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Abstract

Literature, from time immemorial, has been a tool that expresses cultural elements and these elements are used to deliberately depict the richness of our cultural heritage expressing the writer's knowledge about the society. This paper attempts a close look at the concept of youth culture from revolutionary perspectives, and how it relates to culture and governance in Mafo's Wazobian Revolution and Achebe's A man of the People. The selected texts are chosen because the authors have both contrasting and comparing grounds in the creation of the revolutionist characters. Hence, this study would account for the matter of youth culture and governance, the plights of youths and how these texts have been able to resolve the issues of governance and youth culture in African society. Every literary work thrives on the effective juxtaposition and combination of various artistic forms and elements that come together to create the final piece of work. This lays the foundation in this study for the examination of the beauty inherent in the artistic creation and discussion of youthful revolutionist ideas and governance in Africa. Youths have been side lined in the governance by the rich and ruling class. Post-colonialism is used as our theoretical framework. This paper concludes that, no matter the experiences and achievements of past leaders, the involvement and revolutionary ideas of youth culture in the governance of any nation are sacrosanct to the societal development and functionality.

Keywords: Youth Culture, Governance, Revolution, Agitation, Post colonialism, Politics, Rebellion.

Introduction

Literature, over the years, continues to reflect the challenges faced by man and the society. Man has an inalienable connection with the society, and by extension, literature cannot be removed from the equation. Literature and society go side by side, and man's continuous effort to both shape and influence history, makes literature a vital tool as it allows man to create impressions, entrench ideologies, and propagate his beliefs and worldview.

Man's world is not devoid of social, political and economic issues that has affected him in the society, and these issues are captured in literature by virtue of its reflective and refractive nature. It is widely admitted that literature of any given period, on one hand, and the social, economic and political forces of that period, on the other hand, are in some ways inter-connected.

Literature has been seen as what mirrors the society. To mirror the society means to reflect different historical realities in it, which may be horrific or peacefully-appealing. It has been the representation of the society, that is,



everything that makes the society whole. Often, literature shows the relationship between man and his environment, how man's activities shape the society and how the society has in return affects man's life. Defining literature, ¹Oripeloye (2007:1) submits:

Literature is an imaginary but plausible narrative which dramatizes changes in human relationship...literature is referred to as "imitation of life". The major concern of literature is the condition of man in the society and how to represent it with symbols in a way that this condition becomes meaningful.

The above submission shows that literature may be a fictional or non-fictional narration of the socio-political and socio-cultural experiences of the people. Literature through its genres: poetry, prose and drama has been able to contextually represent issues like culture, war, slavery, colonialism, tribalism, politics, corruption, governance, oppression etc., which are all parts of the historical realities that have shaped different peoples' lives in various regions of the world.

Literature has been a reflection of time and space, that is, it has been able to present for discussion, issues that affect people in various phases of history and stages of life in different spaces like Africa, America, Asia, Caribbean etc.

Literature encompasses a lot of different ideologies, concepts and notions. Literature is basically a term used in describing written or spoken material ² Broadly speaking, literature is used in the description of anything, from creative writing to something either more technical or scientific. Literature is a reflection and refraction of the issues that are exigent in the society. Many literary artists react to their society and are always a product of the societies that produced them. Thus, it is easy to differentiate the different literatures of different cultures and areas. This is due to the fact that these writers are reacting to socio-cultural conditions that these writers tend to combat. On the other hand, language, verbal or non-verbal, is central to the survival of mankind, because it is an important tool for communication, negotiation and the transfer or preservation of the literary as well as cultural heritage of a people, from one generation to the other. There is a deeply intrinsic relationship between language, literature and culture, such that a change in one ultimately affects the other two.

Culture is the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture, in this sense, is a system of collectively held values. People with little understanding of cross-cultural competency tend to use the term interchangeably with race and ethnicity. However, culture is believed to be the approach a group of people involve in in putting an end to a problem, where these processes or approaches,

¹Oripeloye, Henry. *Reading Literature: An Introduction*. Lagos: Black Accents Publishing Ltd. 2007, 1.

²Vatsa, S. "Literature is the mirror of the society but must be able to see the mirrored." *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*. 4 (3): 2016.

if imbibed overtime, become a systematic way of life. Therefore, we are all born into a culture and we learn all the basic tenets or otherwise known as traditions and we act based on these learnt behaviours. All these learnt recurrent patterns, overtime, tell in our use of language, which invariably shape our literatures.

In general, from the sociological perspective, culture is the total of the inherited and innate ideas, attitudes, beliefs, values, and knowledge, comprising or forming the shared foundations of social action. Likewise, from the anthropological and ethnological senses, culture encompasses the total range of activities and ideas of a specific group of people, with common and shared traditions, which are conveyed, distributed, and highlighted by members of the group. Each people's way of life is a result of lengthy period of training, where knowledge is passed down from one generation to another. However, it is now a noticeable trend that this way of life, for some people, is not well documented and some have become adulterated, as a result of loss of participation and sufficient literatures to help to retain these cultures. As such, this paper intends to investigate the trends of youth cultural aesthetics in ³Achebe's *A man of the People* and ⁴Mafo's *Wazobian Revolution*, with the view to exhume the revolutionary ideas inherent in the youths and how these help governances in African society.

