

FROM FICTION TO REALITY IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S A MAN OF THE PEOPLE

Dr. EPOUNDA MEXAN SERGE

Faculté des Lettres, Arts et Sciences Humaines
(Université Marien NGOUABI, BP 69 Congo - Brazzaville)

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian Chinua Achebe is and remains one of the major's icons of literature in the black continent. His novels portray the life of African people in general and that of Nigerian people in particular. After portraying the Ibo traditional society and the challenge with a foreign civilization in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964), Achebe revealed the sorry situation of this people during the colonial reign in *No Longer at Ease* (1960) then he came to pull off his literary adventure by writing *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) where he points out the post-independent evil doings and reality. It is in this respect that we consider literature as an impersonation of human activities where the writer portrays a picture of what people do, say, and think in society. That is why in literature, there exist many stories describing human life or activities through characters who, by their behaviour (actions, words, reactions) convey several messages of different nature. It is then the behaviour of characters, though fictitious, that expresses their nature. It is in this context that the current paper intends to demonstrate that the behaviours of some characters in *A Man of the People* corroborate post-independence African reality.

Keywords: Fiction, reality, character, evil practices, revolution.

Résumé:

Le Nigérien Chinua Achebe est et reste l'une des figures majeures de la littérature sur le continent noir. Ses romans décrivent la vie des africains en général et celle des nigériens en particulier. Après avoir dépeint la société traditionnelle Ibo et le défi d'une civilisation étrangère dans *Things Fall Apart* (1958) et *Arrow of God* (1964), Chinua Achebe révèle la triste situation de ce peuple pendant le règne colonial dans *No Longer at Ease* (1960) puis venait réussir son aventure littéraire en écrivant et publiant *A Man of the People* en 1966 et *Anthills of the Savannah* en 1987, où il décrit les mauvaises pratiques et les réalités maléfiques post-indépendante. C'est à ce titre que nous considérons la littérature comme une imitation des activités humaines où l'écrivain dépeint une image de ce que les hommes font, disent et pensent dans la société. C'est pourquoi il existe en littérature de nombreux récits décrivant la vie ou les activités humaines à travers des personnages qui, par leurs comportements (actions, propos, et réactions) véhiculent plusieurs messages de nature différente. C'est alors le comportement des personnages, bien que fictifs, qui exprime leur nature. C'est dans ce contexte que cet article se propose de démontrer que les comportements de certains personnages dans *A Man of the People* corroborent la réalité africaine d'après l'indépendance.

Mots clés : Fiction, réalité, personnage, pratiques malfaisantes, révolution.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The postcolonial literature lies not only on the white man's intrusion in Africa and his managerial system but also and mainly on the picture he made of the continent. Indeed, Africa's portrayal by Westerners didn't meet the Africans' expectations. In a word, the story of Africa was mistold with Africa as 'a dusky place dwelled by people with stolid primitive minds'. This colonial situation inspired and irked African scholars to express their feelings through writing. The backdrop of their writings was devoted to the dramatization of countries' mismanagement before and after the departure of the colonial regime. Among the African learned persons, there was Chinua Achebe, with a prolific literary creation. As a matter of fact, it is unquestionable evidence that his work was a response to the situation in which he found himself, that is the colonial situation and his ambition was to produce stories for his own particular world and audience. This is relevant as in the twentieth century he has played an important role in the emergence of African literature and so far the transformation of the literary world.

The novel, *A Man of the People* (1966), taken as the political satire, comes out of his keen observation of the crisis of Nigerian politics on the eve of the 1966 civil war, an event that is prominent in the short stories and poems written when he worked as an unofficial diplomat for the breakaway Republic of Biafra. Thus, from fiction to reality in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* purports on exalting the anti-government practices implying Odili Samalu with his friends and Chief Nanga with his followers. In this connection, our main concern in this research work is to answer the following question: how can 'from fiction to reality be proved in Achebe's *A Man of the People*? The hypothesis supporting this research work is that characters of this novel, though fictitious behave as if they were real people who existed at the time. The sociological and psychological approaches will be helpful in attempting to reply to the above question. Also, limiting this study only to Achebe's *A Man of the People* would be irrelevant, some other references of the same interest could be considered for the betterment of the study.

