MILITARY POLITICS IN THE NIGERIAN NOVEL: A POSTCOLONIAL READING OF CHINUA ACHEBE'S *ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH* AND HELON HABILA'S *WAITING FOR AN ANGEL*

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DECLARATION

This work or any part thereof has not previously been presented in any form to a university or any other body whether for the purpose of assessment , publication or any other purpose (unless otherwise indicated). Save for any of the acknowledgements and references cited in the work, I confirm that the content of the work is the result of my own efforts and of no other person.

_____ _____

NDE JAMES ANTHONY Signature & Date

CERTIFICATION

This work entitled **Military Politics in the Nigerian Novel: A Postcolonial Reading of Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel***, carried out by **Nde James Anthony** meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Master of Arts in English Literature, from the Department of English and Literary Studies of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty and to my daughters who made my studies a smooth ride.

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, the mid 1960s up until the later part of the 1990s marked a turning period in the nation's political landscape, mainly because of the militarization of the Nigerian political space. These military interventions which began on 15th January, 1966 reached its zenith during the repressive regimes of Ibrahim Babangida and the dictatorship of Sani Abacha. Nigerian literature remains a formidable part of the opposition to military dictatorship and tyranny. The country's writers hold and project the military's messianic pontifications in huge suspicion and disbelief in their writings. Using Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* (2002) and Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988) as templates, the aim and objectives of this study have to do with examining in a broader perspective, the recurrence of the military in the nation's history as reflected in fiction as well as the public's perception of the military institution. Adopting postcolonial theory as a discursive framework for analysis, the study x-rays how the older generation of Nigerian novelists like Achebe and the younger generation which Habila represents depict the dynamics of military politics in their narratives. Postcolonial theory with strands that resist oppression and dictatorship have aided the analysis. The findings of the study show that, although the writer and the masses may not have the power to physically change the oppressive character and disposition of the military establishment, they can however; undermine military oppression and dictatorship through collective action in popular resistance.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In the discourse of post-colonialism and the historicity, Chinua Achebe and Helon Habila mark as an outstanding African and Nigerian English novelist and as established postcolonial writers and the historians, in order words, postcolonial re-collectors of Nigeria's historical socio-cultural experiences in their fictional novels. The postcolonial debates are born from the historical experience of colonialism. The postcolonial writers assert that their countries had a prestigious history, culture, heritage, government, politics and tradition and they also depict the past from which they have got the raw materials for their works. This discourse has ceased to be mere adaptations of the West.

The fundamental part of the European laws, the damage of post-colonialism and the suitability of the dominant European discourses become noticed in the process of cultural decolonisation. The socially acceptable view finds all the ethnic and the cultural groups as having special characteristics and they are bound with their own territorial existence and cultural roots that have been discussed in postcolonial novels. Moreover, it has been stated that the roots, the unique characters, and even the territorial existence are created through their migration from one region to the other or from one settlement to another. The colonial invasion in general and the British imperialism in particular over the region; Africans were inspired by their urge to invade and appropriate the rich resources of the African lands and man power.

The postcolonial schools of thought such as Orientalism and New Historicism and other different branches of learning express new views of enlightenment to the oppressed. The new generation made an attempt to translate the dreams of the suppressed into reality by organising nationalist

movements which in turn were supported by postcolonial writings. The present century finds a new hybrid school of global theory known as globalisation in which knowledge and information, goods and services move freely across the borders. In this context, it is highly interesting to study the fictional works of Chinua Achebe and Helon Habila, who are a postcolonial voice in a 'globalized perspective' 'in which the global is transformed at the local level' (Ashcroft, 1989:218).

Many scholars are of the opinion that politics and literature are inextricably linked, while others are of the opinion that, politics robs literature of its artistic value resulting in mere political statements by writers; such as Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1965), and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born* (1965); Ngugi Wa' Thiongo's *Wizard of the Crow*; Adebayo William's *The Remains of the Last Emperor* and Okey Ndebe's *Arrows of Rain;* Mamman Vatsa's *Voices From the Trench* (1985); Wole Soyinka's *From Zia with Love* (1992); Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1976); Chinua Achebe's *Girls at War* (1972) and *Anthills of the Savannah*(1987); Rasheed Gbadamosi's *Echoes From the Lagoon* (1973); Isidore Okphewo's *The Last Duty* (1976); Festus Iyayi's *Heroes* (1986) etc. In the development of African literature, politics has impacted greatly on both its themes and style. African writers, from inception, have tapped from the socio-political events in the continent in the construction of their novels. This is because African historical and political experiences have presented highly political subjects for the continent's imaginative literature. In Nigeria, the country's literary tradition exhibits a continuing political dimension. The Nigerian literary tradition provides a ready example of the link between a country's literature and the political realities of a nation. This is so because, literature broadly understood, has always shed light on the idiosyncrasies of the human condition that may not be fully captured in the empirical gaze. Thus, literature

provides an important platform for such critique which ultimately could help pave the way for an enduring political regeneration and reform. Writing on the intersection between literature and politics, Suleiman Jaji (2013) observes that:

> The point of convergence between literature and politics has always generated debate from earliest times especially from when "society" came to be identified with the development of humanity and the emergence of the nation state (76).

In Nigeria, the mid 1960s up until the later part of the 1990s marked a turning period in the nation's political landscape, mainly because of the militarization of the Nigerian political space. These military interventions which began on 15th January, 1966 reached its zenith during the repressive regimes of Ibrahim Babangida and the dictatorship of Sani Abacha. As the sociological critics of art contend, literature even its counterfeit nature (fiction) can be used for a systematic study and interpretation of society. Uzoma Nwadike (2009) rationalizes this assertion noting that:

> The literature of a people is the mirror through which they see themselves. In it, their successes, their failures, their aspirations, their expectations, their fears, their orientation, their occupations, their potential, their intrigues and their entire ethos and worldview are chronicled (47).

For this school of theorists, writers in any society function like activists in their documentation and interpretation of socio-political experiences. For postcolonial Nigerian writers, literature must be committed and every piece of fiction should refract truthfully the situations, atmosphere and realities in the public space.

Postcolonial Nigerian literature remains unwavering in its consistent foregrounding of the socio-political tensions and contradictions in the nation's body polity. In various ways, Nigerian literature has captured the politics and inherent contradictions in the country's military establishment. In doing this, Nigerian writers have reflected the various forms of dictatorship,

betrayals and oppression prevalent in the nation under the military era. Writing about the military as a recurrent motif in Nigerian literature, Gbemisola Adeoti (2003) contends that:

> The realm of fictional literature also bears the imprints of decades of military rule. A military coup provides the dues-ex-machina that resolves the political debacle in Achebe's *A Man of the People*, although the author later in Habila's *Anthills of the Savannah* re-views the messianic conception of soldiers, especially in their intervention in civil administration. Soldiers and the military institution provide the butt of Soyinka's ridicule in plays like *Kongi's Harvest, Jero's Metamorphosis, Madmen and Specialists, A Play of Giants, Beatification of Area Boy* and the most recent, *King Baabu.* Festus Iyayi in *Heroes* celebrates the ordinary people and the under privileged soldiers on Nigerian and Biafran sides as the true 'heroes' of the civil war. Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn*, Odia Ofeimun's *The Poet Lied*, Ken-Saro Wiwa's Soza Boy and Frank Uche Mowah's *Eating by the Flesh* are also part of Nigerian letters that engage soldiers as subjects (4).

Elsewhere, Adeoti (2003) lays bare the character and temperament of fictional works dealing on military politics in Nigeria:

> That the reality of militarism has engendered its own aesthetics. Hence, the predominance of drama of rage, fiction of protest and poetry of indignation. Indeed, literature of "anger and protest" flourished during the period. These writings are remarkable for deliberate violation of hallowed conventions of literary compositions without necessarily impeding significations. After all, military rule itself thrives on violation and subversion of rules. Through their arts, writers participated in the general struggle to end military dictatorship. While some sympathize with victims of harsh politico-economic policies of military government (e.g. Structural Adjustment Programme), some depict the reality in its grimness. Some seek to stir resentment in the people against the military, goad them into a possible confrontation with a view to liberating them… (33).

Using Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* (2002) and Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988) as templates, this study examines, in our perspective, the recurrence of the military in the nation's narrative fiction and possibly the public's perception of the military institution. In doing this, the study will endeavour to x-ray how the older generation of Nigerian novelists like Achebe and the younger generation which Habila represents, depict the dynamics of military politics in their narratives. This is in line with Adebayo Williams' (1996) observation that:

> African writers have resisted oppression and injustice on the continent with great force and courage. Literature is fundamentally incompatible with tyranny. In its purest state, literature is subversive of authority and authoritarian rulers. Its joyous and spontaneous celebration of life, its near anarchic contempt for regulation and regimentation makes it the most natural enemy of dictatorship. While the dictator seeks a total domination of men and society, literature often seeks their total liberation (350).

Puncturing the acclaimed messianic pretension of military governance, Ladipo Adenolekun (1985), submits that the military has always claimed "the logic of a legitimacy derived from the barrel of the gun" (100). For him, this claim is an irrational logic. He illustrates this position with the failure of the military to keep the "Aburi Accord", a failure that plunged the Nigeria into a thirty-month civil war.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Nigerian literature remains a formidable part of the opposition to military dictatorship and tyranny. The country's writers hold and project the military's messianic pontifications in huge suspicion and disbelief in their writings. Thus, this study is premised on these two propositions that, Nigerian literature interrogated military engagement in politics both as a major theme and a recurring motif, and that, Nigerian authors' fictional novels portray the then participation of military in politics interpreting as an act of demystification of the redeeming role and incorruptibility of the military institution and its actors. The questions here remain in what way and how can this be done, which this study attempts undertake.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The representation of politics in literature in fiction is often problematic; this is because, the imaginative treatment of actual events and its assumed faithfulness to truth is always at conflict with that of the historian's pursuit of truthfulness. In this regard, the study's objectives are to:

1. indicate that Achebe and Habila's works intertextually approximate real events in Nigeria's military politics.
2. capture the manner Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* portray the contradictions of military politics in Nigeria;

1) show that the military, contrary to the portrayals by some of the early generations of African writers, is not a corrective institution it often claims to be.

1.4 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study examines only the works of two writers; Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*; despite the avalanche of literary works dealing on the dynamics and contradictions of military politics in Nigeria. However, the selected texts exhibit some of the seminal characteristics which have come to define what one may call 'military narratives', such as voicing against oppression and dictatorship, and a conscious effort at deconstructing the 'grand narrative' of the military as a corrective institution.

1.5 Justification of the Study

This dissertation contributes to the body of knowledge on the military leadership in the Nigerian novel, the postcolonial novelist as activists in Nigeria and today's contemporary novelists, and the use of postcolonial criticisms of texts and the fictional collection of historical events on Nigerian politics. This study sheds more lights on military politics of Nigeria in the eyes of Chinua Achebe and Helon Habila and post-colonialism, using these authors from two generations to illustrate the Nigerian leadership crisis in the past and present as a result of history. The Nigerian military and citizens and significant to the society and their depiction in the texts illustrates thematic concerns which respond to the today's political issues in Nigeria. The importance of studying military politics in Nigeria lies in the fact, not much analytical criticisms

by scholars, has not been given attention to this area of post-colonial study, most especially on the selected two generational novelists, who portrayed colonisation and the aftermath subjugation of leadership on citizens by the military.

This research will benefit students, teachers and future researchers by bringing to limelight the components of post-colonialism. The research also has the potential of spurring further research in the study of the Nigerian novelists today and the politics of our nation as well as an extensive look into the two texts selected for this study.

1.6 Methodology

In order to choose an appropriate research methodology, an extensive literature review was conducted on the methodologies other researchers have used in similar circumstances. It is against this background that the study adopted the qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, trans-disciplinary and sometimes counter-disciplinary field. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005:7):

> Qualitative research embraces two tensions at the same time. On one hand, it is drawn to a broad, interpretive, post-experimental, postmodern, feminist and critical sensibility. On the other hand, it is drawn to more narrowly defined positivist, post-positivist, humanistic and naturalistic conceptions of human experience and its analysis. Further, these tensions can be combined in the same project, bringing both postmodern and naturalistic or both critical and humanistic perspectives to bear.

Qualitative research draws upon and utilises approaches and methods such as ethno-methodology, phenomenology, hermeneutics, feminism, deconstruction, ethnography, interviews, cultural studies, artefacts and participant observation. This generic focus of each of these versions moves in four directions at the same time:

i. the detour through interpretive theory linked to

ii. the analysis of the politics of representation and the textual analysis of literary and cultural forms, including their production, distribution and consumption,

iii. the ethnographic, qualitative study of forms in everyday life and

iv. the investigation of new pedagogical and interpretive practices that interactively engage critical cultural analysis in the local community (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

This study based on qualitative research procedure, relied on primary (the selected literary texts) and secondary sources (archives, library books, articles, journals, thesis and dissertations etc.). As a literature-based study, the research methodology is largely textual analysis of the selected literary works. This entails a close reading of the texts as well as their analysis within the chosen theoretical framework. Through this approach, the study attempted to properly situate the texts as well as their contexts.

Furthermore, secondary sources were be used in order to anchor the arguments and discussions on sound critical and intellectual platform. Finally, a comparative study of Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* was undertaken with the aim of spotlighting how perspective, that observatory trajectory from which a writer tells his story, could shape and influence the works of two different writers whose raw material derive from the same source.

Generally, in a qualitative research plan, sampling designs involve mainly purposeful sampling for intentional textual content and historical related events of the context of the study. This purposive sampling suits better in a study whereby the researcher finds it convenient to select significant content of the text in other to represent the socio-cultural human experiences. Therefore, the selected sample represented the whole selected texts for this study: works written by Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988) and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel"* (2002). These novels have been analyzed as a representative of the military politics in the

Nigerian novel as a postcolonial reading. Specific data collection methods were employed in this qualitative research. Creswell (2002) mention observation and gathering documents as common methods of data collection in a qualitative research design. In this study, therefore, qualitative methods of data collection were employed whereas textual and content analysis was the major source of data.

The analysis of data from the text was meant to show how literary devices are portrayed in communicating the message. For our convenience, only the portrayal of historical events from the novels was portrayed. The purpose was to show how the writers employed the literary techniques in the recollections of socio-cultural human experiences in a Nigerian novel of the historical events of military politics in Nigeria. The study analyzed them from text to text depending on their usefulness in communicating the message(s) in the novel. These variables were then examined comparatively as they apply to literary techniques of the postcolonial presentation in the novels.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory is a disperse interdisciplinary field influenced by various thinkers such as Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Frantz Fanon, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer, Derek Walcott, and J. M. Coetzee. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is often cited as a foundational text of postcolonial theory and criticism. The subject matter of postcolonial theory is vast and varied. In *The Empire Writes Back*: *Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (1989), Bill Ashcroft *et al.* aver that the term 'postcolonial' is used to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the

historical process initiated by the European imperial aggression. Lois Tyson (2006), in *Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Manual*, holds that as a domain within literary studies, postcolonial criticism is both a subject matter and a theoretical framework. As a subject matter, postcolonial criticism analyses literature produced by cultures that developed in response to colonial domination, from the first point of colonial contact to the present.

Some literature works were written by the colonial masters, in order words, the westerners. Nevertheless, much more of postcolonialism was written, and is being written by colonized and formerly colonized people. As a subject matter, any analysis of a postcolonial literary work, regardless of the theoretical framework used, might be called postcolonial criticism. Postcolonial criticism focuses mainly on the literature of cultures that developed in response to the western colonial domination. However, as a theoretical framework, postcolonial criticism seeks to understand the operations politically, socially, culturally, and psychologically of colonialist and anti-colonialist ideologies.

Postcolonial criticism is a term which has obviously become globalised. However, a key problem remains in the actual naming. The prefix 'post' raises questions similar to those arising from its attachment to the term 'modernism'. Does 'post' signal a break into a phase and consciousness of newly constructed independence and autonomy 'beyond' and 'after' colonialism, or does it imply a continuation and intensification of the system, better understood as neo-colonialism? According to Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooker (2005):

> The appearance of postcolonial theory has overlapped with the debates on postmodernism, though it brings, too, an awareness of power relations between Western and 'Third World' cultures which the more playful and parodic, or aestheticising postmodernism has neglected or been slow to develop. From a postcolonial perspective, Western values and traditions of thought and literature, including versions of postmodernism, are guilty of a repressive ethnocentrism.

However, for Jide Balogun (2011), post-colonialism as a literary theory, emerged in the late 19th century and thrived throughout the 20th century. Post-colonialism is a literary approach that gives a kind of psychological relief to the people (the colonized) for whom it was born. The focus of the postcolonial critic is to expose the mechanism and the evil effect(s) of that monster called colonialism on the colonised. Colonialism, which is the capitalistic and exploitative method by a 'superior' nation (coloniser) to lord itself over a less privileged nation (colonised), leads to the impoverishment of the latter. The concept of colonialism has political, economic and cultural implications.

Post-colonialism sees literature as an avenue to probe into the history of society by recreating its past experience with the mind of forestalling the repetition of history. The ultimate for the postcolonial critic is to be melancholic about his historical moment that produces a new dawn in his society. Post-colonialism is a dominant feature in African and Caribbean literature as writers in these settings see colonialism as an instrument aimed at reducing them to nonentities. An interesting feature of postcolonial criticism is its attempt, not only to expose the oddities of colonialism but to reveal and discuss what the independent nations make of themselves even after the demise of colonialism. In another sense, postcolonial denotes a period of recovery after colonialism as well as a signification of its ongoing cultural aftermath.

Edward Ako (2004), focussing on the thematic preoccupations of postcolonial literature observes that postcolonial writers and critics deal with problems of migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, caste, class, race, gender, place and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, literature, philosophy, and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. Thus, in its engagement with literature postcolonial criticism, especially for the

'Third World', is a politico-literary discourse which in the words of Rehnuma Sazzad 'opposes the power-knowledge nexus' constructed by the West, devising in the alternative, fresh ways of approaching old epistemologies. Thus, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) epitomises the postcolonial as a counter-narrative to Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1902) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) respectively. J.M Coetzee's *Foe* (1986), in the same light represents a revision of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). These are Western 'Master Texts' which portray distorted images of Africa and its people. Postcolonial criticism therefore takes as part of its objectives the critique of 'Colonial ethos' reflected in 'Colonialist texts'.

