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**Corruption and Disillusionment in Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* (1964) and
Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966): Dialogue and Polemics**

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Abstract

This research examines the portrayal of corruption and disillusionment in post independent Nigeria from a dialogic perspective. It puts under study Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* (1964) and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966). To shed light on this study we have borrowed M. Bakhtin's theory of Dialogism developed in his work; *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays* (1981). In this dissertation we have attempted to answer two main questions: How do Okara and Achebe dialogize concerning corruption and disillusionment? A second intriguing question is: To what extent does Okara's *The Voice* affect Achebe's *A Man of the People* in terms of Dialogism? The outcome of the study has shown that Achebe has stylized Okara concerning corruption and disillusionment. The two authors are indeed in a constant dialogue vis-à-vis bribery, violence and social oppression and the anti-system struggle. Both of them used their antagonists Chief Izongo and Chief Nanga as their primary symbols of corruption and disillusionment. As a matter of fact, Achebe has been intensively influenced by Okara's *The Voice* which prompted him to re-produce Okara's work; its context and content, the plot and the conflict as well as the characters and characterization. Despite the fact that Achebe was entirely absorbed by Okara's *The Voice*, this did not prevent him from making considerable contributions to his work essentially his protagonist anti-system struggle and the happy ending of his narrative.

Dedications

To my dear parents Sadat Tahar and DjebraMalika for their abundant care throughout my educational pursuit.

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I. General Introduction

Many African Literature are a committed literature; initially, it was means for celebrating African society and culture. Later, it was used in the anti colonial struggle. Presently, it is being engaged as a veritable weapon for depicting the postcolonial disillusionment in African nations.

Most African nations gained their independence in the 1950s and the 1960s. Subsequently, the years that fallowed independence dragged African nations into a severe political despair and disillusionment mainly because of the intensified implementation of dishonourable practices and corruption. Thereby, the African writings have been mainly pre-occupied by depicting the socio-economic and political realities of the continent. This situation is described by Claude Ake as follows:

At independence the form and the function of the state in Africa did not change much for most countries in Africa. State power remained essentially the same: immense, arbitrary often violent, always threatening ...politics remained a zero-sum game; power was sought by all means. Colonial rule left most of Africa legacy of intense and law-less political competition amidst an ideological void and a rising tide of disenchantment with the expectation of a better life.¹

Therefore, one may open the gap and make reference to the current Algerian fight for independence from the corrupt political system. It started on 16 February 2019, six days after president Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced his candidacy for a fifth presidential term in a signed statement. These protests also known as Hirak movement reveals a unique organized and united nation never witnessed before, indeed, all Algerians all over the country came out in the streets to peacefully demonstrate their total refusal of the current government, hoping to reach true democracy.

In this context, the Federal Republic of Nigeria gained independence in 1960, but soon afterwards succumbed to military rule after a bloody “coup d’état” which later led Nigeria to

a severe civil war. Obviously, the main reasons behind this downfall are: corruption and bribery, the dictatorial and repressive behaviour of the leaders as well as despair and disillusionment.

The prevailing of corruption and disillusionment in post independent Africa is a widespread subject matter in African novels. Among the novels which tackled this issue are: Ayi Kwei Armah *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), Meja Mwangi *Kill Me Quick* (1974) and Ngugi Wa Thiongo *Devil On The Cross* (1980).

The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born is Armah's first novel. The novel records Armah's disillusionment with post-colonial experience of Ghana, and demonstrates the widespread corruption as he reveals the harsh image of selfishness and greediness of both the leaders and the inhabitants.²

Additionally, Mwangi's novel *Kill Me Quick* depicts the disillusioned post-colonial Kenya as it describes the oppressive and dictatorial tendencies of the rulers toward their people. The novel reveals that in African post-colonial societies, corruption and rampant scarcity of personal integrity have replaced the peaceful existence.³

Furthermore, Ngugi's *Devil On The Cross* is a landmark in Ngugi's life and career for he was born in detention in one of the largest prisons in post-colonial Africa, The Kamiti Maximum Security Prison. The novel was written "with blood, sweat and toil" on toilet paper.⁴ Ngugi uses the image of the body to portray corruption and moral degradation.⁵

In this register, Chinua Achebe and Gabriel Okara are also among numerous African authors who decided to use their writings as a means to make their voices overheard. They were greatly committed to denounce the injustices and atrocities lived by the Nigerian during the years following independence of their country. In their works, Okara's *The Voice* (1964) and Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) represented the Nigerian society, its politics and

way of life. They proudly took this task as their duty to declare loudly the painful circumstances under which they were living at that period. Chinua Achebe and Gabriel Okara use quite the same method of writing to unveil and raise awareness in the minds of many Nigerians whose lives became unbearable because of daily conflicts in their country.

Achebe's novel is a political satire, it is being associated to a new phase of writing which Achebe takes a hard look at "what we in Africa are making of our independence".⁶ Achebe depicts the political class that is completely devoured by greediness, as the main source of corruption and disillusionment.

In his turn, Gabriel Okara in his novel *The Voice* explored the dilemma of incompetent and corrupted leaders in a fictional place that resembles to Nigeria. He criticized discreetly the failure of the inadequate attitudes undertaken by the Nigerian politicians in their nation-building.

Therefore, one of our primary concerns in this paper is to examine the theme of corruption and disillusionment in these two above mentioned novels and to determine the inter-influential relationship between them, as two standard examples of post independent Nigerian experiences and the prevailing political system. The latter system embodied the same colonial legacy which is carried by the loyalist bourgeoisie and faithful leaders of the colonial regime.

Review of the Literature:

Both Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Okara's *The Voice* have raised a wide range of criticism. As far as *A Man of the People* is concerned, Mercedes Mackay one of the earliest literary critic, whose review was published only a year after Achebe released his novel that is in January 1967, he maintained:

At one time it seemed that Wole Soyinka held the field as West Africa's really great satirical writer, but this new novel of Chinua Achebe's puts him well into the running. This may not be the most pleasant of his

novels, but it is by far the most brilliant, written at his unusual exciting pace, tight, powerful, and in parts exceedingly funny.⁷

Emmanuel Ngara asserts in his essay “Achebe as Artist; The place and Significance of *Anthrills of the Savannah*” that the approval that the publication of *Things Fall Apart* got, is of equal acceptance for the publication of *A Man of the People*. Achebe’s novel is considered to be another turning point in his career. Ngara affirms that *A Man of the People* was the first novel of disillusionment published in Anglophone Africa.⁸

Other studies have been conducted on Gabriel Okara’s *The Voice*, including the review of The Journal of Commonwealth Literature sustain that *The Voice* is an exciting and imaginative piece of writing characterized by the simplicity of its narrative story and writing. The simplicity of the story is misleading; it is not the simplicity which comes from the author’s weakness, but the simplicity that results from careful writing⁹. Besides, in 1968, Margaret Laurence, one of the Canadian novelist, described Okara’s novel *The Voice* “as being undoubtedly one of the most memorable novels produced in Nigeria”¹⁰ as she wrote in her book on Nigerian literature; *Long Drums and Cannons*.

To our best knowledge, no study has yet been produced on both writers together from a dialogic perspective. Except for the comparison of Akambi Fatiou RAIMI, a senior lecturer at the University of Parakou entitled African-Like Politics: A Comparative study of Gabriel Okara’s *The Voice* and Chinua Achebe’s *A Man of the People*.¹¹

Although a great deal of studies has been undertaken, so far they remain insufficient as they have not grasped the totality of the relationship between Achebe and Okara. Accordingly, our aim through this dissertation is to complete the views mentioned above by identifying how Achebe and Okara dialogize through their two respective works and determining which one of these two authors influenced the other.