However, the result of our review of the literature shows that this topic, as formulated hasn't been approached yet by researchers in our Alma matter, nevertheless, we have found from the internet some studies related to this issue. One of them is the paper conducted by Vachaspati DWIVEDI, Department of English, Haramaya University Ethiopia entitled 'Aspects of Realism in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*' (2008). In this work, the author recognizes that *A Man of the People* is really a work of fiction among realistic novels. In this connection, Dwivedi (2008: 11) writes 'The realism of Achebe's 1967 novel *A Man of the People* is demonstrated by the fact that events portrayed in the novel actually went on to occur in Nigeria in 1967: a military coup placed the politicians behind bars.' As to the plan, it is through the interaction of characters that the demonstration of 'from fiction to reality will be done. But, prior to this, background information on the study should be profitable in order to shed light on the theme.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS AND BACKGROUND TO THE NOVEL

This research work entitled 'From Fiction to Reality in Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People' aims at highlighting the behaviour of some characters in a way as if they lived in a tangible space and interacted with the others. On the basis of this emotional and physical intimate relationship which includes a common living place two dimensions are necessary: firstly, the sociological dimension as it makes prominent the relationship existing between literature and society through a work of fiction knowing that literature is a mere reflection of society which is, in turn, the source of inspiration for writers. It is in this sense that the comment made by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1972: XV) on literature sounds profound when he writes: 'literature doesn't grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society. One comes to understand that literature results from conscious acts of men in society. Secondly, the psychological dimension as it enables us to understand human nature in order to analyze characters' behaviours and motivations. In this connection, Carloni and Filloux quoted by Blachère and Aminata Sow Fall (1997:31) in 'les genres littéraires par Les texts comment on the use of this critical approach in the following terms:

L'acte d'écrire étant une conduite, la création littéraire n'est qu'un cas particulier analysable, décomposable au même titre que les autres. Toute œuvre est le résultat d'une causalité psychologique ; elle comporte un contenu manifeste et un contenu latent, exactement comme le rêve. Elle est une projection du psychisme de l'auteur et souvent des motivations dont il est loin d'avoir été conscient en l'élaborant. L'analyse du contenu latent définit très exactement la psychanalyse littéraire.

The writer in his endeavour to understand and interpret the world leads people in an apparent environment presenting things as if they existed in real life. It is then in this point that fiction is understood as a type of literature describing imaginary events and people or any creative work, chiefly any narrative work, portraying people, events, or places in imaginary ways that are not strictly based on history or fact. In its most narrow usage, fiction applies to written narratives in prose and often specifically novels, as well as novellas and short stories.

Thus, the writer writes about a true event as if it were fiction or in the style of a story inventing some of the details – settings, characters for a story to be understood. Therefore, it appears evident that a work of fiction is created in the imagination of its author. The author invents the story and makes up the characters, the plot or storyline, the dialogue and sometimes even the setting. Also, a fictional work does not claim to tell a true story. Instead, it immerses us in experiences that we may never have in real life, introduces us to types of people we may never otherwise meet and takes us to places we may never visit in any other way. As a matter of fact, fiction can inspire us, intrigue us, scare us and engage us in new ideas. It can help us see ourselves and our world in new and interesting ways. In this view, fiction is make-believe, invented stories; they may be short stories, fables, vignettes, plays, novellas, or novels. Although writers may base a character on people they have met in real life, the characters and the experiences that the character faces in the story are not real.