Beyond the claims of counter-balancing the dominant discursive ethos of the West, postcolonial African writers also foreground the political tensions in their emergent independent states. With the failure of political independence to usher in the dividends of democratisation in many African countries, disillusionment has set in and writers in their works reflect these social dissonances manifested in political instability, ethnic identity, inequality, and corruption, abuse of power and leadership failure. The effects and aftermaths of colonisation become a fascinating theme of these writers, including the wide socio-economic inequality in society which often results in conflict. In all, postcolonial writers and critics share a sense of solidarity with the oppressed and marginalised.

Postcolonial theory is one which tilts strongly towards the incorporation of politics into literary theorizing. Postcolonial criticism often interrogates the dichotomy between history and fictional representation. As one of the newest developments in the evolution of philosophical and cultural theories, post-colonialism emerged in the later part of the twentieth century; a decade or so after many formerly colonized nations gained their political independence. According to Ashcroft Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (1989), postcolonial societies are often characterized by a

history of subjugation, including political, cultural and psychological dominion through colonial discourse and cultural hegemony. Postcolonial discourse is therefore resistant and has always been concerned with issues of political oppression, marginalization, political betrayals, and economic exploitation. In the interrogation of these subject matters, postcolonial writers often share a sense of solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized.

Emphasizing its ideological predilection, Ayo Kehinde (2010) argues that 'postcolonial African novelists use their novels to facilitate the transgression of boundaries and subversion of hegemonic rigidities previously mapped out in precursor literary canonical texts about Africa and her people.' Awan Ankpa (1993) views the concept in like manner as representing '…those fields of significations in which people who had been colonised by Europe struggle to redefine themselves and their environment in the face of Euro-centricism's epistemological violence.' Thus, seen from the perspective of a counter-discourse, postcolonial literatures become in the words of Kehinde "…veritable weapons used to dismantle the hegemonic boundaries and the determinants that create unequal relations of power, based on binary oppositions such as 'Us' and 'Them'; 'First world' and 'Third world'; 'White' and 'Black'; 'Coloniser' and 'Colonised. In other words, 'post-colonial African novelists use their novels to facilitate the transgression of boundaries and subversion of hegemonic rigidities previously mapped out in precursor literary canonical texts about Africa and her people' (Kehinde, 2010).

According to Phebe Jatau (2014), postcolonial discourse is an encompassing hermeneutic mechanism or discourse. It is an all-embracing phenomenon whose versatility and diversity can encapsulate the extensiveness and complexity of the Nigerian postcolonial reality. Postcolonial discourse identifies the wide range, variety and nature of postcolonial writing. Jatau further observes that postcolonial theory can be used as an epistemology applied to the Nigerian novel to

examine how Nigerian novelists 'talk for themselves' within the context of Nigerian postcolonial reality by offering a re-reading of Nigerian novels especially with regards to their demonstration of difference and their celebration of hybridity and cultural polyvalence. In so doing, the manner in which the colonial contact distorted the hitherto socio-political, economic and cultural patterns of existence in Nigeria leaving the Nigerian, after independence, to grapple with a 'new order' created by the resultant cross-fertilisation of cultures is highlighted. In this study, Jatau's definition very well serves our purpose as it will be explored in details in setting up our argument.

Like almost every other theory, Postcolonial theory has also sustained a considerable amount of criticism. Critics included Marxists, subaltern writers and black intellectual history writers who attacked different aspects of the theory. One prominent voice in the questioning of Postcolonial theory is the self-criticism of Gayatri Spivak. While a major Postcolonial theorist herself, she agrees that the very act of studying the third world from the first world might be a reassertion of the first world's 'centreness' and the marginality of the third world. She concedes that these subaltern studies located in the 'centre' cannot possibly be a selfless act on the part of the West but that the only reason the West is making room for the margin is for the interest of further objectifying the third world.

A critique that is reiterated by many scholars and one which is truly concerning is the issue of Western 'third-worldism'. Marxists such as Arif Dirlik and Aijaz Ahmad have presented arguments which question the very need for such a discipline if it's not only to benefit the third world intellectuals who migrate to Western universities wearing the 'representative of the native' cloak. Indeed Dirlik was being sarcastic as he says, "Postcolonial theory happened when third world intellectuals arrived in first-world academe" (1996: 282). This spatial removal of

postcolonial intellectuals from where the real postcolonial realities exist on the ground, has raised protests that these intellectuals are merely engaging in philosophical mental flights "at the cost of social agency" (Gandhi 1998: 57), but Ahmad's reservation with Postcolonial theory goes beyond the location of practice and more importantly on the fact that postcoloniality is too homogenizing a label that can be attached to all societies that have been colonized.

The reason why the fact that the US and Nigeria for instance, are both former colonies of the British is unsettling, is because, we might contend, it is not subjection to colonization that makes one 'postcolonial' (to call upon all the characteristics of what it means to be postcolonial) but the fact that he/she was subjected to imperialist hegemony. Ahmad seems to be suggesting that instead of the colonial/postcolonial dichotomy, the capitalist/proletariat division is more explaining to this condition which to Marxists, is a condition that has existed since the beginning of human race and hence does not require Postcolonial theory to explain it. Indeed the argument Ahmad (1996) calls upon to support his Marxist views which says that some two-thirds of the population in sub-Saharan Africa today are said to be living below the living standards of the colonial period can also be demonstrated in the case of Ethiopia which is suffering very similar economic challenges as other African states as well as facing the effects of neo-colonialism, all while Ethiopia has never been colonized.

Anthony Bogues raises the concern that Postcolonial studies present critiques of the hegemony of Western knowledge, and that they do so themselves grounded in and armed with Western philosophy. This "internal" resistance, he contends, repeats the Western error of leaving out or dismissing indigenous black intellectual traditions. He asks; what do those who were 'outside', who have been 'objects amongst objects' have to say? What are their discursive practices, and how should we study them? Do they form an intellectual tradition that we need to recognize and

then critically engage? Finally can we lump the discursive practices of these thinkers only in the category of the Postcolonial? (p:3) perhaps there is a lesson to be learnt from the fact that African literatures cannot be expounded in American/European literary periods and theories such as Classicism, Romanticism, Victorian and so forth but only with continental parameters that consider Africa's history of socio-cultural experience literarily and the literary culture. Likewise, it seems, Black or other non-European conditions of 'postcoloniality' also require to be addressed with native approaches grown out of local knowledge (Bogues, 2003:3).

Finally, despite the polemics surrounding the concept of post-colonialism, it is unarguable that the emergence of the 'post' in literary and cultural studies in the 20th Century is a significant development that has radically widened the scope of literary theorizing, criticism and interpretation. Depending on the context in which it is employed, 'post' connotes both 'a succession' as well as 'a transcending of existing perspectives'. From post-structuralism, post-marxism, postmodernism, to postcolonial criticism, the aim has been to interrogate dominant epistemologies and re-theorize their claims in the light of emerging new knowledge. Thus, for postcolonial Nigerian writers, writing does not exist in a vacuum; every piece of fiction possibly refracts truth situations, atmosphere and realities in the Nigerian socio-cultural experiences. In this sense, *Anthills of the Savannah* and *Waiting for an Angel*, offer us a fictional, and possibly the exact true picture of the postcolonial Nigerian predicament under military dictatorship marked by disillusionment and frustration.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualizing Military Politics and the Nigerian Novel

Nigeria is a society continuously trying to reinvent itself; hence the subject of politics remains one of the thematic preoccupations of its imaginative literature. Politics has always provided the catalyst for the efflorescence of literary creativity. Despite the claims of *Aestheticism*, there is always the political intent in arts because it cannot be divorced entirely from politics. Appadorai

(1968) defines politics as "the science concerned with the state and of the conditions essential to its existence and development" (1).

Writing on the interface between literature and politics, the French writer, Stendhal (1783-1842) avers that 'politics in a work of literature is like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert, something loud and vulgar - and yet a thing which is not possible to refuse one's attention" (quoted in Irving Howe, 1970:17). George Orwell, known for the deep political insight of his novels, in the essay "Why I Write" (1946), holds that there are four motives which propel him to write namely: egoism, aesthetic enthusiasm, historical impulse, and political purpose. According to the Kenyan novelist, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1991), 'all artists, all writers, are in politics' (73), and for the Russian writer, Anatoly Lunarchaski, 'art walks in the shadow of history and politics'. In his attempt to establish the duality between art and politics, Achebe (1975) holds that:

> It is clear to me that an African writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of the contemporary Africa, will end up being completely irrelevant like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his house burning to pursue a rat fleeing from the flame… (78).

Charles Nnolim (2010:62) writing on the nature of political novels contends that in the broadest term, a political novel is "any novel in which the author's concern with public themes and public welfare are pre-dominant; especially any themes that extend beyond the concerns of the individual self and embrace the collective destiny of nations or the masses." He further submits that:

> Politics enters the novel at those times when the fate or destiny of peoples or classes are locked in the death throes of survival, when continuity in a people's way of life is threatened; when alien forces by way of military forces or colonial invasion endanger a people's future or make that future uncertain; and, in our body politic, when the vultures of corruption descend to devour a people's cherished ethical, religious or moral values (62).

According to Sesan Azeez Akinwumi (2012) the intersection of politics and literature has greatly enriched the content of African writings because:

> Literature in Africa is the encyclopaedia of the collective African cultural, social, economic, sociological and political experiences of the continent. African writers are therefore expected to record and reflect these collective experiences in their literary texts. Going by this position, it is therefore said that the attention of literary writers in Africa should therefore be shifted from colonial problems to the postcolonial realities of questionable national and foreign diplomacy that degenerated into civil war, political dissent, local terrorism and at large global terrorism (71).

From the above submissions, one can surmise that politics entered the novel to awaken the consciousness of the people and prick the conscience of the political leaders and their shenanigans. In this study, there are two key concepts: military politics, and the Nigerian novel. To provide an appropriate understanding of the postulations in this study, each of these is explained in an operational context of thought and related to the general concerns of the study.

2.1.1 Military Politics

Conceptualized or defined in whatever way, the idea of military politics as used in the study encapsulates the shenanigans and manoeuvres among soldiers themselves and between soldiers and the civil populace. In other words, military politics here connotes the way the military interferes in politics, as well as the way politics interferes with the military institution.

Nigeria passed through a very crucial event of her life, an event that changed her physiognomy and the course of her history forever. It was the first military coup that usurped the civilian government of Alhaji Tafawa Balewa on January 15, 1966. Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu led the coup and and supported by others saw the death of the premier of the Northern and Western regions among other top military officers and senior politicians. Although the coup failed and the ring leaders apprehended, it saw Major-General J.T.U Aguiyi Ironsi, into power as the first

Military Head of State and General Officer Commanding the Nigerian Armed forces. This coup led to many counter-coups in the history of Nigeria's military rule. Which also give rise to the unspeakable Nigerian civil war (Biafra), and millions of people lost their lives in the three years of unstoppable gun fire and war. Coups beget coups and so the country became a land of coups. According to Obikeze, Obiajulu and Obi, Emeka:

> It could not be wrong to call Nigeria a land of coups. The country has been ruled by seven military rulers and has had a much higher number of coups both successful, unsuccessful and "arrangee" ones. (180).

This dissertation not necessarily concerned with the historical discourse of military rule in Nigeria particularly, by tracing and recounting events with dates in Nigeria's political leadership as they saw it, neither is the concentration on the programmes and leadership styles of these 'blood tasty military men', because we don't have the facts. But here, we are tried to highlight the necessary and only the critical comments of authors and individuals on the influence and resultant effects of military in the politics of the Nigeria. Among these comments, efforts are made to glean and present only the critical comments that will throw more light on the topic under discussion.

Employing ideas and comments from non-fictitious work is to balance the latter views and standpoints of the novels as they portrayed the miasma of human life alongside the brutal and corrupt mindset of the military leaderships that veered the country to the brim of economic collapse, moral decay and political instability for in the words of Ker (2004):

> It is interesting to access the validity of West African novels as social documents, for if literature is relevant at all it is because we can obtain some picture of society and of life from it. However in order to determine how accurately certain social types and their behaviours are reproduced in a work of fiction, we must have knowledge of the structure of the society gleaned from other sources than purely literary ones (26).

In line with the above, we shall examine some critical comments from sources gathered from non-fictitious works. From the bulk of available literature we see just like several creative artists presented, the agony of the masses that waited for death to come; that forced their ways into self imposed exile; that littered the prisons all around the country; that could boast of nothing to show for the economic viability of the country; that could no longer express themselves for fear of the blood tasty demons; that were ostracized and discriminated by the outside world as people that eat and speak corruption; the agony of hunger, death and starvation is what the novels rose to expose.

An anonymous Rtd General quoted in Guardian Newspaper Interview as quoted in Obikeze, Obiajulu and Obi, Emeka has this to say about military in politics:

> With the benefit of hindsight, I think the military's involvement in politics hasn't been the blessing it was supposed to be. Looking back at the situation of the country today, it would have been better we didn't venture into government. We are blamed for every imaginable crime in the land now. The military which used to be respected and spoken about with awe are now being attacked with contempt. I now subscribe to the views of those who believe that 1966 coup could have been avoided. We were supposed to right the wrongs of the politicians. But we over stayed. Now we are being blamed for the wrongs we set out to right. It is a terrible thing (168).

One can quickly add that the 'terrible thing' is what the military did to the country and her dear citizens at large as we further discoursed the reinactment of the historical events fictionally in works of Chinua Achebe and Helon Habila. According to Ake (1996):

> The ascendancy of the military is one of the great tragedies of Africa, for the military is nothing other than a highly specialized apparatus of violence whose salience begins when sociability has become impossible and when civilized values no longer apply, when we must take to the battle fields. That is why military rule is inherently and inevitably de-civilizing.

Thus, military leadership is still believed and upheld by many as the worst leadership administration that has ever happened to the politics of Nigeria as well as many African nations

once held under the claws, brutalities and tyranny of these leaders. This is what these novelists stood to expose for future generations to see and most importantly learn.

2.1.2 The Nigerian Novel

Several attempts at defining the Nigerian novel have shown the impracticality of ascribing fixed meaning to it. However, the rise and development of the Nigerian novel is 'defined by a number of literary landmarks'. The first is the novels in indigenous languages which could be traced back to the 19th Century, such as Pita Nwana's *Omenuko* (1933); D. N. Achara's *Ala Bingo* (1937)D.O. Fagunwa's *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* (1938); and Abubakar Imam's *Ruwan Bagaja*. The second is the Nigerian novel in English, which is best exemplified by Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). For the purpose of this study, Nwagba's (1998) definition of the Nigerian novel serves our purpose. He states that:

> The Nigerian novel is any work of imaginative fiction in English or in an indigenous Nigerian language, which explores the experiences of its Nigerian characters in the socio-cultural and socio-political Nigerian setting, in such a way that both the setting and character strike us as unmistakably Nigerian (3).

Nwagba concludes by outlining the essential characteristics of a Nigerian novel as follow:

i. It must be written by a Nigerian because it is extremely improbable for a non-Nigerian to write a novel which can convince us as authentically Nigerian;

ii. The experience explored should be one issuing from the Nigerian society and not superimposed upon it;

iii. The language of the novel must be either one of the many indigenous languages of Nigeria or English.

Nwagbara (2009) in his paper on the "State Violence and the Writer: Towards the Dialectics of Intellectual Militancy in Transcending Postcolonical Nigerian Contradictions" on the issues of the Nigerian novel and form, he posits that, in *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson

remarks that the ‘‘form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right’’ (1981:141). Preoccupation with the realities of violence as well as its implication in governance in Nigeria, has conditioned the craft of Nigerian novelists (writers) as well as their ideological persuasion. Therefore, form is shaped by the realities in a given social space – and this ultimately conditions the ideo-aesthetic colouration of a writer. Udenta's statement lucidly bears up this position:

> Man is variously understood and depicted from the perspective of the artist's ideo-political impulses and weltanschaung. Form in art does not condition idea-content; it is idea-content that breathes life into the specific artistic forms used in Working them out. (31)

A diachronic survey of this artistic position shall be relevant in apprehending the import of this form of aesthetics. Historically, the overarching consequences of slavery on African identity and heritage as well as the inhumanity meted to African slaves provided an artistic form that was inevitably focused on aesthetics of cultural re-affirmation: a literary culture that functions at the crossroads of an external struggle against cultural deracination. This animated the works of Phillis Wheatley, Olaudah Equiano, Ottalah Cuguano, and Iganatius Sancho, *inter alia*. Their writing was essentially steeped in the narrative of psycho-cultural and somatic violence they faced as a result of slavery and dehistoricisation project by the West that considers Africa as the other. In their narrative style, they refracted in penetrating cadences their sanguinary experiences on the slave ships and on colonialists' plantations. The concern and impact of cultural erasure and displacement of the Africans, crystallises in what Bill Ashcroft *et al* describe as the burden of ‘‘place and displacement’’ (1989:8). In like manner, the logic of the Senghorian and Cesairean Negritude movement was basically an ideo-aesthetic project of re-inventing the black race. Thus, this movement orchestrated a literary response that engaged with colonialist violence. Accordingly, writers like Birago Diop, David Diop and Aime Cesaire, among others directed

their aesthetic dart to attenuating and erasing the impact of colonialism, which finds testimony in cultural violence (cited in Nwagbara, 2009:128).

In Nigeria as well as other African nations, the ledgers of postcolonial writers are replete with issues ranging from political corruption, State violence, to despotic governance, among others. In Nigeria particularly, the mode of governance in place has conditioned the form of writers' craft; Nigerian writers' quest for democratic and purposeful governance has been unwavering and unalloyed. All the military governments in Nigeria have ruled with Gestapo force, cruelty and intense violence against the subaltern and human rights activists; this is also true of civilian dispensations, which are mere cloning of militarised governments. The killing of the Nigerian ace journalist, Dele Giwa by letter bomb; the death of Kudirat Abiola; the hanging of the activist-writer, Ken Saro-wiwa with other Ogoni eight and the maltreatment of the Nigerian Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka by the powers that be are cases in point. This national tragedy in the thinking of Ihonvbere has consequently made the Nigerian State a wielder of immense power and violence, and this has left crisis of confidence in the State thereby creating a lingering flavour of violence and political contradictions (Raji 2000:76).

