

Political Praxis Topicality in The African Novel: A Postcolonial Reading of Henri Lopes' The Laughing Cry and Chinua Achebe's Anthills of The Savannah



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Abstract: This paper deals with 'political realm' as a literary theme in African literature. It purports to evidence the manifestations of political power in Henri Lopes' *The Laughing Cry* and Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*. The exploration of these novels from two post-colonial different linguistic areas reveals how the political power is manifested throughout an absolute exercise the struggle for its preservation. This abuse and the misuse of the political power by the post-colonial ruling elites pave the way to the peasant masses' disenchantment and the reign of social disorder that Africa is still struggling to get rid of. As a final assessment, this study posits the two analyzed works as political novels.

Key-words: the ruling class - political praxis- dictatorship- skepticism- upheaval- the downtrodden

Résumé : Cet article traite du 'realm politique' comme source d'inspiration dans la création littéraire. Il met en lumière les manifestations de la praxis politique dans *Le pleurer Rire* d'Henri Lopes et *La termitière de la Savane* de Chinua Achebe. L'étude de ces romans pourtant issus de deux zones linguistiques postcoloniales différentes révèle comment le pouvoir politique se manifeste à travers l'exercice absolu de la lutte pour sa préservation. L'abus et la mégestion du pouvoir politique par les élites dirigeantes aux commandes dans certains Etats despotiques, ouvrent la voie au désenchantement du petit peuple et au règne du chaos dont l'Afrique peine à en sortir. Enfin, cette étude positionne ces deux romans analysés comme des chefs-d'œuvre à forte centralité politique.

Mots clés: la classe dirigeante - Praxis politique – dictature - désillusion, soulèvement, les opprimés

INTRODUCTION

Written African literature originates from responding to the fallacious claims of the African cultural and historical heritage reflected in European-centrist narratives. It is responsive to socio-cultural and political issues relevant to Africa such as, the painful colonial past of the continent along with the disenchantment of Africans with their leaders as the continent experiences 'independence.' Within this literary endeavor comes the third generation of African writers such as Chinua Achebe and Henry Lopes whose works do not have the luxury of "art for art's sake", as Mao Tse-tung (1965:86) emphasizes this characteristic of literature: "In the world today, all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and geared to definite political lines. There is in fact, no such a thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics." Indeed, during the first international congress of African writers and black artists in 1956, Leopold Sédar Senghor (1964:164) stated that "la littérature africaine est une littérature engagée" as the way to invite Africans to submit their art to the 'negritude cause.' This meant to resist against black leaders who were carrying on the white domination and to partake in the reconstruction of Africa which was ruined by imperialism. The incorporation of politics within their works of fiction has been for the two authors a conceptual tool to help shape their stories. These two narratives, in effect, have enabled young Africans discover how their countries are ruled in the post-independence era by African ruling class which is not elected by nominated by the Western world's leaders who do not want Africa to be totally independent.

This study is a postcolonial reading of Henry Lopes' *The Laughing Cry* (1982) and Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988) with an emphasis on aspects of political topicality. It purports to evidence the manifestations of political power as a literary theme pervaded in these novels. Before dealing with our subject matter, it would be important to clarify the concepts of 'topicality' and 'political power'. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 'topicality' (1965:86): refers to the state of continuing to exist for a long period of time. As for 'political', it derives from the word 'politics' which means according to The

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American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1965:86) "the art or science of government or governing especially the governing of a political entity, such as a nation, and the administration and control of its internal and external affairs". In The substance of politics, Appadorai (1968:1) defines it as "the science concerned with the State and of the conditions essential to its existence and development." As far as 'power' is concerned, it is according to the same dictionary the ability or official capacity to exercise control; authority. Hence, political power carries connotations of the ability to control the public affairs. As it can be seen, political power carries connotations of the ability to control the public affairs.

The choice for Lopes's *The Laughing Cry* and Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* is linked to their common theme of 'political power' which is still topical in most of African countries. These two narratives shed more light on political praxis of African leaders in the eyes of Chinua Achebe and Henry Lopes and post-colonialism, illustrating the way both portrayed colonization and the aftermath subjugation of leadership on citizens by the African leaders. For they bear testament to the act of using literature to address socio-historical issues that border on state terrorism, dictatorship and political corruption, *The Laughing Cry* and *Anthills of the Savannah* have individually attracted critical attention as political novels.

In Roman congolais: tendances, thématiques et esthétiques (2007:78), Alpha Noel Malongahelps to buttress this opinion when he states that: "Le pleurer-rire est le seul roman de Lopes qui présente une réflexion profonde sur l'exercice du pouvoir politique." This assertion corroborates Denyse de Saivre's viewpoint about Lopes (1982 :18): "Il a choisi de décrire minutieusement, livre après livre, l'Afrique d'après les indépendances en sortant de la problématique colonialisme/néocolonialisme."

As far as *Anthills of the Savannah* is concerned, James Anthony Nde (2017:52) similarly writes:

In all, *Anthills of the Savannah* is a 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 corrupt political world are the rules rather than the exception.

Ayo Kehinde, too emphasizes the novel's political topicality when he writes: "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 same wave, Nwachukwu-Agbada (2007:92) even furthers that "the novel (Anthills of the Savannah) is a study of power in an African state, and shows how original ideals are swept aside by the concept of power personalization". These submissions are in tandem with Chide Maduka's pronouncement (2007:80): "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."

Hence, Using Henry Lopes's *The Laughing Cry* in tandem with Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* as templates, this study, unlike the above-mentioned, attempts to examine the recurrence of political topicality in the nation's narrative fiction and possibly the public's perception of politics, both in the Francophone and Anglophone world area as well. In doing this, it purports to x-ray how two African novelists from two different linguistic areas depict the dynamics of politics in their fictional works under consideration.

In effect, this study is carried out through the lens of postcolonial theory which tilts strongly towards the incorporation of politics into literature while it often interrogates the dichotomy between history and fiction. Postcolonial theory appears germane to this study as an "attempt to understand the problems posed by the European colonization and its aftermath;" it "seeks to engage with the experiences of the colonized throughout the world" (Tiffin, 1997:96). Indeed, Postcolonial theory casts a critical look at colonizer and colonized relationship from colonial times to the so-called 'post-independence' period.

In *Beginning Postcolonialism* (2000:82), McLeod, one of the upholders of the postcolonial criticism, considers it in terms of activities it carries out, activities, he thinks, imply "reading texts produced by writers from countries with a history of colonialism [...], reading texts produced by those that have migrated from countries with a history of colonialism, or those descended from migrant families, which deal in the main with diaspora experience and its many consequences".

This study is worked out through the prism of three main points. Before conceptualizing the shenanigans and manoeuvres among politicians themselves and between these leaders and downtrodden as depicted in the selected novels, an emphasis is laid on the interplay between Literature and Politics.

1. THE ENCROACHMENT BETWEEN POLITICS AND LITERATURE

Literature is not created in vacuum, but it is always set in a special time and space and is said to be the expression of life, an illustration of the world in which it is derived. It inextricably reflects all the socio-cultural values that show the interplay between literature and the world outside the novel. They are connected to each other to the point that, at a deepest level of consciousness, one reinforces and recycles the other. In a nutshell, to the extent that every social identity is revealed in its literature and the later inseparable from the community destiny, a cultural and historical background of the considered country always proves helpful if there is any hope to gain as much deeper and more rewarding experience from literary works produced its writings. Crucial to this

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perspective is that the postcolonial novel is a child of social transformation; a genre that offers a blueprint to transcend the African experience. Integral to this conviction is Huma Ibrahim's assertion (1990: 79-90):

Social and political realities of the post-independence era in which the colonizer has been replaced by a political elite. African literature of the past two decades have transformed the theme of disillusionment. Where the colonizer was once the sole object of criticism, now African technocrats, cadres and government officials are depicted exploiting the masses they had promised to uplift.

In the African literature, from inception, it is a critically shared view that politics and literature are intricately connected, though some still have a pejorative look at politics for, they advocate that it robs literature of its creative quintessence resulting in mere political statements by writers. Writing on the intersection between literature and politics, Suleiman Jaji (2013: 76) 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."

Politics remains one of the thematic preoccupations which always provide the catalyst for the efflorescence of literary creativity. This is in line with the observation of SesanAzeezAkinwumi(2012:71):

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.

From the forgoing, reiterating the pronouncement of Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o(1991: 73) that in Africa, "all artists, all writers, are writers in politics," Charles Nnolim (2010:62) deductively defines the contours of a political novel in these terms:

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. [...] 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.

As the sociological critics of art contend, literature even its counterfeit nature (fiction) can be used for a systematic study and interpretation of society. Pius NganduNkashama, rationalizes this assertion noting that:

La littérature retrouve ses origines dans les grandes passions du Peuple, mais également dans ses peurs les plus profondes et ses angoisses accumulées, autant que dans les craintes mythiques mises en forme par les paroles et les discours échangés. Et les lieux de surgissement en demeurent les guerres, les affrontements, les contradictions, les apparitions, ainsi que les images que les hommes peuvent avoir de leur propre misère.

Similarly, UzomaNwadike (2009: 47) asserts 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.

From these submissions, one can surmise that writers in any society behave like activists in their documentation and interpretation of socio-political experiences. For postcolonial critics, literature must be committed and that every piece of fiction should refract truthfully the situations, atmosphere and realities in the public space.

Yet, *The Laughing Cry* and *Anthills of the Savannah* dissect some of the issues that have preoccupied African writers since the 1960s, notably, despotism in postcolonial Africa, its characteristics, its effects on ordinary people, dissident intellectuals, and popular resistance. As a matter of fact, some critics like AkingbemiNiyi (2010:31) bears testimony to the historical significance of *Anthills of the Savannah* when he writes:

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 fiction which distinguishes it from other narrative forms which are considered fictional.