Because fiction is generally understood to not fully adhere to the real world, the themes and context of work, such as if and how it relates to real-world issues or events, are open to interpretation. Characters and events within some fictional works may even exist in their own context entirely separate from the known physical universe. Therefore, Chinua Achebe is one

of the writers who has fictionalized the socio-political situation of Africa in general and that of Nigeria in particular. Indeed, in *A Man of the People*, Achebe serves of imaginative creation to historically paint his society. However, in contrast to fiction, creators of non-fiction works assume responsibility for presenting only the historical and factual truth. Despite the traditional distinction between fiction and non-fiction, some modern works blur this boundary, particularly ones that fall under certain experimental storytelling genres including some postmodern fiction, autofiction, or creative nonfiction like non-fiction novels which are falsely marketed as nonfiction. This is realistic fiction that typically involves a story whose basic setting (time and location in the world) is real and whose events could feasibly happen in a real-world setting. Additionally, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines reality as the quality of being real or resembling something that is real. This conception doesn't distant in terms of meaning with realism which in literature stands as the art of showing, writing and painting things as they really are without idealizing them. It is in this perspective that Coles (2001:13) applies realism to literature in the following terms:

Realism, in literature, is a manner and method of picturing life as it really is, untouched by idealism or romanticism. As a manner of writing, realism relies on the use of specific details to interpret life faithfully and objectively.

In fact, despite what can be termed 'game of words' the content of the above quotation is what Achebe endeavours to reveal all along with his literary production, mainly his last novels where he forecasts the future of Nigeria. Thus, the keywords of this study (fiction and reality) being circumscribed, the following step is to show the veracity of the subject matter. In this regard, our main concern in this work lies in how is fiction turned into reality in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*?

The novel, *A Man of the People* is the fourth novel written by the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe published in 1966. Its main concern is about the revolutionary activities undertaken by Odili Samalu with a view to overturning Chief Honorable M. A Nanga, and with him his governance for corruption and mismanagement though Chief Honorable was his former teacher. From then, a conflictual atmosphere emerged between Odili Samalu with his friends and Chief Honorable and those who were under his control. However, it is not to forget that this conflict stemmed from Elsie, Odili's girlfriend who slept with Chief Nanga. To retaliate to Chief Nanga's misdeed, Odili also slept with Edna, Chief Nanga's wife. From there, one may understand that *A Man of the People* is a conflictual novel that ended by a military coup d'état that led Odili Samalu as well as his followers to jail. Therefore, in accordance with the topic, the psychological dimension of characters imbued them in behaviour that corroborates that of the real-life people of the African continent.

3.0 FACTUALITIES' UNVEILING

It is acknowledged that creative writers draw inspiration from real-life situations in order to express their feelings and emotions. This is the unique route given to them to say openly and loudly what is lowly said by other members of society. Thus, from fiction to reality in Achebe's *A Man of the People* is manifested through characters the author chose to build stories and as such stresses on their behaviour. In other words, the author uses his characters to materialize Nigerian society as if they were real people and this is done through the

different deeds performed by them. Indeed, this novel counts an important number of characters but for practical reasons, just a few of them will be considered to bring answers to our fundamental question. Among the many characters, we resort to the ones who embody the ruling class and those who claim for a new state of affairs, pertaining to a revolution in government for great change.

4.0 FORCES IN POWER

The advent of western power through colonization in the African continent was a reassuring step to socio-political, economic and cultural development for the black continent. Unfortunately, these people harvested the backside of his expectations as their hope turned into the lure. The ultimate hope for them was to militate for westerners' departure for them to be replaced by natives. This is what happened to African countries when the 'bang of independence' rang in the sixties. Indeed, independence was welcomed by African countries since people considered it as the end of white man's power and the rise of a new social order. This can be justified by the vacant positions left by the white men and instantly occupied by Africans themselves. Conversely to their expectancy, the everyday practices of countrymen brought about a feeling of disappointment, arising from the realization that things are not what they were expected or believed to be. This situation is noticeable in the creative works of Chinua Achebe, especially in *A Man of the People*. The lack of dynamism and abdication of the leadership was openly observed with some financial embezzlements here and there as the narrator (1966: 39) reveals:

From the day a few years before when I had left, like so many other educated citizens of our country, things were going seriously wrong without being able to say just how. We complained about our country's lack of dynamism and abdication of the leadership to which it was entitled in the continent, or so we thought. We listened to worshipers of scandalous deals in high places – sometimes involving sums of money that I for one didn't believe existed in the country.

