

A Re-Evaluation of Power, Discourse, and Leadership Responsibilities in *Anthills of the Savannah*

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Abstract

*This paper examines Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* through the lens of political discourse and the ambiguities of power and leadership responsibilities. It interrogates how language, both as a medium of control and a site of resistance, shapes the exercise and perception of power in the fictional state of Kangan. Drawing from critical works and contextual insights, the study reveals how Achebe constructs a narrative in which leadership collapses under the weight of moral ambiguity, rhetorical performance, and institutional decay. Using discourse analysis, the paper explores how Achebe's characters engage with and distort language to assert or undermine authority. While existing scholarship addresses dictatorship and post colonialism, few interrogate the linguistic and ethical complexities of leadership responsibility in the novel. This re-evaluation foregrounds Achebe's warning against the theatricality of power and the failure of leaders to speak or act with moral clarity.*

Keywords: Achebe, political discourse, power, leadership responsibility, language, *Anthills of the Savannah*.

Introduction

Re-Defining Power and Leadership Responsibilities

In history, the nihilistic conception of man as an enigma, that is, a mysterious being, sometimes to the point of naivety has often given rise to the dominance of one group or state over another, of a few hedonists who derive their power from the successful manipulation of man's unstable personality-structure. Although the instability of the individual personality does not, by any measure, make the human essence confusing and enigmatic, the proverbial manipulation of man's inherent weakness sponge on these deficiencies, mystify their own competence for smartness and in the end, impose themselves on others with the spurious claim of the right to leadership because according to their own conceit, they know what the insignificant others are yet to understand.

These mysterious entities have not understood the true essence of power and leadership responsibilities but have beastly confused power as a tool to wield control over a handful of others who are weak and feeble; these leaders, in their bid to satisfy their selfish bids become enigmatic and incongruous to the point of losing their own humanity. As Ogbeyi (10) notes, 'virtually all the leaders come to power with the sole purpose of enriching themselves and their cronies rather than offering selfless services to the nation and its people.' From Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and some other literary works, we shall draw inferences. In *Anthills of the Savannah* for example, the likes of Sam, the Head of the State of Kangan, and his cabinet typify leaders who are unable to understand their responsibilities as leaders. In this novel, Sam's idea of freedom is contradictory. He is out to perpetuate himself in power and not to free people. Our present-day politicians, after being empowered through incredible elections and appointments, become pseudo-democrats. They confuse democracy for pseudo-democracy and at the end, see power as an invaluable tool for manipulating humanity. "They do some unthinkable things in a bid to secure their hold on power. They view power as their birth right and most political office holders come to regard themselves as power personified" (Idorenjin, n.p.). Thus, at a purely philosophical level, such is the origin of oppression: mankind's segregative classification of itself, by its most necrophiliac faction, and with a criterion based exclusively on intellectual terrorism, which factionalizes the monolith of humanity into the "sane substance" and "lunatic dregs" of life lodged in the gross inequalities which characterize society's material foundation. In this society where to know is to have those who know, use their knowledge as well as the wealth of what they know about the limitations of man in society to exacerbate the premises of oppressive and dictatorial reality, abuse or misconception of power becomes imminent. As Dike puts it, "Human beings tend to abuse power (or anything) whenever they have excess (absolute) of it" (n.p.). In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe notes that: "power is like marrying across the Niger; you soon find yourself paddling by night" (p. 45). People that cannot swim should not marry across the Niger for to do so would result in being forced to swim, or at least, paddle. In other words, a man who hates bad leadership may become worse than those he criticises if he finds himself in a pool of power drunkenness. Thus, Omololu rightly observes that "human nature associated with the exercise of power has the tendency to be abused if not checked (p. 4)". Hence, human weakness for power drunkenness has constantly led to a misunderstanding of the true essence of power. Sequel to this, Ted asserts that:

The constitution is not just a historical document... The status and responsibilities that the founders gave us (should) be applied every hour of every day. We do not have the right to ignore or dilute or wave them, because they are not ours to

dispose of - they belong permanently to the people we temporarily serve. They are the nation's legacy, and we are the current trustees of that legacy. (p. 20)

Power, therefore, is an instrument for managing the affairs of a populace temporarily. It is a temporary disposition to serve or lead a people towards greatness with an aim to alleviate or if possible, eliminate human woes. Power, like the life of its holder, is ephemeral and passes away like a brief candle.