Since postcolonial African literature remains unwavering in its consistent foregrounding of the sociopolitical tensions and contradictions in the countries' body polity, the selected novels have been analyzed as representatives of politics in the African novel. Indeed, politics has impacted greatly on both its themes and style. The Congolese Henry Lopes and the Nigerian Chinua Achebe are among those African novelists whose works have acquired a world-wide audience and acclaimed for their propensity to politics. For, they provide an important platform for such critique which ultimately could help pave the way for an enduring political regeneration and reform. It is a critically shared view that politics is woven into *The Laughing Cry* and *Anthills of the Savannah* to awaken the consciousness of the people and prick the conscience of the political leaders and their mischiefs. Hence, one clearly infers that defined in whatever way, the idea of politics as used in this study encapsulates the shenanigans among

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politicians themselves and between these leaders and the downtrodden. For literature broadly understood, has always shed light on the idiosyncrasies of the human condition that may not be fully captured in the empirical gaze.

The *Laughing Cry* is a parody of dictatorship. The novel opens with a coup perpetrated by Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé alias Daddy Hannibal-Ideloy, a former warrior who assumes the mantle of power after overthrowing his opponent Polépolé, in a fictitious republic of post-colonial Africa. The latter establishes a violent regime endorsed by the West. The abuse and horror of the military regime is recounted by Maître, the narrator whose true identity has never been revealed. He is an eye-witness. As a domestic and MC of Daddy, he finds himself in the inner circle of power, and tries to decry the president's maladministration characterized mainly by corruption, megalomania, violence, tribalism and authoritarianism. The policy of Daddy consists in eliminating all his political opponents. The climax is the elimination of the Djassikinis as a result of a missed coup perpetrated by Haraka. The testimony of Maître is full of discretion (intimate souvenir, sex affair, his exile, his correspondence with his friend, the former cabinet secretary and other interventions of various forms). The novel ends with Bwakamabé's downfall as an aftermath of his serious disease of spots.

As for *Anthills of the Savannah*, it satirizes military dictatorship and its attendant aberration in post-colonial Africa. It recounts the story of three school mates who became prominent figures in a new regime in the fictional West African State of Kangan. The novel opens with a meeting of the regime's president and cabinet. The government has been in place for two years, since a coup which overthrew the former dictator. Three men, friends since childhood, have assumed important positions. Sam is the president, Chris the commissioner of information, and Ikem Osodi is the editor of the government controlled newspaper, the national *Gazette*. Ikem is outspoken about the need to reform the government which sinks into suspicion, opposition, witch-hunting and the gagging of the press. The climax is the murder of Ikem and the hunt of Chris, who eventually dies by the gun of a drunkard soldier while on the run from the chase mounted on him by the dictatorship government of Sam. The story ends by a coup which overthrows and eventually kills Sam, bringing into power General Ahmed Lango twenty four hours after the coup. The naming ceremony of Elewa's baby by Beatrice signals Achebe's positive hope for Nigeria.

2. CONTEXTUALIZING THE POLITICAL SHENANIGANS OF THE RULING CLASS IN POST-COLONIAL AFRICA

African literature in general aims at revealing and parodying the evils of modern African society. Like all African committed writers, Henri Lopes and Chinua Achebe, in their attempt to reform society, and create egalitarian states, decry this situation of dictatorship. A position echoed by Adebayo (1996:350) when he writes: "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..."

The *Laughing Cry* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, being political novels, denounce social evils which still gangrene most of post-independence African countries and impede their taking-off. In the framework of this study, it is worth scrutinizing some aspects linked to the management of political power in Congo and Nigeria as they are contextualized in the two novels under consideration. In this regard, answering such a concern leads to X-ray the reign of dictatorship with a special focus on the ruling Class' endeavor to preserve their political power even through all kinds of shenanigans, victimizing their fellows who could no longer profit from the independence they shed blood for.

In all, dictatorship is chiefly characterized by some wrongdoings the striking manifestations of which are violence, arbitrary arrests, torture, political repression, political murder, manhunt, and terror among the others.

Generally referred to a "fierce behaviour intending to hurt or kill somebody", Priestland (1974:11) states that "...the essence of violence is that physical power is deliberately employed with the ultimate sanction of physical pain." In the wielding of political power, African rulers resort to systematic violence in order to muzzle their opponents, and remain in power. This situation of violence is largely portrayed in *The Laughing Cry* when Lopes dramatizes the fate of the 'Gang of Twenty' which is a group of young dissidents who dare protest against Daddy's dictatorship. They are sadistically reprimanded, as evidenced in the following passage:

At the rise of the curtain, the 'Gang of Twenty' and their accomplices, with bare fists, were confronted by the same number of adversaries, but all with gloves! The best heavyweights of the National Boxing Club, reinforced by the toughest of the Chief's own gorillas. A boxer against a distributor of leaflets. And let be knockouts! Thirty thousand francs per K.O.

Each of the prisoners was carried off on a stretcher. Like so many inert rubber dolls. [...] Daddy has ordered severe punishment. That they be beaten 'well-well' [...] let everyone go through it...you can beat them to the point of death...(*The Laughing Cry*, p.100)

The way Daddy's men arrest and brutalize these rebels epitomizes a real atmosphere of terror and violence established in the country, like in most despotic African postcolonial regimes. This turmoil reaches its pitch after Captain Yababa's attempt to overturn Daddy's regime. The narrator helps us figure out the way captain Yabaka, for instance is manhandled by President himself:

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The Captain had been arrested in the middle of the night and dragged to the Palace. Tied up like cassava, he had been thrown at Daddy's feet.

"So, you stink-hound! You want to play at filthy games, do you?" But the Captain had resolved to be silent.

"Nothing to say? You won't reply?" He slapped his face with his lion's tail. [...] A rain of blows fell on the Captain. They were aimed at his head, hammering and hammering at it till he became immobile. By the time they stopped, he must have lost consciousness.

"Open it now, I you ... yes, like that ... wait a bit." And Bwakamabé pissed copiously into the mouth of the victim. The jet of yellow liquid fell noisily, like a nauseating beer. All the military men watched this scene without a word. [...] Yabaka remained walled in his silence. Though seated, he looked down as if from a height at the man standing before him. He passed a whole night upright, arms raised and hands stuck against the wall, watched over by shifts of soldiers with their weapons ready. At the slightest movement, at the least hint of relaxation, blows rained upon him. [...] the following night, they forced a bottle up his anus, commenting with obscene sarcasm, then they filled his mouth with water embittered with a soapy liquid. Frequent swoons helped the captain to preserve his silence. But that night, they had great difficulty in bringing him back to his senses. They had to call in a male nurse, one of those Djabotama militants who were used to render such services to the police. (*The Laughing Cry*, pp.243, 44, 45-49)

Sentences such as "Tied up like cassava, he had been thrown at Daddy's feet", "Bwakamabé pissed copiously into the mouth of the victim", and "...they forced a bottle up his anus" are indicators of Daddy's sadism. A. N. Malonga (2007:90) too goes on the same line when he argues that "Le Président Bwakamabé est conscient, mais il soutient cette violence car il l'affectionne de toutes ses forces, et son âme."

Similarly, Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* portrays the use of violence by the military regime which rules in the republic of Kangan. Analyzing this novel, Akingbe (2012:9) accordingly writes:

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 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 rather brutalizes and subjugates "the poor and dispossessed" of the Kangan republic.

Sam and his sycophants' violence is visible through the victimization of Beatrice and Elewa. Though innocent, these women are both are victimized and manhandled by the police who accused them of hiding Christopher Oriko, one of His Excellency's detractor. Hence, "a huge soldier rushed in pushing the two women aside so powerfully to his right and left in a dry breast-stroke movement that sent Elewa, slight as a reed, down on the floor on her bottom." (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p.105) Here, one easily infers that in this despotic regime, even innocent people are not spare from Sam's violence.

Other victims of His Excellency's violence are students who are denied the right to protest against the arbitrary arrest of their political leader:

With koboko and truncheons they fell upon their fleeing victims chasing them into classrooms, the library, the chapel and into dormitories. In the women's hostel, which some of the attackers had originally gained in the blind accident of hot pursuit they all finally congregated and settled into a fearful orgy of revenge, compounding in ancient sex-feud with today's war of the classes. As ambulances screamed in later to collect the wounded and move them to hospital. (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p. 104)

From the foregoing, one can easily infer that in Africa, despite their hypocritical speeches in favor of human right, African potentates often infringe the law when they resort directly to inhumane practices in order to oust those who oppose to their policies. In his attempt to differentiate between dictatorship and democracy, Claude Ake (1996:34) accordingly writes: "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."

Apart from violence, African despots also resort to 'manhunt' which is referred to as the tracking down of political opponents who resist against the dictatorial regime of Bwakamabé and His Excellency. Indeed, these dictators, in their desire to hold on to power, often put in place an authoritarian regime for the sake of silencing and eliminating political figures who dare fight against their oligarchical regimes. Radical activists and opponents, who stand toe to toe against the tyrannical regime, meet this fate. This is the case of Colonel Haraka, an opponent of Daddy's regime who is the first to experience the witch-hunt. Accused to foment a putsch in order to overturn Daddy, Haraka is tracked down by the incumbent regime, as the narrator tells:

The walls of the capital and all other towns in the land were plastered with posters of an astonished looking Haraka. The radio announced his description every quarter of an hour, in French and all our tribal languages. Monsieur Gourdain obtained from France a pack of Alsatian dogs, together with their keepers. (*The Laughing Cry*, p.131)

The logistics settled by Monsieur Gourdain with "a pack of Alsatian dogs" imported on purpose from France shows his resentment against Colonel Haraka who is wanted 'dead or alive' by Daddy.

