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BY

THE AFRICAN WRITER AS A COUNTER
FORCE TO DICTATORSHIP:
A STUDY OF ACHEBE AND FARAH

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**BEING A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT
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AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN ENGLISH**

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this thesis was carried out by Adedamola Adetokunbo Ogunmola of the Department of English Studies, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba- Akoko, under my supervision.



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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the Almighty God for seeing me through this programme.

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To Jehovah Almighty, the source, the inspiration, the beginning and the end. Before Him, there were no majesties and after Him, there would be none. I thank You for your faithfulness and care for me.

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Finally to the dead soldier, who fought many wars and lost one for her breadth flew into space one cold morning after the harvesters came and had a bountiful harvest for she was harvested into the bossom of the Lord. Emilia Omoleye Ogunmola (1898-2005).

ABSTRACT

The problem of dictatorship has become a frequent feature of military governments, especially in Asia, Latin- America and Africa. Grievances, complaints , political restructuring, desires for more freedom and yearnings for a change of government by the people had in the past provided avenues for these dictatorships. It is against this backdrop that this study is examining how dictatorship can be tackled effectively without recourse to anarchy and chaos using Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Nurruhin Farah's *Sweet and Sour Milk*. The research further examines the relationship between dictatorship and governance, how African writers such as Wole Soyinka, Ali Mazrui, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O among others were able to get involved in the socializing dimensions of governance, and how they were able to successfully articulate their views concerning bad governance in particular and the public decision making process in general.

The methodology employed in this thesis was textual analysis as both the primary and secondary sources were thoroughly scrutinized. The method also helped to categorize the texts according to their characterization, language and cultural referents. The method also helped to examine how African writers have organized themselves into opposition forces against dictatorship through the analyses of the themes of the drift towards dictatorship of the African leaders, its effects on the masses, and its degrading effect on the African continent as expressed in the selected texts.

The project discovers that both Achebe and Farah were able to pass their message across through different narrative techniques such as Point of view, Allusion, Imagery, Idioms and Proverbs among others. It also discovers that both authors concluded that dictatorship which usually arises under the guise of correcting some anomalies created by earlier leaderships, usually end up posing more danger to the society than what it intends to correct. Both Achebe and Farah depicted this through Sam and The General respectively. Other characters such as Ikem, Beatrice, Loyaan and Soyaan all represent the reformist in the society who keeps putting their best to have a better society.

This study recommends that, democracy, being a promising tool regarding the attainment of human ideals, requires the need of intelligent operators and facilitators and this has been achieved by the African writer through their vehement opposition to dictatorship. This research provides in-depth materials for further studies of the subject

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Background Information

Power can either be legitimate when the individual exercising it have been granted the necessary authority and this authority to exercise power must come from the people and can usually be found in written documents such as constitution or declarations. Also according to the Longman active study dictionary eight impression, "Power is the legal right or authority to do something and the ability to make people do make people do you want" (572) while the encyclopedia Americana, 1974 vol. 9, defines dictatorship as "a form of government in which a person or group possesses absolute powers without effective con situation limitations"(82). In the post-war era, dictatorships became a frequent feature of military government especially in Latin America, Asia and Africa. In the case of many African countries, after achieving independence in the post-war wave of decolonization, several Presidents gradually transformed into dictatorial rulers. These regimes often proved unstable with the personalization of power in the hands of the dictator and his associates. It is often alleged that the rise of these dictatorships was substantially influenced by the cold war dynamics. Both the United States and the Soviet Union managed to expand or at least maintain a stronghold on their interests by financing paramilitary and political groups and encouraging coups d'etats especially in Africa, which have led countries to brutal civil wars and subsequent manifestations of authoritarianism.

Other terms that are synonymous with dictatorship include tyranny, authoritarianism, autocracy, and despotism. The essential ingredient in all is power and authority. Tyranny is a repressive type of personal rule into which any or all of

the other forms deteriorate. This is because tyranny is characterized by complete arbitrary exercise of power as it has no regards for the rights and life of individuals. Grievances, complains and yearnings for a change of government by the people have, in the past, provided room for dictatorship. Dictatorial regimes are said to attempt changes for the better in the social, political and economic system of the nation or state. Man loves power naturally and in fact, this at times starts from the family and then extends to other spheres of life in the society. A general overview of the system sees dictatorship to have been put in place to revolutionarize and reform certain laws in the state. All the six continents of the world have, at time or the other, been subjected to one form of dictatorship or the other. In the middle east and Africa, leaders such as Muammar al-Gaddafi of Libya, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt and Saddam Hussein of Iraq created personality cults in which they became the face of their nations both within and internationally.

Most military dictatorships are formed after a coup d'état has ousted the previous government. One very unique pattern was followed by Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq which began as a one-party system but over the course of its rule turned into a military dictatorship as its leaders donned military uniforms and became closely involved in government. In Pakistan, the former rulers, Muhammed Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf have held singular referenda to elect themselves as presidents of Pakistan for several years as well as having general elections to bring in civilian prime ministers who are politically subordinate to the President. In the past, military juntas have justified their rule as a way of bringing political stability to the nation or rescuing it from the threat of "dangerous ideologies". In Latin America, the threat of communism was often used, while the Middle East, the

desire to keep Israel and Islamic fundamentalists under “check” proved an important motivating factor. In Africa, it is usually argued that politicians are corrupt. Dictators that arose as a result of military take-over tend to portray themselves as non-partisan, as a “neutral” party that can provide interim leadership in times of turmoil and also tend to portray civilian politicians as corrupt and ineffective. Military dictatorships usually have little respect for human rights and use whatever means available to silence political opponents.

Since the 1990s, dictatorships brought about as a result of military take-over have become less common. The end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union made it more difficult for dictators to use the threat of communism as justification for their actions, or to gain support from foreign sources. South American countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Haiti, Peru among others had been ruled by dictators at various times. In Europe, Greece, Poland, Romania and Spain are countries all known to have experienced the evils of dictatorship. In Asia, China, Indonesia, Iraq, South Korea, Turkey, Thailand and so on were all formerly ruled by dictators. It is pertinent here to note that about twenty two African countries were at different times subjected to ruthless dictators. In the traditional African society, long before the first white man set his foot on the shores of Africa, law and order had always been supreme. Quoting Ali Mazrui, Ibrahim Sundiata approaches this situation in the article “The roots of African despotism: The Questions of Political Culture” by saying “the explanation for despotic dictatorship in Africa rests on factors of social psychology rooted in the primordial conditions of pre-colonial past”(1988:11). In *Government and Politics for West African Students*, Jide Osuntokun and Adamolekun Ladipo identifies two different pre-colonial systems of government in Africa. They supported the monarchical

system as they described it as the widest spread political system in pre-colonial Africa . The traditional African society is a hierarchically organized one in which the structured patterns are used to maintain order and also to mediate between superiors and subordinates. There is a vertical transmission of legitimate authority at each level of the hierarchy.

The deities are believed to be in charge of the universe. They see to the well being of everybody and sustain the cosmos. The king is next to them. He is believed to be God's deputy on earth. The king is both the political head as well as the religious head of his people, while the masses are at the bottom of the hierarchy. Those in the lower positions are responsible only to themselves and to those above them. The family system is also an important part of the traditional African system. Since everyone comes from the family, having respect for constituted authority starts from the family as members of the family are held together by subjecting themselves to the eldest living male member. At times, this system leads to dictatorship since the ruler is given absolute power and authority. It is needless to say here that the pre-colonial African political structure encourage authoritarianism and made it a basis for control on the African continent.

A good government serves as the representative of the people and it is divided into the executive, legislative and judicial arms. This decentralization of power helps to guard against power accumulation by any arm of government. In other words, these arms serve as checks and balances to one another. As earlier said, the pre-colonial African society has a role to play in legalizing the authority and powers of the ruling class since it ascribed a divine origin to leadership. The king is believed to be the choice of the gods, having consulted the oracle before he is

finally crowned king. In both Achebe's Nigeria and Farah's Somalia, dictatorship has so much ravished these respective countries. To the African writer, independence involves total liberation of Africans not only from the colonial masters but also from political enslavement by their leaders. These writers have therefore become advocates of honesty and dynamism as pre-requisites for successful leadership.

1.1 Aim of the Study

Many earlier studies have focused on several aspects of politics in contemporary African writings, but not many have examined dictatorial issues within the new nation states of Africa. This study is therefore to complement these earlier studies and to arrive at a more comprehensive discussion of the roles that African writers have played and are still playing in combating tyranny in Africa.

1.2 Research methodology

The research method intended is by analyzing the two primary sources which are *Anthills of the Savannah* by Chinua Achebe and *Sweet and Sour Milk* by Nuruddin Farah. Also books and article reviews and field studies would be carried out.

1.3 Literature Review

Existing researchers on dictatorship in the world and in Africa in particular would be referred to. Essays and reviews of people such as Agovi. K. E, Diblawe A. I., Kubayanda Joseph, Izevbaye D, Mazrui Ali, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, Obiechina E, Soyinka W, among others. These prolific writers have, through their writings,

actions and interviews vehemently fought against ruthless dictators and recommended democracy as an alternative to dictatorship.

1.4 Expected Contribution to Study

The essay is expected to contribute its own quota to the study of the nature and ways of African dictators. Recent studies have proved that potential dictators can be discovered at an age as early as four as they tend to dominate their colleagues from that early age. Also, the study is expected to showcase the heroic writings of the first generation writers who wrote without fear against dictatorship so as to encourage the upcoming class.

1.5 Theoretical Framework (Marxism)

Marxist literature is a radical literature. Radical literature, as the term goes, sees the world as being in a state of constant confrontation between two diametrically opposed and irreconcilable classes: the oppressor and the oppressed. It pursues the cause of the latter in its totality. Its goal is to bring to light the essence of the struggle of the working class. The Marxist Writer therefore adopts a working class [the masses] orientation and the all necessary task of revolutionary transformation of the society. Marxist literature normally focuses on the role of class play in a work; how the characters overcome oppression; what the work says about oppression, among others. Marxist literature, as a promoter of the level of consciousness of the working masses, posits a materialistic argument and analyses the process through which the underprivileged in the society are exploited and oppressed. The dialectics of oppression and the idea of liberation forms the focus of Marxist literature.

