

Characters' Motion in Chinua Achebe's Novels

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Abstract: Literature has more than one form among which prose. Indeed, in this form (merely all) literature describes imaginary events and characters, though some may allude to true fact or real people. This is why in narratives, writers use different characters without which stories would be unpleasant and senseless. As such, writers create fictional characters based on historical figures and stories they hear, people they know, or even characters from other works. It is in this respect that the present analysis purports on the position characters occupy in the course of stories in Chinua Achebe's writings. Therefore, we will show how these characters behave all along the stories placing themselves at the crossroad of every fact. Their position in the novels make them not only famous but also influential or powerful that no other character could challenge.

Keywords: Fiction, character, novel, initial order, ascending order, descending order.

I. Introduction

Literature has been on motion and the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe is regarded as a central figure of modern African literature. Author of five novels, his first novel and magnum opus, *Things Fall Apart*, occupies a pivotal place in African literature and remains the most widely studied, translated, and read African novel. As the first African writer to win broad critical acclaim in Europe and America and the most widely read African novelist, Chinua Achebe has shaped the world's understanding of Africa and its literature. He has got such a position in his skillful manner of counting stories and handling characters through different positions they hold in his writing. It is from these positions that I have found interesting to scrutinize the characters' motion in the author's novels, especially *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* and *Anthills of the Savannah*. In this connection, the present analysis aims to answer the following fundamental question: How are characters ranged in Chinua Achebe's novels under scrutiny? The hypothesis sustaining this question is that the probing of these above mentioned novels reveals that characters are ranged into stages going from the initial position to the decreasing one passing through increasing stage.

However, a number of critics have already conducted analyses on Chinua Achebe's novels and as such on characters. Among them we can mention Ononiwu, Ngassaki and Epounda. Indeed, in an article entitled "A structuralist Study of Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*", Ononiwu highlights the role a character plays in a work of fiction while alluding also to other authors. For him, the structuralists believe that the character plays a significant role in the structural study of the work of fiction. It characterizes the entire work of fiction and constitutes its essential and most meaningful part. Then, referring to Ferrara (1974:350), Ononiwu puts: Fernando Ferrara in his article "Theory and Model for the Structural Analysis of Function", suggests that fiction could be defined as "communication through characters". In fiction therefore, the character is used as structuring element without which the story is not enjoyable. Consequently, the objects and various events of fiction occur thanks to character and it is only in relation to it that they possess qualities of coherence and plausibility which make them meaningful and comprehensible. In this connection, raising the place of characters within a work of fiction, EPOUNDA Mexan Serge (2019) in his abstract affirms: "It is agreed that characterization is one of the most important elements of fiction because no novelist can effectively pass across the message to his readers or audience if not through the characters he creates".

From the aforesaid, one can understand that writers go through characters to reach or meet their goal, that of having the message destined and the structural study in fiction implies studying the structure of characters. They are created, behave in a certain way, and die or end in heroes. The major findings of this analysis will be made possible through the use of sociological, moral and psychological approaches and will be revealed in three sections known as initial stage, ascending order, and descending order.

Section 1: Initial Stage

This paper proposes itself to explore the motion of characters in Achebe's novels. As we cannot refer to all characters of a novel, only a single one or two will be considered and especially the protagonist of selected novels. A work of art mainly includes more than one character and they are identified through different appearances as well as the role they play in the story. However, the current section focuses on characters in their first visual aspect in novels. Therefore, it purports to answer the following subsidiary question: How do characters appear in their initial stage in Chinua Achebe's novels?

Life on earth is marked by three main events: birth, life and death, although some other people do not show signs of life at birth, referring to newborn infant. But for God's sake, the ideal would be for humans to complete these steps. Initial stage refers to the image of characters right from the beginning, their early appearance or position in the novels. In this respect, Chinua Achebe's three novels have been considered: *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* and *Anthills of the Savannah*.