Issue and Working Hypothesis:

It follows from the above review of literature that this subject has been studied from different perspectives but to the best of our knowledge no study was engaged in a dialogical comparison between Gabriel Okara and Chinua Achebe before our attempt to fulfill it. In fact both writers have a common interest in their country's matters, and their works under analysis deal with the theme of corruption and disillusionment in post independent Nigeria.

Additionally, both of them published their two respective works in English and within the same period that is the 1960s. Relying on these facts we will argue that the two authors initially dialogize with each other throughout their writings on a variety of referents. Therefore, our study will be to determine how these two authors dialogize relying on M. Bakhtin's theory of Dialogism developed in his work; *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981) through which we will try to demonstrate the influence the two authors have had on each other.

Methodological Outline:

Our dissertation consists of two chapters including a general introduction and a general conclusion. In this dissertation we propose to discuss, through a comparison, two models of government as explored by the two authors notably Chinua Achebe and Gabriel Okara. We start from the hypothesis that their two works were meant to sustain and reform the corrupted and disillusioned Nigerian society. Then we move to shed light on the inter-influential relationship between *The Voice* and *A Man of the People*. In this dissertation we are going to rely on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism which he expounded in his work: *The dialogic*

imagination: Four Essays (1981). Finally, we conclude by evaluating the results and finding that we would achieve through our analysis.

II. Materials and Method:

1- Materials

Chinua Achebe, throughout his various published writing *A Man of the People*, revealed a live image in which he exposed the basic realities that Africa in general and Nigeria in particular witnessed.

The novel tells the story of a young and educated man, Odili the narrator meets his former teacher Chief Nanga, who now became the powerful but corrupt Minister of Culture. This latter invites him to his mansion where Odili finally uncovers Chief Nanga's real face as Nanga sleeps with Odili's girlfriend. Following this incident Odili registered to the Common's People Convention Party in opposition to Chief Nanga's political party.¹²

Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* declared the reasons behind the corrupted and disillusioned life that surrounds the Nigerian society.

Okolo the protagonist returns to his home town Amatu after having studied abroad. Once back he was astonished by the extent to which his country was falling off. Corruption and materialism had taken control. Therefore, Okolo decided to devote all his life to restore order and enters in a conscious combat against Chief Izongo; one of the corrupted leaders in Amatu.¹³

Historical background

Nigeria referred to as the Federal Republic of Nigeria, gained independence from the British ruler on October 1960; the year Nigeria assumed both political and military control of its territory. The Nigerians were obviously very enthusiast and quite optimistic about their country's future. No one would of imagined that the next fifteen years would be total political chaos; a military coup d'état succeeded by three years civil war (1967-1970).

With the departure of the colonizer Nigerians were now faced to the new responsibilities of independence, that is who would rule the nation. The Nigerians were equally divided since this resulted in the formation of the federal coalition government, and Azikiwe Nnamdi appointed Governor-General and Sir Abubakar Tafawa as the prime minister.

A coalition government since during the 1959 election none of these parties; the Action Group (AG), the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and the National Congress of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC); won the majority. Thereby, the Northern People's Congress united with the National Congress of Nigeria and Cameroon to form a coalition government.

It is only three years after independence that is in 1963 that there were general agreement to the constitution of a Republic which represented presuming for Nigeria the first attempt for building a democratic nation. As a matter of fact Nigeria changed from the British system of government to the American one; that is instead of having a ceremonial president and a prime minister, Nigeria decided to elect a president who would oversee the affairs of the nation; and Azikiwe Nnamdi became the first executive president.

Unfortunately, in 1966 Nigeria succumbed to military rule after a bloody coup d'état 1965, and this is one of the main reasons besides corruption and bribery, fraudulent conversion of public funds and violence and repression that led Nigeria into a severe civil war¹⁴.

2- Method:

To reach the aim of this study, we have borrowed M. Bakhtin's theory of Dialogism developed in his work; *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays* (1981), for its relevance to our analysis. The Dialogical Imagination is a compilation of four essays concerning language and the essay: "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse" (1940), "Epic and the Novel"

(1941), “Discourse in the Novel” (1934-1935) and “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope” (1937-1938).

Within his work Bakhtin introduces the concept of stylization which he explained as being the reproduction of another’s person style, in order to provide another belief, and ideological position. Therefore, we will make use of Bakhtin’s concept of stylization to sustain our reading on corruption and disillusionment in Okara’ s *The Voice* and Achebe’s *A Man of the People*.

Furthermore, Bakhtin was interested in explaining how language is shaped by social, historical and political influences. He coined the term heteroglossia to describe and theorize the existence of and the relationship between language varieties. In this respect, the second chapter of this study emphasis will be put on the influence that the two author and their two respective works have had on each other.¹⁴

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III. Results and Discussion

a- Results:

Our study is primarily concerned with the theme of corruption and disillusionment, which is Okara's and Achebe's main focus in their novels to locate exactly the weakness that corruption and disillusionment caused in their country after independence. The aim is also to determine the kind of the dialogical relationship which relates Okara to Achebe.

Our investigation to reach this aim will start from the point that the two selected authors showed a common interest sight about their country's matter *A Man of the People* and *The Voice* are two products of two Nigerian writers, namely Chinua Achebe and Gabriel Okara. In addition the two authors aim at linking fiction with historical, social and political realities in a way that awakes the consciousness of the reader. Moreover, we are going to highlight the characteristics in which the two authors exemplify the corrupted and disillusioned post-independence Nigeria. Finally; we conclude by determining the kind of dialogical features that combine or detach Gabriel Okara's and Chinua Achebe's works as well as the authors themselves relying on Bakhtin's theory of Dialogism.

Throughout our reading of Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* we have revealed the following findings: first of all, the two novels do not call out to reach any economic interest, but rather they attempt to open a dialogue for their own society to denounce the injustices of the ruling system during the era following independence. The quest for independence was to restore home control and peace. On October 1960 the Nigerians won independence after a long and bitter struggle. However, it soon appeared to Nigerians that the newly independent government became more oppressive and corrupted than its predecessors. Little by little there was the emergence of the African dictators who

carried out the repressive practices which allowed them to maintain their precious status of power.

Actually, the two works call to break up with the follow leaders of colonialism and build a true home democracy. Since Nigerians were submerged by the feeling of disillusionment for they felt that all their sacrifices, their hard labor to finally get rid of the unjust colonizer were not properly valued.

As a second finding; the two authors sustain that cowardice and dishonesty in leadership remain the major factors that led Nigerians into downfall. In this respect, the two authors request for a battle and a need to rebel against the dictatorial leaders who use their position for their personnel interest while their nation starves in poverty and injustice. In fact, the two authors used respectively the character of Izongo and Nanga to testify the corrupted leadership; and made use of their main character Okolo and Odili as rebellious against the system. Eventually; the two authors succeeded to communicate their message through their characters to reveal the harsh and bitter realities that the authorities and the state are painfully trying to cover up.

Moreover, the two authors agreed to a great extent in their perception of corruption and disillusionment in their society. However, they came to dialogize differently concerning the way in which their main characters oppose the system and how they perceived the ending or punishment of the rebels. We conclude by deducing that Gabriel Okara's and Chinua Achebe's works are complementary. In fact the two authors share the same perception concerning corruption and disillusionment and at the same time, each of them completes the view of the other by adding new conceptions.

b- Discussion

Most of the African independent nations witnessed the same internal conflict that is the social and political problems mainly set off by the corrupted leadership which took position of power right after independence. This ultimately led to the despair, disillusionment and deception of the Africans who thought that their nightmare of the colonizer being abolished, still the real demons appeared to be worse than colonization itself. In these terms committed writers implicitly or explicitly started to depict the conflicts of their societies within their works. Among these writers the Nigerian writers Chinua Achebe and Gabriel Okara who manifested within their two respective works *A Man of the People* and *The Voice* the disillusioned and corrupted Nigerian society.