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Colonel Haraka's death is similar to that of Christopher Oriko whose tragic fate Achebe epitomizes in *Anthills of the Savannah* is still unforgettable by other characters in the novel. For he eventually dies by the gun of a drunkard police officer while on the run from the witch-hunting mounted on him by the dictatorship government of Sam, as illustrated below:

Then at six o'clock came a police statement declaring Mr. Christopher Oriko, commissioner for information wanted by security officers in connection with the recent coup plot and calling on anyone who had information concerning his whereabouts to contact the nearest police station and warned citizens that concealing information about a coup plotter was as serious as failing to report a coup plot or taking part in a coup plot; and the penalty for each was death. (*Anthills of the Savannah*, pp. 111-112)

The way the security officers witch-hunt Chris, dead or alive, evidences that these potentates, in the exercise of political power, use all machinations in order to subjugate the dregs of society and to cling to power.

Another antidemocratic practice that post-independence rulers resort to is the police repression which, according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, carries connotation of "the act of being kept down by force, or the condition of having political, social, or cultural freedom controlled by force or military means." In many post-independence dictatorial regimes, the police repression is the best way to keep control over the poor masses, as Frantz Fanon quoted by EloDacy(1986:35) asserts: "Dans un pays où les masses sont insatisfaites, l'armée devient le soutien indispensable d'une répression systématique."

Lopes and Achebe respectively denounce this evil police repression throughout their novels. In *The Laughing Cry*, for instance, this cruelty is perpetrated by Monsieur Gourdain's security agents against any person who dares challenge Daddy's authority. The first victims of Monsieur Gourdain's trap is the 'The Gang of Twenty'. This group of young men, fed up with Daddy's policy, is just demanding free elections in order to change the regime, but unfortunately they are automatically repressed in blood by Monsieur Gourdain and his auxiliaries:

Monsieur Gourdain threw into action his whole regular army, plus his auxiliaries. Working day and night, they finally managed to catch, in the very act, some young fellows with Afro hair-does who, once thrown into jail, immediately confessed everything. How many they were (few); who was their leader (nobody could decide); where they printed their clandestine literature (the duplicating room of a school in the quarter). They were well beaten, threatened with the most exquisite tortures, and wasted no time in spilling beans. (*The Laughing Cry*, p.83)

The victimization of 'The Gang of Twenty' starts during the funeral of Old Tiya when this group of young militants of change, tries to sing so as to taunt the hymn of Tiya's party. An act which seems very benign, but turns into arrests and brutalization from Monsieur Gourdain's repression agents when "The authorities claimed that, at the moment of dispersal, agitators had wanted to sing the hymn of Tiya's party. Immediately, they had been overwhelmed and arrested by Monsieur Gourdain's agents, mingling with the crowd.(p.203)

This abysmal situation reminds the plight of students who, in *Anthills of the savannah*, experience brutal police repression when they plan to protest against the arrest of Ikem Osodi, their political leader. Consequently, the regime sent Jeeploads of police officers in order to apprehend the president and secretary of students' Union:

But by the time students Union had taken up the story and were demanding a judicial inquiry and the immediate dismissal of colonel Ossai and his prosecution for murder. Two jeeploads of mobile police sent to apprehend the President and secretary of the Union bungled the arrest. (*Anthills of the savannah*, p.104)

This passage shows that police officers in the fictional republic of Kangan, with their brinkmanship, as in any dictatorial regime, resort to repression for the sake of retaliating to any recalcitrant of their tyranny. Hence, they often fan out all over the country in order to control the people and restrict their freedom. This situation is evidenced with police check-points settled here, which seriously disturb the traffic:

Another check-point, no doubt. Stupid fellows the police; they would choose the approaches to a bridge to disrupt traffic! A long last Braimoh cleared the corner, and ran full tilt into it! This was no ordinary check-point but a major combined army and police operation. There were two military jeeps by the roadside and three police patrol-cars flashing their roof-lamps. Ahead, passengers were being ordered out of vehicles. (*Anthills of the savannah*, p.114)

Narrations such as "This was no ordinary check-point but a major combined army and police operation" or "Ahead, passengers were being ordered out of vehicles", are clear indicators of the anti-democratic nature of Daddy's regime, which deploys even its army forces in tandem with police officers throughout the country in order to restrict the freedom of the laboring masses. They act as a strong means of oppression over the dregs of society or any potential opponent.

One must admit that this police repression is generally perpetrated during 'arbitrary arrests.' People in a despotic regime are sometimes arrested wrongly without being guilty of the crime they are charged with. In *The Laughing Cry* for instance, the author dramatizes the 'arbitrary arrests' of Moudié and Bangoura, two convicts who are reported to be wrongly detained. For "A popular story running around Moudié served as my philosophy: two detainees in the prison at Bangoura introduced themselves as follows: "I'm in here for telling a political joke. And you? Oh, I'm in for having heard one and smile". (*The Laughing Cry*, p.17)

Like these two detainees, many others are victims of arbitrariness. This is the case of Spinoza, a young professor of philosophy, who is arrested by Monsieur Gourdain's Secret police just because he is accused of meddling with 'The Gang of Twenty':

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They laid hands on a young professor of philosophy whose hairstyle resembled a Russian flat cap and who disturbed them even more by his lectures, in which he had declared that God did not exist, adding that the thing was just as important as mathematics a deserved a whole course of education to itself. (*The Laughing Cry*, p.84)

The arrest of his young professor of Philosophy seems far from being an isolated case. Later, Spinoza's black colleagues have been apprehended and sent to jail just for having demanded the release of their co-worker, as the narrator keeps on explaining: "We learnt from Aziz sonika that on the night following the request for an audience, the two Europeans were chucked onto the first plane, and their black colleagues handcuffed and dragged to Police Headquarters." (*The Laughing Cry*, p.82) The adjectives "handcuffed" and "dragged" reveal the barbaric nature of most postcolonial rulers who restrain into 'infra-humanity' citizen they are meant to serve.

Equally, in *Anthills of the Savannah*, arbitrariness is illustrated through the arrest of Mr. Kent, a controversial expatriate Director of administration at Bassa Hospital. This Executive popularly known by MM for the Mad Medico is accused for plotting with Christopher Oriko and Ikem Osodi against His Excellency Sam. Consequently, "Mr. Kent was hauled in quietly for interrogation, held secretly and incommunicado for four days at the BMSP, released under tight security and deported within forty-eight hours." (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p.87)

Other victims of wrong arrests in the novel are the six leaders from the Abazon province. This province is affected by a serious drought, and the President does not take crackdown measures to jugulate this burning issue. In an attempt to make their voice heard, these leaders decide to march on the presidential palace so as to attract President Sam's attention. Regrettably, the incumbent regime sees this demonstration as an act of rebellion and decides to arrest them because "...six leaders from Abazon who were involved in a recent illegal march on the Presidential Palace without police permit as required by decree had been arrested." (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p.91)

Unfortunately, this arbitrariness sometimes brings about political 'murder' which the *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language* (2004:836) refers to as a "crime of deliberately killing, in a barbarous or inhuman manner another person and not in self-defense or with any other extenuation circumstance recognized by the law". This practice is very common in most postcolonial African despotic countries where dictators resort to political murder as a means of intimidating and silencing political opponents. The exploration of the two novels of our corpus displays scenes political murder and brigandage.

Analyzing Bwakamabé na Sakkadé's dictatorial ethos, Alpha Noël Malonga (2002:89) accordingly writes: "Bwakamabé na Sakkadé est la représentation de l'autoritarisme, de l'inculture, de la monstruosité de certains dirigeants africains qui usent de la force militaire pour écraser toute opposition à leur régime". Indeed, *The Laughing Cry* refracts the killing of many opponents of Daddy's policies. Captain Yabaka is among the victims of Daddy's regime. The latter and some of his companions have been arrested, tortured and shot dead by Daddy accompanied by members of his government. A macabre spectacle reminding Jesus's Passion, as the narrator epitomizes:

Yabaka and a dozen of his companions were shot at dawn.[...] Bwakamabé attended the execution in person, and insisted upon being accompanied by all the members of the Council of National Resurrection and all the ministers. They began by killing the first batch, while the Captain and five of his comrades, without blindfolds, were obliged to watch the spectacle of what awaited them. Then it was their turn. Bwakamabé, with a machine-pistol, joined the ranks of the firing squad, all of them Djabotama. The Captain was tied to a post in the form of a cross, with arms outstretched, his eyes exposed. The orders were to kill with single shots. At the first command, they must shoot to one side, very close but without hitting him. A pause. At the second command, aim at the bottom of his legs. A pause. At the third command, aim for his thighs. Another pause. At the fourth command, shoot at his arms. A pause. At the fifth command, fire at will. Aim at his vital parts to box him up. The head, the chest, the belly. The soldiers, stuffed to the gills with wee, emptied their magazines with great delight. (*The Laughing Cry*, pp.253-254)

The novel also refracts the murder of sixteen terrorists and accomplices affiliated with Téléma Terrorist group. These men arrested and slaughtered are accused for being activists militating against the dictatorial regime, as the media report: "A few lines in the French press announcing the execution of sixteen 'terrorists and accomplices' of the Téléma Group." (*The Laughing Cry*, p.241) This passage pinpoints that Bwakamabé's regime perpetrates political murders to weaken the voices of the masses. This group of activists, militating for the welfare of the downtrodden class is violently executed by the power-seeking government despite the fact that they were fighting for a right cause.