In *Things Fall Apart*, the protagonist's father, Unoka is presented as a lazy and improvident man, disinclined to work. Accordingly, the narrator asserts that:

Unoka was of course a debtor and he owed every neighbor some money, for a few cowries to quite substantial amounts... He was poor and his wife and children had barely enough to eat. People laughed at him because he was a loafer, and they swore never to lend him any more money because he never paid back. But Unoka was such a man that he always succeeded in borrowing more and piling up his debts. (1958: 3-4).

This is the way Okonkwo's father appears in the novel. However, we can learn from this extract that Okonkwo does not obtain or receive anything from his late father who had no possessions or wealth. And witnesses about his poverty and weakness are abundant among which the one made the priestess:

You, Unoka, are known in all the clan for the weakness of your matchet and your hoe. When your neighbours go out with their axe to cut down virgin forests, you sow your yams on exhausted farm that take no labour to clear. They cross seven rivers to make their farms, you stay at home and offer sacrifices to a reluctant soil. Go home and work like a man... Indeed, he did not inherit a barn from his father. There was no barn to inherit. The story was told in Umuofia of how his father Unoka (1958: 12).

From the aforesaid, we clearly understand that Okonkwo does have an early start in life which many young children usually receive: Such is his initial position in the story. This proves Okonkwo's state of lack, lack of asset or property empowering him to make a start. Fortunately, despite these disadvantages, he didn't cross his arms. During his father's lifetime he began to lay foundations for a prosperous future. Indeed, he didn't despair bearing in mind the idea that life is a fight and until you die things could positively change. He has a 'never-say-die attitude' hoping that tomorrow will be better than today. In the same vein, the observation made by Basile Marius Ngassaki on Okonkwo is helpful to understand his initial stage. As a matter of fact, in his article entitled 'The Structural Perception of Chinua Achebe Things Fall Apart, Ngassaki (2010: 46) assesses Okonkwo's genesis in the following terms:

Chapter three presents some flashback features because it starts with the genesis of Okonkwo's struggle for better life up to the stage of yam borrowing from Nwakibie. Unfortunately, it pours down unexpectedly throughout the rainy season so that the harvest was bad. In failing to make profit from what he borrowed, Okonkwo resumes his initial status through a cyclical structure which stands as follows: the first part of the story is made of an ascending order with an apologetic plot because the protagonist moves from a situation of need to the completion of this

lack in borrowing yams and the reader feels admiration for him for his courage to use all means to avoid poverty. The second part of the story has got a descending order with a melodramatic plot. He doesn't deserve this misfortune.

This quotation traces back Okonkwo's genesis. In fact, aware of his state Okonkwo starts to labour for a better future by borrowing yam from Nwakabie. Unfortunately he didn't meet his goal as he fell to make profit with the yam he borrowed and resumes to the starting point. But the truth is that his life has been characterized by motions since he didn't end his life as he started. His life has had its ups and downs as announced by Ngassaki. If Okonkwo didn't inherit from his father in *Things Fall Apart*, Obi Okonkwo of *No Longer at Ease* didn't face the contrary.

Obi Okonkwo is the protagonist of *No Longer at Ease*, Chinua Achebe's second novel. At the beginning of the story, his position does not differ from that of Okonkwo in so far as he didn't benefit or inherit from his parents too. Though smart or quick and resourceful, Obi Okonkwo's position was below standard and this state engages the interest or attention of Umuofian Progressive Union. Because he couldn't cope with his situations, the Union often meets to find ways out for him. At the first meeting where members expressed their views on Obi Okonkwo, one of them opines:

We paid eight hundred pounds to train him in England. But instead of being thankful he insults us because of a useless girl. And now we are being called together again to find more money for him. What does he do with his big salary? My own opinion is that we have already done too much for him. (1960: 12-13).

