

AN EXPLORATION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN ANTHILLS OF THE SAVANNAH AND ARROWS OF RAIN

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Résumé

*Les rapports entre l'État et la société sont régis par des principes de gouvernance qui induisent une gestion adéquate de tout aspect de la vie sociale, culturelle et économique. Ce rôle s'opère essentiellement à travers diverse éléments ; dont le pouvoir de contrôler des flux de savoirs et d'informations pour obtenir un degré d'influence politique des media et des entités savantes qui puisse favoriser la stabilité et le développement du domaine public. Cependant, bon nombre de dirigeants essaient de s'accaparer ces éléments du domaine public en utilisant excessivement le pouvoir de contrôle, comme c'est le cas dans les représentations allégoriques du Nigeria dans *Anthills of the Savannah* de Chinua Achebe et *Arrows of Rain* de Okey Ndibe. Ainsi, cet article analyse le mode de contrôle du savoir et l'information sous les régimes militaires chez Achebe et Ndibe, se basant sur le cadre intertextuel entre les deux romans, et le contexte Nigérian. Le style de narration dans les deux récits semble privilégier le conte comme moyen de perpétuer les mémoires individuelles pour résister à la subversion de la mémoire collective entreprise par les régimes autocratiques.*

Mots clés : domaine public, pouvoir, démocratie, roman, intertextualité

Abstract

*The relationship between State and society is driven by principles of governance, which induce the adequate management of social, cultural and economic life. This role operates through various ways among which we have the control of knowledge and information flow in order to obtain a degree of political influences of media and knowledgeable entities that can bring about stability and development in the public sphere. Unfortunately, numbers of rulers try to grabble and monopolize these apparatuses of the public domain as modelled in the allegorical representations of Nigeria in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*. Then, this article studies the rendering of knowledge and information grabbing under military by Chinua Achebe and Okey Ndibe, basing on the intertextual frame between the two novels and the Nigerian context. The style of narration in the two novels seems to be privileging storytelling as the best way to perpetuate private memories to resist the subversion of collective memories attempted by autocratic regimes.*

Key words: public sphere, power, democracy, novel, intertextuality

Introduction

The relationship between State and society is driven by governance, which induces the ideas of leadership, organization of the socio-economic life and other management actions. That constitutes the State power and it operates through ways such as the control of knowledge and information institutions and agents. Yet, when the State power is excessively exercised against the agents of those social apparatus, it produces a model of decadent society similar to the public spheres displayed in a classic of Nigerian literature such as Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966), a novel with a setting marked by social unrest, due to the overuse of State power by careerist politicians. Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest* (1967), which is a play, also illustrates the impact of a repressive and ambitious autocrat over the Nigerian society he attempts to rule. In addition to those masterpieces of the early decade after independences in Africa, the public sphere is once more depicted in the works of writers considered as a second generation; such as Okpewho Isidore (1993), Chinua Achebe (1987), Helon Habila (2002) and Okey Ndibe (2000), to quote a few. The common denominator in their respective novels is the state of decadence of the Nigerian public sphere related to successive military regimes and their inability to be democratic.

This thematic has also been examined by some scholars and critics such as Niyi Akingbe (2013) who focuses on the military brutality and its related dehumanization, or Edwin Onwuka (2012) who addresses the personality traits associated with soldiers in politics. To expand the critical attention on the issue, this paper will examine the effects of military regimes on actors of the knowledge and information society such as Intellectuals or scholars and journalists in the public spheres under military power as exhibited in two of those novels, namely Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2000). In the selected novels, one can see that the text of Okey Ndibe owes so much to that of Chinua Achebe. Indeed, in addition to the topical intertextual frame of repressive military power in the two novel, the text of *Arrows of Rain* seems to be reflecting some characterization and narration styles of *Anthills of the Savannah*. Also, both text represent a violent and repressive military setting; whereas knowledge and information agents are tamed, as well as the populations.

It is conspicuous that Okey Ndibe could have drawn inspiration from Achebe, but it should not be omitted that the two authors belong to different generations of writers, so their discourses are necessarily influenced and exposed differently. Basing on these dimensions, the interpretation of the narratives in the two novels will be done in the theoretical framework of intertextuality as projected by M. Bakhtin. For him, it is a process of transformation of prior texts or utterances in order to evaluate, “rework and reaccentuate [them in a new text]” (Bakhtin, 1986: 89). Thus, this paper sheds light on the intertextual frames shared by and between the two texts on the Nigerian public sphere under the military regimes, with the objective to examine the different dimensions of power relations between despotic military regimes and intellectuals or scholars, and media or journalists.

