

Towards Utopia: Ayn Rand's and Chinua Achebe's Political Perspective.

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Abstract

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Key words: *Utopia-an Atlantis.. Political Philosophical Treatise treatise...socio-cultural dimensions. Ideal community life, highly calculated literary style ...spiritualism, materialistic.*

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Rand's Atlas Shrugged and Achebe's Anthills of the Savannahs is a sequel to Rand's The Fountainhead and Achebe's A Man of the People. The ideal 'man-child' of The Fountainhead grows into the 'demi-gods' of Atlas Shrugged and Rand's pursuit of the individual consciousness reaches culmination point, where Rand creates her protagonists as "man ought to be", in the image and likeness of God himself. Achebe's A Man of the People explores the moral relations of an individual with his society and this is further developed in Achebe's Anthills of the Savannahs. As in the previous phase, Achebe is also concerned with the question of who shall be the guardian of the public conscience.

The theme of Atlas Shrugged is, Rand tells us in For the New intellectual: ‘the role of the mind in man’s existence’ and as corollary, “the demonstration of a new moral philosophy: the morality of rational self-interest” (Rand 1961:88). It demonstrates the application of the theme of The Fountainhead – ‘Individualism’, to the political-economic arena. It demonstrates that Capitalism rests on the mind and the freedom of the mind. “My most important job” wrote Ayn Rand, in her notes, quoted by Barbara Branden in her book, The Passion of Ayn Rand, is the formulation of a rational morality of and for man, of and for his life, of and for this earth” (Branden 521).

The plot portrays what happens to a world when the mind goes on strike; when the men of creative ability in every profession, quit and disappear. To quote John Galt, the leader and initiator of the strike:

There is only one kind of men who have never been on strike in human history. Every other kind and class have stopped when they so wished, and have presented demands to the world, claiming to be indispensable- except the men who have carried the world on their shoulders, have kept it alive, have endured torture as sole payment, but have never walked out on the human race. Well, their turn has come. Let the world discover- er who they are, what they do and what happens when they refuse to function. This is rule strike of the men of the mind (AS 981).

The theme of the ‘Producers versus the Parasites’ reaches its climax here in this phase. In one of her notes, quoted in Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal, Rand states:

Reverse the process of expansion that goes on in a society of producers: Henry Ford’s automobile opened the way for the expansion of many industries; oil, roads, glass, rubber, plastics etc. Now, in a society of parasites, the opposite takes place: a shrinking of industries and productive activities. A James Taggart at the head of a big concern would have exactly the opposite effect from that of a Henry Ford (Rand 1967:187).

Since the essence of the creator’s power is ability of independent rational judgement, and since this is precisely what the parasite is incapable of - the key to every disaster in the story, to the whole disintegration of the world, is in each case (big or small) a situation where independent, rational judgement is needed and cannot be produced, (‘cannot’ in the case of the parasites, ‘will not’ in the case of the creators) observes Rand (Ibidem: 189).

Atlas Shrugged, is an action story on a grand scale, but it is a consciously philosophical action story, just as its heroes are consciously philosophical men of action. It moves effortlessly and ingeniously from economics to epistemology to morality to metaphysics to psychology to the theory of sex, on the one hand, and on the other, it has a playboy crusader who blows up a multi-billion-dollar industry; a philosopher- turned-pirate who attacks government relief ships, and a climax that involves the rescue of the hero from a torture chamber.

John Galt is Rand’s full and final statement of ‘the ideal man’ the statement towards which the whole of her life was moving her. Galt was to be the apotheosis of the human-potential, the man of theoretical genius, of practical efficacy, and who lives joyously, courageously, productively, rationally, and triumphantly-the man who belongs on earth. The person of John Galt dominates all the events of Atlas Shrugged. He is the man who conceives the strike, who initiates it, who seeks out the men of the mind to join it and who brings it to its final climax and triumph. He is the man who said he would stop the motor of the world and did. In the radio talk John Galt gives to the world of parasites, Galt describes himself thus:

I am the man who loves his life. I am the man who does not sacrifice his love or his values. I am the man who has deprived you of victims and thus has destroyed your world, and if you wish to know why you are perishing-you who dread knowledge-I am the man who will now tell you (AS 960).

John Galt is the man who discovers ‘Atlantis’, who gives his strikers their banner, the solemn oath that binds them together and their rallying cry in the form of the statement: “I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine” (AS 1003). When Rand had devised the character and role of John Galt, Rand turned to her heroine, Dagny Taggart, the woman who was to be worthy of loving Galt and being loved by him. “I had always been in awe of woman”, Rand said. Dagny is Rand’s first portrait of ‘ideal woman’. Kira was still a young girl at the end of We the Living; Dominique was paralyzed by a profound inner conflict in The Fountainhead. But Dagny was to be free of psychological conflict, serene in her basic relationship to existence, passionately ambitious and creative. Rand wished to project her as the woman thought to be impossible by the conventional view of life and of sex; the woman engineer, dealing with the material world of metal rails and freight cars and diesel engineers, who is, simultaneously, a consummately feminine hero worshipper.

Dagny is myself, with any possible flaws eliminated, she is myself without my tiredness, without my chronic, slightly anti-material feeling, without that which I consider the ivory tower element in me, or the theoretician versus the man of action. ... Dagny is myself without a moment of exhaustion.

She said, in an "Interview with Rand": "Dagny first meets John Galt after her plane crashes in Atlantis. Rand describes Dagny's reactions in one of the most exalted tributes to her ideal in all of her writing: When Dagny Taggart opened her eyes, she looked up into a man's face and she knew that in all the years behind her, this face was what she would have given her life to see—a face that bore no mark of pain or fear or guilt. It had a look of serene determination, with nothing to hide or to escape. This is Rand's way of introducing John Galt—the way men were meant to be.

In the above paragraph two women are in love: Dagny Taggart, the woman protagonist of *Atlas Shrugged* and Ayn Rand. What Dagny experiences with John Galt would come to an end through the living reality of John Galt, but they were not to end for Rand. Rand had never found the man whose "eyes imparted a superlative value to himself and to the world" (AS 981). But she would give him reality in a work of art; "and he would never disappoint her nor betray her, like the men Rand loved—like Frontz, like Leo, like Frank, like Nathaniel Branden, who had sentenced her to a life time of unrequited love" (Branden 1986:357).

The attributes most sharply emphasized in Galt's portrait are rationality, realism, serenity, self-esteem. An essential characteristic of Galt illustrates Rand's view of what she calls "the importance of evil", a concept of great importance in her philosophy and in the structure of all her novels. Galt has a profound contempt for evil, a contempt based on the conviction that evil is the irrational and therefore, the blind, the aberrated, the impotent. Evil is to be fought when necessary, but not to be taken seriously in one's own view of life, not to be granted metaphysical power or significance; evil is to be despised, not hated or feared. One may observe this premise in the plot-structure of *Atlas Shrugged*. The central lines of dramatic conflict are not between the good and the evil, but between the good and the good; between Galt and Francisco, the strikers on the one hand; and between Dagny and Rearden who will not join the strike, on the other. The errors that set Dagny and Rearden in conflict with Galt and Francisco are what Rand defined as "errors of knowledge, not breaches of morality" (Ibidem). This same pattern is also apparent in *The Fountainhead*. The central conflict is Roark versus Dominique and Wynand. In the both novels, the villains merely cash-in on the consequences of the hero's conflicts, but are not the initiators, the sources of the motive power of the story's events. In the novels, and in actual life, Rand said in 'An Interview with Rand'.

The alleged victories of evil are made possible only by the flaws of the errors of those who are essentially good. Evil, left to its own devices, is impotent and self-defeating. To make my central conflicts a struggle between heroes and villains, would be to grant to evil an honour it doesn't deserve (An Interview with Rand, p. 35).

Francisco d'Anconia a copper industrialist, heir to an enormous fortune, Galt's closest friend and the first man to join him in the strike, becomes one of Rand's most colourful and dramatic figures; the man of ruthless purposefulness who assumes the role of a playboy in order to destroy his fortune in plain sight of the whole world. Francisco's leitmotif is a light-hearted gaiety: he is the man with a superlative capacity for the enjoyment of life, and an iron-disciplined worker of unsurpassed productive energy and achievement. It is Francisco who would explain the meaning of the novel's title and its theme, to Rearden and to the reader:

"Mr. Rearden", said Francisco, his voice solemnly calm, "if you saw Atlas, the giant, who holds the world on his shoulders, if you saw that he stood, blood running down his chest, his knees buckling, his arms trembling but still trying to hold the world aloft with the last of his strength, and the greater his effort the heavier the world bore down upon his shoulders—what would you tell him to do?" "I...don't know. What... could he do? What would you tell him?" "To shrug" (AS 616).