It is against this morbid, vertiginous landscape that Nigerian writers have used their craft to engage with the excesses of State and its machinery. In addition, the Nigerian writers' commitment to depict the faces of State violence in their works stems from the fact that they see themselves as repositories of history, education and criticism (Ojinmah 1991: vii). In Festus Iyayi's *Violence*, we witness a reconstruction of State violence and vicissitudes of life among the urban poor in postcolonial Nigeria petrodollar (cited in Nwagbara, 2009:130).

The protagonist of the novel, Idemudia and his wife, Adisa, objectify the subaltern and marooned that are at the last rung of societal stratification, but who are determined to change their

condition in the face of tyranny. Achebe's political novels; *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* bear testament to the act of using literature to address socio-historical issues that border on state terrorism, dictatorship and political corruption. In Soyinka's *Season of Anomy* and *The Interpreters*, there is decry of Establishment ideologies, societal anomie and monopoly of State violence. Within this seam, the portraiture of Tanure Ojaide's nameless protagonist, The Activist in his novel, *The Activist* distils ideo-aesthetic effort to transcend State terror and environmental exploitation.

The form of the Nigerian novel is a reflection of an intriguing interface between it and Nigeria's traditional values (Nnolim 1992:234). Thus, form is informed by the context or content of a work of art. A more radical facet of this argument is that the Nigerian novel is not essentially an independent entity that makes reference to nothing outside itself; it is not auto-telic. In this connection therefore, in his *The Novel and Change in Africa,* Onyemaechi Udumukwu argues that:

> (…) critics who analyse a work in the light of its effects on social experience, agree that there is a connection between form and content. The novel brings together different aspects in one unit, i.e. the subject matter and the technique. (2006:7)

Deductively, the form of the Nigerian novel mediates the dialectics of a writer's responsibility to his environment; hence, form in this context is teleological its architectonics is informed by social realities. In addition, Nigerian novelists recognize the blinding subjectivities of the day and the terror unleashed by the State in their works; their art is a protest against State excesses and anti-people politics. Crucial to this perspective is that the Nigerian novel is a child of social transformation; a genre that offers a blueprint to transcend the Nigerian experience (cited in Nwagbara, 2009:130).

2.2 Empirical Review

Uzoechi Nwagbara (2011) paper on *Intertextuality and the Truth of Achebe's Fiction: Militarised Nigerian Postcolony in Anthills of the Savannah*; the paper critically examined the centrality of intertextuality in the production and appreciation of Chinua Achebe's fiction, mainly, his political novel about militarism, *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988). Intertextuality deals with relations among texts: no text is an island. The departure from monolithic, author-centred theory of literary criticism to unrestricted and diversified one, following the urgency of poststructuralist lore, precipitated intertextuality. Nwagbara asserts that, militarism is the prevalence of the armed forces in the administration or policy of the Nigeria state. The significance of intertextuality to the creation of postcolonial Nigerian literature establishes the fact that, the social facts (part of which militarism) that are being refracted are real. These artistic productions are ''truthful chronicle''; they are relational in textual make-up. His paper established that Achebe's fiction is a derivative of the corpus of ''verifiable'', realistic literature on militarism in Nigeria's postcolony, though being a fictional novel, it ''truth'' about Achebe's fiction of the socio-cultural experiences in Nigeria; which was largely bordered on militarism and political dictatorship.

Although, his concentration was to investigation and demonstrate the concept of intertextuality pertinent to apprehending the hallmark of Achebe's fiction, this paper also establishes that, the fiction presented the truth of Nigeria's historical events in the text; *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). Thus, art does not exist in a vacuum; his fiction is a response to lived experience in postcolonial Nigeria. Thus, the truth that Achebe's fiction refracts is social facts located within an identifiable, pragmatic social space. Also, it has been proven that the issues which Achebe's fiction addresses are equally a continuation of similar matters by other fiction on Nigerian experience. There is therefore a relational nexus between Achebe's postcolonial fiction and

novels of the same preoccupation; they spawn a discursive confluence. This diachronic similarity makes Achebe's fiction intertextual: it is part of a seamless ''mosaic'' of reference, quotation, and allusions. Therefore Achebe's fiction is essentially a response to an ''effective presence of one text in another'' (Genette 1982: 8). The effectiveness of Achebe's text in relation to postcolonial Nigerian situation is the ''truthfulness'' of his fiction to dramatise the contemporary experience in Nigeria in a similar way as other fiction of this fixation. Thus, *Anthills of the Savannah* is a rich incarnation of Achebe's artistic consciousness to illustrate palpably the matter with Nigeria, which other novels (by him and other Nigerian writers; Helon Habila) that deal with military intervention, power play and gross violence in the polity orchestrate. It is within these parameters that the novel is read as an archetypal postcolonial novel on Nigeria's militarised politics.

Asika, Ikechukwu Emmanuel (2011) on the military dictatorship in Nigerian novels, analyzed Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, stating that, in all parts of the world, writers play very prominent and significant role in the social re-education, re-orientation and re-direction of their societies, and the use of literature helps to shape our attitudes to life which brings change in the society. Therefore, writers reflect the hard socio-political as well as religious and economic realities of the people of the past as present. His aim was on one hand to re-direct the society unto its peace, unity, harmony and peaceful co-existence and on the other hand, to save the past events from a humanistic point of view for the generation yet unborn, unlike the historian who deals only with facts and figures. But paper using the two texts that re-enacted the past fictionally, to give the future generation a vision that will help them access their past and determine their future. The paper concentrated on one of the peculiar events in the history of our country, Nigeria, the era of military dictatorship. Asika's

focus was to determine and explore how these writers captured and creatively documented their individual feelings during that era of blood, tyranny, oppression, brutal killing, terror and alarming rate of corruption, the era of military dictatorship in Nigerian politics (Pp. 275-289). He concluded by asserting that, writers on military dictatorship in the country Nigeria, are the moral consciousness of the society, and the two author proved just that even from their point of view and fictionally.

Jonas, et al (2011) examined the Military as a Motif in the Nigerian novel by Helon Habila *Waiting for an Angel*, on the continuous presence of the military as a motif in "the Nigerian novel", by examining the paradigm shift from the older generation of Nigerian novelists who saw the military as corrective mechanism to the younger generation of Nigerian novelist who hold that the military is the bane of the decay that has come to envelop the modern Nigerian society. Their position is that ideologically, the military cannot be seen as a corrective mechanism, because it is responsible for the corruption religious malaise, academic rot and human right abuses among other observations that have bedeviled the Nigerian society.

They interrogated the presence of the military as a motif in the Nigerian novel and revealed how military dictatorship is exposed in the text *Waiting for an Angel*. They also examined how the ruling class which is one of tyranny, exploitation and subjugation of the will of the people has continue to muffle the voices of opposition will not stop the torch of resistance burning until the tyrant and his henchmen are removed. Jonas et al posits that, through artistic innovation and experimentation, Habila has shown that no matter the argument by older writers like Achebe, the military is not good for any decent society. Their assertion of this paper agrees with the vision of the author that, the need for a violent revolution has become imperative, by commanding his positive portrayal of the role of the people in the overall struggle to make Nigeria a better

society. Through the use of facts and fiction, Habila artistically achieved great feats in an attempt to recreate and reconstruct history and place many historical figures in better perspective in the historical evolution of the Nigerian nation. On their final note, they affirmed that *Waiting for an Angel* explores labyrinthine history of Nigeria which has been "punctuated by a brutal, perennial military dominance'' (Allwell & Ezechi, p.126) and concludes that, the civil rule should be left for civil authority while the military should remain within its orbit of protecting the territorial integrity off the nation.

Nwagbara (2009) in his paper on the "State Violence and the Writer: Towards the Dialectics of Intellectual Militancy in Transcending Postcolonical Nigerian Contradictions Since Nigeria's political independence in 1960, ensuing administrations have virtually towed the path of violence – as ensconced by the colonialists in order to contain people's dissatisfaction as well as to muscle opposition arising from the masses. Consequently, the most effective way to guarantee domination as well as private accumulation of wealth by the ruling class is the creation of the totalitarian State (Sklar 1979:537; Diamond 1987:569). These regimes have equally run the State as a private business, thereby personalising State power and liquidating constitutional authority. Since independence, Nigeria has passed through eight military jackboots in this order; Major-General J.T.U Aguiyi Ironsi, General Yakubu Gowon, General Murtala Mohammed, General Olusegun Obasanjo, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari, General Ibrahim Babangida, Generals Sani Abacha and Abdusalami Abubakar. Accordingly, the civilian governments have taken the public space as a private business, thereby militarizing the public sphere to ensure compliance from the masses. This is evidenced in the failed state status of Nigeria – which civilian governments have demonstrated even in democratic dispensations (Nwagbara, 2009:124).

As politics is reduced to mere zero-sum game, in which the winner makes a sweepstake, leaving the loser prostrate, the political class in postcolonial Nigeria maintains that politicking by the wholesome tenets of democratic principles and the bettering of the condition of the masses are nothing short of sheer luxury that it cannot afford. Hence, the unbridled political schism and socio-economic exploitation in Nigeria characterise her politics: politics of violence, which the state furthers. On this score, ‘‘the state is viewed as the agent of the productive relations between a class of exploiters and a class of the exploited’’ (Jinadu 1980:100). It is against this backwater that the postcolonial Nigerian novelists’ art is forged. It is an artistic commitment aimed at transcending the postcolonial realities engendered by State violence. Herein lies the fact that the mainstay of this kind of literature is ‘‘to cognise and problematise the contradictions and alienation in human and social relationships from bourgeois ethics and psychology’’ (Lenin 1970:85). In this connection therefore, Martin Albrow has reasoned in his book, *The Global Age: State and Society beyond Modernity* that the ‘‘inability of the State to shape the aspirations of individuals and to gather them into collective political aims’’ (1997:75) have animated the dialectics of text and terror. This is so because the (Nigerian) writer in Niyi Osundares’s perspective is a person that people look up to, in whose works people are trying to see how they relate to the social, cultural and political problems that we are facing… (Na’Allah, 2003:470).

Texts overview of violent action is one which entails doing harm or damage to a person or thing; and this usually elicits pain from the receiver of the action, which violence produces. There is a reverberation of this in Gerald Priestland’s statement in his *The Future of Violence*: ‘‘… the essence of violence is that physical power is deliberately employed with the ultimate sanction of physical pain …’’ (1974:11). Considered in the minimalist sense for the purpose of convenient discursive mould, violence, the sheer use of (physical) force to cause harm thereby creating

emotional distress, physical pain and psychological desolation, spans the continuum of history. As indicated in the preceding argument, violence shaped Nigeria's historiography and political architectonics; this experience percolates its literature, thereby linking the texts produced in this social space to terror (violence) therein. Hence in Trotsky's notion, each literary work is a product of the materials drawn from a writer's ambience or social facts in a writer's social environment (Siegel 1970:13). Technically, the Nigerian novel is an upshot of social experience in Nigeria (Nwagbara, 2009:125).

By extrapolation, the understanding of the dialectics of terror and text in postcolonial Nigeria is inhered in engaging with the dynamics of State violence and its fallout. It is within this matrix that Edward Said maintains that it is essential that a work of art (literature) be inscribed into its world so as to reveal the silenced interactions that unfold within it (Udumukwu 2006: 20). Moreover in order to negate terror, violence and dictatorship in the postcolonial Nigeria, writers, which include Chinua Achebe, Niyi Osundare, Odia Ofeimun, Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan and Tanure Ojaide, among others, have taken literature as a platform for the negation of postcolonial tragedies. To this end, Bill Ashcroft considers African (Nigerian) literature as a function of ''conflict between a dominant discourse and a local reality'' (1).

Accordingly, for a novelist (writer) to be relevant, there should be ''a close relationship between his writing and his world, his society and life'' (Kehinde 2005:88). Here lies the dialectical nexus between terror and text. It is within this rubric that Joe Ushie x-rays the responsiveness of artists to the actualities in their social space:

> In assessing their responsiveness therefore, it is necessary to gauge their art against the actual physical conditions of the society at the time when they compose. (2005:15-16)

Text and terror are indissoluble in the literary production of postcolonial writers, necessitated by the pressures of the moment to articulate the forces in society in their works through the creative process, thereby harking back to their traditional roles as moulders of thought and social commentators. This idea is in tandem with Achebe's preoccupation in his artistic enterprise:

> In Achebe's view, the African (Nigerian) writer of our time must be accountable to his society; if he fails to respond to the social and political issues of his age, to espouse the 'right and just causes' of his people, he is no better than 'the absurd man in the proverb who deserts his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames. (Roger, 1976:1)

In addition, postcolonial Nigerian writers appropriate art to delineate the mode of power relations between ''the economically exploited, underprivileged masses of the society'' (Ojaide 1996:24) and the State; this again crystallises in text and terror rhetoric. The internecine relationship between text and postcolonial realities (terror) is a function of the nature of a writer's society (Lindfors et al 1972:8). The abortion of the bargained dividends of democracy, political independence and nationalist ideals in the wake of incessant military intervention in politics as well as political violence in Nigeria, (even during democratic regimes) has elicited aesthetics of intervention (cited in Nwagbara, 2009:130).

Consequently, as Frederic Jameson asserts ''… all Third World texts are national allegories…'' (Aijaz, 1992:95). To this end, the pestilential, despotic system in Nigeria since her creation till date provides an interesting material for the writers which translates into their reconstruction of these events in society. Aware of their oracular responsibility, Nigerian novelists (writers) have continued to produce a body of literature that adumbrates alternative values and political culture that eschew state violence and postcolonial disillusionment. This artistic mould saw the publication of the novels that decry the depraved state of Nigeria's nationhood.

These works include *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* by Chinua Achbe; *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus* by Ngozi Adichie and the most recent *Waiting for an Angel* by Helon Habila; *Season of Anomy* and *The Interpreters* by Wole Soyinka; *The Heroes, The Contract* and *Violence* by Festus Iyayi; and other works that chart a new historical course away from Nigeria's postcolonial political turmoil. For these writers, their artistic commitment to art that questions the legitimacy of Nigeria's postcolonial system bears testament to how this kind of literature is a correlate of terror; this nexus is made possible by the umbilical relationship that the former has with the latter. So, ''art is the representation not of the body but of the forces which created the body'' (Kazantzakis 1961:150). It is within the premise of using literature to refract the conjunctures in society as well as using it as a compass to navigate out of State violence that the connection between the text and terror finds resonance.

In portraying the forces at work against nation-building in Nigeria, the Nigerian writers have faced harsh and violent conditions; some of them have been exiled, incarcerated, terrorised, and cowed by the State. These writers include Wole Soyinka, Niyi Osundare, Ken Saro-Wiwa, among others. However, the Nigerian writer cannot baulk at their responsibility to use art (literature) to contest the public space – this is an integral facet of their vocation as moulders of thoughts, chroniclers of history, conscience of their age and critics. In this light, they believe ''literature can play a great role in straightening the patterns of change in Africa'' (Maduka 1984:13) – and Nigeria in particular. Commenting on the resolve of these writers to use art (text) to engage with the horrors in their society, Achebe dwells on the roles of writers in times of tyranny and political violence – and challenges them in this manner:

> We must seek the freedom to express our thought and feeling, even against ourselves, without the anxiety that what we say might be taken in evidence against our race (Roscoe, 1971:122 cited in Nwagbara, 2009:127).

2.3 Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah and Helon Habila's Waiting for An Angel*

Nigeria witnessed its first military coup d'état on January 15, 1966. Between 1967 and 1970, the country was engulfed in a horrendous civil war with its attendant bloodbath and dislocations of people's lives. When the first military coup d'état took place, many Nigerians saw it as a succour to the failings of politicians who took over power from the British colonialists in 1960. Giving a historical insight into military involvement in politics, S.P.I Agi (1999) contends that:

> Throughout history, from Artaxerxes on, military has interested itself in politics. Military groups-the Sacred Band of Thebes, the Praetorian Guard in Rome, the Samurai in Japan, the Junkers in Prussia, the Janissaries in the Ottoman Empire, the army of France from the time of Napoleon have often influenced political decision (2).

Adewale Ademoyega (1981), justifying military intervention in politics in his historical account of the Nigeria Civil War, sees the incursion as a "painless surgical operation designed to heal a sick Nigeria" (126). But on the contrary, subsequent military interventions in the political governance of the country, rather than heal the nation, proved to be a huge albatross on the collective psyche of the people. As Agi earlier observed, the armed forces handed to Nigeria at independence had as its primary responsibility the security of the nation, and was to be subjected to civil authority. Under much pretence, regrettably, the military has got involved in politics. Some of these pretences include; non-inclusion of the citizens in political decision making, political intolerance among the politicians, party in-fighting, weak political leaders among others provided the military cogent reasons to take over power from the civil authority. To justify itself, the military came to regard itself as the saviour with national interest that would bring political salvation to the nation. To justify their grip on political power, they claimed that they would correct the anomalies, cleanse up the political system and keep the country united. But these have all failed as successive military regimes have demonstrated gross incompetence, corruption, intolerance to opposition, human right abuses, assassination among other evils. Military

usurpation of political power has kept the country disunited. The citizenry live below poverty line and have remained under the vicious circle of poverty. Crawford Young (2004) puts this in perspective thus:

> Military intervention became the sole mechanism to displace incumbents, but the putschist in power normally formed a new single party to legitimize permanent status for his rule. Thus citizens became once again merely subjects, facing an exclusion from the public domain reminiscent of colonial times. One important difference: whereas the colonial state asked only obedience, the post-colonial polity demanded affection. Mere submission did not suffice; active participation in rituals, loyally (support marches, assemblies to applaud touring dignitaries, purchase of Party cards, display of the presidential portrait, participation in plebiscitary elections) were mandatory (25).