1. Power Relations between Soldiers and Intellectuals

Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah* and Okey Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain* tell the story of the throttlehold of some military regimes, respectively on the populations of Kagan and Madia. These spaces, where the plots of the two novels are developed, echo the Nigerian society, with regard to the names and events incorporated in the narratives. About this relation between the literary text and society, M-E. Panagiotidou explains that, “social, historical and political references are commonly found in literary texts and they can allude explicitly or implicitly to people in the public eye... or events” (Panagiotidou, 2011: 74). As a matter of fact, in *Anthills of the Savannah*, Chinua Achebe who belongs to the first generation of Nigerian writers, explores the military interactions with the public sphere in Nigeria. In the same vain, Okey Ndibe builds a plot in *Arrows of Rain* to reverberate this sequence of the Nigerian political history that many observers qualify as the main factor of the failure of Nigeria to live up to the social stability related to the democratic principles it has subscribed to.

The main issue identified by the two Nigerian authors is somewhat encapsulated in the following quote by E. Onwuka : “the military in *Anthills of the Savannah* and *Arrows of Rain* show no sense of patriotism, loyalty and discipline; rather, they manifest their opposites with flagrant abuse of human rights”(Onwuka, 2012: 44). This picture of the Nigerian public sphere is in total contrast with the idea of

democracy or the attempt to redress the country as promoted by military when they seized power. On matter of fact, the public sphere is a real indicator of the state of functioning of a country. For J. Habermas, the appropriate public sphere is the one that enhances the ability to create and facilitate the flow of knowledge through debates on key subjects in society (Habermas, 1989: 83). Then, the Nigerian intellectuals are supposed to be given opportunity to participate in debates on common interests and help rulers to resolve political issues. Unfortunately, some intertextual frames shared by the narratives of the two Nigerian authors allude to the fact that the agents of knowledge such as intellectuals or scholars face some peculiar manifestations of power.

In general, the notion of power refers to the ruler's use of legal means to conduct an appropriate governance. But in the context of the analysed novels, the narratives expose the notion of power in connection with the intertextual frame of autocracy and brutality. The intertextual frame of dictatorship is actually noticeable in the post-colonial Nigerian creative literature as well as its political history, as aforementioned. This aspect is particularly conveyed in Achebe and Ndibe's novels through the characterization of the military Head of State. Indeed, the nominated novels by the two Nigerian writers represent some rulers and styles of governance that are very close. Although the two novels do not cover the same years of military rule in the Nigerian history, their depicted rulers have a number of common features. In both stories, the potentates are referred to as 'His Excellency' and they have obtained their authority out of a military coup. Also the military authority in *Anthills of the Savannah* looks for life-presidency through the organization of a referendum, while in *Arrows of Rain* the Head of State would assume the title of life-president without any form of consultation.

In addition, there is a symbolical reference to Mahogany tree in the two narratives: in Chinua Achebe's text, there is a huge Mahogany table in the office of His Excellency of Kangan and in the narrative of Okey Ndibe those same trees are around the prison of Madia. These trees are also very strong and durable; which may stand for the symbolic of absolute and limitless power exercised by the successive martial Heads of State in the country. The allusions to long stay in command and unquestionable vigour displayed through the depiction of the rulers in the two novels, is indicative of some autocratic regimes with overwhelming power. This insight is observable through the interactions

between the top of the executive and the intellectuals in the settings exhibited by the novels.