Post-colonial theory is a system of rules and ideological framework which interprets and evaluates an aesthetics piece produced by cultures that developed in response to colonial domination and imperial subjugation. Post-colonialism sees literature as an avenue to probe into the history of society by recreating its past experience with the mind of forestalling the repetition of history. ⁵Ayo Kehinde (2010:239) states in his, *Postcolonial African Literature and the Counter Discourse*, that postcolonial theory does not only seeks to expose the oddities of colonialism but to reveal and discuss what the independent nations make of themselves even after the demise of colonialism. The African authors tell stories to entertain and educate the people in a way they understand. African literature shows how economic, political, religious and social situations relate to pre-colonial Africa, colonialism, neo-colonial independence, and indigenous situations. Thus, the themes dealt with by African authors include art, governance, disillusionment, religion, urban-life, tradition and culture, ironies of life, and pre-colonial, colonial, and neo-colonial realities. Just as the common storyteller of old, the contemporary African author aims at helping his/her society to change while retaining the best features of authentic African cultures.

An interesting feature of postcolonial criticism is its attempt, not only to expose the oddities of colonialism but to reveal and discuss what the independent nations make of themselves even after the demise of colonialism. In another sense, postcolonial denotes a period of recovery after colonialism as well as a

3 Chinua Achebe. *A Man of the People*. London: Heinemann Publishers. 1978.

4Ola John Mafo. *Wazobian Revolution*. Akure; M. O. J. Investments Limited. 2016.

5Ayo Kehinde. *Postcolonial African Literature and the Counter Discourse: J.M Coetzee's Fiction and Reworking of Canonical Works*.

www.africaresearch.org/papers/J07/J072khn.pdf. Accessed February 2020. (2010, 239).

signification of its ongoing cultural aftermath. The independent African nations are governed and ruled by the few aged people with economic power at their disposal in which they use to oppress, suppress and compress the youths into a pigging hole of forgetfulness and abandonment politically and economically. Most of the youths are disillusioned with the happenings in the society today. It was hoped that the situations will be better after the exit of the colonial masters, but the reverse is the case as the youths who are supposed to be the leaders of tomorrow are not given the opportunity to be part of the governance for years now. Most nations of the world today are ruled by the adults, only few nations are governed by the youths or young adults with France and Ukraine leading the vanguard.

Youth Culture

Adolescence is a stage of development, a life stage, or a state of mind. In a typical African setting, it is usually linked to when the girl child matures in terms of body structure and the boy on the other hand, increases in terms of his facial and body enlargement. It can also be seen as a stage where the child begins to formulate new orientations, as to how to act and react to certain societal constructs, in terms of relating with friends, choosing what cloth to wear and how to behave in the society.

According to an online article, published in ⁶*The Psychology of Adolescence* by Lerner & Steinberg, (2009:1):

The first use of the word adolescence appeared in the 15th century and came from the Latin word, "adolescere" — which means to grow up, or to grow into maturity. But surely, people must have noticed this characteristic phase.

Youth cultures, or subcultures, depending on the theory used, are cultures that predominantly include young people as members. Youth culture is a contested phenomenon which is understood to mean different things by different groups. It is the integrated pattern of human knowledge, beliefs, and behaviour, exhibited by youths, as we see in⁷Okri's *The Famished Road*. These cultures embody language, ideas, beliefs, customs, taboos, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, and works of art and so on, especially in an African milieu. Culture, on the other hand, consists of shared values, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and practices that underpin behaviour by members of a social group at a particular point in time. It is creative expression, skills, traditional knowledge, and resources. These include craft and design, oral and written history and literature, music, drama, dance, visual arts, celebrations, indigenous knowledge of botanical properties and medicinal applications, architectural forms, historic sites, and traditional technologies, traditional healing method, traditional natural resource management, and patterns of social interaction that contribute to group and individual welfare and identity. It is generally accepted that

⁶Lerner R. and Steinberg, L. *The Scientific Study of Adolescent Development: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Ibadan: Longman. 2009, 1.
⁷Ben Okri. *The Famished Road*. Longman Publishers. 1991.

culture embodies the way humans live with and treat others and how they develop or react to changes in their environments.

In other academic fields like anthropology, it is seen as a social knowledge that unconsciously acquired by a group of individuals in the same society where they share the same ideas, beliefs and even their way of life. In the same vein, in language related subjects, it can be said that the term youth culture has many meanings that usually deal with forms of speech, like we see in Festus Iyayi's *Violence* (1979), the rhetorical structure of discourses, society rules and conventions and knowledge constructs, like we see in *Thread of Gold Beads* by Nike Campbell-Fatoki (2013). Moreover, youth culture is highly required and important in daily life because of its big vitality and importance to understand the world's view of life, especially as it concerns the youth and their mode of behaviour.

The focus of the political science literature on national level politics means that the activities of young people in local and informal politics are often neglected. While it is agreed that young people hardly participate in national-level politics, it is expedient to note that youths make available spaces for political self-expression at lower levels or even outside of formal settings. Furthermore, the degree at which political involvement occurs, and the strategies and available resources for that engagement, is variable among young people. Studies show that significant youth activism occurs at community level, this means that young people are more likely to engage in community meetings than to get involved in campaign rallies or protests ⁸(Lekalake and Gyimah-Boadi, 2016).

Nevertheless, youth politics at community level is not totally unhinged from the national as they are tied needs—for employment, secure livelihoods and political freedoms—that are irretrievably bound in the actions and inactions of the state ⁹Thieme 2010; ¹⁰Dawson, 2014, ¹¹Ojok & Acol 2017, ¹²Vigh 2006), Young people's political involvement is influenced by and expresses itself in other dimensions of life that are not discernibly political. The part of young people's experiences known as 'youth cultures'—which encompasses "consumer goods, forms of education, avenues of work, leisure activities, and places for socializing" ¹³(Murillo 2017:131)—can be a space for expressions of citizenship. Furthermore, youth cultures can be entry points to more overtly political actions, such as when apolitical engagement in social media leads to

⁸Gyimah-Boadi, E. &Lekalake, R. *Does Less Engaged Mean Less Empowered? Political Participation Lags Among African Youth, Especially Women*. Afrobarometer Policy Paper 34. Available at www.afrobarometer.org 2016.