Such is a declaration made by Odili Samalu facing the mismanagement of the country by forces in power. He has, in fact, the quality of a confident character not to be afraid or easily intimidated by anyone. Odili was committed to denouncing the greatest challenges faced by countrymen in their daily life since a privileged group of people stockpiles the national resources for their own use while the lower or common classes live in adverse conditions. This behaviour is fiercely blamed by many scholars in their writings. One of them is Festus Lyayi. In fact, in his novel entitled *Violence*, Festus evaluates and gauges the management of African rulers, mainly in Nigeria, his home country as well as elsewhere. The novel reveals an important number of characters implied in the practice of looting the money of the state for their own profit to the detriment of the popular masses. Some of them are Igreki, the army general and Azonze as Festus (1979: 78-79) mentioned in the following extract:

He (Igreki, the army general) was retired with full benefits after embezzling substantial governmental funds amounting to as many as sources have it to nearly two hundred and forty million nairas. (...) He (Azonza) owned over two hundred houses which he used public funds to build. He also owned several farms which were worked

with government equipment and labour, and yet whose expenses and maintenance were charged to the government treasury.

In Achebe's *A Man of the People*, however, a lot of social evils are observed among the characters. Chief Nanga's behaviour is telling evidence. As a matter of fact, Chief Nanga is one of the influential members of the executive power. Thus, aware of his position within society, he started proving himself more popular and important, leading him to be self-sufficient. This can be seen through the honour granted to him by his people, Anata. This is less rebukable yet, but more important to raise Chief Nanga's attachment to attempts of corruption. Therefore, to avoid facing Odili Samalu in the coming elections Nanga took profit of his position to secure Odili a juicy post and an important sum of money for him to decide otherwise; a behaviour common to African politicians fearing defeat from their opponents who very often are approved by popular masses. This statement is evidenced through Chief Nanga's wordings as the narrator (1966:12) puts:

'My private secretary has B. A from Oxford', he said. He should have come with me on this tour but I have some office work for him to do. By the way, Odili I think you are wasting your talent here. I want you to come to the capital and take up a strategic post in the civil service. We shouldn't leave everything to the highland tribes. My secretary is from there; our people must press for their fair share of the national cake.

'From fiction to reality openly expresses itself from such behaviour as it is and becomes a focal point of African leaders. The extract shows how tribal is Chief Nanga who would rather hire his own country fellows: a common practice in African administration. This leads us to realize how Achebe uses his fictional talent to convey true facts African people face in their everyday life. Indeed, from Chief Nanga's mouth, one could hear only corrupted words mainly to Odili for the latter to resign himself to politics. So far, Nanga through the narrator (1966:19) writes 'The country needs the experts like you. And leave the dirty game of politics to those who know to play it...' As we can see, Nanga makes understand that politics is an unpleasant area where people involved in it spoil their hands and he wanted Odili to remain perfect or flawless by presenting him as a person with extensive knowledge or ability in many areas. In this perspective, the conception of corruption made by Ekwueme (2014:51) purports as Odili has decided otherwise and Chief Nanga gained profit. To this effect, for Ekwueme 'corruption is associated with the practice of using the power of office for making private gain in breach of laws and regulation nominally in force'.

This evil with numerous drawbacks is refuted and blamed by more than one person. However, views about its impacts flourish in many literary theories as this practice reaches the climax in most African countries. On his side, arguing on corruption, Lumumba (2014: 47) makes a comparative analysis between corruption and prostitution which is also one of the evils characterizing African rulers. For Lumumba, 'Corruption is worse than prostitution, for the latter might endanger the morals of an individual; the former invariably endangers the morals of an entire country. This view is noticeably justified as prostitution implies two persons engaged in the fact whereas corruption not only concerns the corruptor and corrupted persons but also depraves or perverts the sense of values of an entire country. Thus, the evil of one individual embraces the whole country.

