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# **Realism in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Anthills of the Savannah**

Mémoire de Maîtrise



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# **Dedication**

*This work is dedicated to:*

- *my parents Mor Absa Ndiaye and Fatou Kiné Ndiaye, my first teachers in life*
- *my brothers Saliou, Aly and Ibrahima*
- *Alimatou Sadia Wélé.*

## Introduction

The emergence of a strong and independent literature in English from Black Africa is an important post-war cultural development. This thesis, however, is concerned with realism in Achebe's Things Fall Apart<sup>1</sup> and Anthills of the Savannah<sup>2</sup>.

Before going any further, we need to justify the choice of the author, the topic and the novels. Achebe is a gifted and mature writer whom we admire very much. Far beyond this admiration, there is the fact that he is imbued with culture, proud of his origins and has never given up advocating a deep-rooted literature. He has always believed that, in African literature, experiences from Africa should be dealt with; what's more they should be handled within an African setting. This is, no doubt, what explains his will to give a realistic depiction of African experiences.

As for the choice of the topic, it comes from the presence of Igbo culture and real experiences of Africa in the work of Chinua Achebe. Contrarily to some authors, Achebe claims for an africanity, not only through the choice of his themes, but also via a penmanship which, though using English, succeeds in conveying the whole richness of a culture, of a language. Thus, he has marked the Nigerian tradition and risen up to the class of the best African writers.

Concerning the novels(Things Fall Apart and Anthills of the Savannah), they interest us because of <sup>their</sup> literary contents and their affective function, more precisely we have always been fascinated by the theme of real experiences of Africa. The approach of Achebe has seemed relevant and we have decided to analyse it. The choice of his first and last novels serves our purpose very well: we can have elements about pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Things Fall Apart. New York. Doubleday. 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Chinua ACHEBE . Anthills of the Savannah. London. Heinemann. 1987.

But before evoking the topic, some general considerations must be made; namely that African literature has a functional role. In Africa, there are rapid and drastic upheavals so that the political concerns appear in an immediate way. Thus, the writers *have to* confront politics in real life even though they have not displayed the same degree of interest in narrative. This is applicable to all Africa and although the lack of literary concern is not displayed in Achebe's work, the concern for social and political matters is likely to press African writers for some time to come.

But to focus on the outline of our topic, the concept "realism" must necessarily be defined. The term has different meanings. It can mean the disposition of dealing only with facts and reality and not the impractical. In a philosophical point of view, it is a doctrine which states that abstract things have an objective existence, or that "things have reality apart from the conscious perception of them."<sup>3</sup> At another level, it represents a literary movement of the XIX century. In its broader web of meaning, realism is the impression of the real that the text produces thanks to a certain number of tools. In fact, "Modern Criticism insists that realism is [...] a system of conventions producing a lifelike illusion of some "real" world outside the text (...)." <sup>4</sup> It is often identified in terms of the effects on the reader, giving the impression that such characters and events might exist in real life. It is about an effect of resemblance between two heterogeneous worlds: the linguistic world of the text and that of the "beyond the text" (linguistic or non-linguistic ). It is in this perspective that we put our topic: "Realism in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Anthills of the Savannah."

In the study of our topic, we intend to show the various tools which allow the understanding of realism. The first of these processes is the analysis of the

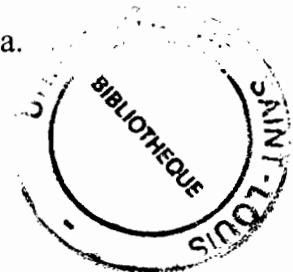
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<sup>3</sup> S. I. LANDAU & R. J. BOGUS. The Illustrated Contemporary Dictionary. U. S. A.. 1978.

<sup>4</sup> Chris BALDICK. The Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms. Oxford. O.U.P.. 1990.

themes of cultural and political crises in Things Fall Apart and Anthills of the Savannah. Achebe's first novel is about the tragic story of Okonkwo who falls because of internal causes, but also of external and historical ones. However, he is not the only victim of the coming of the white man. The novel is about the tragedy of a whole rural traditional society. However that may be, it seems that Things Fall Apart evokes Nigerian tradition (and African one by extension), more precisely the Igbo tradition. With his last novel, he returns to the modern setting. But he still continues his quest for objectivity: the white men are not the only ones responsible for the crises in modern Africa and Anthills of the Savannah turns out to be a social and political criticism. It registers the widespread disillusionment following the initial euphoria of independence. Sam, blinded by his will to stay eternally on power, becomes a ruthless dictator and the people his helpless targets. This work set somewhere in the fictional state of Kangan could apply to many post-colonial African states. But literature cannot be produced out of nothing. It is our contention that only a critic who knows the structures from sources which are not purely literary can discover whether certain social types are reproduced with their own behaviour in Achebe's work. That's why, before analysing the themes, we evoke the historical backgrounds.

The second part of this thesis explores how realism emerges through characterization. The first section of this part is concerned with the portraits of Okonkwo, the main hero in Things Fall Apart and Sam, the head of the State in Anthills of the Savannah. But literature has a social function which cannot concern the individual only. Most of the questions raised by Achebe are, at a last analysis or by implication, social ones. The representation of the head of the State implies that of his immediate surroundings and supporters. As for the story of Okonkwo, it is that of a whole community. The second part shows this in detail. On the whole, this part attempts to show that Achebe disposes characters so as to display certain motives which exist in real life in contemporary Africa.



Such dispositions are articulated round a narrative technique which we plan to study in the third part of our work. The narration implies language. Achebe uses language creatively, gives subjective meanings to words in order to convey his vision. The language of the characters may also reflect reality. The narration implies also narrative voice which is dealt with in a second section. Thanks to a specific focalization, illusions of reality may be created on the reader.

For each part we take, we would like to show the illusion of reality which is created on us or to link it with what we know of the author and his social context. In other words, our objective is to develop ideas of verisimilitude (likelihood and credibility).

We hope that, at the end of our analysis, we will be able to make the silences of Achebe's texts speak. As Pierre Macherey put it:

*The speech of the book comes from a certain silence, a matter which it endows with form, a ground on which it traces a figure. Thus the book is not self-sufficient; it is necessarily accompanied by certain aspects without which it would not exist. A knowledge of the book must include this absence.*<sup>5</sup>

So, in a text there are many things that are left unsaid and which are, at the same time very important. A reader who has theoretical knowledge is required to complete it. We hope that we will be able to do so, to prove that our response can determine the texts, that reading is not an innocent activity. Instead of remaining a consumer of Achebe's texts, we wish to fill the gaps by showing the connections between them and the reality out of which they were created.

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<sup>5</sup> Pierre MACHEREY, A Theory of Literary Production. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1978. P.85.



## Part One:

### Political and cultural crises

This part is concerned with the study of the major themes in the novels. What is meant by the term "theme" are simply the central insights of the stories. The themes represent the central ideas the author uses in order to deal with society, i.e. with a group of people interacting upon one another. In fact, in a novel the author does not use the themes in order to reveal exclusively human character, but he deals with this character in relation to other individuals.

Before he sets out to write, Achebe must find a subject. He has first a clear idea of what he wants to write about. The first phase of his work consists of gathering the raw material that will permit him to construct his fiction. In general, Achebe does not use the themes to excite the readers. His stories appear as serious ones and the themes display segments of human life. Most of the time, these segments go beyond the individual incidents of his fiction and Achebe does no less than reveal the profile of a society . However that may be, the themes are not constructed out<sup>of</sup> nothing. They are created out of a reality. Therefore, it seems important to study the historical backgrounds which generally sustain the themes developed in the novels under probe.

## **Section One: Historical backgrounds.**

This section is meant to show the contexts in which Things Fall Apart and Anthills of the Savannah were born. The study of the historical backgrounds seems to be very important. There is a need to know society<sup>6</sup>. The historical background gives to a piece of literature a sense of historical reality. It does not matter that the focus is not actually the historical background itself.

It has often been said that literature influences society. The other way round is also true. In many cases, the interactions between African traditions and the contemporary social context determine African literature. As Emmanuel Obiechina put it, there are the "determining background factors of the African novel" where "the changing cultural and social situations in West Africa both gave rise to the novel there and in far-reaching and crucial ways conditioned the West African novels' contents, themes and textures"<sup>7</sup>.

There is then a necessity to focus on the sociology of the author, the social context. Achebe, as a member of the Igbo society, can be studied as a social being. The political context of his mind can also be dealt with if we follow Marxist theories. But a study of the economic bases of literature and the social status of the author is linked to that of the people whom he addresses.

The Marxists do not only study the relation between literature and society; they have a precise conception of what this relation should be in our time as well as in a future classless society. Thus, the studies can be based on non-literary criteria (ethics or politics). But since we are only interested in the historical reference points, we will focus our attention on what the social relations were.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp.85-86.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Simon GIKANDI. Reading Chinua Achebe. London. Heinemann. p.32

Concerning the historical context of Things Fall Apart, we shall look back on the period before the independence of Nigeria. We propose to give some historical references about Nigeria before the independence with a particular emphasis on the Igbo land before and just after the penetration of the missionaries<sup>8</sup>. A second point of the first section consists of references about the period which goes from the independence of Nigeria to the publication of Anthills of the Savannah, which can help us give a context to Achebe's last novel.

A survey in Histoire Générale de l'Afrique, vol. IV has found that in the North of Nigeria, some kingdoms (soon islamized) were formed between the XI and the XVI centuries. The most outstanding ones were those of Kanem and Kanem-Bornu. According to the same sources, in the South, Ife constituted the common cultural and religious center of the Kingdom of Oyo and that of Benin. This center was in relation with the Portuguese from 1486<sup>9</sup>.

If we focus on the Igbos (who occupy the Eastern province of Nigeria extending from the Calabar Port to the town of Onitsha), we notice that the first contact in the territories where they were found with the strangers could be traced back at the time of Ptoleme. Thomas Melone notes that Herodotus speaks of two rivers which cross the Sudan. They bear the names of Gir and Nigir. In 1353, the Arab and particularly Ibn Batuta and later on Leo Africanus (1556) called the great river "Niger". It was Mungo Park in 1796 and then in 1805 who became the first white explorer of that region. He gave authentic revelations about the current of the water<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Simon GIKANDI. Reading Chinua Achebe. London. Heinemann. p.32

<sup>8</sup> In writing this section, I have selected information From Histoire Général de l'Afrique. Vol. IV. UNESCO/NEA, 1985 and Melone's Chinua Achebe et la Tragédie de l'Histoire. coll. " Critique littéraire". Présence Africaine. 1973 .

<sup>9</sup> Djibril Tamsir NIANE (dir.). Histoire Générale de l'Afrique. Vol. IV. UNESCO/NEA. 1985. Pp.265-521.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas MELONE. Chinua Achebe et la Tragedie de l'Histoire. Coll. " Critique Littéraire " . Présence Africaine. 1973

In 1553, the British eliminated Portugal (destruction of Portuguese vessels), controlling thus the slave-trade in Nigeria. From the XVI century to the beginning of the XIX century, some pulaars (who were also Muslims) intervened in the North and finally constituted an empire around Sokoto.

In 1851, the British occupied Lagos and in 1879 the creation of the United African Company (which later became the Royal Niger Company) allowed Great Britain to supplant the other strangers and to secure the penetration and the administration of some territories which continued to expand.

In the South of Nigeria, it was thanks to the missionaries that the British influence and trade, concentrated in Lagos in the beginning, spread to the largest part of the Yoruba land. As for the Igbos, the greatest expeditions meant for the exploration of the region started in 1841. Among the expeditions, one can cite those of Thomas F. Buxton (famous for his anti-slavery tendency), of the Reverend J.F. Schlon (a popular linguist based in Sierra Leone) and those of Samuel Ajayi Crowther (a teacher and ancient slave who, finally, was to become the first black bishop). Thomas Melone mentions that these three men attempted great adventures under too risked circumstances on three boats: "Albert", "Wilberforce" and "Sudan". But their expeditions were a sign of a new era: Christianity in Nigeria. After the setting up of the first church at Calabar by the United Presbyterian Church, the missionaries superseded the civil authorities in order to establish the first contact with the natives in the farthest zones. According to Melone, it is under that atmosphere of evangelization and of passion for colonial expansion that the childhood of Achebe is to be situated as well as the birth of his work. His father, he says, was among the first converts of his village. He was then educated by the missionaries and, in his turn, partook of the evangelizing mission<sup>11</sup>. Thus, by 1880, Achebe's father knew, during his childhood, the penetration of the strangers in

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.

Nigeria and the last days of the local civilization or its falling apart before the success of the colonial policy of appropriation of Africa.

Still in the South, since 1884, the British had signed with the Yorubas some treaties about the suppression of slavery. In 1886, the British administration succeeded in convincing Ibadan and the coalition of the Ekiti, the Ijesha and the Egba to sign a peace-treaty which would end the war they had been waging against one another. The Yorubas, tired of fighting (internal conflicts) accepted the interference of the British. Ijebu was the only town able to resist the missionaries, the British traders and the administration of Lagos.

Eager to occupy the Yoruba country since the beginning of the 1890s, the British decided to give it a lesson and to show the other Yoruba towns at the same time, that any resistance was useless. Under the pretext that there was an affront against Governor Denton in 1892, the British launched a well-prepared expedition against the Ijebus. One thousand men, all of them armed, were sent to them. The Ijebus gathered an army of seven to ten thousand men. Despite their numerical superiority and the fact that some of them had at their disposal fire arms, the Ijebus were defeated<sup>12</sup>.

This invasion was a lesson for all the Yoruba towns: between 1893 and 1899, Abeokuta, Ibadan, Ekiti, Ijesha and Oyo accepted to sign a treaty and to have English residents. In the Niger as well as many zones of Nigeria, the British had signed in 1884 many treaties with the local chiefs (the kings of Calabar and Bonny).

Whereas the occupation of Southern Nigeria was the concern of the British government supported by missionaries and traders, that of the North was enabled

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<sup>12</sup> R. SMITH <sup>gives</sup> more details about ha battle in his article «Yoruba-Ijebu ». West African Resistance. ed. M. Crowder. London Hutchinson of London. p.80.

by the National African Company and the government; there was an armed interference. Of course this interference was preceded by a series of treaties between the Company and the chiefs from the North. Mbaye Guèye and Albert Adu Boahen assert that it was a way of keeping the region and avoiding the French and the Germans:

*Le principe de l'occupation effective ayant été établi à la conférence de Berlin, pour devancer les Français et les Allemands, la Compagnie fut contrainte d'intervenir<sup>13</sup>.*

In 1900, Nigeria came under the jurisdiction of colonial office. At the beginning of the first world war (1914), the colony and the protectorate of Nigeria were created, regrouping the North and the South of the country and part of Cameroon. In 1951, there was a representative government of the colony. The Federal Constitution was promulgated three years later (1954). Thomas Melone says that the draft of Things Fall Apart had existed since 1954<sup>14</sup>. The novel was published two years before the independence of Nigeria.

As for the historical context of Anthills of the Savannah, one may refer back to the period which goes from the independence of Nigeria to the publication of the novel.

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960, Nigeria was independent. The same year, Achebe published No Longer at Ease. Three years later (1963), the country adopted a Republican Constitution and chose to remain in the Commonwealth. The following year, Arrow of God was published. In 1966, A Man of the People followed.

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<sup>13</sup> The principle of the effective occupation having been established during the conference of Berlin, the Company was obliged to intervene in order to get ahead of the French and the Germans (translation mine). From Mbaye GUEYE & A. A. BOAHEN. "Initiatives et Résistances en Afrique Occidentale de 1880 à 1914". In Histoire Générale de l'Afrique, vol. VII. UNESCO / NEA. 1987. p.160.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas MELONE. op.cit. p.

Until 1966, the political life of Nigeria was characterized by some struggles over the control of power. During the independence, power belonged to a coalition between the Northerners (represented by Sir A.T. Balewa, Prime Minister) and the Southerners (represented by Azikiwe who was Governor and then head of the State). The coalition wanted to eliminate the third party, the Action Group (based in the West). The party of Balewa was called N.P.C. (Northern People's Congress) and that of Azikiwe N.C.N.C. (National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon). There were some internal troubles in the Action Group and under the pretext of those conflicts, the coalition declared the state of emergency and arrested leaders of the Action Group. Corruption was spreading and the Nigerian opinion was hurt. The workers (who had been ignored) went on strike twice: 1963 and 1964.

Despite the Republican Constitution, troubles persisted. The army profited by this situation to seize power (1966). The arrival of General Ironsi was warmly welcomed. That coup happened on January 15<sup>th</sup>. Prime Minister Balewa, Festus Okotie Eboh, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Ahmadou Bello and Akintola were assassinated. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, five regions were replaced by provinces, the parties were disbanded; the Northerners reacted and hundreds of Igbos were slaughtered in the North. By the end of June, hundreds of thousands of runaway Igbos got to the South.

On July 27<sup>th</sup>, Ironsi was killed by the Nordists. The coup d'Etat by General Gowon happened on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August and the decree of unification was suspended. 30,000 Igbos were killed in the North, more than 1,000,000 ran to the East. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1967, the Aburi Conference (Ghana) was held. It was about the distributions of the incomes on the oil between the producing regions and the central government. The creation of a new federal structure took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May, 1967. The four regions, Hausa-Fulani (North), Yoruba (West), Edo (*Mid*-West) and the Igbo (East) were replaced by twelve states; the boundaries of three of these states were calculated to prevent the Igbos from profiting by the



incomes. So, the East was divided into three states: the Rivers (capital Port Hartcourt; 1,000,000 of Igbos; produced 63% of the Nigerian oil), the South East State (capital Calabar; 2,500,000 Ibibios and Efiks; 2,000,000 of Ekes and 8 others ethnic, the poorest region) and the State of the Center East (Capital Enugu; 7,000,000 of Igbos; produced 3% of the Nigerian oil). The fact of weakening the Igbos may be considered as tribalism.