In fact, Claude Ake (1995) underscores the antithetical relationship between democracy and military rule as "the military and democracy are in dialectical opposition ... the military demands submission, democracy enjoins participation; one is a tool of violence, the other a means of consensus building for peaceful co-existence" (34).

Nigerian writers-poets, novelists and dramatists- have variously attempted to grapple with the issue of military engagement political governance in the country. This is so because the military institution has wittingly or unwittingly inscribed itself into Nigerian literary tradition. At the onset, many Nigerian, nay African novelists have viewed the military as saviours. For instance, on the one hand, Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1965), and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born* (1965) see the military as saviours, even though Arrmah appears ambivalent because he has no faith in the military. On the other hand, Ngugi Wa' Thiongo's *Wizard of the Crow*, Adebayo William's *The Remains of the Last Emperor* and Okey Ndebe's *Arrows of Rain*, among others condemned military usurpation of political power.

Although, some Nigerian authors view the military as the architect of modern corruption in the country; among other writers who have engaged the military in their literary oeuvres include;

Mamman Vatsa's *Voices From the Trench* (1985); Wole Soyinka's *From Zia with Love* (1992); Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1976); Chinua Achebe's *Girls at War* (1972) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987); Rasheed Gbadamosi's *Echoes From the Lagoon* (1973); Isidore Okphewo's *The Last Duty* (1976); Festus Iyayi's *Heroes* (1986); Femi Osofisan's *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen* (1992) and Bode Sowande's *Flamingo and Other Plays* (1986); Frank Uche-Mowah's *Eating by the Flesh* (1995), Adebayo Williams' *The Remains of the Last Emperor* (1994), Kole Omotoso's *Just before Dawn* (1988), Sowaribi Tolofari's *The Black Minister* (1994), Ngozi Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007); and Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* (2008) among many others.

From the foregoing, one can concur with Gbemisola Adeoti (1983) that "the military is not only a dominant political force in the country's postcolonial governance but also a recurrent subject in its narrative fiction, poetry and drama". Thus, in the works of Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Christopher Okigbo, John Pepper Clark, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Odia Ofeimun, Niyi Osundare, Ben Okri etc, one is confronted with tropes of power abuse, economic mismanagement and poverty among other legacies of military regimes. Their art also captured the twist in public perception of soldiers.

Whereas the soldiers were celebrated initially as messiahs who rescued the polity from corrupt politicians, they became like vampires in the 1980s and 1990s after plunging the nation into political turmoil and economic tribulation. For instance, at the time *Anthills of the Savannah* was published, political unrest continued to dominate Nigeria. In August of 1985 specifically, a military coup, responding to the growing discontent of the people, overthrew the existing authoritarian military regime. The new leader assumed the title of president, banning members of certain past regimes from political involvement for a period of ten years. Thus, *Anthills of the*

Savannah is a deft reconstruction of postcolonial Nigerian spatiality under the emasculating grip of militarism. In this review, our aim is to examine the paradigm shift between the older generations of Nigerian novelists, like Achebe who saw the military as corrective mechanism to the younger generation of Nigerian writers, like Habila, who holds that the military is the bane of the decay that has come to envelop postcolonial Nigerian society.

2.2 Achebe and the Futility of Military (Mis) Rule

He is revered as one of the founders of modern Nigerian, nay, African literature for his historically sensitive and insightful novels about his native land and its people. He is praised for his ability to artfully combine traditional folklore and tradition with Western ideologies, and critics are quick to note that Achebe's writing is relevant to a multitude of societies, not just those of Africa. That notwithstanding, Achebe is first and foremost a contemporary African writer, writing novels that carry important messages about and for his people. Achebe uses his work to call for an end to oppression and a return to order, integrity, and beauty. The novel, *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) has been greeted with a plethora of responses since its publication. In fact, the critical reception was overwhelmingly positive, and many critics regard the novel as one of Achebe's best to date. Achebe was already respected as one of the founding fathers of Nigeria's literary coming of age; hence the success of *Anthills of the Savannah* only confirmed his place among Nigeria's leading intellectuals (Clarke, et al, 2014). In 1987, *Anthills of the Savannah* was a finalist for the Booker Prize, Britain's most prestigious literary award.

Anthills of the Savannah satirizes military dictatorship and its attendant aberrations in post-colonial Africa. It recounts the story of three schoolmates who become prominent figures in a new regime in the fictional West African state of Kangan. *Anthills of the Savannah* opens with a meeting of the regime's president and his Cabinet. The government has been in place for two

years, since a coup overthrew the former dictator. Three men, friends since childhood, have assumed important positions in the new system. Sam is the president, Chris Oriko is the Commissioner of Information, and Ikem Osodi is the editor of the government controlled newspaper, *the National Gazette*. Ikem is an intellectual and a poet who is very outspoken about the need to reform the government. In the text, Achebe addresses the course unbridled power often takes and demonstrates how the fierce pursuit of self interest comes at tremendous cost to the community as a whole. Critics have observed that this novel is a departure for the author because he creates fully developed female characters and suggests that the women are sources of moral strength, tradition, and hope in the face of violence and deception.

Emmanuel Ngara (1990), for instance, speaks of the author soaring "to the heights of literary artistry" (128), and Elleke Boehmer (1990) claims that Achebe's "new vision is manifested in the strategic gender configurations of his central characters" (102). David Maughan-Brown (1990) on his part observes that "the solution Achebe's fiction here proposes to what its author sees as the problems afflicting contemporary Nigeria seems to me to be unlikely to have the durability of the anthills of the savannah, capable of enduring many seasons of grassfires" (148).

According to the Cambridge University Press (2007), Chinua Achebe is “Africa’s best known and most widely read author” (1). The setting of *Anthills of the Savannah* is Kangan, an imaginary country in West Africa, where Sam, a Sandhurst-trained military officer, also known as His Excellency, has taken over the reins of power through a coup d'état. The actions of the novel are principally relayed by three friends: Ikem, Chris and Beatrice. In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe presents a military government that carries the guise to correct the anomalies committed by a past civilian regime in Nigeria, fictitiously represented as Kangan.

However, this supposedly messianic government only ends up surpassing the civilian government in corruption and abuse of power. The novel features an elitist government headed by a soldier simply described as Sam, who brings into his government his friends and school mates, Chris and Ikem, together with academics such as Professor Okon, respected members of the public and his military colleagues. The government, which begins on a progressive and optimistic note, with a democratic goal, gradually sinks into suspicion, oppression, witch-hunting and gagging of the press. The climax of the novel is the murder of the radical journalist Ikem and the aggressive hunt for Christopher Oriko, the information commissioner, who eventually dies by the gun of a drunken soldier while on the run from the chase mounted on him by the dictatorial government of Sam. The story ends with a palace coup in which Sam is overthrown and eventually killed. The principled role played by Beatrice and the actions in the final part of the text, including the naming ceremony of Elewa's baby signpost Achebe's positive hope for Nigeria. In his assessment of the novel, Ayo Kehinde (2010) contends that:

> *Anthills of the Savannah* is Achebe's most sustained treatment of political issues in post-independence Nigeria. The president of a fictional African state, Kangan (unmistakably Nigeria), is intoxicated with power. In the text, there is a transition from love and friendship to disillusionment and violence. The President is apathetic towards dialogue, constructive criticism, egalitarianism and communication. The public sphere is rejected in his domain, because it is seen as an anathema. In the world of the novel, the public sphere is not allowed to materialize. Rather, flattery comes to assume the place of real debate, and the moral force of governing is displaced by internal struggles over power. For instance, one of the narrators believes that, in order not to irk the president, it is good to 'keep your mouth shut' (2).

In its depiction of Sam, Achebe provides a perfect example of the saying that, "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Displaying his highhandedness and brutality as captured in the above extract, Sam, the Head of State, says authoritatively to his commissioners: 'You know I've never relied on you fellows for information on anything or anybody' (*Anthills*, 15). He frontally told the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney-General: 'you may be the

Attorney, but don't forget I am the General' (*Anthills*, 24). Afraid of 'speaking truth to power', the Attorney-General also concurs by saying: 'we have no problem worshipping a man like you' (*Anthills*, 24). As the narrator noted, within two years of holding the reins of government, Sam metamorphosed into a totalitarian dictator, as his government 'holds the yam and holds the knife' (*Anthills*, 33).

Dissecting the hollowness and tyranny of military rule through the character of Sam, Kehinde further avers that:

> The leadership style of His Excellency, Sam, shows that the military operates through 'might is right', and it is usually tyrannical in approach. In fact, the ordeals of the people of Kangan reveal that military rulers are really dictators under whom the masses suffer untold economic and psychological hardships. And for the simple reason that man desires comfort, he rebels against oppressive tendencies in the rulers. (33-34).

Sam's metamorphosis into a brute and despotic dictator started at a cabinet meeting early in the novel when he obstinately refuses to visit the drought-stricken province of Abazon. He harasses and addresses members of his cabinet impudently. Such high-handedness is reflected in his abusive words to Chris, the Commissioner for Information:

> 'You are wasting everybody's time, Mr. Commissioner for information. I will not go to Abazon. Finish! Kabisa! Any other business?'
> 'As Your Excellency wishes. But…'
> 'But me no buts, Mr. Oriko! The matter is closed, I said.
>
> How many times, for God's sake, am I expected to repeat it?
> Why do you find it so difficult to swallow my ruling. On anything?'
> 'I am sorry, Your Excellency. But I have no difficulty swallowing and digesting your rulings' (*Anthills*, 1).

The image of the military portrayed in the above exchange is that of arrogance and outright disregard for democratic governance ethos. This naked and temperamental display of power-drunkenness lends credence to the often held belief that military dictators habitually distance themselves from the people they rule. In fact, he ordered Chris, the Commissioner for

Information to 'find some nice words to them. Tell them we are tied up ...with very important matters of the State ... tell them they can be rest assured that their complaints or rather problem...will receive His Excellency's personal attention' (*Anthills*, 17). Here, Achebe shows the dangers of blindly pursuing power at the expense of the community. Sam, indeed, has no regard for the people he is supposed to be leading, and for that they suffer.

In Umelo Ojinmah's (1991) estimation, Achebe, in the *Anthills of the Savannah* perceives military governance and claims to probity as a hollow ritual:

> Achebe sees the soldiers as not being any better than the civilians they ousted ... they have become worse, having perfected torture, intimidation and cold-blooded killing as weapons to cow the opponents of their policies (86).

Chidi Maduka (2007) in an article entitled ''Chinua Achebe and Military Dictatorship in Nigeria: A Study of *Anthills of the Savannah"*, also insightfully observes that:

> […] Achebe deftly opens the novel with an apt dramatization of the power game which is a major concern of the work. Sam is a power seeker who ruthlessly silences opposition in order to show that he constitutes a formidable power base capable of resisting the assault of political opponents. (64-80).

Re-echoing the above submission, Nwachukwu-Agbada (2007) argues that ''the novel is a study of power in an African state, and shows how original ideals are swept aside by the concept of power personalization'' (92). In all, *Anthills of the Savannah* is a political novel about postcolonial Africa, where brute force, press repression, intimidation, counter coup d'états, power game, political assassination, corruption, secret trials, struggle for power and all the machinations of a corrupt political world are the rules rather than the exception. But it is not all pessimism in the novel as Achebe sees a beacon of hope for the future through the redeeming characters of are Ikem Osodi, Chris Okong and Beatrice Nwanyibuife. These characters are depicted by Achebe as sheer foil to His Excellency's wrapped persona. Paradoxically, although the conclusion of the novel offers a little hope, it nevertheless shows that the political unrest of

Kangan cannot be addressed by simple solutions. The people desirously want change and peace but are unsure how to attain a suitable system of government, especially when each successive regime is made up of members of the coup that overthrew the last regime. In other words, it is a system driven by sheer might and strength as opposed to justice, philosophy, or respect for the land. The novel also portrays a strong and enduring sense of community among the people, despite the fact that their political rights have been gagged. To many critics, Achebe offers in *Anthills of the Savannah* the message that Nigeria herself must take responsibility for her state of disarray. No doubt, the colonial period ushered in a host of problems, Achebe seems to say, but ultimately the country itself must pick up its own burden and cure its own ills. Achebe suggests that the age-long unity of traditional African society is what appears to keep the community and its heritage and culture intact even when it is ravaged by unjust political regimes.

2.6 *Waiting for an Angel* and the Naked Terror of Military Dictatorship

Helon Habila is one of the most remarkable new voices among the third generation of Nigerian writers. Habila has published three major novels. They are *Waiting for an Angel* (2002), which chronicles the social realities of the military usurpation of political power in Nigeria, *Measuring Time* (2006) which interrogates and mirrors the lives of two characters (Mamo and Lamamo) as they make effort to assert their place in a nation that kills their dream and ambitions, and *Oil on Water* (2010), which examines vividly the effects of oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger- Delta region of Nigeria.

In *Waiting for an Angel* (2002), Habila dissects some of the issues that have preoccupied African writers since the 1960s, notably, despotism in postcolonial Africa, its characteristics, its effects on ordinary people and dissident intellectuals, and popular resistance. According to Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton (2005) Habila belongs to:

> A new generation of writers born after 1960, the emblematic year of African political independence from colonialism. This generation, the first in Africa to be temporary severed from the colonial event... came to be identified as writers of the third generation in Anglophone and Francophone critical traditions (14).

On the characteristics of these writers such as Maik Nwosu, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Habila, Adesanmi and Dunton argue that their temperament is shaped by an increasingly globalized world and a concomitant postmodern valorization of "nomadism, exile, displacement and deracination' (16). Furthermore, third-generation writers, according to the duo, in keeping with the deconstructive penchant of postmodernism, interrogate "totalities such as history, nation, gender, and their representative symbologies" (15). In the novel, Habila takes his readers back to the 1990s when Nigeria was under the cruel grip of a military government. In the 'Afterword' of the book, the writer explains this period of time as "a terrible time to be alive, especially if you were young, talented and ambitious – and patriotic" (*Waiting*, 223). *Waiting for an Angel* is a piece of historical fiction and Habila categorically states in the 'Afterword' that the book contains some recognizable historical facts and incidents. In other words, real-life personages and incidents animate the fictive world of the novel in question.

Anthony James (2012) bears testimony to the historical significance of the novel when he observed that:

> The event of the mid 80's through the 90's in Nigeria is what Helon Habila captures in his novel *Waiting for an Angel*. The Mid 80‟ s through the later part of the 90‟ s marks a significant period in the landscape of Nigerian history, mainly because of the militarization of the entire Nigerian society. From the subtle but repressive government of Babangida to the crude and unbridled dictatorship of Abacha, were the periods characterized by the muzzling of the press and radical intellectuals by various agencies of the military. The masses were not spared; they languished in abject poverty, misery and general social malaise that were as a result of harsh economic policies, most especially the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the Babangida era (169-170).

Due to its historical accuracy and directness, some critics like Akingbem Niyi (2010) see the novel as 'faction' and contends that:

> As a work of fiction, the novel makes it possible to identify with Nigeria's real world, the people and the actual events depicted in the narrative. This identification with real-life situation is one generic characteristic of faction which distinguishes it from other narrative forms which are considered fictional (31).

Among the real-life incidents which the novel recounts and to which Akingbem Niyi infers above include an illustration of the incarceration of the hero of the story, Lomba (pp.3-32), which is reminiscent of the jailing of Nduka Irabor and Dele Thompson of *The Guardian Newspaper*. Similarly, the various riots and strike actions that swept across Nigeria beginning from the 1991 petroleum subsidy riot that started at the University of Jos, Plateau state and climaxed with the petroleum workers strike of 1994 (PENGASSAN) and the various June 12th demonstrations across the country were pointedly recreated.

Furthermore, real-life events like the expulsion of Nigeria from the Commonwealth (p.192), as a result of the judicial murder of the Ogoni Rights activist, Ken Saro Wiwa, the assassination of frontline *Newswatch* journalist, Dele Giwa (pp.196-197), the pro-democracy group; NADECO and the eventual assassination of Kudirat Abiola (p.210) were all creatively portrayed in the text. Again, in the 'Afterword', Habila reveals the historical backdrop against which the plot of the novel unfolds. He explains that his novel seeks to capture the political conditions that obtained in Nigeria in the 1990s, particularly during the General Sani Abacha's dictatorship which lasted between 1993-1998. This period, according to Habila, was marked by "plain, old-fashioned terror" and "There were more 'official' killings, arrests, and kidnapping in those five years than in all the other military years put together" (*Waiting*,227). He further writes on the diabolic character of the Abacha dictatorship:

> Every day came with new limitations, new prisons. Perhaps some of these limitations would have been endurable if one could have found a moral basis on which to be loyal to the military rulers, if one could somehow have believed in the mission they were set on.... But there was nothing to believe in (Waiting, 224).

Jonas Akung and E.D Simon (2011) in a piece entitled "The Military as a Motif in the Nigerian Novel: Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*" argue that the novel explores the deplorable condition of the Nigerian State in the events leading to the expulsion of Nigeria from the Commonwealth of Nations. The novel, they contend, recreates vividly the human rights abuses, police and military brutalization and the violent revolt across the nation. The military usurpation of political power culminates in the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election supposedly won by Chief MKO Abiola, the setting up of the Interim National Government (ING) headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan, the eventual stepping aside of General Ibrahim Babaginda, the overthrow of Shonekon in 1993, the death of MKO Abiola, his wife, Kudirat, among other issues are explored in this novel (56). Mary Whipple (2004) sums up the issues mentioned above by noting that "the author shows us the effects of this dictatorial government on the ordinary people" (1). According to her, the people were helpless, but they were not ignorant of the machinery of state ruled by a ruthless and despotic leader. She submits that he author uses the novel to explore the ways of making the people understand the harsh realities of their recent past under mean, self-centred and self-serving military gangsters masquerading as leaders. It is an expose of the helplessness of a people caught in the web of despair.