In her philosophical treatise, *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand uses each of the heroic characters of demonstrate in concrete philosophical terms, her very important theories for life on this earth. Francisco D'Anconia expresses one of the most essential concepts of Rand's innovative thinking on money. It is not the root of all evil and can't exist unless there are goods produced and men able to produce them. "Money is the material shape of the principle that men who wish to deal with one another must deal by trade and give value for value" (AS 714). The root of money, the root of all production and wealth is man's mind. Money is made by the effort of every honest man, each to the extent of his ability. Money rests on the axiom that every man is the owner of his mind and his effort. But money is only a tool. It will take you wherever you wish but it will not replace you as the driver. Money will not purchase happiness for the man who has no knowledge of what he wants: Money will not give him a code of values, "if he's evaded the knowledge of what to value," and it will not provide him with a purpose, "if he's evaded the choice of what to seek." Money does not corrupt man, man corrupts money. Money

is a living power that will serve a mind that can match it. Francisco gives Galt a clue to men's characters: "The man who damns money has obtained it dishonourably; the man who respects it has earned it" (AS 715). "Francisco", Rand tells us in her notes, "is the philosophical expression, the concretization in a human character...of Minerva" (Branden 1986:414). To Rand, Francisco's name-Francisco Domingo Carlos Andres Sebastian D'Anconia, symbolized the whole character. "He us the other axis of my type of man", she once said. "There are two types of men in my novels", Rand wrote in her notes, quoted by Barbara Branden, in *The Passion of Ayn Rand*;

Roark, Galt, and Rearden are one line, Wynand, Bjorn Faulkner, Leo, and Francisco are the other. The Francisco type are the men who symbolize the enjoyment of life on earth. In my early attempts in Russia, the Francisco type was very prominent-so in devising the character of Francisco, I was cashing-in on an enormous store of ideas (Branden 1986:371).

The leitmotif of Francisco was to be an indestructible, gaiety, the leitmotif of Ragnar Danneskjold, the philosopher who becomes a pirate was to be an implacable sense of justice. Ragnar tells Rearden:

...my only love, the only value I care to live for is that which has never been loved by the world, has never won recognition or friends, or de-fenders-human ability. That is the love I am serving, and if I should lose my life, to what better purpose could I give it? (AS 315).

Ragnar is the symbol of the good man's helpless indignation against evil. That was Rand's lead to his character, the indignation that any victim feels against evil. That was the justification for a superior type of man choosing a career of violence. He was to be the avenging angel (Branden 1986:651).

Hank Rearden is the key means of dramatizing the martyrdom of the men of the mind. He is the martyred industrialist, the concrete "Atlas" who carries the world on his shoulders and receives only torture in return. The characterization of Rearden, a leading industrialist and the chief victim of the novel was to be unique in Rand's work. He is a hero, the most attractive and memorable, a man whom one admires intensely for his education, his uncomplaining struggle, his achievement, his austere honour, the magnanimity of his personality. But he is a man torn by conflict-not only the conflict with the outside world that characterizes Rand's other heroes, but by inner conflict. The conflict between his sexual passion for Dagny and his conviction that sex is a degradation; the conflict between his love for Dagny and his sense of duty towards a wife he despises; the conflict between his love for Francisco and his conviction that the face of the playboy which Francisco presents to the world is the proof of depravity. It is Rearden's intense battle with himself and the unflinching honesty with which he fights it, that engages the readers. He is a man who, within the context of his understanding, will not deceive himself. After his first sexual encounter with Dagny, he tells her:

I held it as my honour what I would never need anyone. I need you. It had been my pride that I had always acted on my convictions. I've given into a desire which I despise. It is a desire that has reduced my mind, my will, my being, my power to exist into and object dependence upon you-not even upon the Dagny Taggart whom I admired. Whatever I wanted I was free to proclaim it aloud and achieve it in the sight of the whole world. Now my only desire is one I loathe to name even to myself. I want no pretence, no evasion, no silent indulgence, with the nature of our actions left unnamed ... It's depravity-and I accept it as such... and there is no height of virtue that I couldn't give up for it (AS 640).

In the end, Rearden comes to understand the nature of his mistake, and the reader understands the means by which a man of spiritual mobility faces his internal conflicts. Hank Rearden is a self-made man who has risen to the position of the country's greatest steel industrialist. In the novel, Hank Rearden is on trial by the government, for an illegal sale of a metal alloy which he had created and which had been placed under government rationing and control. In this context, Rand uses Rearden to philosophize on the moral meaning of capitalism. Rearden tells the jury at his trial that he works for nothing but his own profits which he makes by selling a product to men who need it and are willing and able to buy it. The producer and the customer deal as equals by mutual consent to mutual advantage. Rearden further tells the jury that he is not willing to pay his workers more than their services are worth to him and he is not prepared to sell his product for less than his customers are willing to pay him. Rearden acknowledges his ability and his success and his money and he will not apologize for it. Rearden believes, if one individual's rights are violated, it will lead to universal devastation. The moral premise of achieving good by turning men into sacrificial animals is the most contemptible evil, which he is prepared to fight in the full confidence of the justice of his battle and of a living being's right to exist.

If Hank Rearden joins the strike as he refuses to compromise with Government controls, Dr. Hendricks, a distinguished brain surgeon quits and joins the strikers when medicine is placed under state control. Dr. Hendricks is not prepared to permit "the passionate devotion that goes into acquiring that skill to be

placed at the disposal of men whose sole qualification to rule me was to dictate to me at the point of a gun” (AS 757). Men consider only the welfare of the patients, with no thought for those who are to provide it. Dr. Hendricks could not accept that people asserted their right to enslave him, to control him, to force his will, to violate his conscience, to stifle his mind. Their moral code has taught them to believe that it is safe to rely on the virtue of their victims. Richard Halley, a great composer and musician also joins the strike, because the world is not worthy of his music.

Having dealt with Rand’s major protagonists, the researcher enumerates a number of secondary characters. Dagny’s brother James Taggart who ‘hides in mystical nonsense to avoid moral judgement’ (AS 536); Lillian Rearden, Hank Rearden’s wife, ‘the archetype of the humanitarian liberal pseudo-intellectual who despises and hates the industrialist’ (AS 641); Cheryl, the young girl who marries James Taggart believing his pretence of greatness, and is destroyed when she grasps the horror of the truth; Robert Stadler, the great scientist destroyed by his own cynicism; Ellis Wyatt and Ken Danagger, industrialists who abandon the work they live and join Galt’s strike. In her outline, Rand does not determine the relative importance of the secondary characters, says Branden. She plans to use them as the plot requires, when it required them (Branden 1986:535). ‘One character is an exception in my whole writing career’ (Ibidem), she later says, shaking her head as if still startled by the exception and by how it came about:

He is a character who, without my intention seemed to write himself. He came out of the material inspirationally, as I was writing. All I had intended was to describe in one brief mention a modern young college boy bureaucrat (Ibidem: 540).

The character is the young man nicknamed ‘The Wet Nurse’, in Atlas Shrugged, sent by Washington to direct the ‘fair’ distribution of the new metal, Rearden had created. He is to be a boy who ‘had no inkling of any concept of morality. It had been bred out of him by his college. This had left him with an odd frankness, naïve and cynical at once, like the innocence of a savage’ (AS 31). The character began to interest Rand. Rand realizes that through this type of innocent savage, not corrupt enough to know how corrupt his actions are, innocent enough to admire Rearden, a boy who really accepted what he had been taught in college, Rand could show the tragic representative of the good average young people. He would be a boy brought up as amoral, then awakening to moral understanding. ‘The Wet Nurse’ was to become the most endearing and touching of all Rand’s characters. In his last scene, during a riot, Rearden Steel staged an order from Washington, he would be shot in a last desperate effort to save Rearden’s Mills. Rearden takes the dying boy in his arms, to carry him to safety. But it is too late:

The boy’s features had no power to form a smile, but it was a smile that spoke in his glance, as he looked at Rearden’s face, as he looked at that which he had not known he had been seeking through the brief span of his life, seeking as the image of that which he had not known to be his values (AS 316).

One of the minor characters, ‘fishwife’, a woman striker in the valley, has a particular personal meaning to Rand, Her work is to provide the fish for the grocery market. As Dagny and Galt drive through the valley, Dagny sees “a young woman, stretched on the sun flooded planks, watching a battery of fishing rods. She glances up at the sound of the car, then leaps to her feet in a single swift movement and runs to the road. Dagny...sees the glance with which the young woman stood looking after Galt...hopelessness, serenely accepted was part of the worship in that glance. Galt says; ‘She’s a writer. The kind of writer who wouldn’t be published outside. She believes that when one deals with words, one deals with the mind” (AS 417). “The fishwife” is Rand’s Hitchcock-like appearance in Atlas Shrugged.

While projecting what happens if the men of the mind go on strike, and defining how and why civilization collapses, Rand is led to a crucial question: If it is the men of the mind who carry the world on their shoulders and make civilization possible—why have they never recognized their own power, and why have they never challenged their torturers and expropriators? When she grasped the answer, she knew it was to be one of the most important moral concepts in the novel: the concept of ‘the sanction of the victim’. Rand realizes that it is the victims, the men of virtue and ability, who make the triumph of evil possible by their willingness to let their virtues be sued against them; their willingness to bear injustice, to sacrifice their own interest, to concede moral validity to the claims of their own destroyers.