Later on (the 30<sup>th</sup> of May, 1967), Lieutenant-Colonel Emeka Ojukwu, proclaimed the independence of the East under the name of Biafra. According to the Quid 1998, it was a territory of 75,000 square kilometers, of 14,000,000 inhabitants composed mainly of Igbos (2/3). On July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1967, the federal armies intervened in Biafra. It was the official beginning of the Civil War. The federal armies were numerically superior and more equipped. Nevertheless, the military action of Biafra succeeded in interesting the whole population though Biafra had suffered from hunger. The Biafrans were skillful enough to sensitize the international opinion about what they presented as the genocide of the Biafran people.

In 1968, Biafra rejected the proposal of negotiation made by General Gowon. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of May, Côte d'Ivoire recognized the State of Biafra and in June there was the failure of the Conference on the cease-fire attended by Gowon and Ojukwu, and which was presided over by Emperor Haïlé Sélassié.

After the great attack of the federal army in March 1969, the defeat of Biafra was only a question of time. One month later, the federal forces retook Umuahia (Capital of Biafra). In August, the Igbo leader Azikiwe stated the need for the unity of Nigeria and in December, there was an offer of federal peace to Biafra. January 1970 marked the end of the civil war. General Ojukwu left Biafra (10<sup>th</sup>) and on the 15<sup>th</sup>, General Gowon declared the end of the war. Achebe writes:

*The civil war gave Nigeria a legitimate excuse to cast the Igbos in the role of the treasonable felon, a wrecker of the nation. But thanks to Gowon's moderating violence overt vengeance was not visited on them when their secessionist State of Biafra was defeated in January 1970<sup>15</sup>.*

In July 1975, Gowon was overthrown by a coup of officers who were politically close to him. In 1976, after ten years of repeated coups d'état, General Obasanjo came to power and attempted to bring back stability. This showed the remarkable ability of the Nigerian leading class to device solutions exacted by the hardships. There was a relative period of return to democracy from 1979 to 1983 (the democratic process was started in 1976 but it actually began in 1979). General elections were organized in 1979. Those elections, renewed in 1983, gave both times victory to Shehu Shagari and his political friends. After that period, many military takeovers took place. Corruption and economic crises were very frequent. Some religious murders were committed at Yola (North East). Under the rule of Babangida (which began in 1985), some conflicts between the Christians and the Muslims happened. Babangida attempted to restore the economic situation and negotiated the conditions of the recycling of the debts of the country. Chinua Achebe published Anthills of the Savannah in 1987.

On the whole, Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Anthills of the Savannah were born under the circumstances mentioned above. But in order to grasp the realistic effect, a study based on the stories (the novel) and the actual society is required.

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<sup>15</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. The Trouble with Nigeria. London. Heinemann. 1984.

## **Section Two: A realistic depiction of cultural and political crises**

This section attempts to show that the function of Achebe's fiction is about the investigation of social and historical conditions of African societies. In other terms, it is meant to show that there is a link between Things Fall Apart and the actual historical experiences of Africa and between Anthills of the Savannah and the post-colonial one. For this, we propose to choose some themes in real life and assert their resemblance with the incidents of the novels under probe. Concerning the colonial experience, we shall investigate the themes of authentic African experiences and that of the clash of cultures. As for the post-colonial one, we offer an analysis of the doctrines that inform the modern situation.

Concerning the theme of African historical experiences in Things Fall Apart, Achebe presents us a society in its destiny. The elements that constitute the tradition are various and form the basis of the daily activities. Yet we can detect some manifestations which are the carriers of the cultural patrimony: social organization, marriage and religion. They are constantly mentioned in Achebe's first novel. As he said himself:

*African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; [...] their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, [...] they had poetry and, above all they had dignity<sup>16</sup>*

We will attempt to study the elements of tradition, by referring to the actual society of the Igbo and to the novel. Our task is hence, to try to grasp the elements which constitute African traditional society, more precisely to see how the work of Achebe is a representation of the social reality of traditional Africa. Our objective.

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<sup>16</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. "The Role of the Writer In a New Nation". In African Writers on African Writing. ed. G.D.KILLAM. Evanston. Northwestern University Press. 1975. p.8.

in so far it lies within the recalling of African customs, is to appreciate the creative efforts of Achebe as an attempt to represent , from a series of traditional facts.

Concerning the social organization in real life, the African traditional society is featured by a system based on the values of the community. These values are expressed in a moral and material solidarity. Man exists only in and thanks to the community which gives him life or the sole possibility to preserve it. The keystone of social organization is based on family groups and age-grades.

If we take into account our existing knowledge of the Igbos (in real life), we notice that they organized themselves into autonomous villages which represented the socio-political unity. About the Igbos, Joseph Ki-Zerbo has written:

*Au Sud-Est du Nigeria actuel s'était constitué un puissant et dynamique groupe Ibo. [...] L'unité socio-politique est le village.*<sup>17</sup>

In this organisation unity was the clan. Each village was segmented into lineages which were divided into sublineages (compound). In a compound there could be many households. In 1988, in an interview with Raoul Grankvist, Achebe stated:

*This is what the Igbo people chose, the small village entity that was completely self-governing. [...] The reason why they chose it was because they wanted to be in control of their lives. So if the community says that we will have a meeting in the market place tomorrow, everybody should go there, or could, there [...]*<sup>18</sup>  
go

This pertains to the autonomy and the unity mentioned above. In fact, it was very easy to control small spaces. Cohesion was maintained in the latter.

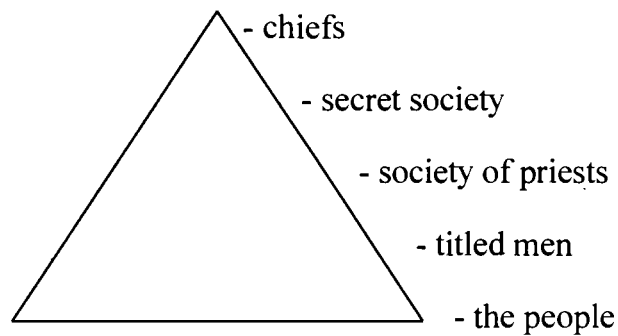
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<sup>17</sup> In the Southeast of present Nigeria, a powerful and dynamic Igbo group was formed [...]. The socio-political unity is the village ( translation mine). From KI-ZERBO. Histoire de l'Afrique Noire d'Hier à Demain. Paris. Hatier. 1972. p.159.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Travelling. Chinua Achebe In Scandinavia. Swedish Writers In Africa. op.cit. p. 9.

Politically speaking, the Igbos had no king. Their "kings" were priests (Eze). In the words of Ki-Zerbo: "[Les Ibos] se regroupent parfois sous l'égide d'une même divinité."<sup>19</sup>

There was hierarchy in the socio-political organization as represented by the following pyramid.



The Igbo social classes (pyramid proposed by Bamikunle)<sup>20</sup>

But, in spite of the hierarchy, there was democracy in this organisation. The Igbos evolved a humanistic civilization. That's why, Ki-Zerbo writes: "Ils avaient une structure ultra-démocratique qui favorisait l'initiative individuelle."<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, each village had a legislative assembly which called open-air meetings at which everyone was free to give their opinions. In this democratic process, the highest honours were open to every free man. Achebe legitimates this view:

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<sup>19</sup> The Igbos sometimes met under the aegis of a same divinity. ( translation mine) From KI-ZERBO . op. cit. p.159.

<sup>20</sup> Aderemi BAMIKUNLE (Nigeria). Lecture at the University of Saint-Louis (Senegal). 1995.

<sup>21</sup> They had a ultra-democratic structure which favoured individual initiative (translation mine). From Ki-Zerbo. Op.cit. p.159. <sup>22</sup>Quoted in Travelling: Chinua Achebe In Scandinavia. Swedish Writers In Africa. op.cit. p. 9.

*So if the community says we will have a meeting tomorrow, [...] everybody [...] could go there. And everybody could speak*<sup>22</sup>.

The final decisions were left to the elders. But the decisions did not become "laws" automatically. There was a ritual binder which included oaths. After that, the decisions were definitely taken. The ultimate power was the legislative assembly which gave power to various departments (age grades, council of elders, secret societies etc.)<sup>23</sup>

The democratic process which really existed among the Igbo is very close to that which is in the fiction. All that we have said above can be linked to what is in Things Fall Apart. A study of the democratic process in the novel may show the linkage.

In the novel, properly speaking, there is no king as it is shown by the following answer to the missionaries:

*They asked who the king of the village was, but the villagers told them there was no king." We have men of high title and the chief priest and the elders", they said*<sup>24</sup>.

So, when they first arrive in Mbanta, the missionaries expect to find a king. But they discover that there is no functionary to work with. This matches the actual fact that the Igbo of Nigeria had no king.

In the society pictured in the novel, there is hierarchy as it was the case in the actual one. We have well balanced powers which tend to leave decision in the hands of the "strongest" men according to the decisions to take or the cases to examine ( the ndichie, the titled people and other chiefs, and the Egwugwu). The ndichie are those who decide over the fate of the young virgin given by the clan of

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<sup>22</sup>Quoted in Travelling: Chinua Achebe In Scandinavia. Swedish Writers In Africa. op.cit. p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> BAMIKUNLE. op.cit.

<sup>24</sup> Chinua Achebe. Things Fall Apart. op.cit. p.105.

Mbaino in order to replace the "Daughter of Mbanta". Four titles exist in the clan of Umuofia, but only one or two men from each generation could reach the fourth and the highest. The title of Ozo and that of Idemili can be cited. Among other chiefs, we have Ezeani (who has sentenced Okonkwo who has broken the peace by beating his wife<sup>25</sup>) and Chielo (who decides over the killing of Ikemefuna). There are nine Egwugwu and each of them represents a village of the clan. They are the greatest masked spirits who settle disputes which cannot be resolved in other ways.

Below, we have the people who have acquired the first title but cannot go further. At a lower stage, we find the Efulefu (sometimes called " Agbala "). They are considered as naughty people in this clan where manhood is very important. At the bottom of the social ladder, there are the " osu " or " taboo " people. They cannot cooperate with the others.

However, there is a democratic process. Despite the groups, people can express themselves in public assemblies some of which are described by the author:

- Chapter Two: when Umuofia has to decide over the attitude to keep after the affront of Mbaino

- Chapter Six: when the six chiefs are arrested.

It is about two serious decisions and the members of the clan are invited to voice their minds. Generally, an orator takes the floor to expose the matter. But the participants are very numerous and the decision is taken after an agreement.

Thus, we see that these democratic institutions in which each man is judged " according to his worth ", not " those of his father"<sup>26</sup> as would be appropriate in an aristocracy or an oligarchy is close to the one we described earlier in this section

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p.30-31.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.8.

and which was concerned with the democracy in the actual history of the Igbos.

Still in the authentic African experiences, a link can be established between religion in actual traditional Africa and in the fiction. Religion may be defined as a system of beliefs, rites and practices relating to the situation of man in universe, erected into a dogma and transmitted through an organized priesthood.<sup>27</sup> When man became conscious that the universe was ununderstandable for him, he started to establish some links between the irrational world (that he was constructing with difficulty) and the rational one. In order to lessen the anguish that the feeling of the infinite (emanating from nature) was causing, man structured the Cosmos. The major questions that he asked himself: origin of the world, the beyond, relationship between the living and the dead, urged him to construct an idea of his existence. The need to understand, the feeling of a moral ideal (harmony towards which he was tending) formed the basis of religion.

Among the African, man's position in African way of thinking and culture were the basic elements which allowed to grasp the links between God and man. One may even assert that religion was derived from culture. It was based on a particular view of the world, which included the understanding of the nature of the universe, the human beings and their place in the world but also the perception of the supernatural. Man affirmed his conviction that the human being was superior to everything that existed. Hence, religion seemed to be essentially dependent upon the human being and the universe. It seems that, among all the Africans, there was the notion of a supreme God who was generally looked on as Creator. The importance of his role in human affairs was diversely appreciated. Most of the time, he was regarded as too far to be reached. In other cases, he was considered as transcendental and immanent at the same time. Kofi A. Opoku insists on these attributes:

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<sup>27</sup> Mauduit. Manuel d'Ethnographie. Paris. Payot. 1960. p.92.



*Dieu ne ressemblait pas aux êtres humains [...]; en même temps, il se mêlait des affaires des hommes, soutenait la création, défendait l'ordre moral<sup>28</sup>.*

In Africa, religion informed about everything. Its influences reached social, familial and political life. In general, the religious spirit preponderated over the political one. Nevertheless, it is important to notice the unity of African traditional religion, not only through some of its elements, but also the attitude of man vis-à-vis the invisible, through the position he saw as his in the creation, through the feeling he had of his belonging to the universe.

That is to say that the African religions were a religion of a God of a man, of the earth, the fetishes etc. Of course there was the hierarchy of the spirits. Below God, the spirits of the ancestors were found next to the secondary divinities. All of them had their sanctuaries, cults and priests. Some of them were linked to features of the environment (sky, fire, earth, etc.) In traditional Africa (the Igbo land included), the cult of the ancestors was an essential element of religion. They were respected and feared, as it was the case with the other gods. In his poem "Those Gods are Children", Achebe writes about the importance of the cult of the ancestors:

*A fool alone will  
Contest the precedence of ancestors  
And gods<sup>29</sup>*

Apart from these supernatural gods, other spirits were found: the mystical powers capable of protecting or harming people. It was found in this group agents of sorcery and magicians. Charms and amulets were used by people either to protect themselves or to harm others.

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<sup>28</sup> God did not resemble human beings [...]; at the same time, he interfered in human matters, supported His creation, and defended moral order (our translation), From Kofi Asare OPUKU. "La Religion en Afrique Pendant l'Epoque Coloniale". In Histoire Générale de l'Afrique. vol IV. op.cit. p.550.

<sup>29</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. "Those Gods Are Children". In "Beware Soul Brothers" (Revised Edition). African Writers Series. 1972. P.46.

Concerning the conception about man, there was a symbiosis between the community of the living and that of the dead. Death would not mean the end of life. There was continuity and extension. The departed therefore represented members of the society. In his study of the Igbo society, Basden insists on this symbiosis:

*Their belief in the spirit life is exceedingly tenacious [...] When a man dies, he is alluded to as having "gone home" or simply as having "gone to the spirit world", and the mourning of the survivors is that of those who have said "farewell" for the time being only<sup>30</sup>.*

Another aspect of religion was the relationship between the individual and society. In traditional Africa, to be a human being meant to belong to a community. This implied a participation in the beliefs, ritual and feasts of the latter. Society was not based on individual rights but on obligations. The rights of the individual were asserted in the exercise of the obligations, which transformed society in a large network of relations. African religion was that of a family, a clan. It played a greater role in Africa than in Europe because it impregnated the whole social life. Religion was the peculiarity of man, of society; in other words, it was in the latter that religion was created and developed. The social and the religious were dialectically linked: the existence of one aspect presupposed that of the other.

Thus, religion was, in one way or another omnipresent in the social activities and practices of every day. There was an actual network of socio-religious interactions. It must be stated that religion became a necessary medium because it represented a reference in daily life. However, in order to enjoy society very decently and thus become a member of the social group, initiation was necessary. Initiation always included a socio-cultural dimension. Indeed, there was among the Africans social and religious means which allowed every man to evaluate his moral and

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<sup>30</sup> G. T. BASDEN. *Among the Igbos of Nigeria*. Philadelphia. JB Lippincott Company. 1921. P.18. BASDEN's view is shared by E. MILINGO in his article "Black Civilisation and the Catholic Church". In *Colloque sur Civilisation noire et Eglise Catholique*. 12-17 Sept. 1977. Abidjan. E.P.A. & N. P. A. 1978. P.277.

spiritual forces. Human life was considered as a cycle (birth, marriage, reproduction, death and beyond). The individual seldom remained in the same position and should necessarily try to reach the next one. In order to ease the passage, special rites were organized and regeneration was perpetual.

If we look at religion and beliefs in the novel, we see that they are similar to the kind we have already described. In the novel, religion is one of the main elements of the life of the Igbos. It is based on the beliefs which reflect the most significant social aspects. Chukwu is the supreme God, Creator of the Earth and the Sky. He has created the whole world and the other gods as Akunna explains to M. Brown.

The other gods are Ikenga, Ani and Agbala. Agbala's authority is respected all over the clan. He addresses to men through Chielo. Ani is the earth goddess, very feared by the Igbos. She cannot tolerate the fact that her followers<sup>are</sup> killing each other (exile of Okonkwo after he has committed a murder). Ikenga symbolizes manhood. His image is found in the hut of every Igbo, under the form of a sculptured piece of wood.

As for the beliefs, there are two main functions: the Egwugwu and the medicine men. The latter are needed in difficult situations (war against another clan for instance). In the novel, the prestige of Umuofia results from the courage of the warriors but also the medicine men. In the fiction, there is also a symbiosis between the living and the dead. Even if the role of the Egwugwu is important when they establish<sup>justice</sup>, the other role is more important: the link between the departed and the living. Appearing in the village during the feast or important events, they go to and fro between the land of the dead and that of the living, symbolizing hence the absence of frontiers between these two worlds. This is close to the actual symbiosis which existed among the Igbos of Nigeria.

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Achebe also mentions the rites of passage from one position to the other. He talks of Okoye who gathers all his resources in preparation for the expensive ceremony required to take the Idemili title, and also the social rise of Okonkwo (his election as Ekwugwu). This resembles the idea of the circle which existed in real life in Africa.

The two religious worlds (that of the fiction and that of "the beyond the text") are therefore very similar. Thus, one can say that the description is realistic. Religion is a revelation to the reader because Achebe does know the customs of his social group which he tries to represent. The characters do not reject the traditional beliefs for they are aware of the necessity of the rites of the fetishes, the ancestors etc. Religion is a constant which is manifest among the characters, through the social interactions and even in the activities of every day. Initiation also appears as a fundamental aspect in Igboland. The integration to the social group is done after this stage which is determining in the life of the Igbo.

Besides, there is a realistic effect with the structures of kinship and particularly marriage. In real life, in Africa, marriage was a fundamental aspect of the survival of the societies and followed a certain number of principles. Polygamy was very developed. However, in the traditional societies of Africa, young people were not free to marry the girl of their own choice. The parents were the ones who chose for them, according to the relationship that united them with the family of the bride. People adopted marriage in order to fulfil social requirements. Yet, it was characterized by complementarity.