Critical Oversight in *Anthills of the Savannah*

Recent scholarly studies on Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) have largely focused on feminist empowerment, postcolonial resistance, and symbolic structures. The novel remains one of the most provocative postcolonial novels on the problems of political power in post-independence Africa. Besides the violent excesses of military regimes, it illuminates the moral paradoxes of progressive leadership. Scholarships on *Anthills of the Savannah* fail to engage with the novel's core concern — the ambiguity and complicity of power and leadership. Available critical works like that of Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi (2024), Norah Hadi Q. Alsaeed (2023), John Aning, Sanka, and Kofigah (2023) and a host of others overlook how Achebe disrupts simplistic understandings of leadership. In these studies, one thing is obvious: a consistent failure to adequately address the interplay between language, power, and leadership responsibilities in the novel. Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which explores how language constructs and reinforces social power, ideology, and dominance, this essay critiques critical works on *Anthills of the Savannah* exposing their neglect of Achebe's central concern: the ambiguity and performativity of political power.

Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi (2024), in "Transportation and Agon," frames movement in the novel as a metaphor for socio-political negotiation observing that public transportation scenes become "fleeting modes of assembly for the exchange of ideas" (Osinubi 18). While this insight is useful, Osinubi overlooks how mobility in the novel is tightly controlled and symbolically manipulated through discourse. Major Sam's motorcade, for example, does not simply transport a leader it stages his power, an example of how language, space, and symbolism function as tools of domination. CDA would stress the need to analyse the language used during these moments, particularly how deference is constructed through scripted protocol and silencing of dissent.

In the same light, Norah Hadi Q. Alsaeed (2023) presents a feminist-postcolonial reading that admires Achebe's celebration of African traditions and female voices. She focuses on Beatrice and the revival of indigenous symbolism through her leadership in the naming ceremony. However, Alsaeed disregards the *discursive implications* of Beatrice's role.

Her language is soft, symbol-laden, and ritually controlled, revealing the complex negotiation between traditional values and modern political expression. From a CDA perspective, this naming event is not merely symbolic; it is a *performative act of legitimation*, echoing what Norman Fairclough terms “the discursive reproduction of power” (Fairclough 1995). Alsaeed does not examine the implications of this act in reinforcing elite control under the guise of communal consensus. Aning, Sanka, and Kofigah (2023) present a fascinating mythopoetic reading of the myth of the Idemili in the novel, rendering it as a call for moral regeneration. While they rightly identify the myth’s thematic significance, they underplay its rhetorical use as a political strategy. Achebe presents a world in which myths are reactivated not as timeless truths but as tools of persuasion, as language acts used to obscure the absence of real leadership. CDA encourages attention to such ideological uses of tradition, especially when leaders like Sam cloak their failures in nationalist rhetoric and sacred imagery. The authors’ failure to interrogate this rhetorical deployment limits their view of Achebe’s critique.

For Deepak and Naveen (2024), Sam’s dictatorship within a neo-colonial framework mirrors colonial authoritarianism. While this is a valid position, it risks simplifying the novel’s nuanced treatment of power. The General’s speeches, filled with magnificence and empty slogans, are examples of what Teun van Dijk terms ideological discourse language that maintains elite dominance while concealing responsibility (van Dijk 2006). These scholars do not analyse the text’s linguistic structures or public addresses, missing how Sam’s power is mediated by discourse, not just by violence. Similarly, Hassan Usman (2023), in “Stylistic Perspectives in Postcolonial Achebe,” pays attention to the novel’s diction and syntactic patterns, particularly in Item’s editorials. While Usman identifies how Achebe distinguishes between characters’ voices, he stops short of analysing how Item rhetorical structures challenge state ideology is. Item’s prose embodies resistance, but also reveals internal contradictions. A CDA approach would probe how his linguistic choices simultaneously empower and alienate his readership, revealing the tension between intellectual activism and populist engagement.