The novels portray a communal sphere with some intellectuals or scholars who have been transformed by the regimes into some powerless and ineffective puppets. Indeed, when the regime is well on track and the dangerous metamorphosis of His Excellency has become effective, we can see that scholars and other intellectuals in the country are martyred and humiliated. The opening chapter of *Antbills of the Savannab* presents a symptomatic reality of this change through the following lines: “you are wasting everybody’s time, Mr Commissioner for Information. [...] Why do you find it so difficult to swallow my ruling...” (Achebe, 1987:1). These words of His Excellency to Chris are marked with language of domination and subjugation. The tenor that pervades here suggests that the Kaki-man demands submission from this intellectual who is part of the cabinet. Undeniably, there will be a transformation of the accredited intellectuals or scholars recruited to form the cabinet of His Excellency. This attitude is also underlined by I. Mwinlaaru when he points out that “Chris, together with the Cabinet ministers, has gradually been reduced to a helpless victim of the monstrous power displayed by Sam” (Mwinlaaru, 2014: 112). We notice that the military ruler has become a real threat for those intellectuals around him. In the narrative, the words used to describe what these people have become are *inertia*, *frightened*, *supplicant*. This is to show the extent to which they have been tamed.

The most striking fact is the radical change of the scholars who get close to the executive institution. This is symptomatic of the general mood in most African countries where rulers do not care about good governance. G. Ayittey has a very odd rendering of this degenerating aspect of the African intelligentsia, which he puts as follow,

so many professors sold out by singing the praises of tyrannical regimes in exchange for an appointment or a Mercedes-Benz! ... Even the barbarous military regimes of Idi Amin of Uganda and Samuel Doe of Liberia could find professors to serve at their beck and call. Professional standards, ethics, integrity, and probity were sold off by Africa's "educated" to win favours. (Ayittey, 1992: 295)

When abandoning their ideals just for self-centred advantages, African intellectuals have betrayed their countries. There is a huge gap between their attitudes and the struggle that would have totally liberated the continent from the clutch of Neocolonization, and the state of underdevelopment as indicated in the extract above.

This could be the case of Professor Okong, who is characterized in the narrative of *Anthills of the Savannah* as the embodiment of opportunism or a person lacking the sense of political morality. The exposed characteristic of the African intellectual under autocratic rule is crystalized in the narrative through the words of His Excellency, when he qualifies Professor Okong: “No sense of loyalty, no *esprit de corps*, nothing! And he calls himself a university professor. [...] Disgraceful” (Achebe, 1987: 21). There is a gulf between the erstwhile political commitment of this scholar and the way he has become when serving the military power. This character used to have sharp critics against the dethroned civilian regime, and now he has no problem to validate all the atrocities of the Head of the junta. In fact, this character rebuts his own principles and he is able to do any immoral things just to please the General and cling to his privileges.

Analogous to the depiction of intellectuals in Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah*, Okey Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain* portrays an executive cabinet with some ministers such as Reuben Ata. This ‘flamboyant’ minister for Social Issues is said to have “a number of dubious certificates from several London based institutions” (Ndibe, 2000: 111). Above all, this minister is rather specialized in creating conditions for corruption and manipulation of anybody that can constitute an opposition to the governance of the General. By organizing debauchery in his own house, he can see to the subjugation of any form of resistance to the actions of the Head of State. He seems to have nothing to do with the state of the country, his real mission is to see to the projection of a polished image of the Junta.

Then, we can across the idea that the characterization of those members of the executive in the two novels indicate that they really lack patriotism in addition to their being unqualified for their positions as executive members or the scholars they pretend to be. This utterance seems to be echoing the perception of a former Nigerian president who considered the scholars as unpatriotic and held them with great

suspicion, as mentioned in *The Trouble with Nigeria* (Achebe, 1983: 15). By relating this extra-textual extract of Nigerian political history to the context of the settings in the novels the literary significance is that the collective imagination can be biased by calculated actions. Indeed, the intellectuals and scholars in the Nigerian regimes topped by Kaki-men are projected as not able to produce the necessary change in their country.

The African intellectuals and scholars are rather revealed as those who have betrayed the continent by dedicating their life and power to *Good life*. This term used in *Arrows of Rain* to label the atmosphere created by the Minister for Social Issues to deal with the public affairs. As one goes through chapter twelve of the novel (Pp.111-123) we can see that *Good life* refers to sex, alcohol and money to corrupt journalists, scholars and even some foreign diplomats who promulgate a utopic image of Madia. It is the artificial world from which the truncated public domain is built; I mean the official discourse that presents everything well on track under the regime. In the two narratives, we realize that the phenomenon of 'shine' that caused the failure of first African regimes is still alluded to. This utterance embodied by the character of Koomson in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) is used to depict the excessive lifestyle of the earlier African political elite. Indeed, in the narratives of *Arrows of Rain*, one can read that Maximus Jaja who "had trained in Russia and Yugoslavia and had imbibed as much Marxist ideology as medical training" (Ndibe, 2000: 134), is now distorted into an adept of big cars and luxury like people of the middle class of Nigeria under the rule of Generals.