Traditionally, marriage linked two families and not two persons. It was about unity or the sense of community. The parents exerted authority in that domain by choosing the bride because they knew better the interdictions and the conditions of validity and harmony of marriage. In general, girls were treated as a property with which parents parted after a compensation. In black Africa, the sense of the

bride price is very noble: there is a compensatory aspect for the parents who have brought up their daughter who is taken when her social function is about to assert itself in the family. The bride price is seen by Mary E. Modupe Kolawole as "a symbolic gesture of appreciation and valuation of the girl and a means of ensuring that some of the basic things that she needs to settle down to a married life are provided by the bridegroom"<sup>31</sup>. In short, the woman to marry was not an object to be sold. She was given dignity. Further, in order to show that she deserved dignity, she was obliged to preserve her virginity. If marriage was the outcome of a consensus between two human groups, it always gave way to some feasts which were intimately inserted into the traditions. The ceremonies that accompanied marriage were various. Generally, in the African societies, the bride was considered as a being possessing dangerous powers and the goal of the bridal rites was to deprive her of these powers.

The way marriage was conceived is close to the depiction in the novel. If we examine marriage in the novel, we see similar things. In Things Fall Apart, marriage has a collective function and is marked by three stages:

- fixing the dowry (for example with Obierika's daughter)
- the uri or officialisation of the link (Chapter Twelve, with the daughter of Obierika)
- the isa-ifi (in Mbanta with Uchendu's son Amikwu): the bride must swear that she has never slept with a man since the bridegroom expressed the will to marry her.

Thus, we discover that the two pictures of marriage (that of the fiction and that of Africa) are similar. This authorizes us to talk of a realistic depiction of

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<sup>31</sup> Mary E. M. KOLAWOLE. Womanism and African Consciousness. Africa World Press Inc.. 1977. P.50.

marriage. In Things Fall Apart, marriage is essentially sealed according to a precise ritual. The theme of polygamy recurs in the novel. The negotiations require as much material as good speeches. This stage is a verbal battle between influential members of the different families. Hence, marriage which is a manifestation of the customs appears in under every form in the novel of Achebe.

On the whole, Achebe's ability rests on the archaeological role of the novel. His thoughts, most of the time, return to the forgotten questions of the African experience. Indeed, Achebe appears as a historian who uses literature as a social document where he records or preserves the customs, traditions or experiences of his society. Achebe's greatest aim in writing is to teach his people ( particularly the Igbos) about their cultures and traditions. By doing so, he hopes to help them to regain belief in themselves as true Africans.

Partially, Achebe seems to write his novel as a statement of what the future of Nigeria might be if she were to take advantage of her somewhat rich past. Some people might say that he is simply idealizing the community to which he belongs. But history has proved that democracy and civilization existed among the Igbos.

Next to the theme of authentic African experiences, there is the clash of cultures. It is possible to find verisimilitude between actual colonization and the one in the fiction. The first subtheme which creates illusion of reality is related to the colonial initiatives and the reactions of Africans in front of the colonizers. The ways the penetration of the white man was done in the Igbo land were multiform. The means of domination were also various. In west Africa, the British did not hesitate to resort to negotiations but, most of the time, they used force. The following lines by Ntalindwa sustain this view:

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*The feeling of insecurity was the impetus in the colonialists' adoption of brutal and dictatorial methods of rule to coerce the unwilling populations to succumb*<sup>32</sup>.

In the South of Nigeria, the strategies used by the British were diplomacy and military actions. The Nigerian's reactions were, thus, either temporary submission (or alliance) or fierce fights. In some parts of the Yoruba land, they had signed peace agreements. But with the Ijebus of the Yoruba country, they used their military forces.<sup>33</sup>

A reading of Things Fall Apart allows us to see a similar picture. In the story, the first encounters are very violent and have serious effects since there are dead people in both sides. The populations of Abame have killed a white man: "they killed him and tied up his iron horse."<sup>34</sup> The white men, in their turn have massacred the people of Abame on a market-day: "Abame has been wiped out."<sup>35</sup> These violences remind us of the real ones which happened in Africa. But there comes a moment when the natives are more peaceful. So the means of domination become more insidious and this reminds us of the actual picture in Africa.

Another subtheme of colonization which creates illusions of reality is the attraction of Christianity. Actually, in West Africa, before the establishment, the missionaries were the conveyors of western cultures. Not only did they want to convert Africans to Christianity but also to western cultures. They attacked the elements which gave cohesion to African societies. Opuku notes the opposition of some wise men against the missionaries, seeing in their presence a challenge and a menace to traditional beliefs:

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<sup>32</sup> Raymond NTALINDWA. « Colonialism and Dictatorship », West Africa, 6-12 March 1955. P.336.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Section One of Part One

<sup>34</sup> Chinua achebe. Things Fall Apart. op.cit. p.139.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.139.

*Les Africains réagirent de nombreuses façons à ces attaques. En premier lieu ceux qui n'avaient pas été convertis s'opposèrent à la domination coloniale et défièrent les missionnaires.*<sup>36</sup>

The teachings of the missionaries were shared by the colonial administration. Religion was not excluded from their preoccupations. There were some responses on behalf of the Africans who challenged the missionaries. They used religion as a weapon against colonial leadership (the use of magic). During the first decades of the XX century, some Igbo warriors, according to Opuku, used such means to protect themselves. In west Africa, the missionary had a negative attitude vis-à-vis the African culture and religion. Africans were referred to as barbarians and needed to be taken to salvation. The English writer Rudyard Kipling talks of the "burden of the white man" (civilizing Africa), which means, for him, that the white men were the only ones who had civilization.

But, doubtless, some Africans accepted Christianity. The first group of converts was composed of underprivileged who were given hope by the missionaries' teaching about equality and brotherhood. For Opuku, those who had broken taboos and the mothers of twins were the first recruits<sup>37</sup>. Christianity reached also African traditional chiefs or dignitaries. There were many African preachers leaving their ethnic group in order to work as missionaries. For instance, in West Africa, the Yoruba bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther worked in the Niger Valley.

All these facts are similar to those in the fiction. A study of the attractions of Christianity in the novel may prove it. In the story, the first agents of colonization are the missionaries. They are found in Mbanta and Umuofia where they evangelize the natives, using interpreters who are converted. Their speech is meant to praise

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<sup>36</sup> Africans reacted, in many ways, against those attacks. First, those who had not been converted opposed colonial domination and challenged the missionaries (translation mine). From OPUKU. op.cit. p.555-556.

<sup>37</sup> OPUKU. op.cit. p.568.



their God and to assert that traditional gods are bad and meaningless. They want to replace Chukwu and his allies. The first intrusion seems very ridiculous before the Igbo who talk of the foolish logic of trinity. But gradually, many of them will be converted because the God of the white man will prove itself (the episode of the Evil Forest). We are inclined to perceive the acceptance of Christianity by some Africans in real life.

Christianity attracts the underprivileged (Osu and Efulufu, mothers who have lost their twins and other sensitive people such as Nwoye). This group of converts is similar to the one in actual history as seen above. Even the titled men are converted. Ogbuefi Ugonna is the first one. There is credibility between the conversion of titled men and the acceptance of Christianity by many African dignitaries.

Moreover, the role of school is realistically portrayed. If we refer back to history, we see that it is thanks to schooling that many Africans got converted. In many parts of Africa, we had the equation School = Church. Elias Shrenks says that every schoolboy had a missionary vocation; that's why he had bad opinions about those who could not read the Bible<sup>38</sup>. By the end of the XIX century the missionaries registered many converts.

This image (the role of school) is close to the fictional one. In the novel, school is a means of learning the colonizers' language. It allows a certain power. Attracted by the rewards of M. Brown, many Umuofians get converted.

Broadly speaking, Achebe's conception of colonization is realistically portrayed. A reader who knows about Africa does not ignore the negative impact of colonization. It had disorganized African societies which used to be coherent. Achebe reflects this view (the negative impact of colonization) through the title of

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p.567.

the book which symbolizes the cultural conflicts and the misunderstanding between the white man and the Igbos or the Africans by extension.

Achebe writes to "dispel old images in order to create a true sense of his people's dignity"<sup>39</sup> as Rhoads says. He wants to correct the misrepresentation of Africa by foreigners:

*I read some appalling novels about Africa[...] and decided that the story we had to tell would not be told for us by anyone else no matter how gifted or well intentioned.*<sup>40</sup>

Literary productions such as Conrad's Heart of Darkness see Africans as primitives, portraying African values in negative terms<sup>41</sup>. For Achebe, the Europeans are mistaken and Things Fall Apart is set in the past to show that civilization existed in Africa:

*African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; [...] their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, [...] they had poetry and, above all they had dignity*<sup>42</sup>.

However, Achebe does not idealize the past. This adds to his realism. The African past is presented with some shortcomings as he put it: "We have to admit that like other people's past ours had its good as well as its bad sides."<sup>43</sup> We are convinced that colonization generated some advantages (less important than the destructions) and that everything is not perfect in African traditions.

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<sup>39</sup> D. A. Rhoads. "Culture in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart". In African Studies Review. Vol.36.n2. Sept.1993. p.63.

<sup>40</sup> Chinua Achebe. Morning Yet on Creation Day. London. Heinemann. 1975. P.70. For Chinua Achebe's view of Cary, CF Dennis Duerden &Cosmos Pieterse (eds.). African Writers Talking. London. Heinemann. 1975. p.4, and Chinua Achebe. Morning Yet on Creation Day. London. Heinemann. 1975. P.70.

<sup>41</sup> J. Conrad. Heart of Darkness. London. Penguin. 1989. Pp.35-36.

<sup>42</sup> Chinua Achebe. "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation". In African Writers on African Writing (edited by G. D. Killam). Evanston. Northwestern University Press. 1975. P.8.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p.9.

Generally speaking, Achebe seems to reveal that there are cultural shortcomings which need correcting. To depict this fact is to depict a worthy precursor of a good modern civilization. Traditional culture is destroyed and unless modern Nigerian government (and African one) is an improvement on the destroyed past cultures, the crises will remain. This is seen in Anthills of the Savannah.

Concerning the cultural alienation in the post-colonial situation, a close link may be established between the actual one and that described in Anthills of the Savannah. There is credibility between the fictional and the actual facts. We talk of alienation when someone or a group of people acts as foreigners towards their society. The alienated and their landscape tend to exist in an antagonistic relation. They are foreign to themselves and refuse to reconcile with themselves, with their society. They adopt foreign values, don't affirm themselves but deny themselves. In fact, if it had been what Achebe calls "a bringing together like the necessary backward step which a judicious man takes in order to see a canvas steadily and fully"<sup>44</sup>, it would not have meant alienation. Unfortunately the people we refer to do not know how to select.

In real life, the external causes of cultural alienation are about the consequences of the contact with Europe. With the coming of the white man, there was a falling apart of traditional values. The natives were taught some new principles and systems of self-interest and were told to forget the sense of collective good.

A reference to Nigeria would show that there was a crossroad of cultures. It was represented by the point where the Igbo values met with foreign structures. But there was an unbalance in the interaction. There was no state of intelligibility, no

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<sup>44</sup>Quoted by GIKANDI. Op.cit. p.29.

complementarity. Rather, we found relations of domination and African traditions tended to die away. There was a gradual loss among Africans and the colonial complex prevailed after the departure of the white man. The ancient habits were disturbed.

Indeed, in the post-colonial situation, there is what Jean Franco calls the "reconstruction of past errors"<sup>45</sup>. The colonizers fixed the colonized as a people without an objective history and hence subject to European values. Initially, the Africans should fight in order to return history to their brothers. Unfortunately they don't do it. They are what Fanon calls "black skin, white mask"<sup>46</sup> who even partake in the destruction of cultural values. They have preferred uprootedness to deep-rootedness. All this may be traced back to colonization.

Another aspect of alienation is the dilemma facing the African intellectual after the contact with Europe. It is a dilemma of knowledge and experience. In fact, schooling may also shape the mind of the elite and influence them. School has cultural aspects; it is foreign. Historically, schools were set up in Africa by foreigners who transmitted their knowledge. Thanks to their teaching, they conveyed their own vision of the world, their cultures.

At the beginning, the schools were led by missionaries who delivered their knowledge while accomplishing an evangelical mission. They could not rely on oral traditions. They had to teach their language, reading and writing. All they wanted was, in one way or another, to spread their culture. In many cases, the Africans had to move in order to be educated abroad. However that may be, uprootedness was born. Homi K. Bhabha's following words illustrate the point:

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p.27.

<sup>46</sup> Frantz Fanon, Black Skin- White Mask. Trans. C. L. Markmann. London. Hutchinson of London. 1989.

*The principal method of teaching them the English language would be by giving them English phrases and sentences, with a translation for them to commit to memory. These sentences might be so arranged as to teach them whatever the sentiments the instructor should choose. They would become, in short, attached to the Mission*<sup>47</sup>.

The African intellectual (marked by western cultures) is lost. He wants to be committed in the struggle (the liberation of his nation) but bears on him something that prevents him from doing so.

There is verisimilitude between the actual alienation in Africa and the one described in Anthills of the Savannah. Alienation is realistically portrayed by Achebe. Many of the characters in the novel are alienated. With colonization, individualism has taken place. Achebe is aware of that when he writes that the British "had totally and completely ruled out the keeping of domestic animals in their reservation. Except dogs, of course."<sup>48</sup> The people of Kangan is influenced by the foreigners. In one way or another, Sam, Chris and others tend to promote foreign cultural values.

In general, many of the characters think over the historical moments that have led to the post-colonial situation. They also reflect on the way their individual selves and identities have been shaped. For instance, Beatrice "was born into a world apart; was baptized and sent to schools which made much about the English and the Jews and the Hindu and practically everybody else but hardly put in a world for her forebears and the divinities whom they had evolved. So she came to barely knowing who she was." <sup>49</sup>

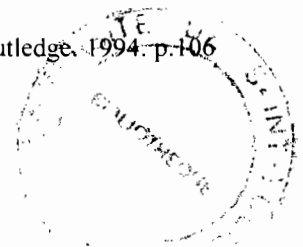
Another consequence of the contact with Europe in the novel is the dilemma of the African intellectuals. It is not easy for them to expand their experience to the

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Homi K. BHARBA. The Location of Culture. London & New York. Routledge. 1994. p.106

<sup>48</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Anthills of the Savannah.cit. p.107.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p.105.



underprivileged. Even Ikem, witnessing the "stubborn sense of community", becomes aware of his own isolation in the social situation which he has attempted to influence:

*What about renouncing my own experience, needs and knowledge? But could I and should I[...]? So for good or ill I shall remain myself.*<sup>50</sup>

Hence, we realize that it is difficult for these characters (the intellectuals) to develop a fundamental knowledge of a people different from them. This aspect is close to the actual dilemma of the African intellectual as seen earlier.

So, as far as cultural alienation is concerned, we see that there is credibility between the actual world and the fictional one. In other terms, cultural alienation is realistically portrayed by Achebe.

However, in post-colonial Africa (in real life), not only do we have a cultural crisis but also a political one. Actually in Nigeria, the trouble is that of leadership. Achebe states that "The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership [...] to the challenge of personal examples which are the hallmarks of true leadership."<sup>51</sup>

In reality, in Africa, the different elite discovered the interest to keep the states as they have been inherited. The different states recovered the repressive attributes which had been theirs before the independence. The foreign powers whose control was reinforced, did not hide the advantages they found in that situation which seemed to guarantee the eternity of their interests: No matter the ideologies the then regimes were claiming, there was a forced progression towards

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p.142.

<sup>51</sup> Chinua Achebe, The Trouble With Nigeria, London, Heinemann, 1984, P.1.

the forms of authoritarian states with the creation of a unique party.

The period comprised between 1963 and 1965 was the most decisive in the evolution. In most cases, the states and regimes disappointed the majority of people. There was the generalization of the unique party. In many cases, authoritarianism went together with the deterioration of the living standards of the masses; that's why Mbokolo writes:

*Entre 1945 et 1960, les différents régimes coloniaux avaient concédé quelques réformes qui avaient d'importants résultats mais avec l'incertitude des indépendances, les conditions étaient pires que celles de la dernière décennie de La colonisation*<sup>52</sup>

On the one hand, the leaders claimed the necessity for development in order to reject, in a remote future, the reforms deemed pressing by the majority. On the other, they adopted repression and the practice of corruption. Hence, it seemed that the authoritarian states did not succeed in inscribing in the reality moral values such as the care for public property. We had "upstarts and ruffians in the community who would uphold the regime at the expense of their own people."<sup>53</sup>

However, since 1973, a much deeper questioning seemed to have taken place. Many factors have intervened, in particular: the acceleration of the largely wide urbanization, which favours social inequalities and various risks of explosion; the extension of a crucial economic crisis.

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<sup>52</sup> Between 1945 and 1960, the different colonial regimes had conceded some reforms which had significant results but with the uncertainty of the independences, the conditions were worse than those of the last decade of colonisation. ( translation mine). From Elikia MBOKOLO. Afrique Noire: Histoire et Civilisations. Tome 2. Paris. Hatier. 1992. p.337.

<sup>53</sup> Chinua ACHEBE The Trouble with Nigeria. op.cit. p.48.

This failure of leadership is realistically portrayed by Achebe in his last novel. In Anthills of the Savannah, not only do we have colonization as the sole

explanation of the crises but also close causes. At this juncture, Ikem's assertion is clear:

*The prime failure of this government[...] is the failure of our rulers to re-establish vital inner link with the poor and dispossessed of this country, with the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation's being.<sup>54</sup>*

The quotation is kindred to what Achebe said about the actual failure of leadership in Nigeria. There is then the failure of the independences and the authoritarianism of the leaders is never punished. For Ikem, even if there are "remote causes" which explain the failure, the "close causes" are found at the first place.