From the above quotation, we can learn that Obi Okonkwo is a worker with an important salary but unable to fulfill necessary needs as some members complain about his behavior, claiming even to give up their assistance. This observation, though approved by most members but disapproves by the president who believes that a kinsman in trouble had to be saved, not blamed; anger against a brother was felt in flesh, not in the born. As a result of this, the union collect money and send him abroad to learn English. This assistance was followed by wise advices as we can read:

Anyway, I know that we have no fear where you are concerned. We are sending you to learn books. Enjoyment can wait. Do not be in a hurry to rush into the pleasures of the world like the young antelope who danced herself lame when the main dance was yet to come. (1960:13)

Truly, Obi was eager to pursue his studies abroad but couldn't do that because his initial stage was below standard. Thanks to the Union, he went abroad. Additionally, Obi Okonkwo remains faithful to traditional values and appears incorruptible at the beginning of the story. Indeed, he was attached to ancestral requirements and overcome many attempts of corruptions. This can be evidenced through the conversation he had with a custom officer as the narrator puts:

Customs formalities here took thrice as long as at Liverpool and five times as many officials. A young man, almost a boy in fact, was dealing with Obi's cabin. He told him that the duty on his radiogram would be five pounds. "Right," said Obi, feeling his hip pockets. "Write a receipt for me." The boy did not write. He looked at Obi for a few seconds, and then said: "I can be able to reduce it to two pounds for you." "How?" asked Obi. "I fit do it, but you no go get government receipt." (1960: 35).

From this quotation, we can realize how much Obi has been tempted to corruption but remained stern and rooted in tradition in order not to stain his image and spoil his inner sense. Thus, in his initial step, Obi remains honest and rejects corruption that becomes a common practice in today administration. Indeed, to get a particular service or hire a job, people usually bribe or use corruption, a dominant theme in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*. In Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* for instance, the initial order refers to the European educated dictator Sam with his childhood friends who came to power soon after the Europeans' departure, especially their adolescence's period rooted in African culture or style of life. A style which later on alters as they grow up. It is

in this perspective that another order comes up: ascending order that I propose to examine basing on the author's writings.

Section 2: Ascending Stage

The visible and invisible world including human beings are the wonderful creation of God. And his plan for people is not for misfortune but a plan of happiness. It is incontestably evident that three moments characterize the life of a human: birth, life and death. This means that right from the beginning a man was born, grew up and experienced his destiny before returning to God. His life should be intertwined by several stages, or ups and downs. However, the current section focuses on critical positions a character has experienced. In this connection, it purports to answer the following subsidiary questions: what does ascending stage mean and which characters embody the structure of ascending order in Achebe's writings?

The movement of a story is as crucial for characters as it helps determine its structure, that is, whether it has an ascending order or not. Ascending order can be well understood according to contexts. In mathematics for instance, ascending order refers to the arrangement of numbers from least or smallest to greatest or largest. In art however, it refers to somebody or something which is increasing in value. As our analysis is based on characters, ascending order leads to the positions or even role hold by characters in stories of their respective novels. In this way, it represents a continuous progress or rising made by a character compared to his initial position in the story. To this effect, the observation made by Basile Marius Ngassaki is convincing when he (1988:284) writes:

Dans un grand nombre de contes africains, une progression dramatique du récit part d'une situation initiale de manqué pour aboutir à l'absence de ce manque en passant par une amélioration. Cette évolution de la trame événementielle imprime un mouvement ascendant positif et unidirectionnel jusqu'au dénouement de l'intrigue. Le schéma structural traditionnel du type ascendant est : manque – amélioration – manque comblé.

In ascending order, characters gradually move from one state to another, especially from a non-valuable condition to a crucial one. This is evidenced through the character of Okonkwo who embodies this order in *Things Fall Apart*. As a matter of fact, his life had been ruled by a great passion to become one of the lords of the clan though he did not inherit from his father who in fact was impotent and lazy. However, from a senseless man Okonkwo becomes notorious through his hardworking character as the narrator witnesses:

Okonkwo was ruled by one passion, to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness another was idleness. During the planting season Okonkwo worked daily on his farms from cock-crow until the chickens went to roost. He was a very strong man and rarely felt fatigue. (1958: 9).