The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress. Literature and art undoubtedly share, with all forms of cognition, the characteristics of expressing the ideology. The study of ideology and its influence upon the content of literature is, of course, essential to Marxist analysis. It is necessary in considering the Marxist view of literature to make a critical appraisal of the development of the theory and practice of Marxism itself within which the view of literature in that respect have evolved. To Marx, reality is governed by economic needs(historical materialism).In application, this principle means that the present organization of society must be destroyed, even through violent revolution if necessary, because only through such destruction can a better political, economic and social organization be achieved. To achieve this new format of society, working men, the proletariat, must be organized and take up the struggle against the capitalists who defraud them. The Capitalists can be likened to the African dictator who keeps oppressing the people he swore to protect and the proletariat could be the masses represented by the writer who is deploying all the weapons in his arsenal to fight against the oppression of his people.

The importance of Marx's thoughts extends far beyond the revolutionary movement whose prophet he became. As a primary theorist and historian, he perceived human history to have consisted of a series of struggles between classes: the oppressed and the oppressors. Marx's thoughts was that "historical materialism" is the ultimate driving force, a notion involving the distribution of resources, grains, production and such matters. The privileged rich rely on the labour force for survival. Marxism believes that when profits are not re invested in the workers but instead in the creation of more factories, the workers will grow poorer until no short-term patching is possible or successful .At this crisis point,

revolt will lead to the restructuring of the system. After a long time of oppression and endurance, the masses in any given society rises up to the challenges of uprooting a tyranny and ensuring the establishment of democratic governance.

Literature reflects class struggle and materialism. Marxists generally view literature not as a piece created in accordance with timeless artistic criteria, but as a product of the economic and ideological determinants specific to that era. Literature reflects an author's own analysis of class relations however shallow or piercing that analysis may be. It is against this background of the above postulations by Karl Marx that I am adopting the Marxist literary theory to engage this research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 The Corruption of Power

To put this discussion of dictatorship in the proper perspective, it is important to make reference to the origin of both democracy and dictatorship which is Ancient Greece. In the Greek tragedy, *Antigone*, written by Sophocles, there is a character named Kreon, the antagonist, who is the king of Thebes. Thebes is a dictatorial state where Kreon exercises absolute powers. Even though he is warned by a few people of his bad deeds, Kreon abuses power throughout the play and this causes him to suffer greatly. Sophocles, through this piece, avers that there are consequences for the abuse of power. In the play, Kreon decrees that no one must bury the body of Polyneices. Out of love for a dead brother, Antigone violates this law and buries Polyneices. This angers Kreon as he sentences her to death. Kreon's act also angers the gods too as they don't want Polyneices dead body to be left unburied and they are equally opposed to Antigone being buried alive in a cave. Kreon is therefore urged by Haimon to change his mind, but Kreon rejects this request and went ahead to bury Antigone alive.

Teiresias warns Kreon that the gods are angry because of his actions. Kreon rejects both Haimon's request and Teiresias's warning and as a result, he suffers in the end. In the beginning Kreon once addresses the senate on how a ruler should rule his state. He says in his long speech, "I believe that he who rules in a state and fails to embrace the best men's counsels, but stays locked in silence and vague fear, is the worst man there. I have long believed so" (217- 221). To impress the senate, Kreon assures them that he will listen to any advice they give him because that's what a good ruler should do. When he is told that someone has buried Polyneices body, he

flies into a rage and even threatens to kill the sentry who brings the news unless he produces the person who has buried the body. Kreon openly goes against his own declaration. It simply shows that dictators can sometimes deceive the people by trying to prove they have human feelings.

When Antigone is arrested and brought to Kreon, she denies nothing as she goes ahead and confirms her action by saying "I did not believe that Zeus was the one who proclaimed it; neither did Justice, or the gods of the dead whom Justice – lives among. The laws they have made for men are well marked out. I didn't suppose your decree had strength enough, or you who are human, to violate the lawful traditions the gods have not written merely, but made infallible." (550– 558).

Antigone could be said to be like the African writer who could risk his life for such confrontations. The writer has to be able to disagree with the policies of the dictator and also profer alternatives to such policies. The consequence most times is death. Within the Republic, he explains that the soul consists of three parts: reason (wisdom), courage (honour) and appetite [moderation/desire]. The class structure of Plato's ideal city also embodies these divisions: the guardian or "philosopher kings" represents wisdom and are entrusted with the mandate to rule; the auxiliaries represent courage to protect the city; the producers represent moderation and service to provide the economic and agricultural base for the city. All these components Plato says must come together to make the city stand. As long as these three components work together, there would be an ideal city. Plato puts up a four stage linear digression towards tyranny. According to him, from the ideal state, a timocracy is first born from the love of honour. As wealth becomes cherished among the citizens, timocracy gives way to oligarchy. In an oligarchic state, the desire for freedom leads to the rise of democracy. Finally as the desire for freedom

increases and becomes limitless, the city is said to fall into a state of tyranny. Thus for Plato, a tyrant or dictator is a democrat who has lost all restraint.

While Plato views the tilting towards tyranny as a uniform digression, the presence of this widespread decay ultimately creates the conditions for one person to rise to power. Within this digression, reason is gradually overcome by appetite until "insatiable desire" for freedom transforms a democracy into a dictatorship. It has been well noted that dictators often seize power under the pretext of correcting the anomalies of the ousted government. In some cases too, dictators do start well at least before the "insatiable desire" for power, as Plato puts it, catches up with them. An ideal democratic society must be one in which reason overcomes desire. Plato views money and private property as the floodgate to this decay. "Wherever they will possess private land, house and currency, they will become... masters and enemies instead of allies of the other citizens, hating and being hated, plotting and being plotted against, they will lead their lives far more afraid of the enemies within than those without. Then they themselves as well as the rest of the city are already rushing towards a destruction that lies very near." (The Republic : 417a). Plato, in his views, believes that the complete absence of justice resulting from an emphasis on the search for private property and self-gratification leads to dictatorship. In other words, it is the incessant desire of leaders for wealth and power that turns them from democrats to dictators.

A Dictatorship can arise as a result of an insatiable appetite for money, service and power. At this juncture, it is pertinent to say that only two of the aforementioned factors - money and power- are reasons why dictators arise in Africa. Aristotle believed that dictators will divert the attention of the masses by

pointing accusing fingers at some people or some things such as war. He uses war as a tactic and then fortifies his regime under the pretext of national security. By diverting the public's attention, the dictator ensures that the masses concentrate on earning their daily bread rather than plotting against him. People should enter into politics only when they have managed to put their economic necessities in order. It is only then that they are sure they can participate actively in politics. Once the dictator has established himself firmly in power, he sets out to eliminate anyone that might threaten his rule. Plato believes a dictator must keep a sharp eye out for men of courage or vision or intelligence or wealth and he should not rest until he has purged them from the state. Aristotle agrees by saying that the "dictator should lop off the heads of those who are too high and he must put to death men of spirit".(The Republic:414a). Both philosophers argued that dictatorship always arise when the people of a state wants limitless freedom which cannot be gotten in any ideal society.

2.1 Dictatorship In Africa

On the African continent, in recent years, renaissance is not a word that we have come to associate with. More often, we have been used to bloodshed and catastrophe. Three to four decades after the end of the colonial era, the legacy seems to be bitter and poisoned. After the great wave of independence, one party socialist regimes promised a utopia which never arrived in most of the continents while capitalist – friendly dictators ruled and plundered the rest. The cold war was fought by proxy between the allies of Washington and Moscow – sometimes just with money and other times with guns. The African continent was marked by famine, corruption and chaos. In the past years, there had been bloodshed in an unimaginable scale while the world looked on in apparent helplessness. Nigeria,

Sudan, Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mozambique, Somalia among others have all been ravaged by bitter civil wars. The study of western political thoughts has endured a drastic change throughout the centuries. This shift occurred through the queries of ancient philosophical minds such as Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and St. Augustine. Two examples of great importance are the inequality of gender and the role of power sharing within the state. Plato believed that all people; men and women alike are created equal. Aristotle, who has been often referred to as Plato's greatest student and also noted to have a way of ridiculing some of his teacher's works, believes women by nature are to be dominated by men. He refers to women as imperfect men. According to him, women can possess reason but cannot achieve the same status as the man. He says that the only purpose women are to serve is to provide "matter" for the child and the men in turn provides "form".

The beginning of the Stoic philosophy formed a totally different view on the idea of equality. Equality was no longer derived with respect to a community in the whole, but rather as individuals. The Stoics developed a system consisting of three classes. Everyone within each class was considered equal. They were strong adherents of the concept of natural law, which meant that both men and women can reason. Their reasoning was treated in the same respect no matter what gender they belong to. Zeno of Citium, (a Greek philosopher who lived around 334BC and 262BC), the founder of Stoicism, believed in the notion of brotherhood among all men and women alike. The government brought about by the Stoics was one in which all the people within the state had contributions to the running of the government. Augustine argued that the state should promote peace and prosperity among the people, reflect a true religion and also work to establish commonly

accepted rules for acquiring the necessities of life. The foregoing simply shows that even the much respected ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle at one time or the other had been proponents of dictatorships. It is very clear that the African dictators couldn't have had it more than what Plato and Aristotle said on women.

After the cold war, there were concerted efforts by the colonial masters to correct the anomalies they all helped to start on the African continent but as it clearly seen, not much has been achieved. Even though in Nigeria in the last few decades, there had not been so many cases of dictatorships, Somalia is not as lucky in that respect. Countries like Sudan , Rwanda , Burundi , Guinea, Mali and so on at one time or the other had their own share of brutal dictatorships. The ethnic lines drawn by the white men during the colonial days is far from being over. It is highly gratifying to note that the new Secretary – General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki – Moon , unlike some of his predecessors, is showing a keen interest in African issues right from the outset of his tenure. His major concerns were focused on the cases in Darfur, the Eritrean/Ethiopian border crises, the on-going conflict in southern Somalia among others. All these crises have been responsible for the perennial death of millions of African people.