In the story, there is the revelation of the various crimes committed by the dictator Sam. The shortcomings of his regime are depicted by the witnesses. The first thing is that he is alienated by power. Mad Medico mentions it:

*The most awful thing about power is not that it corrupts absolutely but that it makes people so utterly boring. I told you this boy [Sam] was such a charmer when I first met him<sup>55</sup>.*

This means that he is alienated by power. He no longer respects individual freedom and commits numerous crimes such as public executions. Through the mouth of Ikem, Achebe informs us about these executions:

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<sup>54</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Anthills of the Savannah. op.cit. p.144.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p.56.



*[...] I wrote my first crusading editorial calling on the president to promulgate forthwile a decree abrogating the law that permitted that outrageous and revolting performance<sup>56</sup>.*

What seems dangerous for the witness is that Sam commits his crimes on behalf of authority:

*I had never expected that authority should excel in matters of politics. But the ritual obscenities it perpetrated that afternoon took me quite by surprise.<sup>57</sup>*

Next to the crimes, there is corruption in the novel as it used to be in reality . Embezzlement is constantly mentioned in the story. Through his auxiliaries, Sam is provided with an authoritative power which has no precise limit. No distinction is made between public funds and personal belongings. There are "vast sums spent on the refurbishment of the retreat. Money incidentally, which had not been passed through the normal ministry of finance procedures."<sup>58</sup>

Consequently, two classes are established: the privileged (leaders) and the underprivileged (those who are governed). The former class lives as parasites on the back of the latter whose conditions remind us of the actual sufferings in Africa. The terrain through which Chris makes his final journey shows us how economic and political inequalities have contributed to the negation of the nationalist dream and culture. We have a wealthy South and a desolate North:

*The towns and villages on the Great North Road responded[...] to the general scaling down in the size of structures as one pushed out of the rain country slowly towards the land of droughts. The massive buildings of the new rich down the coast gave way to less imposing but still iron-roofed and cement-walled houses[...] As the bus lurched[...] Chris noticed that the same iron roofs were now borne more and more on the shoulders of mud walls.<sup>59</sup>*

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p.43.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p.104.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p.73.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p.206.

In a word, the authoritarianism of Sam has caused the deterioration of the living conditions of the masses and Achebe's depiction of this fact is close to the picture we have given of the failure of leadership in real post-colonial Africa.

Apart from this, the questions of tribalism and of political instability are important subthemes of the political crises. A presentation of the actual manifestation and the fictional one shows nearly the same features.

In real history, in post-colonial Africa, the issue of military takeovers and the exercise of power by the armies, with or without the collaboration of civilians seems, at first sight, to apply to a constitutional debate over the forms of governments. In fact, since the independences, the direct interventions of soldiers in the political life has become so frequent that they display, not only the difficult search for a reliable regime, but also all the disorders which make the societies crumble and which hit the states. Since the declaration of the independences, half of African states have known a successful military takeover. There is also the case of the military conspiracies (real or suspected but which have been discovered in time) that almost all the states have known.

The repetition and the relatively easy success of the coups shed light on the major characteristics of the states inherited from colonization. Post-colonial states comprise, among their dominant features, the fact of being in permanent crises

In Nigeria, the post-colonial State was hit by a political crisis so that it was on the verge of crumbling. The country knew two coups in 1966. The first happened on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January (with Ironsi) and the second on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August (with Gowon). In July 1975, Gowon was overthrown by another coup. So in less than a decade, three takeovers took place. On the whole, a military takeover brought about another one and gave way to a long period of conspiracies and conjurations which symbolize the divisions among the armies.

In some other cases in Nigeria, the army was divided and reproduced the tendencies of the political class of the civilians. The ethnic considerations have played, in these situations, a significant part. This is tribalism which Achebe perceives as "discrimination against a citizen because of his place of birth."<sup>60</sup>

Tribalism and the failure of nationalism are realities lived in post-colonial Africa. We have the failure of democracy because of tribalism (absence of unity). There is the absence of a political and administrative elite who is able to run the countries while accepting to be controlled by the nation. It can be noticed that post-colonial African states are still at a tribal stage within internal division, ethnic conflicts (the example of Nigeria). The leaders are most of the time "trained" abroad and the middle-grades managers are almost non-existent.

The main problem is the choice of a constitution when in fact the solution demands an evaluation of the opposed forces, a mastery of the social data and of the existing social settings. The leaders are not "entirely free of the collaborating Warrant Chief Syndrome."<sup>61</sup>

African leaders are so unable to situate themselves that they have adopted without alteration western constitutions. There is no original political regime corresponding to the sociological realities of the countries so that the constitutions are artificial and decorative façades which are adapted to the realities of the countries. This leads to a distortion of social values. The leaders keep on admiring western styles which practise the policy of "divide-and-rule".

Achebe seems to have exploited this material (tribalism and political instability) in his last novel. In Anthills of the Savannah, the troubles linked with tribalism and the various coups are mentioned and resemble those in the actual post colonial situation. In the story, political instability is largely due to the lack of morality. Beatrice's narrative gives a broader sense of power. It is structured round

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<sup>60</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. The Trouble With Nigeria. op.cit. p. 4

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

the mysteries that surround us and the link that exists between the world and the divinity that sponsors it:

*In the beginning power rampaged through our world naked. So the Almighty, looking at his creation through the round undying eye of the Sun, saw and pondered and finally decided to send his daughter Idemili, to bear witness to the moral nature of authority by wrapping around Power's rude waist a loincloth of peace and modesty.<sup>62</sup>*

The Almighty's aim was to provide his creatures with power and authority. But finally there is the triumph of power because the morality epitomized by Idemili has disappeared. The balance between the two entities (secular power and moral authority) got imperiled by some problems; its devotees increased and spread all over the world:

*But as people multiplied and spread across the world, they built little shrines farther and farther[...] Still their numbers continued to increase and outstrip the provisions of every new settlement[...]*

The worst thing is that people are unable to keep the original moral sense to reconcile the destructive effects of power:

*Man's best artifice to snare and hold the grandeur of divinity always scumbles in his hands, and the more ardently he strives, the more paltry and incongruous the result.<sup>63</sup>*

Accordingly, it can be argued that the lack of morality pushes many people to be interested in power. The coups become more and more numerous and we are induced to grasp the actual political instability in Africa as mentioned earlier. Sam became head of the State thanks to a coup and is overthrown by another one:

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<sup>62</sup> Chinua Achebe. Anthills of the Savannah. op.cit. p.102.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p.103.

" They say unknown person enter palace and kidnap am "<sup>64</sup>. The conspiracies and deterioration of the living conditions make people leaders of preying states: " All the wars fought in this country were, are diversionary "<sup>65</sup>.

The issue of tribalism is also mentioned in the novel. Independence has produced a tribal state which does not favour development. The lecture organized by Ikem is significant: with the independences, the regimes have produced every kind of practices which cause tribalism. The example of the referendum is sufficient enough to sustain such an argument. The Abazonians have voted "no" and this causes them the closing of the water-holes they started digging in their region.

The idea of tribalism goes together with the failure of nationalism. In the state Achebe depicts, human friendship is repressed; it is not succoured. Some characters such as Sam do not enable the birth of a national culture. Rather, they promote foreign values and their policies mitigate against cultural identity:

*The real danger today is from that fat, adolescent and delinquent millionaire, America, and from all those virulent, misshapen freaks like Amin and Bokassa sired on Africa by Europe.*<sup>66</sup>

The situation depicted by Achebe does not surprise any reader aware of the conditions of post-colonial Africa. There is a resemblance between this depiction and the one we have given of the political instability and tribalism which actually exist in post-colonial Africa.

Broadly speaking, a reading of Things Fall Apart and Anthills of the Savannah may give the illusion that the themes might exist in reality. The settings remind us respectively of Africa before and during colonization, and post-colonial

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p.213.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p.146.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p.52.

Africa. But the various themes are undergone by characters who give them sense. To a certain extent, one may assert that every story is that of characters. There is a need to analyse them in order to see how they advance the realistic attempt.

## Part Two: Characterization

Achebe, while painting reality, imagines in his novel what is peculiar to every social group, every character. He describes the attitudes of the characters and reveals their personality. Through characterization many themes are described and each of them is symbolized by a character or a group of characters.

This part attempts to show the realistic illusion created by the author thanks to characters. In a first section, we propose to study the character of Okonkwo and Sam. The choice is based on the fact that the former is the main hero in Things Fall Apart, and with the latter we are in<sup>a</sup> state whose hierarchy we would like to follow. A second section will be concerned with other characters.



## **Section One: Okonkwo and Sam**

The story of the hero in Achebe's work may be represented by a circle. At the end of existence, there is always a similar situation between the falling point and the starting one. The hero of Achebe's work is often an ordinary person who, by the interplay of social forces or political opportunism, suddenly reaches a high position of material or moral power and then is sent back to his social standing through suicide, madness, loss of his social position or prestige, death. This is the idea of circular destiny<sup>67</sup> illustrated by Okonkwo's character.

Realism appears first with the use of onomastics which is the study of names in the text. The illusion of reality is linked to the mode of designation of the character; the use of the proper name creates an impression of reality. It plays a double role: it means the fiction and the reality of the fiction. The name "Okonkwo" is at the same time literary and apply to the code which sees him as real.

Physically speaking, Okonkwo is a man of action. All the forces that moulded his personality are fully represented and he reminds us of an actual wrestler. But he is featured by his displacement from the Umuofian mainstream. Firstly his displacement is about the failure of language:

*He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he used his fists.*<sup>68</sup>

His stammering is a tragic flaw because in his society "the art of conversation is regarded very highly"<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> Discussed by MELONE. op.cit. pp.204-214.

<sup>68</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Things Fall Apart. op.cit. p.4.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p.7.

Next, his displacement pertains to the fact that he defines himself as the one who hates all that his father likes. He has repressed verbal competence which he sees as a means of his father who "has the sense of the dramatic". His heroism is the opposite of his father's cowardice. He is presented as "a man of action" who "unlike his father could stand the look of blood"<sup>70</sup>.

In the character of Okonkwo, there is a sentimental anxiety which is the internal reproduction of a felt emotion each time the same situation of danger is displayed. This danger is the economic hardships and the menace of destruction that Unoka may bring about. Patriarchy is a reproduction of a given identity, but Okonkwo did not inherit "a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife"<sup>71</sup> But can the hero get rid of the image of his father? Achebe reveals that the spectre of Unoka is always before Okonkwo. We are told that "to lay the foundations of a prosperous future ",Okonkwo worked" like one possessed and indeed he was possessed by the fear of his father's contemptible life and shameful death"<sup>72</sup>. Because of the presence of this spectre, he feels very restless and thinks that he must develop the liberating forces, in himself and in the world. This quest leads him to nervousness. He thus

negates the fundamental laws that govern his people's relationship: he beats his wife during the Holy Week and insists on violent actions to punish the religious converts<sup>73</sup>.

His determination to be goes together with the fear which causes him tragic tensions and drives all his actions towards the achievement of his objectives. But it is the same tensions that oblige him to wear a mask, to avoid to look like what he actually is. This behaviour is constant with the hero. All along the story we have the conflict between the self and the mask. For instance, we are told that, after having

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p.7.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p.18.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p.18.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. pp.158-159.

transgressed the sacred week, he is "inwardly repentant" but "he was not the man to go about and telling his neighbours that he was in error"<sup>74</sup>. Furthermore, his father was a sensual man and when Okonkwo buries the image of his father, he buries his own sexual drives which he constantly represses.

From these presentations, it would appear that Okonkwo has repressed an important part of himself and of his culture, if we keep in mind that Unoka represents an important side of Igbo life (the artistic experience which we will explore in the second section). This repression has hurried his failure.

This aspect of the character of Okonkwo could be linked to the issue of unity. The illusion of reality which may be created on the reader is that an individual is defined by his/her culture. To distant oneself from one's cultural mainstream may be dangerous. Okonkwo is the representative of the tragic elements of Africa. In many respects, the main protagonist seems to be Africa unable to contain certain types of personality. The real cause of the destruction of

Africa is the coming of the white man. But Achebe has created a dual tragedy (of a man and his society) of universal significance.

With traditional Africa, there is the sense of community. One of the greatest inventions meant to save this legacy should be the mystics of unity. But here is Africa which falls apart because the sense of unity is lost. The destruction of the continent is precipitated by the lack of unity with those from the same cultural background as symbolized by the death of Okonkwo (precipitated by his distantiation from the Igbo mainstream).

Another aspect of Okonkwo is his static character. This lack of change may be linked to the negative aspects of the African past (in real life) which need correcting. Through the story, it is seen that Okonkwo is almost the same at the end

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p.31.

as well as the beginning. He poses before us as a character capable of no change. By the end of his exile, he gives the impression to be able to get back on his feet. But the historical deeds do not allow him to reconquer his lost position and he chooses death.

The illusion of reality is that our past has unpromising aspects which should be corrected. Change is required and Africa needs men who are able to select the good sides of western cultures and not those who constantly refuse change as Okonkwo the static character does.

It is true that in Things Fall Apart, Achebe represents or re-represents the cultural roots of the actual Igbo society in order to provide self-confidence. But at the same time, the roots are referred to some universal principles and difference may be necessary in the frame of national self-confidence. The novel reveals that the perpetual human types recur in all cultures and that all effective civilizations must learn to deal with these types. Achebe's aim, as he said, is to present a humanity which is beyond the European and the African, which transcends them, which is common to both but peculiar to neither:

*One general point is fundamental and essential to the appreciations of the African issues by Americans. Africans are people in the same way that Americans, Europeans, Asians, and others are people.*<sup>75</sup>

So, Achebe seems to reveal the African ability in precolonial time to incorporate the variety of humans in a well-functioning culture. Hence he refers Africa to standards such as democracy, tolerance etc. which both Americans and Africans can seek. But he is aware that our past bears some flaws that should be corrected.

In sum, lack of unity and change is symbolized by the character of Okonkwo. Even after the independences, we encounter this lack of unity and traces

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<sup>75</sup> In Approaches to Teaching Achebe's Things Fall Apart, op.cit. p.21.

of selfishness with some characters such as Sam.

What we said of onomastics with Okonkwo is true to the name "Sam". Through the mode of designation with the proper name, there is illusion of reality. There are also illusions of reality with the physical standing of Sam. Through the mouth of the first witness (Chris), Achebe insists on the look of Sam:

*For a few minutes or so the fury of his eyes lay on me. Briefly our eyes had been locked in combat. Then I had lowered mine to the shiny-table-top in ceremonial capitulation.*<sup>76</sup>

The "fury" in his look represents menace and charisma. This feature is shown in greater details with his gait and way of speaking. The superior and boastful tone he uses is characteristic of an actual dictator.

As for his dressing, he wears a danshiki, which is very symbolical. The aim of Achebe is that of authenticity: it seems that he wants to show that there is a link between the story and Nigeria. Moreover, the fact that Sam, a soldier, constantly dresses in civilian may make the reader think that he never intends to give back power to civilians. This situation reminds us of the strong regimes of post-colonial Africa.

The moral standing of Sam is more explicit than the physical one. Achebe's aim is, perhaps, to show the immorality of the leaders. Despite the fact that "His Excellency[...] is extremely good at such times"<sup>77</sup>, Sam is immoral. Talking to Chris about his refusal to go to Abazon, he says:

*You all seem to forget that I am still a soldier not a politician. Soldiers are plain and blunt[...].*<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Anthills of the Savannah, op.cit. p.1.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p.6.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p.4.

In Anthills of the Savannah, the portrait of Sam may be linked to human nature and is a result of a vision of Authority. In the novel, there is a constant reference to irony. Chris's following words are an example:

*That's a pity because what this country really needs is a ruthless dictator. At last for five good years.*<sup>79</sup>

Here irony allows the author to show that the nature of the now power is ridiculous. It enables him to condemn the system, to show that he is dissatisfied with African leadership.

Through the various remarks of the witnesses, the reader discovers that there is the use of fun directed towards Sam. But the purpose is not only to make him/her laugh. It has a very significant function: irony is used in order to denounce. The theatre of Molière (comedy) may be recalled: to teach people while making them laugh. Chris uses sentences which are very close to mockery:

*There is something else about Sam which makes him enormously easy to take: his sense of theatre. He is basically an actor and half of the things we are inclined to hold against him are no more than from his repertory to which he may have no sense of moral commitment what so ever.*<sup>80</sup>

That is to say that Sam would have made a good actor. In other words, he is not fit for politics. He was simply pushed by chance and "came to power without any preparation for political leadership"<sup>81</sup>. The fact that there is entertainment means that there is a criminal who is never punished. Achebe translates his awareness when he is disturbed by the various deeds and behaviour of Authority. He uses irony as a form of reaction, to condemn African political leaders.

Most of the time, the reader discovers that the moral features of Sam are vicious. That's why Ikem is very dubious about the attitude of His Excellency when

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p.3.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p.50.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p.12.

he mentions that "Of course one may well question the appropriateness of these attributes in a head of State"<sup>82</sup>. Sam is a wicked character who has a tyrannic conception of power. The fact that there is the transformation of the Republic of Kangan into an empire symbolizes the despotism of Sam: "The emperor may be a fool but he isn't a monster"<sup>83</sup>.

In some cases, Sam is introduced as an animal, "a lion to tame a leopard"<sup>84</sup>. He appears as a wild character whose greed and cruelty are identical with the state of nature. All that he wants is to remain a tyrant and not to share power. This greed could apply to many African leaders. In post-colonial Africa, many leaders have a tyrannical conception of their mission.

It is also shown that Sam always refers to foreigners. His main shortcoming is that he does what is "expected of him especially by the English[...]"<sup>85</sup>. This can make the reader think that the lack of political autonomy (as seen in the first part of this thesis) is pointed out. Actually in Africa, it is about an environment where the leaders cannot develop personal initiatives. They are always obliged to refer back to western leaders.

With the physical and moral standing of Sam, some features are displayed and bring the reader to grasp the image of the head of the State. Achebe uses some attributes that the actual or fictional person would have in reality.

Finally, we have the impression that the way Achebe pictures Sam is a means of revealing that this character must be demystified. He invites people to consider Sam as somebody who is bound to disappear. The character does not

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p.50.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p.46.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p.48.

please us and the disgust is sometimes sustained by irony.