⁹Thieme T. 'Youth, Waste and Work in Mathare: Whose Business and Whose Politics?' *Environment and Urbanization* 22:2: 2010, 333-352.

¹⁰ Dawson, H. "Youth Politics: Waiting and Envy in a South African Informal Settlement." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40:4: 2014, 861-8.

¹¹Ojok D., &Acol, T. 'Connecting the Dots: Youth Political Participation and Electoral Violence in Africa.' *Journal of African Democracy and Development* 1:2: 2017, 94-108.

¹²Vigh, H. E. *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau*. New York: Berghan Books.2006.

¹³ Murillo B. *Market Encounters: Consumer Cultures in Twentieth-Century Ghana*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. 2017.

political discussions and, even beyond that, to political activism offline (Ojok&Acol 2017; ¹⁴Kahne, Lee and Feezell, 2013).

Youth cultures can also be sites of resistance, which in fact, constantly used by the state and traditional authorities as reason to further side-line young people from the processes and benefits of citizenship (Murillo, 2017; ¹⁵Newell, 2012). Collective action movement that brings together young people across geographical spaces in a cause is an increasingly preferred avenue for young people's direct political activism. These movements may have a set of stated or implicit goals such as a need 'to redress injustices, achieve public goods, tackle sources of grievances, or express support to some moral value of principles' (¹⁶Diani and Bison 2004: 283). Not taking in to account the specific aims, according to¹⁷(Loader, Vromen, and Xenos 2014), the collective action is therefore inherently political and it seeks to bring about change by evoking a sense of 'we' (the powerless) versus 'them' (the powerful) This argues that young people, unconcerned with conventional political institutions such as political parties, would rather be politically involved through networks created by themselves, using media that is more familiar to them, than unfamiliar terrains. That's is why the #EndSARS revolutionary protest against police brutality championed by the youths in October 2020 was a success to an extent in Nigeria.

Therefore, without sustained and joint efforts free from existing political structures, young people may find themselves further marginalized from spaces within which decision-making occurs. In essence, collective action which aims to influence politicians from the outside is best regarded as a complement to, not a substitute for, traditional, structured and more sustained forms of engagement through party politics, voting, advocacy, lobbying and dialogue.

Youth and Governance

Regardless of the fact that youths make up more than half of the population in many countries, young people (ages 18-35) are mostly side-lined from mainstream politics and decision making. They struggle to secure the respect of public officials and are regarded as lacking the skills and experience to be involved in political activities and champion positive changes in their communities. This exclusion, added with limited educational and economic opportunities, renders young people both idle and frustrated with the status quo. Today's youths need real opportunities to engage in political processes and add to practical solutions that influence development. When presented an opportunity to construct, make known their opinions and play a salient role in

¹⁴Kahne, J., Lee, N.-J., &Feezell, J. T. "The civic and political significance of online participatory cultures among youth transitioning to adulthood". *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 10:1: 1-20. 2013.

¹⁵Newell, S. *The Modernity Bluff: Crime, Consumption, and Citizenship in Côte d'Ivoire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.2012.

¹⁶Diani, M. and Bison, I. "Organizations, Coalitions and Movements", *Theory and Society*. 33, 3:4: 2004, 281-309.

¹⁷Loader, B. D., Vromen, A., &Xenos, M. A. "The Networked Young Citizen: Social Media, Political Participation and Civic Engagement. *Information, Communication & Society* 17:2: 2014, 143-150. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2013.871571.

political decision making, young people consistently demonstrate their willingness and ability to initiate positive, lasting change. They also are more likely to demand and defend democracy, and acquire a greater sense of belonging.

Young people being generally excluded from political systems and processes in many ways is most common in their low representation in formal governance structures. In national politics, age-limits to candidacy restricts people's political participation. For example, the age at which individuals can contest for parliamentary elections is mostly higher than for the voting age, age of consent, and age of criminal culpability and other markers of social or civic responsibility. It is 30 in Nigeria, 21 in Sierra Leone and 18 years for Kenyans.

Besides formal rules, other factors such as cultural norms, social conventions and absence of both social and financial capital restrict young people's participation in governance. Therefore, in practice and despite the formal regulations and laws, ¹⁸people under the age of 35 are hardly found in formal political leadership positions... It is common practice to characterize politicians as "young" if they are below 35-40 years of age.' A 2014 report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the proportion of members of parliament under 30 years reveals that, out of 13 African countries that submitted data for the report, Zimbabwe had the highest proportion of persons under 30 years in a single or lower house of parliament, but with only 3%.

By comparison, Norway topped the list globally at 10.1% youth representation. Regarding upper houses of parliament, Kenya ranked highest among countries in the survey with 5.9% representation of young people below age 30. The data on African countries were not checked on the basis of sex, but the trend globally is that there are fewer female than male representatives across all age categories (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2014). This indicates that the under-representation of youth is a worldwide dilemma, but it is more glaring and visible in Africa.¹⁹Ransford Edward Van Gyampo & Nana Akua Anyidoho (2019:2), in 'Youth Politics in Africa' posit that:

Undoubtedly, African youths are a political force. Nothing evidences this fact more in contemporary times than the Arab Spring and other movements of political contestation, resistance or revolt led by young people in Burkina Faso, Senegal, Niger, Togo and South Africa, among other countries.