As for *Anthills of the Savannah*, James Anthony Nde (2017:74) notes that "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". This opinion is in tandem with Umelo's assertion (1991:91):

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe sees the soldiers as not being any better than the civilians that they ousted; if anything, they have become worse, having perfected torture, intimidation and cold-blooded killing as weapons to cow the opponents of their policies.

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Anthills of the savannah also adumbrates His Excellency's murderous activities. The victims are Sam's childhood friends: Ikem and Chris, two militants protesting against His Excellency's maladministration and all sorts of machinations. The first to be victimized is Ikem Osodi. In his speech delivered at the University of Bassa, he proposes that the head of the President should be removed from the national currency if his image is put in the nation's currency. The media misrepresents this message and pretends that he has called for a regicide. As a result, Major Johnson Ossai, swings into action and arrests Ikem Osodi. The latter is fatally wounded by gunshot in the scuffle that ensued between Major Johnson's Guards and him:

In the early hours of the morning a team of security officers effected the arrest of Mr. Osodi in his official flat at 2002 Kingsway Road in the Government Reservation Area and were taking him in the military vehicle for questioning at the RSC Headquarters when he seized a gun from one of his escorts. In the scuffle that ensued between Mr. Osodi and his guards in the moving vehicle Mr. Osodi was fatally wounded by gunshot. (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p. 101)

This passage shows that Ikem Osodi is fatally executed by the tyrannical regime as the result of his belief. This political opponent meets a sad death because of his radicalism towards the Kangan incumbent regime. Ikem can be considered as the spokesperson of Achebe's ideology, as Rajkumari Ashalata Devi in (2006:27) comments: "He sees himself as the passionate defender of the poor "and the dispossessed, so to say the less privileged and the wretched of the earth."

Apart from Ikem, the novel also dramatizes Chris's death. Christopher Oriko, another Sam's opponent, similarly got killed by a drunkard soldier who tries to abduct a school girl. Chris was trying to seek shelter in the North of the country after he was declared wanted. Unfortunately, he is murdered point-blank by a police officer stealing a lorry-load of beer and then abducting a school girl:

'A police officer stealing a lorry-load of beer and then abducting a school girl! You are a disgrace to the force.'

The other said nothing more. He unslung his gun, cocked it, narrowed his eyes while confused voices went up all around looking straight into the man's face daring him to shoot. And he did, point-blank into the chest presented to him. (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p. 129)

The circumstances of Chris's death clearly demonstrate the cruelty of this authoritarian regime. In line with this thought, Ojinmah (2010:91) avers that: "In Achebe's view, the circumstances of Chris's death typifies the depravity of military dictatorship to which human life has become worthless."

Also, it must be emphasized that the military dictatorship after violating human rights and murdering political leaders, brings terror to the oppressed. 'Terror' generally refers to an intense or overwhelming fear. It can have a political connotation when it becomes 'terrorism', known as the ideology of violence or the threat of violence carried out for political purposes. African ruling elites brutalize, terrorize and subjugate the dregs of the society. These authoritarian regimes commit exactions and brigandage, which causes an extreme fear to the peasant masses. In his seminal work, Ngũgĩ waThiong'o (1981:121) underscores the viciousness of terror practiced by in these words: "The comprador class rules by torture, fraud, imprisonment, military brutality, terror and so on to suppress the people on behalf of their paymasters in London, Paris, New York, Amsterdam and Tokyo." The Kenyan essayist clearly pinpoints that African regimes use all sorts of machinations to terrorize their victims.

Lopes and Achebe are two African writers who denounce these defects throughout their novels. In *The Laughing Cry*, Lopes dramatizes the situation of Maître who is petrified when he is summoned to the Presidential Palace in order to become Daddy's domestic and MC, as he stammers: "I'm sure it would have turned many people's heads to know they were going to be received at the Presidential Palace in a few hours. But I just had cold feet. Great ones like that, higher than the highest, as we say in Moundié, are best kept at a distance." (p.17)

As a result of his exactions, he has succeeded to terrorize his fellow citizen. Maître's fear of Daddy's figure lies may be on the portrayal that A. N. Malonga (2007:8) makes of these bestial leaders:

Le pleurez-rire met en scène un dictateur loufoque, le Marechal Ideloy Bwakamabe Na Sakkadé, prêt à tout pour s'éterniser à la tête de l'Etat et exerçant un pouvoir sans partage. [...] le portrait de ce personnage typique prend appui sur les stigmates onomastiques et dévoile une identité bestiale qui s'offre, par antiphrase, comme une célébration de l'humain et de l'humanisme.

Such an 'ontological' fear is similarly observed in *Anthills of the Savannah* through the attitude of the Commissioner for information and Attorney-General. As a matter of fact, the latter for fear of being excluded or accused of high treason, resorts to book-licking in order to avoid President Sam's anger: "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." (p. 14) This shows how His Excellency's collaborators or employees avoid his anger, resorting to flattery so as to win his confidence.

In a nutshell, African dictators have established an atmosphere of fear in their countries. They appear as wolves or scarecrows for the peasant masses. So far, the exploration of *The Laughing Cry* as well as *Anthills of the Savannah*, has shown that this dictatorship is noticeable through violence, manhunt, arbitrary arrests, police repression, political murder, and terror perpetrated by the ruling elites. The rationale behind all these evil rampant practices is to eliminate opposition in order to perpetuate their

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regimes. Furthermore, it is important to note that when African political leaders assume the mantle of power, they create means to preserve it.

3. CONTEXTUALIZING THE STRUGGLE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE POLITICAL POWER

It is a critically shared view that most of the African ruling elites who take the mantle of power, just after the independence, implement mechanisms, tricks, and political stratagems to preserve their political reign. These, do-or-die policies enact poison-tipped which could help them rule eternally. This last point of this study purports to highlight the way these despotic leaders endeavor preserve their corrosive leadership in the works under consideration.

Any reader conversant with *The Laughing Cry* and *Anthills of the Savannah* cannot miss to observe that the preservation of political power is achieved through nefarious practices such as demagoguery, the gagging of the press, political opportunism and the refusal to hold elections. To start with, it is important to assert that in a literary angle, the term 'Demagoguery' is used for an emotive dictator, a manipulator of consciousness. Hence, a demagogue is then this political leader who gains political power by appealing to peoples' emotions, instincts, and prejudice considered as manipulative and dangerous. This nefarious practice is mainly characterized by fallacious promises and defamation. A 'false promise' can be viewed as a statement declared solemnly and intended to dupe the masses. African rulers institutionalize fallacious promises in order to nourish the hope of the governed, to divert their attention and consolidate their leadership and power base.

In *The Laughing Cry*, for instance, Bwakamabé uses fallacious promises so as to preserve his leadership. The author provides the reader with a stickling illustration during Daddy's political journey in the Libotama Province. 'Sweet' things that Daddy intended to realize remain fallacious promises. For the State's Treasury was empty and people were enduring difficult times:

And he made promises. His Minister of Finance frowned heavily. What matter! He announced, just the same, a new road, a new school, a college, a high school, a hospital to replace that old dispensary which was more like a latrine. Water, electricity, telephones, television, a modern stadium, a hotel a factory, jobs...and just couldn't go on. (*The Laughing Cry*, p.166)

This extract consecrates the institutionalization of false promises in the political arena. The caucus of Moundié is replaced by falsehood which aims at preserving their seats. These leaders show no concern for the masses' interests. They are mostly conducted by private interest and materials pursuit. In this respect, DjibyDiaw (2016:34), says that: "The relationship between the elite and the masses can be summed up by the elite's over-assessment of itself and its contempt and lack of concern for the poor masses." Political as well as economic stability that Bwakamabé promises to his people while ascending to power remain a mere utopia. For under his rule, the country paradoxically turns into a land of upheaval and turmoil. Ever since, Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé pushes his country on the brink of recession which dramatically reduces gloomy hope to the point that they were conditioned to borrow money from Western countries in order to bail out the treasury coffers, as he contends:

Yesterday, I received your colleague, the Minister of Finance. Our Treasury is broke. The coffers are empty. The fruits of my journey to the uncles' land can't be collected immediately. The groundnut planted today doesn't spring up tomorrow. We too must wait to harvest what we have planted. (p.225)

Hence, one easily understands that Bwakamabé only resorts to illusion and deception in order to consolidate his power. This latter promises great bounce-back-ability to his economy at the seizure of his power; but the vow intends only to harbor his people's hope.

Similarly, *Anthills of the Savannah* shows how Sam resorts to false promises when he receives the delegation from Abazon in drought-stricken province which comes with a petition summoning His Excellency to visit their province. Unfortunately, Sam asks Professor Okong to dupe them:

Humour them, is what I'm saying. Gauge the temperature and pitch the message accordingly.' I will, Your Excellency. Always at your service. 'Now if indeed, they have brought a petition accept it on my behalf and tell them they can rest assured that their complaints or rather problems...their problems not complaints, will receive His Excellency's personal attention. (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p. 11)

Here, Sam deceives the delegation from Abazon. Truly, this pledge was fallacious since he only feigns to show a good image. For Sam, the Abazonians' delegation should not be given much attention because if their petition wins, it will pave the way to other delegations willing to have their petitions solved.

In a nutshell, African ruling elites use lies in the exercise of their power. Their storytelling and rhetoric aim at captivating the attention of the poor masses. Fallacious pledges are a strong tool used by politicians to strengthen their leaderships. These false promises are coupled with defamation which is another way of reinforcing their political ascendancy.