The result of this transformation of the African elite is that; scholars become counter-productive for their countries. Professor Okong himself explains so brilliantly in *Anthills of the Savannah* that they "are like children washing only their bellies" (Achebe, 1987: 18). This self-inflicted irony is seen to have no qualms when we consider the Attorney General's words to His Excellency in the same narrative: "we know our place; we know those better than ourselves when we see them. We have no problem worshipping a man like you" (Achebe, 1987: 24). This is a pure expression of self-nihilism because when some intellectuals are accomplice of the disarrays of the autocratic rulers just for their personal profit, we might be convinced that they are lost. They are made to deny the true nature of their status and what they represent for society.

The elite are made impotent simply because they fear the loss of their privilege but also because they are least educated. On this account, Jürgen Habermas argues that “those least knowledgeable and least interested in politics are precisely (...) those whom the politicians are seeking to attract” (Crossley & Robert, 2004: 2). Definitely, those people supposed to be “the cream of our society and the hope of the black race” (Achebe, 1987: 2) are manipulated and subjugated. Accordingly, when we look deep into the intertextual frame of intellectuals and scholars displayed in *Anthills of the savannah* and referred to in *Arrows of Rain*, it appears that the two authors do not want necessarily to condemn them systematically for their apparent incapacity to bring change in the Nigerian public sphere. They rather seem to acknowledge that the military deliberately create conditions to subvert the authority and capability of those latter to play their role in society. But these social categories are not the only victims of misgovernance in the societies depicted by Achebe and Ndibe in their novels chosen for this analysis. The two narratives also emphasize the subversion of media and journalists’ engagement with the public life of the country.

2. Military Power and Media

This sequence could also be entitled the sword versus the pen. As a matter of fact, when reading the selected novels, we notice the acrimony of the junta towards the dedicated and passionate journalists. These characters representing media professionals are particularly dealt with by the Heads of State and Secret Police, simply because they present themselves as the guardians of Knowledge and information society in the described post-colonial spaces. Knowledge society is a space where knowledge and information are given utmost importance. For J. Habermas, “the novels, newspaper, pamphlets and journals are an important source of information and basis for arguments and critiques during public debates” (Habermas, 1989: 83). So, it is essential for the media and journalists to exercise freely their role of information entities. This is also part of their engagement with the public life of their country. But the actions for the total control of power operated by most of postcolonial regimes consist in the stranglehold of the information channels of their countries. Like the Orwellian totalitarian society in *Nineteen Eighty Four* (1949), the mass media are not free as they should

be, in the particular context of successive military rules displayed in the corpus of this paper. This wrench to good governance is still being part of the practices of African rulers, even decades after the independences in Africa.

The post-colonial societies parodied in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* project a more vivid image of this phenomenon through the interactions between government and presses. We can distinguish the intertextual frame of the state-sponsored violence and manipulation undergone by this social entity in the two narratives. The possible interpretation of these textual elements is that, the media and journalists are either subjugated or ostracized. In Achebe's novel for example, there is only one alternative for the journalists: that is to follow the regime or disappear. Indeed, the story of *Anthills of the Savannah* reveals how His Excellency personally designates what the journalist could publish on behalf of his Commissioner for Information. This latter has to check or dictate the information for printing, as it is recalled to the editor of the National Gazette: "Chapter Fourteen section six of the Newspaper Amendment Decree gives the Honourable Commissioner general and specific powers over what is printed in the Gazette" (Achebe, 1987: 26). We understand here that the editorial line must go along with the outlines established by the government. Then information is selected and oriented by the ruler; which means that we are in a totalitarian setting. The *Gazette* represents the only source of information for the people in the setting of the novel. It also signifies an important part of influence, since His Excellency understands that it can really serve the private interests of the hand which holds and guides it firmly. This infringement of good governance is particularly emphasized in the novel through the code *NTBB*, which means "Not To Be Broadcast, and designed for, anything inconvenient to those in government" (Achebe, 1987: 61). This policy is a real menace to the emergence of a true knowledge society and an accurate collective memory.