The probing of *A Man of the People* presents the character of Nanga as a cornerstone wherein revolve all evils. As one of the most influential characters, he took profit from his position to harm others. Ironically, he pretends to love Odili but his behaviour betrays him through different facts he poses. Apart from political ambitions, the feeling of identity and loyalty to his tribe, and the act of impairing integrity or moral principle, Nanga is also characterized by immoral acts or practices. As a skirt runner, Chief Nanga couldn't help himself resisting in front of the beauty of Elsie, Odili's girlfriend. To this effect, he starts loving her as he accommodated the couple with lodgings. Thus, aware of Odili's absence, Chief Nanga slept with Elsie, forcing sexual intercourse without her consent. Such an act is conceived as a crime Nanga committed against Odili's girlfriend as he (1966:69), himself witnesses in the following terms:

...I rush into the sitting-room and made about up the stairs when I heard as from a great distance Elsie deliriously screaming my name. I find it difficult in retrospect to understand my inaction at that moment. A sort of paralysis had spread over my limbs, while intensive pressure was building up inside my chest. But before it reached the raging point I felt it siphoned off, leaving me empty inside and out. I trudged up the stairs in the incredible delusion that Elsie was calling on me to come and save her from her ravisher. But when I got to the door a strong revulsion and hatred swept over me and I turned sharply away and went down the stairs for the last time.

From this extract, we realize how the fictitious world turns into reality as it is testified by the spouse himself. This becomes a common practice experienced by people in real life. Since Chief Nanga, an official belonging to the group of leaders is caught in the act, this means to some extent that this practice is recurrent and also perpetrated by any of his surroundings. It is often admitted that when one finger is spoiled, it also spoils the others as they all stay together. Accordingly, Chief Nanga assuredly didn't miss to contaminate his fellows with this evil. As this practice is frequently perpetrated, it becomes widely the concern of many writers. Something strange in *Lyayi Festus' Violence*, the Queen, wife of one of the wealthiest politicians embarked on immoral practices; an act which would have been committed by male characters. In fact, though married, she could sleep with whoever she met as witnessed by Obofun (1979:120), her husband in the following wordings: 'Queen is no wife to me anymore. She is no wife, the way she carries on, not caring even if I know she will sleep with any man, any kind of man'. One of the convincing facts about Queen's immorality in this novel is when she is tempted to sexually corrupt Idemudia, Adisa's husband. This is obvious when we consider her speech toward Idemudia. In this respect, the narrator on the Queen's behalf said:

Please, shut the door, Queen said to him. She was now lying on the bed. Shut the door, she repeated. Then come here and sit beside me. Here on this chair beside the bed, Idemudia wondered what the thing was as he sat on the easy chair beside her bed. She was wearing a see-through nightdress, soft and light blue. He saw the dark outlines of her body in the pale nightdress and quickly returned away...Help me off with this, Queen said to Idemudia, turning so that she lay. (1979:291)

This is a paradoxical case where a woman of a high position coaxes an unemployed man for some reason. All this accounts for moral deprivation, an attitude perpetuated by African

rulers once in power. Additionally, the same practice is noticed in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* where His Excellency abuses Beatrice knowing that she is Chris' girlfriend. Here again, immorality is experienced through the character of Sam as the victim testifies in this way:

Then, I suddenly heard my name. Beatrice, come and sit here by me, he ordered patting the sofa on the other side of him. African Chiefs are always polygamists (...). Polygamy is for Africa what monogamy is for Europe, (...) and then came the master's voice summoning me to have my turn in the bedchamber of African polygamy. (AOS: 79).

Although His Excellency is a fictitious character, his wordings reflect the real image or interpretation of what happens in real life. He confesses the evil which is a common practice in almost all African countries. Therefore, fiction becomes reality as the evil(s) are factual.