When we look at the word 'defamation', we realize that it carries connotation of "damaging somebody's reputation by saying or writing bad or false things about him/her". In fact, the African post-colonial political landscape is pervading with leaders who, in their iron rod politics, resort to defamation in the exercise of political power. In *The Laughing Cry*, Henri Lopes satirizes defamation through a notwithstanding, a harsh policy exercised by the regime, and a strong discrimination against the Djassikini

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ethnic group because of their tribal inclinations. Indeed, ZaHélène, Daddy's eldest sister, damages the reputation of the Djassikinis by insinuating his brother to punish all Djassikini's insurgents:

Hannibal, Hannibal, it's me your elder sister Za Hélène. Damned bandits! Show me that you are a chief. Show that you're a man. Show that you're my youngest brother. The best of my brothers. The only bother same-father-same-mother. The son of Ngakoro, son of Fouléma, son of Kiréwa, all brave ancestors who never heard of an injury without making those who dared defy them swallow their own blood and shit. [...] Robbers ... no doubt. Djassikini (a curse on their mother's darkest parts). [...] Hannibal, my brother, we must be revenged. We must revenge. In the name of God (she cut her throat with her forefinger), if you don't punish these thieves, these dirty natives all Djassikini you'll lose your own authority. (*The Laughing Cry*, pp.96-97)

Hence, the Djassikini who were already suffering from Daddy's retaliatory measures will be dethroned by a "brother same-father-same-mother", just to avoid their revenge. Meanwhile, Bwakamabé, taking a cue from ZaHélène, his elder sister, decides to intensify his policy. Hence, he demonizes the Djassikini and takes extra-legal measures to castigate them. This goes from cutting off ears, amputating hands to executing recalcitrant, as evidenced by the narrator:

A very brief one The President what he wanted, while calling on the Minister of Justice and his Supreme Court to devise appropriate legal terms. Any person (citizen of the country or foreign) who stole a bull, or just a piece wool, or anything inferior, equivalent, intermediary or superior; furniture, building or ringing piece of metal, would have an ear cut off; in case of a second offence, the second ear would go; in case of a third, amputation of the right hand and in case of a fourth, public execution in the main square. (*The Laughing Cry*, p.97)

In the same way, *Anthills of the Savannah* reconstructs aspects of defamation. In the novel, the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney-General as well as Professor Okong fall into the pitfall of defamation. In fact, Professor Okong endeavors to defame Christopher Oriko, the Commissioner for Information and, Ikem Osodi, Director of the state-owned newspaper the *National Gazette*. He accuses them of disloyalty, betrayal, and defection to the side of rebels. As for Professor Okong, Chris and Ikem, they were accused of fomenting a rebellion to overturn His Excellency. Obviously, this is a defamatory view since it only aims at tarnishing the reputation of his co-workers, as Professor Okong runs them down:

'Well, Your Excellency. I am sorry to be personal. But I must be frank. I believe that if care is not taken those friends of yours can be capable of fomenting dissatisfaction which will make the rebellion look like child's play. And if my sixth sense is anything to go by they may be causing a lot of havoc already.'

'That fine. Mr. Okong. I deal with facts not gossip.' (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p. 12)

However, Professor Okong's wrong accusations are disallowed by His Excellency because of its lack of authenticity and credibility. In spite of his attempt to out-do his friends, Professor Okong does not win the case. For this reason, the Attorney-General resorts to the same action and tries to damage the reputation of his friend. Thus, the Attorney-General resorts to defamation to evict his friend Chris. He charges him with betrayal and tries to convince His Excellency that he was not his ally and acolyte:

To speak the truth, your Excellency, I have no evidence of disloyalty on the part of my honorable.' He paused for effect. But nothing showed on His Excellency face.' But lawyers are also human. I have a personal feeling which may not stand up in court, I agree, but I hold it very strongly and if Chris were here I would say it to his face. I don't think Chris is one hundred percent behind you. (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p. 14)

The quotation captures the socio-political ills of neo-colonial leaders. These leaders bathe into defamation in order to remain in power and relegate their opponents to periphery. In brief, African political landscape is strewn over much social malaise. These anti-social behaviors are displayed by any intellectual who finds himself in a responsible position to cling on to power and preserve their position of leadership. However, these intellectuals also preserve their power by muffling activism and radical criticism through the gagging of the press.

'Gagging' derives from the verb to 'gag' meaning to prevent somebody from speaking freely or expressing his opinion. Obviously, the object of the press is to inform the public about the current issues. Unfortunately, African kleptocrats muzzle activism and criticism to cover their naked truth characterized by massive corruption, fraud, and repetitive cases of arbitrary arrest, damnable shooting of activists, and other anti-values. Those who dare lambaste their misdeeds are subjected to intimidation, if not cold-blooded killing. This is in tandem with Ayo Kehinde (2010:82) when he states: "Oppressive and repressive regimes antagonize freedom of speech to their personal advantages." Here, one notices that it is rather difficult for the press in Post-independence Africa to publish and write authentically about events occurring in the society.

In the *Laughing Cry*, the freedom of speech is alienated as much as the regime authorizes the existence of the only Editorial called the "Southern Cross, the one and only weekly newspaper in the Republic." (*Laughing Cry*, p.12) This state-owned editorial is the only medium of expression in the country. It is controlled by the despotic regime. It purports to cover the truth, promote falsehood above moral ethos, and restore the image of the despotic ruler. Indeed, Bwakamabé does not allow opposition and criticism. He therefore banishes the public sphere by gagging the press. He also bans the entry of the Western Press which criticizes the excesses of political dictators. In this regards: "He slashed asunder the French paper *Gavroche* Aujourd'hui, which dared to

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caricature our president without having its journalists flung into prison.” (*The Laughing Cry*, p.72) This Western press, unlike the Southern Cross, manages to infiltrate in the country leaving bare the social injustice imposed on the laboring masses.

In such a restrictive environment, the restriction of freedom of speech helps creating an alternative means which enables the masses to get access to information. Radio grapevine becomes however an alternative medium which informs the masses. Since the mass media is nonexistent in this country, the only one which exists engages in sycophancy and thus turns a blind eye and deaf ear to the social malaise prevailing in the Republic. Analyzing the impact of Press gagging in *The Laughing Cry*, Kalonju Zeze (1984:50) helps buttress this idea when he writes:

[La radiotrottoir est] un médium polyfonctionnel, une voix plurielle, anonyme et indéterminée [...] qui donne des informations, surtout celle qui sont du domaine secret et qui paraissent bien gênantes pour le pouvoir [...] Elle critique aussi les sources d'information officielle à caractère de propagande, et essaie de rétablir chaque fois une version plus conforme à l'histoire.

As can be seen, radio grapevine is therefore a medium which propagates even secret information in an authoritarian regime. The incapability of people to voice out their opinion drives them to engage in rumors. They rely on radio grapevine and believe in the political message it delivers. Notwithstanding the falseness of its information, people take it as a gospel and prefer to believe in what is spread than in what is published by the editorial, as the novel reads: “You! When you're told something, you never want to believe it. You say it's just rumors—radio grapevine. But you don't know that what radio grapevine says is true enough. Toads don't croak unless it's raining, dé.” (*The Laughing Cry*, p.22)

In the same way, *Anthills of the Savannah* captures the aspects of the gagging of the press when the narrator reveals the existence of a new penal code aiming at preventing the press from expressing freely. In fact, thanks to the article fourteen, section six, of the Newspaper Amendment Decree, the commissioner for information has the power over what is published and broadcasted in the press. That is why Christopher Oriko often quarrels with Ikem Osodi who thinks that “Journalism is not meant to make the environment cosy for leaders who are despotic. It is meant to prod them to act in the interest of the larger society and cause them sleepless nights.” (p. 82) Indeed, Ikem Osodi and Christopher Oriko do not find a common ground when it comes to broadcast and print the journal. As for Chris, the commissioner for information, Ikem should be issued a letter of authorization before he airs his information, as he argues:

Chapter fourteen, section six of the Newspaper Amendment Decree gives the honorable Commissioner, general and specific powers over what is printed in Gazette. You know that well. I will now invoke the letter of that law and send my instruction in writing. Expect it in the next half-hour. It is clear that's how you want it, so I will oblige. (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p. 34)

This passage illustrates the antidemocratic nature of the Kangan government for its administration censors and deprives people of the freedom of speech. This forfeiture is also visible through restrictions imposed on journalists in the exercise of their profession. They receive dictum from their senior officials and prevention to air the truth, as Ikem Osodi brings evidence:

‘BB. You've just been told, BB. That's what my friends at radio Station write in bold yellow letters across the face or records too dirty to play on the air. It means Not To Be Broadcast,’ explains Ikem again... Chris might have added though that it doesn't now apply to dirty records alone. Anything inconvenient to those in government NTBB’ (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p. 36)

This quotation highlights the degree of censorship and restriction exercised and imposed on journalists. The press corps is silenced by politicians in order to operate without restraints. The activists who dare lambaste the defects of the public office holders are automatically made redundant or evicted in order to avoid the revelation of their misuse.

All things considered, Lopes and Achebe are of the opinion that the media, as the fourth power in a democratic regime, play an important role in the building of a society of justice and peace. Integral to this conviction is Keyinde's argument that (2010:83): “In as much as the mass media today strip away the literary husks from the kind of bourgeois self-interpretation and utilize them as marketable forms of the publics, provided in a culture of consumers, the original meaning is reserved.” This excerpt corroborates the assertion that the mass media reconstructs the trouble of the nation to “the failure of our rulers to establish vital links with the poor and disposed of his country, with the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation's being.” (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p.84.) That is why African rulers should create independent press in order to prod them to act both in favor of the hybrid class of intellectuals and that of oppressors.