Above all, the journalists who dare challenge it are doom to a sad end. In *Arrows of Rain*, further details are given on the way these things are handled by the despotic Generals. The narrator explains that it all starts by "a file at the State Security Agency. Perhaps even a visit" (Ndibe, 2000: 41). Through this explanation, it appears that the media professionals who try to reveal a true account of the state of the public affairs are seen as the State enemies and become objects of surveillance

and intimidation. Also, it can end with a murder, like the assassination of Ikem the editorialist by the agents of the Secret Police of General Sam in *Anthills of the Savannah*. The other possible end is the breakdown and suicide of the brilliant journalist Ogugua in the maximum-security prison of General Isa Palat Bello in Okey Ndibe's narrative.

From these extracts, we notice the insertion of this political practice to control media and journalists in Nigeria in *Anthills of the Savannah* and we also realise the retellings of this practice in *Arrows of Rains* that has been published two decades later.

The allusion to this practice of the military Heads of State in the two novels corroborates the vertical intertextuality between them. It could also be meant to retell these totalitarian ways of Nigerian rulers; which can be testified through a horizontal intertextuality between the novels and the recognized history or collective memory about the Nigerian political life. For example, it is attested in most Nigerian satires that some military rulers such as Yacubu Gowon, Abdulsalam Abubakar and particularly Muhammadu Buhari had a strong control of civil society and journalists when they seized the power. Then, we better understand when J. Kristeva comments that intertextuality implies "the insertion of history into a text and of this text into history" (Kristeva, 1986: 39). When echoing such an utterance of the collective observations on the military relations to media in Nigeria, both narrative confirms Kristeva's assumptions that texts cannot be separated from the larger cultural or social textuality out of which they are constructed (Allen, 2000: 35). This assumption gives the true sense of horizontal intertextuality between the studied novels and the other Nigerian novels exploring the thematic of military rule. Chiefly, the literary significance of these intertextual bounds could be that, the two Nigerian novelists seek to put the odd condition of media and journalists at the rank of the most aggravating factors of the decadence of the public sphere in Nigeria. The brutality of military Head of State against media and journalists seems to be justified by their need to be the only admitted voice in the public domain. The despots want to control the history and the collective memory by regulating and orienting the flow of information in the country. Consequently, the only media that can exercise freely are those which are obedient to the regime and its members.

There are also some similarities in the two selected novels on this particular relationship between the totalitarian rulers and the media.

From Chinua Achebe's novel to that of Okey Ndibe, the narrators describe some scenes with the Head or high officials of the despotic governments and some journalists in apparent good cohabitation. It is indeed, extraordinary to see how far the same repressive regimes use media to project a positive image of their governing. In the sixth chapter of *Anthills of the Savannah* (Pp.74-80) there is an American female reporter that is received in Bassa (Kangan) with deference on the part of the regime. The lady from American United Press is at ease and seemingly handled with due respect by His Excellency and all his staff at a party with a lot of drinking and nice ladies with nick names such as "Black is beauty", probably some escort girls. The objective of this presidential decorum before a foreign journalist is to project a convenient image of the military Head's governance in an international magazine. The Khaki-men seem to be keen on having a polished image abroad, while they ill-treat their people.

Analogously, in *Arrows of Rain*, we have the same kind of private exorbitant party at Honourable Reuben Ata's house with drinking and an army of prostitute. Indeed, in chapter twelve (Pp. 112-117), Ogugua recounts how he was taken in this vicious circle, after he had started a career of conscious and dedicated media man. This professional journalist who could "give a headache to a big man (or) make powerful men stay awake at night" (Ndibe, 2000: 97) has finally lost the capacity to publish the true information. He has become incapable to denounce the misconducts of the regime; particularly the ones concerning the military Head, because he has been corrupted by 'God Life'. This media professional has been transformed in such a way that corresponds to what G. Ayittey describes: "so many journalists flouted the imperatives of their profession -objectivity and balance- to please autocratic regimes" (Ayittey, 1992: 294). We apprehend that, with corruption, autocratic regimes can finally control the objectivity of journalists and make them publish their own version of information. Here also, we can notice that the tyrants seek to hide the real information and propagate a fabricated one. That is why they do not admit the incorruptible and conscious media professionals who can reveal truth. Thus, arguably, the autocratic regimes' attempts to bring institutions of information under control is motivated by fear.