In fact, the system of sympathy (judging a character as positive or negative) is a means of achieving realistic effects. Its acceptance imposed by the literary work appears as the effect of a contract. After the reading of a novel, there is a kind of contract which is established between the reader and the text. For Vincent Jouve, "Lire, [...] c'est accepter le rôle que le texte nous assigne"<sup>85</sup>. The constitutive traits of the agents classify them and designate them to our agreement (disagreement). In this system, the cultural code may be used. For Vincent Jouve, "Ce code entre en jeu lorsque le lecteur juge un personnage comme positif ou négatif à partir de valeurs extra-textuelles"<sup>87</sup>. What matters, Jouve says, is the axiology of the reading subject; the illusion is such that we judge the fictional character as we would judge a real one. With the negative aspect, this code seeks a coherence in a world where the economic and the social structures make the character meaningless. It devalorizes him. The character is not a model to follow<sup>88</sup>. This happens with Sam. The irony of Achebe traces a large distance between him and the narrator. He has to present the destiny of Sam as negative. Thus, the reader operates a displacement of the individual to the social system in the negative mark of the novel. The character dies and thereby we perceive Achebe's condemnation of the leaders in real life. For him, they should be demystified and what's more they have to disappear.

Through the portraits of Okonkwo and Sam some themes are represented. At the same time, they resemble certain elements of Africa. In other words, they are realistically portrayed.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p.49.

<sup>86</sup> To read is to accept the role the text assigns us ( translation<sup>mine</sup>). From V. Jouve. L'Effet Personnage dans le Roman. Paris. P.U.F. 1992. P.120.

<sup>87</sup> This (...) code occurs when the reader judges a character as positive or negative from extra-textual values (translation mine). From V. Jouve. op.cit. p.108.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. pp.108-144.



However, to reveal certain hidden realities or to condemn African systems, Achebe does not limit himself to the two characters. In Anthills of the Savannah we find the surrounding of Sam and in Things Fall Apart there are many other characters who plainly contribute to the creation of illusions of reality.

## **Section Two: Other Characters.**

In Achebe's last novel, the power of the head of the State is not individual; it is collective. Also in Things Fall Apart there are many other characters who advance the story. A novel deals with society, i.e. a group of people interacting upon one another. Obviously, we cannot talk of man outside society. Man is not an isolated entity. We have to analyse him according to social relations.

This section attempts to explore the characters with artistic experiences, the immediate supporters of colonization and post-colonial authority, finally the people with the emergence of female characters.

A case in point in the various artistic experiences is that of Unoka, the musician. This character whose moral and physical standing contrast with that of his son (Okonkwo), appears as a naughty person before the clan. But this man is also an artist, which makes him sympathetic:

*He was very good on his flute, and his happiest moments were the two or three moons after the harvest when the village musicians brought down their instruments, hung above the fire place[...]<sup>89</sup>*

Thus, his personality presents positive aspects. He is rich with his creative gifts and the kind of music he plays pleases the village. The system of sympathy creates realistic effects next to the proper name "Unoka".

Unoka is able to bring about the hunger of spiritual food among his fellows. the search for culture which is a fundamental aspect of life. This aspect of the character may mean that Africa had history and culture. Unoka's creative activity is stimulated by wine and is permanent. The illusion of reality which is sustained is that art is a refuge, a kind of artificial paradise. For the poet, the poetic experience is the sole authentic experience because it is rooted in the desires.

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<sup>89</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Things Fall Apart. op.cit. p.4.

Unoka is also a person full of humour. This in debt man is an excellent "lawyer" (for instance his answer to Okoye who comes to claim for his credits<sup>90</sup>). This attitude matches the profile of the Igbo society in which "the art of conversation is regarded very highly[...]"<sup>91</sup>. The poetic state for him is a perpetual childhood (innocence, purity, pleasure, relation with nature) and his only company is that of children. The latter can sometimes be considered as artists.

In Things Fall Apart, we find the trio of children: Nwoye, Ezinma and Ikemefuna. The case of these characters is all the more striking as their experiences place the artistic creation at the root of poetic life (between nature and culture). They are very young (at least when the story begins). The main communal trait of these children is that they are contemporary to a period which coincides with the "childhood" of history. Melone calls them "les enfants de l'enfance du monde"<sup>92</sup>. It is a poetic world which neither suffers the discursive and selective discrimination of the reason of the adults nor the destructive contact <sup>with</sup> culture.

The innocence of the trio and their happiness contrast with their tragic destiny. The three of them are innocent victims. It is allowed to see in this case, in the tragedy of life, the privileged source, the primordial stimulant of artistic creation as in the case of Unoka.

The trio is marked by their sharpness of mind and their skill ~~to~~ tell stories. There is the disponibility of their frail psyche which is impressed by events while ignoring the significance or the root. For instance what strikes Ezinma in the story of the tortoise is not the implausibility of the spectacle but the astuteness of the reptile and his punishment.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p.7.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p.7.

<sup>92</sup> The children of the childhood of the world ( translation mine). From Thomas MELONE. op.cit. p.163.

This presentation of the trio is lifelike. The world of children is a poetic setting. Children live through their instincts which identify with nature with which they keep a close relation. Achebe's realism is reinforced by the use of onomastics. The names "Nwoye", "Ikemefuna", "Ezinma" apply to the code which perceives them as real. With these children, the illusion of reality is also sustained by the system of sympathy. Thanks to extra-textual values we judge them as real.

All in all, through the artistic experiences in Things Fall Apart, it is allowed to see a realistic attempt on behalf of Achebe. The artists partake of the same community of destiny as Achebe and testify to the permanence of the universe of children in artistic creation. Advocating a return to "primitivism", the African writer discovers a real source of life only by renewing the contact with the primordial forces of his/her race or culture. Achebe shows that Africans had civilization and history. They were not taught culture by Europeans. For him Africa "had above all art and poetry"<sup>93</sup>.

The world of artists is also found in Anthills of the Savannah. The examples of Chris and Ikem can be taken<sup>94</sup>. Both characters obey the norms of onomastics. The way they are designated is such that they stand as real persons. The names "Chris" and "Ikem" are not simply literary; they also mean the reality of the fiction<sup>95</sup>.

Chris is a graduate of the London School of Economics who loves debates very much. He has moved from the Editorship of the National Gazette to the post of Commissioner for Information. In the course of the novel, he changes and keeps on having a critical view of Sam. He is against the constraints Sam exercises upon them. Hence, he wants to be systematically fed up with Sam. The kind of revolt he

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<sup>93</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. "The Role of the Writer In a New Nation". op.cit. p.8.

<sup>94</sup> Beatrice is also a writer but we propose to analyse her in the passage concerned with female characters.

<sup>95</sup> The use of onomastics is to be applied to all the characters who bear a proper name.

leads is characteristic of some ministers and suggests commitment.

The change of the character represents the structure of suspense<sup>96</sup>. This structure plays a major part in the referential illusion. A character is an empty sign which the novel fills little by little and then remains uncertain till the end or near the end of the story. The relative instability of Chris keeps him as "living". He is constructed in duration as the actual human being is in time.

As for Ikem, he is a man of principles, the tough "rebel" who is not ready to bargain his freedom of speech and this earns him sympathy. The fact that we judge him with the system of sympathy creates illusions of reality. He is a poet with a trusting heart and fights for the freedom of the local press. But he is not allowed to do freely his job because he writes harsh editorials against the system. He believes that the truth of the printed word may influence his corrupt childhood companion. More than being bent on writing, he is keen on meeting his people. He tries to hold "secret meetings" with them. He thus appears as unbearable before the government which issues "a formal letter suspending him with immediate effects"<sup>97</sup>. Later he will be killed.

A link may be found between the situation of the writer in Anthills of the Savannah and the burden of the African writer in the actual context. The way writers are treated in the novel gives the impression that it is true to life in post-colonial Africa. In real life, in Africa, writers or artists in general undergo real historical influences. There are unauthentic settings and they suffer. They can either keep quiet or tell it and risk the same situation as Ikem. For instance many journalists who are bent on denouncing injustice do it at the cost of their life. Normally the job of the writers should be to persist in seeing and making others see. Césaire is convinced of that:

96 I translated the terms "structure de suspense" which I borrowed From V. Jouve .op.cit,p.115

97 Chinua ACHEBE. Anthills of the Savannah. op.cit. p.143.

*My tongues shall serve those miseries which have no tongue, my voice the liberty of those who founder in the dungeons of despair.*<sup>98</sup>

The formula is beautiful but the dilemma of the writers is to be listened to when they mention truths which people do not want to hear. When they want to "serve those miseries which have no tongue", they are forced to exile or killed. With the flouting of political independence, many writers suffer from a lack of autonomy as if they represented a powerless Africa. Those who look for authentic values are at odds with their society. On the way to the land of authentic values, every act and every object are signs whose meaning is to be read beyond the appearances. The novel becomes allegorical. Anthills of the Savannah<sup>99</sup> is to be ranged in this category.

The upheavals of the continent (general crises) impinge on the African novel: wars, coups d'états, imprisonments, all these things gag the writers for some years. The act of writing may seem absurd or useless in the tormented period of post-colonial Africa because the main problems are "what to say? to whom tell it? How?" After 1973, the role of the writer as a teacher<sup>100</sup> was claimed by the writers. In fact the question of commitment has always been how to convey politics in real life through literature. However that may be, the task has always been perilous.

In sum, the study of the experiences of the artists in both novels teaches us about the idea the author has about the work and the life of an artist. Furthermore, it informs us about a possible kinship (or community of fate) which would unite Achebe and other African writers.

Among other characters in both novels, one could cite members of the cabinet - apart from Chris and Ikem - and the judges (Anthills of the Savannah).

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<sup>98</sup> Aimé Césaire. "Return to my Native Land". African Arts / Arts d'Afrique. In West Africa. 1968. pp.100-101.

<sup>99</sup> Chinua ACHEBE "The role of the writer In a New Nation". op.cit.

and the representatives of colonization (Things Fall Apart). In Achebe's last novel, the ministers are the immediate collaborators of Sam. It is the same for the judges. Both classes are permanently found in the story. They are the ones supposed to implement the various programmes set by Sam. These programmes aim at maintaining the domination of the latter. There are eleven ministers expected to be "the cream of society and the hope of the black race"<sup>100</sup>. They are friends and many of them take part in the degradation of power and depend on Sam. Professor Okong is aware of that:

*Your Excellency is not only our leader but also our teacher. We are always ready to learn*<sup>101</sup>.

So, most of them are corrupt, materially and morally speaking. All that they want is to have a share of the cake. And the reward is in <sup>the</sup> hands of Sam; that's why they have to flatter him.

Moreover, in the novel, the authoritarianism of Sam brings about that of the ministers. Hence the real victims are the masses who should claim for their rights before the courts. Unfortunately, the judges are very corrupt. The term "justice" has no sense in the story. There is a tyrannical link between the executive power and the legislative one. Whereas the judges should defend the weak and the righteous, they violate the laws to the account of Sam.

There are illusions of reality with these characters. Apart from the use of onomastics and the system of sympathy, the way they are depicted can be linked to the actual organizations of post-colonial regimes in Africa. In Africa, there are lots of conspiracies and nepotism is a real practice. Most of the time, African cabinets are like a circle of family or friendship and, in this "compound", the president holds the yam and the stick. His collaborators are obliged to obey him; otherwise they

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<sup>100</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Anthills of the Savannah, op.cit. p.2.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p.18.

will be punished. African systems are all the more powerful as there is no separation between the powers (legislative, judiciary and executive). In a word there is the failure of democracy.

The representatives of colonization also strike our attention and their representation is lifelike. Take the case of the District Commissioner. He does not arrange things when he jails the six chiefs from Umuofia. The book ends with a passage revealing his mentality. For him the Umuofian society offers only the substance of a "reasonable paragraph". The attempt of Achebe is realistic. The District Commissioner reminds us of the mistaken Europeans, those who used to misrepresent Africa. It is possible to see in this character a Joyce Cary or any European who gave derogatory images of Africa.

In addition, in Things Fall Apart, we find the messengers of the court. It is a pompous name to designate prison warders, soldiers or militiamen recruited by the colonizers. The Igbos call them "Kotma" (abbreviation of the English word "Court Messengers"). Like some ministers in Anthills of the Savannah, they appear as zealous servants and sometimes go beyond the recommendations of the District Commissioner. For instance, the District Commissioner tells them to treat the six chiefs who are arrested in a gentle way. But as soon as he has left, they start ill-treating them.

The status of the auxiliaries of colonization is similar to what really existed in colonial Africa. No movement of conquest or colonization can develop or be maintained if there is no local help or close external assistance. The missionaries were not numerous and the remoteness of the metropolitan bases would not be compensated by the technological superiority of the Westerners. The Europeans, thus, had profited by the lack of patriotism of some Africans to occupy gradually the target territories.



Soldiers are also represented in Anthills of the Savannah. They are the ones supposed to keep order. But Achebe presents them as supporters of Sam. Finally there is no order. We understand the rhetorical question of Chris when he asks "Security forces! who or what were they securing ?"<sup>102</sup>. Those who are expected to keep order are the very ones who trouble it. They ill-treat people. A soldier who is driving a car on the verge of grinding a passer- by says to him "If I kill you I kill dog[...]"<sup>103</sup>.

By extension, the soldiers and the religious form a duo which strongly participates in the repressive policy of Sam. Both categories are rich and corrupt. The religious character who integrates power is embodied by Pr Okong:

*Professor Reginald Okong, though a buffon is a fighter of sorts and totally self-made. Unfortunately he has no sense of political morality which is a double tragedy for a man who began his career as an American Baptist minister and later became Professor of political science at our university*<sup>104</sup>.

He is among those religious characters subdued to the president. His function of minister makes him distant from his initial job consisting of spreading the gospel.

This depiction of soldiers and religious characters in Anthills of the Savannah is close to what we know of Africa. In reality, in Africa, many armies serve only the president. In many cases the heads of states are the "supreme chiefs" of the armies. The leaders need soldiers to keep a very strong regime. Achebe also criticizes certain types of religious people who have no sacerdotal mission. Indeed, in Africa the separation between the spiritual and the temporal is not always effective. There are kinds of "theologian states"<sup>105</sup>. They are states which are

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.p.212

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. p.48.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. p.40

<sup>105</sup> I translated the term "Etat théologien" which I borrowed from Achille Mbembe. Les Afriques indociles:Christianisme, Pouvoir et Etat en Société Postcoloniale. Paris. Kartala.1988.

constantly found in Africa and which draw many of their features from the Church.

Religious characters are also encountered in Things Fall Apart: Mr. Brown, Mr. Smith and Kiaga. From the beginning, Mr. Brown (a missionary) is very keen on imposing his religion. That's why he wants to deny the Igbo gods. Soon he discovers his awkwardness and understands that his attempts may be compromised in case there are some conflicts. Moreover, he has to gain time in order to set up his church. The fact that he has retained Enoch (the most zealous of the followers) marks an important stage in the future of the Mission in Umuofia: the clan pays him respect, and thanks to his talk with some personalities, he succeeds in understanding the religion of the Igbos.

This presentation of Mr. Brown is realistic. Achebe's artistic objectivity is striking: he does not present all the intruders "so much as villain as catalyst"<sup>106</sup>. There are good aspects brought through Christianity and Chinua Achebe develops the idea of complementary. As observed with Okonkwo, he wants to present a humanity which transcends the African and the European. Cultures must learn to deal with one another.

As for Mr. Smith, he condemns publicly the policy of Mr. Brown. After the sacrilege of Enoch (unmasking of an Egwugwu), Ajofia (leader of the Egwugwu) comes to see him with a spirit of conciliation. But he remains firm and resorts to the army of the administration in order to save the church.

There is a realistic aspect with this portrait. Mr. Smith represents for the white man what Okonkwo is for the Igbos. They symbolize refusal for change, intolerance and violence which often lead to tragic situations. The actual factor which has destroyed Africa is the coming of the white man. Achebe is aware of that and made his abhorrence of colonialism very clear. For him the crisis in Igboland

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<sup>106</sup>Gilbert PHELPS. "Two Nigerian Writers : Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka ". In The New Pelican Guide to English Literature, vol.8. Ed. Boris FORD. Great Britain . Penguin Books. 1983. p.334

"goes back, of course, to the beginning of colonial administration"<sup>107</sup>.

The missionaries had a negative attitude vis-à-vis the African culture and religion. From the very beginning, they were resolute to destroy them. They said that the only true god was the one revealed in the Bible. For them, all the other gods were only illusions; apart from the Church, there was no other source of salvation. Rich of their conviction to hold the sole truth, they rejected all that was "pagan" as Smith does. They preached against all kinds of traditional practices. On the whole, to be a Christian meant, to a large extent, to stop being an African and to take as reference European cultures.

The third representative of Christianity, Mr. Kiaga, who is first a mere interpreter of Mr. Brown, will soon lead the Church of Mbanta because the English missionary lives in Umuofia where his headquarters are located. As a faithful disciple of Mr. Brown, he retains his flock during the quarantining of Christians by the villagers of Mbanta.

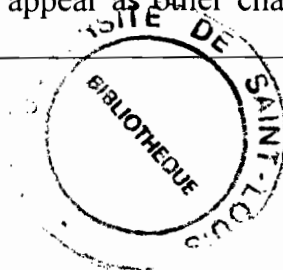
Mr. Kiaga reminds us of actual people who left their ethnic group in order to work as collaborators of the missionaries. The example of Samuel A. Crowther is illustrative. Even Achebe's father worked as a collaborator of the white men. Thus one may say that with this character (Kiaga) the representation is realistic.

Broadly speaking, with the portraits of the leaders and colonial authorities, we always find ideas of verisimilitude between the fiction and the actual world. However that may be, their actions are orientated towards the people. Obviously, the colonizers have come to colonize people and without individuals there cannot be the constitution of a state.

In Things Fall Apart, fourty names or so appear as other characters from

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<sup>107</sup> Chinua Achebe. The Trouble With Nigeria. op.cit. p.47.