The parasitical society portrayed in this novel reaches its heights. The society is perishing because it fears knowledge. The society here ‘sacrifices justice to mercy, independence to unity, reason to faith, wealth to need, self-esteem to self-denial, and happiness to duty’ (AS 963). John Galt deprives this society of man’s and is dragging to sacrificial altars the creators, producers, thinkers, industrialists, scientists—the men of justice, of independence, of reason, of wealth, of self-esteem. But John Galt beats the ‘moochers’ and the ‘looters’ to it. He reaches these men of genius and rescues them to ‘Atlantis’.

The individuals in this phase alienate themselves from self-immolation. They decide they will not sanction society to victimize them, nor allow themselves to be swallowed by the herd. The individuals are striking against unearned rewards, unrewarded duties and the dogma that the pursuit of one's happiness is evil. They are on strike against the doctrine that life is guilt. The society here condemns these creators as 'evil', 'useless' 'dangerous and to be shackled' and to be shackled' and 'only an illusion' (AS 970), and so they remove themselves to a Utopian land, leaving the world as they saw it: 'a world without mind' (AS 973).

John Galt in his radio talk to the world: 'This is John Galt Speaking', says that neither of the demi-gods were to return until the American Society realized that 'a country's political system is based on its code of morality' (Rand 1974 182). America's moral system must be built on its foundation, on the premise that Rand advocates in *The Virtue of Selfishness*, that 'man's is an end in himself, not the means to the ends of others, that man's life, his freedom, his happiness are his by inalienable right' (Rand 1964:16) when it falls to a level of impotent chaos, when the advocates of the morality of sacrifice perish, when those hatred-eaten mystics are swept aside- 'then and on that day we will return' (AS 1008), promises John Galt.

And when they are called back, Galt promises to build and 'Atlantis' here on earth:

a city of smokestacks, pipelines, orchards, markets and inviolate homes, with the sign of the dollar as our symbol, the sign of free trade and free minds-and this country will become once more a sanctuary for the vanishing species: the rational being... In this world you will be able to rise in the morning with the spirit you had known in your childhood: that spirit of eagerness adventure and certainty. You will live in a world of responsibility being... your virtues will be given protection, your vices and weaknesses will not...And when you look at men and at yourself, you will feel, not disgust, suspicion and guilt, but a single constant respect (AS 965-966).

Rand in a dramatic and stunning finale makes her last plea to the American:

In the name of the best within you...In the name of the values that keep you alive, do not let your vision of man be distorted by the ugly, the cowardly, the mindless in those who have never achieved his title... Do not let your fire go out, spark by irreplaceable spark... Do not let the hero in your soul perish in lonely frustration for the life you deserved but have never been able to reach. Check your road and the nature of your battle. The world you desired can be won, it exists, it is real, it is possible, and it is yours (AS 1012).

Rand's identification of the disastrous sequences of 'the soul-body dichotomy', the theory of 'from each according to his ability to each according to his need', and the meaning of love and sex are some of the other contributing elements to the growth of the novel's scale. They become central philosophical issues. In her notes quoted by Branden in *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, Rand describes the way in which this soul-body dichotomy serves as sanction and excuse for the persecution of industrialists and for the scorn directed against those who create physical means of man's survival. Rand observes:

Show that the real sources, key spots, spark plugs of material production (the inventors and industrialists) are creators in the same way, in the same sense, with the same heroic virtues, of the same high spiritual order, as the men usually thought of as creators, as artistic (Branden 1986:750).

The policy from each according to his ability to each according to his need had been taught to mankind from times immemorial, by parents, teachers and ministers, that it would achieve a noble ideal, that it was righteous and just. But in *Atlas Shrugged* Rand considers this policy evil, disastrous and dangerous for man's survival on this earth. Galt observes that this policy is equivalent to:

Pouring water into a tank where there's a pipe at the bottom draining it out faster than you pour it, and each bucket you bring breaks that pipe an inch wider, and the harder you work the more is demanded of you, and you stand slinging buckets forty hours a week, then fifty-six for your neighbours supper-for his wife's operation, for his mother's wheel chair, for the baby to be born, for anyone anywhere around you-it's their to receive -from diapers to dentures, and yours to work without rest, without hope... From each according to his ability to each according to his need (AS 945).

In *For the New Intellectual*, Rand scornfully observes that the premise 'we are all one big family' (Rand 1961:104) is absurd because 'you don't all get a belly ache together' (Ibidem: 105). 'From each according to his ability to each according to his need is unjust as a man might claim he needs a yacht, and is it right, asks Rand, for him to need a yacht when he has not worked for it. Naturally, a man would hide every ability he had, and slow down and watch like hawks that we never worked any faster or better than the next

fellow' (Ibidem) because the best would only go to 'the family' (Ibidem) whenever any man failed any- where, another man had to make up for it in this policy. Rand observes:

To work with no chance for an extra ration, till the Cambodians have been fed and the Protagonists have been sent through college, to work on a blank check held by every creature born, by men whom you'll never see, whose needs you'll never know, whose ability; or laziness or sloppiness or fraud you have no way to learn to right to question is no moral law to accept (FTNI 47).

The meaning of love and sex takes on a very different interpretation in the works of Ayn Rand, just as money and the work ethics did. Rand believes that 'sex is not the cause, but an effect and an expression of a man's sense of his own value' (Rand 1961:99), Galt observes: The men who thinks that wealth comes from material resources, and has no intellectual root or meaning are the men who think for the same reason that sex is a physical capacity which functions independently of one's mind, choice or code of values (AS 965).

A man's sexual choice is the result and the sum of the fundamental convictions, Rand challenges the reader in Atlas Shrugged when she says: 'Tell me what a man finds sexually attractive and I will tell you his entire philosophy of life. Show me the woman he sleeps with and I will tell you his valuation of himself' (AS p.972). A man according to Rand will always be attracted to the woman who reflects his deepest vision of himself. There is no conflict between the standards of his mind and the desires of his body. What glory can there be in the conquest of a mind- less body, Rand asks in her comment on Atlas Shrugged quoted in For the New Intellectual (Rand 1961:101). "Love" she says, "is a response to our highest values-and can be nothing else" (AS 963) Rand continues:

Let a man corrupt his values and his existence, let him profess that love is not self-enjoyment but self-denial, that virtue consists, not of pride, but of pity or pain of weakness or sacrifice that the noblest love is born, not of admiration but of charity not in response to values, but, in response to flaws-and he will have cut himself in two (AS 987).

Rand's full power of dramatic integration is visible in her masterpiece Atlas Shrugged. Each key event carries and illustrates her philosophic themes and simultaneously contributes it to the economic disintegration of the country, advances the personal relationships among the characters and heightens the element of mystery and suspense created by the disappearance of one man of ability after another.

In Atlas Shrugged, Dagny Taggart asks John Galt what he had told the inventors, the artist, the industrialists, the scientists the men of the mind in every field of activity who had joined his strike, to convince them to abandon everything and to join him. Galt answers: I told them they were right. I gave them the pride they did not know they had. I gave them the words to identify it. I gave them that priceless possession which they had missed, had longed for, yet had not known they needed: a moral sanction (AS 986).

This was to be Rand's gift to America. 'A moral sanction'. The philosophical demonstration that to live for one's own rational self-interest, to pursue one's own selfish, personal goals, to use one's mind in the service of one's own life and happiness, is the greatest, the noblest, the highest, the most moral of human activities. Speaking of his strikers, Galt would say:

I have given them the weapon they had lacked: the knowledge of their own moral value. They, the great victims who had produced all the wonders of humanity's brief summer ... had not discovered the nature of their right. They had known that theirs was the power. I taught them that theirs was the glory (Ibidem 990).

Speaking to the unnamed, un-championed beating heart of her new land, Rand was to say: 'Yours is the glory' (Branden 1986:416).

America had given her life, and hope, and freedom, and the possibility of achieving everything denied to her in Soviet Russia. But Ayn Rand was a trader. She would write that '...the moral symbol of respect for human beings, is the trader. We, who live by values, not by loot, are traders, both in matter and in spirit. A trader is a man who earns what he gets and does not give or take the underserved' (VOS 96). She was to repay her adopted country for the gifts if offered her. She was to repay it by giving America its voice.

The researcher will now analyse the final stage of individualism as seen in the last works of Chinua Achebe. In this phase Achebe projects, the concept of ideal leadership as one of the very important solution to his society's problems. C. L. Innes in his book Chinua Achebe observes that Anthills of Savannah (1987) is Achebe's most complex and wisest book of date. It's a sequel to A Man of the People (1966), written al- most twenty-one years later and shows a marked change in Chinua Achebe's novelistic interests, his political philosophy and his artistic vision (Innes 1990:46). The novel deals with the cynical calculations of Africa's

latter-day power elite, and the bankruptcy of the sixties and seventies nepotistic politics, and in this sense it is a sequel to *A Man of the People*. But Achebe's view of that elite and its politics in the wider context has become more compromising and at least theoretically more attuned to gender a populist ideas. The elite, in *Anthills of the Savannah*, unlike in *A Man of the People* can no longer be expected to engage in a dramatic defence and its understanding of leadership and open its doors to traditionally excluded groups. Achebe signals this change in attitude by admitting to his narrative representative, members of 'the people': taxi drivers, or shop assistant, the urban poor and towards the end a market woman. This view of including the people is reinforced by the rather determined development of the novel's two main heroes: Ikem Osodi and Chris Oriko.