The question is whether the United Nations itself can have the courage and fortitude to address the real fundamental issues facing the millions of Africans who are suffering under abject poverty not because of lack of resources but mainly due to lack of democracy and its consequent poor governance. Africa has since been suffering under the twin enemies of poverty and vicious dictatorship, at times, masquerading as “ democratic governments”. Even African leaders under the aegis of the African Union are in most cases cruising around in their limousines while

Africa is burning from tyrannical regimes infested with corruption and gross abuse of human rights. African leaders are not ashamed of the fact that the continent has become an empty basket while it is endowed with natural resources that could make it a bread basket for itself and the world if only it has a democratic system of governance that would give priority to the interests of the African people and not the corrupt few.

It is a known fact that corrupt dictatorship in Africa are often supported by self-serving developed and developing countries for their selfish interests. It is really important to note that, it is the so-called super powers that swore to protect Africa that are aiding these dictators especially those ones from the oil, gold and diamond regions. The United States of America has a declared objective policy to promote democracy throughout the world. President W. Bush in his second term inaugural speech said "all who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know that the United States will not ignore your oppression or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you."(Jan,20: 2005) These words were said many years back, but Africans, the majority of who lives in this continent of "tyranny and hopelessness" as Bush rightly puts it are still suffering under the most oppressive of regimes. It should be noted that, none of the super-powers, including the United States would help Africa out of genuine love. They are always out there trying to protect their citizens and their numerous investments. Only Africans; the people, the businessmen, the elites, the priests, the imams and so on can rout out dictatorship themselves.

One of the pertinent questions that arise is, what chance do poor Africans have when their oppressive regimes are armed and supported by the international community for their selfish gains? In salvaging Africa, any person, group of people, Africans themselves or even the international community must face the real facts. It must be known that Africa's primary problem is not lack of resources. Its main problem is lack of democracy without which the international community may continue to pump in billions of dollars into Africa but would have little or nothing to show for it. It must also be noted that the powers that be in the international community are interested in Africa mostly for the purpose of exploiting its immense natural resources as well as their other latent motives such as the so called "war against international terrorism" than the removal of dictatorship and poverty; the very factors that breed terrorism in Africa. Various writers in Africa have written so many things about dictatorship and the evil that goes with it. The need for Africa to do more to help itself becomes more apparent when it is now really obvious that no foreign superpower will help Africa out of sincere love. No amount of dollars will do the magic unless Africans help themselves.

2.2 Colonialism and its effects on Dictatorship

According to Erich From, "the sado - masochistic person admires authority and tends to submit to it, but at the same time he wants to be the authority himself and have others submit to him." (1960:179). From's words describe accurately the African dictator and paints him in the true picture of what he is. He wants authority. He wants to exert control and as Farah proves, he wants to be the grand patriarch who can take or give life. Cartey William in *Whispers from a Continent*, 1971 argues that the issue of dictatorship in Africa long started during the era of the white overlords. Since the dictator cannot function alone without the help

of 'his' police, Cartey posits that, in the colonial era, the policeman , as an employee of the colonial power was hated by his fellow black men and derided by his white colleagues because he was black. He was therefore goaded by this sense of inferiority to the white world and to save face, delighted in brutal action against his own brothers. According to Cartey, "In his (the colonial African Police) role, where he attempts to cater for the establishment, he carries out his duties with alacrity and brute force with an inhumanity to his own kind."(1971:48).

The African dictator and their agents can be likened to the policemen under the colonial regime who metes out the most brutal treatments to his own brothers, sisters, father and mother. As Adam and Giliomee (1979) puts it in their book titled *Ethnic Power Mobilization: Can South Africa Change?*, "in order to put the oppressive machinery in motion, the apartheid apologist adopted a "granite wall approach" to governance. A rigid and uncompromising method that exploited, oppressed and brutalized the blacks even in their tumble – down shanties." The dictator adopts all methods and uses all the ammunitions he can find in his armory to unleash a reign of terror on the same set of people he has sworn to protect. The masses who fought for independence, the peasant and workers who sacrificed all to redeem the land from the enemies, are today the beggars, the destitutes and the so called vagrants in post – independence Africa. The people that took to the forest in order to force the colonialists out of their lands are the very people who today are like the pot that cooks but does not eat. The black imperialists who constitute the advantaged minority have entrenched what Soyinka calls "the monopolistic ethos" (Guinea Bissau ;1974 :9)

The recent effects of colonialism and neo colonialism on the masses justifies Ngugi's assertion in *Homecoming* that "now there are only two tribes left in Africa, the "haves" and the "have nots" (1972:14) Rather than usher in the much expected dawn of a new era of freedom, equality and national development, independence has ironically led to a restoration of colonialism through the back door in the guise of neo colonialism. While it is true that the white colonizers have physically left Africa, Okereke in "The many faces of neocolonialism in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* and *Devil on the Cross*" in *Literature and National Consciousness* believes that their presence is "more corrosively felt now that their new domination of Africa through African leaders whose minds and consciences have been completely corrupted and colonized by the old master..." (1989:139). Africa's independence has proved to be a mirage, and according to Ezeigbo in "Ayi Kwei Armah, Neo colonialism and the African woman" in *Literature and National Consciousness*, through African leaders, a diabolical "sense of dependency is still firmly entrenched in the socio-political and economic life of the independent (African) States". (1989:147). Instead of husbanding the natural resources of the continent for the development of its people, African leaders in connivance with foreign capitalists have further plundered the resources of the continent leaving wretchedness, misery and mammoth deprivation in its wake. This is why I will refer to African dictators as policemen of international capital who often mortgage a whole country for arms and crumbs from the master's table.

Oginga Oginga says that the basis of neocolonialism in Africa which leads to dictatorship is "built on the previous colonial history of the country in which it operates from foundations that the colonial regime laid before its ostensible

departure. The object of neocolonialism is to ensure that power is handed to men who are moderates and easily controlled political stooges. Everything is done to ensure that the accredited heirs of colonial interests capture power. This explains the pre - independence, preoccupation of the colonialists with the creation of an African middle class and the frenzy to corrupt leaders at all levels with the temptations of office and property and preferably both" (1967:250). Even though Odinga's assertion may not be totally right due to the fact that most dictators start out on a good note as constitutionally elected officers before getting power-drunk and subsequently fine -tuning the constitution to serve their selfish purpose, it can still be said that these dictators wouldn't have functioned well without the direct or indirect backing of their white overlords.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 The writer in an anti-democratic society.

There is no denying the fact that the African writer has always considered himself a political animal. The practice of literature as socio - political commentary, among its many other functions, pre - dates the advent of written literature. Its goes back to the pre-colonial times when the public story- teller never hesitated to weave into his tale a moral caution at the end. This is supported by Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah*. According to him, "only the story can continue beyond the war and the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sounds of war-drums and the exploits of brave fighters. It is the story that saves our progeny from blundering like beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort, without it, we are blind. Does the blind man own his escort? No, neither do we the story. It is the story that owns and directs us"(1987:25) . From "What has literature got to do with it" collected in *Hopes and Impediments*, Achebe says "literature, whether handed down by word of mouth or in print , gives us a second hand on reality. Literature enables us to encounter in the safe, manageable dimensions of make-believe the very same threats to integrity that may assail the psyche in real life; and at the same time providing through the self - discovery which it imparts a veritable weapon for coping with these threats whether they are found within our problematic and incoherent selves or in the world around us" (1988:48) . Achebe believes that literature has social and political importance. It is much more than a creative ornament. It provides a necessary critical perspective on everyday experience, educates us on the meaning of our actions and offers us greater control over our social and personal lives.

Didacticism in literature was one of the many ways in which traditional societal values were reinforced. For instance, it was not unheard of for a court poet to admonish the king in his songs. This was taken in good faith and accepted as part

of the duties of the poet, as part of the functions of literature. The emergence of the novel in Africa coincided with the struggle against colonialism in many African countries, and the writer, because of his education and privileged position in which he found himself in terms of audience and respect for his views, naturally continued in this tradition of maintaining societal values and integrity with his writings. Maintaining societal values here, of course, means the reinstating of the African's dignity through the overthrow of foreign dominance, and, through sincere patriotism. The first generation of African writers started the trend: Achebe with *Things Fall Apart*, Wa'Thiongo with *Weep Not Child* and Soyinka in his many plays and novels. Soyinka in his foreword to his play, *Opera Wonyosi*, re-emphasizes what he sees as the writer's duties to his society: "art should expose, reflect and indeed magnify the decadent, rotten underbelly of a society that has lost its direction, jettisoned all sense of value and is careering down a precipice"(1981).

If it is true that art mirrors and often interprets the dominant mood of its times, then the African writers will continue to dramatize, in human terms, this economic and political drama that is unfolding in his milieu. However, despite the writer's undoubted eagerness and ability to contribute to the national debate, he is not always free to do so. Here, we must pause and ask whether writing and literature in general, is actually able to effect changes in African societies. Of course, the writer does create political awareness. Wa' Thiongo's s play *I'll Marry When I Want* and the popular political upheaval that followed is a testament to this. But, can the writer cause the downfall of a bad government and make dictators embrace democracy? The African writer has since been faced with different forms of censorship but the writers' inability to create immediate changes does not diminish the threat he poses to despotic regimes in his own country. This is because

he is most often taken seriously by the outside world. He is often quoted in newspapers and by pro-democracy groups. He is thus indirectly able to shape opinions about his country and to bring about pressure for change in his own country. A good example of this is the Nigerian writer and environmental activist, Ken Saro Wiwa . His short stories and letters to newspapers outside Nigeria contributed to what led to the suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth group of nations in 1995 thereby causing great embarrassment to the Nigerian government and the oil companies whose exploration were causing grave and irreparable damages to Ogoni land, his native region.