It is rather unfortunate that 'young people are excluded from meaningful participation in governance systems' ²⁰(Asante, 2006:170) but are recruited to 'fight dangerous political wars' ²¹(Ahwoi, 2008:32), often as 'foot-soldiers' of

¹⁸Ahwoi Kwamena. "Designing a Youth Development Manual". *Mimeo* p. 2008, 1-6.

¹⁹Ransford E. V. G. & Nana A. A. *Youth Politics in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2019.

²⁰Asante, R. "The Youth and Politics in Ghana: Reflections on the 2004 General Elections", in Kwame Boafo-Arthur (ed.) *Voting for Democracy: The 2004 Elections in Perspective* 1: 2006, 213-22.

²¹*ibid.* 32.

political parties ²²(Bob-Milliar, 2014). In extreme cases, they have been lured or conscripted into armed conflict and terrorism. ²³(Ransford and Nana 2019:1). ²⁴Ransford& Nana (2019:21) conclude that,

From the foregoing, it is clear that young people's participation in politics ranges from roles as agents and instruments for the development of more democracy to their activities as purveyors of political conflict and violence. Nonetheless, they are often still excluded or marginalized in formal political processes and structures. It has sometimes been argued that young people's political exclusion is due to their own lack of interest in politics.

In any case, youngsters' activism in elective spaces of political commitment proposes that they might be baffled with formal political frameworks they see as imperfect, degenerate, abusive, or exclusionary. It is along these lines that significant contributions can be suggested for current political systems in Africa in order to address the shortfalls of the political framework. It will also extend the comprehensiveness of political structures that will support youngsters' cooperation and participation in legislative issues in contemporary Africa.

Revolution and governance in Achebe's *A man of the people*

Revolution

The precise meaning of the concept of revolution remains semantically contested. Koselleck²⁵(as quoted by Marinelli 2014:8) argues that the semantics of the concept revolution is by no means unequivocal. The African revolution, and the larger liberation struggle of colonial people everywhere, is the fundamental characteristic of the advance of history in this century. Such a revolution means the transformation of life in the direction of progress which, in turn, means national independence, eliminating all foreign domination, and carefully selecting friends and watching enemies to ensure progress.

Thus, the struggle is not only against colonialism, but against neo-colonialism as well. However, African writers may have to rely on history, culture, socio-political, and economic situations of their society in their dramaturgies, and some factors such as personal visions, periodic essence, ideology and socio-economic and political realities may be considered by African critics as they evaluate African texts. Revolution is one of the most important phases of the historical evolution of nations, occurring in the presence of socioeconomic and political issues. Revolution, according to ²⁶Lawrence Stone (1966:159) is:

...change, effected by the use of violence, in government, and/or regime, and/or society. By society is meant the

²²Bob-Milliar, G. M. "Party Youth Activists and Low-Intensity Electoral Violence in Ghana: A Qualitative Study of Party Foot Soldiers' Activism." *African Studies Quarterly* 15:1: 2014,125-152.

²³Ibid. 1.

²⁴Ibid. 21.

²⁵Marinelli, M. '*China Today: Long Live The Revolution Or A Change In Entropy*', *Postcolonial Studies*. 17 (1): 2014, 7-22.

²⁶ Lawrence Stone. *Theories of Revolution, World Politics*, 1966,159-76.

consciousness and the mechanics of communal solidarity, which may be tribal, peasant, kinship, national, and so on; by regime is meant the constitutional structure-democracy, oligarchy, monarchy; and by government is meant specific political and administrative institutions.

This definition allows to distinguish between the seizure of power that leads to a major restructuring of government or society with the replacement of the former elite by a new one, and the coup d'état involving no more than a change of ruling personnel by violence or threat of violence. In the 1960s, according to ²⁷Rosenau (1964: p. 48) social scientists at Princeton University have changed the word "revolution" with the concept of "internal war" that is defined as any attempt to alter state policy, rulers, and/or institutions by the use of violence in society, where violent competition is not the norm and where well-defined institutional patterns exist. No wonder Mr Omoyele Sowore a Nigerian human rights activist, pro-democracy campaigner, former presidential candidate, and founder of an online news agency Sahara Reporters, on 3rd August, 2019 was arrested by the Nigerian State Security Service (SSS) for alleged treason after calling for a protest tagged #*Revolution Now*. The government sees the use of the word 'revolution' by Sowore as an offence which must be punished because he is planning to take over the government by force through 'revolution'.

The Governance

Achebe's depiction of youths within the text presents us with two categories, with regards to their perception and understanding of politics, political leaders as well as what the yardsticks for measuring good governance should be. On one hand, we have the revolutionary sect represented by Odili Samalu who is convinced that the political leaders have failed the people. The other category is the political sect which Chief Nanga represents. This conviction is further strengthened as the plot unfurls further and Odili struggles to hide his anger and resentment while he waits for the arrival of the minister at the school.

Odili represents the new breed youths who are divergent in their thoughts, and having been educated and enlightened. They are fully aware and expect their political leaders to serve the people but are disappointed to see the people wallow in ignorance and cynicism

As I stood in one corner of that vast tumult waiting for the arrival of the Minister, 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 honour 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. P.2²⁸

²⁷Rosenau, J.N. *Internal War as an International Event.* In J. N. ROSENAU (Ed.), *International Aspects of Civil Strife*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964, 45-91.
²⁸ Chinua Achebe. *A Man of the People*. London: Heinemann publishers, 1978.