From the above quotation the narrator unveils Okonkwo's eagerness, intention and bravery for work, his intention to be different from his father who was "agbala". He didn't limit himself on the theory but implement to get a successful issue. This attitude matches the common saying which stipulates: "when there is a will, there is a way". In this connection, Ngassaki's wordings are relevant when he (2010: 45) puts: "Okonkwo moves from a situation of total lack to a state of completeness. This implies ascending structure as Okonkwo's strong determination to eradicate poverty leads to self-confidence which attracts the readers' admiration". Additionally, to better his life, Okonkwo borrowed yams from Nwakibie as he was in need. After seasons, he took profit of them even if he did not totally meet his goal. However, the story has an ascending order in so far as Okonkwo moves from a situation of need to the concluding action, to the completion of this lack in borrowing yams. By all means, he uses his courage to avoid poverty. In the same vein, greatness is also a form of ascending order. In *Things Fall Apart*, greatness belongs to whoever has titles, barns, wives, children ... and Okonkwo was granted greatness, an important virtue among the Igbo people.

Ascending order is also diversely appreciated in novels. From a tricky situation to a relief of one's pains, a character experiences ascending order. In *Things Fall Apart*, Uzowulu is one of the characters who has undergone it. In fact, after beating his wife, Uzowulu was prevented the wife by his in-laws. Thanks to the mediation led by Egwugwu, he was blamed for his wrongdoings but at last he was given back his wife. The reconciliation has been made where he was forced to beg his in-laws, giving them fines for what he has done. So far, Okonkwo experiences another kind of ascending order when his friend, Obierika visited him after two years of exile. In fact, after killing a son of the opposite site, to save his life Okonkwo fled to his mother's land in Mbata. He was received by his late mother's youngest brother and other kin people. In his mother's land, Okonkwo seems to lose his inner bearings and the ascendance is viewed when Obierika came and gave Okonkwomoney he has sold yams belonging to him. Definitely, from this gesture Okonkwo was so happy not only for money he received but also and especially for Obierika's visit, an evidence that shows good relationships that exist between them.

The success or victory of one character or position over another one stands as ascending order for him/it. Thus, the fight between traditional values and modernity serves as index to talk of ascending structure of this story. However, this ascendance favours the Christian religion because the missionaries succeeded to convert more people, to change indigenous' ideas from their own system to a new one as the narrator evidences:

Although Nwoye had been attracted to the new faith from the very first day, he kept it secret. He dared not go too near the missionaries for fear of his father. But whenever they came to preach in the open market-place or the village playground, Nwoye was there. And he was already beginning to know some of the simple stories they told. 'We have now built a church', said Mr. Kiaga, the interpreter, who was now in charge of the infant congregation. The white man had gone back to Umuofia, where he built his headquarters and from where he paid regular visits to Mr. Kiaga's congregation at Mbata. 'We have now built a church', said Mr. Kiaga, 'and we want you all to come in every seventh day to worship the true God'. (1958: 106)

Undoubtedly, the influence of Christian religion is observed and portrayed as local people join it. It was a mere betrayal for Okonkwo as his son opposes the clan and joins the new faith. As a foreigner always returns home, Okonkwo has finally returned his father's land. But before leaving, Okonkwo organizes a farewell party to thank his mother's kin people for their hospitality during his stay and this has an ascending character for him who longed to find again his countrymen.

Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* also bears ascending structure for stories counted in it demonstrate that characters are not static; they grow, move and interact as the stories move too. The protagonist's life is immensely woven by changes. Indeed, the story of Obi Okonkwo's departure and stay in England serves as evidence. Despite his cleverness, Obi couldn't afford his studies. Thanks to Umuofia Progressive Union he went abroad to pursue his studies as the narrator writes:

Six or seven years ago Umuofians abroad had formed their Union with the aim of collecting money to send some of their brighter young men to study in England. They taxed themselves mercilessly. The first scholarship under this scheme was awarded to Obi Okonkwo five years ago, almost to the day. Although they called it a scholarship it was to be repaid. On Obi's case, it was worth eight hundred pounds. (1960: 14-15).