In Africa, censorship is serious business. In Nigeria, with the advent of successive military dictatorships from the 1980s to the 1990s came a succession of decrees all promulgated in an effort to paralyze writers and journalists most of who became victims of various anti-press legislations. These decrees are, Decree No. 2 of 1984, Decree No 43 of 1993, Decree No 107 of 1993, Decree No 35 of 1993, Decree No 29 of 1993, Decree No 14 of 1994 and Decree No 1 of 1986. All these decrees were to gag the media by all cost. By the mid 1990's, most indigeneous publishing houses, which had briefly thrived in the vacuum left by the multinational companies' pull out due to the devaluing of the local currency in the structural adjustment programme of the mid 80's, slowly expired under this stifling conditions . The African society sometimes puts too much pressure on the writer as to what he should or should not write about. This stifles his creativity as surely as any government decree and this later leads to the writer seeking other publishing opportunities far away from his country where he can imagine himself writing for faceless non – judgmental audiences.

The focus here is on the way the writers function in an anti - democratic society. The chapter also seeks to explain why some societies have been tolerant of their outspoken writers while some others have not. It is a well - known fact that Achebe's Nigeria has been more tolerant than Farah's Somalia. In going about this, we need to examine the socio-historical background of the settings we are examining in this discourse. This leads us to the study of the history and social structure of Somalia and Nigeria and also explains why Nuruddin Farah is on exile while Chinua Achebe, also being an anti dictatorial writer is writing from home. All committed writers identifies with the struggle of their people. Such writers use their talents to create for the people their ideals and inspire them with confidence for the future. Their writings should give the ordinary man hope. The creative writer must be in touch with the happenings in his society and also use them as recurrent themes in his writings. He must also be an active participant in the struggle he writes about. He must not run away unless there is serious threat to his life. A dictatorial regime tries to monopolize all opportunities to engage in propoganda and often stops at nothing to crush any kind of counter propoganda. Such regime also shuts all the avenues of democratic expression and outlaws all democratic institutions and rights, thereby making the society very undemocratic. Many African writers have suffered and are still suffering certain deprivations or torture in one way or the other. While many are being imprisoned with a ban on their writings, some are executed and others sent on exile, thereby making them fugitives in exile. These situations have always presented three major options to the writer. Firstly, he could decide to be unconcerned by maintaining a silent posture towards the atrocities of the government. This makes such writers ineffective since he would have failed in his function as the society's watchdog. Secondly, the writer may choose to be an

accomplice of the government in the perpetration of its evil which negatively affects the people. He can do this by trying to justify the dictatorial government through his writing. Thirdly, the writer can see himself as a serious counter-force to the dictatorial tendencies of the government. By doing this, he is vulnerable to imprisonment, banishment or even execution.

The language a writer uses in the anti-democratic society in which he is functioning is very crucial to the success of his writings as his language is the weapon of his struggle. A dilemma however faces the African writer and that is whether he should use his indigenous language as advocated by the prolific East African writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o who once changed to writing in his native Gikuyu language (His most recent works were written in English Language) or he should retain the European languages such as English and French. It is pertinent here to say that the choice of the African writer depends on the audience he is trying to get across to. His language should be simple and comprehensible enough for the masses. This is Wa'Thiongo's position in *The Writer in a Neo Colonial State* when he says: "he (the writer) will have to confront the languages spoken by the people in whose service he has put his pen. Such a writer will have to rediscover the real language of the struggle in the actions and speeches of the people, learn orature; and above all learn from their great optimism and faith..."(1986:10)

This clearly explains why Wa'Thiongo once opted for Gikuyu, his native language, as the medium of expression in his writings. Even though Wa'Thiongo has every reason to do this, one must not also forget that it is not the language used that has the power but it is the words used that rouses peoples' emotions. A true writer expresses aspects of life as he conceives it. Therefore, whether in exile or at

home, African writers are committed to the socio – political circumstances prevailing in their countries. Nurddin Farah, even though in exile never shut his eyes to the tyrannical regime of Siad Barre and his cohorts back at home. The writer, in his attempt to make people rise up and protest needs to be a master of the language he chooses to employ. He needs the imagery of this language so as to help him drive home his points. Chinua Achebe from West Africa's Nigeria and Nurudin Farah from North Africa's Somalia have both published their novels in the English language but with a high degree of control over the language and cultural referents both of which affects the accessibility of the works to their various audiences whether in or outside their countries.

3.2 Nurrudin Farah's Somalia

Farah is a prolific novelist from Somalia, popularly called the 'Horn of Africa'. Derek Wright in "Somali Powerscapes: Mapping Farah's Fictions" described Farah as "one of Africa's most multicultural and multilingual writers" (1990:21). Farah's novels has been preoccupied with the oppression of his native people under the dictatorial government of Siad Barre. In 1974, he went on self-exile because his criticisms were becoming unbearable for the Barre led government which was believed to have executed about sixty – one people in the first six years of his reign of terror. The Horn of Africa have been characterized by and noted for its political unrest. Independent Somalia which was born on July 1st, 1960 remains the only African country whose population is homogeneous. They are predominantly Moslems bound by a common language. Salean Holmes in "Preserving Somali Culture" described Somalia as 'a nation of bards' (1988:6). Oral tradition, especially poetry, has been the cause of the preservation of the Somali culture. They hardly write down anything. This was proven by Holmes again in

Preserving Somalia Culture” by saying that “Somalia chose its alphabets only in the 1970s” (1988:8). There were embargos on books and written documents. Even the military government itself adopted the oral tradition in its repressive techniques. The military leaders often chose spies among the illiterate masses and since they cannot write, they still have to pass on their information by the mouth. This is the system referred to as ‘Dionysius’s Ear’ as used by the General in *Sweet and Sour Milk*. (1979) . Dictators usually fear the enormous power of literature when rightfully used by the writer and thus such writers becomes a threat to the government.

3.3 The Peculiar Nature of Somalia

Somalia is not a country like others and in many ways, it is not ‘African’ nor ‘Arab’ although it is located on the African continent and has often been considered ‘Arab’ in some ways. In 1974, Somalia joined the Arab League of which it is still a member. The Somalia people or the Somali nation is an unquestionable reality but the Somali state is a much more ambiguous nation which has for the time being receded into the gray zone of a legal abstraction probably for a good many years to come. This situation is all the more puzzling since at the time of independence in 1960, Somalia was described as one of the few mono-ethnic states in Africa, one with common language, a common culture and a single religion, Islam. Farah was born 1945 in Baidoa in the Italian Somali land. He is a novelist particularly concerned with women liberation in postcolonial Somalia. Farah is the son of a merchant father and poet mother. As a child, he learned English and Arabic in school. In 1963, three years after Somalia’s independence.

Farah was forced to flee his home region of Ogaden following serious

border conflicts. For several years, he pursued a degree in literature, sociology and philosophy at India's Panjab University, Chandigarh. He later returned to teach in Mogadishu. Farah began his writing career with the novel *From a Crooked Rib* (1970); the story of a nomad girl who flees from an arranged marriage to a much older man. The novel gave him mild but international acclaim. On a tour of Europe after publishing *A Naked Needle* (1976), Farah was warned that the Somali government had plans to arrest him for its contents. For the fear of facing imprisonment, he set out on a self-imposed exile that lasted for twenty-two years, teaching in the United States, Italy, Nigeria, Germany, Sudan, India and The Gambia. Farah's latest work consists of two trilogies of novels *Variations on the Theme of an African Dictatorship* (1980-1983) and *Blood in the Sun* (1986-1999). "Variations" attacks the corruption of many authoritarian postcolonial African regimes, comparing them to the abuses of European colonialist. The trilogy also explores gender issues condemning female circumcision. Farah's reputation was cemented by his most famous novel, *Maps* (1986), the first novel in the *Blood in the Sun* trilogy. *Maps* was set during the Ogaden conflict of 1977, exploring the issue of cultural identity in a postcolonial world. In 1996, Farah returned to Somalia, settling down again in Mogadishu. He was awarded the 1998 Neustadt International prize for literature second only to the Nobel in prestige.

There is no national government in Somalia. While parts of the north are relatively peaceful, including much of the self-declared "Republic of Somali land", inter-clan and inter-factional fighting can flare up with little warning and kidnappings, murder and other threats to foreigners can occur unpredictably in many regions. The Somali republic gained independence on July 1, 1960 and Somali was formed by the union of British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland,

while French Somaliland became Djibouti. A socialist state was established following a coup led by Major General Mohamed Siad Barre. Rebel forces ousted the Barre regime in 1991 but turmoil, factional fighting and anarchy ensued. The Somali National Movement (SNM) gained control of the north, while the capital of Mogadishu and most of Southern Somalia was controlled by the United Somali Congress. Somali has been without a stable central government since dictator Mohamed Barre fled the country in January 1991 in a tank taking with him the gold and the foreign currency reserves of the central bank worth an estimated 27 million US dollars.

Subsequent fightings among rival faction leaders resulted in the killing, dislocation and starvation of millions of Somalis and led to the United Nations military intervention in 1992. Responding to the political chaos and humanitarian disaster in Somalia, the United States and other nations launched peacekeeping operations to create an environment in which assistance could be delivered to the Somali people. By March 1993, the potential for mass starvation in Somalia had been overcome, but the security situation remained fragile. On October 3, 1993, US troops received significant casualties (19 dead and over 80 others wounded) in a battle with Somali gunmen. The United States subsequently withdrew its forces in 1994 with the United Nations following suit in 1995. Their mission had achieved very little success. Conflicts between rival warlords and their factions continued throughout the 1990s. No stable government emerged to take control of the country. In the late 90s, relative calm started emerging and economic development somehow accelerated. The country was stable and improving. A transitional government that emerged in 2000 soon lost power. Somali land and Puntland, two regions in the north broke away from the country and set up a regional, semi-autonomous

government even though they were not internationally recognized.

After the attack of September 11 2001, the United States began to take a more active role in Somali's affairs, fearing that the country had become a haven for terrorists. In January 2004, two dozen or so warlords reached a power – sharing agreement after talks in Kenya. The agreement called for a 275 – member parliament. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was the 14th attempt at a Government since 1991. This new Transitional Federal Government led by Abdullah Yusuf didn't last long as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) was really attacking it. Since 1991, about one million Somalis have died because of the conflict. Somalis have been used to the authoritarian family system as crystallized by Farah in *Sweet and Sour Milk* in the figure of Keynaan , " the grand patriarch". As Keynaan declares, "i am the father. It is my prerogative to give life and death as I find fit. I've chosen to breathe life into Soyaan and remember ...I am the Grand patriarch." (95). This has really suggested how the people see leadership and thus the reason for the tyranny has been officially instituted by the military government over the people. As Felix Mthali said in "Autocracy and the Limits of Identity: A reading of the novels of Nuruddin Farah," "In real life the 'grand patriarch' of Somalia cuts people in halves as if their lives did not mean much. Between October 1967, when he took power, and the middle of 1980, Said Barre had already executed sixty-one people and imprisoned without trial many more" (1989:55).