This passion for revolution is not a consensus among the youths as it contrasts with the view of some who would give anything just to get a slice of 'the national cake' and would rather become willing tools for the current leaders as seen in the case of Andrew Kadibe who makes conscious efforts to Chief Nanga and by calling him "Man of the People" which turns out to be a laughable attempt at establishing familiarity. The journalist also trades his watchman role for that of a praise singer, shamelessly playing suck up to Nanga during his visit to Anata. But Odili Samalu is very critical of Chief Nanga owing to his knowledge of the many failings of politicians who are more concerned about enriching themselves and fooling the general public.

But in another scenario, Odili's stance becomes quite questionable when he accepts to stay in Chief Nanga's house while waiting for the scholarship the chief promised him. However, Odili's decision to go up against the "fingers that fed him" is by no means an impulsive decision. Perhaps, he too has been fooled by the Chief Nanga's charm and confidence initially and this is something he admits even before the story begins. He admits:

No one can deny that Chief the Honourable M. A. Nanga, M.P., was the most approachable politician in the country. Whether you asked in the city or in his home village, Anata, they would tell you he was a man of the people. I have to admit this from the onset or else the story I'm going to tell will make no sense. P.1²⁹

However, this perception soon changed following what could be referred to a mix of subtle disillusionments and, perhaps, one swift blow of brutal realization. Achebe's subtle approach has to be commended as he allowed Odili to follow a trail of breadcrumbs before coming on the actual stock. Chief Koko's supposed poisoning sowed a seed in Odili, one that would blossom later. It is discovered later that Chief Nanga is a kind of character who tries to bring the young ones, the youths, close to himself, not for the purpose of making them to participate in the administration of the government affairs but to use them for selfish reason of establishing his political platform and using the youths to make it formidable political organization.

For instance, Chief Nanga gets close to the young characters in the novel like Odili, John, Agnes Akilo, Elsie and others just for selfish political reasons and emotional satisfaction. Odili's disillusionment comes in full force when Chief Nanga takes his beloved Elsie "heard as from a great distance Elsie deliriously screaming my name while Nanga had sex with her." The disillusionment revolutionises Odili's perception of Nanga. His change is unsurprisingly drastic as he wastes no time in voicing his displeasure to Nanga soon after the unpleasant incidence.

"Where have you been, Odili?" he asked. "We—I—have been looking for you; I nearly phoned nine-nine-nine." "Please don't talk to me again," I said. "What . . .! Wonders will never

²⁹ibid. 1.

end! What is wrong, Odili?" "I said don't talk to me again," I replied as coolly as possible. "Wonders will never end! Is it about the girl? But you told me you are not serious with her; I asked you because I don't like any misunderstanding... And I thought you were tired and had gone to sleep . . ." "Look here, Mr Nanga, respect yourself. Don't provoke me any more unless you want our names to come out in the newspapers today." ... "You have won today," I continued, "but watch it, I will have the last laugh. I never forget." P. 45³⁰

Odili's transformation from the gentle and 'sensible boy' that Achebe portrays from the beginning, to the rather radical and audacious man who confronts Nanga is properly captured in his last statement to the chief that night before he leaves the house. Odili's epiphany (disappointment and disillusionment) is a symbolic manifestation of what the general public pass through when the political leaders fail to keep their promises. These leaders promise to protect the interest of the masses and they present themselves as humble servants whose only mission and desire is to serve the people. Chief Nanga who moves from being an ordinary school teacher to become the "Honourable Minister of Culture" is a practical example of these kinds of leaders who present themselves as "public servants" at virtually every opportunity they get.

Youthful Agitation: Rebellion or Revolution?

Odili's desire to bring down Chief Nanga is a twin mission; one that is inspired by rebellion and revolution especially when one realises that the older generation appears to be lukewarm and unbothered about corrupt nature of the incumbent government and its modus operandi. In fact, ex-police officer clearly states that he enjoys the incumbent political leaders when he makes this statement in their defence in response to Max's accusations against them:

The ex-policeman put it very well. "We know they are eating," he said, "but we are eating too. They are bringing us water and they promise to bring us electricity. We did not have those things before; that is why I say we are eating too." P. 53.³¹

Odili's decision to contend with chief wears a rebellious look by virtue of the relationship between Odili and Chief Nanga prior to their fallout. Naturally, the relationship deteriorates following their verbal spat. Odili moves in with Maxwell Kulamo, who with some other friends, would later create the C.P.C (Common People's Convention) whose aim is to challenge the current government and form a new political party that would in line with its name give common people especially the youths a voice in government.

Max and some of his friends having watched with deepening disillusionment, the extent at which the hard-won freedom is being abused by corrupt, mediocre

30Chinua Achebe. *A Man of the People*. London: Heinemann publishers, 1978, 45.

31Ibid, 53.

politicians who see themselves as experienced leaders, decide to come together and launch the Common People's Convention. The CPC is a political organization established by some young ones to correct the ills in the society and strengthen the democracy. This is a crusade in support of youth culture and governance in African literature as proposed by Achebe.