The theme of corruption and disillusionment which is represented in these works, through different incidents and characters, has been used to show the real life that existed in Nigeria after independence. Their two novels are rich with illustrations of corruption, failing economic and social systems as well as disillusionment of the people who lost their faith in everything. Also, they denounce the growing intolerance toward political opposition that leaders adopted to maintain their position in power. Chief Nanga in *A Man of the People* and chief Izongo in *The Voice* were the main representative of such an oppressive system that was imposed on the people.

Our approach to study Chinua Achebe's and Gabriel Okara's novels will be primary in terms of dialogism relaying on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism : *The Dialogical Imagination : Four Essays*. The optimal reason of appealing to Bakhtin lies in the common shared thematic concerns and literary commitment by the two authors to reveal the evidences that their country witnessed right after independence.

Bakhtin informs in his work that the dialogical form of the novel or every genre has its own counterpart:

It is our conviction that there never was a single strictly straightforward genre, no single type of direct discourse-artistic, rhetorical, philosophical, religious, ordinary everyday that did not have its own parodying and travesty double, its own comic-ironic counterpart. What is more, these periodic and laughing reflections of the direct word were, in some cases, just as sanctified by tradition and just as canonized as their elevated models.¹

Bakhtin advocates that any original text is subject to criticism and dependent on its counterparty because the worthiness of any text is revealed only through the process of dialogisation. Parody, stylization and open or hidden polemics can be considered as types of this dialogisation. Therefore, our comparative study will focus mainly on studying how the two selected novels complete each other to reveal their worthiness.

Okara and Achebe exhibit what Bakhtin coined Stylization, which he expounded as being two pieces of writing written by two different authors thus using different styles however sharing the same view about a given thematic concern. Throughout our reading we came to deduce that Gabriel Okara and Chinua Achebe agree to a great extent in their perception about the corrupt and disillusioned Nigerian society.

Gabriel Okara and Chinua Achebe explore the dilemma of incompetent and corrupted leaders in post independent Nigeria. They criticize discreetly the failure of the inadequate attitudes undertaken by the Nigerian politicians in their nation-building. They condemn the moral decadence and materialism of hypocrite and greedy leaders. They describe the phase which comes after independence in Nigeria as being worse than the phase of colonial regime. Indeed the political regime undertaken right after independence was not yet prepared to govern democratically.

The two novels equally denounce the horrors and bitterness that the Nigerian society underwent due to the extreme spread of corruption and bribery in the years that followed

independence. Okara and Achebe in the two selected works exploited the harsh and cruel image of corruption and self-interest and hypocrisy which were as easily and as naturally incorporated in Nigeria as the only way to prosperity and development. Nigerian leaders themselves believe that the only way to gain power and get wealth is to take illegal shortcuts necessary to achieve their aim quickly. The major reason for such a belief was greed and personal interests. The two novels highlighted the egocentrism of those leaders who were obsessed by position and power.

1- Chapter One: Corruption and Disillusionment in Okara's

The Voice and Achebe's A Man of the People

A- The Portrayal of Corruption in The Voice and A Man Of the People:

Throughout the analysis of this chapter, accentuation will be put on Bakhtin's concept of Stylization which stipulates that the process of coming to know one's own language and belief emerges from someone else's language. Indeed, stylization according to Bakhtin is the reproduction and re-creation of someone else's style. In this order, Achebe's A Man of the People reproduced Okara's The Voice regarding his attitude toward Corruption.

Corruption is simultaneously everywhere; it is encountered in almost every small or big sector of society. Morris defined corruption as being the dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery. It is the illegitimate use of power to benefit a private interest.²

In fact Corruption makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. Those who possess power make use of it for their personal benefits as well as to hide the truth and mislead the realities. Corruption remains to be a major social; political and economic challenge for which African countries in general and Nigeria in particular continues to fight. It spreads where there is no discipline or strong moral principles that may supervise it. Corruption exists in various forms political and social, as it is manifested either by bribing or embezzling. The two novels embodied full illustrations of corruption, failing economic and social systems in a fictional setting that resembles to Nigeria.

Bribery

Gabriel Okara and Chinua Achebe gave equal importance concerning the phenomenon of bribery within their selected works as being the main reason behind the corrupt state. Both of them agreed that bribery constitutes a serious issue which prevents people from having equal

chances and social justice. Both of Okara and Achebe used their protagonists respectively Chief Izongo in *The Voice* and Chief Nanga in *A Man of the People* as the primary symbols of corruption and bribery.

In *The Voice*, Bribery spread almost everywhere in Amatu and Sologa as Okara depicted it in his novel. The daily life and commercial activities are becoming more suspicious and fake. Chief Izongo had put a reward on the head of Okolo and everyone who would caught him will be awarded. In chapter eight, there is reference to this kind of unethical behavior where a mother “asked her son to go catch Okolo, one of the main resistant figures, so as to denounce him and be rewarded. Her son replied that nothing can be done in sologa freely. ‘The son scratches his head. ‘I have no money to find him,’ he said quietly. Money? You will take money to find him? His mother asked not believing. ‘Without money I can’t find him. Money is inside everything in Sologa.’³ in fact this is a kind of pure assertion about the role which bribery holds in the society as a mean of resolving problems.

Additionally, within *The Voice*, the spread of bribery as a social epidemic contaminates even the field of justice and fairness. Everyone is involved under this unethical act despite of his social status. Starting from the prime minister named chief Izongo passing by the policemen until the simple ordinary citizen from Amatu or Sologa. Okara in this novel referred to a policeman who confesses to Okolo that bribery is one of the means through which one can be rich easily:

Okolo this man’s spoken words stirred in his inside. In his inside he stirred them and looked. This man had said he had taken home bags of money and was now returning to sologa. He was a policeman and to him on earth it was the best work, especially if one has a lucky head. If you have a lucky head and if you catch a rich trader stealing from a big Whiteman’s shop then on heap of money you stand up to your knees.⁴

Like Okara, Chinua Achebe in his part issued the concept of Bribery as being an aspect of corruption; by giving or accepting illegal payment as means of influencing one’s decisions.

Achebe approves the existence of such a complex issue inside the governmental factor on which the leaders rely to abuse in power. Money indeed was an indispensable weapon for Chief Nanga which inconsiderably dissolved all his illegal practices. In this regard, Chief Nanga presented to the cabinet a projection of completion of a road between Giligili and Anata before the next election, which the cabinet approved.

The Minister of Public of Construction (Odili presumed) Hon .T.C.Kobino Nanga's colleague called to announce that an Expert of construction had rejected the construction of the road .Nanga annoyed replied to him:

Look T.C. we agreed that this road should be tarred. What is this dallying and dallying...? Which expert? So you want to listen to expert now? You know very well T.C. that you cannot trust these boys. That is why I always that I prefer to deal with Europeans ...What? Don't worry about the Press; I will make sure that they don't publish it...⁵

Moreover even the electoral process as it is depicted, in the two novels, does not follows a given social program pattern designed by appropriate competent leaders who may serve their country. It rather depends on the ones who own a big capital and can pay more than his competitor. In this case any polluted ignorant man can be elected to govern the community and anyone can try his chance to be a politician despite his antecedents. It is believed that politics is a kind of escapism from the poor life and misery that surrounded them. Okolo in chapter three referred to a certain man who came to Amatu to taste himself in politics.