Refusing to hold elections is another ethos characteristic of despotic regimes. In *The Laughing Cry*, for instance, the power-hungry Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé prohibits holding elections knowing that they could give rise to his dethronement. This is why he and his sycophants, cunningly extol the virtues of the one party system during the council of ministers.

It was the only realistic solution for the country. Democracy must be pursued, of course, but not by aping the whites. Authorizing several political parties would only encourage a realignment in antagonistic tribal blocs, and promote fratricidal conflict. No, not a single example could be quoted where this system had worked in Africa. It would never work. Africa was not Europe. The next speaker stressed that the fight against underdevelopment imposed the need for a strong regime: “don't be afraid of words, we must have a dictatorship: a dictatorship expressed in the interests of the people. [...] He demonstrated that to hold elections in our country, even under a single –list system, would simply create opportunities for disorder by power-hungry politicians. [...] Ever since Africa was Africa, the chief of the village, in our culture had never been elected. (*The Laughing Cry*, pp.73-74)

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This passage highlights the nature of Bwakamabé's dictatorial regime which willingly clung to the throne arguing that voting is an imported culture from western countries and qualifies it to be a "hypocrisy of the white mentality". (p.74) Hence, the meeting of the council of ministers ends with categorical rejection of the multiparty system with these words: "...no question of ceding power to a rabble bemused by Satan." (p.75)

Considering himself as the providential leader of his country, Bwakamabé confiscates the power by prohibiting multiparty system and radical opposition, as the narrator clearly tells:

Only the influence of divine inspiration could induce him to place his power in play, or to renounce it. Don't joke with power. He was ready to fight, to die and to kill to keep in his pious hands the power conferred on him by God. African societies, by tradition and historical necessity needed to be well controlled and well directed. (*The Laughing Cry*, pp.75-76)

This accounts for his condemnation of Moundié and "the Gang of Twenty", a group of young students who freely demand elections, addressing Bwakamabé in the names of various birds, fishes or beasts of the savannah. In a seemingly pedagogical perspective, Daddy warns and justifies their arrest:

In a sound family, there was no place for a child who wanted to command in place of his father. If he was a real member of the family, not a snake or a slave, he wouldn't be afraid to make his disagreement known. He would express it openly. What was all this nonsense about wanting to write on an anonymous paper, while hiding yourself in a booth. We mustn't encourage that kind of falsity. (p.74)

In the same way, in the fictional Republic of Kangan, Sam prohibits the organization of elections by cowering and abducting his opponents. A flaw that Ikem Osodi criticizes in a meeting held at the University of Bassa when he appeals: "Do you not buy and sell votes intimidate and kidnap your opponents just as the politicians used to do?" (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p. 96)

Another ethos characteristic of African ruling class is tribalism. Generally known as the attitude of being loyal to one's tribe, it, according to Claude S. Phillips (1998:32), "refers to the 'defense of a so-called 'tribal' interest in contrast to a larger interest.'" African writers in their attempt to expose the misdeeds of African potentates endeavor to lampoon tribalism which is almost rampant in post-independence African countries.

The Laughing Cry satirizes this flaw which reaches alarming proportions with Daddy's ascension to power, a reign characterized by favoritism or the divide-and-rule policy. As an illustration, in the choice of his collaborators, Bwakamabé does not look at people's competence to manage the post, but rather, his first criterion is ethnicity. For he decides to be surrounded only by his own people, as he contends:

Listen, Maître, you must understand that this is a political post. In my position, I must be surrounded by my own people and no one else. [...] Don't joke with political posts, Maître. A butler is like a cabinet secretary or a doctor: absolutely must be one of us. (*The Laughing Cry*, pp.20-21)

Narrations such as "In my position, I must be surrounded by my own people and no one else" and "A butler is like a cabinet secretary or a doctor: absolutely must be one of us" tell more about many African rulers' penchant to privilege tribal affinities over professional competence. They prefer to recruit people from their own ethnic group, giving therefore rise to favoritism, prejudices, tribal rivalries and provincialism. As a reminder, the country of Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé is divided into ethnic groups. The major ones are Djabotama which is the tribe of Daddy Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé, and Djassikini which is the tribe of his political opponent Polépolé. The country is only dominated by Djabotama who have all the privileges (accession to political positions, the right to obtain the scholarship, the right to integrate the police force, etc.). For instance, when the French great tailor, Serge de ruyvère wishes to welcome at least five trainees in his Parisian studios, "Daddy inserted one of his nephews, who was about twenty-two at the time and had just entered Class five, after many failures and repeated years. He added three other Djabotamas and, on the advice of Monsieur Gourdain, one individual of another tribe." (p.48)

The Djabotamas and their acquaintances have a word to say in the choice of ministers and other political positions. This is the case of Ma Mireille who has her brother appointed at a higher position in the new government, always on the advice of Monsieur Gourdain, and under the guidance of the Djabotama great diviner and elders invited to concoct the new government:

That day, Daddy had summoned to the reception hall of the Palace the most celebrated diviner in the country, the same who had officiate on the night of his traditional investiture in the gardens. He also called his maternal uncle, some close members of the family and the Minister for customary Affairs. [...] A few hours later, the radio announced the first ministerial reshuffle since the coming to power of General Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé and the Patriotic Council of National Resurrection. The Chief of Political Security was, conspicuously, promoted to Minister of Culture, the Arts, Museums and Leisure, while Monsieur Gourdain had a new master in the person of Ma Mireille's same-mother-same-father brother, senior advisor on development and hitherto Counsellor at our London Embassy. (*The Laughing Cry*, pp.53-54)

Here, the phrase "Ma Mireille's same-mother-same-father brother" evidences the 'tribalisation' of the administration almost officialized in many post-colonial African countries gangrened by 'clientélisme'. Furthermore, when General Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé reorganizes his Security Service, Monsieur Gourdain, his comrade in arms, the real inspirer of perpetual repression, conspicuously recruits any who can speak the Kibotama language irrespective of education and other physical considerations:

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Right from the time when he was still leaving at the Libotama Hotel, he set about the reorganization of the Security Services, selecting systematically all those who spoke Kibotama, or who came from neighbouring areas, who were unemployed or had just been rejected by educational establishments. All this mob was to form the core of the secret police, hypocritically styled "The Presidential Documentation Service. [...] All those whose names or place of birth signaled the native region of Polépolé were dismissed out-of-hand. As for the "compatriots" of Bwakamabé, it was explained to them right away what duties they had now to perform, in addition to their official ones, and how much they would be paid. (The Laughing Cry, pp.55-56)

As it can be seen, people who constitute the secret services are recruited not on the basis of their competence and savoir faire, but on the basis of their tribal acquaintance with Daddy. Consequently, natives of other tribes are precluded and denied the possibility of integrating the police force.

Additionally, apart from Djabotamas' favoritism, the regime exercises a violent repression of Djassikini especially after a missed coup perpetrated by Captain Haraka. According to the dictator, this failed putsch of Haraka deductively shows the deprivation of all Djassikini, as narrator evidenced: "And he declared that all the Djassikini were thieves and their wives whores [...] He assured us, cutting his throat with his finger, that he himself was no tribalist, no racist, but that those Djassikini were nothing but filth, just that." (The Laughing Cry, p.148)

From the above passage, we understand that Bwakamabé is an opportunist. In fact, he seeks opportunities to reveal his tribal propensities. Truthfully, he did not like Djassikini who are an ethnic group of his political opponent Polépolé. He profits from Haraka's missed coup to eliminate Djassikini. The following passage is elusive: "Several more Djassikini were executed and it was decided that they should no longer enjoy scholarships, nor enroll in the diplomatic service or the army." (The Laughing Cry, p.153)

Likewise, Anthills of the Savannah stigmatizes tribalism that the northerners impose on southerners. This unfairness is visible through the construction of facilities. The North is well-equipped whereas the South presents an image of a region which is abandoned by the regime. While Abichi, which is a village of His Excellency and many political leaders, presents almost the same image as the capital city, the South presents a sad image with crumbling infrastructures. The following passage is evidence:

Even the asphalt on which luxurious sped towards the North told its own story of two countries. Thickly-laid and cushiony at first it steadily deteriorated into thin black paint applied with niggardly strokes of a brush over the laterite beginning to break up and reveal, as the journey progressed, more and more of the brown underlay, forcing the elegant and beautiful luxurious to lurch from side to side in order to avoid deepest ruts and pot-holes. (Anthills of the Savannah, p. 122)

Obviously, the extract above reveals the way northerners are relegated to oblivion by Kangan ruling elites. They lack basic infrastructures. Their roads, schools, house etc. are totally dilapidated. Consequently, the government does not take draconian measures in order to jugulate this ordeal because of their tribal propensities.

Furthermore, Chinua Achebe also lambastes tribalism which gangrenes the school sphere. Indeed, the students from the South emerge in all domains because of favoritism and advantage their gain on the basis of tribal propensities. At the University of Bassa for example, weak students are promoted because they have tribal relationships with the faculty of the University of Bassa, as Chris argues: "So what are we talking about? Do you not form tribal pressure groups to secure lower admission requirements instead of striving to equal or excel any student from anywhere? You refer academic tariff walls behind which you can potter around in mediocrity." (Anthills of the Savannah, p. 96) Tribalism that the author criticizes here contributes to the drop of students standards of education, but also to the loss of credibility of the University of Bassa.

