by Sam the head of state when he was in the meeting with his ministers where he tried to show them that he was still a military man not a civilian.

Trust - Another striking quality we will find in both views is trust. When Machiavelli was describing how a leader should appear concerning cruelty and clemency; he said, ".....a prince must be slow to believe and to act, and must watch so that he does not come to fear his own shadow; but proceed in a temperate manner with prudence and humanity, so that too much confidence may not make him incautious and too much distrust render him intolerable."

This same quality of trust was exhibited by Sam in the *Anthills of the Savannah*, when he sought for the truth from the Attorney General, on whether or not his friends were for him. He did this because he trusted nobody, not even his friends, when it comes to the affairs of the state. Also in his discussion with Professor Okong, Sam made it clear to him that he works with facts and not gossips.⁸

Promise - Machiavelli notes that a prince is praised for keeping his word. However, he also notes that a prince is also praised for the illusion of being reliable in keeping his word. A prince, therefore, should only keep his word when it suits his purposes, but do his utmost to maintain the illusion that he does keep his word and that he is reliable in that regard. Therefore, a prince should not break his word unnecessarily. As

Machiavelli notes, "He should appear to be compassionate, faithful to his word, guileless, and devout. And indeed he should be so. But his disposition should be such that, if he needs to be the opposite, he knows how."

POWER PLAY AND GENDERED SPACE IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH

The setting of *Anthills of the Savannah* is Kangan, an imaginary country in West Africa, where Sam, a Sandhurst-trained military officer – also known as His Excellency, has taken the rein of power by coup d'état.

There is a distancing of authorial voice via the use of varied narrative channels, multiple point-of-views; while at the same instance, Achebe orchestrates his social vision for postcolonial Nigeria, which is in the throes of prebendal pillage and misguided leadership. The national tragedy – considered as the gist of this fictive work is principally relayed by three friends: Ikem, Chris and Beatrice.

The portraiture of Sam depicts him as a military dictator and inept leader, who relies on brute force, hegemony and violence to consolidate his leadership and power base. Also, he considers the state machinery as a private estate – that ought to be used for the institutionalisation of mediocrity, private interest and above all materialist pursuits. The atmosphere in the novel invokes political buccaneering and crude use of force characteristic of the Third Reich. Hitler, the Fuehrer consolidated his power base by enforcing loyalty and subordination via clobbering his apparatchiks to submission in order to ensure perpetuity and clout.

Hitler's propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, who is known for dissemination of half-truths, cants and warped ideas, parallels Prof. Okong in the novel; while the portrayal of Johnson Ossai, Sam's hatchet man and the belligerent Director of the State Research Council in the novel, mirrors Heinrich Himmler, the Nazi chief of Gestapo (Secret Police). Sam (His Excellency) and his foot soldiers - his henchmen - constitute the cabal that tramples the nation under foot. Wole Soyinka in his *Season of Anomy* sees this clique that furthers violence, class attrition and materialist hegemony as "alliance of the purse and the gun". But in contradistinction to the world-view of these powerprofiteers, are Ikem Osodi, Chris Okong and Beatrice Nwanyibuife.

These characters are depicted by Achebe as sheer foil to His Excellency's persona as well as his coteries'. We shall return to them presently. The cultural materialist resource and source for oppression of women are lodged in power struggle and ideology. And central to power struggle is the cultural scaffold at

work in a particular social space. In their provocative work, *Conflict across Cultures*, LeBaron and Pillay, have indicated that "Culture and conflict constantly shape and reshape each other in an evolving interactive process". The corollary of the interface between culture and class struggle is how to acquire power for the dominance as well as possible oppression of other classes in society.

Of note, in this study, there are basically two classes or worlds: the man's world and the woman's world. This Manichean nature of power relations finds testimony in fierce, unabated power play in gendered social space. The attempts to curb the political, social, cultural and economic scrapes engendered by patriarchal arrangement and to liberate women from this mould of practice have given rise to feminist ideology and aesthetics in Nigeria and the world over. It is under this rubric that *Anthills of the Savannah* is significant. In apprehending the essence of this study, it is appropriate to know that ideology is imperative in deconstructing the edifice of patriarchal framework that supports the oppression of women. In this regard, Udumukwu adroitly describes the historicity of feminist deconstruction of patriarchy: "...feminism... is animated by a desire to reconstruct history in order to reconstitute the woman as subjects. This implies that women are presented or represented not as a mere object of history, put at the margin".

INTERTEXTUALITY AND THE TRUTH OF ACHEBE'S FICTION

The concept of intertextuality was born following poststructuralist theorising about envisioning the death of author-centered criticism, which limited the gamut of apprehending wide-ranging, disparate meanings and multidimensionality of textual interpretations. Intertextuality de-emphasises the space of discursive evanescence thereby providing a bulwark for inclusivity and heterogeneity of textual relations for diachronic textual interpretation. This process is opposed to Ferdinand de Saussure's synchronic method of assessing texts, which is not historical in reach. Thus, the author was killed in Roland Barthes' ambitious essay, "The Death of the Author" (1967).

Intertextuality ensconces that no text is an island. In maintaining that there is no isolated text, rather every text is derived from a pool of textual relations, intertextuality reverses the structuralist contention that a text can only be influenced by its antecedents and has no destination. Therefore, in the poststructuralist schema, older text can be filtered through later texts – thereby foregrounding the endless stream of interconnectivity of textual tissues, cultures, ideologies and mores, among others. Also, Barthes' contention in his avant-garde essay was to annihilate interpretive tyranny, which consigned

omniscience to the author; this is in line with Erich Auerbach's idea of narrative tyranny in relation to author-centered textual interpretation, a departure from the Barthesian concept.