Thus in Somalia, there is a close affiliation between oral tradition and the forces of tribal dictatorship. Even though the Somali culture emphasizes individual rights and freedom, the culture has been exploited and misinterpreted to officially institutionalize tyranny and dictatorship. Abucar H.I 's article "Gaal Dil Gartisana Sii : A cursory Review of Somali Judicial system (s)" supports this by proving that

the traditional Somali society emphasizes individualism and freedom. According to him, the Somali proverb "Gaal Dil Gar" means "do not kill even the infidel without giving him the natural right of every man" (1989:10). This shows the extent to which the right of every individual, even enemies and foreigners in traditional Somalia is preserved. Since when the military seized power, freedom has been totally ignored. As Diblawe puts it in "Gaal Dil Gartisana Sii", "there is an international consensus to prove that the rule of law has prevailed in Somalia during the civilian regime. 'The Somali constitution of this period protected human rights'.

(13).

From the foregoing, we find that dictatorship in Somalia started with the military era. The implication of this is that the creative writer cannot effectively perform his role or serve effectively under such hostile situations. As can be seen in Farah's case: he was really a writer in an anti-democratic society and for his resolve to fight dictatorship, he had his share of suffering as an exile. It is a known fact that being in exile not only physically separates the writer, but it also emotionally divorces him from his family and society at large. Nurrudin Farah has however not allowed the fact that he went into exile to dampen his spirit. Instead, his sojourn seems to have provided him with the solitude necessary to enhance his writings. Even though his writings were banned in Somalia, his struggle still continued in exile.

3.4 Chinua Achebe's Nigeria

Chinualumogu Albert Achebe, born November 16, 1930, is a Nigerian novelist, poet and critic. He is best known for his first novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Raised by Christian parents in the Igbo village of Ogidi in Southern Nigeria,

Achebe excelled at school and won a scholarship for undergraduate studies. He became fascinated with world religions and traditional African cultures and began writing stories as a University Student. After graduation, he worked for the Nigerian Broadcasting Service before moving to the metropolis of Lagos. He gained world wide recognition for *Things Fall Apart* in the late 50s. His later novels include *No longer at Ease* (1960), *Arrow of God* (1964), *A Man of the People* (1966), and our focus here, *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). Achebe, unlike people like Ngugi Wa Thiong'O who championed the cause against writing in English, wrote his novels in English and has defended the use of English, a language of the colonizers, in African literature. His 1975 lecture at the University of Massachusetts Amherst later published in his collection of essays in *Hopes and Impediments*, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness" became the focus of controversy for its criticism of Joseph Conrad by describing him as "a thoroughgoing racist".

When the region of Biafra broke away from Nigeria in 1967, Achebe became a devoted supporter of the secession and an ambassador for the people of the new nation. The war ravaged the populace and as starvation and violence took its toll, he appealed to the people of Europe and the America for aid. When the Nigerian government retook the region in 1970, he involved himself in political parties but soon resigned due to frustration over the corruption and elitism he witnessed. He lived in the United States for several years in the 1970s before returning home in the 1990s. Achebe's novels focus on the traditions of the Igbo society, the effect of Christian influences and the clash of values during and after the colonial era. As Ezenwa Ohaeto rightly puts it in *Chimua Achebe: A Biography*, Achebe, more than any other Nigerian writer, has "made statements on the role of

the writer in his society. His conception of the writer's duty has also tended to change with the political situation in his country." (1997:43). Achebe's writings, beginning during the colonial era, spans through the successive socio - political crises that have accompanied his country Nigeria, the civil war inclusive. As a foremost Nigerian writer, Achebe in the early periods of his writing, tried to recreate the Nigerian historical past to counter earlier assumptions that Africans had no history or culture. He achieved this with *Things Fall Apart* (1958). Like most other contemporary writers (novelists and poets), the political situation in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general is the major emphasis in his recent writings. Due to the disillusionment experienced all over Africa as a result of the failure of the emergent African leaders, Achebe's newest novel *Anthills of the Savannah* sets out to strip naked the phenomenon of military dictatorship in the nation states of Africa.

After the 1960 independence of Nigeria, sets of politicians emerged with aspirations to restore the dignity of Nigeria, a country which has just being wrested free from the white man's clutches. As time went by, this goal became irrelevant as these politicians drifted away fast from their initial goals. Neo-colonialism replaced colonialism as the new indigenous leaders took on themselves the imperialist and oppressive garb of the white masters. This only led to the mockery of the hard earned independence and a bitter civil war later ensued. Achebe's work was greatly influenced by this war. In May 1967, for either genuine or in-genuine reasons, the South-eastern region of Nigeria broke away to form the Republic of Biafra headed by the then military Governor of Eastern Nigeria, Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu. Later in July same year, the Nigerian military attacked to suppress what it considered a rebellion. Achebe's partner, Christopher Okigbo who had become part of the secessionist army was later killed in the war's front line. He was then

working at the press. Achebe also then started writing short stories and poems that showed his interest in the new nation. C. L. Innes in *Chimua Achebe* says that ; “the factors and forces which shaped Achebe as a writer, the African cultural context, shaped by Britain’s colonizing presence, his awareness of the twin influences of his Christian upbringing and his attraction to Igbo culture; his education especially the English literary tradition, his seminal encounter with the “African novels” of Joyce Cary resulting in his decision to become a writer and interpreter of his own culture to his own people, his determination to show African people the strength of their culture by showing them what they had lost through decades of foreign colonial domination, all form an integral part of his uniqueness.”(1990:56)

Dedicated to the promise of Biafra, he accepted a request to serve as foreign ambassador, refusing an invitation from the program of African studies at North Western University in the US. Achebe traveled to many cities in Europe, including London where he continued his work with the African Writers Series project at Heinemann. Addressing the causes of the war in 1968, Achebe lashed out at the Nigerian political and military forces that, to his mind, had forced Biafra to secede. He saw the conflict in terms of the country’s colonial past. In 1987, Achebe released his fifth novel which is our focus: *Anthills of the Savannah*. It is about a military coup in the fictional West African Nation of Kangan. A finalist of the prestigious Man Booker Prize , the book was hailed all over Europe and Africa. He was able to provide a powerful antidote to the cynical commentators from overseas who see nothing ever new and worthwhile coming out of Africa. Like many other African nations, Nigeria has a rich oral tradition. However, in comparison to Somalia, the influence of western education is strong, thereby introducing writing at an early age into the country. Critically examining the Nigerian situation; the story

has been really different from that of the Horn of Africa. In fairness, many of the succeeding regimes have shown a great measure of liberality towards the writers. Even though the writers have been as vocal as their other counterparts in the continent, Nigeria is a fairly open society where no religion or culture is imposed. This has really led to more freedom for writers.

Wole Soyinka's imprisonment by the government of Nigeria during the civil war may be seen as an infringement on the freedom of writers in Nigeria, but again, it should be noted that Soyinka was not imprisoned because of his writing but because of his condemnatory remarks about the then military government's stance on the civil war. To a large extent, there are hurdles for the African writers to scale both at home and in exile. They are exposed to a wide variety of materials in the political, economic and social conditions of their countries to form a basis for their literary works. Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Farah's *Sweet and Sour Milk* have vividly demonstrated that creative writing can be used for social and political purposes. Conclusively, both the writer and his society counter influence each other. Although Achebe and Farah dealt with the common theme of military dictatorship, the socio - political background of each of them have largely contributed to their different experiences and views. This vividly explains why Achebe is freer in his country Nigeria (even when he joined the secessionist camp) to effectively perform his role as a writer and social critic than the Somali writer, Nurruddin Farah whose socio-political background stands as a barrier to his effective functioning as a writer in his country. He could only function in exile even though self-imposed.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 VIEWS OF CHINUA ACHEBE AND NURRUDIN FARAH ON DICTATORSHIP

A man cannot be an abstract being in his society. One way or the other, he has to be in constant interaction with the world around him since he himself is part and parcel of the society, man cannot opt out of the events and happenings around him. This is to say that the writer, like any other individual in the society, cannot be divorced from the events going on in his society or the historical events of his nation. A true writer represents the 'eye' and 'ear' of his people. As eyes, the writer must sharply focus on the conflicts and sufferings of his people and as 'ears' he must hear the people's cries and distressed appeal for equality, justice and peace. The history of colonialism gives early African writings a monotonous theme of protests and conflicts within African societies. This is a major preoccupation of early Africa's contact with Western culture. The writers have used their arts to express nostalgic feelings about the loss of their cultural heritage and values. In this respect, African writers express, in their writings, the disintegration of the African society. This is what Chinua Achebe refers to as the first duty of the African writer.

To Achebe, the African writer should first and foremost show to the world that Africa has a culture even before the coming of the white men. Chinua Achebe believed that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that they had poetry and above all, dignity. (See *Hopes and Impediments*). Also to Ngugi Wa Thiong' O, the prolific Kenyan writer, the African Writer should reveal in his writings, the struggles of his people against their society. In *Homecoming*, Ngugi says "I believe that African intellectuals must align themselves with the struggles of the African masses for a meaningful national

ideal... perhaps in a small way, the African writer can help in articulating the feelings behind this struggle.”(1972:50) . Thus, for Wa Thiong’O, the African writer has the duty of being committed to the cause of his people, by actually participating in their struggle for freedom. There have been varieties of tyrannies and dictatorships in the present day African World for the past twenty years. African leaders like Idi Amin, Siad Barre, Sani Abacha and Jean Bedel Bokassa has gone into historical records as dictators. In the course of time, it became obvious that many of these African leaders in government became oppressive; thus African writers gradually beamed their search lights on the issue of dictatorship in the African Society.