From this quotation, Obi has experienced a doubled ascendance: first, he is unable to finance his studies, the Union has assisted him. That is why he travelled. Second, from zero knowledge, Obi learned or gained knowledge on a specific field. Therefore, he has gone from a lower state of one particular knowledge to a medium or higher state. Moreover, the story also bears an ascending structure for all the clan because the honour does not reside only on Obi himself but on the entire clan too. This is read through one Unionist's wordings when addressing to Obi:

Sir, we the officers and members of the above-named Union present with humility and gratitude this token of our appreciation of your unprecedented academic brilliance... The importance of having one of our sons in the vanguard of this march of progress is nothing short of axiomatic. Our people have a saying 'ours is ours, but mine is mine'. Every town and village struggles at this momentous epoch in our political evolution to possess that of which it can say: 'this is mine'. We are happy that today we have such an invaluable possession in the person of our illustrious son and guest of honour. (1960: 36-37).

Obviously, Obi Okonkwo has brought honour to the clan and countrymen are proud to have one of them holding a post in the government knowing that it is not given to anyone and anyhow. One should fulfill some conditions before being considered. Additionally, Obi's parents live in a sorry condition, lacking at least the minimum to survive. Aware of that, Obi decided to grant them a monthly allowance from his salary (p.63). The story on their side has an ascending structure since they have gone from a delicate situation to that of satisfaction thanks to their son.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, Chinua Achebe paints the story with abundant cases of orders, whether ascendant or not. Therefore, we immediately think of European educated megalomaniac dictator Sam and his childhood friends who came to power soon after the Europeans left the country. From them, we can read ascending order for none of them inherit from parents as it is the case other characters and they all had a tricky start as boys. The exploration of the novel reveals that His Excellency, Sam came to this position without any preparation at all for political leadership.

His Excellency Sam was at the crossroad of all people under his power. That is why ordinary people of Kangan, suffering from a violent wave of heat expected Sam to visit and rescue them. Actually, Sam wished to be elected as President for life but Abazonians did not consent. As punishment for not supporting him, Sam reduced the water supply to them. They tried in vain to meet His Excellency through his representative. This shows the hardness and megalomaniac attitude of the bourgeoisie class towards the ordinary people. However, people's desire was to have assistance from the President as one of them, professor Okong declares:

But Your Excellency, you are too generous. Too generous by half! Why does every bad thing in this country start in Abazon Province? The Rebellion was there. They were the only ones whose Leaders of Thought failed to return a clear mandate to Your Excellency. I don't want to be seen as a tribalist but Mr. Ikem Osodi is causing all this trouble because he is a typical Abazonian. I am sorry to be personal, Your Excellency, but we must face facts. If you ask me, your Excellency, God doesn't sleep. How do we know that that drought they are suffering over there may not be God's judgment for all the troubles they have caused in the country. And now they have the audacity to write Your Excellency to visit their Province and before you can even reply to their invitation they carry their nonsense come your house. I think your Excellency that you are being too generous. Too generous by half, I am sorry to say. (2007: 18).

Once His Excellency has realized the people's subordination, he did not delay to answer in the following terms: '*I appreciate your strong feeling, Professor, but I must do these things my way*'. This story reveals an ascending structure for this people as they have gone from the state of shortage of water supply to that of total supply or satisfaction because the President heard with attention their cry of heart. After initial and ascending orders, characters also undergo descending order that I propose to examine shortly.