The present canonised field of study, intertextuality, has Julia Kristeva as its intellectual high priest. Kristeva borrowed a lot from the famous Derridean philosophy, neo-Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, and appropriated these theories for her conceptualisation of intertextuality. Also, Kristeva's radical critical tool had a prehistoric indebtedness to Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist semiotics and Bakhtin's idea of dialogism. In Bakhtin's concept of dialogism or dialogicity, a word (in text or language) is no longer a construal of fixed meaning, rather a concourse of textual networks and surfaces. Thus, "any text is a new tissue of past citations". Intertextuality as Julia Kristeva's brain-child was conceptualized in 1966, during the march from structuralism to poststructuralism – in order to curb the power of the author, who assumed the authority of a closed sign-system, dictating how text could be read or understood. This approach was a prelude to Deconstruction, which takes textual interpretation from multi-faceted perspectives.

In theorising intertextuality, Kristeva maintains that every text is constituted "by a mosaic of citations, every text is absorption and transformation of another text". Like Kristeva, Terry Eagleton opines that every literary work is essentially "re-written" (1983). In re-writing literary works as Eagleton indicates, each text directly or indirectly makes reference to other texts, this is what Peter Barry sees as "a major degree of reference between one text and another".

The relationship amongst texts and the dialogue such texts address brings to the fore the ideological coloration of a particular epoch or time. In instantiating this, the corpus of colonial fiction passes through a filter: the texts produced during this time, highlight imperial rule and its concomitants. Same goes for anti-colonial fiction, which gibbets imperialist incursion. Therefore, every text or literary work is derived from the ideological or politico-social realities of a particular time in the history of a people.

The truth of Achebe's fiction fundamentally lies in its capacity to mirror diverse perspectives and narratological patterns as indicated by other writers in relation to the same subject matter that he articulates in his earlier fiction. Essentially, in his political fiction, there is a distillation of Achebe's preoccupation to address one major concern: the political impasse and power usurpation in postcolonial Nigeria. This method of artistic representation is akin to the West Indian postcolonial literary experimentation on "mosaic" of sources, which Henry-Louis Gates calls "tropological revision". This is in relation to postcolonial Nigerian literature that is given to alluding diverse narrative patterns that coalesce to paint a similar and familiar picture characterising Nigeria's postcolonial condition.

In the Gatesian locution, this thesis is considered as "the manner in which a specific trope is repeated with differences, between two or more texts".

CONCLUSION

The main thrust of this investigation is to demonstrate that the concept of intertextuality is pertinent to apprehending the hallmark of Achebe's fiction, particularly *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). Thus, art does not exist in a vacuum; his fiction is a response to lived experience in postcolonial Nigeria. Thus, the truth that Achebe's fiction refracts is social facts located within an identifiable, pragmatic social space. Also, it has been proven that the issues which Achebe's fiction addresses are equally a continuation of similar matters by other fiction on Nigerian experience. There is therefore a relational nexus between Achebe's postcolonial fiction and novels of the same preoccupation; they spawn a discursive confluence. This diachronic similarity makes Achebe's fiction intertextual: it is part of a seamless "mosaic" of reference, quotation, and allusions. Therefore Achebe's fiction is essentially a response to an "effective presence of one text in another". The effectiveness of Achebe's text in relation to postcolonial Nigerian situation is the "truthfulness" of his fiction to dramatise the contemporary experience in Nigeria in a similar way as other fiction of this fixation.

Thus, *Anthills of the Savannah* is a rich incarnation of Achebe's artistic consciousness to illustrate palpably the matter with Nigeria, which other novels (by him and other Nigerian writers) that deal with military intervention, power play and gross violence in the polity orchestrate. It is within these parameters that the novel is read as an archetypal postcolonial novel on Nigeria's militarised space.

REFERENCES

1. Adeniyi, B. (1990). Plot as technique in fictive narratives: A case study of Achebe's *anthills of the savannah* and Amadi's *the great pounds*. Unpublished Ph D Dissertation, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
2. Chukwuma, Helen. "Literary Strategies in Feministic Writing: Flora Nwapa's *Cassava Song* and *Rice Song* and Phanuel Egejuru's *The Seed Yams Have Been Eaten*". Ed. Onyemaechi Udumukwu. *Nigerian Literature in English: Emerging Critical Perspectives*. Port Harcourt: M & J Grand Orbit Communication, 2007.
3. Maduka, Chidi. "Chinua Achebe and Military Dictatorship in Nigeria: A Study of *Anthills of the Savannah*". Ed. Onyemaechi Udumukwu. *Nigerian Literature in English: Emerging Critical Perspectives*. Port Harcourt: M & J Grand Orbit Communication, (2007): 64-80.

4. EllekeBoehmer, "Of Goddesses and Stories: Gender and a New Politics in Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah", *Kunapipi* XII.2 (1990): p.104.
5. Chinua Achebe, *Anthills of the Savannah* (London: Picador, 1988). All textual quotations appearing in this paper are from this edition only.
6. Ake, Claude. "A Plausible Transition". *Tell*, 34, September 25, 1995.
7. Morrison, Jago. *The Fiction of Chinua Achebe*. London, Palgrave, 2007.
8. Sougou, Omar. "Language, Foregrounding and Intertextuality in Anthills of the Savannah". *Critical Approaches to Anthills of the Savannah*. (ed). Holger Ehling, (1991):35-54,