Apart from Chief Nanga who epitomizes evils characterizing African leaders in power, Chief Koko is also a figurative character with tremendous wealth as he is in charge of finance in their government. It is through politics that he makes money and his living conditions are quite different from popular masses. Likewise Chief Nanga, Chief Koko also engaged themselves in corruption. As an experienced politician, he convinces Max Well to change his mind and care for another subject. The purpose of this corruption was to prevent Max Well from politics fearing him to easily win the election: such is a practice African politicians often use in order to be elected. Accordingly, Chief Koko (1966:119) writes:

They think they can come and give money to irresponsible people to overthrow a duly constituted government. We will show them. As for you my brother you can eat what has entered your hand... Your good friend Maxwell Kulamo has more sense than you. He has already taken his money and agreed to step down for Chief Koko.

In this extract, Chief Koko boasts of the opulence that he got through illegal means. But the truth is that he succeeded to persuade Maxwell since he agreed to step down. By this instance, we are tempted to say that in politics everything is possible. And in the African context, it stands to reason that the forces in power feel free to do whatever they want regardless the popular masses. Meanwhile, in their writings, writers considered as spokesmen reveal what popular masses think or say so slowly. Thus, in the case of *A Man of the People*, a number of characters stand as revolutionaries, showing their discontent on the way forces in power manage the common affairs. Among them, we have Odili Samalu and Maxwell Kulamo that we are going to consider shortly.

5.0 REVOLUTIONARIES

The exploration of Achebe's *A Man of the People* shows that the forces in power gave improper treatment to the masses, especially through injustice, corruption and wrongful practices. This behaviour didn't please Odili and Maxwell, friends of long-standing as they studied together. From then, we realize that they are characterized by intelligence or mental capacity that help them to renounce marginalization or ill-treatment. They are genius, endowed with the capacity of thinking, assessing what is right and what is wrong. Thus, they are involved in a new order that should replace the older one characterized by evil practices

of leaders. This reform can become realistic only if African intellectuals unite with social classes and fight the rulers. In this connection, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's view is convenient when he writes:

I believe that the African intellectuals must align themselves with the struggle of the African masses for a meaningful national ideal. For we must strive for a form of social organization that will free the manacled spirit and energy of our people so we can build a new country and sing a new song. (1975: 50).

We can understand from this quotation that the destiny of Africa is only between African hands. Together they will stand but divided they will fall. This is to say that Africans should agree, consent on a new atmosphere, a new ideology for governance and this is possible if they stand together. Once together, they will be so strong to fight against all forms of social evils they experience in everyday life, evils which hinder or retard the development of most African countries. Thus, in connection with our analysis, some characters proved themselves useful to denounce or fight evildoings in Achebe's *A Man of the People*. Among them, we have Odili and Maxwell.

Odili Samalu is an emblematic character in this novel. He was the lonely child of her mother since the latter died in her first childbirth. This meant in the minds of people that Odili was an unlucky child, if not a downright wicked and evil one. This was so because dying during childbirth in the Ibo society implies shame to the family. His father, being a charismatic politician, Odili didn't hesitate to inherit this science through a teacher at Anata Grammar School. Once invited by Chief Nanga, minister of culture and his former teacher, Odili was not only exposed to corruption but also trapped since his girlfriend Elsie was raped by the minister. His witness about the circumstances of Chief Nanga's adultery on his girl-friend Elsie has a telling image as the Achebe (1966: 69) writes:

By the time I got to the longing my eyes were fairly at home in the darkness and it was easy finding Elsie's door. My hand was already on the knob when I heard voices within. I was transfixed to the spot. Then I heard laughter and immediately turned around and went down the stairs again. I didn't go into my room straight away but stood for long minutes in the sitting room. What went on my mind at that time lacked form and I cannot now set it down. But I remember finally deciding that I was jumping to conclusions that Chief Nanga had in all probability simply opened the connecting door between the two rooms to say good night and exchange a few pleasantries. I decided to give him a minute or two more, and then discarding this pussy-footed business go up boldly and knock on Elsie's door...I rushed into the sitting-room and made to bound up the stairs when I heard as from a great distance Elsie deliriously screaming my name.