This man his suffering had bewailed, Okolo remembered. He said he lost his job because he had no one to stand in his front to speak for him, and no one to put hand for him to give the headman the twenty pounds he had asked. How could he the twenty pounds give, when he had not twenty pence? His month's pay was only six pounds and he had a wife and three children to feed and buy clothes for. So he came home to taste politics.⁶

Okara and Achebe accentuated on the way in which money contributed in the reinforcement of Chief Izongo's and Chief Nanga's position. As a matter of fact, they both used money to avoid any opposition to their way of rule. Within *A Man of the People*, Nanga

was a teacher before becoming a politician, and as a politician he is depicted within the novel as being a fraudulent greedy man. Actually he takes the money which was meant for the development of the community, constructing a commercial four-story building, for his personal gain. This money allows him to live in luxury, and to pay bribes for his competitors as it is the case with Odili to whom Nanga proposed a huge sum of money to dismiss his political party:

In spite of your behavior Chief Nanga has continued to struggle for you and has now brought you the scholarship to your house. This kindness surprises me; I couldn't do it myself. On top of that he has brought you two hundred and fifty pounds if you will sign this paper...⁷

Relying on Bakhtin's theory in general and on the concept of Stylization, we conclude by affirming that Okara's *The Voice* and Achebe's *A Man of the People*, throughout the above analysis, dialogize similarly concerning their perception of bribery. In fact, both of them assert that bribery is one of the major reasons that obstruct Nigeria from benefiting of equal opportunities.

Violence and social oppression

Throughout our reading of the two works, we have noticed that Gabriel Okara and Chinua Achebe displayed within their two respective works the dramatic role that violence and social oppression played within the corrupted ruling system. In fact, the use of force, intimidation, destruction, pain and suffering was the only way for chief Izongo and chief Nanga to maintain their position within their society and avoid any opposition and rebellion against their way of rule.

In both Okara's and Achebe's works great attention is given to the phenomenon of social oppression and violence. Warnings and fear were no longer enough to stop the resistance against the ruling system. Chief Izongo and Chief Nanga failed in their mission to bring

Okolo and Odili by their side by soft and kind ways. Therefore, they saw the necessity of using violence with them so as to erase the roots of the conflict and opposition.

Chief Izongo and his followers did not have any tolerance or sympathy concerning Okolo or anyone else who opposes the ruling system. The abuse in the use of power was very notable in the novel when it comes to the matter of criticizing the system everyone who is suspected must be arrested and held. Okolo himself has been harmed and mistreated by Izongo's messengers and the people of Amatu who support the system:

The people snapped at him like hungry dogs snapping at bones. They carried him in silence like silence of ants carrying a crumb of yam or fish bone. Then they put him down and dragged him past thatch houses that in the dark looked like pigs with their snouts in the ground, pushed and dragged him past mud walls pitying eyes, pushed and dragged him past concrete walls with concrete eyes; pushed and dragged him along the waterside like soldier ants with their prisoner.¹⁶

Within the last chapter, in Chief Nanga's inaugural campaign meeting where Odili got beaten up severely: "He slapped me again and again...By this time blows were falling as fast as rain on my head and body until something heavier than the rest seemed to split my skull."¹⁷ and Odili was transported to a hospital with serious injuries as he explains: "My cranium took a little time to mend – to say nothing of the broken arm and countless severe bruises one of which all but turned me into a kind of genealogical cul-de-sac."¹⁸

Chinua Achebe's perception of violence is not different from Gabriel Okara's view. Chief Nanga in *A Man of the People* fails in his mission in bribing Odili which leaves him with no choice but to destroy Odili's image in the country. During his inaugural campaign meeting he addresses his crowd saying: "My people, this is the boy who is thrusting his finger into my eye. He came to my house in Bori, ate my food, drank my water and my wine and instead of saying thank you to me he set about plotting how to drive me out and take over my house."¹⁹ Always addressing his crowd he treats Odili of a traitor who tries to rob his new wife Edna

saying: “He even tried to take a girl on whose head I had put the full bride-price and many other expenses- and who according to our custom is my wife.”²⁰

Violence is also strongly being reflected in Okara’s *The Voice*. Indeed, Chief Izongo fails in his mission in bribing Okolo, thus, leaving with no choice but to use violence and social oppression. Thus, Chief Izongo set to destroy Okolo’s image by attributing him madness, describing him as a mad person, therefore, his words will have no value and will never be taken seriously. From the very first lines of the novel Okolo is depicted almost as an abnormal person: “So the town of Amatu talked and whispered; so the world talked and whispered. Okolo had no chest, they said. His chest was not strong and he had no shadow. Everything in this world that spoiled a man’s name they said of him.”²¹

Achebe and Okara stressed on the overused social oppression to demoralize opponents to the current system. One of the means of social oppression used by those in power is to demoralize their political opponents, which was mentioned earlier in the novel like Odili who lost his job after registering himself as an opponent of Chief Nanga’s party. Odili went to his school where he decided to give a special discourse about his new political party the C.P.C. That night his director Mr. Nwege gave him a letter of dismissal as Odili narrated the event: “When I got to his ‘Lodge’ he handed me a month salary and a notice of dismissal.”²² In *The Voice*, Okolo found himself banished from his home village because Chief Izongo see him as a threat to his position of power, as he shows off in front of his people proclaiming: “It was a great task I performed, my people. A great task in sending him away. A dangerous task, but it had to be done for the good of us all.”²³

Borrowing Bakhtin’s concept of stylization we settle by sustaining that Okara and Achebe correspondingly, focused on portraying the pre-dominance of violence and social oppression within the Nigerian system of government.

Anti-system struggle

Okara and Achebe themselves urged for the necessity of creating an Anti-system who would respond and reject at the same times the social oppression and injustices of leaders. Both of the authors manifested such appeal by awaking the conscious spirit of their characters to object the system.

Once Okolo comes back to Amatu after exile he is stronger than when he left the town .He is now self-confident and is ready to challenge Izongo before all the villagers as he do not fear anything. Okolo in fact was back to make hear his voice which for a long time he retains:

Yes I am going to meet him! ‘

Don’t go. They say they will send you away for ever and ever if you come back

They cannot a thing do to me. The town is there gathered and I want to face him before their eyes.

I want the people to hear my voice.’

My inside just now is like a whirlpool and I am dizzy. I know not what to think.’²⁴

Okolo did not hide his oppositionist sight toward Izongo’s acts or showed any feeling of fear or hesitation to criticize his system. He affirmed this when Tuere and Ukule tried to stop him going to face Izongo. ‘Am I then in this place to hide like a thief? Am I to run away? No the straight words never runs away from the crooked words. I will go.’²⁵ He started by moving from one village to another asking people if they have got it? His aim through this quest was to raise the consciousness of people to see what happened around them. His quest of finding answers represents half of his struggle to repair the society. Okolo rebels in the sense that he strives to restore the morale discipline and social order in both Amatu and sologa. Okolo possesses a challenging spirit and a brave heart which allowed him to resist so along as the struggle maintains because he is unable to keep longer his feeling of anger and disappointment.

Achebe for his part revealed the anti-system resistance as far as Okara did Odili and Max militate in the Common People's Convention party (CPC) with the aim of not eradicating but at least slowing down the corruption and impunity going on in the country even though they know they will not get the power soon. In Max's words: "We will not win the next election, what we must do is to get something going. You simply cannot have this stagnation and corruption going on indefinitely."²⁶ They believe that something must be done, they can no longer remain act less, and that this corruption and decay can no more dictate the terms under which their future and the future of their country is going to proceed.