By integrating the intertextual frame of corruption and financial abuse in their selected texts, Chinua Achebe and Okey Ndibe could be

mediating two significances: first, there could be a subtle irony on their part, to brand the incongruity between the reasons evoked by military for their intervention in the political sphere and their management of public affairs. On this account, E. Asika reports the quotation of an anonymous Nigerian army retired General as follow: “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” (Asika, 2011: 278). Undeniably, military regimes generally justify themselves as corrective governments against the mismanagement and abuses of the dethroned regimes. So, when they happen to be using excessively the financial means of the State just to enjoy luxury or impress and subjugate journalists, it becomes ridicule. The other significance could be that, the juntas in Nigeria fear the loss of their power if the hideous image of their management is revealed under the pen of journalists. So, the brazen corruption and institutionalized immoral life become the alternatives to make journalists and media produce a polished image the Kaki-men and their governance.

Inopportunately, this type of interaction between African autocratic rulers and those social institutions cannot produce the kind of public sphere conceptualized by Jürgen Habermas. Indeed, the theory of Habermas reported by A. Edgar posits that, the public opinion is shaped out of debates which are facilitated by mediums of information. Consequently, “the public sphere should be open to all, and agreement should be secured through the force of better argument, rather than through any exercise of threat of physical force” (Edgar, 2006: 124). Then, we understand that, the argument put forwards in the theory of Habermas is that, a public sphere where information is controlled with violence, there would not be debates or any form of opening. Drawing from this argumentation and with regards to the conditions of intellectuals and journalists in the selected novels one may conclude that the public sphere in Nigeria under military regimes is but a dystopian one. The style of governance consisting in taming ideologies and information channels is like going through the annexation of the collective memories and people’s ability to think by themselves and evaluate the governance they are going through. These seminal elements of a normal public sphere should rather be free or free themselves from the grip of authoritarian regimes by appropriate means, and that is what the two Nigerian writers try to mediate.

3. Story to Mediate a New Public Sphere

The narratives of *Anthills of the Savannah* and *Arrows of Rain* are intertwined, with regards to their description of the kind of public sphere that can exist under autocratic rule. Fortunately, these narratives are not the simple reproduction of what the official discourse on public affairs is. They also reverberate a narration of contest and suggest changes. Then, through their fictional pieces of writing, Achebe and Ndibe seek to re-establish a normal order or simply an adapted one with regards to the context of globalization. The dystopian depiction of societies in their two selected novels could be considered as a form of protest and resistance. This is part of Jürgen Habermas' notion of *communicative power* and it is described in the work of A Edgar as "the influence that citizens may exert upon a State, through the rational discussion of their interests, values and identities in the public sphere" (Edgar, 2006: 23), using newspaper, journals, novels or other communication media.

To counterbalance the attempts of African regimes to assuage their public spheres, two approaches are presented in the selected novels for the analysis. The first approach to be examined is that proposed by Chinua Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah*, through the trajectory of the poet and journalist named Ikem. In the name of the objectivity characterizing his profession of journalist, Ikem is obliged to bend the official discourse and propose what corresponds to the collective memory. This artist and man of media refuses to be part of those who have betrayed the African continent by producing sharp editorials in the *National Gazette* against the odds of the governance in his country. In addition to that, he lunches a crusade against what he thinks is an attempt of the falsification of history by the Military Head of State. By organizing a conference at Bassa University, Ikem wants the mass of students and scholars to re-appropriate the public life of their country.

This way of responding to the stranglehold on the medium of information is also recommended by Jürgen Habermas who believes, as some philosopher such as Tocqueville, Mill, or Kant that middle class people and private individuals should "engage in reasoned argument over key issues of mutual interest and concern" (Crossley & Robert, 2004: 2). The proactive attitude of this character is up to the task of transforming the public sphere into a zone of flowing information and knowledge, as demanded by democratic principles. By permitting the normal exercising

of the tasks of journalist and scholars or artists in a country; it is as if conforming to what adequate governance calls for. Therefore, we can distinguish that Chinua Achebe envisions showing the image of Ikem as a catalyser. This character is empowered with the characteristics of the fearless hero who defies the authority; notwithstanding the enormous risk of the political context. In this way, we can say that the objective of the writer is to urge the enlightened but inept citizen to stand up and produce change in their societies. They should face the misruling of postcolonial African societies with concrete actions.