Umuofia. But they are episodic characters (or simply cited ones) without any major influence on the action except for Obierika, Chielo, Nwakibie and Ogbuefi Ezeulu to a lesser extent. Our aim is to study the responsibility of the people in the crises.

As mentioned in the first part of this thesis, art and culture were very developed in Umuofia. There was also total democracy. All these cultural, social, military, economic and political institutions had only one objective: to keep man happy in his community. Man is the agent and the finality of any prosperity in a world where it is good to live, as Achebe states in an interview with Lewis Nkosi, in Africa Report:

*This particular society had its good side. The poetry of life, the simply if you like, the communal way of sharing in happiness and sorrow and in work and all that. It also had art and music<sup>108</sup>.*

But even if these aspects are true to the society described in the novel, the arrival of the missionaries will change things. After his return from exile, Okonkwo finds that things are up-side-down, tend to fall apart. His place among the Egwugwu is lost and the masked spirits no longer administer justice. The new religion gains more and more ground:

*A man's place was not always there, waiting for him[...] The clan was like a lizard; if it lost tail it soon grew another<sup>109</sup>.*

People from the same clan become enemies. We witness the conflict between Okonkwo and his son Nwoye. The gods no longer react and men have lost the "power for fight". For Okonkwo this situation is unbearable:

*Okonkwo was deeply grieved. He mourned for the clan which he saw breaking up and falling apart and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia, who had*

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<sup>108</sup> Quoted by Melone. op.cit. p.58

<sup>109</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Things Fall Apart. op.cit. p.171.

*so unaccountably become soft like women*<sup>110</sup>.

As the story progresses, Achebe creates around the hero a universe of tragic solitude. He is forsaken by people. Life thus becomes absurd and he chooses suicide.

The realistic attempt of Achebe is in relation with the lack of unity in traditional Africa. Actually, in Africa, the white man had profited by the tribal conflicts, the internal divisions and the lack of unity among Africans to settle down in the continent.

The failure of nationalism is also realistically portrayed in Anthills of the Savannah. The authority of Sam is applied on the people who is also indicted in the lack of nationalism. People no longer care of their brothers. In many cases we have irresponsible and coward people. Ikem is thoroughly disturbed by the attitude of some people during the mangling of four citizens:

*But it wasn't authority that worried me really. It never does. It wasn't those officious footlings, either. It wasn't even the four who were mangled. It was the thousands who laughed so blatantly at their own humiliation and murder*<sup>111</sup>.

Here we see that things have entirely fallen apart. Those thousands Ikem speaks about should normally support their brothers. Unfortunately there is no sense of nationalism. In other cases, the people lives resignedly. That's why it is very close to the auxiliaries of Sam. It is indifferent in front of the political affairs. Also, before the official demonstrations (marked by violence and costly solemnity), the people is impotent (not important !) and ridiculous. This lack of unity and the failure of nationalism do not surprise any reader aware of the situation of post-colonial Africa. They are realities lived in Africa.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid. p.165.

<sup>111</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Anthills of the Savannah. op.cit. p.41.

However, in Anthills of the Savannah, there is a especial evolution. The opposition of some characters is praised. The case of the students can be taken. Opposition is embodied in their movement. Through Ikem's lecture, we also discover that the people does not always abide by the prevailing policy; it does not always favour the tyrannical power of Sam. For instance, the Abazonians voted "no" during the referendum which consisted *in* electing Sam as "president for life". The fact that there is a delegation from Abazon means that the people is not always passive.

This evolution is sometimes true to Africa. In post-colonial Africa, there are some states with different objectives. Unable to achieve their goals, the authoritarian states faced an active revolt, though it was often limited to relatively narrow circles; schoolboys and students, trade unions etc.

In general, Achebe portrays the people in a particular way and not in a general manner. Thus in Anthills of the Savannah, he presents us some scenes in the various streets. He allows us to discover the taxi-drivers, the traders, the passers-by etc. Each time, we feel a living environment, an actual one with their conditions. But most of the time, he wants to reveal that the people is partly responsible for the crises.

In both novels, with the people, there is the emergence of female characters. In our study we choose to analyse their conditions and to show the realistic aspects with their treatment.

Things Fall Apart presents a world where most of the time the women's role is relatively static. Sometimes, female characters are objective causative agents as we see it in the inter-communal conflict between Umuofia and Mbaino. The innocent girl to replace Ogbuefi Udo's wife appears as a mere symbol of executing traditional rites. Generally, women are excluded from the various important aspects of life and have a low status. Subservience prevails .

The issue of subservience is a reality in colonial Africa. During colonialism, many husbands were servants to Europeans. These same men, afterwards, returned home to be served food cooked by their wives. That is, they expected their wives to become their own servants. If then men were cheap commodities before Europeans, the women themselves were worse because they could not expect a higher status than that of their men.

Some feminist critics such as Rhonda Cobham are not satisfied with Achebe's treatment of women. Cobham argues that Achebe has not taken into account the historical contributions of the Igbo women to the political situations and thereby reinforces a typically western sexist attitude toward women<sup>112</sup>. Such attacks do not seem fair. In the novel, there are redemptive aspects of womanhood. There is the famous phrase "Nneka [...] Mother is supreme". Men are those characters who take part in war. But in the periods of adversity, the female characters appear as supportive and tender beings. Explaining the saying "Mother is supreme", Uchendu explains the balance:

*It's true that a child belongs to its father. But when a father beats his child, it seeks sympathy in his mother's hut. A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you*<sup>113</sup>.

In the same prospect Chielo acts as a counterbalance to male strength. She is a woman of high standing. There are also the outstanding potentials of Ezinma and the example of many men betraying traditions whereas some women remain faithful. The redemptive aspects evoked in the fiction are close to what we know of some women in Africa. According to Kolawole, the mythology of Nneka is a reality in Igbo cosmology:

*When a man is dishonoured, disgraced or exiled[...], he takes refuges in his*

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<sup>112</sup> In Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe. Eds. INNES & LINDFORS. Washington .Three Continents Press. 1978. pp.91-100.

<sup>113</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Things Fall Apart.op.cit. p.124.

*mother's home or village*<sup>114</sup>.

Northrop Frye explains myths in terms of structure. He relates myth to culture. For him, myths are cultural models that man uses to "shape and reshape the civilization that he himself has made"<sup>115</sup> But apart from the denotative aspect (justifications of man's domination), myths have also a connotative impact. In African literature, there are myths of gender that impinge on women's self-esteem. Nneka is one of them.

In Africa, women often carried a long with men. The associations "Women in Nigeria" and "Yewwu Yewwi" (Senegal) are examples of women with positive actions in confronting governments. Some women used also to partake in the different wars<sup>116</sup>. In colonial times, women were not always simple objects. They were given dignity and valorized. Most of the time, they appeared as custodians of traditions. Motherhood and mothering were respected. Cheikh Anta Diop supports this argument:

*Thanks to a matriarchal system, our ancestors prior to any foreign influence had given women a choice place. They saw her not as an object but as a mother*<sup>117</sup>.

In the novel, if the Igbos have failed to implement the ideal balance, they also struggle so as to limit the male's abuse of his control over the female. Moreover, there are some indications that the male and the female are equal. For instance, in the case of Uzowulu who beats his wife, and his indignant in-laws who took his wife and children away, the Egwugwu warn Uzowulu that, it "is not bravery when a man fights with a woman"<sup>118</sup> and tell him to take a pot of wine to

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<sup>114</sup> KOLAWOLE. op.cit. p.63.

<sup>115</sup> Northrop Frye. *Essays on literature, Myth and Society*. Bloomington . Indiana University Press. 1976. p.21.

<sup>116</sup> About women's war, cf. KOLAWOLE. op.cit. pp.48-49.

<sup>117</sup> Cheikh Anta DIOP. cf. KOLAWOLE. op.cit. p.63.

<sup>118</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. *Things Fall Apart*. op.cit. p.93.



his in-laws so as to have his wife back. In-laws are depicted as opposed to ill-treatment of women and as acting to prevent it from happening<sup>119</sup>. We find also men such as Ndulu who treat their wives as equal. It is said that Ndulu "could not do anything without telling her".<sup>120</sup> Achebe suggests that not only does Ndulu's example exist, but it is also passed on in a song about this great warrior whom the rest of the tribe can admire.

Achebe presents the best men as those who combine the masculine and the feminine. Thus, Okonkwo is defective in his rejection of the feminine whereas the clan exacts the combination of male and female principles. For Okonkwo, female means Evil and male Good. During all his life, he is marked by the idea of masculinity as opposed to femininity. In a meeting, he says to a titleless man who disagrees with him "This meeting is for men". If he has rejected Christianity, it is because he sees it as female: it only recruits the Efulufu (slaves and mothers of twins). In his opinion, his son Nwoye has decided to live with female when he gets converted:

*To abandon the gods of one's father and go about with a lot of effeminate men clucking like old hens was the very depths of abomination*<sup>121</sup>.

Further, Uchendu reports the need to kill Ikemefuna, but at the same time advises Okonkwo against taking part in the murder. However, Okonkwo does because he doesn't want to be regarded as a weak person, the double of his father ("Agbala"). In addition to that, he is very harsh with his wives. During the Week of Peace, he will not stop beating one of them, "not even for fear of a goddess"<sup>122</sup> Ultimately, Okonkwo's destruction is tragic because, though it is brought about by the unjust system of the white man, Okonkwo is partially responsible for he has defied the sacred laws of his clan. His disrespect towards women precipitates his

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid. pp.90-91.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. p.68.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. p.153.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. p.30.

death.

This depiction is realistic. When Achebe wrote his novel, Nigeria was about to achieve her independence and Achebe wanted, probably, to provide the foundation for effective political institutions. He sees such institutions as combining both feminine and masculine principles, which would mean democracy. Unless this stage is born in independent Africa, the "death" of the continent will be precipitated as it is the case with Okonkwo.

A fundamental role is also played by females in Anthills of the Savannah. Achebe's last novel is mainly concerned with the abuse of male power. But it also suggests the necessity for women to "acknowledge and take upon themselves aspects of maleness".<sup>123</sup> The dynamic role of women, marked by the political awareness of Edna in A Man of the People, reaches maturation. Achebe is no longer at ease with the representation of women with limited roles. The barriers of confinement have fallen apart. Beatrice is the fulcrum of the social changes. From the beginning of the story, she is represented as somebody having close relations with Sam:

*As soon as I appeared at the door His Excellency had rushed out to meet me, planted a kiss on my forehead and led me by the hand into the room*<sup>124</sup>.

However, through the story she changes and thinks that it is necessary to fight against injustice. In a nutshell, she becomes committed. The one who was regarded as an "auxiliary" of Sam launches a revolution against him in the name of freedom:

*That every woman wants a man is a piece of male chauvinist bull. Shit I had*

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<sup>123</sup> INNES, Chinua Achebe, Cambridge . Cambridge University Press. 1990. p.158.

<sup>124</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Anthills of the Savannah. op.cit. p.74.

*completely rejected before I knew there was anything like woman's lib*<sup>125</sup>.

For some characters, she is too ambitious; an accusation against which she protests. She wants to follow and even defend Chris and Ikem, becomes the converging point of the main characters whose consciousness she shapes and sharpens.

For Achebe, women's liberation is not strange to Africa. It is not western. Even though Beatrice's failure is due to western education, her feminist views are not shaped by the western women's movement but by her experience while she was growing up. Through Beatrice, Achebe creates a female character who defies some gender conventions that were previously taken for granted:

*You often hear people say: but that's something you picked up in England. Absolute rubbish! There was enough male chauvinism in my father's house to last me seven reincarnations*<sup>126</sup>.

She undergoes the same change as Nwapa's Efuru that is her incarnation as a water deity. Like Idemili she plays a central role, stands on top of the anthill of change. The structure of suspense (Beatrice's change), next to the use of onomastics, add to Achebe's realistic project. Moreover, the myth of Idemili is a reality in the Igbo land. For Ifi Amadiume, Idemili was the central deity of the Igbos living in one of the areas of Eastern Nigeria where Achebe was born. She represented female industriousness, assertiveness and prosperity<sup>127</sup>. Consequently, any man seeking titles of empowerment should consult Idemili who held the balance of power. We are told by Kolawole that "if Idemili considers him unfit for such power, he dies before the end of three years unless he obeys her"<sup>128</sup>. If he gets it, he should not break peace.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid. p.219.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. p.88.

<sup>127</sup> Ifi AMADIUME, Male Daughters. Female Husbands :Gender and Sex In an African Society. London. 1987. p.27.

<sup>128</sup> KOLAWOLE. op.cit. p.63.

Many writers (male and female) did canonize Idemili as a source of the empowerment of women. For instance Flora Nwapa's heroines derive their experiences from their relation to Idemili, the woman of the lake. But Achebe's use of the myth seems more profound.

Furthermore, in the story, there is Beatrice's comment on the role of women in Ikem's novel. This may, as well, be a replica of Achebe's assessments of critics<sup>129</sup>. So the fact that Beatrice launches such an attack on the role of women assigned by writers such as Sembène Ousmane means self-critique (reinforcing Achebe's position).

By the end of the story, she does not disappear but simply symbolizes hope. Achebe describes her as "a captain whose leadership was sharpened more and more by sensitivity to the peculiar needs of her company."<sup>130</sup> The metaphorical motif is to subvert its meaning of gender role it usually has. There is an illusion of reality: we are reminded of Achebe's actual conception about women. In an interview with Anna Rutherford, he stated:

*The quality of compassion and humaneness which the woman brings to the world generally has not been given enough scope up till now to influence the way the world is run. We have created all kinds of myth to support the suppression of the woman [...] I am saying the woman herself will be in the forefront in designing what her new role is going to be, with the humble co-operation of men.*<sup>131</sup>

The last chapter of the book is significant as far as hope with the regeneration of the female is concerned. The shifting of the name of the baby (born posthumously to Ikem) from the male to the female (reform of the traditional naming ceremony) is as significant as the name "Ameisechina" (may the path never close). As there is no equivalent to translate her thoughts (the personality of the

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<sup>129</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. *Anthills of the Savannah*. op.cit. p.63.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. p.229

<sup>131</sup> Quoted by Omar SOUGOU. op.cit. p.53.

baby's status), Beatrice chooses a boy's name, which is characteristic of continuity and regeneration. The "path" may represent the one Ikem had started to clear.

Beatrice, like the anthills standing out in the savannah, becomes a re-represented woman, a female character who wants to be among oppressed women, playing the part of men. As the savannah anthills refuse to be destroyed with the general landscape, Beatrice is resistant and seeks a choice place in the socio-political field. She wants to transform society.

There are realistic aspects with this hope: the role of the artist as the transformer of consciousness. We know that Beatrice is a writer. Through her, it is possible to perceive actual feminist writers. She reminds us of all the female writers who attacked an existing but uncomfortable situation through "protest literature".

However; there is irony because Beatrice's new coalition embraces a few women: Elewa, her mother, Adamma, Agatha. At the end of the story, we do not discover public participation in the new order by Beatrice's coalition. Also, women are not conscientized about the reordering of traditional ceremony. However that may be, there is hope and Achebe has succeeded in placing women at the right place which they had lost. There is, as David Richard put it, a "repossessing of time"<sup>132</sup>. But women need also to possess space.

In any case, Achebe is convinced that in any political institution, there should be the collaboration of female and male principles. There shouldn't be any sex-discrimination in a good democracy.

At the end of the analysis of the second part of our *work*, it can be argued that Achebe's characterization reinforces his realistic attempts. From the way characters are represented, Achebe creates among readers a feeling of seeing the

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<sup>132</sup> David RICHARD. "Repossessing Time : Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*". In *Chinua Achebe : A Celebration*. Ed. PETERSON and RUTHERFORD. London . Heinemann. 1990. pp.130-138.

real. All along the story, he disposes characters in an objective way. But the disposition of the characters and their role is articulated around the literary level which we would like to explore in a third part.

Part three:  
Narrative technique

The literary level is the author's method of selecting and arranging details so as to create meaning. In fact, one of the major points that determine the narrative method is the desire to create a realistic story so that people don't realize it's a fiction, a lie. The goal of stylistics, we believe, is not to study the formal features of the text for their own sake but to show the functional significance of these features in order to interpret the text or to relate literary effects to linguistic causes. Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short note:

*Literary stylistics has implicitly the goal of explaining the relation between language and artistic function<sup>133</sup>.*

In the first section of this part, we would like to discuss some aspects of language in both novels. The second section is concerned with the study of the narrative voices.

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<sup>133</sup>G. LEECH & M. H.SHORT. Style In Fiction. Longman Group Ltd. 1981.



## **Section one: Language**

Achebe's historical authenticity is reflected in the use of the English language. He proceeds by creating several prose styles which he carefully selects. For instance, in dialogue, the westernized characters do not speak like the European character or like an elder of the village. There is the individualization of characters and language is used as their identification. This produces realistic effects. For instance, with the use of pidgin the reader feels as if he/she was in a real context. This use may also relate to Achebe's literary concern: he thinks that English is necessary but standard English is not. They have to "nigerianize" it or to "africanize" it.

Besides, the idioms of Igbos which Eldred Jones calls "vernacular style"<sup>134</sup> are simulated. This use is not simply limited to dialogues. In Things Fall Apart, the narrative itself contains tales and proverbs, evoking a purely African context.

In real life, in Africa, the tale reflects everyday's life that it attempts to orientate by giving some rules of behaviour capable of making of man a balanced being. It is the custodian of a traditional moral and juridical authorization and attempts to perpetuate, in a marvellous way, the norms of conduct. Even if the tales permit to distract, they have a didactic function.

The tales integrate any theme, activity, fact and phenomenon of life, in order to teach, to advise people. They are concerned with every aspect of the culture of the people who elaborate them. The tales allow to register and to transmit the cultural heritage of the group, to safeguard this cultural acquirement and to maintain the harmony between people and their universe. Apart from this function, they entertain people. If they teach people while entertaining them, it is because in traditional Africa no conception of a gratuitous art is possible. Any opportunity is

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<sup>134</sup> E. D. JONES. "Language and theme in Things Fall Apart". In Review of English Literature. Vol.4. Oct1990. pp.39-43.

exploited so as to illustrate the various teachings or to complete the formation of the individual.