In another instance, Enoabasi Ufot (2022) interprets Achebe’s work through the lens of symbolic conflict and narrative politics. She examines the confrontation between journalistic ethics and state propaganda but neglects the discursive mechanisms by which this opposition is enacted. Ufot’s reading omits how characters like the Commissioner for Information deploy euphemism and narrative distortion as tools of manipulation. CDA would emphasize how Achebe stages the battle over truth through competing discourses, where control of narrative equals control of power.

Likewise, in a 2023 comparative analysis, Ahmed Salisu draws parallels between Achebe’s novel and contemporary Nigerian political dynamics. Though insightful,

Salisu's piece remains abstract and macro-political. He cites instances of political repression but fails to analyse the language of repression itself. For example, the military's declarations and Item's assassination are not merely events; they are communicative acts with ideological implications. The failure to apply CDA renders his work less effective in revealing how Achebe problematises the performative nature of modern leadership.

Odafe Atako (2024) explores intertextuality and political memory in *Anthills of the Savannah*, linking it to Achebe's earlier works. While he contributes to understanding the novel's historical continuities, Atako does not explore how Achebe deploys linguistic intertextuality — phrases, slogans, and proverbs, for example — as tools of critique and subversion. The speech patterns of the cabal and the journalistic voice are interlaced with coded resistance, demanding closer discursive scrutiny. In available critical works, there is little to no engagement with Achebe's linguistic representation of leadership, how power is performed, contested, and destroyed through speech. Achebe's characters, Ikem, Chris, Beatrice, and Sam represent different modes of leadership, and their legitimacy is defined as much by what they say and how they say it as by what they do. Item's journalism, Chris's controlled silences, Sam's bombastic decrees, and Beatrice's conciliatory tone all illustrate that language is a tool of both resistance and repression. By ignoring this, recent critics overlook Achebe's deeper message: that leadership is not only about structure but about discourse: it is the act of speaking truthfully and responsibly. A CDA-oriented reading makes clear that Achebe critiques not just who holds power, but how it is created, performed, and ultimately undermined by the very language that should uphold it. For a fuller understanding of the novel's political vision, future scholarship must re-evaluate power not just as a theme, but as a rhetorical process, fraught with ambiguity and ideological manipulation.

Ambiguities of Power and Leadership Responsibilities in *Anthills of the Savannah*

All political aspirants come with the rhetoric of transformation. They preach a gospel of change, often invoking divine imagery, regardless of the actual direction of their policies. As Makinde aptly notes, "Nigeria is a God-intoxicated society" (p. 6), yet it remains among the most corrupt nations globally. Odumuyiwa's inaugural lecture, "A Religious but Criminal Society: Any Remedy?", captures the contradictions that permeate the Nigerian socio-political fabric. Makinde further observes: "Indiscipline and lawlessness, greed and corruption have displaced GOD and substituted MONEY as an object of worship in our society, to the extent that we are neither accountable to God nor humanity." Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, these public utterances are more than opinions. Rather, they represent discursive constructions of moral decay, in

which ideological contradictions are normalised and legitimised through political language.

This decay finds powerful narrative illustration in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*. Achebe critiques the pathologies of postcolonial governance by showing how power discourse — once idealistic — quickly turns coercive. The following passage is telling: “and all this is tied up in his mind with this failed referendum for life president. The pain still rankles... After the failure of the referendum, he had complained bitterly... that I had not played my part... to ensure the success of the exercise” (p. 147). This excerpt encapsulates the power-laden discourse of betrayal and entitlement. His Excellency's language reveals how leadership has become synonymous with ownership, where dissent is recast as disloyalty. From a CDA perspective, Achebe shows how political actors deploy discourse strategies of legitimisation, such as appeals to loyalty, to justify authoritarianism.