This study extended the arguments and perspectives contained in the selected works reviewed with specific focus on the military politics in the Nigerian novel and the country's socio-cultural and historical events captured or re-enacted in the selected texts of the study. We hoped the analysis spotlight pointed out some of the military instruments of brutality with which they terrorize the citizens, including the police, soldiers, and security agents, which Louis Althusser calls "the Repressive State Apparatus."

CHAPTER THREE

FUTILITY OF MILITARY GOVERNANCE IN POSTCOLONIAL NIGERIA IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH*

3.1 Ineffectiveness of Military Governance in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*

Anthills of the Savannah is set in Kangan, a fictional African state with dateline being the 1980s. It is written against the background of the political environment of post-independence Nigeria characterized by a succession of military coups. Kangan is a contemporary African nation struggling to find stability in postcolonial times. The actions revolve around the western educated friends, Sam Okoli, Ikem Osodi, Christopher Oriko and Beatrice Okoh. Theirs is a case of friendship gone sour. The novel gives us a true picture of the post-colonial African condition marked by dictatorship, corruption, betrayal, disillusionment and frustration. It is a narrative that highlights the turmoil inherent in a dictatorial regime. Chinua Achebe in the novel skilfully addresses the route unbridled acquisition of power often takes and demonstrates how the fierce pursuit of self-interest comes at tremendous cost to the society as a whole. Sam's regime is one that is disconnected from its citizens and offers no optimism. Wondering about the President's sudden seclusion and inaccessibility Beatrice recalls:

> In the early days of his coming to power I had gone fairly often to the Palace with Chris and sometimes Chris and Ikem. But then things had changed quite dramatically after about a year and now apart from viewing him virtually every night on television news, I

> had not actually set eyes on him nor had any kind of direct contact for well over a year (72).

In the text we are told that "His Excellency came to power without any preparation for political leadership" (12). Little wonder Ayo Kehinde (2010) says that “the text depicts a deeply diseased country that urgently demands a deeper determination to cure the ailments”.

The art of storytelling has been used as a powerful tool to mediate changes in *Anthills of the Savannah;* and was able to capture the vainness of Military Governance in Postcolonial Nigeria by us these narrative technique. Achebe stands out in his role of the “novelist as teacher” because his stories empower the people, legitimize their fight against injustice and even depict their triumph. Achebe does not engage with the politics of rancour but looked within to reveal widespread condition of the suffering of the people. This is how the narrative transcends its historical context and takes a fresh look at the nation and its problems. In *Anthills of the Savannah* one is captivated by the innovative narrative techniques used by Achebe and the gripping stories he narrates of his own race. Through the simple act of telling stories, Achebe delves into serious and contemporary themes like tribalism, students’ unrest, regionalism, and freedom of expression and the role of the press.

Anthills of the Savannah is also the novel where Achebe portrays a dictator, Sam (as it is used here to understand the ineffectiveness of the military political leadership), though he is the dictatorial head of the state of Kangan, Sam has his own fears, doubts and a feeling of helplessness. He is tortured to death after a coup. Sam’s lack of contact with the people of Kangan, his refusal to meet the leaders from Abazon reveals the callous attitude of the government that does not meet the aspirations of the people. This failure of the state is counter balanced by the deep sense of community in the people of Abazon. This sense of the community

is also symbolised by the small gathering at the end of the novel to name Ikem and Elewa's child. As they gather at Beatrice's house and pray for the baby and the "life of Kangan" (212), Achebe mentions the white man. He writes:

> "We have seen too much trouble in Kangan since the white an left because those who make plans make plans for themselves only and their families" (212).

This refusal to censure the colonial rule is an indication that writers such as Achebe have taken their writings beyond the conventional limits of protest literature. The novels set during colonial rule, Achebe did not write about any armed struggle or freedom movement, but in this novel, set many years after independence, there are stories of bloodshed and sacrifice; Ikem's death as a victim of the military junta and Chris's death while trying to save Adamma from being raped by a soldier. These deaths are actually the sacrifices they make to rid the nation of its internal troubles. These troubles are the offshoots of the prevailing state of indiscipline and lawlessness.

The academic world continues to attach much importance to the dismantling of the colonial apparatus and the legacy left behind. The aftermath has stretched to a long period and the post situation continues and postcolonial study is widening its field of study to offer a specific critique of the imperialist subject. Though Achebe occupies a prominent position in the postcolonial canon, his writings speak out his concern for the people. Achebe's remark about being satisfied if his novels taught his readers to respect their lives even with all its imperfections is well-known. This statement clearly suggests that he writes for the people and not "back" to the imperialist project.

Achebe also categorizes the act of writing and storytelling as a gift ordained by the gods. He writes in *Anthills of the Savannah*, "To some of us the Owner of the World has apportioned the gift…to wait…and when the struggle is ended, to take over and recount its story." (113). It is this

gift which helps him to transcend all frontiers and literary techniques marked by politics and history. For the general readers, Achebe has this to say in *Anthills of the Savannah* through the voice of Ikem:

> No I cannot give you the answers 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. (145-146)

Achebe condemns military incursion in politics through coup'd'état, with the aim of sanitizing the nation from the hands of the civilians. The military took over power with the motives to right the wrongs of the civilians which to Achebe is a total failure that did more harm than good in society. He frowns at the idea of over throwing civilians in the bid to restore sanity in government and used this storytelling as a technique in the novel in narrating his grievances of the then military governance:

> Experience and intelligence warn us that man's progress in freedom will be piecemeal slow and undramatic. Revolution may be necessary for taking a society out of an intractable stretch of quagmire but it does not confer freedom, and may indeed hinder it … society is an extension of the individual the most we can hope to do with a problematic individual psyche is to reform it. No responsible psycho-analyst would aim to do more, for to do more, to overthrow the psyche itself, would be to unleash insanity. We can only hope to re-arrange some details in the periphery of the human personality any disturbance of its core is an irresponsible invitation to disaster … (99).

The writer widens the scope to enable us to move beyond the postcolonial conundrum. Literature is a strong moral force that is capable of bringing about change. It helps one to think of the world as human rather than material. Although we belong to the same human race, yet history and politics affect us differently. It is literature that connects us, preserves the wisdom of world cultures and helps to explain our world and our place in it. It kindles in us the ability to think and learn creatively through the shared experiences which provide spiritual insights. Chinua Achebe's novels recreate the sense of the community, they teach and inspire. Achebe, saw

military leadership as a woe rather than the blessing it claimed to be. He told a story of a man who is dreaded by all and sundry because he is a military leader. Even his commissioners could only suggest things that delight his head or they will be shown the walls of the prison for disobeying him. The people are made to suffer and no one is allowed to utter a sigh of despair or he would face a dangerous music.

Throughout *Anthills of the Savannah* there are references to stories, narratives, and the storyteller. Achebe writes that "the story is everlasting" and that "storytellers are a threat." Three of the novel's main characters are writers: Ikem is a writer and newspaper editor, Beatrice writes short stories, and Chris is a former journalist who left his post as editor of the *National Gazette* to accept the position of Commissioner of Information. The elder from Abazon speaks at length about the important and lasting role of the storyteller. He argues that in his youth he would have said that the battle was most important, but now that he is older and wiser, he understands that the story is more powerful. Through stories, a community can retain its sense of history and tradition and seek guidance for the future. He explains, "Because it is only the story that can continue beyond the war and the warrior. . .The story is our escort; without it, we are blind." Later, as Ikem addresses a group of students, he expresses his belief that the role of the writer is to ask questions, not to propose solutions. Critics have observed that this is perhaps what Achebe is doing with this novel. The power of writing is shown after Ikem is taken away in the dark of night and killed. To get the truth about the event into public awareness, Chris uses his contacts within the international press as a means of informing the world about what happened to Ikem.

Achebe is often praised for his skillful blending of folklore, myth, proverbs, and customs with modern Western political ideologies and Christian belief systems. By presenting these two approaches, Achebe asserts his belief in the power of the past to ease the excesses and confusion

of the present. In a similar vein, Achebe was the first Nigerian writer to apply the conventions of the novel to African storytelling. Well aware of the strong oral tradition of African literature, Achebe found a way to write honestly about Africa in a way that is accessible for an international audience. *Anthills of the Savannah* was originally written in English, and by adopting a structure that is familiar to his English−speaking audience, he makes his African storytelling available without compromising the integrity of his heritage. At the same time, Nigerians can benefit from his writing because English is their official language.

The novel is made up of eighteen (18) chapters. The story is told from multiple points of view, comprising first person and third person omniscient narrative techniques. In Chapter One, the story is told from the perspective of Christopher Oriko. In Chapters Two and Three, it unfolds from the perspective of the omniscient narrator. Ikem Osodi relates the events in Chapter Four while Chris takes over the narrator's role again in Chapter Five, with Beatrice coming in as narrator in Chapters Six and Seven. Chapters Eight to Eighteen are told from the perspective of the omniscient narrator. The narratives given by Chris, Ikem and Beatrice serve as witnesses that accrue from their individual experiences and the part that they play in the politics of Kangan. In some situations, there is no temporal link between the events presented in a chapter and the one that precedes it, thereby increasing the complexity of the novel.

The text is the complex narrative structure of the story in order to present a transcending point of view on the historical events in Nigeria and the parties who played the roles in the events. In this study, point of view is in relation to the traditional narrative techniques employed in narratives, namely, first person: Elewa's fascination continues to be driven by her volitional perceptive process. This perceptive behavioural process Elewa engages in serves as an anchor from which

the narrator describes the oddness of Mad Medico's residence to the reader. A more specific description is even done subsequently through the actions of Elewa:

> Now she nudges Beatrice and points at the legend inscribed in the central wall of the bar above the array of bottles in a semi-literate hand.

This situation is interesting because the episode is narrated from the first person point of view and as is characteristic of this narrative technique, we expect that situations and events are described from the viewpoint of the narrator. By implication, the transfer of viewpoint to Elewa is an indicator of her character. That is, Elewa is a stranger to the things that surrounds her in Mad Medico's house and thus must be curious about them. The narrator, Chris, who is knowledgeable, has taken these trivial things for granted. Below is an exam of the use of this technique in the text:

> Wetin I de hear, Ikem? Na true say dem done sack you? Ikem nodded his head as he pressed her to himself. She burst into tears and violent crying and in that brief instant exploded the atmosphere in the room. All three were embarrassed by this intrusive emotion, but more especially the men, and each put in a clumsy word or two // to console the girl and restore the original calm.

As is demonstrated by the processes in the extracts above, Elewa is highly sentimental or emotional in character. The episode from which the extracts are isolated presents Ikem's visit to Chris' flat following the former's suspension as editor of the *Gazette*. He finds Beatrice there and the three of them are discussing Ikem's suspension and other related issues. In extract 1, which describes Elewa's arrival at the flat, the circumstances attendant to the material processes she is engaged in (*in a state of flutter clearly discernible from where Chris stood; breathless and deeply agitated; ignoring welcoming greetings from everybody*) show that she is impatient.

The third person limited narrative point of view is seen in the character Beatrice in the Like in the first person narration where she is the "I" narrator, as is often the case, Beatrice is assigned

agency in most of the processes in which she is engaged. She occurs as actor in material processes:

> *She ate a grapefruit and drank a second cup of coffee while she flipped through the barren pages of the Sunday newspapers …*;
> *she heard far away the crowing of a cock*
> *she was still at the railing of her balcony when Agatha came in to begin her chores*
> *No breakfast for me Agatha,' she called out cheerily to her*
> *she immediately sat up in her bed.*

This narrative person Beatrice as a dynamic character; she is often involved in talk and activity, and engages in thinking, perception and conscious behaviour. She is also assigned identity in relational processes. Again, she is Goal in only 13 (6.2%) processes, which are very often similar to the processes in which she mostly occurs as Goal in Chris' narrative:

> Then Chris went and sat down on the sofa beside her and placed his left arm across her shoulder and with his right hand raised her chin gently and saw she was crying.
> She did not resist then as he pulled her to him and reverently tasted the salt of her tears.
> He kissed her lips and her nipples and closed his eyes again.
> He (smiled mischievously and) kissed her.

The narrative opens with Sam, the military ruler, at a meeting with his Cabinet discussing the issue of his visit to Abazon. Sam is mad at his Cabinet and especially Chris, the Commissioner for Information, who is persistently insisting on the president's visit to Abazon. No sooner has the meeting ended and the president ruthlessly and unceremoniously dismisses his Cabinet, than a delegation arrives from Abazon to plead for water supply in their community.

The arrival of this delegation is the point of attack in the narrative, and becomes the configural event around which the narrative is built. Sam instructs Professor Reginald Okong, Commissioner for Home Affairs, to receive the delegation on his behalf, a strategy he adopts to avoid negotiation with the delegation. He also instructs Chris to arrange for a photograph to be taken of the delegation. Professor Okong tries to convince Sam that Chris and Ikem, the Editor of

the *National Gazette*, are not loyal members of his government. This interaction between Okong and Sam lays the foundation for the hatred and suspicion Sam has for Chris and Ikem. Chris calls Ikem to instruct him to send a photographer to cover "a goodwill delegation from Abazon" (p. 26) upon which they have a supposedly usual but vitriolic argument over editorial policies and principles. Ikem, out of curiosity, departs to the presidential palace to meet the delegation himself and apparently find out what they have come to do exactly.

In the next episode, we meet Ikem and Elewa, his girlfriend, at his residence quarrelling. It is midnight and Ikem is insisting that Elewa does not sleep in his house. After this episode, Ikem informs us of the longstanding argument between him and Chris over his (Ikem's) crusading editorials. Ikem also describes the awful public execution of convicted criminals and tells us how, through his crusading editorials, he has been able to persuade the president to abolish it. He presents Sam as a man with goodwill who is being turned into a ruthless dictator by the sycophancy of some of his Cabinet ministers, such as Professor Okong. He notes that it is his as well as Chris' obligation to save Sam from this situation.

Later, Chris, Ikem, Beatrice, Elewa, Mad Medico and Dick meet in Mad Medico's residence, where they drink and converse on several issues, including their previous pleasant relationship with Sam before they all got themselves entangled in power politics. Sam invites Beatrice to a party at the Presidential Retreat at Abichi, 40 miles away from Bassa, the capital. At Abichi, Beatrice meets "the new power-brokers around His Excellency" (p.76). When Beatrice remarks on Sam belittling himself for Miss Cranford, his American guest, Sam gets annoyed and sends her back home in the middle of the night. This party marks the turning point in the novel. When Chris visits Beatrice the next day, she tells him that there is trouble coming for them:

> And I see trouble building up for us. It will get to Ikem first. No joking. Chris. He will be the precursor to make straight the way. But after him it will be you. We are all in it, Ikem, you, me and even Him (Sam). The thing is no longer a joke (p.114/5).

She cautions that Chris and Ikem settle their differences and jointly save the situation, but Chris is reluctant to take the initiative.

In the text, the reader becomes aware that this is a novel which sets out to short-circuit the conventional novel-form by drawing on the (supposed) transcription of speeches and of state proclamations, and by resorting to an unusually didactic mode of storytelling. It's a novel which reproduces, at length, and seemingly verbatim, the political thoughts of its key protagonists. Achebe is intent on importing into the novel, untransformed, these disquisitions on the nature of postcolonial politics. And in so doing, he seems to call into questions the form and possibilities of the postcolonial novel, as a genre, itself (Achebe, 1975:74-75).

The novel is emphatic in its conviction that those who respect the integrity of narrative, who recognize the power of narrative, are those and only those capable of beholding the future. Central in this respect is the elderly James Baldwin Review 1 leader of the delegation of Abazon. He has come to conclude, in his aged wisdom, that it is not the battle which is decisive, but the telling of the battle:

> only the story can continue beyond the war and the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sound of war-drums and the exploits of brave fighters. It is the story . . . that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort; without it we are blind. Does the blind man own his escort? No, neither do we the story; rather it is the story that owns us and directs us.42

Thus it appears that ultimately *Anthills of the Savannah* is less about the impossibility of the novel as the medium for engaging with the postcolonial so much as an attempt to re-politicize the novel-form, such that it can contend with historic realities of the postcolonial epoch of military ineffectiveness. In formal terms, Anthills of the Savannah is not conspicuously radical, although

this is not to underestimate its structural complexities. It revives many of the properties for long associated with the novel, and demonstrates that while the novel can continually renew itself by becoming ever-more protean, this is the work of recuperation as much as it is innovation.

Furthermore, Achebe makes use of animal imagery (such as birds and lizards) in order to tell the colonial history of Nigeria: "Strange but tears loomed suddenly in Beatrice's eyes as she spoke to the bird:

> Poor fellow. You have not heard the news? The king's treasury was broken into last night and all his property carried away his crown, his sceptire and all" (Achebe 99).

In this passage, the withdrawal of the colonizers are depicted with the usage of some symbols. The king's treasury may stand for the raw materials of Nigeria and it is carried away to Britain. In the following sentence, "the birds began to fly away in ones and twos and larger groups. Soon the tree was empty", the tree may stand for Nigeria and the birds may represent the English people/colonizers, who leave Nigeria one by one after exploiting the country fully.

In the novel, there are also lizards. It is stated that the male lizard is ferocious and the female is coy. It is the microcosm of the sexual relationships among the living things. It is natural, male is active and female is passive, but as human beings are supposed to be superior to the animals, they should be different. Accordingly, Beatrice is the active part in making love with Chris. She gives the command, she is the judge to decide whether he is worthy or not?

> She said: Come in. And as he did she uttered a strangled cry that was not just a cry but also a command or a password into her temple... she had pulled him up and back with such power and authority as he had never seen her exercise before. Clearly this was her grove and these her own peculiar rites over which she held absolute power. Priestess or goddess herself? No matter. But would he be found worthy? Would he survive? (Achebe, 104)

In addition to the lizards, there are mosquitoes and bed bugs, who suck the blood of the people just like Britain. Furthermore, there are elephants looking for water2 and then sucking the juices stored in the years of rain by the tree inside its monumental bole (Achebe 193). In this scene, elephant can be taken as Britain and the tree as Nigeria due to the fact that Britain makes use of Nigeria's raw materials and natural sources for a long time.