Osodi, the poet-journalist, comes to realise the importance of establishing "vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed ... the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation's being" (AOS 141), and Chris Oriko, carrying Ikem's light, forges contacts outside his elite group. The charge of deliberateness, however, should not disparage what is Achebe's obvious commitment to imagining a reformed national politics. Expressing at once mature disillusionment and heavily-qualified fresh hope, his tentative new vision is manifested (as David Maugham Brown observes in *Anthills of the Savannah and the ideology of Leadership*) in the strategic gender configurations of his central characters" (Kunapipi 1990:142).

The novel opens with paranoid manoeuvres within a male elite determined to keep hold of power, it ends with a celebratory naming ritual involving three key female figures: Beatrice, Chris's old girlfriend, and a new priestess of the goddess Idemili, Elewa, and Elewa's child by Ikem, called Amaechina, 'May-the-path-never-close' (AOS 222). Headed by the powerful Idemili 'talismen' and together with its affiliates from various classes, urban and rural, this life-affirming sisterhood signifies a new conception of ruler ship, the beginning perhaps of a new era for Kangan and signals a new moment in Achebe's work, according to David Maugham Brown (Ibidem:140). The new moment indeed represents a revision of ideas of power and leadership – in Ikem's terms, a 'new radicalism' – or whether it remains in the main emblematic, a public enshrining of a canonized and perhaps stereotyped 'womanly' authority set up as a last resort in the face of a depraved political situation. Even in the case of a so-called radical revision, 'it may be that gender in Achebe remains a vehicle. Women is the ground of change but not the subject of transformation' (Ibidem: 141).

In a pamphlet entitled: 'The trouble with Nigeria' (Achebe 1987:21), which Achebe wrote as an injunction to Nigeria just before the 1983 election scandal, Achebe bluntly admits that the 'indiscipline of leaders', a national condition of 'lawlessness' and 'selfishness' (Ibidem :27) was the trouble with Nigeria. Achebe throws light on the political conception behind *Anthills of the Savannah* and observes that the cure of the disease is "not to be found in society at large but in the nation's leaders" (Ibidem). Leaders combine and so compound their lawlessness with influence and power. 'They are in the language of psychologists 'role models'. People look up to them and copy their actions.... Therefore, if a leader lacks discipline, the effect is apt to spread automatically down to his followers (TN, p.31). Africa's national leaders have become its curse-but, he believes, they might be its salvation. Addressing Nigeria's elite as himself a self-conscious member of that group, Achebe is unambivalent in his view of leadership as the chief pivot of political and also of economic transformation. Though he believes that the advent of a new leader should be followed by 'a radical programme of social and economic re-organization or at least a well-conceived and consistent agenda of reform' (Ibidem 1), he sees the first step in any process of change as being new ruler ship, in effect, the intervention of personality.

Interviewed after the publication of, Achebe made it clear that one of his intentions in the novel has been to take up issues raised in *The Trouble with Nigeria* and to use his novel to propose solutions. What will save Nigeria's future progeny is, for Achebe, better leadership. Achebe interviewer, Anna Rutherford, says:

I had the feeling that what you were suggesting was that the society reflected the quality of the leadership; if the leadership was corrupt, the society would also then turn to corruption – in other words, the negative aspects in the society would be directly related back to the negative aspects of the leadership (Rutherford 1987:3).

Achebe agrees with this interpretation but adds: ...'but what I'm really interested in is how you could begin to solve this problem. If you're going to do that, you have to pin-point the responsibility, specifically before you can even begin to break out of the vicious circle. And it is at the level of the leadership that this break must occur (Ibidem: 3).

So, *Anthills of the Savannah* sets out to solve this problem. The solution proposed by the novel is couched in terms of 'leadership', a preoccupation carried over into the fiction from Achebe's non-fictional statements. The first sentence of 'The Trouble with Nigeria' states quite

boldly: "The Trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership" (TN. p.1). Achebe then comments, The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to

the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership, and he concludes a few pages later that:

Every single day of continued neglect brings (Nigeria) ever closer to the brink of the abyss. To pull her back and turn her around is clearly beyond the contrivance of mediocre leadership. It calls for greatness ... Nigerians are what they are only because their leaders are not what they should be (TN, p.10).

In 1988, Achebe can be found interpreting the causes of the Biafran war in exactly the same terms: "The war resulted from the failure of the leadership of Nigeria to protect significant portions of the population from a pogrom, from destruction" (TN, p.1). In pursuit of this leadership thesis Achebe goes as far as asserting that after two decades of bloodshed and military rule (TN p.7) in one of the most corrupt, insensitive, inefficient places under the sun (TN, p.9) what his "society craves today is not a style of leadership which projects and celebrates the violence of power but the sobriety of peace" (TN, p.34) what 'the wretched of the earth' crave as the solution to the 'gargantuan disparity of privilege' between the 'tiny class' of the elite and 'the vast multitudes of ordinary Nigerians' (TN, p.22) is, it is suggested, a change in leadership style. Achebe concludes that "if Nigeria is to avoid catastrophes of possibly greater dimensions than one has been through since Independence, one must take a hard and unsentimental look at the crucial question of leadership and political power" (TN, p.59). 'Leadership and political power, constitute a single 'question': Is it possible to separate the concept of 'political power' from that of 'leadership'.

When this concern with leadership finds direct expression in *Anthills of the Savannah* one finds reference to "leaders who openly looted our treasury, whose effrontery soiled our national soul" (AOS 42). Ikem comes to the conclusion that the 'prime failure' of leadership in Kangan, the novel's fictionalized version of Nigeria, can be seen as "the failure of our rulers to re-establish vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed of this country, with the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation's being" (AOS 141).

The key to the ideological thrust of the novel lies in the usage Achebe makes of Ikem as the primary vehicle for his message, of leadership and reform, rather than revolution, in whose service Ikem lives, dies as fictional character. Achebe makes a point of trying in a variety of ways to signal a distance between himself as author and Ikem. The most obvious of these are:

- i) *The criticism which Ikem comes in for in front of the other characters, most notably Beatrice's criticism of his attitude to women (AOS 65).*
- ii) *Potentially and more tellingly, the omniscient narrator's comment: By nature, he is never on the same side as his audience. Whatever his audience is, he must try not to be. If they fancy themselves radical, he fancies himself conservative; if they pro- pound right-wing tenets he unleashes revolution (AOS 154).*

This would suggest that Ikem's adherence to any political position can never be taken at face value and might seem to serve as insurance against the possibility of his being identified as an authorial spokes- person. But it is, nevertheless, Ikem, who is made responsible for ex- pounding the central tenets of the political philosophy on which Achebe's central message about leadership is hung:

- i) In the 'strange love-letter' (AOS 97-101) he reads to 'Beatrice'
- ii) In his seminal speech at the students' union (AOS 152-161).

Ikem's credentials as an authorial voice are established so clearly that the distancing devices carry very little conviction. Beatrice, who can be taken as a reliable witness throughout, describes Ikem's treatment of women as 'about the only chink in his revolutionary armour' (AOS 65). The reader's sympathy is clearly sought for such statements as Ikem's: "While we do our good works let us not forget that the real solution lies in a world in which charity will have become unnecessary" (AOS 155). Key scenes like the public executions on the beach are described through Ikem's eyes, and Ikem's perceptions are subsequently authorial endorsed in interview: "So you find a leader like the editor of the 'National Gazette' setting himself up to correct the situation. It is people like him who must initiate the action. It cannot be done by the group on the beach who are delirious and obscenely happy and enjoying the execution" (Rutherford, p.2). It enables Achebe to provide a continuous and favourable assessment to Ikem's performance in the crucial speech to the students. He develops a device whereby description of the audience response serves as an index to the incisiveness and accuracy of what Ikem is saying. Thus, for example, the statement that 'the laughter had died all of a sudden' (AOS 160) indicates that Ikem has scored a telling point at the students' expense. This is a device which readers first had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the wholly uncontentious context of the long speech given by the Old Man of Abazon at the Harmony Hotel (AOS 122-128). Apart from canvassing support for resistance to 'catchy, half-baked orthodoxy' (AOS 158), 'modish radicals' (AOS 159) and 'half-digested radical rhetoric' (AOS 161), the

main burden of Ikem's political message in the novel lies with his elevation of reform over revolution: This is obviously a very far cry from Achebe's earlier endorsement of 'a revolution that aims toward true independence' with its apparent recognition that neo-colonialism and mere 'flag' independence are not susceptible to 'reform'.