In *A Man of the People*, the multi-party system, rivalry occurs between the People Organization Party(POP) and the Common People's Convention(CPC). The politicians in *A Man of the People* are against the intellectuals in a way that they fear they would uncover their malfeasances, thus, eradicating them and their dirty government. Thus against C.P.C since its founding members were intellectuals and professionals as Odili affirms: "There was a trade unionist, a doctor, another lawyer, a teacher and newspaper columnist."²⁷ and there is also Max fiancée 'a very beautiful lawyer' and the most astonishing member for Odili was 'the junior minister in the government'. Okolo and Odili have much suffered in their process of resistance in opposing the system. Both of the authors dialogize equally for they both insisted on the need of awakening the Nigerian conscious to rise against the corrupt leaders.

As we have already mentioned, Okara's *The Voice* and Achebe's *A Man of the People* mirror corruption and disillusionment in post independent Nigeria. In this matter, despite the facts that since independence there has been gradual attempts to inverse and eradicate this trend of political despair and disillusionment which characterized political life in Africa, to this day not much has occurred in terms of fundamental progress in their development. Nigeria collected over\$600 billion in oil revenue since the early 1960s when it started oil

production, however a study conducted in 2004 revealed that as much as \$400 billion has disappeared, while the majority of its population suffer from acute poverty.²⁸

The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) is an index published annually by Transparency International since 1995, which ranks countries “by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys.”²⁹ The 2018 Corruption Perception Index, published by Transparency International, measures the perceived levels of public sector corruption in 180 countries and territories. Drawing 13 surveys of business people and expert assessments. The index scores on a scale of zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).

The 2018 CPI states: “The result paint a sadly familiar picture: more than two thirds of countries score below 50, while the average score is just 43. Sub-Saharan Africa is the lowest scoring region on the index, and has failed to translate its anti-corruption commitments into any real progress. A region with stark political and socio-economic contrasts and longstanding challenges, many of its countries struggle with ineffective institutions and weak democratic values, which threaten ant-corruption efforts.”³⁰ Indeed, Nigeria ranks 144/180 and scores only 27/100 on the index, however, the CPI proclaims: “Despite stagnation across the region, there are some promising political developments, particularly in Angola, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.”³¹

B- The portrayal of disillusionment in *The Voice* and *A Man of the People*

Once again all over this study, Bakhtin’s concept of Stylization will be the fundamental pillar in conducting this analysis. Thereby, a brief re-explanation of the concept is necessary. Stylization as maintained by Bakhtin is the intentional re-creation of another’s person’s style in order to present a particular viewpoint and ideological position in a new artistic context. Consequently, Achebe’s *A Man of the People*’s theme of Disillusionment is a re-creation of

that in Okara's *The Voice*.

Corruption and disillusionment are interrelated, in a way that wherever there is corruption, the persons that submit to it or live under its conditions are ultimately submerged by a feeling of disillusionment, despair and disappointment. Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Okara's *The Voice* satirize the historical path of Nigeria after independence and brought certain realities like political and social issues through their literary style which brings reality alive through fiction. Disillusionment is another important aspect in which Okara and Achebe came to dialogize continuously.

Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Okara's *The Voice* exhales the prevalent disillusionment that resides in every Nigerian spirit. Disillusionment in Achebe's novel, to a large scale, can be grasped in Achebe's announcement in an interview with Tony Hall: "*A Man of the People* wasn't a flash in the pan, this is the beginning of a phase for me in which I intend to take hard look at what we in Africa are making of independence."³²

In this context, for revolutionary critic, Doc Udentia O. Udentia, "Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* is an iconic representation of post-colonial disillusionment. They were disappointed with the post colony, so they took to writing to protest."³³

Consequently, the two novels excessively reflect Achebe's and Okara's intense feeling of disillusionment concerning their motherland which after independence turned out to be in total chaos. A chaos caused mainly by corruption, greediness and race for power and money which indubitably sank its people into a deep feeling of disillusionment, despair and disappointment.

Both of Okara and Achebe agreed to a certain extent that disillusionment is the bitter result of the failure in leadership. The problem is described by Achebe in his pamphlet, *The Trouble with Nigeria*:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or

anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hall marks of true leadership.³⁴

Chief Izongo and Chief Nanga are conceived as the primary symbol of disillusionment, for their corrupt, greedy and selfish way of rule. In fact, people had placed hope and faith in them, however, they have only retrieved deception and disillusionment because both of Izongo and Nanga broke away their promises of achieving justice, peace, harmony and better social conditions, which turned out to be achieving their personal advancement, progress and benefits.

Chief Izongo and Chief Nanga whenever they use the term 'progress' they inevitably mean their own advancement. Since they are only interested in their personal benefits rather than in the country's welfare. For greedy and selfish leaders like Izongo and Nanga, politics had another goal rather than the nation's welfare. For them, politics is an easy way for personal prosperity mainly through bribery and embezzlement of public funds.

Furthermore, both of Okara and Achebe speak through their characters to demonstrate the passivity, obedience and hypocrisy that characterized the post independent Nigerian society. Okara in his novel strengthens the way on which his characters were fed up of the acts of their leader, but still remain passive and incapable of doing anything to inverse the situation. Ukule in one of his claims denies even the existence of manhood within his society, for him manhood can only be reached once men die: "If in this world we can recreate ourselves, I would become a man. When I die I will return as a man, I will continue to be a man but not a cripple."³⁵

Adding to this Tebowei who declared to Okolo: "These happening things make my inside bitter, perhaps more bitter than yours, but there is nothing I alone or you and I can do to change their insides."³⁶ Indeed, one of the messengers asserts: "if the world turns this way I take it; if it turns another way I take it. Any way the world turns I take it with my hands. I like sleep with my wife and my one son, so I do not think."³⁷ People are aware of the corrupt and

manipulation that devastated their society but choose hypocrisy and passivity as the only way to protect themselves and the ones they cherish.

Finally, Tuere a female character who stands with Okolo's side and shares the same view about the corrupt ruling system. Unlike many male characters she was not afraid to denounce openly her opposition toward Izongo's action. But at the same time, like almost all the characters, is submerged by the feeling of disillusionment as she solemnly declared: "Amatu is lost, yes Amatu is lost."³⁸

As far as Achebe's *A Man of the People* is concerned, he shares the same view with Okara, indeed within the very first lines of the novel Odili reveals their fraudulent Minister of Culture and the harsh truth about the passivity of the members of his community, as he notifies:

I felt intense bitterness welling up in my mouth .Here were silly, ignorant villagers dancing themselves lame and waiting to blow off their gunpowder in honor of one of those who had started the country off down the slopes of inflation .I wished for a miracle, for a voice of thunder, to hush this ridiculous festival and tell the poor contemptible people one or two truths. But of course it would be quite useless .They were not only ignorant but cynical .Tell them that this man had used his position to enrich himself and they would ask you as my father did if you thought that a sensible man would spit out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth.³⁹

Adding to this, in the second chapter, Andrew is clearly expressing his deception and disillusionment concerning the fact that Chief Nanga is their Minister of Culture, saying: "just think of such a cultureless man going abroad and calling himself Minister of Culture. Ridiculous. This is why the outside world laughs at us."⁴⁰

In addition, Odili got beaten up by Chief Nanga and his mob as he recalls: "The last thing I remembered was seeing all the policeman turn round quietly away."⁴¹ Odili and Okolo were faced to the feeling bitterness deception while their own people did nothing to stop the corruption that arbiters their everyday lives. Instead, they believed that passivity and obedience were the only way to keep the serenity of their lives.

The novels are full of concrete illustrations that refer to passivity, obedience and

disillusionment in both words and actions among the characters. The repressive attitudes of the leaders killed all the sense of dialogue and transparency. Actually, both people in Amatu and Anata have some kind of awareness about the selfish and corrupt leaders, however, they remain passive and incapable of doing anything to ameliorate their everyday lives. .