Section 3: Descending stage

If the initial stage can be qualified as a natural one for it is the very first appearance of characters in stories, ascending and descending stages are different for they are positions characters gain or reach while interacting

within the society they live. Therefore, contrary to ascending structure, descending structure designates the movement going from stable state or a satisfaction position to a worsen state. Thus, like real people, characters manifest this structure in stories through their reaction, behavior and what other characters say to them. This last order is often influenced by the environment they are found, leading them to a new vision which differs from the previous one. It is in this perspective that Basile Marius Ngassaki's observation about human conscience is significant when he (2009:131) states: "It is not an easy task to carry out the introspective study of a human being because individual consciousness states are changing. People's attitudes are mostly influenced by emotions and instinct." It is evident that the change advocated in this citation is twofold, going either from bad position to a good one or from a good position to a worsening one. However, my concern in this section is focused on the second aspect as the subtitle indicates above.

The descending stage occupies a non-negligible place in Chinua Achebe's novels, especially in stories with characters undergoing tricky situations. In Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, Ngassaki has appreciated this kind of structure focusing on the protagonist's decline. Accordingly, he (1988: 304) confesses that:

Ce type de conte part d'une situation stable pour déboucher sur une situation dégradée. Son mouvement est également unidirectionnel mais négatif. La situation initiale du récit *The Palm-Wine Drunkard* a un mouvement descendant. Le héros était dans une situation stable et confortable qui lui permettait d'obtenir tout ce qu'il voulait sans pour autant travailler, mais la dégradation s'est amorcée avec la mort de son père. La détérioration des conditions sociales du héros a atteint le comble du malafoutier.

From this quotation, we have been edified on the story of a character who lives comfortably but within a short of time ends unhappily his life. The author has referred to a vivid case of descending order which is in fact a true situation that ordinary people experience in everyday life. In *Things Fall Apart*, the demise of Umuofia traditional values stands as index of descending structure with tragic plot for this people though it can be considered ascending for the missionaries who brought change. As a matter of fact, Umuofians were living in peace with their culture and customs but surprisingly a strange force came and altered the way of life as we can read from the following excerpt: "*Umuofia had indeed changed during the seven years Okonkwo had been in exile. The church had come and led many astray. Not only had the low-born and the outcast but sometimes a worthy man joined it*". (1958: 143).

In *No Longer at Ease* however, the descending order rests on Obi Okonkwo after timeless temptations happened to be caught in bribery. This is reported by the president of UPU who found it shameful for a man in the senior service to be jailed for twenty pounds. Accordingly, he writes: "*I am against people reaping where they have not sown. But we have a saying that if you want to eat a toad you should look for a fat and juicy one*". (1960:13). Actually, as protagonist, Obi has been famous all along the story but from this fact, he has lost his dignity and then moves from a respected position to a worsening one where nobody can trust him. His guiltiness was testified when the judge in charge of the affair exclaimed himself in the following terms: "*I cannot comprehend how a young man of your education and brilliant promise could have done this*".(1960:10).

Another telling issue of descending structure is the contrast between Obi Okonkwo and the clan about Clara, his fiancée. Indeed, though Clara is "Osu", Obi feels better and more confident in his decision to marry her. To him, this is strange and unbelievable and nobody can prevent or stop him of his decision as he declares:

It was scandalous that in the middle of the twentieth century a man could be barred from marrying a girl simply because her great-great great- great-grandfather had been dedicated to serve a god, thereby setting himself apart and turning his descendants into a forbidden caste to the end of Time. Quite unbelievable. And here was an educated man telling Obi he did not understand. 'Not even my mother can stop me' he said as he lay down beside Joseph. (1960: 72-73).

Obi's attitude bears a descending order since he advocates change in the country and as such will no longer live in peace and harmony with the clan for he stands against ancestral values. This lack of peace and harmony due

to Obi's decision is also perceived by Joseph, Obi's friend who tries in vain to persuade him as we can read through the following conversation:

“What you are going to do concerns not only yourself but your whole family and future generations. If one finger brings oil it soils the others. In future, when we are civilized, anybody may marry anybody. But that time has not come. We of this generation are only pioneers.”

“What is pioneer? Someone who shows the way. That is what I am doing. Anyway, it is too late to change now”.