We? Who are we? The trinity who thought they owned Kangan as BB once unkindly said? Three green bottles. One has accidentally fallen; one is tilting. Going, going, bang! Then 'we' becomes 'I' becomes imperial 'We' (AOS 191).

In a review titled 'Betrayal', Neal Ascherson observes 'it parts a joke about Sam being left alone in power, the 'imperial We' reference is also Chris's final comment on the obsession with power that, in different ways motivated and so also undermined each member of the trinity' (Ascherson 1988:4). Ironically, however, after the demise of the troika, a highly exclusive elite will still remain in place and in force. The group that coheres around Beatrice is to be the catalyst of the future, Rutherford observes the ultimate responsibility for getting us out of this bad patch is with the small group of people who, in one way or another, find themselves in positions of leadership' (Rutherford, p.2). In this small group, the tendencies to nepotism and corruption which have compromised elite rulers in the past, will presumably be mitigated by the advent of women's salubrious force.

Elleke Boehner in his article, 'Of Goddesses and Stories: Anthills of the Savannahs observes that Achebe believes that woman must be included in the new elite because she is uncorrupted by power and once native female rule depends on the stereotypical image of woman as inspirer and spiritual guide; but whether the practical application of the idea has much hope is another question. Achebe seems to be confused about (Kunapipi, 1990:128). On the one hand, Achebe portrays a pessimistic political system, which dominates the greater part of the novel, and which Ikem gives expression to, and, on the other, an apparent commitment to gender reform and to the redemptive power of myth which comes into its own towards the end.

An exponent of the present politics and the herald of a future vision, Ikem gives us a clearer sense of these ambiguities. In the incendiary speech to the University which is the immediate cause of his arrest and murder, Ikem resolutely rejects text-book revolutionary specific African or Kanganian contexts (AOS 158). The abstractions of such theories have permitted every sort of misinterpretation and licence on the part of their proponents. However, as he has already enjoined Beatrice, '(n)one of this is a valid excuse for political inactivity of apathy ... the knowledge of it (is) the only protective inoculation we can have against false hopes' (AOS 100). His proposal, which recalls assertions of Achebe in 'The Trouble with Nigeria' is to re-form society around ... its core or reality' (AOS 100) that is, to develop its inner strength, which in Anthills of the Savannahs includes the power of womanhood. In typically metaphysical terms, Ikem wishes to connect his essence with earth and earth's people' (AOS 140-141) yet is also aware of the classic dilemma of radical intellectuals, namely, that the knowledge and experience which constitute their power, also isolate them. Ironically, it is precisely his belief in indigenous sources of healing that tags his status as outsider, one who appreciates rituals as an observer but does not live them. The same cultural distance marks off Beatrice's position as one removed from custom. Being a bearer of redemptive vision does not transform Beatrice, into a representative member of the earth's core: significantly, her status is that of special icon, not people's goddess. Ikem's meditations lead to the point of resolution which is captured in Achebe's idea of broadening from the top – as opposed to, say, democratisation or widening from the base: 'You have to broaden out so that when you are talking for the people, you are not only talking for a section or a group interest' (Rutherford, p.3). Given the need for an elite and therefore for hierarchy, the main possibility of reconciliation lies in building and extending person-to-person connections across class, gender and political hierarchies. The intention is to maintain an elite leadership within a national framework, but to change its style: to develop responsibility, a newly-gendered image of power, not a little scepticism and a broader support base-in general to 'widen the scope' (AOS 158). The leaders approach the 'owners' of the country in order to embrace and take into their bosom certain of their number. So, Beatrice, leader, inspirer and new seer, becomes the informing centre of a new select group drawn from various social sectors. David Maugham Brown observes that according to the leitmotif of the novel, in the anthill that survives after the fires of the harmattan, Beatrice is queen, keeping the colony together. As with Yeat's interlocking gyres, though things threaten to fall apart, though old vortices collapse, centres – stable 'cores of reality (leaders, elites, women as dispensers of succour) – are needed, if there is to be movement and change' (Kunapipi 1990:142).

In terms of the revolutionary of Marxist theory 'orthodoxies of deliverance' (AOS 99) Ikem derides, the cop-out is patently obvious: existing economic and political structures remain firmly entrenched, class hierarchies (such as outlined in The Trouble) are endorsed; a soft-core middle-class moralism is reinforced. From the gender perspective, by implicitly presenting the sisterhood's investiture as, in the main, metaphoric

redemption, the danger is that woman's conventional position as inspirational symbol –the mentor who is never a full political actor is entrenched.

Yet Achebe has prepared for his caveat by eulogizing the power and importance of myth and story – telling in the novel – in the particular through the rhetoric of the Old Man from Abazon (AOS 122-128), in the hymns and the poetic role Ikem, and in the apotheosis of Beatrice. For the present, the national is to be redeemed metaphorically – or perhaps metaphysically – only: that is, by London-educated civil servants turning into Ibo priestesses, by syncretic ritual and emblematic cross-class and cross-ethnic alliances. Achebe's general idea seems to be that, in the African context, where much theory has already been uselessly imposed, political postulates, such as those set out in *The Trouble with Nigeria* do not of themselves offer hope of regeneration. Not by way of clichés from other histories and struggles, but in the figures of gods and rituals drawn from its own local cultures, can the nation, whether Kangan or Nigeria interpret present confusion conceptualise a new future, or as Beatrice puts it, '(subvert) the very sounds and legends of day-break to make straight the way' (AOS 109). This is related to Ikem's idea that humanity be re-formed around what lies within it; that, where 'times' will always 'come around again out of story-land' (AOS 33), one should draw on history and story as it is and has been lived.

The metaphoric and allusive images of a future dispensation give primary colour to the hope of Anthills of the Savannah and to Achebe's own hope for the African nation. His idea of the relation between symbolic transcendence and the presence of women should be more clearly defined. Significant emblematic elements appear in Ikem's two dense prose poems (the 'Hymn to the sun' (AOS 30-33) and the Meditation on Idemili's owner' (AOS 102-105). 'Masculine' images of power and agency are juxtaposed with 'feminine' evocations of peace and reconciliation. It is clear that old dichotomous gender distinctions run deep. However, the final scene at Beatrice's flat, in dramatizing and unifying Achebe's central symbolic meanings, demands the focus of attention. It is here that Beatrice, pre-figurement of a 'gynocentric' spiritual way, stands forward as the harbinger of a new order. From the initial act of having pointed Ikem in the direction of his vision of woman (AOS 96), through being flippantly called a 'prophetess' by Chris, we find Beatrice metamorphosed through sorrow (her suffering is stated not dramatized) into a priestess of Idemili, 'the unknown god (sic)' (AOS 224); and also a leader of the naming ceremony (replacing the traditional position of father or male family head (AOS 222)). Whether the cross-reference is intentional or not, Achebe rather appropriately draws on the same redemptive Ibo tradition of female devotion and worship (as did Nwapa in *Efuru*, as Ifi Amadiume tells us in "Class and Gender in Anthills of the Savannah) with her moral authority, godless-like carriage and capacity for mediation and inspiration, Beatrice has recognizably become a daughter of the Idemili described in the myth earlier told by Ikem.

The incarnation of Idemili is a redemption of the present political situation, as it is of the neglect of the goddess in the past. Ikem's observation, that myth has been used to marginalise women (p.89) is also echoed by Achebe in the Rutherford interview. Attended by Elewa, child of the people and bearer of the seed of a poet, and a new child, a girl with a male name – Beatrice's spiritual power as a blessed woman thus represents the fulfilment of Ikem's final vision of Woman as adopting a new and yet-to-be-imagined role, as signifying new hope (AOS 98). To quote Achebe himself, Beatrice and her entourage represent women in their place 'in the forefront of history' (Rutherford:4).

The potential of woman as celebrated at the end of Anthills of the Savannah represents a significant advance in the African novel, being most distinguished perhaps by Achebe's refusal to dictate exactly how that potential will be fulfilled. Space is made for woman to be herself, the prefiguring subject of a new social and political vision. Yet at the same time, despite the efforts at 'rescheduling' power, it is also true that the way in which Achebe privileges woman continues to bear familiar markings for gender, and that this must, to a certain extent compromise his re-imagined hope. Symptomatic of Achebe's difficulties is Elewa's transmogrification through the implantation of Ikem's seed (AOS 184). As part of the same symbolic logic, Amaechina's name – "May the path never close is translated as the 'Shining path of Ikem' (AOS 222). The implicit idea of inheritance along a male line – of masculine influence as life-giving, and of man as passing the rod of leadership on to woman – can of course be justified in terms of Achebe's belief in continuity: 'The remnant-shall-return' (AOS 222). Yet it equally signifies that maleness remains potently generative: as Beatrice discovers the day she dances with His Excellency, 'the royal python' still stirs '(gigantically)' in the 'shrubbery' of Idemili's shrine (AOS 81).