In this respect, the two authors repeatedly depicted their narrators in moments of regret, paralysis and despair, where they were unable to make their voice heard. We conclude by deducing an important feature related to post independent Nigeria that is called disillusionment of the masses. This malcontent feeling comes as the result of the multi-challenges that face the state at a moment where the political authorities fail to establish order and ensure appropriate environment for its people. Thereby, Achebe's *A Man of the People* and Okara's *The Voice* ultimately exemplify disillusionment of the masses through their narrators, their characters and mainly through the entire narrative.

Thus, the interest of this work is to remind the reader that is always useful to go back to the past to remind oneself of the saying of many writers whose words are meant to raise consciousness in every one's mind and to give voice to the voiceless souls. In effect, both writers want the African to cease being passive and considering himself worthless and inferior. And both of them shout loudly that no one has the right to deprive the other of their lives, their liberty or their property be him a colonizer or a corrupted country man. The two authors are looking forward to see their people regaining their peaceful lives and to live in a world deprived of all unethical practices and full of hope and widespread justice.

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2- Chapter Two: The Inter-influential Relationship between Okara's The Voice and Achebe's A Man of the People

A- The Influence of Okara's The Voice on Achebe's A Man of the People

The relationship between Gabriel Okara's The Voice and Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People as it has been argued throughout our analysis in the first chapter; is around the order of Stylization. Stylization is exemplified within their perspective concerning the corrupted and disillusioned post independent Nigeria which they practically developed upon the same predominant themes. Although in the second chapter emphasis will be put on the writing style of the two authors in a way to demonstrate which one of these two Nigerian figures has been deeply influenced by the other. Okara's The Voice and Achebe's A Man of the People exhibit what Bakhtin formulated in his theory of Dialogism; Polyphony.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*, Bakhtin developed the concept of Polyphony; which literally means 'multiple voices'. Bakhtin reads Dostoevsky's works as containing many different voices unmerged into a single perspective, and not subordinate to the voice of the author. Each of the voices has its own perspective, its own validity and its own weight within the novel. Bakhtin defined polyphony as "the event of interaction between autonomous and internally unfinalized consciousness."¹ Bakhtin contrasts the unitary single-voiced speech of the monologue, where only a person is speaking. With the idea of dialogue where two or more voices engage with each other from different points of view.

In The Voice, Gabriel Okara was attempting consciously to represent as he says:" our ideas, our thinking, in fact our whole mode of speech".² Thereby Okara is not presenting a stable and monologic truth but rather displays various perspectives, views and ideas by mean of his multiple characters and voices including Okolo, Chief Izongo, Abadi, and Tuere and so

on. Simultaneously, Achebe's *A Man of the People* presents a dialogic perspective, for within his novel he opted for the multiplicity of voices. In fact, each of narrative's characters has his own voice, ideas and views. Consequently, both of Okara and Achebe succeeded in enabling their characters to exist independently beyond their authorial consciousness.

Bakhtin defines Heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel:

Is another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions.³

Depending upon this concept as a jumping-off point, we start from the basic frame of mind that Achebe influenced Okara's *The Voice*. For Achebe has way before Okara a long history of literary achievements.

In this regard, Chinua Achebe is a Nigerian, poet, professor and critic, he is the author of *Things Fall Apart* (1958) a work that led him to be coined the "Patriarch of African Novel". He was considered by many to be one of the most original artist writing in English during his life time. Nadine Gordimer a south African writer , political activist and recipient of the Nobel prize in Literature observed " Chinua Achebe's early work made him the father of modern African Literature as an internal part of world literature"⁴.

Chinua Achebe is among the first African figures who have contributed in the fulfillment of the African writing and culture. Throughout his writings he has celebrated his Africanity worldwide, as he used his writing as a mean to denounce the conditions under which the Africans live every day. He has produced several famous pieces of writing through which he inspired generation of African and non-African writers and changed the landscape of world literature.

Therefore, no one can deny the deep influence that Achebe himself and his works have played on Gabriel Okara. "In both his poems and his prose Okara draws on African thought, religion, folklore and imagery and he has been called "The Nigerian Negritudist".⁵

The protagonist of *The Voice*, Okolo like countless post-colonial African is hunted by society and hunted by his own ideals. Experimentally linguistically in *The Voice*; Okara translated directly from the Ijo syntax into English in order to give literal expression to African ideas and imagery. This what we have been accounted to in Chinua Achebe's earlier novel a technique he used well before Okara called Appropriation and Abrogation. In addition, the novel creates "a symbolic landscape in which the force of traditional African culture and western materialism contend"⁵ In fact, Okara told Andrew Salkey that the book was a struggle between the forces of darkness and light⁴, indeed while reading the Voice we immediately recall *Things Fall Apart* in which this struggle seems Deja vu.

Achebe did in fact influenced Okara as we have just argued. Nevertheless, throughout our personal reading of *The Voice* (1964) and *A Man of the People* (1966) we came across the eventuality that Okara actually played a great role in influencing Achebe who came up two years later with his satirical novel *A Man of the People* and this is what Bakhtin defines as Double-Voiced Discourse and what Kristiva calls Intertextuality. In fact while reading Okara's *The Voice* it remind one of Achebe's works, style and ideology however even when reading Achebe's *A Man of the People* it is impossible not to bring into mind Okara's *The Voice* its writing style, the characters, and indeed the main events of the narrative.

Another aspect of Dialogism is Parody, Simon Denith a critic defines parody as " any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice."⁷ According to the Oxford dictionary a parody is: a composition in prose in which the characteristics turns of thought and phrase in an author or class of authors

are imitated in such a way as to make them appear ridiculous, especially by applying them ludicrously inappropriate subjects; an imitation of a work more or less close modeled on the original but so turned as to produce a ridiculous effect. Bakhtin defined parody as follows:

In parody two languages are crossed with each other, as well as two styles, two linguistic points of view, and in the final analysis two speaking subjects. It is true that only one of these two languages (the one that is parodied) is present in its own right; the other is present invisibly, as an actualizing background for creating and perceiving .Parody is an intentional hybrid, but usually it is an intra-linguistic one, one that nourishes itself on the stratification of literary language into generic languages and languages of various specific tendencies.⁸

Accordingly, parody can be defined as being a work that imitates another work by means of irony and satire. Thereby, in our case of study Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) is an ironical imitation of Okara's *The Voice* (1964). The title of any book or document is of primary importance, as it contains different interpretations. As a matter of fact great attention ought to be given to the title, for reading and understanding the title of any given piece of writing may give us a first glance at the context and content of that work.

Gabriel Okara entitled his novel *The Voice* after his protagonist Okolo, whose name means 'the voice'. *The Voice*'s tragic hero, Okolo, is both an individual and a universal figure and the ephemeral "it" that he is searching for would represent any number of moral values. Okara's skilled portrayal of the inner tension of his hero distinguished him from many other Nigerian novelists. Ironically, Achebe's *A Man of the People* is entitled after his antagonist Chief Nanga.

In Chief Nanga, Achebe gives a vivid portrayal of a typical modern African leader, as a matter of fact, Achebe's *A Man of the People* is a satirical work that projects the irony of Africa's democratic experience at the post independent period and the uncontrollable thirst of its leaders for titles, positions, power, recognition and ultimately personal glorification.

Again we stress on the period between the publications of this two works, asserting that *The Voice* (1964) had been published two years before the publication of *A Man of the People* (1966). Therefore, one may presume that it is during these two years that Achebe produced and then released his novel. To sustain our assumption, one needs to go back to Achebe's earlier novels that is *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964). These three novels are sometimes referred to as "The African Trilogy", for they share similar setting and themes which are exclusively about colonization and the trauma of that experience.