The tale reinforces the feeling of solidarity and of belonging of the people to the same community. The virtues that it praises are hardworking, the submission to a social hierarchy without which no communal life would have been possible. It praises the respect that should be paid to the elders (guardians of tradition), the attachment to the land, to the way of life and beliefs of the ancestors.

In Achebe's first novel, the tales have a choice place. They are the favourite domain of children and women. The objective sought through the tales is not gratuitous. They represent the schools of the village and its relaxation. This school is that of tradition and that of life. They can be an explanation of the world. The tales may also have a moral standing:

- Ear and Mosquito: the weak should not be humiliated for one ignores what the future holds for one.

- Vulture and her daughter: when one uses forces, one should also beware of silent victims (or: those who cry when caught are less dangerous than those who remain silent).

Added to that, they have a cultural standing: in every civilization, man wants to understand his milieu and the tale allows to answer questions:

- Ear and mosquito: the tale explains why mosquitoes take it out on the ears of human beings rather than the other parts of their bodies.

- Trick of the tortoise: the vengeance of the parrot explains why the shell of the tortoise is bizarre.

In sum, the tale represents for traditional literature what the novel is for

modern literature. In the case of Things Fall apart, there is an interdependence of two genres which is created by the fact that the novel does not exist without the tales and that the tales are included in the novel to which they give sense and form. Achebe seems to signal the interdependence between African literary expression and European one. We find in his novel African and European processes which are inserted into his social origins. He profits by a literary genre (the novel) in order to comment the themes of another genre (the tale).

Next to the tales, the proverbs, important aspects of popular culture, recur in Achebe's first novel. They are a form whose most obvious aesthetic manifestation (in relation to the literary work) remains the use of image.

In traditional Africa (in real life), there are civilizations of orality. In these societies, the general assemblies under the palaver-trees hold an eminent place and give priority to the best knower of the social codes and the cultural norms. The latter is needed to conclude the arbitrations required for the balance and the harmony of the rural world which believes in the power of speeches. The proverbs are often required at the end of the arbitrations because they allow to comfort the one who is given reason by the judge and to nonsuit the one who would persist in error.

The proverbs depict general or universal truths and some habits commanded by communal experience in front of reality and daily life. They represent a social and juridical code.

The proverbs are closely linked to the African languages, customs and religious beliefs. They inform us about the sense of observation and the knowledge of the human nature of Africans. This use is consonant with African traditions. The proverbs are used for any purpose: to praise, to threaten, to comfort etc. In general, they convey an active wisdom.

In Things Fall Apart. Their use is part of Achebe's realistic project: to write about Africans and about authentic African experiences. The proverbs, doubtless, give an African flavour to the story, they "africanize" it. Most of the time, the proverbs visualize a lesson extracted from the wisdom of the ancestors and stand for a reflection of the clan. They reflect the thoughts and values of the group.

However, beyond the reflection of the Igbo clan, the proverbs represent also the wisdom of every people. They stand for a universal wisdom and most of the proverbs have their equivalents in other civilizations. For instance, some equivalents may be found in English:

- When a man says yes, his chi also says <sup>yes</sup> (Igbo)<sup>135</sup>

= God helps those who help themselves (English)

- The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under it (Igbo)<sup>136</sup>

= Reputations shape reactions (English)

- A man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness (Igbo)<sup>137</sup>

= As you sow so shall you reap (English)

Therefore, in Things Fall Apart, Achebe wants, perhaps, to educate two categories of people: the westerners and the Africans. So, he succeeds in talking in a very meaningful way to the westerners (mostly unaware of his material) and the Africans:

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<sup>135</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Things Fall Apart, op.cit. p.27.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. p.8.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. p.16.

*Perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure art. But who cares?  
Art is important, but so is education of the kind I have in mind.*<sup>138</sup>

This education is done with tact. Take for instance, his purpose to make the western reader understand why characters rely so much on proverbs:

*Having spoken so far, Okoye said the next half a dozen sentences in proverbs. Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and the proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten.*<sup>139</sup>

The explanation of the use of proverb is nearly conveyed through a proverb and we find a balance of their occurrence between the need of the western reader (unfamiliar to them) and that of the African one (very familiar to them or others like them). At the same time, they are adapted to an artistically functional purpose. For this, they establish (for western and African readers) a sense of wisdom which sustains a cohesive society.

Finally a whole world of traditional ceremony is conjured up and Achebe creates a complete picture of a rich but complex human society. This picture, on the one hand, fulfils Achebe's aim consisting *in* teaching his African readers that their past "was not of a long night of savagery". On the other, moreover, it has the same effect on the non-African readers<sup>140</sup>.

The proverbs and the vernacular interjections such as "Umuofia Kwenu !", "yaa !" may suggest the question of orality. But there is no contradiction as far as Achebe's aim is concerned. If we take into account the themes he has decided to treat, it is normal that orality be found at the center of his work.

Traditional rhetoric recurs also in Anthills of the Savannah. Most of the

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<sup>138</sup> Chinua ACHEBE, quoted by PHELS, op.cit. p.331.

<sup>139</sup> Chinua ACHEBE, Things Fall Apart, op.cit. p.7.

<sup>140</sup> Bernth LINDFORS offers a full study of proverbs in Chinua Achebe's work In "The Palm Oil With Which Achebe's Words Are Eaten". In African Literature Today .1. 1972. pp.3-18.

time, we find figures of speech in the various messages of the elders. The reader is reunited with the proverbs. The fact of endowing these characters with such speeches may relate to Achebe's function as a writer in the face of the issues (social and political) about which he wants to write. Whereas the leaders have a sterile language, that of the elders is referred to as "compelling power and magic."<sup>141</sup>

Furthermore, parables are found in Anthills of the Savannah. With the use of parabolic implications, there is realism. Parables are actual turns of speaking especially among elders. They are definitely rooted in the African context and add to the richness of traditional discourse.

A symbolic parabolic implication is the fable of the tortoise and the leopard. The tortoise is caught by the leopard who reveals him that he will die. The prey requests a short period to prepare his death. Then he starts scratching the road with his hands and feet. In effect, what he wants to say is that even if he dies, it is necessary to prove that he has resisted. We understand that, through this parable, Achebe wants to mention his commitment. He is likely to reveal that his aim is to leave traces of his struggle. It is in this sense that we have to understand the extent to which the last words of the elder are significant:

*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.*<sup>142</sup>

In other terms, this is an address to the future generations. They may, if they prefer, refer back to the writings or the deeds of their predecessors, try to reinforce them so as to win. The storyteller becomes the memoir of a whole people. Achebe's literary production can therefore be seen as a springboard which his people may take to achieve a further jump in their resistance.

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<sup>141</sup> Chinua ACHEBE .Anthills of the Savannah. op.cit. p.122.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. p.128.

The language Ikem uses shows also that the speech of the elders has impinged on him. This means that Achebe himself is marked by traditional aspects since Ikem may be considered as Achebe's alter-ego. During the debate, the answers given by Ikem tend to show that the main issues are about writers and politics. There is a moral lurking in the fable of the elder of Abazon who is arrested. No doubt, storytellers constitute a threat:

*They threaten all champions of control, they frighten usurpers of the right-to-freedom of the human spirit - in state, in church or mosque, in party congress, in the university or wherever.*<sup>143</sup>

The statement is clear: storytelling is used in order to denounce. But the political leaders are those who hold the yam and the stick and storytellers have to keep quite or risk the same treatment as the elder. This is the theme of the burden of the writer(in real life) as dealt with earlier in the first part of our thesis.

Another important aspect of language in both novels is the use of intertextuality which is very functional as far as the study of realism is concerned. Yve Reuter reserves the term for the copresence of two or many texts, that is to say in order to make the effective presence of one or many texts simpler. It may comprise the quotation (which is the most literal and the most explicit form), plagiarism (literal but non avowed) and allusion (less literal and explicit)<sup>144</sup>. Another possible form of intertextuality is the repetition (in a series or a cycle) of elements from previous works<sup>145</sup>.

In a methodological point of view, our aim is not to pinpoint the borrowings but to study their integration in the text, the eventual transformations and also their functions. The latter may vary from respect to irony, valorization to disqualification

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid. p.153.

<sup>144</sup> Yves REUTER, *L'Analyse du Roman*. Paris.Bordas. 1991. p.137.

<sup>145</sup> Anothy RUTH and Rosen ELISHEWA's *Les Discours du Cliché*. (Paris. CDU-SEDES. 1982.) and Jean Bellemine NOEL's *Le Texte et l'Avant Texte*. (Paris.Larousse. 1970.) are of note for the understanding of intertextuality.

of a character etc.

In Achebe's first novel, the title of the book is an example of intertextuality. Achebe uses a verse from W.B. Yeats's poem as an epigraph to his book:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer  
Things fall apart  
The center cannot hold  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.*<sup>146</sup>

The choice is symptomatic. It shows a profound meditation on Yeats's vision of history as a succession of civilizations, each containing elements of its own destruction for no society has, so far, succeeded in containing all the human aspirations. For Lloyd Brown, the historical cycles recur in every civilization:

*In evoking Yeats's themes, Achebe implies that the sense of history and tradition, the burdens of cultural continuity, decay, rebirth have all been the African's lot as well as the westerners[...] The novelist has exploited the European's cultural criteria[...] in order to reverse the white man's exclusivist definitions of history and culture.*<sup>147</sup>

It is true that Achebe shows that the Igbo customs have been subdued by the British, that there is a subversion of the Igbo values (already endangered by their own destruction). But far more than exploiting the "European cultural criteria", through a borrowing from Yeats's historical cycles, he actually reclaims an age-old non-western cyclical conception which has been recently annexed by Europeans.

In Anthills of the Savannah, Achebe uses also an extract from David Diop's poem, "Africa", as an epigraph to Chapter Ten which owes its title "Impetuous Son" to the same work. Ikem meets the taxi-drivers and meditates on the situation of his country. He has a clear idea of what is required:

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<sup>146</sup> W.B. YEATS. "The second Coming".

<sup>147</sup> Lloyd BROWN. "Cultural Norms and Norms of Perception in Chinua Achebe's Fiction". In Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe. op.cit. p. 135.



*General political experience, slow of growth and obstinately patient like the young tree planted by David Diop on the edge of the primeval desert just before the year of wonders in which Africa broke out so spectacularly in a rush of independent nation states.*<sup>148</sup>

There is here a resumption of the reference to the poem. The purpose is to substantiate the fact that, in the intertext, the poem refers both to Ikem and Africa as the substances of the metaphor in it which pertains to the present situation<sup>149</sup>.

According to Yve Reuter, the use of epigraph is called "paratextuality"<sup>150</sup> (which is still a form of intertextuality). It is about a heterogeneous entity comprising the writing and the image present in the text or preceding the definitive version of the text, comprising also components owed to the author or others (under his/her control or not, before or after his/her death etc.). These components are fundamental because they determine not only the choice of the text but also the reading and the expectations of the reader. They are important because the author may give concrete practices of the reading and because the author may give meanings right in the titles (clear or enigmatic), warning etc.

A significant intertextuality exists also between the two novels. Beatrice becomes aware of her divine attributes. She is prompted by Ikem to realize her ethereal essence which she acknowledges when thinking: "I do sometimes feel like Chielo in the novel, the priestess and prophet of the Hills and the Caves."<sup>151</sup> Here intertextuality crops up because the novel she alludes to is Things Fall Apart (the character of Chielo has a double personality: in daily life she is friendly to Ekwefi and her daughter but when possessed by Agbala, she becomes very threatening. She thus inspires justified fear to the clan. She is an intermediary between the clan and

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<sup>148</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Anthills of the Savannah. op.cit. p.139.

<sup>149</sup> The metaphor is largely explained in Chinua Achebe's Hopes and Impediments. London . 1975. pp.32-41.

<sup>150</sup> I translated the term "Paratextualité " which I borrowed from REUTER. L'analyse du Roman. op.cit. p.138.

<sup>151</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Anthills of the Savannah. op.cit. p.114.

Agbala whose divine will she transmits. She is a woman of high status). Like Chielo, Beatrice has a double personality: the corporeal nature and the divine attributes. The function of the intertextuality is the valorization of women in the text as well as outside it (in real life). Beatrice is deftly ushered as a central figure and Achebe believes that in the change which is to come in the nations, women should play important parts.

The valorization of women is also achieved through another noteworthy component of intertextuality: "Idemili" (Chapter Eight). The myth of Idemili is traced in Arrow of God:

*Idemili means pillar of water. As the pillar of this house holds the roof so does Idemili hold up the raincloud in the sky so that it does not fall down[...].*<sup>152</sup>

So, Idemili is introduced as a strong creature. She plays protective roles, has a redemptive function. Beatrice who is associated with the Almighty is also a source of redemption in the nation. Through her, Achebe valorizes women in general.

What's more, the myth of Idemili allows Achebe to evoke the lack of morality of power. The pillar of water is transformed by man's lack of morality and his selfishness into "numberless shrine houses across the country"<sup>153</sup>. With this aspect, the myth is traced clearly in "Lament of the Sacred Python":

*And great father Idemili  
That once upheld from earth foundations  
Clouds banks of sky's endless waters  
Is betrayed in his shrine by empty men  
Suborned with the stranger's tawdry gifts  
And taken trussed up to the alter shrine turned  
Slaughter house for the glory advent  
Feast of an errant cannibal god*

<sup>152</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Arrow of God. African Writers Series. 1964. p.50.

<sup>153</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Anthills of The Savannah. op.cit. p.103.

*Tooth filled to eat his fellows.*<sup>154</sup>

Through the figurative language one may see the fact that creativity can be imperiled by power (without morality) and greed as it is the case in post-colonial Africa. Part of the meaning of Anthills of the Savannah is explicated by the last two stanzas of "Lament of the Sacred Python":

*And the sky recedes in  
Anger; the Orphan snake  
Abandoned weeps in the shadows.*<sup>155</sup>

That is to say that, if the common people is punished, it is because there are dictators (like Sam) who are ready to "eat [their] fellows". Actually (outside the text) in post-colonial Africa, we notice a total failure of nationalism and tyranny prevails.

Also about power, an example of intertextuality is the metaphor of the "green bottles" (nursery rhyme). The function of this intertextuality is to achieve irony. There is irony when an unexpected situation happens. In reality, Chris, Ikem, and Sam believed that they would remain eternally (or at least too long) on power. But soon like the bottles hanging on a wall in the nursery rhyme, they start falling one by one. Ikem dies under the order of Sam and Chris runs for his life, thinking:

*There green bottles. One has accidentally fallen; one is tilting. Going, going, going, bang ! Then we becomes I, becomes imperial we*<sup>156</sup>.

He is absurdly shot dead. Before his death, he murmurs what seemed to sound like "The last grin"<sup>157</sup>. Later, Beatrice decodes the phrase:

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<sup>154</sup> Chinua ACHEBE . "Lament of the Sacred Python". in "Beware Soul Brothers". Revised Edition. .African Writers Series. 1972. p.50.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. p.73.

<sup>156</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Anthills of the Savannah, op.cit. p.191.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. p.126.

*What he was trying to say was "The Last Green". It was a private joke of ours. The last green bottle. It was a terrible, bitter joke.<sup>158</sup>*

By the end of the story, the third "bottle" (Sam) also dies. So the three characters who thought that they owned Kangan have all disappeared. The form of intertextuality we have here is a kind of parable which denotes the precariousness of power. Along with this aspect, the political instability in Africa in actual life seems to be evoked. We are reminded of the various coups and murders.

Achebe refers also to the work of his characters. We notice the parody of the University lecture, the epic poem by Ikem and the reference to the book which the District Commissioner wants to write. They function as intertexts. The ironic ending of Things Fall Apart (when the District Commissioner wants to tell the whole story, in "the book which he plans to write") is significant. The District Commissioner's main thought is about the book he is writing and "he had chosen the title of the book, after much thought: The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Niger"<sup>159</sup>. The function of the intertextuality is to achieve irony and to produce realistic effects. Achebe wants to make the western reader understand in a way which contrasts with the utter incomprehension of the District Commissioner in the novel. He wants to correct the misrepresentations of Africa by Europeans.

In Chapter Three, the epic poem ("Hymn to the Sun") that Ikem composes is also very significant. During the referendum, the Abazonians voted "no" and Sam decides to punish them. After a two-year suffering, they send a delegation to him. This visit precipitates the crisis in the novel and motivates Ikem in his poem which allows a mise en abyme. Yve Reuter speaks of "metatextuality"<sup>160</sup> in this case:

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid. p.231.

<sup>159</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Things Fall Apart. op.cit. p.

<sup>160</sup> I translated the term "metatextualité" which I borrowed from Yve REUTER. op.cit. p.139.

thanks to a "mise en abyme", the narrator comments or makes others comment the novel that is being written. "Hymn to the Sun" is a "subtext within which Anthills of the Savannah holds en abyme its own symbol"<sup>161</sup>. This symbol represents the image we guess from the title of the book and which is described in these lines of the poem:

*The trees had become hydra-headed bronze statues so ancient that only blunt residual features remained on their faces, like anthills surviving to tell the new grass of the savannah about last year's brush fires.*<sup>162</sup>

There is a realistic effect with this symbol. The image is characteristic of the harsh situation that prevails in real post-colonial Africa.

Achebe refers also to the work of one of his characters in his last novel. The parody of the university lecture is found in Anthills of the Savannah. Through his lecture, Ikem rebukes many social groups. But the main element of his speech is the revelation of the role of the writer:

*A writer wants to ask questions. These damn fellows want him to give answers. [...] My critics say: there is no time for your beautiful educational programme; the masses are ready and will be enlightened in the course of the struggle[...] They do not realize that revolutions are betrayed just as much by stupidity, incompetence, impatience and precipitate action as by doing nothing at all.*<sup>163</sup>

This passage suggests a criticism of a certain radicalism which sees capitalism and imperialism as the sole obstacles to development while neglecting their effects (such as corruption) which should also be eradicated. Ikem's speech seems to echo Achebe's defensive arguments. Ikem ends the lecture with an aphorism (short saying): "Writers don't give prescriptions[...] They give headaches"<sup>164</sup>. Hence, Achebe inserts in his last novel, an essay, a subtext through

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<sup>161</sup> SOUGOU. op.cit. p.47.