Literature is used as a medium of reflecting life as it really is; hence it becomes the artistic expression of the real problems of the society. There is a close affiliation between literature and politics. As Ali Mazrui notes in an article “On Poet-President and Philosopher -Kings”, ‘Literature and Politics in Africa continues to meet at a variety of points. (1990:13) . Every true artist reflects the beliefs, philosophy, political and social situations of his age and time, since art is never created in a vacuum. Literature has a high degree of constructive power and that is why it is evident for the writer to harness this power and use his art to lend a hand in the intricate struggle of life. David Kunene in an article, “Ideas under Arrest; Censorship in South Africa” said “art and particular literature derives its power from the fact that it is a vehicle of ideas, and ideas, untrammled and free flowing that it becomes the enemy of the oppressor.” (1990:425). Kunene expatiates this point further by saying that, literature is the most reliable mirror that can be used to give a true reflection of any society and its people. The oppressor sees himself reflected in his ugliest form. In Kunene’s words, “the oppressor sees

the ugliest in the art and not in himself and instead of removing his own deformities, he breaks the mirror. (1990:426).

In "Writers in Politics", Ngugi Wa Thiong' O also has this to say about the function of art, especially in politics: "There is no area of our lives including the very boundaries of our imagination which is not affected by the way that Society is organized, by the whole operation and machinery of power; how and by whom that power has been gotten; which class controls and maintains it; and the ends to which the power is put...literature and politics are about living men, actual men and women and children, breathing, eating, crying, laughing, creating, dying, growing, men in history of which they are its products and its makers." (1997:8). In a state where the government is liberal and is ready to guarantee the welfare of the society, no form of oppression or deprivation would be suffered by the members of the society. In such a society, the writers may indulge in art – for – arts' sake, since there will be nothing to criticize but it is very doubtful however if such a utopian society exists therefore it has been the role of the artist through all the ages to serve as watchdogs in their various societies. The effect of this is to bring politics and especially dictatorship, which has become a convention in Africa and other parts of the world closer to literature for scrutiny. Dictatorship as a theme is not peculiar to African literature; it occurs in other world literatures as we have Greek and Modern European literatures. In Greek literature, there is the traditional belief that government or delegation of power is sacred – by divine will, thus, it is believed that a leader's appointment either as a king or priest is sacred and such a leader is supposed to act accordingly. The king is therefore highly respected and his words amounts to 'thus says the gods'. This governmental system however has its disadvantage in that the leader or king could become

tyrannical.

The Greek believes that the gods and man lived in a world where human actions were governed and directed by the powers above. Thus, power was not to be abused or violated, if it happens, it will not be without the necessary consequences by the gods. William Shakespeare often deals with political issues, especially the question of power, in many of his plays. *Coriolanus* and *Measure for Measure* are two examples of Shakespeare's plays that dealt with power and political problems. In *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare exposes the aspirations of democracy and at the same time, he suggests that public rule or traditional leadership cannot be accepted by the people if it does not have the love of the people at heart. In *Measure for Measure*, a political problem that has to do with the government is dealt with. The problem lies in the inability of the Duke to exercise his power to bring order to the city of Vienna. He disguises as a Friar and delegates his power to a deputy Angelo. Shakespeare, through the Duke and Angelo opines that good leadership should not be as complex as Angelo's but be merciful, tolerant and moderate. The Duke is seen as a lenient governor who believes in tempering justice with mercy, while Angelo thinks justice must not go with mercy.

In Africa, the writers who all along had been concerned with culture conflict have found it compelling to address themselves to the realities of power and politics as we have in the independent African nations. The abuse of political power and dictatorial systems of government which has since characterized many contemporary African nations has attracted a lot of writers to politics. As rightly observed by Dan Izevbaye in his article, "Issues in the Reassessment of the African novel" "apart from novels about colonization, the bulk of African novels are

political in the narrow sense. The themes of the African novelist have so far been related mainly to national politics." (1979:22). In the traditional non – literate societies of Africa, the artist uses his creativity to serve the society. He is made to be a part of the government by performing special duties. For example, some are attached to the king's court as poets or praise singers on permanent basis. In the contemporary African society, the literary artist also becomes an important part of the national process through his arts. To the artist, art has first to be art and then all other interests follow. This is where aesthetics comes into art. In this respect, the political and social life of his people becomes crucial to the artist, and this is reflected in his arts.

Derek Wright in an essay titled: "Somali Powerscapes: Mapping Farah's Fiction", expresses what he observed to be Nurudin Farah's view of the African literary artist. To Farah, "an artist is the creation of his nation's enlightened opinion" (1990: 21). Many African artists have explored dictatorial regimes in their works. For example, Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest* is a satire of the regime of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. Soyinka's condemnation of dictatorship is portrayed through Kongi, an independent African state ruler, who exalts himself foolishly and destructively above his followers and the gods. Camera Laye's novel, *Dramouss* has also been an indictment of the regime of Sekou Toure of Guinea. Other African writings on dictatorship include Sembene Ousmane's *The last of the Empire*, Alex la Guma's *Time of the Butcherbird*, and Mongo Beti's *Remember Ruben*, Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Nuruddin Farah's *Sweet and Sour Milk*. The novel, though an alien form in Africa, has been a very convenient form for the writer to transform his research into practical situations and to put across his opinions to a wider audience. This idea is succinctly put by Emmanuel

Obiechina in *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel*, that it is the changing cultural and social situations in West Africa which "both gave rise to the novel and in far-reaching and crucial way conditioned the West African novels' content, themes and texture" (1977:3). This view of Obiechina suggests too that it is not possible to divorce the social, political and economic changes in Africa from the discussion of the major trends in the African novel and literature as a whole. If the artist or writer is to be such a prime mover in the social and political affairs of the society, then his role is indeed very vital.

Therefore, in the contemporary realities of much oppressive governments, the artist cannot fail to address his writings to such realities of human predicaments as that experienced under dictatorships. African writers have made themselves counter forces to dictatorship. This they do by the subtle use of language and techniques to expose the brutal nature of dictatorships and by revealing to their audiences/readers (and the society at large) the devices used to divide and rule the people. Ali Mazrui in his essay, "On Poet Presidents and Philosopher - kings", examines closely how arts can be used as a counter - force to dictatorship. Based on real life situations, Mazrui uses the works of Leopold Sedar Senghor and Agostinho Neto as examples to suggest that the sensibility of art could reduce the misuse of power. In his words "...art in a ruler is no guarantee against dictatorship; genuine artistic genius may be a protection against brutal extremities and excesses. Art by itself is no substitute for democracy." (1990:19). He argues further that: "a genuinely gifted artist in supreme power is less likely to ignore the imperatives of humanness than a ruler bereft of aesthetic sensitivity" (1990:19). Mazrui's contention thus affirms that arts and the knowledge of it can be a very effective tool in opposing dictatorship. Mazrui is however careful to conclude that "there is no

proof yet that art has an inherent tendency towards democracy and social justice".(1990:19).This could mean that not all artists preach the gospel of democracy with their arts.

By getting involved and writing about evils of dictatorship or any other sensitive national issue of the day, the literate artist is not only performing a civic duty but as Josaphat Kubayanda puts it in an article, "Dictatorship, Oppression and New Realism", " it is also an obligation to the self..."(1990:9). Nuruddin Farah states during an interview, as quoted by Derek Wright in "Somali Powerscapes: Mapping Farah's fiction," in clear terms that the artist as a counter - force to dictatorship, especially in Africa is risking his life. As Farah's puts it, " in Africa, writing is a matter of life and death"(1990:21). This according to him is because "If you write something condemnatory of the regime in power they pass the death sentence on you" (1990:21). Apart from the 'death sentence', the artist could be detained, imprisoned, exiled or maltreated in any other form. From the foregoing, the writer and the dictator can be said to be odd bedfellows. This is because the writer uses his art to instill fear in the heart of the dictator. In doing this, he employs with great dexterity, different techniques such as satire and parody coupled with the subtle use of language to convey his message. The writer's message in a dictatorial system is that the (mis) governance of such a regime must not be allowed to continue. Farah's Somalia has been seen to have witnessed more violent acts as a result of dictatorship than Achebe's Nigeria. In these two countries, military dictatorships have led to brutal civil wars which claimed the lives of innocent citizens.

In conclusion, having commuted their art to the struggle against intimidation, unnecessary arrests, repression, detentions, execution, exile and harassment of dissident voices, African writers have been a strong force of opposition against dictatorship in the African continent.

CHAPTER FIVE

An Account of the Styles of Chinua Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah* and Nurrudin Farah in *Sweet and Sour milk*.

5.1 Introduction

Literature, like a mirror reflects best the socio-political situations of the society. The tendency towards highlighting pressing issues in writing connects literature with life. The writer being the 'eyes' and 'ears' of the society has the duty of writing about what he sees or hears which directly or otherwise affects his people's well-being. His writing must be fully people oriented. Nigeria and Somalia had at one time or the other suffered from the crushing grips of dictators and have produced so many writers most of who rose to the limelight due to their courage in the face of persecution and even death. Chinua Achebe and Nuruddin Farah, through their two novels which we are analyzing in this discourse, have been able to show their concerns for the current socio-political issues in their respective countries, and this also applies to most African countries.

5.2 A Stylistic Analysis of Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines an anthill as "a pile of earth formed by ants over their nests". It also defines a Savannah as a wide flat open area with few trees found especially in Africa. It is not really known and not really the bone of contention here what Achebe was trying to do here by joining these two contradictory words to form his title; a pile of earth and a flat wide area. Achebe's novels deals with colonial and post-colonial African situations reflecting the problems of the entire African continent. *Anthills of the Savannah* deals with the socio-political issues connected with the phenomenon of military dictatorship. Achebe's reputation as a major writer of the twentieth century was established so

quickly. Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah* portrays the military government as no better than the civilian government in the fictional African state of Kangan with the story centering on three friends: Sam, Ikem Osodi and Chris Oriko. They are all trained in London and in the course of their careers, Sam joins the armed forces while Chris and Ikem goes into Journalism. In the course of time, Sam becomes the head of state while he makes Chris the commissioner for information and Ikem, the editor of the government newspaper, the Gazette. The three friends tries to work together as a team by using their intellectual abilities and energy for the good of their country. Things however takes a different turn when Sam comes back from his first Organization of African Unity (O.A.U) Conference. Sam becomes power drunk and insists on being addressed as "His Excellency" even by his friends who before now relate to each other by their first names. As Agovi observes in an article titled "The African Writer and the Phenomenon of Nation States in Africa", "throughout the novel, there is the ambiguity for the readers of oscillating between two modes of address in relation to the Head of State - 'Sam' and 'His Excellency'." (1990:51).