Certain traditional gender-specific spheres of influence appear to remain in force. In their time-honoured way, women in Anthills of the Savannah especially the heroine who lacks 'book', wield power through sex and their bodies, whereas man continues to control the word (Ikem's poetry) and also, one presumes the rule of the word that is politics. As in earlier nationalist writing, Ifi Amadiume tells us in "Class Gender in Anthills of Savannah" 'the artist, the one who defines first the vision of the future and transmits the myths of the

people, is male' (Amadiume 1989:9). Towards the end of the novel, it is true, a woman does decisively obtain control of vatic power. However, in that her transfiguration is, almost by definition, symbolic, she remains trapped in a role that women have occupied many times before in the mythologies of nations, states and politics, she incarnates 'the ideals and the desire of men'. On the same point, one might ask to what extent Beatrice's induction into the cult of Idemili is in part a specific development of a stereotype; the inverse of the image of woman as unclean, or as body? As in more traditional evocations of Mother of Africa, woman in Anthills of the Savannah is represented as mystical, in touch with the unknown, as mentor or genius of the renewed nation.

As problematic as cross-gender filiation are relationships within 'the sex'. In this case, differences of class complicate gender status, returning us to the question of the constitution of the ideal elite. In another representative scene, Beatrice plays the central role, Elewa – or perhaps Ikem – is the main Catalyst of the situation. Conflict arises during the time of crisis after Ikem's death when Agatha, Beatrice then treats Agatha roughly, pushing her aside to do the job herself. At this point Achebe equips his chief heroine with a fair amount of defensive rationalization: she is concerned to repeat that Elewa's emergent consciousness' has acted with transfiguring power, singling her out from the mass represented by Agatha. It is this special 'almost godlike' touch which, in addition to being 'Ikem's girl', Beatrice concludes, has "transformed a half-literate ... girl into an object of veneration" (AOS 184), and someone she is able to befriend. Beatrice makes quite clear that the 'complaining millions of men, who darken in labour and pain' are to be saved, not by their own efforts, but by those with inner light – a capacity which would further separate the elite from the mass. Yet given this chasm of consciousness, how are the enlightened humans, even if female (asks Brown) to interact with the masses, like Agatha, who do not have the gift of 'luminosity' (unless this is sympathetically transfused), or, with class barriers still in place, do not come into contact with those who have light? The apotheosis of women figures, impelled by the need to save the elite from itself, finally brings us back to the original problem of how to form an enlarged caucus, a problem now compounded by the distancing effect of the canonization of woman.

Achebe wants his novel, *Anthills of the Savannahs* to give hints of a new and regendered order. There are inconsistencies and contradictions or moments of insight in his art of narration. The problems of elite politics remain insoluble but symbol provides a powerful means of thinking forward. Beatrice asks: "what must a people do to appease an embittered history?" The answer is there in the eyes of her guests: they recognise in her act of articulation, 'the return of utterance to the sectional priest struck dumb for a season by the Almighty for presuming to set limits to his competence (AOS 220). 'Truth is Beauty', Beatrice explains at the very end of the novel – it is the truth that lies in the last image of Chris withstanding his assailants like Kunene's Emperor Shaka' (AOS 233) and the truth contained in the prominent image of the anthills holding their own truth of the past. Implanted in the 'truth (is) beauty' postulate, is an evitable suggestion of abstraction from real, material life:

it is in keeping with this that Beatrice's new vocation, if we are to believe Nwapa, demands retreat from everyday life. Yet Beatrice's assertion is also a practical adaption of the doctrine of aesthetic appreciation to a context, where, as Soyinka has also held, myth and ritual continue to thrive as living presences; Achebe in Girls at War makes Gladys program from 'girl' to sanctified object as much as for their beauties of ceremony to be redeemed, for their truth, their lived reality, as much as for their patterned form (Achebe 1972:103-23).

Achebe appears to want to hold the two ideals truth and beauty, in balance, the one intimating the other: So, just as a relatively ordinary woman may become, through her spiritual understanding, an example or 'shining path' to her companions, in the same way an ordinary stick in the sand is transformed through ritual into a pillar of Idemili, the connection with 'earth and earth's people'. The real functions as index to the beautiful. In this way too, random collection of individuals can come to represent the ritual passage into the future of another Kangan. In 'serious' politics, symbols and supernatural signs such as these might seem superficial and, certainly from a gender point of view, compromising. Yet, where other options and modes of recompense are unsteady or have failed, symbols stand for points of intersection with, as Achebe would have it, the very present divine: as interjections of spirit, 'transactions' between the market place and goddesses.

Anthills of the Savannah reveals that Achebe has risen to new heights in both artistic excellence and social vision. A writer who is continually coming to grips with the problems of society and art is likely to develop to higher levels of social consciousness and as a consequence to strive for new forms of artistic representation, forms which match his or her quest for democracy and social transformation.

When writers make their debut with a classic of the quality of *Things Fall Apart* it is often not easy to match that first performance in later works. *Things Fall Apart* stands head and shoulders above the other three novels. Emmanuel Ngara in *Stylistic Criticism and the African Novel: A Study of the Language and Content of*

African Fiction says : With regard to the use of the language it may be argued that although he over-played the importance of proverbs in *Arrow of God*, his skill in that particular aspect has become so perfect that the language of the third novel is superior to that of any of the other novels, *Things Fall Apart* included. But when one reads *Anthills of the Savannah* one is struck by a new and refreshing quality in the use of language, a quality that is perhaps discernible in *No Longer At Ease* and *A Man of the People*, but not in the same degree of excellence (Ngara 1985:59). Achebe's basic philosophy regarding the use of the English language by the African writer has not changed. There is, for instance, a clear distinction between the language of relatively uneducated people like Agnes, Beatrice's housemaid, and Elewa, Ikem Osodi's girlfriend. These consistently speak Pidgin, unlike Beatrice, Chris, Ikem and His Excellency, all of whom belong to the educated elite and would normally use Standard English. It is also clear that the bearded old man who is one of the leaders of the Abazon delegation that meets Ikem at Harmony Hotel in Chapter 9 is reminiscent of the like of Ezeulu, those who represent traditional wisdom and are blessed with the gift of eloquence. His English is meant to be Achebe's rendering of the Ibo he would have spoken. This is all familiar to Achebe's readers, but there are some new elements now. George Lukas in *The Historical Novel* tells us that Achebe is such a master of the English language that he is able to skilfully combine what sounds like conventional English spoken and written by linguistically talented mother tongue speakers with a local educated variety of the language and the idiom of non-English speaking characters, to produce a style which is almost classical but almost with an underlying informal touch that saves it from being stilted (Lukas 1981:331-332). Consider, for example, these two passages from *Anthills of the Savannah*:

On my right sat the Honourable Commissioner for Education. He is by far the most frightened of the lot. As soon as he had sniffed peril in the air he had begun to disappear into his hole, as some animals and insects do, backwards. Instinctively he had gathered his papers together and was in the very act of lifting the file-cover over them and dragging them into his hole after him when his entire body suddenly went rigid (AOS 3).

I was determined from the very beginning to put my career first and, if need be, last. That every woman wants a man to complete her is a piece of male chauvinist bullshit I had completely rejected before I knew there was anything like Women's Lib. 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! (AOS 880)

The first passage represents Chris Oriko's language and the second Beatrice's. The features which are clearly noticeable in the two passages are the conventional style, the natural flow of the language and how easily readable the extracts are. It is also worth noting that in these and many other passages Achebe is able to maintain a fine balance between informality and formality. This is partly because he employs the first-person narrator point of view. At the same time, he does not lose the opportunity to exploit the use of local idioms which even highly educated people like Professor Reginald Okong are wont to use in appropriate situations, as in the passage where Professor Okong is attempting to curry favour with His Excellency, the President (AOS 18).

It is amazing how Achebe manages to combine a wide variety of stylistic features and to slide into different moods with great ease. The style is on the whole light-hearted. The novel deals with very serious matters but the tenor of discourse is relaxed and sufficiently informal to allow the reader to reflect and digest the ideas without being overburdened by a heavy style. This is also true of *A Man of the People*, but it is more difficult to achieve in *Anthills of the Savannah* because in the former novel the principal characters, Odili and Chief Nanga, are not portrayed as serious-minded characters, but in *Anthills of the Savannah*, all the major characters are addressing what they believe to be grave matters but in a manner which is never so serious as to bring about a feeling of depression in the mind of the reader. On the contrary there is even irresistible humour in many a passage when Professor Okong refers to overthrow of the civilian regime as 'a historic fall from grace to the grass' (AOS 12), and in passages depicting His Excellency, the President's wit and wry humour.