We can learn from this extract that Odili experienced hard moments and couldn't help opposing Chief Nanga and this has been the starting point of conflict between both characters. Once he caught Chief Nanga in the act, Odili decided to show his discontent. This can be understood through the answer he (1966: 119) gave Chief Nanga as shown below:

Take your money and take your scholarship to go and learn a book; the country needs experts like you. And leave the dirty game of politics to those who know how to play it...

Do you want an answer? It is NO in capital letters! You think everybody can be bought with a few dirty pounds. You're making a bad mistake. I will fight you along the road and in the bush, even if you buy the entire C.P.C. I can see you are trying to cover your fear. I see the fear in your eyes.

From this conversation, we realize that the friendly atmosphere which existed between Odili and Chief Nanga turned into a conflictual one due to Nanga's misbehaviour. Odili, not only rejected corruption and disapproved of Nanga's immorality but also made these evils known by the masses. Thus, aware of that, Odili joins his friend Maxwell where he started involved in politics. They waged war against Chief Nanga with Odili aiming at replacing Chief Nanga. But unhappily Odili was doomed to hospital for he was slapped by Chief Nanga's people. As a matter of fact, Chief Nanga misrepresented, harmed or diminished Odili's reputation in front of his own people. This happened during Chief Nanga's speech where people gathered to hear his program and promises for the progress of the country. According to the narrator, we could hear Chief Nanga (1966: 139) say to his people:

My people, this is the boy who wants to take my seat. 'The announcement was greeted by a wild uproar, compounded of disbelief, shock and contemptuous laughter. 'Come up here,' Nanga. They want to see you...

'My people,' said Nanga again. 'This is the boy who is thrusting his finger into my eye. He came to my house in Bori, ate my food, drink my water and my wine instead of saying thank you to me he set about plotting how to drive me out and take over my house...

He even tried to take a girl on whose head I had put the full bride-price and many other expenses and who according to our customers is my wife-this girl here... he went over Edna and roughly pulled her hands away from her face...

This is too enough to understand that Chief Nanga expresses the desire to live long and perhaps die in this position in blackening Odili for electoral ambitions. It was only after his people got news of this, that they began maltreating Odili, slapping him and blows were falling on him like drops of rain. Fortunately for him, the police were very supportive. Actually, Chief Nanga's practices attest to the behaviour of African political leaders who once elected in some positions never offer to leave, hoping to stay everlastingly. In this case, we realize that for political reasons Chief Nanga through his people wanted to put Odili to death. The same atmosphere also prevailed in Kenya, especially in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* when the narrator asserts: "It was at this time we heard the terrible news: the lawyer has been murdered. He has been taken from a big hotel and taken a mile or so from the blue hills and he was shot and left for the hyenas to eat". This fact is not surprising since *Petals of Blood* centers around evils committed in post-independent Kenya and this is a vivid instance where a lawyer has been killed by forces in power for he opposes their ideals. Additionally, these cases are common to almost African countries where leaders perpetrate evils against masses and opponents. These facts reflect real-life circumstances African people

daily experiment. In *A Man of the People*, Odili has undergone these evils and couldn't help denouncing them.

By the same token, in their article entitled 'Facts and Political Realism in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*' Epounda Mexan Serge and Bokotiabato Mokogna Zéphirin showed how much African politicians are clung to evildoings. Thus, commenting on the arrest that Ikem was the victim of, the authors write:

...His arrest is linked to his burning desire to reform society. Many other forms of violence have also been reported. Because they wanted to know the truth about Ikem's death, a group of students were ill-treated and beaten by the police. They require a judicial inquiry and the dismissal of Colonel Ossaf who is, according to responsible for the murder of Ikem. (2018: 158-159).

Actually, Ikem is the editor of the *National Gazette*. Thus, trying to criticize the harmful practices of the government, he was arrested. This attests to the brutality, abuse of power and intolerance which distinguish African politicians from westerners' leaders.

However, referring to the novel under scrutiny, Odili is not the lonely character to unveil these practices. His friend, Maxwell that we will consider shortly has also ranged himself among the revolutionaries.