Yet Achebe's fourth novel *A Man of the People*, contrary to his previous works deals with corruption, disillusionment and other aspects of post-colonial African life. Additionally, the novel does not include any specific or cultural group instead it focuses on portraying problems such as bribery, incompetence and governmental apathy which were experienced by many West African nations in Neocolonial era. From our analysis above we came to the conclusion that this sudden change in the writing style of Achebe resulted from his deep influence by Okara's *The Voice* and to sustain our results we are going to rely on Michael Bakhtin's concept of Stylization.

What stretches us from the very first reading of the novel is the strange resemblance in the characters naming, not just the naming but also their characterization. In fact, Achebe did not only reproduced the same themes but he also reshaped almost the same characters. In this regard, Bakhtin defined Stylization:

Every authentic stylization, as we have already said, is an artistic representation of another linguistic style, an artistic image of another's language. Two individualized linguistic consciousness must be present in it. The one that represents (that is the linguistic consciousness of the stylizer) and the one that is represented which is stylized.⁹

In this respect, Achebe's *A Man of the People* is an artistic representation of Okara's *The Voice*. Achebe therefore is considered as the stylizer and Okara as the one which is stylized. As a result, Achebe re-created Okara's *The Voice*; its characters and characterization.

To begin with, Achebe reproduced the same protagonist as Okara's main character Okolo, thus, in *A Man of the people* he named his protagonist Odili. Odili and Okolo are both depicted as educated, and they both narrate the events of the story, subsequently we see everything from their personal points of view. Furthermore, they are both engaged in a fight against their current government whom we acknowledge throughout the novel to be powerful but corrupt Ministers of Culture whom strive to attain personal position and wealth. Furthermore, we are being introduced to twin antagonists; Chief Izongo in *The Voice* and Chief Nanga in *A Man of the People*, in fact Achebe reproduced the equivalent of Chief Izongo. Within the novels they are depicted as being ministers of culture but corrupt, selfish and immoral chieftains.

In third and last position, we are being accustomed within the two works to the identical depiction of the adherence and acceptance of the people of their corrupt and incompetent leaders, and most important their passivity toward the system of government. In *The Voice*, one of the messengers says: "If the world turns this way I take it; if it turns another way I take it. Any way the world turns I take it with my hands. I like sleep and my wife and my one son, so I do not think."¹⁰ practically the same idea is expressed in *A Man of the People* when Odili confesses: "They were not only ignorant but cynical. Tell them that this man had used his position to enrich himself and they would ask you - as my father did- if you thought that a sensible man would spit out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth."¹¹

Double-Voiced Discourse originally employed by Bakhtin to compliment his concept of Dialogism, which recognizes the dialogic force contained within any utterance. No word in

language can have a single, independent meaning. All language, every utterance is always pregnant with traces of their prior use, indeed made recognizable, made into language by the prior use and at the same time towards other implied speakers. Without the existence of an implied, texts remain nothing but marks on a surface. Thus, *The Voice* is ultimately marked with traces of Achebe and vice versa; while reading Okara's work it spontaneously brings into mind Achebe's works and writing style. Additionally, even when reading Achebe's work it is merely impossible not to remind *The Voice*. This is Double-Voiced Discourse and this vision is essentially intertextual, intertextuality itself first named by Kristiva in her engagement with Bakhtin's work. Bakhtin writes:

If we do not recognize the existence of this second context of someone else's speech and begin to perceive Stylization or parody in the same way ordinary speech is perceived, that is, as speech directed only at its referential object, then we will not grasp these phenomena in their essence: stylization will be taken for style, parody simply for a poor work of art.¹²

Relying on Bakhtin we can affirm that both stylization and parody constitutes double-voicing, thus driving us to the ultimate result that there is an inter-influential relationship between Gabriel Okara's *The Voice* and Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, evidenced through Bakhtinian concept of stylization and parody.

B- Achebe's political ideas and optimism in *A Man of the People*

From the beginning of this dissertation we have mainly concentrated on the perception of the two authors and their works on the aspect of corruption and disillusionment in post independent Nigeria, which came out to be identical. However, within this part of chapter attention is drawn on the political aspect of the two novels. Thus, a brief overview on the Nigerian political history will be necessary.

Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, it plunged into several crises starting with the declaration of a state of emergency in western Nigeria in 1962, the boycott of federal election in 1963 by two southern political parties, breakdown in civil authorities and crises of rigged

election in 1965. This culminated in military coups and political assassinations in 1966, leading to the anti-Igbo genocide, secession and the declaration of the sovereign state of Biafra in 1967. The accumulation of all these unfortunate events exploded into a bloody war of thirty months that cost millions of innocent lives¹³.

Nigeria's persistent political instability and unsuccessful democracy is the inevitable bitter out-turn of Colonialism. However, according to Achebe one of the main reason behind the repeated downfall, besides colonialism is the failure in leadership and the mismanagement of diversity of religion and ethnicity. In this regard, in an interview, Achebe looked for:

How to convince 150 million people to put aside competing interests, sideline different religions, ethnicities ,political persuasions, and build a united rostrum or two with strong leaders to truly bring about fundamental change to Nigeria. That is the challenge.¹⁴

According to Achebe art is a mean to bring hope and essentially change to society, hence, he has always been involved in his nation's social and political issues. Indeed, one among his major social and political engagements is when he defended the secession of Biafra from the Nigerian nation and in his 1968, he maintains:

It is clear to me that African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant_ Like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames."¹⁵

As per Achebe writers are purely teachers, they have the duty to use their knowledge to shake the conscious and awake the deserted corrupted and mistreated states. As a matter of fact, Achebe from his earliest writings *Things Fall Apart* (1958) to the one published short time before his death, *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (2012), he eternally exhibits either explicitly or implicitly the social and political issues facing his country. In fact, Achebe throughout his endless rich and noble career, he remained faithful to his ideas, beliefs and origins.

From the starting of this study we have made assumptions and conceptions concerning Achebe's *A Man of the People* being deeply affected by Okara's *The Voice*, which throughout our analysis have given material evidence of this influence. Indeed, Bakhtin affirms:

At any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, ... These "languages" of heteroglossia intersects each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying "languages".¹⁶

Thereby, Achebe's influence of Okara's *The Voice* led him to produce a new socially work of art to which he has made considerable contributions. As Bakhtin confirms:

The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. The author has his alienable right to the word, however the listener also has his right, this relationship, has to do first and foremost, not with the meaning of the words, but with other's expressions, intentions and voices.¹⁷

Gabriel Okara within his novel represented African political life through the one-party system. Okara focused on putting forward the system in which the country is governed by a single political party and where the forming of other political parties is forbidden. Within his novel Chief Izongo's party is the one in power, to his side we find Abadi; Izongo's adviser and the representative of the Elders, the Elders; a small administrative body and the messengers; Izongo's agents. Chief Izongo's party's aimed at gaining money, power and women, in any way he doesn't trouble himself for the cause of the common man instead he oppresses his people to get wealthier and more powerful.

In opposition to Izongo, we encounter Okolo who is considered as a traitor because he is asking people all around the same question: "Have they got it?" consequently, Izongo and his followers directly presumed that he is asking whether the people of Amatu are satisfied with Izongo's way of ruling. If Izongo deserves to be the chief since he has not the capacities nor the knowledge to be a leader. Asking whether they feel secure when someone like Izongo is watching every move they make. Okolo's questioning got him to be banished from his home

village Amatu. But what matters for Okolo is that he wanted his voice to represent the voiceless, and speak for the people who themselves are incapable because they are tormented by fear of Izongo.