In *Anthills of the Savannah* the use of language is intricately bound up with the author's narrative technique. The story is told from the point of view of three characters – Chris Oriko, the Commissioner for Information in the Republic of Kangan; Ikem Osodi, editor of the *National Gazette*; and Beatrice Okoh, Chris's girlfriend and a Senior Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. In addition to these three narrators there is the omniscient narrator who takes over from each one of them at a convenient point. For example, the event that takes place in Chapter I are narrated by Chris Oriko who, like Beatrice, puts his observations in writing. But in Chapter 2 the omniscient narrator takes over again, and this goes on and on. An important consequence of the technique is that the author is able to explore in depth a wide variety of issues from different angles. Instead of seeing the events through the eyes of one storyteller as in *A Man of the People*, one is presented with the versions of at least four major narrators. Take the character of His Excellency, the President, for example, one gets to know him from what Chris says about him, from what Ikem says, from Beatrice's internal monologues

as well as her conversations with Chris, and also from the events described by the omniscient narrator. As a result, His Excellency emerges as a rounded character who does not only have distinctive features and qualities, but also gives us a genuine insight into the behaviour and ideology of some African Heads of State and into their relations with their ministers and other senior government officials. Through the omniscient narrator one gets an insight into the President's capacity to keep his ministers on their toes by playing them off against one another, and through Beatrice's narrative one begins to see a sharp contrast between his ability to control his own ministers and the ease with which Westerners, even mere Journalists, can dominate his thinking and behaviour, as in the case of Lou Crayford, the American journalist one meets in Chapter 6. The upshot of this multiple narrator technique is that Achebe creates four main characters each of whom gives us a view of society and the political set-up depicted in the novel.

As if the multiple narrator technique is not sufficiently complicating in itself, Achebe adds to the complexity of the plot by making generous use of the flashback and other modes of narration. For example, one gets to know about the past lives of His Excellency and of other characters through the recollections of Chris and Beatrice. For instance, one meets His Excellency exercising his power as Head of State at the beginning of Chapter 1 and only at the end of the same chapter does Chris explain how Sam came to be President and how his education and military training prepared him for the position. What is more, one only gets a clear account of the relationship between Sam, Chris and Ikem at the end of Chapter V.

There are other features which add to the complexity of the narrative structure of *Anthills of the Savannah*. One of these is the use of symbolism in conjunction with myth and allusion. A supreme example of this feature is Ikem's 'Hymn to the Sun' (AOS 30-33) which foreshadows the disaster that follows in the novel and is probably a comment on the self-destructive tactics of His Excellency who, in an attempt to preserve his own power, resorts to destroying his former friends and is himself destroyed in the process. There is also the reference to David Di-op's poem, 'Africa', whose last lines encapsulate one of Achebe's suggestions about the way forward for Africa – that what is at issue, is not so much a political system, as the patience to develop, through experience and over a long period of time, a viable political and economic system (AOS 23-128). Finally, there is the naming ceremony for Elewa's daughter which symbolizes a new major development that the world of Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God has now gone and has been replaced by new social values in that, contrary to custom, the naming has been done collectively by young people and the old man from the village who was supposed to perform the task realises that social values have changed and so accepts and blesses what the young people have done.

It is thereby evident that new developments in Achebe as an artist have taken place, but the development in social consciousness and artistic vision, and in authorial and aesthetic ideology, and from the point of view of dialectical criticism i.e., from nationalist consciousness to revolutionary consciousness and from the point of view of critical realism, the aesthetic ideology that characterize his first four novels to socialist realism, is not significant enough, because Achebe has not become a Marxist. Dialectical criticism maintains that the vision of a non-Marxist writer like Achebe is constrained by the limitations of the writers' 'false consciousness' and so he or she will display a limited world view with regard to the place of various classes in society'. Achebe's analysis of African society, is presented from the point of view of one class – the petit bourgeois or to be more precise, the political and intelligent elite, to which he himself belongs. Achebe thereby portrays only a partial view of the social fabric of the Republic of Kangan.

All his major characters- Chris, Ikem, Beatrice and Sam (His Excellency) are members of the educated elite class. The intelligentsia occupies the entire of the stage in Achebe's world while the other classes are either pushed to the periphery or relegated to oblivion. The two major classes of oppressed and deprived people, the peasants and the workers, are given a place in the world of *Anthills*, but they are given minor roles to play in the drama of that world. The peasantry is represented by the delegation from Abazon and by Elewa's mother and uncle who visit Bassa for the naming ceremony. The working class is represented by the taxi-drivers who form an alliance with Ikem. These are minor characters and Achebe does not give us sufficient insight into their lives and into their response to the events and problems that plague the Republic of Kangan. Indeed the peasants to Abazon Province come to Bassa in an effort to reach an accommodation with 'the big Chief' with a view to persuading the Government to continue with the work on bore-holes which stopped because of the people of Abazon's refusal to support His Excellency's claim to life presidency, and indeed Chris Oriko ultimately flees to drought-stricken Abazon and dies there in the company of Emmanuel Obete, the President of the Students' Union, and Braimoh, one of the taxi-drivers; but the readers do not have first-hand information about the living conditions, life style and predicament of the inhabitants of rural Abazon. As for the most privileged class, the class of rich people who own the means of production, one's only encounter with it is through a brief reference to Alhaji Abdul Mahmoud, Chairman of the Kangan/American Chamber of Commerce who wallows in the filth of wealth and corruption (AOS 177).

One of the major indications of Achebe's development in social consciousness is his portrayal of women. In the earlier novels women are given minor roles and all the major parts are taken by male characters. There is one significant exception to this and that is Clara in *No Longer at Ease*, but while she is a fully developed character, she finds herself acting in a world dominated by men, and while Obi genuinely loves her, he tends to patronise her and is portrayed as her intellectual superior. Beatrice, on the other hand, is neither intellectually inferior to Chris nor dominated and patronized by him. Their relationship is a relationship of equals who have a natural attraction for each other. While she rejects the Western concept of Women's Lib, she is certainly of the view that woman is equal to man and a woman can live a complete life without a man. It is indeed significant that Beatrice is the only government official who is brave enough to tell His Excellency off. Disgusted by the excessive deference His excellency shows to Lou, a mere journalist, because she is an American, Beatrice is bold enough to accost the Head of State who normally reduces his ministers to the status of mere boys: "If I went to America today, to Washington DC, would I, could I, walk into a White House private dinner and take the American President hostage. And his Defence Chief and his Director of CIA?" (AOS 81)

It is also significant that Beatrice is closely connected with Ikem's daughter, who symbolizes hope for a better future, and worthy of note that Ikem's child is girl. It is Beatrice who names the child and the symbolic significance of the child is captured in the name Beatrice chooses for her. 'We have our own version of hope that springs eternal. We shall call this child AMAECHINA: May-the-path-never-close. Ama for short' (AOS 222). So the struggle for justice and democracy continues and the seed of revolution Ikem Osodi has planted, shall grow again patiently and obstinately, until its fruit gradually acquires the bitter taste of liberty, as David Diop says in his great poem which is quoted as an epigraph at the beginning of Chapter 10.

Ikem Osodi's views on art and politics are observed to be closely related to Achebe's. Through Ikem, Achebe persuades the reader to reflect on a number of topical issues in *Anthills of the Savannah* the place of women in society, issues relating to class struggle and theories of revolution, the African predicament, as well as issues relating to literary theory and the role of the writer in society. As a novelist and a journalist and also as one who is not directly part of His Excellency's government machinery, Ikem appears to be the most appropriate character to raise some of these questions and to reflect on them.

With regard to the question of women, his views are deeply influenced by his interaction with Beatrice who has definite ideas about the place of women in society. Among other things, Beatrice holds the view that 'giving women today the same role which traditional society gave them, of intervening only when everything else has failed is not enough' (AOS 91), and she sees this as weakness in Ikem's original political position, as a fact which blurs his vision as a writer, it is her discussions with him on questions such as these that lead him to formulate his new theory on women and other oppressed social groups. His reflections on the problem of women result in the formulation of a radical theory of social class. "The women ... are the biggest single group of oppressed people in the world", says Ikem... "but they are" not the only such group. There are others –rural peasants in every land, the urban poor in industrialized countries, Black people everywhere, including their own continent, ethnic and religious minorities and castes in all countries" (AOS 98). Using Ikem as a mouthpiece, Achebe comments on the theory of class and class struggle and calls to question some of the fundamental tenets of historical Marxism, including the idea of a millennium in which there is no oppression of one social group by another after the establishment of communism. Ikem believes that the orthodox Marxist position proposes a simplistic remedy to the problem of oppression. For his part, he does not believe that once a socialist and communist revolution has taken place, all the social problems of society are bound to disappear.

The sweeping, majestic visions of people rising victorious like a tidal wave against their oppressors and transforming their world with theories and slogans into a new heaven and a new earth of brotherhood, justice and freedom are at best grand illusions. The rising, conquering tide, yes, but the millennium afterwards, no! New oppressors will have been readying themselves secretly in the undertow long before the tidal wave got really going (AOS 99).

In his lecture to university students in Chapter 13 Ikem addresses the all-important question of the function of the writer. The writer does not provide solutions to problems, he argues. The most important function of the writer is to include people to reflect upon the condition of their lives to raise their consciousness so that they can begin to ask why things are as they are, why things are going wrong:

No, I cannot give you the answer you are clamouring for. Go home and think! I cannot decree your pet, text-book revolution. I want instead to excite general enlightenment by forcing all the people to examine the condition of their lives because, as the saying goes, the unexamined life is not worth living ... As a writer I aspire only to widen the scope of that self-examination (AOS 158).