The scrutiny of Anthills of the Savannah also reveals that African political leaders are tied with their people by tribal links. For instance, Abazonians voted "no" in the plebiscite which prevented President Sam to hold on to power, not because their province was neglected by president Sam, but because they did not receive any go-ahead from Ikem, their tribal leader, as the Abazonians' spokesman appeals:

When we were told two years ago that we should vote for the big chief to rule for ever and all kinds of people we had never seen before running in and out of our village asking us to say yes I told my people: We have Osodi in Bassa. If he comes home and tells us that we should say yes we will do so because he is there as our eye and ear. I said: If what these strange people are telling us is true, Osodi will come or he will write in his paper and our sons will read it and know at is true. But he did not come to tell us and did not write it in his paper. So we knew that cunning had entered that talk. (p. 76)

Here, one easily underscores that Ikem Osodi is trustworthy by Abazonians because he is a native of Abazon. He is considered as their "eyes" and "ears" that is why they endorse him and reject other politicians who do not belong to their tribe. From the forgoing, easily infers the wickedness and baseness of African political leaders who openly resort to tribalism in order to cling on to power.

Another ethos becoming almost a common issue in African despotic regimes in the post-independence phase is financial embezzlement which is referred to as the stealing of money that you are responsible for or that belongs to your employer. Obviously, many public office holders get involved in a network of fraud, theft and broad daylight robbery. These leaders squander the public funds in opulence, extravagance and personal aggrandizement. Linking the novel with the political situation

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of the continent, Côme Mankassa, in the columns of "Semaine Africaine" dated September 11, 1960, criticizes self-appointed African political leaders who misappropriate the public funds for, personal pleasure, luxury and their own basic amenities when he writes:

Trop de voitures ont été payées aux frais de la princesse. Les salaires de ces fonctionnaires issus de l'africanisation sentimentale augmentent dans des proportions injustes. Non content d'exorbitants traitements et de privilèges divers (voiture, logements et équipements, etc.) que le gouvernement leur accordait, les ministres se livraient aux détournements des deniers publics, pour satisfaire leurs plaisirs, au mépris de nombreux chômeurs.

These politicians resort to this evil machination in order to ingratiate themselves in power, regardless of ordeals, hardships and lean times that the dregs of humanity suffer from. This is true for Daddy Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé who is the epitome of this evil practice in *The Laughing Cry*. For, he bathes into an administrative malpractice in the exercise of his incumbency. As a matter of fact, when he seeks recognition of his despotic regime by the OAU, this dictator takes the luxury to invite a Parisian tailor Serge de Ruyvère in order to manufacture his suits. Likewise, his wife Ma Mireille orders the latest creations from that year's collection and invites the West Indian hairdresser Theodora for the occasion:

The great tailor Serge de Ruyvère, of the Faubourg-Sait-honoré, was flown over first class and accommodated at public expense, to work on the wardrobe in detail, and was able finally to produce a good two dozen of three-pieces, some Dakar-style costumes and innumerable shirts and ties, all bearing his famous monogram: SR. Ma Mireille profited from the opportunity to order the latest creations from that year's collection. On the tailor's advice, she decided to include in her delegation the West Indian hairdresser Theodora... (p.47)

Here, Lopes clearly discloses the attitude of African rulers who lead a luxurious life and bathe into personal ostentation at the taxpayer's expense. Daddy is a perfect example of these leaders who exercise a careless policy regardless of poverty and misery of his downtrodden class. For, despite the fact that the country experiences a difficult time, he takes the luxury to misappropriate the public funds and spend it for personal use. For example, when he wishes to go to Ethiopia for the recognition of his dictatorship, he decides to hire a plane that takes them to Addis Ababa as it is clearly evidenced in the following passage: "Nothing for it but to hire a plane, look! Power is a serious matter. When one is looking for recognition by the OAU, one doesn't disembark from a scooter. Go and charter me a jet. Plenty of money here." (*The Laughing Cry*, p.48) This act appears as a waste of money. Bwakamabé uses the public funds willingly without taking care of the ruled that are in the throes of poverty. His journey is hundred percent sponsored by the public treasury. It is important to note that all these expenditures made for private use cost him an arm and a leg and is insightfully an act of administrative mismanagement.

In addition, Daddy transforms the Public Treasury as his own property. He drags it everywhere he goes in order to penalize who ever shall seize power by force, as the media lampoon: "According to radio grapevine, he was always careful on these journeys to carry with him all the cash in the Public Treasury, so as to paralyze anyone who might toy with the idea of playing the trick he had played on Polépolé" (p.156) This attitude drives Bwakamabé to squander the taxpayers' money for personal use. For example when he went on a tour through Libotama Province, he decides to share the public funds to the people of his native province. The under mentioned passage is illustrative: "Daddy, with big, nervous and dramatic gestures, tore off the elastic band and began to throw into the wind, in the manner of a seedsower, copies of his effigy which spun like propellers before setting on the surface of the river." (p.172)

From the above extract, we understand that Bwakamabé is an embodiment of an administrative malpractice. He prefers leading an ostentatious life for the sake of a personal aggrandizement instead of providing social amenities for his people. His malpractice of Daddy is also visible through the creation of political positions for his entourage. For the sake of argument, Daddy even appointed a secretary in charge of car parks; a portfolio which is very useless for a state. The passage below brings more evidence:

Here followed a list of certain ministers and secretaries of state, whose names are lost (there were so many changes), but of whom one was charged with "expenditure from the Treasury", another with "control of State expenditure", a third with car parks and a last with "the presidential press." (p.174)

By the same token, *Anthills of the Savannah* exposes the financial embezzlement which prevails in Kangan and undermines the exercise of its political power. Indeed, President Sam is a prototype of malfeasance since he illegally embezzles money from the public Treasury in order to refurbish Abichi Lake. This refurbishment does not provide a financial interest for the peasant masses, but it only aims at satisfying his delusion of grandeur. The narrator brings evidence of the price of the refurbishment.

Going up to it with the great shimmering expanse of the artificial lake waters stretching eastwards into the advancing darkness on your left and the brightly lit avenue taking you slowly skywards in gigantic (...) The rumored twenty million spent on its refurbishment by the present administration since the overthrow of civilians who had built it at a cost of forty five million may still be considered irresponsibly extravagant in our circumstances. (*Anthills of the Savannah*, pp.43-44)

From the forgoing, one infers how dictatorial regimes excels in financial embezzlement in order to perpetuate their tyranny and ostracize the grass roots. The impact of this evil practice is undeniably tremendous since it contributes to the total pauperization of the peasant masses who are condemned to live a poverty-stricken life.

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Furthermore, all the social spheres of the postcolonial countries are almost plagued by moral depravation. *The Laughing Cry* and *Anthills of the Savannah* dramatize this decadence mainly through flaws of the ruling elites who lose their moral compass, and commit despicable acts which exteriorize their sexual mania.

In *The Laughing Cry*, sexual bestiality which is rampant in the Congolese society, becomes the epitome of Maître and Daddy. André Patient Bokiba and Antoine Yila (2002:32): lend credence to this assertion when they write:

L'exercice tyrannique du règne Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé se caractérise par la violence qui est non seulement physique mais aussi sexuelle. C'est dans cette perspective que ZaHelène, la grande sœur du président est violée farouchement de même que Mademoiselle Malaïka Yabaka, la sœur du capitaine Yabaka ; mais aussi, cette violence atteint des proportions alarmantes lorsque le Directeur de la sécurité présidentielle, Monsieur Gourdain s'est permis d'introduire une bouteille dans la voie rectale d'un paisible citoyen.

As a matter of fact, Maître encourages polygamy as a customarily obligation. For as he maintains: "to have only one woman is like having only one cord to your kora." (*The Laughing Cry*, p. 6) He even furthers that: "the wife's sisters are little wives to her husband. [...] A wife who wants her man to herself is an egotist. [...] A man who stays with just one woman is a weakling." (p. 7) Hence, among his numberless mistresses, we can mention Soukali, a wife of a rich customs inspector; Ma Mireille, Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé's wife and Cécile, Soukali's lady-in-waiting. Maître has a reputation of letting appear his sexual obsession through his tremendous sexual intercourse with his mistresses. Indeed, throughout the novel, he recounts his frolics passionately giving the impression of porn films' shooting. The narrator recounts his flirt with Ma Mireille; the First Lady. "Ah, Maître, what are you doing? What are you doing? Ay! You're going to tear the heart out of me, Maître. You want to take it all? Eh? Is that it? Eh, Maître? But why? Oh, Maître!" Too late. No wind could now hold the buffalo in all his strength. He was giving, giving, giving." (*The Laughing Cry*, p.83)

As for Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé, his perverted morality and bestiality is obvious through his affairs with his endless mistresses. Apart from Ma Mireille, his wife, Daddy has at least five more sweet little "First Ladies". For the "Guinarou", monogamy is the white men's heritage and has no raison d'être in the African setting, as he argues: "For other occasions, one knew of at least five more sweet little 'First Ladies'. Two were of our country, though not of the Djabotama people. The others came from Mali, Guinea, Somalia, Sudan, Congo or Zaire where, as you know, there are enough beauties in the streets to take away your breath." (p.15) Allusion to Mali, Guinea, Somalia, Sudan, Congo or Zaire, doesn't mean that these countries the only places in Africa where sex is practiced as a commercial assert. This quotation evidences African leaders' perverted and corrupted mindsets which manifest through their sexual affairs. Maître and Daddy's quest for sexual pleasure is quenched on their different journeys. Indeed, they take the luxury to have sex with the most "appetizing virgins" who are therefore granted to all the members of his delegation on a journey. Here again, Maître considers it as a customarily legacy among the Djabotama dignitaries, as he keeps on: Up to a certain rank, all the members of the delegation had the pleasure of discovering under their mosquito nets, at the end of the day, a gift that was living, young, hot and firm, and which it would have been maladroit, nay insulting, to refuse. I have myself profited from this custom many times. This is legacy from our ancient traditions which, moreover, the most intelligent of the Uncles have urged to preserve scrupulously, to protect ourselves from the alienating and isolating influences of the modern world. My grandfather, who was of high rank among the Djabotama-hence the possessor of many wives-never missed an opportunity to gratify a guest in his manner, for the sweetening of his stay." (*The Laughing Cry*, p.168)

Narrations such as "I have myself profited from this custom many times" and "...never missed an opportunity to gratify a guest in his manner, for the sweetening of his stay" evidence how these political leaders hide behind their tradition to legalize their bestiality and unfaithfulness for the sake of satiating their uncontrolled libido.