Within the novel, Okolo is in constant search of “it” to which no clear definition is given, but which Okolo briefly explained: “There may be only one meaning in life and everybody is just groping along in their various ways to achieve it...What is he himself trying to reach? For him it has no name. Names bring divisions and divisions, and strife. So let it be without a name; let it be nameless.”¹⁸

Okolo is persistently mentioning the idea of the “Coming Thing”. In an interview with Bernth Linfors, Okara was quite specific about his idea of this term. He was asked: “So ‘the coming thing’ referred to in the book is really political independence? I mean it’s quite a literal allegory?” Okara replied, “Yes, that is right. You will find my poem, ‘The Fisherman’s Incantation; is also about independence. That too was written in the pre-independence era.”¹⁹

While Okara opted for the one-party system, Achebe introduced the multi-party system. Multiparty is a system where numerous political parties have equal chances in conquering national elections and all with capacities to gain control of government offices whether separately or in coalition. In *A Man of the People* we distinguish two political parties; the People's Organization Party (P.O.P) and the Common People's Convention (C.P.C).

The People's Organization Party, led by the illiterate minister of culture Chief Nanga. It encompasses the Nangavanga movement whose main slogan is 'Chief Nanga forever', the P.O.P's female wing and Chief Simon Koko; the minister of overseas training. Chief Nanga's party aims at remaining in power for as long as possible through intimidation and repression. The main goal of Nanga is to accumulate personal wealth and position.

The Common People's Convention founded by a group of intellectuals including Odili Samalu and Maxwell Kulamo, Odili pointed out:

There were eight young people in his room that evening. All but one were citizens of our country, mostly professional types. The only lady there was a beautiful lawyer who, I learnt afterwards, was engaged to Max who she had first met at the London School of Economics. There was a trade-unionist, a doctor, another lawyer, a teacher and a newspaper columnist.²⁰

The C.P.C aims at representing the common man and putting a barrier to corruption and injustice occurring in their country, and to free all people from all chains of repression and abuse. Even though they knew that this task won't be easy but they are still willing to fight as Odili argues:

We will not win the next election,' he told me on another occasion. In itself it was a fairly obvious statement but how many mushroom political parties had we seen spring up, prophesy a landslide victory for themselves and then shrivel up again. 'What we must do is get something going,' said Max, 'however small, and wait for the blow-up. It's bound to come. I don't know how or when but it's got to come. You simply cannot have this stagnation and corruption going on indefinitely.'²¹

Okara's *The Voice* and Achebe's *A Man of the People* represent two political regimes of African political life; the one-party and the multi-party system. Obviously they both failed in their mission for wide spreading true democracy because of the predominance of corruption and bribery, manipulation and cheating, greediness and selfishness and intimidation and repression.

Another contribution of Achebe besides multiparty is the happy ending of his fictional account. In fact Okara's novel ends tragically with the death of its protagonist Okolo. However, Achebe decided to do things differently, he made sure that the main character of his work, Odili, obtains a fairly happy ending. Even though Odili failed in his political mission in which Chief Nanga made him suffer bitterly, as Odili recalls:

He slapped me again and again. Edna rushed forward crying and tried to get between us but he pushed her aside so violently that she landed on her buttocks on the wooden platform. The roar of the crowd was now

like a thick forest all around. By this time blows were falling as fast as rain on my head and body until something heavier than the rest seemed to split my skull. The last thing I remembered was seeing all the policemen turn round and walk quietly away... My cracked cranium took a little time to mend - to say nothing of the broken arm and countless severe bruises one of which all but turned me into a kind of genealogical cul-de-sac.²²

Odili did in fact gain the love of Edna whom he is going to marry. However, according to the customs of Anata he has first to pay back the bride price of two hundred of fifty pounds that chief Nanga had spent on his fiancé. A big amount of money that Odili decided to borrow from the C.P.C funds which were still in his hands. Consequently, contrary to Okara whose protagonist undergoes a tragic ending, Achebe favors the happy ending which symbolizes optimism and hope. An optimistic ending to give Nigerians enthusiasm and spirit of fighting and give way their hidden courage and their incessant love and care for their country. To finally wide open their eyes and conscious to perceive that after all it is worth trying.

Hanging on Bakhtin's theory of Dialogism as a fundamental pillar throughout this analysis, which conducted us to the conclusion that Achebe's *A Man of the people* (1966) is an imitation and a re-creation of Okara's *The Voice* (1964). Yet, this didn't prevent Achebe from making considerable contributions, including his use of the multi-party system and eventually the happy ending of his narrative.

Actually there is an interconnection between these two respective works, and Bakhtin defined this interrelationship through his concept of the double-voiced discourse and Heteroglossia, which later was coined by Kristeva as Intertextuality. Indeed, Julia Kristeva was the first to use the term 'intertextuality' attempting to synthesize Ferdinand de Saussure's Semiotics with Bakhtin's Dialogism.

According to Bakhtin: "Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free."²³ Consequently,

nothing is definite because it is always open for further chains of responses, thereby Achebe's *A Man of the People* may be considered as a response to Okara's *The Voice*.

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IV. General Conclusion

This research is set to investigate the theme of Corruption and Disillusionment in Okara's *The Voice* and Achebe's *A Man of the People*, as well as to determine the inter-influential relationship between these two pieces of writing. To reach the study's aim we have borrowed Bakhtin's theory of Dialogism developed in his book: *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*.

It has been shown throughout the first chapter of this dissertation that the relationship between Okara's *The Voice* and Achebe's *A Man of the People* is of the order of Stylization concerning the theme of Corruption and Disillusionment. Actually, they have both developed corruption through the same pre-dominant sub-titles: Bribery, Violence and Social Oppression and Anti-System Struggle. As far as disillusionment is concerned, the authors agreed to a given extent that the feeling of despair and disillusionment is the result of the failure in leadership.

The two novels mirror the post independent Nigerian society, simultaneously, both authors abundantly call for immediate change. Indeed, both writers want Nigerians in particular and Africans in general to cease being passive and considering themselves worthless and inferior. Okara and Achebe shout firmly that no one has the right to deprive the other from his basic and fundamental rights; the right of life and liberty, be him a colonizer or a corrupted country man. The two authors are looking forward to seeing their people regaining their peace and live in a country without immoral practices, but full of hope and widespread justice.

Concerning the second chapter, it highlights the inter-influential relationship between Okara's *The Voice* and Achebe's *A Man of the People*. This inter-influential relationship was defined by Bakhtin through his concept of Heteroglossia and Double-Voiced Discourse. In fact, following the chronological order of time it is obvious that Achebe's writings played an

important role in influencing many African and non-African writers thus eventually influencing Okara in a way or in another. We came by attesting Bakhtin's concept of Parody and Stylization on Okara and Achebe's writings which exists in a constant process of renewal and contrasted with other fixed literary forms. The core of this study is the influence that Okara has played on Achebe which conducted him to re-create Okara's *The Voice*, however with his personal valuable contributions that of his protagonist ant-system struggle and the happy ending of his narrative. Consequently, Achebe's *A Man of the People* is a compilation and a response to Okara's *The Voice*.

The literary achievements of Okara and Achebe have both enriched the African literature. In fact, since the Second World War, and particularly during the periods of decolonization and neo-colonialism in Africa, African Literature has grown dramatically in quantity and in recognition, with numerous African works appearing in Western academic curricula and on "best of" list, compiled at the end of the 20th century. Truly, Modern African Literature has gained recognition with such classics as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Ngugi WA Thiong'O *Weep Not Child* and Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. This recognition was reinforced by Soyinka's winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986.

The final statement goes back to Bakhtin's concept of unfinalizability as he states that dialogic expression is unfinalizable, always incomplete and productive of further chains of responses; meaning is never closed and always oriented toward the future.

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