The waning of friendship between Sam, Chris, and Ikem illustrates how power relations embedded in discourse reshape social bonds. At Lord Lugard College, their shared past was built on trust. But once Sam ascends to power, he redefines those relationships through the discourse of command and suspicion. Chris, once an integral part of the regime, becomes alienated: power turns friends into fiends. Here, Achebe's use of metaphor reflects ideological transformations enacted through discourse. Power, when couched in authoritative speech, no longer serves collective good but becomes a mechanism of surveillance and punishment. CDA helps us see how Achebe critiques the discursive construction of power as personal glory, not institutional responsibility. Achebe's representation of Sam's autocracy echoes in Nigeria's contemporary political climate, as observed by Dike: “Nigeria is now convulsed by a new epidemic of political witch-hunting, as political oppositions are being clobbered.” Politicians, after securing power, often through rigging — weaponise discourse to delegitimise dissent. In CDA terms, this is the use of exclusionary discourse, which marginalises opposition voices and constructs a monolithic, self-justifying political narrative. This is reinforced by Achebe's depiction of Sam's punishment of Abazon:

Because you said no to the Big Chief, he is very angry and has ordered all the water bore-holes they are digging in your area to be closed so that you will know what it means to offend the sun... you will suffer so much that in your next reincarnation you will learn to say yes even if the matter is clear to you or not (p. 127).

This quote is rich with symbolic and discursive implications. Sam likened to the sun — a life-giving force — transforms into a despot whose displeasure brings suffering. CDA reveals how metaphorical language is deployed to naturalise tyranny, implying that

political punishment is as inevitable as the laws of nature. The metaphor of “offending the sun” is not just poetic; it is an instrument of discursive violence, where language is used to justify deprivation as moral correction. Achebe’s portrayal of Ikem Osodi reflects the role of the intellectual within power discourse. Ikem is critical of the regime and often uses language to challenge its ideological premises: “The prime failure of the leadership of our country since independence... is the failure of intellectual rigour in the formulation of policy and its execution” (p. 99). Through Ikem, Achebe critiques the gap between discourse and action. CDA helps highlight how Ikem’s language, though visionary, remains discursively disempowered in a society governed by military logic. His famous remark: “Writers don’t give prescriptions. They give headaches” (p. 145) reflects the limit of discourse as praxis, especially in an environment where power is exercised through coercion, not persuasion.

Chris Oriko, the Commissioner for Information, is a study in discursive complicity. For much of the novel, he serves as a conduit of official propaganda. His silence and conformity reflect what CDA scholars call discourse reproduction the uncritical transmission of hegemonic narratives. Only at the end, when he sacrifices himself to protect a poor girl, does he rupture that discourse. His death, “shot by a young, frightened soldier for trying to save a girl” (p. 199), symbolises the violent cost of re-humanisation in a dehumanised system. Beatrice, by contrast, offers a subversive discourse. Though not directly political, she symbolises discursive resistance to patriarchal and autocratic norms. Described as “an urbane and articulate woman, a symbol of new thinking” (p. 83), she presides over the naming of Elewa’s child, giving her the name *Amaechina* — “May-the-path-never-close-again.” This act is symbolically discursive, reclaiming identity, history, and continuity. CDA views such symbolic language as counter-hegemonic discourse, not yet revolutionary, but quietly transformative. Achebe also uses narrative polyphony, a key CDA feature, by presenting the story through multiple voices, Ikem, Chris, Beatrice, thereby decentralising the authoritarian narrative. This fragmentation is not just stylistic; it mirrors the discursive instability of the postcolonial state, where no single ideology can claim moral authority. Ikem’s warning, “the story is not for those who obey and do not ask questions. It is for those who ask questions and refuse to be silenced” (p. 125), becomes a meta-discursive call to the reader, urging resistance through language.