Moral degradation also corrodes the security forces. As a matter of the fact, the novel reveals that some soldiers in charge of controlling frontiers at the time they were looking for Haraka, harass and demand sexual rights over and beyond what was allowed by customs and decorum: "Delegations from the frontier provinces asked to be received by the President: they complained of the tendency of those in uniform to make exactions and demand sexual rights over and beyond what was allowed by custom and decorum." (*Anthills of the Savannah*, p. 139) This passage shows how these officers bathe into amoral practices, showing therefore their moral intellectual mediocrity.

In the same way, *Anthills of the Savannah* portrays Sam as a sex maniac. Like Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé, His Excellency encourages polygamy. For, in a party he organizes, he invites Beatrice, and openly declares that African leaders are always polygamists, insinuating that a worthy despot cannot be blamed for having unfaithful relationships with other mistresses. Beatrice for example is among those who should have fallen into his trap, as she testifies later: "And then came the master's voice summoning me to have my turn in the bed chamber of African polygamy". (p. 30) Regardless that Beatrice is a wife of his childhood friend Christopher Oriko, she too, as it is the fate of all women guests at Sam's Presidential Palace, will pay the 'droit de seigneur'.

Moreover, *Anthills of the Savannah* helps the reader figure out how all the security services of the Kagan Republic are pervaded by immoral practices. As an illustration, a drunkard sergeant, celebrating the His Excellency's downfall, tries to abduct a

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school girl: "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 in these parts by fence of hideously-spiked cactus. He was pulling her by the wrists, his gun slung from the shoulder." (Anthills of the Savannah, p. 128)

Apart from this immoral civil servant, the novel also lambastes depraved physicians. Doctor Ofe is a perfect example of perverted and immoral doctors. He dares asking twenty five manilla to his patient before the surgical operation and disappears when he receives the money; leaving his patient confined to bed and dying:

But I had to place beside it the image of that wretched man lying in unspeakable agony for four days and nights in the surgical ward while his distracted relations ran from hospital to a distant village and back again trying in vain to raise the twenty five manilla that DrOfe must have before he would operate (...) Three nurses spoke of their efforts to call DrOfe on the telephone and his threats of disciplinary action against them if they continued disturbing him at home and of his instructions to give the man yet another shot of morphia. (Anthills of the Savannah, p. 30)

Doctor Ofe's categorical refusal to heal the dying patient before receiving the money illustrates the downfall of professional ethic and common sense among African civil servants. For by breaking the Hypocrate oath, Ofe embodies the moral decadence of an administration gangrened by public servants full of megalomania and snobbery.

One of the recurrent features in his works set in post-independence Africa is the presence of characters imbued with a certain delusion of grandeur. They actually behave like snobs defined in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, (2005:756) as "persons who pay too much respect to social position or wealth, or who despise persons who are of lower position." Put in another way, these persons act like megalomaniac because of their greed for power. It is at this level that this adjective drawn from the Psychiatric jargon carries connotations of a kind of mental disorder characterized by delusions of grandeur, wealth and power. According to the same dictionary, a megalomaniac is "a person who has a passion for doing things on a very large scale. He has a mad for belief that he is more important, more powerful than he is." (p.275)

In The Laughing Cry for instance, aspects of megalomania and snobbery appear when Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé prepares his journey to Ethiopia so as to seek recognition of his oligarchical regime. He takes the luxury to call for a Parisian tailor and to hire a jet for the occasion. The latter thinks that wearing cloths manufactured locally and disembarking from a scooter at such a meeting place, is unworthy of his rank, no matter what this costs to the public Treasury, as he contends:

"Nothing for it but to hire a plane, look! Power is a serious matter. When one is looking for recognition by the OAU, one doesn't joke disembark from a scooter. Go and charter me a jet. Plenty of money here." When the young Cabinet Secretary saw the estimate, he could think of nothing better than presenting it to the President.

"Well? I've already told you, for God's sake! (The Laughing Cry, p.48)

Daddy's contention "Power is a serious matter" shows that the ruling elites in their attempt to appear great and powerful resort to these social ills in order to hold tightly to power. Furthermore, for the sake of quenching their megalomania and snobbery, Bwakamabé Na Sakkadé projects changes the currency and replaced it by copies of his effigy in order to be praised and venerated: "Daddy, with big, nervous and dramatic gestures, tore off the elastic band and began to throw into the wind, in the manner of a seedsower, copies of his effigy which spun like propellers before settling on the surface of the river." (The Laughing Cry, p.172)

This reminds of His Excellency Sam's megalomaniac attitude in Anthills of the Savannah. The novel reveals that in his quest for veneration, Sam recommends his minister of finance to display his picture in the new currency of Kangan, as the narrator spines: "The Central Bank of Kangan was completing plans to put the president's image on the nation's currency." (p.113) Unlike Daddy who succeeds to coin his image on the nation's currency, His Excellency attempts in vain to display his effigy. Additionally Sam's delusion of grandeur is also exposed through his craving desire to build luxurious and sumptuous buildings just for the sake of showing up that he belongs to a special class; the upper class:

Going up to it now with the great shimmering expanse of the artificial lake waters stretching eastwards into the advancing darkness on your left and the brightly lit avenue taking you slowly skywards in gigantic circles round and up the hill, on top of which the Presidential Retreat perches like a lighthouse, was a movingly beautiful experience. The rumored twenty million spent on its refurbishment by the present administrative since the overthrow of civilians who had built it at a cost of forty five million may still be considered irresponsibly extravagant in our circumstances. (p.43)

Spending a bundle of money at the taxpayers' expense in order to refurbish buildings obviously evidences Sam's delusion of grandeur. For, as it is said above: "forty five million may still be considered irresponsibly extravagant". This shows how megalomania and snobbery drive African ruling elites to crave for their own prestige rather than investing themselves seek solutions to issues of public interest.

All things considered, African potentates in their bid to preserve their leadership, externalize some negative traits in the exercise of their political power. Yet, The Laughing Cry and Anthills of the Savannah are replete with some illustrative flaws which still plague the political arena of many postcolonial African countries. These two chef oeuvres portray Africa in its post-independence phase, mainly when this continent became "a cesspool of corruption and misrule." (Christopher Heywood, 1975:82)

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CONCLUSION

Almost half a century after most African countries gained sovereignty, postcolonial writers have ever since captured the theme 'political realm' through their aesthetics. The gist of this study has been to evidence the manifestations of political praxis as they are contextualized in Henry Lopes' The Laughing Cry and Chinua Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah. Crucial to this perspective is that the postcolonial novel is a child of social transformations; a genre that offers a blueprint to transcend the African experience. The analysis has shown that the ruling elites struggle to cling to power resorting to demagoguery, gagging of the press, elections boycott among the other perfidious stratagems. Their ethos rank from tribalism, corruption, financial embezzlement, moral depravation, megalomania, and robbery just to mention a few. Such a chaotic mismanagement of the political power negatively impacts the laboring masses which are totally disillusioned. Since "The national bourgeoisie that took on the baton of rationalisation, industrialisation, bureaucratisation in the name of nationalism turned out to be a kleptocracy" (Anthony Appiah Kwame, 1995: 121), the people's disenchantment is actually ignited by the abuse of human rights, unemployment, the pauperization, transforming Africa into a continent in turmoil characterized by violence, arbitrary arrests, torture, political repression and murder, manhunt, and terror. The people thought that independence could solve this plague, but unfortunately it only worsens and, condemnsthem as the 'wretched of the earth'. Disenchanted with the policies of their black leaders who marginalize and relegate them to oblivion, their exasperation prods them to think that their country is accursed. This Confirms then the apocalyptical image that Frantz Fanon(1976: 101) once drew of Africa, a continent where the post-colonial ruling class condemns the toiling masses to a visible common suicide, as he observes:

The peasant who goes on scratching out a living from the soil, and the unemployed man who never finds employment do not manage, in spite of public holidays and flags, new and brightly colored though they may be, to convince themselves that anything has really changed in their lives. The bourgeoisie who are in power vainly increase the number of processions; the masses have no illusions. They are hungry; and the police officers, though they are now Africans, do not serve to reassure them particularly. The masses begin to sulk; they turn away from this nation in which they have been given no place and begin to lose interest in it.(quoted by G. O. Onibonoje, KoleOmotoso and O. A. Lawal.)

As a final assessment, this study posits political praxis as one of the topical issues in the African postcolonial novel. Admittedly,The Laughing Cryand Anthills of the Savannah can be analyzedthrough the lens of the postcolonial theory as political novels. For through artistic innovation and experimentation, Henri Lopes and Chinua Achebe have shown that no matter the argument on post-colonial politics in Africa, the ruling class, be it in Francophone or Anglophone area, abuses and misuses political power.

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