Odili's desire to join the CPC and contest for Chief Nanga's seat, in itself enough to infuriate Nanga but Odili takes a step further by trying to get Edna (Nanga's new bride to be) to fall in love with him as a way of getting even with the chief. Odili's motivation is definitely questionable, even he had to do a little bit of self-evaluation at some point and understandably so:

Having got that far in my self-analysis I had to ask myself one question. How important was my political activity in its own right? It was difficult to say; things seemed so mixed up; my revenge, my new political ambition and the girl. And perhaps it was just as well that my motives should entangle and reinforce one another. P. 62³²

The youths as well must see that they do not fall into the same mistake the old politicians fell into. Achebe concludes in this novel that the youths should be allowed to participate in the governance and administration of their country as they have positive contributions to make in the administration of any nation. But in doing that, care must be taken not to allow their revolutionary campaign to cause harm to the people. Achebe believes that the youths should replace the old corrupt politicians, the youths should be involved in the governance and they should not be left behind in the administration of the society because the old politicians have already taken more than that it is required of them. In commenting about Chief Nanga, Odili rightly says, "No, Nanga has taken more than the owner could ignore!" The need for a reaction, perhaps even, a revolution was overt and he would be glad to lead it.

Literary artists, among whom Achebe belongs, have been seeking for ways to revise the bad condition of Africa so that it can become a truly independent setting where the fear of suppression, oppression, deprivation of basic human rights is forlorn. The subject matter of Achebe's works is built around the idea of moulding a better man for the enhancement of a better society. And a better society in this content is one where human freedom in its entire ramification is upheld. Achebe concludes therefore, that the portrayal of youthful agitation in the text is more of revolution rather than mere rebellion against the constituted authority, though he believes that the authority that neglects its young minds should be challenged.

Youth culture in Mafo's wazobian revolution

In Mafo's *Wazobian Revolution*, a conflict between old, corrupt, exploitative government and the new breed revolutionary vanguard is presented³³. It tells the story of three youths who hope to change the way the Wazobia nation is

32 Chinua Achebe. *A Man of the People*. London: Heinemann publishers, 1978, 62.

33 Ola John Mafo. *Wazobian Revolution*. Akure; M. O. J. Investments Limited, 2016.

governed after studying in Gold City. The novel starts by revealing Mohammed, Bayo and Emeka, who are on a revolutionary mission to revive their dear country, as this leads them into the nest of the immigration officers, an incidence that establishes their coming into stardom.

The novel shows how the rich oppress the poor and how this is the cause for the initial fuss between the trio of Bayo, Emeka, Mohammed, and Alhaji Usman. We see the first level of height of oppression when the queue is to be jumped and the trio stand in the gap and disallow this act:

The three returning Wazobians had watched the development with keen interest. The uproar and side comments confirmed their fears. They timed their movement to the front of the queue. As the last person with the panel moved out and the man in white caftan attempted to move in with his companion, they were blocked by the youths. The officials were enraged, while the people on the queue and on lookers were puzzled. P. 9³⁴

The corrupt practice has become a norm in the society, it is constant though harsh on the ordinary citizens. It is a habit for people to jump queue and the fact that the trio try to stop this act is strange to the people present at the scene.

Gradually, reality set in, the unexpected had happened: three young 'aliens' had suddenly grown wings and had the temerity to challenge the almighty Wazobian Immigration officials! Some of their colleagues and on-lookers applauded their outrage; others pitied them, thinking they were putting their interest in jeopardy. P. 9³⁵

The innocent citizens are denied of freedom of movement in their homeland. This is a typical situation of a case where pressure and threat to life dominate. These youths see the opportunity to make their plans of revolution known from the very beginning of the novel by defiling the corrupt existing protocols and thereby aiming at promoting an egalitarian society where youths will be allowed to contribute their quota to the development of the nation. Despite the intimidation from the immigration officers, the young trio refuse to me intimidated and they demonstrate this when they are told to go with the officers to be quizzed on their affiliation to Wazobia.

Revolutionary Tools of the Oppressed in *Wazobian Revolution*

The press and social media are veritable and worthwhile tools engaged in this narrative by Mafo which are familiar terrains and avenues whereby the youths in the novel express themselves. Several times, references are made to their acts and on most occasions, it suggests that the press had freedom and this is a major advantage revealed in the text. For instance:

3401a John Mafo. *Wazobian Revolution*. Akure; M. O. J. Investments Limited, 2016, 9.
351bid. 9.

The main hall of the Lagoon City Press Centre was filled to the brim. The occasion was given very wide publicity by the combined efforts of the WLC, NUWS, ASUW and the Wazobian Union of Journalists (WUJ). It was, therefore, a mixed crowd of workers, students, academics, journalists and interested members of the public, all waiting to have a closer view of the new national heroes, as portrayed in the press. P. 31³⁶

For the entrenchment of youth culture in the society, the media has a great role to play. The older generation of leaders and politicians may decide to go to the television and radio stations to deceive the people with propaganda, the youths are masters of social media to express their views in this twenty first century. The media is a great source of getting knowledge about certain political and societal issues and this strategy is calmly engaged in the novel, as the protagonists channel certain salient points through it.

He informed the council members about the news the Sultan relayed, which his senior wife has also sent the chief messenger to pass to him. He went for his daily supply of newspaper, which he had not yet torched before the commencement of the council meeting of the day. P. 67³⁷

Consolidation and consultation are engaged by the trio to fight their way through to freedom. This is achieved through massive actions in the text. The protagonists commence their consultation strategy as they start with Fatimah and her Uncle, who are humiliated at the immigration office:

At about 12.30pm, that Saturday, the Wazobian trio, as the press sometimes referred to Emeka, Bayo and Mohammed reviewed the plan to see Fatimah's uncle. The idea had first come from Emeka reasoning that since Fatimah had become close to the trio and had been reconciled with them on the incident at the immigration office, it would be proper to meet her uncle and also set the record straight. P. 52³⁸

Another instance of consolidation in the text is when political parties make advances at wooing the trio to their parties and this is the height of the strategies engaged, as the trio see it as an avenue to reel out their plans.