Sam's consciousness of power and position breaks down the bonds of friendship and familiarity that unites them. He no longer considers the efforts of Chris and Ikem to be of any importance in his government. In his bid to adequately convey his message to his audience, Achebe employs certain techniques coupled with a skillful use of the English Language. In his narration, Achebe distances the authorial voice and employs a mixture of the first and third person points of view. The first person point of view narrative voices includes those of Chris and Ikem while Beatrice gives the third person point of view. Since the narration fluctuates between the first person and third person points of view, it gives the reader a wider

perspective and knowledge of the issue discussed in the novel. In other words, each point of view gives a different perspective and also additional information on the discourse. Also, the mixed narrative technique helps to reflect the steady progression and development of individual characters. Achebe depicts the gradual transformation of Sam into a tyrant. John Kent (Mad Medico) recollects his first meeting with Sam in their school days and tells Dick, "I told you this boy was such a charmer when I first met him. I'd never seen anyone so human, so cultured" (56). This even shows to us that, dictators often start as democrats before becoming power drunk. Chris also recalls that, as a student, Sam was somebody to be envied and emulated. As Chris puts it "Sam was the social paragon... He was the all-rounder - good student; captain of the cricket team,... school captain" (65-66). From Ikem we learn that much of the changes that have come over Sam only started when he attended the O.A.U. meeting.

Sam is used by Achebe to show the corrupting influence of power and how amazing what even one month in office can do to a man's mind. According to Ojinmah in *Chimua Achebe: New Perspectives*. "Achebe sees the human nature as endowing individuals with the capacity both to be good and exceedingly evil" (1991:97). Sam is not born a tyrant. Rather it is the system that gives him the power that changes him. As Plato asserted, dictators do start as good statesmen before getting power drunk.

Through Beatrice too, the author gives a new dimension to his vision. Here, he comes to show the positive contributory factor of the African woman as against his view in *Things fall Apart* where it is portrayed that the woman has no role to play in family and state matters and therefore should stay at home to make babies.

Beatrice Okoh, an English graduate from London University helps to develop Ikem's political perception especially concerning the new role that women have to play now and in future. Ikem attributes his insight and love for feminism to Beatrice. As Ojinmah puts it in *Chinua Achebe: New Perspectives*, Achebe is saying that "the time is now for the new nations of Africa to invoke the female principle." (1991:104). Achebe is noted for his simplicity of language with the use of allusions, proverbs and images drawn from the everyday vocabulary of the masses. This local colouration gives Achebe's work a distinctive flavor and helps us, as critics, to appreciate and participate in the event that is depicted. Through the funeral imagery, Achebe demonstrates that a military regime is essentially dictatorial. Sam, "His Excellency", personalizes his position as the Head of State by calling it his 'funeral'. One of the instances when the Head of State used the 'funeral' image is when he is talking to Professor Okong. Sam says "no, because they don't know you. It is not your funeral but mine" (16). Through this image of "funeral", Achebe seems to stress 'His Excellency's personal responsibility for that office because he is the person who would experience the shame and humiliation that goes with failure of non performance. The Head of State does not see his leadership as needing collective effort or assistance. He finds it right for him to rule and dictate as he wishes. This is why 'His Excellency' tells Chris to suspend Ikem suddenly as the editor of the National Gazette.

The usage of the animal imagery is also commonly employed by Chinua Achebe in this book under our scrutiny. This image is to demonstrate the power of dictatorship on the people. Chris gives a detailed description of the fearful state of Commissioner for Education, before the head of state, using the animal image of the 'hunter and the hunted.' Chris says "on my right sat the honourable Commissioner

for Education. He is by far the most frightened of the lot. As soon as he had sniffed peril in the air, he had begun to disappear into his hole, as some animals and insects do, backwards." (2-3). Also, the Head of State is referred to as 'the wise old tortoise' (23) to express the quantity of his craft. Apart from the images, Achebe created a realistic mode of speech through considerable use of proverbs and wise sayings by the characters. These expressions are such that are commonly used by the people in the traditional African setting. Such examples include 'It takes a lion to tame a leopard, says our people' (22), 'A wise man agrees with his wife and eats lumps of smoked fish in his soup. A fool contradicts his wife and eats lumps of cocoyam' (225) 'What is brought out before a masquerade cannot be taken indoors again. Food goes away-downwards' (226), and so many others.

Achebe does not see the new military regime as better than the civilian regime they had overthrown. There is more of massive corruption in the military regime. A very good example is the presidential villa which is built at a cost of forty five million by the civilians now being renovated by the military at twenty million. The author also reflects the cynicism and moral degeneration of the society under the military regime. The attempted rape of a school girl by a policeman in broad daylight is a typical example of this decadence. While the "women were pleading and protesting timorously, most of the men found it very funny indeed" (215). The death of Chris further shows how worthless the human life can be in a dictatorial regime. He is shot in broad daylight by the policeman he had earlier restrained from raping the innocent school girl in public. This cold-blooded murder of even a government official not only indicts the government that breeds such monstrosities but even the apathetic society that countenances it. 'His Excellency' gradually extends his gross abuse of power to members of his executive council and his

friends alike. Chris once declares to Beatrice that although he is the Commissioner for Information, he has little information himself. The commissioners too are just there as robots and cannot make any positive contribution to whatever is being discussed.

A dictator usually has the urge to eliminate his real or perceived opponents and in the case of Sam, his friends, Chris and Ikem are part of the first victims. Over a period of time, his friends becomes his enemies since they cannot agree to his gross abuse of power. In the course of time, John Kent (Mad Medico) is deported from Kangan, Ikem is taken away to be murdered and while in flight for dear life, Chris tragically meets his death in the hands of a ruthless policeman. As much as Achebe tries to portray the ills of the society and its leaders, he also portrays what the true role of the writer should be in such a situation. According to him, an artist should be visionary. He should criticize at whatever cost. Ikem as editor of National Gazette tells Chris "as for my editorials, as long as I remain editor of the Gazette, I shall not seek anybody's permission for what I write." Ikem has been producing editorials which seems to be infuriating 'His Excellency'. Through Ikem, Achebe re-emphasizes his earlier ideas that the writer should always seek the best for the society even if it is against the dictates and wishes of the authority that be. In so many instances some writers are used in blackmailing other writers just as the press in Kangan was used to report the so-called plot to destabilize the government. Ikem is accused of being behind the plot.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe sees the elites as having contributed in a large measure to the misrule of the Head of State. In their individual military and administrative positions, these intellectuals appropriate the meager resources of the

nation to themselves. His Excellency himself belongs to the elite class but all he ends up reflecting is corruption and indiscipline. The same situation is applicable to Mr. Oriko who later replaces Chris as the Commissioner for Information and the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney General. All of them are elites but they have been infested by the corrupting influence of both privilege and power. Oriko himself exclaims earlier in the novel saying "I am not thinking so much about him as my colleagues, eleven intelligent educated men who let this happen to them..." (2). A good government is one that recognizes that those who are privileged to exercise power and authority must be conscious of the fact that they are brought in to serve and not to be served. According to Beatrice when reflecting on Chris' last message about the last green bottle, she says "Chris was sending us a message to beware. This world belongs to the people of the world not to any little caucus, no matter how talented ... (232). This piece summarizes Achebe's solution to military dictatorships in Africa. When the leaders at the national or state levels realize the fact that there will no longer be a monopoly of power, then they would be forced to embrace democracy.

5.3 Nurrudin Farah's Style in *Sweet and Sour Milk*

Farah's novels have been mainly preoccupied with the oppression of his native people, the Somalis under the dictatorial government of Siad Barre. *Sweet and Sour Milk* is the first part of Farah's trilogy: '*Variations on the Theme of an African Dictatorship*'. Like Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, Farah also deals with the issue of military dictatorship. The plot of the novel is centered around the dictator's obsession with the eliminating of the 'enemies' of the military regime through different methods. The first of the victims of the regime's brutality is Soyaan, the economic adviser to the president, who apparently is poisoned at a

dinner with a government minister and suddenly dies. After Soyaan's death, the military regime posthumously declares him a hero of the revolution, a plan to which his father, Keynaan happily gives his support. Loyaan, Soyaan's twin brother sees this as 'stealing' his brother's soul; he therefore remains uncompromising and obstinate. Loyaan, out of love for a dead brother, works through clues and coded messages and the women who are his brother's friends; Margarita and Beydan. Loyaan later gets to know that the government had through the aid of a Russian trained doctor eliminated Soyaan. Loyaan's obstinacy later leads to the government's decision to send him to Belgrade as a 'diplomat' in the Soviet Union.

Even though the oral tradition is prevalent in Somalia, Farah's choice for writing in English language is understandable. In his country, the prevalence of the oral tradition over the written, coupled with the problem of limited publication and distribution of literature in the Somali language outside the country, made it difficult for Farah to adopt his native language as the medium of his writing. Farah's choice of language is however advantageous to him. As Karim Alrawi observes in an article "Nurrudin Farah: Webs of Intrigue" "his novels, written in English have obliged him to become an exile and thus reinforced his need to write in English so as to maintain a mass audience." (1987:12-13). Farah's form and style deeply shows his rejection of tyranny on the African continent. Each chapter of *Sweet and Sour Milk* has an epigraph and this is very allegorical. The epigraphs give an underlying meaning to the epigraph in the next chapter. For example, the epigraph to the novel's prologue reads: "like a baby with a meatless bone in his mouth, a bone given him by his mother to suck while she is in the kitchen minding the pot which has now begun to sing ..." (7)

This epigraph is symbolic and it informs us in readiness for the deceitful mechanism of divide and rule policy of a dictatorial regime as contained in the epigraph to chapter one which reads: "like two tyres of a bicycle that never touch, never come together, to tell each other of a wish to retire from serving an ungrateful master, each remains isolated within its own limit of space, a system, a code of behaviour that perpetuates and makes possible the serving, each is for a purpose, locked, tied, screwed to a bar which runs between; which makes possible the moving, gives the article an existence, offers the metallic composition a name- and a label at that." This epigraph, in turn, prepares the readers for the next one in chapter two. There are fourteen chapters and there are fourteen epigraphs; all very artful and meaningful. Each epigraph is suggestive of the subsequent one. On the whole, the epigraphs give a vivid picture of the theme of dictatorship in the novel. They depict the powerlessness of the masses in the hands of those in power and authority. It is a vital aspect of Nuruddin Farah's vision.