“It is not”, said Joseph. “What is an engagement ring? Our fathers did not marry with rings. It is not too late to change. Remember you are the one and only Umuofia son to be educated overseas...” (1960: 73).

After his stay-abroad, Obi wages war against the culture he grew up with leaning himself on the bible where it is said that “in Christ there are no bond or free”. Definitely, Obi stood firm in his decision despite his father's explanation about the meaning of the term ‘osu’:

Osu is like leprosy in the minds of our people. I beg of you, my son, not to bring the mark of shame and of leprosy into your family. If you do, your children and your children's children unto the third and fourth generations will curse your memory. It is not for myself I speak; my days are few. You will bring sorrow on your head and on the heads of your children. Who will marry your daughters? Whose daughters will your sons marry? Think of that, my son. We are Christians but we cannot marry our own daughters. (1960: 127).

Finally, Obi did not make up his mind and believed that things would change within a tenth of years and people would get rid of ignorance as he insists in such a way: “*what made an Osu different from other men and women? Nothing but the ignorance of their forefathers. Why should they, who had seen the light of the Gospel, remain in that ignorance?*” (1960:127). According to Obi, all men are equal and as such anyone can be engaged to whoever he or she loves. However, the descending order resides on the clash of cultures between Obi and his clan since Obi has sworn to fight till the end. In a word, Obi was converted to a new faith and exhorts the clan to not consider his own culture in detriment of its own.

Additionally, descending order is also viewed through characters' attitude regarding the situation they experience. The same Obi Okonkwo was stricken by emotions when he heard by the messenger through telegram the death of his mother. As any African, Obi had sobbed inconsolably in the privacy of his bedroom like a kid. Surprisingly, at the occasion Obi decided to send money for the funerals instead of going to attend the ceremony. Actually, this refusal presupposes the misunderstandings he had with his late mother during her life time. This attitude presents a descending order since Obi was at loggerhead with his mother, leading to the lack of unity or harmony within the clan in general and the family in particular. It is certain that Obi could have been in good terms with his mother, but this atmosphere altered later on causing resistance and reluctance on both sides. Therefore, the relationship between mother and son go from good to bad or from better to worse.

The behaviour presented by the main characters in *Anthills of the Savannah*, Achebe's last novel denotes a descending order, especially on the side of common masses. Indeed, after the departure of colonizers, native people expected a change that would favour their interests since the successors were westerner educated natives. Unfortunately, it was not the case. His Excellency Sam, the self-proclaimed ruler of Kangan and his despotic government is alienated and behaved unexpectedly. The story is astounding mainly for native people who also had claimed to be governed by their own followers. Though fictitious, the facts described in this novel corroborate the reality that African people daily experience. Indeed, the elite class members in power possess most of the wealth of the nation looting and squandering the public treasury in detriment to popular masses. They militate for their own conditions and luxurious life while ordinary people of Kangan suffer violent wave of the heat and all sort of evils caused by them. In this way, the descending order rests on the poverty and bad conditions of life the popular masses undergo knowing that they should not deserve such a treatment.

Admittedly, it is the consternation felt by the marginalized people that bears the descending order for this people do not meet the expected results they dream from leaders.

II. Conclusion

At the end of this analysis it is worth reminding that characters have been at the center of this work which purports to answer the following central question: How are characters ranged in Chinua Achebe's novels? It also matters to recall that the novels concerned are *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* and *Anthills of the Savannah*. It sorts out from the analysis that characters have been grouped into three positions basing on their implication in stories: Initial stage, presenting the natural or first appearance of characters in a story; ascending order where characters positively thrive, experiencing well-being and descending order where characters experience the other 'side of the coin' after rejoicing. We have learned from these novels that the same main characters, apart from the starting position, ascend but finally descend; a pattern that many real-life people follow in their lives, better known as ups and downs of life. However, concerning our subject matter, the motion of characters has been remarkable since none of them remains static.

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