The trio appreciated the Governor's goodwill and the reception. This, Emeka made clear in his response to their host's speech on behalf of himself and his friends. He noted that the trio, were flattered by the governor's kind words and open invitation for them to pitch their tent with his party. He confessed that it was tempting for him and his

36 Ola John Mafo. *Wazobian Revolution*. Akure; M. O. J. Investments Limited, 2016, 31.

37Ibid. 67.

38Ibid. 52.

friends to join the ruling party for all the benefits attached and the available contacts like the Governor, being his father's bosom friend, the influence of Mohammed's father, a very powerful Emir in the country and other factors. However, he made it clear that the trio might not go by the easy option, but through the hard way, based on the political situation on ground and the interest of the masses. P. 108³⁹

John Mafo in this novel, believes that man's action is not pre-ordained by the laid standard of the society or people's opinion but by himself. Thus, collectiveness and determination are the prerequisite for political freedom, without them, the effort will be nothing but time wasting. This fact is in line with ⁴⁰Wole Soyinka's assertion that "the man dies in all who keeps silence in the face of tyranny" (1972:13).

Wazobian Revolution expresses Mafo's believe that man's determination of his fate is through actions chosen to satisfy his will. The major reason of such action is to usher in freedom from all dehumanizing conditions. It is not enough simply to express problems (through text) if it is not linked with critical analysis of actions on the underlying causes and struggles; it is not enough to rehearse struggle if it does not lead to struggle.

However, before their release from the immigration office, solidarity songs are engaged and this becomes a practice throughout the novel. They secretly and painstakingly plan a revolution against the conventions in the country, as they are able to mobilise and encourage themselves through songs which make others see them as rebels and revolutionaries which equally advance them into taking actions to remedy their situation.

Solidarity forever
Solidarity forever
Solidarity forever.
We shall always fight for our rights
We have decided to serve Wazobia
We have decided to serve Wazobia
We have decided to serve Wazobia
No going back. No turning back... P. 5⁴¹

It must be noted that achieving political freedom is not an individual battle but a collective one. And for popular justice to take its place as seen in *Wazobian Revolution*, there must be unified front of sameness of purpose, love and collectivism, foresight, togetherness and absolute will-power. It must be noted that revolution itself is a driving force on people to always do things together. But of course, somebody has to inspire it, and be its leading spirit. This is clearly shown as the novel records that the trio challenge the people into action.

³⁹Ibid. 108.

⁴⁰Wole Soyinka. (1972) *The Man Died*. Longman Publishers, 1972, 13.

⁴¹Ola John Mafo. *Wazobian Revolution*. Akure; M. O. J. Investments Limited, 2016, 5.

In conclusion, the young Wazobians realised that only the strong, determined, selfless and united leaders from various ethnic groups could work together and build the necessary bridges that would produce the required unity in diversity for the beloved nation. They resolved to dedicate themselves to this struggle and to work with other Wazobians who shared these lofty objectives. (29)⁴²

In the fight or struggle for freedom, not everyone will be willing to sacrifice his life for the people's sake; but this is not the case of the young men who are determined even at gun point to defend the truth and the nation.

The second incident occurred just before the bridge linking Abasa and Onichada. After a long wait leading to the police check point, the policeman directly controlling traffic had waved the two vehicles on. Suddenly, a police sergeant jumped in front of the pathfinder jeep, pointing his gun... P. 101⁴³

If not for the timely intervention of the DSP, it could have been another story entirely. The young trio demand an apology from the officers and do not move an inch until their points are made. Another major area of revolution engaged by John Mafo is to create an ideology different from other political parties and this is expressed by Emeka when he suggests that the Wazobian Labour Party should have different manifesto and ideology different from the norm and this happens to be the beginning of revolution for the party, as the name of a political party alone, does not guarantee their success in any elections.

Emeka observed that the constitution and manifestoes of the WLP were similar to those of the other existing parties... as he puts it, the differences were merely in the terms of quantities, semantics, styles and presentation. P. 84⁴⁴

Hence, the young man sees to it that the best way to win the revolution is to make a few changes to the principles in the constitution, so it would accommodate a lot of new improvements. Though the idea is opposed initially but later it is adopted.

Political freedom as the aim of the struggle does not always come without a price to be paid. John Mafo shows it very clearly with youths' involvement in the revolution in *Wazobian Revolution*. This struggle which is beneficial is always moved or founded by someone who has the people in mind, as illustrated in the text. It is generally accepted that prose work has made it easier for the public to know what their rights are. The subject matter of Mafo's works is built around the idea of moulding a better man for the enhancement of a better society. And a better society in this content is one where human freedom in its entire

42Ola John Mafo. *Wazobian Revolution*. Akure; M. O. J. Investments Limited, 2016, 29.

43Ibid. 101.

44Ibid. 84.

ramification is upheld and the youths are involved in the day to day administration of their society.

Social Recklessness and Its Effects

John Mafo evaluates the lackadaisical dispositions of Africans towards the ever declining situations in the continent. Africans are either afraid to speak up in agitation for their rights or are bribed to remain silent. The literary import of such lexical items like “spying” and “dishonesty” is beyond their surface semantic; it signifies the social decadence obtainable in our society where there is a wide range of suffering and deceit in the land. Those who occupy the lowest social and economic strata, which are the poor and common Africans, are not just reluctant to advocate for their rights and entitlements, but have been compelled by so many political strategies to accept economic failure and hardship as a normal way of life.