Farah also deploys an excellent artistic descriptive power in this novel. Most of the time, this is done metaphorically. An example in chapter one reads thus: "The sun re-emerged draped in the brown dust of noon, it reappeared looking tanned. The sun had turned on its time yelling pivot and gathered round itself a robe blue as the heavens. For its crown, a wreath of clouds, white as the skull of death. Now the sun canoed through a fern of vapor and heat mist, swam to a clearing and was swallowed up by a swamp of tropical haze." (25) Apart from the descriptions of landscapes and nature, there are also detailed description of prison conditions and the repressive mechanism of the regime. So many people are detained without warrants or trials. Some are even forgotten in prisons after so many years. Ahmed-Wellie recounts to Loyaan the physical conditions of a political prisoner and how

he was called to tend him. According to Ahmed-Wellie: "the man was clearly someone important politically, who would serve the interests of the General's regime alive and in detention... I had evidence shown me that the man's kidney filters had ceased functioning; that his blood pressure had risen in the past five hours..."(42)

Through the stream of consciousness style, Farah exhibits an ability to explore psychological and emotional details of the inner workings of his characters. For example, Loyaan's thoughts are brought to the open, while he goes through the town. Farah writes: "he walked up and down roads with no name, would one of them be named after Soyaan? And which one ... now, now... don't get carried away. You are looking for Margaritta. Address yourself to the issue at hand..."(111-112). Through this, we see how Farah uses this technique to reveal his characters' thoughts. By probing into the emotional and psychological composition of the characters, Nuruddin Farah presents his characters as individual rather than types. All of Farah's characters particularly Soyaan, Loyaan and Beydan are characters who through the real Somalia situation are revealed. The oppression and repression of the dictatorial regime is vividly shown through these characters. The General in Farah's *Sweet and Sour Milk* is representative of the Somali General(Siad Barre) in real life. According to David Mnthali in "Autocracy and the Limits of Identity : A Reading of the Novels of Nuruddin Farah," "In 'real' life, the 'grand patriarch' of Somalia cuts people in halves as if their lives did not mean very much "(1989:55). The General is presented as someone who is highly feared, hence he is hailed with slogans such as 'there is no general but our General' (99). In addition, the General has 'ninety-nine good names and this is chanted in chorus after him.' Loyaan once says "people, immediately their number exceeded five, found it expedient to sing

the General's praises... good names." (89).

In an instance, Soyaan confronts the General's inhuman execution of the ten sheiks who have been accused of using their religion to cause disunity in Somalia. Soyaan tells the General that it is unconstitutional for him to do that. In his response, the General asks Soyaan: "Well, in that case, have I ever introduced myself to you young man? I am the constitution. Now you know who I am and I want you out of here before I set those dogs of mine on you and you are torn to pieces." (226-227). The dictatorial regime in *Sweet and Sour Milk* maintains itself through a system of rewards. An obvious example is the re-employment of an earlier dismissed worker as an informer to the government because he connived with the government to falsify Soyaan's last words as "Labour is Honour and there is no General like our General."

The regime constantly keeps a close watch on the movement and activities of the group of intellectuals in the society so that, whatever attempt is made at criticizing the government is crushed by all means. This is why the elites in the novel are helpless and could not do anything about the ills in the society. Soyaan, an economist who works in the President's office is poisoned and killed. Keyaan expresses the reality of this to Loyaan and to show that the General does not feel threatened by the activities of the intellectuals, he says, "the general fears tribal chieftains or men of his age. Not you, nor Soyaan, nor any one of your generation..."(93). Farah shows here the powerlessness of the Somali elites to do anything about their country's situation under the military dictatorship. Felix Mintali notes in "Autocracy and the Limits of Identity. A Reading of the Novels of Nuruddin Farah" that: "the problem with the 'captive intelligentsia' of Farah's Somalia as with their equally captive brothers and sisters in other parts of Africa is

that they have been either politically marginalized by being isolated from the rest of the society or co-opted into their countries' ruling and exploitative elites...any meaningful attempt at influencing change is bound to lead to the sort of bizarre pre-occupation with secret memorandum and "kamikaze" attempts at assassinating the General." (1989:58).

Mnthali's observation above is right in that the elites in *Sweet and Sour Milk* as also evident in contemporary African realities, have not made much effort to combat oppression and dictatorship in their lands. The elites have not been able to come out with concrete and achievable solutions to the problems of the African society. Soyaan's first memorandum for example, lists all the problems and evils of the dictatorial regime but no solution is given on how to end such problems. Mnthali expresses this idea thus: "it is the area of what needs to be done that the memoranda reflect weaknesses which are common to the thinking of intellectuals all over Africa. Those who become aware of the problems around them rarely come around to broadening their support among the peasants and 'people of the city' in their countries." (59)

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 Conclusion

Dictatorship has been examined in this study as an integral part of the political landscape in the contemporary African society. The novel has been an appropriate form for the African writers to reflect the realities of post-independent Africa with its social, political and economic disillusionment. Many African writers who view the contemporary political order in the continent as desperately in need of social changes have put into writing the ideas, words and images that relate to the contemporary power system in order to construct an alternative Utopian society that is desired. This is essentially the relationship between literature and dictatorship. All these they have done so many times at their own risk. No doubt dictatorship still prevails in one form or the other in Africa today as many of these leaders continue to enjoy acceptance and even outright support, but once they are out of power, they would be condemned by one and all. Thus, it is obvious that the socio-political situations in Africa are yet to reach the necessary state of excellence, hence the need for writers to address more of these problems in their writings.

From the literary works of Chinua Achebe, in *Anthills of the Savannah* and Nuruddin Farah, in *Sweet and Sour Milk*, one can draw some conclusions from the study of dictatorship in the African novel. The two novels are motivated by the social and political situations prevalent in their respective societies. Chinua Achebe comes from Nigeria in West Africa while Nuruddin Farah belongs to the Somali tradition in the North of Africa. Both Chinua Achebe and Nuruddin Farah shared a common identity in themes, regardless of their different cultural backgrounds. This is due to the similarity of socio-political experiences throughout contemporary

Africa which serves as the common denominator for their writings.

All areas of a writer's life are affected by his environment and his society. There is therefore no way a writer's art can be separated from the society. This being the case, the literature of the writer in a non-democratic society has grown out of a political and cultural experience of a people that are being subjected to extreme brutalization and dehumanization. While the Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe has free reign to express his dissatisfaction with the events in his society, Nuruddin Farah is not so privileged since the Somali dictator, Siad Barre, deals ruthlessly with any spoken or written criticism. Nuruddin Farah's experience confirms the fact that a writer cannot be divorced from his society or the historical events of his country. He is really a committed artist because, had he not been a participant in the political upheavals of his country and the suffering of his people, he would not have been able to create such a challenging and moving novel as *Sweet and Sour Milk*, even while in exile. Achebe on the other hand could not just sit and watch as he joined his compatriots in fighting for the emancipation of his people even though it was with his pen that he did.

Chinua Achebe and Nuruddin Farah are determined in their works to fight and destroy tyranny and to usher in a happy, peaceful and progressive life for the people. This they did through the language and techniques that are employed in order to convey their messages. Both novelists adopt the English language as the medium of communication but they make their works an enclave in the cultural life of their people. For example, the indigenous language of Bassa, the capital of Kangan, the fictitious African State in *Anthills of the Savannah* seems to be the Igbo language. As Chinua Achebe puts it in the novel "the one at the back of the

bus written in the indigenous language of Bassa, concise in the extreme and, for that reason, hard if not impossible to translate and said simply: ife onye Metalu ... (202). In addition to this, the names given to the characters, apart from those that bear English names are Igbo names. Examples include Nwanyibuife, Ikem and names for God or deities such as 'Chi'.

Also in *Sweet and Sour Milk*, Nuruddin Farah presents an exact picture of the deformation of life in Somalia. Real names of places and characters are mentioned. The setting itself is Somalia, Somali names such as Soyaan, Loyaan, Keynaan are given to the characters. Somali proverbs and wise sayings are also entrenched in the work. One example is the Somali proverb expressed by Loyaan. He says "if you wish to win people's praise, die young" (31). The point that is being emphasized here about language is that even though these African novelists find it more convenient to write in the English language, they still employ as much as possible speech patterns and ideas from their native African languages. The various views and arguments among African writers and critics on the language factor as it affects African literary writings would come out best as a topic to be discussed in later research works. Agreed that the adoption of African languages would have been more ideal especially when it comes to expressing certain African ideas and concepts such as proverbs, however the use of the colonial language, English or French as the case may be, gives the written work a wider audience than the use of individual ethnic or African language. The renowned East African writer, Ngugi Wa Thiong' O has since been the major brain behind this call.

In their individual creativity, Chinua Achebe and Nuruddin Farah have used the medium of their novels to awaken in the readers a strong feeling about the

repressive political regimes that they and their people have been subjected to. They see dictatorship as an abuse of power, oppression and total dehumanization. There is the conscious attempt by these novelists to make their characters and actions representatives of people and actions in real life situations and settings. Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Nuruddin Farah's *Sweet and Sour Milk* are pieces of artistic excellence. The political message that is conveyed in the novels is revealing and inspiring. It is such that encourages awareness in Africans themselves. Both novelists have in the words of Wole Soyinka in "The Writer in a Modern African State", "responded to the political moment of (their) society and decided to face its attendant disillusionment" (1967:16).

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