

Avoid the Bait; Miss No Underlying Meaning: A Concise Textual Deconstruction of Achebe's *A Man of the People*

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Abstract

From the perspective of Stylistics as a subfield of Instrumental Linguistics, texts may be writerly or readerly. Writerly texts are crafted such that they create room for multi-faceted deconstruction, whereas readerly texts only allow for restricted or determinate deconstruction. Literary texts, especially those with high academic or scholarly (intellectual) value such as A Man of the People (AMOP), are certainly writerly in nature. For this reason, AMOP is the reference text for the study. The objective of the study is to show that texts embody weighty textual messages more as underlying than as explicit meanings. The major theoretical framework of this study is Van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is 'criticalized' Discourse Analysis (DA). In other words, CDA is DA done following the criticalist tradition. This tradition integrates DA with radical social and cultural theories for the purpose of unearthing implicit meanings and underlying ideologies. The data analyses and discussion in the study have evinced that a sentence or any stretch of utterance means much more than its literal significance (denotation). That is, a text especially a literary one like AMOP, embeds multiples of underlying meaning once it is deconstructed from proper contextual perspectives, which could be intratextual and/or extratextual. The underlying ideologies, together with other implicit meanings in a text, need to be captured, because they could represent the bait in the text that conspires against the interest of the reader. Hence, whoever reads a text is urged to miss no underlying meaning.

Keywords: Chinua Achebe, Underlying Meaning, Text, Textual Deconstruction, Discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis

Introduction

It is an incontrovertible maxim that reading makes a man. In other words, man attains intellectual or cognitive maturity by reading. Hence, self-intellectual development or cognitive self-advancement is man's fundamental reading purpose. Man's foremost reading purpose as identified here is imperative as such, because for an individual to add value to another that individual must first add value to himself, since no one gives what he lacks. Consequently, man makes himself an ardent sojourner in the world of books, scholarly texts, particularly. As implied in the sentence before this, remaining professionally relevant is an additional reason why man preoccupies himself with reading.

Basically defined, in line with Dellinger (1995), texts are selected and organized syntactic forms whose content structure reflects the ideological organization of a particular area of social life. Texts are either oral or written and range from a stretch of utterance or statement to a whole textbook all of which can be literary or non-literary. When a text is literary, it is either fictional or non-fictional depending on whether or not it is a product of the author's imagination. Following Baker (1993) and Fish (1980) as cited in Olorunyomi (2006), texts could also be classified into performance (non-academic) and non-performance (academic) texts. While the former are characterized by improvisation, flexibility and historicity, the latter are identified by determinacy and decidability (purposeful focus and authority).

Whatever their classification, written texts collectively constitute written discourse, the focus of this paper. A text is a written discourse, because it is a creation of language use, since discourse, basically defined, refers to language in use as stated by Onyemelukwe (2011) in corroboration with Brown and Yule (1984). Every written text is a discourse, also because it normally discusses some subject matter of interest in a crystal clear eloquent manner. Again, because discourse is meaning-driven, emanating from

language which solely objectifies meaning generation and communication, man reads texts to generate, communicate and/or utilize meanings in form of textual messages. In other words, for any written communication to qualify as a text, it must be capable of offering the reader identifiable useful focused items of knowledge as information, ideas, principles and ideologies.

From the perspective of stylistics as a subfield of instrumental linguistics, texts may be writerly or readerly. Writerly texts are crafted such that they create room for multi-faceted deconstruction, whereas readerly texts only allow for restricted or determinate deconstruction. Literary texts, especially those with high academic or scholarly (intellectual) value such as *A Man of the People (AMOP)* are certainly writerly in nature. For this reason, *AMOP* is the basis for the exposition in this study for underlying meaning derivation from texts, generally. The objective of the exposition is to show that texts embody weightier textual messages more as underlying meanings than as explicit meanings.

The foregoing indicates that there are varieties (levels) of meaning. Hence, the next section of the study centres on a theoretical framework that provides sufficient insights into levels of meaning with emphasis on components of underlying meaning, so that, henceforth, the reader would miss no underlying meaning in any text, and so, ensure maximum cognitive personal advancement.

Theoretical Frameworks: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Levels of Meaning in Linguistics

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA is ideologically rooted. Consequently, it basically adopts Van Dijk's (1996) ideological schema, which holds that ideologies as interpretation frameworks organize sets of attitude about elements of modern society, and therefore, provides the cognitive foundation for the attitudes of various societal groups in furtherance of their own goals and interests. CDA is anchored on Habermas's (1973) Critical Theory (CT). It is an offshoot of Critical Linguistics (CL) – an instrumental linguistics. CDA is anchored on CT because CL, from which it takes its root, originated from CT. CT advocates a social constructionist's view of language, which advances the notion that:

Realities and subjectivities are constructed in and by language. Hence, subjects construct themselves and the worlds they inhabit in their everyday use of language, thus, constructing and deconstructing power relations in narrativity. Similarly, that which is considered the social and the cultural are constructed and deconstructed. Consequently, changing narratives, telling stories differently might change the social world just as the goal of work on and with language is a politics committed to social change via what is called a semiotic labour on and with texts by Eco (1979). Threadgold (2000)

As already noted, CL is instrumental linguistics. In other words, it is not 'autonomous linguistics.' Nevertheless, as Halliday (1978) has noted, it does not conflict with or contradict autonomous linguistics. It does not contradict autonomous linguistics because in applying its principles, one also learns about the nature of language as a whole phenomenon. M. A. K. Halliday 'signaled' the birth of CL, when in an interview with Herman Parret, he muted the possibility of instrumental linguistics. According to him, instrumental linguistics refers to the study of language for understanding something else.