<sup>162</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Anthills of the Savannah, op.cit. p.31.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. pp.157-158.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. p.161

the parody of a university lecture and the intertextuality allows him to satirize intellectual debates. Moreover, Ikem appearing as Achebe's alter-ego, the role of the writer (in real life) is pointed out.

To sum up, it can be argued that the use of intertextuality is very functional. Realism is constituted through a reference to the already seen, the already known, the already said. It is based on an effect of recognition which is transmitted, in many cases, via clichés, commune environments etc.

Next to intertextuality, Achebe uses an ironic and satirical language in his last novel in order to produce implicit effects. For instance, the superior and irritated tone of Sam, the dramatic utterances such as "finish, Kabisa ! Any other business ?" are suggestive of tyranny. The sterile language of Sam and the semantic misuse of the word "flaunt" by the Attorney General (which is later rectified by Chris as "flout"<sup>165</sup>) may mean mediocrity which is constantly found in the novel and in actual post-colonial regimes.

In general, Achebe reflects reality through the way his characters speak. Language is well monitored and follows a narrative voice which invites a comment.

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid. p.5.

## **Section two: narrative voice**

The narration concerns the organization of the fiction in the story which exposes it. In this section we intend to show the way the narrative discourses work and partake in the realistic attempt. For this, we propose to put an emphasis on the functions of the narrator, the use of the heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrators, the extradiegetic and the intradiegetic levels<sup>166</sup>. An heterodiegetic narrator is outside the story he/she tells whereas the homodiegetic narrator is present in the fiction that is told. There is also an opposition of levels: the narrator is outside the story (extradiegetic) in hand or in the considered fiction (intradiegetic).

In Things Fall Apart, Achebe uses a narrator who recounts the events in the manner of the African griots or traditional storytellers. His adoption of this traditional method commends him for a striking realism. For instance, the use of legends, the recalling of the past deeds of heroes by praise-singers are actual African practices. Like the tales and proverbs, the legends are very important in African cultures. They intervene in the affirmation of an identity of the individuality and the universality of African cultures. In a legend, the characters are precise and definite. The actions are connected to known historical facts and everything seems to happen positively. But the story is often distorted by popular imagination. Thus, myths are also forms of legends in which the characters have become divine.

The legends exalt the values admitted as a norm of identification: bravery, heroism etc. The time of the legend is the ideal time, that of the origins in which all the phenomena are explained.

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<sup>166</sup> I translated the terms "hétérodiégétique", "homodiégétique", "intradiegetique" and "extradiegetique" which I borrowed from Yve REUTER. op.cit. p.66.

In Africa, the legends stimulate the love for the patry, tie social relations, relate the past and the present and reassure people about the future. They reveal the aspirations of the people, the attitudes, images and interpretations of cultural life. They transmit the cosmogony, the history of a people, their battles and epics. They inform about social laws, economics, origins of the various products, religious beliefs, moral codes, totemic links, foundation of villages etc. All these considerations hold a choice place in Things Fall Apart.

In Things Fall Apart, the absence of the "I" mode indicates that there is a heterodiegetic narrator. We are under the impression that there is a report with the declarative sentences and the third person. The pronouns refers to the characters who are mentioned in the story (for instance "he" for Okonkwo, "they" for the people of the clan etc.), to those about whom the narrator speaks. The dominant tense is the preterit, next to the past perfect and the pluperfect. The temporal marks are "that day", "the next day", "three years later, etc."

The message presents an objectivity without the intrusion of the narrator. This narrator may be spoken as an omniscient narrator since his vision have no limit. (The fact that he perceives everything does not mean that he recounts everything). In Achebe's first novel the largest part of the description are impersonal. Consider the opening lines of the book:

*Okonkwo was well-known through the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he has brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat.*

The presentation proves objective and there is an illusion of reality on the reader: Okonkwo is placed in a spatio-temporal context and this makes us think that the author wants to reveal that Africa had history. Therefore, there is a response to the misrepresentations of Africa by the westerners.



Sometimes, the floor is left directly to the characters; the speeches are recounted "as they are heard" and the direct speech dominates. The use of dialogues is very significant. Indeed, the use of dialogues is realistic. In Things Fall Apart, dialogues are employed as a way of reflecting reality as well as making the work as African as possible.

However, at many stages of the novel we feel the presence of the narrator. We have the feeling of an intradiegetic level. First of all, there are some necessary precisions when the Igbo word has no exact equivalent in English:

- The word "Umuada" explained on page 132.
- The word "Osu" made explicit in a long manner from page 156 to page 157.
- etc.

Secondly, there are the choices made by the author so as to privilege some incidents in the story or to recall others, previous but judged necessary (the flash backs are numerous in the novel: thirteen in the first part). Thus we have a number of depictions, more or less related to the action and which make us discover the Igbo society. One may see there an ethnological bias on behalf of the author. The aim of Achebe is to reveal what the culture of his people was before the coming of the white man.

Then, there is the importance of the sounds and images. The narrator is very sensitive to the sounds and particularly to the music of the drums which is, in the societies of orality, before all, a whole language, more poetic and as efficient as some modern means of communication. The Ogene is mentioned and its rhythm and tones are rendered: "Gome, gome, gome went the gong, and a powerful flute flew a

high-pitched blast"<sup>167</sup>. The Ekwe is also mentioned. The transcriptions of the speech of Chielo (possessed by Agbala) and that of the leader of the Egwugwu<sup>168</sup> should be added.

Sometimes, the images are simply reported by the narrator and are derived either from the language ("the nuts of the water of the heaven" to say hail<sup>169</sup>) or from the proverbs (the sun will shine [...] <sup>170</sup>, if a child washed his hands[...] <sup>171</sup>, etc.). In other instances, they are inserted in the conversation of the characters: "If our brothers take the side of the evil, we must root them out [...] We must now bale this water now that is only ankle-deep<sup>172</sup>".

As far as suggestion is concerned, one has to signal the strong presence of the narrator or even the author. Take the last passage of the book when the adventure of Okonkwo and the tragedy of the whole clan are all of a sudden - through the vision of the District Commissioner - reduced to the rank of a simple episode:

*The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph at any rate. There was so much to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: The pacification of the Primitive Tribe of the Lower Niger.*

Here, the perspective of the narration is channelled through the vision of a character. Ubiquity and certainty of anticipations are not possible. The parts of speech "almost", "perhaps", "would", "after much thought", obliterate distance and disclose a narrator involving himself in the story.

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<sup>167</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. *Things Fall Apart*. op.cit. p.88.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. pp.89-94.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. p.130.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. p.8.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. p.8.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. p.

Generally speaking, with this form of narration, Achebe, in order to affirm his cultural identity, draws his inspiration from the ancient history of the Igbos. He praises the sense of honour, courage, tolerance etc. His novel offers an authentic image of African sensitiveness, by revealing with pleasure what Africa was in reality. The tragedy of Okonkwo (authentic hero since it is through his adventure that the whole story of the clan is told) obliges the reader to think and judge. Thus through the ending of the book, Achebe wants to educate the readers and especially the westerners who are required to understand in a way which contrasts with the view of the District Commissioner.

In comparison to Anthills of the Savannah, we encounter a singular fictional construction of the narrative voice. If there is a generally conventional narrative discourse in Achebe's first novel, the last one appears as foregrounded to it. The reader is defamiliarized with the conventions<sup>173</sup>.

In Anthills of the Savannah, next to the omniscient narrator, homodiegetic narrators are found. Thus we have structures that fit together. First we have an intradiegetic/homodiegetic narrator, Chris (a hero-narrator): "First-Witness Christopher Oriko". He has a testimonial role. The second witness is Ikem who also plays a testimonial part.

It may be argued that the withdrawal of the extradiegetic/heterodiegetic narrator is a means of creating illusions of objectivity on the reader. If this narrator was present in Chapter Two it is because effects of realism were sought after: since Chris is not ubiquitous he cannot be at the same time in the meeting room and outside to watch the head of the State consulting Pr Okong. In Chapter Four, his withdrawal is an attempt of objectivity. He wants to distance himself from the affairs of the State, to admit his limited omniscience by leaving the narrative voice

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<sup>173</sup> The major part of my analysis of the narrative voice in Achebe's last novel is based on the handling of focalisation In Anthills of the Savannah by SOUGOU. op.cit. p.

to the intradiegetic/homodiegetic characters (involved in the matter they relate). With the use of intradiegetic/homodiegetic narrators there are retrospective elements on which the narration is based. But some certain anticipations are possible. These narrators have a large vision. There is a polyscopic vision and each character teaches us about the other. The purpose is of authenticity: even in real life, each of us sees life and the others from our own perspectives. In order to produce illusions of reality, the plurality of voices should be privileged. The numerous voices bring contradictions, reveal reality whereas with the single voice the author may appear as a "dictator".

Another aspect which strikes our attention is the function of a female character: Beatrice. In Chapters Six and Seven, there is the first person and the function of Beatrice as judge is more important than that of witness. We feel that she is in relation with the rest of the protagonists. This creates illusions of reality: Achebe giving important consideration to women in real life.

In Chapter Six, Beatrice, interestingly writes a kind of autobiography. A further jump is achieved in Chapter Eight. Two subtitles, "Idemili" and "Nwamjibuife" are found. The first person of the plural ("we") appears in the opening sentence. The voice we felt as standing outside the narrative is now close to the story (homodiegetic narrator). But it does not indicate an intradiegetic/homodiegetic narrator. It simply provides impersonal references.

However, a voice appears and tells us: "She was born as we have seen into a world apart". Further, in the same chapter, he says:

*Barely, we say though, because she did carry vague sense more acute at certain critical moments than others of being two different people<sup>174</sup>.*

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<sup>174</sup> Chinua ACHEBE. Anthills of the Savannah. op.cit. p.105.

Our impression is that this voice is close to Beatrice. Actually, the way the thoughts of the latter are rendered on page 109 justifies it. In the second paragraph of this page they are reported in the direct speech mode:

*These birds, she thought, did not just arrive here this morning. Here quite clearly, is where they have always slept. Why have I not noticed them before ?*<sup>175</sup>

Then, in the third paragraph, they are rendered in the third person by the narrator (already mentioned). In the fourth paragraph, this narrator disappears and thanks to the free-direct speech, the focalization is done through Beatrice:

*Beatrice smiled wryly. So, two whole generations before the likes of me could take a first class degree in English; there were already barely literate carpenters and artisans of British rule hacking away in the archetypical jungle and subverting the very sounds and legends of daybreak to make straight my way*<sup>176</sup>.

Finally Beatrice is promoted as the central consciousness of the novel. Achebe achieves such an effect by presenting her as the last of the intradiegetic/homodiegetic narrators. At the end of the story, she thus fulfils the role of Idemili (the saviour) which has been ascribed to her. In this way, Achebe sustains an illusion of reality: he believes that women are very important and should have a leading role in the struggle against dictatorship. Through the following lines of the book, we discover the presence of the narrator:

*[...] and in the background the narrator voice coming through and declaiming: It is now up to you women to tell us what has to be done. And Agatha is surely one of you.*<sup>177</sup>

The questions the narrator asks, such as "And do you know what ?"<sup>178</sup> and

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid. p.109.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. p.109.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p.184.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. p.184.

"How about that"<sup>179</sup> as well as the passage separating these two questions relate to remarks about the female characters. What's more, one can posit that there is a merging of the narrator's voice and that of Achebe, which creates a realistic effect: Achebe's actual conception of women as mentioned above.

The dovetailing of the narrative structures and the shifting of voices impinge a lot on the chronology of the fiction. Ikem's journey to meet the Abazonian delegation can illustrate the point. The journey starts in Chapter Three, then stops to be resumed in Chapter Nine. The gap is filled both with insights into the main protagonists and the party at Mad Medico's which is narrated in Chapter Five. This unconventional way of ordering incidents portends realistic effects. We have more information about Sam's past. Our impression is that Achebe is more interested in the political leaders whom he wants to condemn. This condemnation is not limited to the fiction; it reaches real life. In general selection is necessary. In a novel everything cannot be told. Achebe registers only the events which have marked more his mind. In fact, realism is a system of conventions in which selection is functional. Michel Zérafra writes:

*Les œuvres [littéraires] [...] sont des analyses et des synthèses esthétiques d'une réalité qui fut déjà analysée et synthétisée par le romancier avant qu'il se mît à écrire.*<sup>180</sup>

Achebe's craftsmanship is therefore displayed in his narrative technique. The author's use of English allows him to reflect his individual experience. His individual expression is marked by the choice of his themes and the suggestive strength of his message which is realistically portrayed.

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid. p.185.

<sup>180</sup> [Literary] works are aesthetic analyses and syntheses of a reality which had already been analysed and synthesised by the novelist before he set out to write ( translation mine). From Michel ZERAFRA. Roman et Société. Paris. P.U.F. 1971. p.13.

## Conclusion

At the end of our analysis, we realize that Achebe's narration makes use of an imbrication between actual history and fictional stories thanks to referential characters, events corroborated by history and also settings in which these incidents have taken place. Such devices explain the recurrence of the names of persons and places which give the impression of identity between fiction and reality. The realistic effect is based on a great concern for verisimilitude and motivation, and this motivation is extended to the names of characters and places, either through their national or social connotations, or some explanations about their origin.

One has to signal the didactic concern accompanying the realistic effect. This double concern (the will to depict truly and didacticism) is frequently based on a desire for totality<sup>181</sup>.

Literature representation consists in the organization of actions; "mimesis" is neither a copy nor an imitation, but a re-representation because there are necessarily transposition and transformation when the writer shifts from the real world to that of words.

In the cohabitation of fiction and reality which strikes our attention when we read Achebe's novels, it is perilous to pretend to delimit what personality belongs to Achebe and what the outside has given him. That is to say that life provides him with the starting point which allows him to venture in a direction different from the one life has taken. Thus, Achebe makes effective what was virtual and achieves some vague possibilities. Hence, Things Fall Apart and Anthills of the Savannah

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synthesised by the novelist before he set out to write ( translation mine). From Michel ZERAFFA. Roman et Société. Paris. P.U.F. 1971. p.13.

<sup>181</sup> Y. Reuter.op.cit.p.101.

appear as historical documents. This corresponds to one of the avowed intentions of Achebe to depict Africa: "any writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of the contemporary Africa" is comparable to the "absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames."<sup>182</sup>. This means realism and naturalism. Things Fall Apart, seems particularly ethnological because Achebe feels like describing his people and culture. But one should not see there an ambiguity or a quest for identity. His attitude is that of a witness who reports facts and describes different aspects of reality. What urges the reader to accept the testimony is the attitude of humour and tenderness that he adopts in order to portray his people.

Achebe, perhaps, wants to express an Igbo nationalism through his first novel ; but there is a certain distance between him and his themes. By designing the project to show traditional life, he contents himself with legitimating the existence of that world but does not invite people either to admire or to hate it. The literary production of Achebe is almost necessarily accompanied with some process<sup>s</sup> which tend to make him escape a realistic reading. His work does not violate our freedom even if our judgement is sometimes stimulated by his suggestion. Achebe uses a system of references which only formulate hypotheses of reading. He proposes a representation of reality because, in a novel, it is impossible to depict the truth in its entirety. He<sup>is</sup> more interested in all the stages through which Africa has gone than the ethnological documentary. We believe, as most of the novels published after 1960 show it, that the independences have disappointed the expectation of people. The novels set in a post-colonial situation depict these disappointments: Anthills of The Savannah reveals how the political leaders, notwithstanding their promises, betray their people.

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<sup>182</sup>In Romanus OKEY's Art, Rebellion and Redemption- A Reading of Novels of Chinua Achebe. New



Moreover, even though the stories told by Achebe are fictional ones, a reader who has theoretical knowledge about Africa is able to link the settings of Achebe's work and Africa. This matches the kind of realism we wanted to adopt in this thesis. In fact, realism is based on the effect of resemblance. Achebe, in his novel, does not always say what he means; but we go beyond the texts in order to find verisimilitude or likelihood. Thus, Umuofia could be linked to Umuahia and Kangan to modern Nigeria or post-colonial Africa. Things Fall Apart would not be the story of Okonkwo and his clan but, in a sense, that of an actual traditional rural society. Achebe himself has written about the realistic aspect of his first novel:

*Although the action of Things Fall Apart takes place in a setting with which most Americans are unfamiliar, the characters are normal people and their events are real human events.*<sup>183</sup>

As for Anthills of the Savannah which is set in the fictional State of Kangan (between the ocean and the Savannah), it re-represents the cultural and political crises which mark the transition from the colonial system to the post-colonial one. It is viewed by Nuruddin Farah as a "rich treasure of transferred meanings".<sup>184</sup>

Beyond the autonomy of both novels, one has to notice that they are deeply rooted in the real. Africa serves them as reference. Doubtless, this is what gives them a certain vitality, i.e. their specificity.

We feel that Achebe, behind the humour which allows him to keep the required distance in order to grasp society in its totality, loves his land whose particular wisdom he appreciates; but beyond the funny part, we guess a philosophy marked by skepticism.

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York. Peter Lang Publishing inc. 1994. P.128.

<sup>183</sup> In Approaches to Teaching Achebe's Things Fall Apart. (Edited by Lindfors). New York. MLA. 1991. P.21.

<sup>184</sup> Quoted by Oumar SOUGOU.op.cit.p.36.

Yet, the concern for depicting truly, for picturing a known society, does not exclude the part of fiction which stems from the imagination of the author and which participates of the originality of Achebe's work. However, the fiction gives the impression that it's true to real life and finally the realistic effect seems to depend on the experiences of the reader. We think that our objective consisting *in* showing that the reader's response can determine the text has been reached. A kind of interaction between the text and our existing knowledge, a collaboration between Achebe and us in order to fix the meaning of his fiction, have been established. A new experience is born and the understanding of Achebe's texts has not been, we think, an acceptance of a passive process but a productive response. Hence, reading, for us, becomes no longer an escapist occurrence.

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