Three green bottles may stand for the three young friends (Ikem, Chris and Sam). Chris recognizes that the end is approaching speedily. "Three green bottles; One has accidentally fallen; one is tilting, Going, going, bang!". Later on, Beatrice expresses that it is a coded message (Achebe 214). The last grin/gren, that is Chris dies with dignity, he was laughing at himself even at the face of death. With regard to death, there is another scene, in which a prince before the execution states that "I shall be born again". His words can be taken symbolically, especially considering that prospective leaders may continue to steal Money, which means that they will reincarnate.

3.2 Chris, Ikem and Sam: "How Things Fell Apart"

Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* deals with themes such as dictatorship, the corrupting nature of power and political unrest. It is a literary reconstruction of postcolonial Nigerian under the vicious grip of militarism. The novel opens where Sam, a Sandhurst-trained military officer and known as His Excellency, has seized the reins of power by coup d'état. The oppressive military regime in the West African state of Kangan is not only corrupt but also bereft of any leadership qualities. Corruption and oppression are the order of the day as Sam, the military dictator and inept leader (an epitome of "soldiers-turned-politicians" (141) relies on brute force, domination, intimidation and brute violence to consolidate his leadership and grip of power. The brazen misrule of His Excellency is vividly relieved by Achebe in the character Ikem:

> The prime failure of this government began also to take on a clear meaning… It can't be the massive corruption though its scale and pervasiveness are truly intolerable; it isn't the subservience to foreign manipulation, degrading as it is; it isn't even this second-class, hand-me-down capitalism, ludicrous and doomed… It is 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 (141).

In the passage above, Ikem criticises the prime failure of Sam's government. He establishes that it is the inability of Sam's government to meet the needs of the Kangan people that led to his doom. Achebe was able to relay the message of the outcry of the citizens of Kangan on the failures of Sam who was taken as the leader of the people and the government he was empowered to lead.

Another issue addressed in *Anthills of the Savannah* is mis-governance and poor leadership. His Excellency sees the state apparatus and resources as a private estate that should be used at his whims and caprices and any one opposed to his orders is guilty of treason. The character of Sam as portrayed corroborates Nwachukwu-Agbada's (2007: 81-107) observation that the "the novel is a study of power in an African state, and shows how original ideals are swept aside by the concept of power personalization".

Things started to fall apart among the three friends when Christopher Oriko (Chris) and Ikem Osodi disagree and oppose His Excellency, Sam, over the way he is steering the ship of the Kangan state. While Sam believes in authoritarianism, Chris and Ikem argue that such an approach will fail because it will alienate the Head of state from the ordinary citizens. While Sam is deeply immersed in the whirlpool of power, Chris, Ikem and Beatrice chose to identify themselves with the people and their problems.

The trio has been friends back in their days as schoolmates in an English preparatory school. Eventually, the three friends also received their higher education in Great Britain. After a

military coup thrust Sam into the position of Head of state, Chris returned to help him form a new government in Kangan. In his desperation to perpetuate himself in power, he organizes a plebiscite but Chris and Ikem refuse to support his vaulting ambition. This lack of support triggers mistrust in Sam's mind and he based his dictatorial fangs on Chris, Ikem and Beatrice, a senior secretary in the Ministry of Finance. In his paranoia, he even accuses them of envy and jealousy. Curiously, Sam justifies his leadership style thus:

> You see if Entebbe happens here it's me the world will laugh at, isn't it? Yes, it is me, General Big Mouth, they will say, and print my picture on the cover of *Time* magazine with a big mouth and small head… It's not your funeral but mine….So I don't fool around. I take precautions (15-16).

Here we see that Sam believes he is neither accountable nor answerable to anyone but to himself. At a point in the course of the narrative, His Excellency even planned to put his image on the national currency. For Ayo Kehinde (2010:34), "the leadership style of His Excellency, Sam, shows that the military operates through 'might is right', and it is usually tyrannical in approach. In fact, the ordeals of the people of Kangan reveal that military rulers are really dictators under whom the masses suffer untold economic and psychological hardships".

3.3 The Abuse and Misuse of Political Power and Authority

Anthills of the Savannah, in its depiction of Sam, provides a perfect example of the saying that "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." The novel uses dictatorship to examine the nature of power and authority. After falling out with the regime of His Excellency, both Chris and Ikem devoted themselves to public protest and demonstration consciously designed to serve as rallying-points for widespread expression of anger and discontent among the ordinary masses. Having been suspended as editor of the *National Gazette*, Ikem tells Chris, "The very worst prescription for a suspended editor is silence" (148). Thus, rather than remain

disconsolate and non-committal, the trio choose to lead protests against the injustice, oppression and corruption that pervade the Kangan society under His Excellency.

The killing of Chris showcases the manifestation of military brutality by His Excellency. He had attempted to rescue a schoolgirl who was being abducted by a police officer. Apparently, the police officer in question was stealing some beer before the schoolgirl saw him. He grabbed the girl in an attempt to rape her:

> The police sergeant was dragging her in the direction of a small cluster of round huts not far from the road and surrounded as was common to these parts by a fence of hideously spiked cactus. He was pulling her by the waist, his gun slung from the shoulder (215).

Moved by the manhandling of the girl by the police officer, Chris intervened but unfortunately lost his life in the process. This is how the third person character narrator captures the pathetic scene:

> He unslung his gun, corked it, narrowed his eyes while confused voices went up all around, some asking Chris to run, others the policeman, to put the gun away. Chris stood his ground looking straight into the man's face, daring him to shoot. And he did, point-blank into the chest presented to him. (215).

In the opinion of Ojinmah (1991:91), "…the circumstances of Chris's death typify the depravity of military dictatorships to whom human life has become worthless". Chris is the 'Commissioner for Information' and tries to control and moderate the editor of the *National Gazette*, Ikem, according to the president's instructions. The president believes that his control of the press can help him shore up his power. Chris tells Ikem that his editorials are "creating stupid problems for everybody. They achieve nothing. They antagonize everybody". But Ikem refuses, insisting that, "…as long as I remain editor of the *Gazette* I shall not seek anybody's permission for what I write" (44). As editor of the government-owned newspaper, Ikem's offence includes the critical articles and editorials he writes condemning the way Kangan is piloted. He also criticizes the

elite for perpetuating the governmental corruption by neglecting the needs of the people. He chooses to be on the side of the masses rather than on the corrupt and repressive regime of Sam. Beatrice appears to have prophesied pointedly the misfortunes that await them when she jokingly told Ikem and Chris:

> "I see trouble building up for us. It will get to Ikem first…He will be the precursor to make straight the way. But after him it will be you. We are all in it, Ikem, you, me and even Him. The thing is no longer a joke". (115).

After being sacked, Ikem continues his public sensitization on the tyrannical and repressive regime of Sam. At the University of Bassa, the capital of Kangan, Ikem delivers a critical speech condemning His Excellency style of leadership. Ikem's speech at the campus is entitled ''The Tortoise and the Leopard-A Political Meditation on the Imperative of Struggle'' (153). As would be expected, the next day, the speech was brazenly misquoted in the National Gazette, claiming that Ikem wants the President dead. He is charged with treason and conspiracy and the soldiers who came to arrest him deliberately shot him dead, claiming it was an accident. The brutal murder of Ikem by agents of the state aptly demonstrates the true nature of Sam's beastly and draconian regime. By his death, Kangan metamorphosed into a full-blown police state. The death of Ikem represents the height of naked force and bestiality to silence the opposition. This is how the agent of His Excellency, Major Johnson Ossai, and Chief Security Officer twisted the story and sold to the world to imply that Chris attempted to resist arrest:

> In the early hours of this morning a team of security officers affected the arrest of Mr. Osodi in his official flat at 202 Kingsway Road in the Government Reservation Area and were taking him in a military vehicle for questioning at the SRC Headquarters when he seized a gun from one of his escorts. In the scuffle that ensued between Mr. Osodi and his guard in the moving vehicle, Mr. Osodi was fatally wounded by gunshot (169).

Achebe uses this episode to highlight the calculated lies and dubious strategies of a tyrannical government.

The treatment meted to the Abazon delegation who visited the Presidential Palace is another incident that portrays His Excellency's alienation from his subjects. Sam refuses to respond to the delegates. It is ironical that Sam exhibits gross disregard for the people of Abazon while he entertains the cheeky girl from Arizona, the American Journalist Lou Cranford. He shuts himself inside his Presidential Palace acquired with public wealth. Achebe gives a detailed description of the extravagant Presidential Guest House at Abichi Lake Resort. It is a metaphor for opulent abuse of power, vis-avis the poor dehumanizing conditions in which the people of Abazon province live. The president's action is suggestive of those in power who feel that detachment from the masses can protect and preserve the aura of power. Instead of going out to meet them by himself, he assigns Professor Reginald Okong to do it. Abazon has been devastated by a prolonged drought, and the government feigned deaf to their suffering because it believed that they refused to vote for His Excellency in a referendum proposing an extension to his rule. Out of the four provinces of Kangan, the Abazonians oppose Sam's proposal while three voted in favour of him. For their hostile stand against him, he punishes the Abazonians by ordering "…all the water bore-holes they are digging in your area to be closed so that you will know what it means to offend the sun. You will suffer so much that in your next reincarnation you will need no one to tell you to say yes whether the matter is clear to you or not" (127). Commenting on His Excellency's alienation from the people, Onyemaechi Udumukwu (1998:23) contends that:

> In *Anthills of the Savannah*, the leaders' lack of contact with the aspiration of the ordinary people manifests in an attempt by the leaders to reduce national interests to their personal interests. This is evident in the indiscriminate scramble among the leaders for political and state power as a means of attaining financial profit.

In a raw and naked show of power, His Excellency arrests and detains the six leaders from Abazon at the Bassa Maximum Security Prison with the excuse that they are "a bunch of hoodlums who have come to storm the Presidential place". Here Achebe highlights the changes

that power brings to an individual. Sam has obviously failed his people because he wields power as a means of exhibiting his despotic tendencies.

In the novel, human rights' abuse and suppression is a social malaise pervading the fictional state of Kangan. Intimidation, torture and cold-blooded murder were weapons employed by Sam to intimidate his critics and opponents. He tells the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney-General 'You may be the Attorney, but don't forget I am the General' (25). His high-handedness and absolutism is reflected in his indecent words to Chris, the Commissioner for Information during the formal proceedings of the cabinet meeting in Kangan government house: "You are wasting every body's time…..I will not go to Abazon. Finish! Kabisa! The matter is closed". Here one sees How His Excellency gets whatever he wants and suppresses the people under his tyrannical leadership.

According to Ikechukwu Asika (2011), "the military era was one of tyranny, denigration, molestation and complication were the citizens are but only slaves and mere worshippers of him, their great god. His Excellency like the manner of all military leaders hates anything that portrays the truth". President Sam uses lies, distortion and gruesome acts to silence vociferous citizens. The State Research Council is one body formed by His Excellency's government with the sole purpose of tracking down what they call "unpatriotic elements" in Kangan. It is an organ used to terrorize and massacre law-abiding citizens.

3.4 The Intelligentsia as Pawns in the Hands of Dictators

In the novel, Achebe assigns some enlightened intellectuals significant roles in devising a credible alternative to the problems of the society caused by leaders like Sam. For him, an enlightened leadership comprising of intellectuals such as Chris Oriko, Ikem Osodi, and Beatrice

is pivotal if the society is to be purged of military dictatorship. Besides, Achebe did not spare a section of the intelligentsia in his denunciation of military rule. He sees them as courtiers to men in the corridors of power. In the words of Ojinmah (1991: 89) "The educated elite, by aligning themselves with those in power, turn a blind eye to the corruption around them, condone the abuses and excesses they see, and become themselves puppets in the hands of puppeteers". In *Anthills of the Savannah*, such characters did not disappoint in their overzealousness to out-do the other and please the status quo. Chris, who is the commissioner for Information, bemoans how this class, which he belongs to, have compromised in their responsibility:

> I am not even thinking so much about him as about my colleagues, eleven educated men who let this happen to them, who actually went out of their way to invite it, and who even at this hour have seen and learnt nothing, the cream of society and the hope of the black race (2).

The above recollection by Chris aptly portrays the level of cowed intimidation the Commissioners are subjected to in the presence of His Excellency, the man of absolute power. In the novel, the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney-General leads the pack of these political boot-lickers. In his attempt to impress His Excellency, he condescends to this ridiculous level:

> As for those like me, Your Excellency, poor dullards who went to bush grammar schools, we know our place; we know those better than ourselves when we see them. We have no problem worshipping a man like you. Honestly, I don't … I say this, Your Excellency, to show that a man of my background has no problem worshipping a man like you… (24).

Elsewhere, rather than tell His Excellency that agents of the state manipulated the referendum in his favours, he hypocritically extols him "The people have spoken. Their desire is manifest; you are condemned to serve them for life" (5).

Not yet done in executive sycophancy, the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney-General tries to blackmail and nail his colleague, Chris, to the cross before His Excellency: "My profession enjoins me to trust only hard evidence and to distrust personal feeling and mere suspicion… I

have a personal feeling…I don't think Chris is one hundred percent behind you…my impression is that he does not show any joy, and enthusiasm in matters concerning this government in general and your Excellency in particular" (22-23). In these utterances, we see the height of intellectual acquiescence and hypocrisy.

The same intellectual complicity and flattery is exhibited by Professor Okong, Commissioner for Home Affairs, in his mode of dressing, which is meant to impress His Excellency. Chris captures this foolery sarcastically "Professor Okong wears nothing but khaki safari suits complete with epaulettes. It is amazing how the intellectual envies the man of action" (4). Ojinmah (1991: 87) condemns this tendency by the educated elites and those in positions of responsibility to descend into the pit of sycophancy and debasement, and to stoop to flattery, boot-licking, and back-biting in order to ingratiate themselves with those in power. For Ojinmah, this attitude of "fawning on the powers that be, and so lose touch with the reality of the people's existence and problems", has turned intellectuals into courtiers of dictator. In the novel, Achebe portrays the pervasive sycophancy, oppression and conspiracy of silence which pervade the whole Kangan nation due to the rudderless misrule of a stone-age dictator.

The police hunt for student leaders who are bundled and arrested. Fear grips the citizenry as Jeep-loads of mobile police forces are deployed to brutalize university students. The people's freedom of movement is curtailed because of "a large number of army and police road blocks springing up all over the city" (p.160). Combined army and police checkpoints are mounted with military jeeps and police patrol cars flashing their roof-lamps as they patrol the whole state of Kangan terrifying and terrorizing innocent citizens. The above scene establishes the extent of ruthlessness unleashed by Sam's government on innocent citizens.

Achebe in the novel clearly portrayed the excesses of power in Sam's personality as well as the absurdity of his rapacious use of power. For Achebe, military government is a woe rather than the blessing it claimed to be. The novel condemns military incursion in politics through coup'd'état. The military takes over power with the motives to right the wrongs of the civilians but turns out a total failure that does the society more harm than good.

We shall conclude this chapter with Niyi Akingbe's (2012: 3) assertion that "the novel focuses on the tragedy of dictatorship and misrule typified by Sam's military administration as narrated by the three friends: Ikem, Chris and Beatrice who are also associates of Sam. The narratives of the trio underline failure of the military to provide good governance which could connect the rulers with the governed, but it rather brutalises and subjugates 'the poor and dispossessed' (141) of the Kangan republic". By the end of the novel, there is a coup d'état. Sam is kidnapped from his Presidential Palace "by unknown persons, tortured, shot in the head and buried under one foot of soil in the bush" (219). The country is on the verge of chaos and explosion. This is in line with Manivuzzan (1992:248) affirmation that "the military leaders only aggravate the problems of nation building after taking over from the civilian political leaders". The final comment from one of the tenants to Chris and Beatrice, about Sam's abduction clearly illustrates the climate of fear prevalent in Kangan: "This country na waa! I never heard the likeness before. A whole President de miss; like old woman de waka for village talk say him goat de miss! This Africa na waa!" (213). The kidnapping of His Excellency is a medium through which Achebe demands a total end to military rule.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INTERPLAY OF LITERATURE, POLITICS AND HISTORY IN HELON HABILA'S *WAITING FOR AN ANGEL*

4.1 The Interplay of Literature, Politics And History

This chapter presents analysis and review of the interactions between literature, politics and the historical events recollected in the selected texts for this study. As earlier mentioned, Helon Habila is one of the remarkable new voices among the third generation of Nigerian writers. He has won many literary prizes in the course of his literary career. Habila won the Caine Prize for African writing in 2001 with the novel *Waiting for an Angel*, which has been translated into many languages including Dutch, Italian, Swedish, and French. His other works include *Measuring Time* (2006) *and Oil on Water* ((2010)). Nigeria, during the 1990s, was a land of military rule, repression, and instability. Habila evokes the mental and social climate of the country at that time.

The setting of the novel is Nigeria in the 1990s, precisely during the military dictatorships of General Ibrahim Babangida and General Sani Abacha. It was an era dominated and ruled by sadistic military brutality. It was an era characterized by human rights violation of unimaginable proportion. The acts committed under the historical regimes of Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha is fictionally compressed in the novel.

Habila recreated a powerful, moving portrait of life at the time, which according to him "… was a terrible time to be alive, especially when you were young, talented and ambitious-and patriotic." The novel according to the author in the "Afterword", is intended to "capture the mood of those years, especially the Abacha years: the despair, the frenzy, the stubborn hope, but above all the airless prison-like atmosphere that characterized them." From another perspective,

Waiting for an Angel could be seen as a gripping, vivid and captivating story of life in Nigerian prisons during the military regime as well as life in a society riddled with unbridled corruption.

The plot of the novel revolves around a young Nigerian intellectual and journalist, Lomba, and his collision with his country's brutal military regime. He is a political prisoner when the novel opens. The novel begins with Lomba, a frustrated poet and journalist in the middle of his second year in prison without trial. This incidence of incarceration is used to signpost what some vocal Nigerians passed through especially in the 1990s. The prison motif here is very significant, a prison is meant to rehabilitate but the opposite is the case here. Lomba laments about his precarious prison conditions:

> I write my state in words of derision, aiming thereby to reduce the weight of these walls on my shoulders, to rediscover my nullified individuality. Here in prison, loss of self is often expressed as anger. Anger is the battled prisoner's attempt to re-crystallize his slowly dissolving self (*Waiting*, 1).