Ikem's point about all certitude being suspect (AOS 99) and his scepticism about a millennium has been vindicated before our very eyes in this decade. In Eastern Europe and Asia socialist countries have come to the realization that the mere adoption of socialism as a political ideology is not in itself a panacea that resents ready solutions to all problems of social and economic development. After going through a fervent cultural revolution China abandoned the approach in 1978 and adopted an open-door policy and a form of socialism that is suited to Chinese conditions. In the Soviet Union, Gorbachev had followed suit with his Perestroika, while one of the former leaders of the German Democratic Republic, Mr. Krenz, recently called for a redefinition of socialism, observes David Maughan Brown. This is not to say that there is necessarily something inherently wrong with socialism, but simply to emphasise the point Achebe makes that simplistic remedies like the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' are likely to fail. One observes in Achebe's works more specifically *Anthills of the Savannah* that he is both socially and morally a revolutionary thinker and consequently a social reformer.

Thus, in Phase III, both Ayn Rand and Chinua Achebe's last two novels, which have been called their philosophic treatise, have been discussed. In *Atlas Shrugged* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, Rand and Achebe, have offered suggestions to solve their society's problems, versus society, in this phase, takes on a new dimension. Rand in her novel *Atlas Shrugged* depicts the growth of the 'man-child' into the 'demi-gods' of *Atlas Shrugged*. Rand creates a Utopian society in the mountains where all the demi-gods who go on strike reside. The society, if one can call it so, is pictured as an ideal society where each man lives for himself and never expects another to sacrifice himself for another. Every man's creativity, integrity and freedom are respected, and though each man is alone, they are not alienated or lonely but enjoy a kind of creative bliss in their aloneness.

Chinua Achebe's book *Anthills of the Savannah* depicts two protagonists Ikem and Chris who are trying to carry the torch of leadership. Achebe believes that a society's success depends on its individual leaders. It is the responsibility of the leaders to lead their people to a better life. It is also the responsibility of the led to inform their leader of their responsibility, says Achebe.

This phase is considered their philosophic treatise because in *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand combines Metaphysics, Morality, Economics and also discusses concepts like love, Money, Politics, Sex, Woman's issues along with Rand's notion of the ideal men who consequently will form an ideal society. Achebe also in this phase, offers solutions to the problems demonstrated in the previous novels. For example, Achebe discusses the kind of leadership necessary for Nigeria, gender transfiguration, the place of women in society, class struggle, the method to combat corruption on Politics, and spiritualism that is necessary for a better society.

Both Rand and Achebe are social and moral revolutionaries in the sense that they are concerned with the socio-moral problems that affect their respective societies and are keen to offer suggestions and solutions for the same. While Rand believes that man, if he exists, must live as he 'ought to be' like a God himself, Achebe believes that a certain degree of individuality is necessary for the growth and development of an ideal society.

The theme of *Atlas Shrugged* is "the role of the mind in man's existence". In this phase, Rand applies the theme of *The Fountainhead* to the political and economic arena in *Atlas Shrugged*. It demonstrates that capitalism rests on the mind and the freedom of the mind. Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* depicts a number of themes; to mention a few: the ideology of leadership, gender transfiguration class struggle, corruption and women's place in society.

In Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* the central lines of conflict in this phase are further developed, not between Good and Evil as in phase II, but between 'Good' and 'Good'; between Galt, Francisco and the strikers on the one hand, and between Dagny and Rearden who will not join the strike on the other. The errors which set these protagonists in conflict are errors of knowledge, not because of morality. 'Good versus Evil' means to grant to evil an honour it doesn't deserve.

In this phase, women play a very important part. One observes there is a progression even in the woman characters of Rand's novel. Rand has always been enthusiastic about presenting her kind of woman. Here in phase III, Dagny is Rand's first portrait of the ideal woman. In *The Fountainhead* Dominique Francon was paralyzed by a profound inner conflict, and Kira of *We The Living* was still a young girl. But here, in *Atlas Shrugged* one observes Dagny is free of any psychological conflict, serene in her basic relationship to existence, ambitions and creations. Rand wanted to present a woman thought to be impossible by any unconventional standard of life and sex. Dagny is a woman engineer, dealing with the material world of metal rails and diesel engines, who is simultaneously a consummately feminine hero worshipper.

One of Achebe's remarkable developments in social awareness is his attitude towards women. In the earlier phases women are used functionally as mere objects and no major role was attributed to them except for Clara in *No Longer at Ease*. Though Clara is a fully developed character, she exists in a male dominated world,

and though Obi loves her, he patronizes her and is portrayed as her superior, intellectually. But in this final phase, Beatrice is neither intellectually superior to Chris, nor is she dominated by him. They function on an equal plane and are naturally attracted to each other. Beatrice like Dagny is induced with qualities of courage and ability, integrity and grit. She tells off His Excellency, ac- costs the Head of the State, who reduces his ministers to the status of mere boys. Beatrice is also given important duties to perform like naming Ikem's daughter.

Both Rand and Achebe deal with topical issues like the place of woman in society, political anarchy, theories of revolution and the American and African predicament respectively. While Rand projects women as autonomous individuals strong intellectually oriented, principled women of integrity who yet believe in hero-worship; Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah* is of the opinion that women are the biggest single group of oppressed people in the world, besides the rural peasants, religious minorities and castes in all countries.

In this phase, the 'second-handers' or the parasites of *The Fountain-head* (in phase II) become the 'moochers' and 'looters' of *Atlas Shrugged* (Branden 1986:211). In the previous phases the second handers are not productive and litter the cultural world with mediocre works; there is still room in the world of Howard Roark and Dominique Francon for genuine geniuses to function. In the world of *Atlas Shrugged* of phase III the 'moochers' and 'looters' not only hamper the 'producer's' or 'First-handers' ability to function, they pass laws and directives which confiscate both the means and the ends of their efforts. One of John Galt's rationales for the 'strike of the mind' is that if the weak have harnessed the strong to their service (as they claim the strong have exploited the weak in the past), then the strong should use the same means that the weak have used-a strike. When the productive withdraw their talents and abilities, the looter's economy crumbles. When there is no host to feed on, a parasite cannot exist. This is the lesson that Rand teaches in *Atlas Shrugged*. In one of Francisco's speeches to Rearden he explains that Rearden is helping those who torment and hobble him because he still tries to produce even with all of the 'looters' restrictions. Francisco suggests that the only way to defeat looters is by not giving them anything to loot.

Phase III evolves into the most successful and most optimistic ending in *Atlas Shrugged*. Although Howard Roark (the good) succeeds in *The Fountainhead*, Ellsworth Toohey and Peter Keating are still holding fort. But in phase III, the strike of the 'men of the mind' vanquishes the looters, leeches and the second handers of the previous phase, leaving the world firmly in the hands of the demi-gods – the creative and the productive. So, one notices through the four novels of Ayn Rand, the individual develops from the 'foetus' of *We the Living* in the first stage to the ideal 'demi-god' of *Atlas Shrugged* in the last phase. The corrupt society in Rand's fiction gradually deteriorates and a Utopian society-a kind of heaven on earth atmosphere is created in her chapter titled: 'Atlantis'. This could be Rand's concept of an ideal society. As far as Rand is concerned, the existence of ideal men would result in an ideal society and the world will be the richer by it.

Achebe in this final phase depicts the individual emerging as leader trying to lead his society out of its present state of anarchy and corruption. Achebe also suggests that the role of government could also be handed over to women, as they are less corrupt and better transforming agents.

In his five novels, Achebe oscillates between the past and present alter- natively, mainly to show the strength, validity and beauty of Ibo life and culture. The first is the anthropological background of the Ibo community and the second the impact of Colonialism on the above community, its teething problems and the process of its readjustment for a new order. The theme therefore is the conflict and tension generated by the clash of cultures and religion and so in these novels, the emphasis is not so much on the individual as on the whole community.

Achebe's heroes are not mere victims of a social change; their fall as he sees it is an inevitable outcome of their own suppression of their gentler of feminine impulses. Thus, the novels are not an elegy to a lost world, but a tribute paid to the dignity of a people and their ancestors. He does not see the white man's intrusion into Africa as 'the white death'. Main- taining an ambivalent stand on this issue, he agrees that Christian intrusion to a certain extent was the disruptive force that force asunder the clan and undermined its solidarity, but he also points out that the Ibo clan at that time was ripe for this cultural onslaught. Viewing both tradi- tional and modern values in a mild, comic irony, Achebe sees the inability to adapt to new demands as the major weakness that destroyed the Ibo anxiety. In his book *Chinua Achebe, Ravenscroft* tells us that it is a communal culture, which allows a considerable measure of individuality but not quite flexible to survive the appearance of the white man" (Ravenscroft 1969:30).

In the course of the five novels Achebe shows that change is inevitable and logical. He "accepts mutability as an ineluctable factor in human civilization and progress" (Peters 1978:130). Achebe believes in the brotherhood of man, in the importance of the collective consciousness, but he also admits that a certain degree

of creative individuality is necessary for the progress of civilization. Both Rand and Achebe philosophizes on a number of issues necessary for the individual and his fulfilment in the society.

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