In the final analysis, Achebe does not offer a blueprint for moral leadership. Instead, he dramatizes the discursive ambiguities of power, showing how language can serve both liberation and domination. Beatrice’s rhetorical question, “what has become of the servant-leader?” (p. 181), is the novel’s ultimate CDA provocation. It invites readers to consider how discourses of service have been hijacked by discourses of control, and how these shifts are encoded in everyday political language. Thus, in both content and

linguistic texture, *Anthills of the Savannah* is a profound critique of power through discourse. Achebe lays bare how language is used to manufacture consent, suppress dissent, and disguise tyranny as legitimacy. He ultimately leaves us with a challenging CDA-inspired question: *Who controls the language of leadership, and to what ends?*

Deceit as a Tool of Bad Leadership

Our politicians are full of deceit. They deploy intricate tactics of manipulation and suppression. Intrigue, which constitutes oppression's primary armoury, is neither an enterprise for the naive nor a game for the lily-livered. It is, on the contrary, expert manipulation of man's inherent weaknesses, his negation of virtues and penchant for vices, his cowardly fear of freedom and pathological aversion to actions against the ubiquitous segments of oppression. The people of Kangan are depicted as fearing oppression and dreading freedom — an ideologically conditioned populace in need of rescue. That "rescue" arrives in the person of Sam, a military officer who seizes power in a coup d'état. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, Achebe illustrates how language constructs, sustains, and legitimises unequal power relations. In Kangan, discourse is not merely a tool of governance but a weapon of domination. Sam, who initially appears as a redeemer, embodies the archetype of the pseudo-democrat. Such leaders are dangerous not due to a lack of intelligence, but because they deploy their linguistic and ideological creativity to dominate others. As Fairclough posits, CDA seeks to uncover how language legitimises relations of power through discourse. Sam does just this, using state-controlled language and coercive symbolism to enforce conformity.

Achebe foregrounds this manipulation through Item's warning: "Those who mismanage our affairs would silence our criticism by pretending they have facts not available to the rest of us. And I know it is fatal to engage them on their own ground" (*Anthills*, p. 58). This meta discursive comment by Ikem draws attention to the regime's epistemic violence — a strategic denial of access to truth. Through the control of "facts," the government constructs a hegemonic discourse that silences dissenters and obscures truth from public scrutiny. The character of Sam also showcases how discourse becomes a performance of power. The term *Kabisa*, borrowed from Swahili, quickly becomes a linguistic tool of authoritarian affirmation: "Sam learnt the habit of saying *Kabisa* from old Ngongo. Within a week, it spread to members of the cabinet and down to the base cocktail set... into the general community" (p. 53). Here, Achebe symbolises semantic hollowing, where language becomes empty ritual, *Kabisa* no longer means "absolutely" in dialogue; it becomes a speech act of submission, a discursive ritual reinforcing hierarchy and silencing opposition.

The political language of Achebe's characters is saturated with ideologically loaded discourse, especially from sycophants like Professor Okong. Okong's ethnically charged remark, "Mr. Ikem Osodi is causing all these troubles because he is a typical Abazonian" (p. 18), exemplifies how ethno-linguistic othering is used to undermine critics and consolidate ethno-political power. Achebe deploys irony in Okong's role as an academic whose linguistic choices undermine enlightenment and promote division. Sam's scornful rebuke, "No sense of loyalty, no esprit de corps, nothing!" (p. 24), ironically exposes the instability of sycophancy: even dictators distrust those who win favour through deceit. Achebe's use of dialogue and register further illustrates the power asymmetries in elite discourse. Characters like Ikem and Chris possess moral clarity but are ensnared by their inability to match rhetoric with transformative action. Item's rhetorical flourish: "writers don't give prescriptions. They give headaches" (p. 145) reveals both the limits and power of discourse. While symbolically resisting tyranny, Ikem is ultimately silenced. His language, though subversive, lacks the institutional power to challenge systemic injustice, a key insight in CDA, where resistance discourse often lacks the force of dominant ideologies. Chris's journey reflects similar tensions. Initially complicit in Sam's regime, he dies in a moment of moral courage, shot while protecting a girl from sexual assault. Achebe's depiction of Chris's death (p. 199) functions as a discursive martyrdom, reinforcing how moral resistance is quashed in systems that privilege coercion over consensus. Reference to *Julius Caesar* sharpens the critique of leadership betrayal:

"Lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
But when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back..." (Julius Caesar, II.i.22-27)

Sam, like Caesar, uses the discourse of reform to access power, only to abandon those ideals once entrenched in office, pure deceit. The regime's deceit infects the general populace, forcing them into performative loyalty. Achebe's portrayal of Elewa is crucial here. Despite being semi-literate and marginalised, her role in the naming ceremony symbolises reclamation of narrative and cultural agency. The naming of her daughter, *Amaechina* ("May-the-path-never-close-again"), signifies a symbolic break from the cycle of betrayal. Yet, the ceremony is more spiritual than structural, an ambiguous moment in which Achebe suggests that true change cannot occur until language, power, and ideology are realigned towards justice. In the broader Nigerian context, Achebe's narrative reflects a political environment saturated with discursive manipulation, tribalism, and sycophantic rhetoric. Leaders often emerge cloaked in populist discourse but descend into autocracy. Achebe is unambiguous: "*Deceitful leadership breeds fear, disunity, and the erosion of*

civic values.” His novel functions not merely as fiction but as a discourse critique of how language enables, conceals, and perpetuates oppression.

In sum, through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah* reveals that deceit in leadership is sustained not only by brute force but by the manipulation of discourse, through slogans like *Kabisa*, the weaponisation of ethnicity, and the silencing of dissenting voices. Language, when stripped of truth and bent to serve autocracy, becomes both the instrument and symbol of bad leadership.

Absurdity of Life and Power

Life and power are transient, meaningless, and futile. In the words of Shakespeare:

“Life is but a walking shadow; a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing” (*Macbeth*, Act 5, Scene 5, lines 22–28).

The futility of life and the temporariness of political power underscore the moral imperative for leaders to govern with humility and purpose. Power, no matter how potent, is fleeting. Chinua Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) is a searing political allegory that resonates with this Shakespearean reality. Set in the fictional African state of Kangan, the novel shows how power, when hoarded rather than shared, becomes grotesque, ultimately collapsing under its own weight.

Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which examines the way discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power and dominance (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008), Achebe’s narrative foregrounds the language of dominance, resistance, and ideological manipulation. CDA allows us to explore how the novel’s discourse practices reflect and reinforce hegemonic structures in postcolonial African societies. Achebe artistically dissects the absurdities of authoritarian rule through the character of Sam, the President, whose descent into paranoia and delusion mirrors the transient nature of absolute power. Once an admired military officer, Sam degenerates into a dictator who rules through fear, coercion, and propagandist discourse. His political language is steeped in spectacle, silence, and symbolic violence. This theatrical exercise of power echoes Shakespeare’s “poor player” metaphor. Sam’s control over Kangan, though seemingly total, is superficial and ephemeral. He is assassinated and quickly replaced by another regime, revealing the cyclical futility of autocracy (Achebe, p. 194).