The imprisonment of Lomba signifies the larger imprisonment of the country under a seemingly unending cycle of military dictatorships. Lomba's rage in the above excerpt justifies Carmen McCain's (2007:2), belief that although the writer does not have the power to physically change the oppressive conditions of the military state, the writer can undermine the psychological oppression of the military state through the defiant use of the imagination. By rejecting the illusion of monolithic power that, the state projects and by connecting with and listening to the stories of a larger community, the writer can simultaneously help shape a social imagination and rewrite history from the perspective of the community.

In the novel, Habila demonstrates the social commitment of some African writers who rose against oppressive regimes in order to protect the masses. In the novel, we encounter incidents similar to the hanging of the Ogoni rights activist, Ken Saro Wiwa, the exclusion of Nigeria from

the Commonwealth of Nations, the annulment of the presidential election in 1993 and the letter bombing of *Newswatch* editor, Dele Giwa among a host of other familiar incidents. The novel also reveals vividly the difficulty of writing under repression as well as the power of the media and literature in resisting oppression: "you see, every oppressor knows that wherever one word is joined to another word to form a sentence, there'll be revolt. That is our work, the media: to refuse to be silenced, to encourage legitimate criticism wherever we find it. Do you understand now?" In this chapter, we shall attempt to examine the interplay of arts, politics and history in *Waiting for an Angel.*

This chapter presented how the writer interrogates and deconstructs the 'grand narrative' of a messianic military government. According to Carmen McCain, earlier cited, "the monolithic truths that the military state tries to impose on people are deconstructed by the very multiplicity of voices within the state. The oppressor itself is not a monolith, as much as it tries to pretend that it is; it cracks and fractures" (*Waiting*, 75). The chapter will also look at how the novel recreates historical forms of oppression prevalent in Nigeria under military rule as witnessed especially in the 1980s and 90s.

Waiting for an Angel is a seven chapter novel with a chronologically fragmented, multi-vocal narrative. The novel fist appeared as a collection of short stories entitled *Prison Stories,* except for the addition of the chapter "Alice," an "Afterward," and the removal of the short story "The Iron Gate." *Waiting for an Angel* traces the life of a young man Lomba, whom the author describes as "slim, of average height and inquisitive of gaze" and from the northern region of Nigeria who comes to Lagos for his university education. In his early days at the university, Bola, Lomba, and an unnamed friend wander away from the old slave port in Badagry, to look

for a fortune teller on the beach to predict their future. When they find him, he tells them that he is "not a fortune-teller" but:

> I am a poet. I listen to the waves for tales of other shores and of the deep…. Life is like a wave motion, full of highs and lows. We sit on life's shores with our hand open, waiting to receive. But the water knows, more than we do, what we need and what we don't need. It takes away from us what we don't need and drops it at another shore where it is needed. Sometimes it returns to us what it took away, refined and augmented with brine and other sea materials. The sea, like death, is not an end but a beginning. Beneath it there is no bed, but another surface, another air (*Waiting* 46-47).

After the death of his roommate and the military clampdown on students' demonstration, the university "began to look like prison," (112) to Lomba. He eventually drops out of school to write a novel but is warned by a colleague that, even if he finishes the novel he is writing in longhand by candlelight in a Lagos slum, no one will publish it. This shows the predicament of writers in a country such as Nigeria. Lomba later secures a job as a journalist at *Dial* newspaper. Here, he meets his old lover, Alice, the daughter of a general but Alice tells him that unfortunately, she cannot marry him because she has promised to marry another military man who is paying for her mother's cancer treatment.

Lomba is miffed by the horrifying political assassinations and media suppression prevalent in the country. After a meeting with Joshua, an activist who lives on Morgan Street, Lomba is convinced of the need to deal with politics in his writing. The *Dial* offices are razed down in arson attacks for accusing the military dictator of squandering millions of naira while he and his editors flee from the secret police. Lomba covers the Morgan Street/Poverty Street demonstration but is arrested. He was imprisoned indefinitely but finds solace in writing love poetry, which the prison superintendent plagiarizes to woo another woman. At a point, the superintendent's girlfriend eventually discovers that Lomba is the inmate writing the poems and

demands to see him. By the end of the novel, Lomba was not released from prison neither is the reader told if he died in prison. His fate is left to the imagination of the reader.

The narrative structure/technique Habila applied in his novel is not arranged chronologically; rather he employed flashbacks and story within a story technique embellish his fiction, and in order to discuss the "Interplay of Literature, Politics and History", we highlighted some of these features. In discussing narrative, we are not just concerned about the narrative method of first or third person narrative but the various devices that have been employed in *Waiting for an Angel* to narrate the story in order to understand the relationship of his literary work, the military politics and Nigeria's historical socio-cultural events during the military governance.

Helon Habila traversed the country and told the story from the point of view of different characters, in different locations and in different situations but all expressing one thing in common: the general feeling of injustice, hunger, brutality and terror all around them. The whole citizens shivered and moaned during the era of blood; the military era that took the country many years back; the era that sowed the real seeds of corruption and stayed long enough to fertilize them to growth. Joshua and other forsaken characters lectured Kela in these words:

> 'Look, we are living under siege. Their very presence on our streets and in government houses instead of the barracks where they belong is an act of aggression. They hold us cowed with guns so that they will steal our money. This is capitalism at its most militant and aggressive. They don't have to produce any superior goods to establish monopoly. The do it by holding guns to our heads. Let me tell you why they hanged Saro Wiwa … where is Abiola? In prison! They will continue subjugating us, killing all dissenters, one by one, sending them into exile, till there is no competition left to oppose them (158).

When the people of Morgan Street complained on a peaceful demonstration, because they wanted to change the name of their street, Morgan Street to Poverty Street, they were given war and violence. Many lost their lives. It was an ugly scene of violence, death and trauma worth

telling than experiencing. Joshua had to choose exile. James towards the end summoned the whole situation of the country to Lomba in these words:

> "… you won't find a publisher in this country because it'd be economically unwise for any publisher to waste his scarce paper to publish a novel nobody would buy … The people are too poor … too busy trying to stay out of the way of the police and the army to read. And of course you know why paper is scarce and expensive – because of the economic sanctions placed on our country. But forget all that. Say you found an indulgent publisher to publish you book … you'd want to enter it for a competition. And what is the most obvious competition for someone from a Commonwealth country? Of course, the Commonwealth Literary Prize. But you can't do it. Because Nigeria was thrown out of the Commonwealth of Nations early this morning, it was on the BBC" … (192).

It was the climax of it all, the very peak that troubled Helon Habila. In the end, all the writers and journalists were hunted like rats. James only option was exile. Lomba was later apprehended and thrown into the prison. It was in that prison that we met him when the novel opened. At last, General Abacha died and that was how the Angel of Liberty came to the rescue of many citizens under the bondage of military dictatorship.

Obikeze, Obiahulu and Obi, Emeka captured the scene in a purely nonfictional manner:

> However, Abacha … suddenly died on the 8th of June 1998, his death which Nigerians refer to as the 'coup from heaven' brought so much joy to most people as his iron grip on the nation was loosened forever by the cold hands of death. This brought to an end a regime that is reputed to be the most tyrannical, brutal, vindictive, overtly sectional, blood-thirsty, deceitful, corrupt and intellectually hollow in the nation's history (218).

In the 'Afterward' Helon made his personal statement that:

> It was a terrible time to be alive, especially if you were young, talented and ambitious and patriotic … you cannot listen to the radio without hearing your country vilified, you cannot read any international paper without seeing how much lower your country has sank on the list of nations with poor human-rights records. Every day comes new limitations, new prisons … but the funny thing is that the military first entered Nigerian politics as messiahs … (223).

Habila shows in his novel, the Nigerian experience under the Abacha regime, a regime that no one will forget in a hurry. Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* recounts the story of young Nigerians

who find their existence cowed by a regime that does not allow creativity to strive. Lomba, an aspiring journalist and writer who ends up in prison, his aspirations and desires are shattered and his future becomes clouded. Using the technique of flashback, Lomba recounts the scenario that surrounds his arrest and imprisonment. As a journalist, he covers a demonstration and along the line is arrested by the police and abandoned in jail without trial.

Imagery is also portrayed in the character Bola, another character in the novel partakes of this turbulent time as well, so much so that on hearing of his parents' death in an auto crash, he is not spared the disillusion of the era as he immediately runs mad, the poverty of the people also gets mentioned in the novel, to think that almost all the wealth of the nation is gotten from a particular region and the majority of the people still live in abject poverty. While and imagery standing out in the novel is "Poverty Street", a place one can truly categorize the people as "the wretched of the earth"; the battered and the beaten in the society in on this street.

> Poverty Street's real name was Morgan Street, one of the many decrepit, disease-ridden quarters that dotted the city of Lagos like ringworm on a beggar's body…Behind the Women centre was Olokun road, the shabbiest and poorest of all the quarters on Poverty Street. (P120-21)

Anthony, J. Trend and Style in Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*

A careful appraisal of the novel shows that Habila breaks away from the conventional chapterisation that is common with most novelists. Instead, he presents his characters as chapters at different stages of the story to reveal their experiences and situations based on their personal idiosyncrasies. In using this method, Habila encapsulates two techniques in one. First, he is an omniscient narrator who tells a story, giving accounts of events and characters and making the reader see everything from the characters point of view. Secondly and most importantly this technique allows him to put the characters on the stage to enact their drama with the minimum of

explicit comment from him. To confirm this fact let's examine Lomba's encounter with one of the warders in his cell (p. 9); "I repeat. My question. Who gave you the papers?" He thundered into my face, spraying me with spit. I shook my head. „I have forgotten.‟ I did not see it, but he must have nodded to one of the hounds. All I felt was the crushing blow on the back of my neck. I pitched forward, stunned by pain and the expectation of it. My face struck the door bars and I fell before the superintendent's boots. This dialogue explains the fact that Lomba was not only telling his story but at the same time enacting it. This is why Percy (1921:8) believes that; "the art of fiction does not begin until the novelist thinks of his story as a matter to be shown, to be exhibited, that it will tell itself. And this is what Habila did by using this technique.

Flashback is also used in the blending of literary techniques in the transcending story. A lover of linear narration might find *Waiting for an Angel* not too appealing to explore, this is because the story is not chronologically arranged. The story opens with events that should have come at the end, coming at the beginning or earlier than expected. For instance, the story begins with Lomba in prison but only on (p.179) we were told he was arrested after the demonstration. And yet again, not only when we got to (p.219) which is the last page of the story that we found out that Lomba was just going to cover the demonstration. Habila's constant digression reveals his authorial power, (poetic license) but most importantly, his creative style is hinged in his ability to cohere the story through the technique of flashback.

In narrating the story of Bola, Lomba's friend, the story begins with Bola having a nightmare, the demonstration at the University and Bola's eventual departure for home, where he eventually learnt about the tragic death of his parents in a ghastly motor accident. In trying to show how devastating this news was to everyone, both Bola and Lomba, Habila quickly links the reader with how Lomba came to know Bola's family and how close they have been since then through

the technique of flashback (pp. 61-62). However, Habila's mastery of flashback becomes more evident when the story of Alice, Lomba's ex-girlfriend was put on stage. The plot of Alice's story is intrinsically woven together through the use of summary (p.79);

> And when you looked and hoped and waited and finally realized that I was never going to come, that you just made a final, irrevocable choice – "I do"– did you not break down and cry?

In this instance, Lomba was trying to recollect the last time he met Alice and how suddenly in prison he discovered that Alice is now married to her new lover Ngai. There is another example on (p.92);

> What light and winged things promises are, fluttering away on the wind no sooner than they are uttered. I also promised to meet you the next day when I left you in the morning, a happy smile on your face. I had a happy smile too. I look back at my life, before and after that moment….

This excerpt was used when Lomba ran into Alice at Mercy Hospital at Ikeja. And Habila used it to link the reader with the last time Lomba and Alice met at the University and how suddenly they ran into each other at the hospital. This trend abounds in the plot of Alice. A lot of these summaries are used by Habila to show the reader the characters various experiences and situations. Novelists use summary when they wish to give important information which is necessary to the understanding of the novel but not worth dwelling on. A fact that Palmer (1986:12) agrees with, when he says summary "could be used for instance to fill in the background, to tell us what had happened in the past or what had happened in the intervening period."

One of the best literary weapons of Habila in *Waiting for an Angel* is his ability to use words to create mental pictures in the minds of his readers. For instance, a playback into Poverty Street does not only reflect a micro of the Nigerian society, but brings to the fore of the reader the

abject poverty that is synonymous with people who live in slums and ghettos as depicted in the street and symbolised in the characters of Brother, Hagar, Joshua, Nancy etc. However, Habila's descriptive potency and prowess is better conjured by the reader when he gives a vivid picture of the instrumentality of the Hang Man on (p.162), and how metaphorical this connotes how life was gradually being sniffed out of Nigerians during this traumatic era.

Similarly, on pp. 194-195 Lomba and James visit to the slave dungeon in Badagry where James showed Lomba the instrument that was used to padlock the mouths of the slaves, reveals how toothless and harmless the press was because of the way the military had ganged the press during this era. But beyond this, is the striking effect of these imageries to replicate historical truth (Ken Saro Wiwa‟ s murder and slave trade) to reflect the situation on ground, thereby creating the true particulars of the period in the eyes of the reader. An aspect that Brooks (1987:37) supports;

> The writer does not select an abstract theme and then embellish it with concrete details. On the contrary, he must establish the details, must abide by the details, and through his realization of the details attain to whatever general meaning he can attain. The meaning must issue from the particulars; it must not be seen to be arbitrary forced upon the particulars.

Through this technique, Habila has been able to present to every reader of his book, a true picture of what transpired during this era.

In *Waiting for an Angel*, Habila shows his class as a master story teller. According to Aire (2002:31), "a true writer's artistry can often be judged by his ability to consistently match the style of new work with its particular theme and setting." If this is stating the obvious, then in *Waiting for an Angel* we were told seven stories in one. Through this technique, Habila creates an atmosphere where his readers come in contact with his characters; feel what they feel, hear what they hear and see what they see. By so doing, the mental and psychological state of each

character is real to the reader. And in turn, the reader is in a better position to ascertain how real the lives and experiences of the characters are to the plot of the story.

Through this technique, Habila breaks away from the traditional norms associated with writers like Thomas Hardy who focus on a single character whose end is usually disastrous. On the contrary, Habila presents his readers with several characters to enable them judge the strength and weaknesses of his lead character, base on what they see of the other characters.

4.2 The Interplay of Literature, Politics and History in *Waiting for an Angel*

Waiting for an Angel is a piece of historical fiction and Habila states emphatically in the "Afterword" that the book contains some recognizable historical facts and incidents. Military dictatorship is one theme that has continued to engage the temperament and imagination of Nigerian writers. Writing about the military adventurism in government, Anthony James (2012) opine that:

> The Mid 80‟ s through the later part of the 90‟ s marks a significant period in the landscape of Nigerian history, mainly because of the militarization of the entire Nigerian society. From the subtle but repressive government o Babangida to the crude and unbridled dictatorship of Abacha, were the periods characterised by the muzzling of the press and radical intellectuals by various agencies of the military. The masses were not spared; they languished in abject poverty, misery and general social malaise that were as a result of harsh economic policies, most especially the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the Babangida era. (169-170).

Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* is a narrative that centres on the real events that happened in Nigeria during General Sachi Abacha's cruel reign back in the 1990s. There is a creative interplay of arts, politics and history in the work. Some of the novel's characters have historical counterparts in Nigeria of Habila's era. Lomba, Joshua, and other intellectuals in the novel are worried about the way the country is sliding into anarchy. Killings and assassinations are the order of the day. As the actions of the novel progress, both men stood up for the poor and the

illiterate, leading demonstrations after demonstrations. Both characters, even though they failed to shoulder this responsibility at the very start because of their reticent about politics in the country, eventually stand up for the poor and the illiterate as leaders of a demonstration, thus embodying the role expected of intellectuals in society.

In the novel, there is no pretension to the fact Nigerians suffered unbearably under the military government of Abacha. According to Lomba, "here in this country our dreams are never realised. Someone always contrives to turn them into a nightmare." Habila captures the state of anomie in the country then in the "Afterword" noting that "Every day came with new limitations, new prisons….There was nothing to believe in: the only mission the military rulers had was systematically to loot the national treasury; their only morality was a vicious survivalist agenda in which any hint of disloyalty was ruthlessly crushed" (224). Habila in this excerpt provides a graphic explication of the kinds of oppression prevalent in Nigeria. First, there is the looting of the national treasury and funds meant for the upkeep of the national infrastructure, and second there is the direct suppression of the more vocal members of the population.

Habila utilized history as the backbone of this work. He weaved the stories of real events and incidents that happened in Nigeria during that locust years. Writing on the relationship between history and literature, Akung (2012) notes that, "the Nigerian novelists over time have sought to establish a synergy between the past and the present. This has become imperative because it is only through this synergy that they can reconnect the past to recreate the future". Likewise, Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2009) are of the opinion that Nigeria's "chequered historical process" is one source that Nigerian novelists have tapped from. For the duo, the Nigerian novel has taken an "intensive and extensive exploration of the experiences, as varied as they are, that make up the nation's socio-political history" (p.109).

The setting of the story is Nigeria, specifically in the city of Lagos. The main character, Lomba, lives on the slums of Poverty Street where he works as an arts journalist. Metaphorically, life in Poverty Street represents the squalid condition of living in Nigeria at that time. In his University years, Lomba has always dreamed of becoming a writer of novels and poems. But after a riot and the closure of the school, he is forced to choose between his dream and reality. Being a writer will not earn him the goodies of life. Thus when the demonstration on Poverty Street came up, James, Lomb's editor says "you can't escape it. In this country the very air we breathe is politics" (*Waiting*, 112).