Why was it that most things were not working in Wazobia? While in Lagos city, they had to cope with epileptic power supply, whereas, the Gold Coast, a year before they left that country, had celebrated fifteen years of uninterrupted power supply! (99)⁴⁵

The Americans are the ones intellectually and financially equipped to induce people against the government and the government cannot call them to order in the face of perceived political highhandedness. However, John Mafo also laments the disheartening corruption that is ruining this set of people who are expected to be the voice of the unheard, unseen and unknown. Those who the government expects to be leaders are soon convinced into joining the groups of the oppressors. It does not therefore matter which way the populace is being kept from complaining or resorting to a dramatic demonstration of their disapproval of foreign government policies, the most important thing is that their local government is made to look as terrible and does not have their matters at heart. Although, they (Emeka, Bayo and Mohammed) acknowledges that a few fragment of the population earns a living through honest means, they condemn the majority for being strongly entrenched in a system of corruption playing their respective roles which have aided its smooth running. Africa is a continent populated by dishonest and selfish citizens who want to make a living at any cost with little or no attention to integrity or moral values.

The writer therefore wonders why the government is the constant subject of criticism when the country is full of insincere and untruthful citizens. Mafo examines the nonchalant attitudes of Africans as a major challenge. He criticizes the unconcerned disposition of the people in the face of overt political danger. He is apprehensive of potential disasters and continuous declination if we remain quiet and pretentious of these realities. He continues his social analysis of the people by stating that traitors are around and that if they will triumph, they must believe that, one day they will win, however, long it takes (237)⁴⁶.

45 Ola John Mafo. *Wazobian Revolution*. Akure; M. O. J. Investments Limited, 2016, 99. 46Ibid, 237.

Also, the belief is that religion and violence are somewhat related and this the reason for so many crimes being perpetrated in the society. However, John Mafo, through some characters decides, to rebuff this by saying that religion and culture should have nothing to do with love and violence, hence, he portrays this in the marriages of Nkem to Mohammed, Bayo to Fatimah and Funke to Emeka, all from different cultural backgrounds.

In several occasions, Nkem and Fatimah are able to reiterate their opinions about how women can also be a major part of the revolution and that revolution is not meant for the men folk alone, as women equally have a role to play.

The Concept of Governance and the Nigerian Society

Moreover, Mafo mirrors a societal experience of arrant insecurity of lives and properties by reflecting the type of tragic news that greet an average Nigerian citizen each day. Some of these news items are the massive killings of the innocent ones across the country, the massacres of fellow countrymen by religious sects, the various cold-blooded murders of citizens, political insurgencies, ethnic or tribal clashes and so on, which remain strongly as the various "flames" that have engulfed this nation. The morning of an ideal society is supposed to provide the people with encouragements and inspired invigorations unlike what is obtained in Nigeria. The media (television and radio stations as well as the newspapers) are condensed with several kinds of unpleasant news, some of which subject matters are those of total violation of the fundamental rights of the citizens and outright disregard of human dignity.

Mafo speaks to the imminent social disaster which could lead to the destruction of lives and properties, displacement of loved ones, casualties in an unimaginable degree and a lot of other forms of devastations. It evokes a mental picture of a world at the brink of collapse, a nation at the fringe of anarchy and a country at the edge of destitution.

When a man takes on a role which is believed to be what the entire community should take upon them, the society becomes curious and inquisitive as people will want to know whether he will be successful or not. The story of these young lads- Emeka, Bayo and Mohammed, shows the strength of men who many thought was even stronger than all revolutionists of their time put together. They were able to lead the country and change they wanted and that gave them fame and brought Wazobia to the peak of her glory. They were devoted to building a strong and respectable society, even when they are presumed to be too young. Mohammed brought about the desired change in Katungo and at a young and inexperienced age of thirty, he was a formidable man credited with many spectacular feats romantically woven into legends. He is believed to have fought against all odds who stood against his administration and ensured that he never left any stone unturned.

However, one important element in *Wazobian Revolution* is that of optimism and hope of a better condition despite the temptation from all

quarters. They were occasionally not sure what the future holds, but are determined to get it done. This is used to establish the fact that the revolutionists know the problem and who to fight, and are not beating the air. Mafo's use of characters from different background is to show unity and solidarity for bravery, confidence, leadership, and zeal for success but behind these words are strong willed man who do not want anyone to challenge their opinions and ready to get the desired result of a better nation.

CONCLUSION

Novel can be categorically said to be a worthy medium for revolt and political change due to its effectiveness in getting people to see things, think about them and take transformative steps towards political, religious and socio-economic freedom. This paper shows how novels have been employed to propagate political messages and changes especially in African society. Novel has been found useful as an instrument, not only in the pre-colonial and post-colonial eras, but also in the neo-colonial era to fight against unfavourable and tyrant governments. Novel has also been used as a medium with a direct contact with the audience. Many times the audience is left to make its own decision on what has been revealed.

Thus we conclude that Achebe and Mafo have been able to reveal to us the importance of the involvement of the youths in the governance of the society, for they play great roles in the betterment of any society. Youth culture must be inculcated into our system in every ramification. Any society or government that neglects this truth is planning to fail because questions will be asked by the youths and that will definitely lead to either rebellion or revolution as the case may be. Youth culture must be given prominence in our society because it will, according to ⁴⁷David Cook (1994:128), "accuse the destroyers who control and pulverise people's lives ... expose the true nature of cynical corruption and dehumanized greed and lust for self-aggrandizement in our society."

⁴⁷ David Cook. "Wole Soyinka and the Critics" in *Wole Soyinka: The African Literary Muse*. (Ed.) Bayo Ogunjimi. UNILORIN Press, 1994, p. 122-140.