Chris Oriko, the Commissioner for Information, provides an intellectual lens into this absurdity. Although Chris initially justifies Sam's authoritarianism using euphemistic and bureaucratic discourse, he ultimately recognises its moral bankruptcy. CDA reveals how Chris's internal struggle reflects broader discursive shifts from complicity to resistance. His tragic death while attempting to protect a woman from police brutality (p. 198) illustrates the collapse of institutional language in the face of unaccountable power. Musa (2020) rightly observes that "ours is a primitive society" (p. 10), and Achebe affirms this through the novel's tragic structure, where individual efforts at justice are crushed under the weight of institutionalised violence. Achebe's narrator notes the "bad habit of power, of spending itself in fear and loathing rather than service" (Achebe, p. 105). CDA interprets this as a meta discursive critique of authoritarian regimes where fear is produced and sustained through dominant language ideologies. Achebe suggests that power should not be a means of personal aggrandisement, but a public trust. Yet, in Kangan, as in Nigeria, progress is "millipeding" (Musa, 2020, p. 10), and change remains elusive due to leaders' inability to see beyond their transient thrones. Aderounmu (2023) succinctly asserts: "Nigeria as a country is a total failure" (p. 14). Achebe does not idealise this claim; rather, he probes its root causes. His narrative unveils the discursive mechanisms of political self-preservation, corruption, and silence. Ikem Osodi, the radical editor, explicitly critiques the regime's lack of vision, arguing that "the prime failure of this regime is its total lack of imagination" (Achebe, p. 137). Ikem's language becomes a tool of ideological subversion, and CDA enables us to see how his anti-hegemonic discourse is targeted and extinguished by the state. His assassination, like Chris's, signifies the state's fear of discursive resistance. This evokes the Biblical wisdom in *Ecclesiastes* 1:14: "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun: and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Achebe's depiction of death as the ultimate leveller affirms this view. Characters who once wielded power with impunity, Ikem, Chris, Sam, are all buried by the same indifferent hand of fate. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* echoes this fatalism: "We are such stuff / As dreams are made on; and our life / Is rounded with a sleep" (Act 4, Scene 1).

Dryden also reminds us: "All human things are subject to decay, / And when Fate summons, monarchs must obey" (lines 1-2). Achebe dramatizes this philosophical outlook in the novel's closing chapter. The naming ceremony, presided over by Beatrice, signals not transformation but ambiguity. The child is named *Amaechina* ("May-the-path-never-close-again") (Achebe, p. 222), signifying hope amidst despair. However, CDA interprets this as a symbolic, rather than structural, counter-discourse. Beatrice, Elewa, and the child represent inclusive leadership, but Achebe remains cautious. As Beatrice reflects, "The

thing started to come to me slowly. The awesome responsibility. I was terrified” (Achebe, p. 218).

The novel thus aligns with Shakespeare’s profound insight in *Julius Caesar*: “The evil that men do lives after them; / The good is oft interred with their bones” (Act 3, Scene 2). Achebe warns that abusive power leaves enduring legacies, while genuine acts of service often disappear from public memory. Philips (2016) supports this when he notes, “Real living occurs only when individuals have sound moral values, or at least consistently and seriously aspire to it” (p. 15). Ikem believes that the people’s liberation lies not in violent revolution, but in a moral and discursive awakening, one that recognises the power of words and stories to transform consciousness. The state of moral collapse in *Anthills of the Savannah* affirms Idorenjin’s claim that corruption thrives “not in a civil society but in a society where law and order have gone on holiday” (2017, p. 5). CDA reveals how language, through euphemism, propaganda, and control of media, serves as a tool of domination in Kangan. The absence of institutional checks, the militarisation of dissent, and the elite’s discursive disconnection from the masses lie at the heart of Achebe’s critique. His text is not just about failed leaders; it is about failed political language.

Conclusion

The struggle against bad leadership is the struggle for the survival of mankind and the safety of earth’s planet. Re-evaluating power, discourse, and leadership responsibilities in *Anthills of the Savannah* necessitates a shift from conventional readings that prioritise gender symbolism and neo-colonial critique to a deeper engagement with the ambiguities that define Achebe’s political vision. Central to this re-evaluation is the role of discourse, not merely as language or rhetoric, but as a system of representation that shapes and contests power. Achebe employs narrative voices, dialogues, and symbolic conversations to expose the fractures within postcolonial leadership and challenge the presumed clarity of authority. Through the speeches of Ikem, the introspective narration of Beatrice, and the silences that surround Sam’s autocracy, the novel uses discourse to unsettle monolithic ideas of leadership. These discursive strategies reveal that leadership is not fixed or heroic but fraught with contradictions, elite complicity, and moral uncertainty. The studies reviewed have generally failed to foreground this discursive complexity. A meaningful re-evaluation must, therefore, centre the novel’s discourse as a lens through which the ethical limits and ambiguities of power and leadership are most acutely revealed.

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