The case of Brother reveals the harrowing experience some Nigerians went through in the hands of Abacha. At every given opportunity Bother does not fail to lament about his predicament: "I bravely sacrifice my leg for this country, and now I am poor because I no fit work with one leg…I, a hero." (*Waiting*, 103). Brother had 'lost his leg to a soldier's bullet, two years ago, in the post June 12 riots" (*Waiting*, 98). The June 12 crisis was an actual event that took place in Nigeria. The military was about to hand over power to a civilian government, hence there was a presidential election which M.K.O Abiola won. However, on June 12, 1993 the military government annulled the elections which led people to revolt. Habila excavates this historical incident to blend into Brother's story.

Habila imbues realism in his depictions of life in Nigeria under Sani Abacha. This he does by including some well-known historical events and their effects on Lomba and the other fictional characters. This blend of faction with fiction is extolled by Niyi Akingbem (2010:31) thus:

> As a work of fiction, the novel makes it possible to identify with Nigeria's real world, the people and the actual events depicts in the narrative. This identification with real-life situation is one generic characteristic of faction which distinguishes it from other narrative forms which are considered fictional (31).

In the novel, the military rulers were engaged in plundering the national treasury while the country's most intelligent thinkers and those who question the acclaimed messianic mission of the military were either hounded into detention or exterminated. For instance, the gruesome hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa was historicized; the killing of Dele Giwa, the editor of *Newswatch* magazine, by a letter bomb was re-enacted and the shooting of Kudirat, the wife of Moshood Abiola, the opponent of Abacha who was jailed for daring to challenge him was evoked.

Habila brings historical incidents to fit his narrative. In the character called Mao, Habila evokes the spirit of Ken Saro Wiwa. Mao said that the death of Ken Saro Wiwa, a writer, critic and environmentalist awakens the spirit in him. Saro Wiwa was the leader of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). He fought for the rights of the Niger Delta people. The Niger Delta is a region endowed with huge natural resources that accounts for a large percentage of the country's revenue yet the people are faced with economic strangulation, marginalization and lack social amenities. Saro Wiwa was a voice crying against the military government's attitude to the Niger Delta people. In 1995, nine Ogoni leaders and Ken Saro Wiwa were killed by hanging. According to Mao "This country is in dire need of a revolution" (*Waiting*, 121). Mao has deep animosity and resentment for the military institution and felt something needs to be done to checkmate them:

> We have to utterly destroy the status quo in order to start afresh. Rawlings did in Ghana…start an uprising…no matter how small…We are living under siege. Their very presence on our streets and in the government house instead of the barracks where they belong is an act of aggression. They hold us cowed with guns so that they'll steal our money. This is capitalism at its most militant and aggressive.

4.3 Recreating Historical Forms of Oppression in Nigeria under Military Rule

In Nigeria's postcolonial literature, the military institution has become a serious thematic focus. The military era in postcolonial Nigeria in itself is one characterized by brutality, repression and

tyranny. Initially seen as a redeeming agency from the corruption that characterizes democratic governance, the military institution in Nigeria under the Abacha era was a complete misnomer. Its temperament was hideous and the dictator bared his fangs on any perceived opponent. In Abacha, Nigerians experienced the difference between the poverty of the masses and the corruption of the military.

As the author says in the “Afterword” to the novel, "there was nothing to believe in: the only mission the military rulers had been systematically to loot the national treasury; their only morality was a vicious survivalist agenda in which any hint of disloyalty was ruthlessly crushed." This excerpt reveals that during the 1990s, Nigeria was run like a police state with unimaginable human rights abuses, leading to her expulsion from the Commonwealth of Nations. The incarceration of Lomba illustrates the fate of journalists, activists and democrats who braved the odds to challenge the regime of Abacha. He is a stone-aged dictator intolerant of opposition. Lomba’s imprisonment can be likened to those who during the Abacha regime went to prison for defying the dictator, namely, Moshood Abiola, General Yar’Adua and General Olusegun Obasanjo among others.

The effects of Abacha’s dictatorial government on the ordinary people did not go unnoticed by the author. Hardship, pain and agony were the constant companion of the masses as could be seen on residents of Poverty Street. On one occasion, residents of Poverty Street demonstrated peacefully against the neglect of their neighbourhood by the government. The unarmed protesters were suddenly attacked by more than fifty armed riot policemen and tear gassed. In the commotion that follows the protesters were severely beaten while women and children running away from the confusion were killed by cars speeding on the adjacent highway. Bemoaning how the military has rendered the masses hopeless at the demonstration arena, Joshua quipped that

"we are dying from lack of hope. Again, piling up this image of wretchedness in the people and the ubiquity of military rule, the editor of *Dial,* James Fiki, assigns Lomba his first writing assignment for the *Newspaper*, and tells him "one General goes, another one comes, but the people remain stuck in the same vicious groove. Nothing ever changes for them except the particular details of their wretchedness. They've lost all faith in the government's unending transition programmes. Write on that…. the general disillusionment, the lethargy" (113).

During Abacha's reign of terror, the media was a powerful tool and a medium that helped the democratic process in Nigeria. Through the media, peoples' consciousness was awakened and galvanized. In the novel, *The Dial Newspaper* is very significant. Lomba works with *The Dial* and is responsible for the literary and art segment. James, the Editor of the newspaper, once told him to go and cover the demonstration at Poverty Street which ended up in confusion and death. *The Dial* is responsible to the people it and stands between the people and the government. While Lomba and James were on their way to the office, Adam, a staff in *The Dial*, called to tell James of the breaking news: "Dele, Dele…Dead". (*Waiting,* 150). Dele Giwa was the founding editor of *Newswatch* magazine killed through a parcel bomb during the military dictatorship of Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. Habila uses this real incident to show the plight of the media during the military regime. At that time, the *Newswatch* magazine was at the forefront in condemning the ills of the military government.

In the novel, we see how the prison superintendent abuses prisoners and berates them in a typical manner characteristic of the inglorious Abacha era. But to show resistance to their dehumanizing condition, they embarked on hunger strike, refusing to feed themselves. In one incident, Lomba refuses to tell the superintendent how he got the paper and pencil with which he writes his prison poems and this was how the jailer bullied him:

> "So. You won't. Talk. You think you are. Tough," he shouted. "You are. Wrong. Twenty years! That is how long I have been dealing with miserable bastards like you. Let this be an example to all of you. Don't. Think you can deceive me. We have our sources of information. You can't. This insect will be taken to solitary and he will be properly dealt with. Until he is willing to. Talk…. Don't think because you are political detainees you are untouchable. Wrong. You are all rats. Saboteurs Anti government rats" (*Waiting*, 20).

Lomba was also indicted by the superintendent for masterminding the demonstration against the government. He tried to deny this, all to no avail. He replied:

> I did not organize a demonstration. I went there as a reporter'. He shrugged 'That is not my business. The truth will come out at your Trial'. 'But when will that be? I have been forgotten. I am not allowed a lawyer, or visitors. I have been awaiting trial for two years now …
>
> 'Do you complain? Look twenty years I have worked in prisons all over this country. Nigeria … sometimes it is better this way. How can you win a case against government? Wait, Hope' … Now he lowered his voice, like a conspirator. 'Maybe there, there'll be another coup, eh? Maybe the leader will collapse and die. He is mortal, after all. Maybe a civilian government will come. Then, there will be amnesty for all political prisoners. Amnesty… (15).

The use of torture as a tool to silence the opposition is everywhere in the novel. Under Abacha, those who dared to resist or question the regime are incarcerated or killed. Lomba shares with the reader his ordeals while in prison, nothing that:

> "all I felt was the crushing blow on the back of my neck. My face struck the door bars I fell before the superintendent's boots… (p.9).

We have argued in this chapter that Habila in *Waiting for an Angel* portrays the social and political ills in Nigeria such as the evils of military dictatorship, human right abuse, and poverty, and imprisonment, lack of press freedom, corruption, marginalization, and abuse of power. We have argued that Habila recreates events that happened under the 1985-1993 regime of General Ibrahim Babangida, such as the assassination of journalist and *Newswatch Magazine* editor, Dele Giwa; the various riots and strike actions that swept across Nigeria beginning from the 1991 petroleum subsidy riots; and the various June 12th demonstrations across the country to the ones

that happened between 1993-1998 during the brutish reign of General Sani Abacha, who at that time was planning to become a life president. Habila's fiction in essence is a reflection of the actual kinds of physical and psychological oppression that took place in Nigeria. Significantly, the novel's title, *Waiting for an Angel*, could be interpreted to mean that the Nigerian society at that period of time was waiting for salvation from the throes of dictatorship and tyranny.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

Achebe deals with the critical period preceding Nigeria's independence, the end of the First Republic accompanied by the Civil War and the series of military coups and the struggle to understand and resist dictatorship. Throughout his works, his continuing concern has been to understand and depict the trouble with Nigeria and her political leadership, where he examines the ugly situation of events in the country in the hands of the military whose manner of government is oppressive and hostile. He paints the ugly picture of military involvement in the helms of leadership of a country known as Kanga which allegorically represented his dear

country, Nigeria. *Anthills of the Savannah* deals with the problems of the present day society during the era of military dictatorship when the civilians were over thrown on the charges of gross indiscipline looting and corruption. In Achebe's most postcolonial and ambitious novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, the political crisis continues and deepens under the military rule; the random sequence of events is encompassed within the larger perspective of myth and legend.

While Helon Habila on the other hand exposes the situation of terror, anguish, victimization, molestation and slavery meted on the citizens of Nigeria during the military era in politics. He concerns himself with General Abacha's years of untold hardship, killing, violence, brutality and imprisonment that led the country many years back in development and Infrastructure. He captures the era and period as filled with atmosphere of blood, fear, terror, hunger, diseases, starvation, denial of self rights and denigration. He pictures a time in the history of the country when people were willingly waiting for death - An angel of death to take them away from the shocking realities of their lives. Using the main character Lomba in the novel, who was detained in the prison simply because he is a journalist who writes about the truth in Nigeria, and revealing the history on Ken Saro Wiwa, where the government erected more prisons and all around the country; innocent citizens were littered as political detainees without trial, a technique to put them away from challenging the government forever.

It also examines how the ruling class which is one of tyranny, exploitation and subjugation of the will of the people has continue to silence the voices of opposition will not stop the torch of resistance burning until the tyrant and his henchmen are removed. This dissertation therefore posits that, through artistic innovation and experimentation, Habila and Achebe has shown that no matter the argument on the postcolonial politics of Nigeria, the military is not good for any decent society. The position of this dissertation agrees with the vision of the authors that the need

for a violent revolution has become very important and this generation of writers ought to fight for the people's political leadership with their pen.

Habila and Achebe positively portrayed the role of the people in the overall struggle to make Nigeria a better society. Through the use of facts and fiction, they artistically achieved great feats in an attempt to recreate and reconstruct history and place many historical figures in better perspective in the historical evolution of the Nigerian as a nation. Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* is pure fiction, while Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* is a piece of historical fiction. Habila acknowledges in the afterword that the book contains some recognizable historical facts and incidents. It is a reconstruction of real incidents that happened in Nigeria between 1985-1993 under the cruel regimes of General Ibrahim Babangida and General Sani Abacha. Some of these real events include the assassination of *Newswatch Magazine* editor, Dele Giwa; the various riots and strike actions that swept across Nigeria such as the 1991 petroleum subsidy riots and the various June 12th demonstrations across the country which happened between, 1993-1998 and during the brutish reign of General Sani Abacha.

In *Waiting for an Angel*, Habila uses the *Dial Newspaper* to show the plight of the media during the various military regimes in Nigeria. The *Dial* is the voice of the people and stands between the people and the government. Lomba, for instance, works with *The Dial* newspaper as a journalist. Once, James, the editor of the newspaper, told him to cover the demonstration at Poverty Street which ended up in confusion and death. While Lomba and James were on their way to the office, Adam, a staff in *The Dial*, called to tell James of the breaking news: "Dele, Dele…Dead" (*Waiting*, 150). In retrospect, Dele Giwa was the founding editor of *Newswatch* magazine who was killed through a parcel bomb during the military dictatorship of Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. At that time, the *Newswatch* magazine was at the forefront in condemning

the ills of the military government. Also, during the Abacha's reign of terror, the media was a powerful tool and a medium that helped the democratic process in Nigeria. Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah* emphasized the role of the media in the opposition to military dictatorship. Through the media, peoples' consciousness were awakened and galvanized. When it appeared that the central character in the novel, His Excellency is running the country as a democratic dictatorship, Ikem Osodi, the editor of the government-controlled newspaper, *National Gazette*, uses the power of the written word to get him out of office so that things can change for the better in the country.

In terms of similarity, both Anthills *of the Savannah* and *Waiting for an Angel* are set in postcolonial African State of Kangan and Lagos. Thus as postcolonial novels, Achebe and Habila did not go on to focus on the impact of British colonialism on the native cultures of Africa but on the failure of leadership in postcolonial Africa. Another similarity between the two novels is that both tried to portray the roles of intellectuals in the society. In *Anthills of the savanna,* intellectuals such as Ikem Osodi and Chris suffered under the persecution of His Excellency's dictatorial government. Despite their persecution, both did not abdicate their roles as the voice and conscience of the oppressed. In *Waiting for an Angel*, intellectuals such as Lomba, Joshua, and others stood their grounds even when their lives were visibly threatened. The idea that intellectuals have a responsibility to the society, especially the downtrodden is not taken for granted in the novels.

Another strong similarity between *Anthills of the Savannah* and *Waiting for an Angel* is that in terms of plot, both novels are peopled by writers. Three of the main characters in *Anthills of the Savannah* are writers. For instance, Ikem is a writer and newspaper editor, Beatrice writes short stories, and Chris is a former journalist who left his post as editor of the *National Gazette* to

accept the position of Commissioner of Information in His Excellency's government. In *Waiting for an Angel,* Lomba, the main character as well as James, the editor of the *Dial Newspaper*, are both journalists, these shows the important role of writers in the society, which is to ask questions.

Thematically, both *Anthills of the Savanna* and *Waiting for an Angel* are concerned with the contradictions of military incursion into the political space in Nigeria nay Africa. Both authors beamed their searchlight on militarism and political dictatorship as well as the aberrations of the military establishment in the social, economic as well as the political life of the Nigerian nation. In the novels, both Achebe and Habila see military governance as a mere aberration.

As a historical novel, *Anthills of the Savannah* portrays a strong and unflinching sense of communal solidarity among the Kangan people just the same way Nigerians rallied around themselves to resist the menace of military regime in the 1980s. As depicted in the novel, Sam provides a perfect example of the aphorism that "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely", especially in his brutal and repressive mien. It was at the height of his dictatorship that he insisted on being called "Your Excellency" and decides that he wants to be elected President-for-Life as did some past Nigerian military rulers.

In terms of narrative structure/technique, Habila's novel is not arranged chronologically; rather he employs flashback and story within a story technique etc to embellish his fiction. From the start, for instance, Habila did away with the conventional chapterization that is obtainable in other novels. Rather, his characters names appear as chapters at different stages of the narrative.

Another profound literary technique used by Habila in *Waiting for an Angel* is imagery. With this, he is able to capture and create mental pictures in the minds of his readers. For instance, his

description of Poverty Street shows that it is a microcosm of the Nigerian society. It is an area of abject poverty, with people living in slums and ghettos. Characters like Brother, Hagar, Joshua, Nancy etc are typical examples of the height of penury of people living in Poverty Street.

This postcolonial discourse has significantly contributed to the fact that it reveals the extent to which this socio-cultural and historical events of Military Politics in Nigeria after colonization has led to certain political, intellectual and creative dynamic in this postcolonial society with which it engages scholars and students to enlighten readers of the literary texts written then and the contemporary writers.

It is obvious that the postcolonial texts that have been studied illustrate that, the plight of the common and less privileged man in Nigeria is traced to the Military governance; with their exploitation and dehumanization inflicted on common Nigerians by the armful weapon hands of the military men. This portrayal in the texts has contributed to the knowledge of the uprising scholars, literati and literature students of the nature of military ruling in Nigeria, and reasons why these generations should also collect events fictionally in literary works for the future readers. In other words, this dissertation stands to portray that, the liberation from the military ruling would be effective through a continuous awareness, and literary writers must be part of it by exposing the scheme of Military politics in Nigeria.

The findings of this study indicate that there is a sufficient amount of books available on the postcolonial recollection of socio-cultural and historical events of Nigeria's Military governance in fiction and its rejection by the people of the nation. These texts, poems and short stories etc., which are currently available, were written by citizens of the nation, who typically resided inside Nigeria at the time of the events and tend to present a limited range of perspectives about

Military politics and her governance of the people and why Nigerians must be aware. This is an opener to students, lecturers, and writers etc., to have an idea of the nature of the texts that recollected military governance in Nigeria.

On the whole, Achebe and Habila reconstruct postcolonial Nigerian space under the vicious of grip of militarism. Helon Habila and Chinua Achebe demonstrated that by no uncertainties, from their perspective, the sharp proclamation is a vital arraignment on the Nigerian military administration. Military men ought to under no circumstances be permitted in the political leadership of the nation if they don't understand leadership. Now, this contemporary growing generation of writers ought to ascend to the difficulties of informing the general public of the travails of the country with military politics in the years past. It is also the duty of the writers of the present day to guide the country to attain an environment free of corruption, intimidation, exploitation, manipulation, subjugation and denigration, among all the seeds that fertilized during the military era in politics. This duty must be done even in the face of our present democracy, no matter how little the effort may seem. Writers should be aware that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, therefore, they should guard themselves against the excesses of our leaders even in the present dispensation as some military men turn to civilians in the guise to lead and prosper the country. Much is anticipated from writers of this country, Nigeria, particularly now the nation veers towards the side of democratic collapse as a result of several areas of injustice and gross failure still glaring in the leadership of the country. Legislative issues should and ought to remain a session of equity, value and reasonableness. In all ramifications, its ideal must be for the people, from the people, by the people. Leadership should be a source of hope and survival not for the rich who could play the game but for the beggars sprawling all over the gutters, slums, ghettos and streets.

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