Unfortunately, we can see in the narrative that, standing up alone against an autocratic ruler is perilous. The daring poet and journalist is tracked down and killed by the secret police officers. This gives rise to a questioning about the adequate actions and the methods used to conduct resistance against a regime that wants to control knowledge and information in a society. First of all, we should wonder if it is wise defying openly a regime that relies on violence to deal with media. Obviously, the minimum risk is to get imprisoned or simply killed, and evidences from the experience of Chinua Achebe and many other Nigerian poets and journalists can attest to these options. Indeed, one remember Chinua Achebe escaping from soldiers in 1967 after the first military coup, then the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa in November 1995 by another despotic regime. Chinua Achebe was lucky enough to escape, but many other committed journalists did not have this fortune. As reported by N. Akingbe, “a lot of Journalists and scores of politicians as well as academics have been incarcerated and killed” (Akingbe, 2013: 167).

From this experience, we can say that the message of Chinua Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah* is not to behave like Ikem or Chris. These characters seem to have been cast after the personal story of the Nigerian authors mentioned above. The lives and fates of these characters could be alluding to the ones of the aforementioned Nigerian intellectuals and scholars who dared frontal resistance to the military tyranny. Out of this vertical intertextual link between Chinua Achebe’s text and the documented political history of Nigeria we understand that interacting with military or militarized regimes can cost dear to intellectuals and scholars. Anyway, there is a strong necessity for those ones to keep their engagement with the public domain, but the actions should not be isolated and frontal attacks of the military dictatorship.

This prospect seems to be the one also supported by Okey Ndibe's narrators in *Arrows of Rain*. On matter of fact, the former journalist Ogugua prefer keeping silence in a setting where military could silence anyone who would dare contradict their version of history. He will start real action by conniving with other persons to make people aware of his part of the story, the real history that can contradict the official version imposed and inoculated by autocratic rulers. Instead of isolated actions, the former journalist creates partnership with other people from the folks of intellectuals, scholars and journalists. Then he decides to collaborate with the psychiatrist Dr Mandi and particularly the *Daily Chronicle* reporter whom he thinks can be the best custodian of his own life story (Ndibe, 2000: 77). This story and the ones recounted by some characters of *Anthills of the Savannah* can be considered as the private memory of many other Nigerians in the nightmarish public sphere created by autocratic rulers.

Storytelling in postcolonial novels is given a sense that Achebe encapsulates in this metaphor: pen is mightier than sword. Telling one's part of the story is intended to share what happened with the public, which according to N. Akingbe, "in itself is a form of protest, given the fact that what is being remembered is subversive of the existing order" (Akingbe, 2013: 159). It is presented as a powerful weapon of political contest against rigid social conventions that hamper the rise of information and knowledge society in postcolonial spaces. As voiced by a narrator of *Arrows of Rain*, "a story never forgives silence. Speech is the mouth's debt to a story" (Ndibe, 2000: 55). That is why it is necessary for writers to recollect private stories in order to give people enough chance to escape the fabric of collective memory operated by those rulers who fail to create an appropriate social landscape.

Conclusion

The use of political power to manage the influence of intellectuals and journalists can be democratic when the objective is to have stability and the development of the public domain. But through the descriptions of the settings in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* we have identified the chronicles a public life deprived of debates. Those discussions, contradictions or contestations that favour the advent of democracy and good governance

are totally held and violently controlled by the rulers. With an approach through vertical and horizontal intertextual relationship with external sources, the plots of the selected novels have permitted to highlight the overuse of power by the military juntas to manipulate and tame the intellectuals and scholars. The subjugation of the public domain, then needs a response on the part of the intellectuals and the information entities of the country. As a solution, the authors mediate the necessity to join force and propose adequate alternatives. Literary speaking the suitable strategy mediated along the two novels seems to be storytelling. The style of narration in the two novels highlights storytelling as the best way to perpetuate private memories in order to resist the subversion of collective memories attempted by autocratic regimes. Having an alternative voice is also important because it represents a counter-balance to the State authority in order to reach the standards of a democratic public sphere.

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