As his friend Odili, Maxwell is endowed with intellect, having the capacity for higher forms of knowledge and thought. Majored in law, Maxwell was involved in politics. Leader of the *Common People's Convention*, Maxwell's ideals are in disfavour for that of the ruling class. Thus, he fought actors of evil practices and claimed for a new order where the popular masses would find their rights. As such, he stands as an opponent to this regime. In this connection, when Maxwell got news of facts Odili underwent, that is corruption and immoral evils perpetrated against him by Chief Nanga, he didn't hesitate to point out the leaders of this regime. This is evidenced through Odili's wordings when he (1966: 123) writes:

Maxwell began by accusing the outgoing government of all kinds of swindling and corruption. As he gave instance after instance of how some of our leaders who ash-mouthed paupers five years ago had become near-millionaires under our eyes, many of the audience laughed.

For Maxwell, the forces in power represented by Chief Nanga failed to keep their promise rather obtained money or property by fraudulent or deceitful methods. This is the image of African political leaders who are characterized by evildoings such as corruption, embezzlement, immorality, violence, and many others. By the same token, Maxwell wishes to certify the people that it was time for political upheaval in a government characterized by a great change from which he is the leader. With his friend Odili, they have tried in vain to overturn Chief Nanga's government that they believe irresponsible.

Regarding the dealings or misdeeds Odili underwent, he was compelled to rally his friend Maxwell for political conquest, one way to avenge Chief Nanga. Paradoxically, Maxwell who presented Odili as his candidate in the election for being a Member of Parliament acted as a counterpart, as if he was at the same time for and against their own victory. Indeed,

Maxwell proved himself faithless by receiving with a consent money from Chief Koko, one of the most influential and wealthiest members of government. This can be seen through Odili's (1966: 126) words when talking to him: 'You should have taken the money from him, he replied. 'What?' I was thunderstruck. 'Chief Koko offered me one thousand pounds'...I consulted the other boys and we decided to accept. It paid for this minibus. As a matter of fact, the other members of the Common People's Convention didn't meet the goal since Odili, opposing Chief Nanga was disappointed by the conspiracy cooked up between Maxwell and Chief Koko. Thus, Maxwell who advocated change let himself corrupted knowing that in so doing they might lose elections. This leads us to think of hypocrisy that is also an evil practice among African rulers, though for the present case it is performed by Maxwell, a revolutionary.

Finally, Odili's state of being a candidate was rejected and this gave birth to a conflictual atmosphere. This was fatal for Maxwell as he has been killed by one of Chief Koko's bodyguards and this is a common practice in African countries. This state of affairs, though fictitious reflects or mirrors how political issues are settled in post-independent Africa. In other words, through this image, Chinua Achebe traces the settlement of political conflicts by forces in power. However, it is known that Maxwell is an intellectual who despite this behaviour opposes the old order and claims for a new order where leaders should govern while respecting human rights. As such he appears as revolutionary for his reactions are in disfavour of the ruling class and fight forces in power for their misbehaviour.

6.0 CONCLUSION

To conclude this research paper, it matters to recall that the subject matter is 'From Fiction to Reality in Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People' and our main concern has been to answer the following main question: How can 'from fiction to reality be proved in Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People? The answer to this question has been found through the implementation of evil practices committed by forces in power on the one hand and the revolutionary movement on the other hand. It sorts out that the forces in power epitomized by Chief Nanga and Chief Koko representing African leaders express the desire to preserve power resorting to evil practices such as financial embezzlement, immorality, moral deprivation and corruption regardless of the peasant masses' conditions of life. Another telling aspect we have reached is the revolutionary movement embodied by Odili and Maxwell who not only denounced the leaders' misuse of power and wrongdoings on masses, ultimate victims of these practices but also fought for a change. Thanks to sociological and psychological approaches we have shown how the masses underwent all sorts of humiliations due to misbehaviour and mismanagement of forces in power. Thus, 'From Fiction to Reality in Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People' proves itself useful since the facts portrayed in the novel actually happened in Nigeria in 1967 during the military coup that jailed politicians.

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