In the light of Halliday's signal, CL emerged from Fowler et al's publication of *Language and Control* in 1979. Relying significantly on the analytical tool kits of contemporary Marxism, post-structuralism and deconstructionism, Fowler's book presents CL as focusing on the social determination of ideology, the constraining role of language in socialization and the theory and practice of representation. The book also posits that all representation (texts) is mediated or moulded by the value-systems ingrained in the medium of representation (language). Thus, CL challenges common sense by pointing out that something could have been represented in some other way with a very different significance (meaning). Threadgold (2000), citing Fairclough (1992), provides us with a profound insight into the fundamentals of CL as follows:

Critical Linguistics is concerned to read the meanings in texts as the realization of social processes, seeing texts as functioning ideologically and politically in relation to their contexts. This is very much an approach in which discourse is text, but there is too little emphasis on the production and interpretation of texts, a too ready assumption of the transparent relationship between textual features and social meanings and a neglect of discourse as a domain of social struggle or of the ways in which changes in discourse might be related to wider processes of social and cultural change. There is also a typical Marxist top-down view of ideology and power and an emphasis on social struggle rather than social action, social reproduction rather than social transformation.

It translates to the idea that in a text, CL, aims at unearthing underlying meanings. In the words of Connerton (ibid), 'CL aims at changing or even removing the conditions of what is considered to be a false or distorted consciousness ..., it renders transparent what had previously been hidden.'

So far, the foregoing explication on CL indicates that texts, *AMOP*, for instance, can be subjected to Critical Linguistic Analysis (CLA). Hence, the following questions arise: What and what constitute CLA's methods and procedure? The first point to note in this regard is that CLA is not a discovery procedure. It is rather a descriptive exercise. That is, it basically involves a linguistic description with reference to a given text. Nevertheless, before the linguistic description, the analyst, with the theory of productive consumption, should first secure a sound contextual understanding of the text, employing relevant discourse experience. Employing relevant discourse experience entails deploying shared knowledge or mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs) to arrive at an acceptable textual interpretation. This goes to depict all conventional and conversational implicatures in the text in line

with Grice's (1995) pragmatic postulations. Thus, no underlying or implicit meaning of the text can be omitted. The sound contextual understanding expected of the analyst goes beyond the linguistic to the context of situation in line with Labov and Fanshel's (1977) 'general propositions' for discourse analysis. The context of situation, it must be noted, should be analyzed to specify the relevant historical, economic, institutional and other circumstances that distinctly and/or collectively impact on textual meaning.

Still before linguistic description, the analyst should approach the text as a type of discursive practice (a letter, for example) and as a document such as a constitution. This serves to generally anchor the analysis, crucially, on ideological relativity of representation, (Fowler, 1987).

Ultimately, the analyst should and must not regard language as traditionally understood by linguists, but should rather look beyond the formal structure of language as an abstract system. This is the automatic implication of the instrumental nature of CL which is guaranteed only by instantiating the practical interaction of language and context, i.e., by contextually situating the textual content. (ibid.)

The onset of CDA was heralded by Foucault's (1991) reaction to Halliday's Functional Linguistics (FL). He reacted to Halliday's theory of language as a social semiotic. Following his reaction, scholars, in the early 1990s, considered it necessary to rethink FL in the light of his work on discourse, institutions and power, and also in the light of Bakhtin's (1986) work on heterolysis and other related publications. The outcome of this rethinking is a new focus on textual interpretation and production together with a new understanding of the crucial importance of inter-textuality and subjectivity in connection with discursive processes involving struggle and change.

Thus, a functional theory of language emerged as a way of grounding DA in a flexible linguistic analysis integrated with radical social and cultural theories. This theory was later termed "CDA" by Norman Fairclough. This is evident in his Australian work by which he produced a theory of discourse and social change, drawing on Foucault and a number of neo-Marxist and other social theorists who brought together a version of FL with sophisticated social and cultural theories, all of which now constitute CDA. See Dellinger (1995), Fairclough (1995a), Kress/Threadgold (1988) and Thibault (1991).

Given the above CDA background, it is clear that its fundamental objective is to enhance textual comprehension beyond linguistic knowledge. This agrees with Kaplan's (1990) assertion that:

The text, whether written or oral is a multidimensional structure and any text is layered like a sheet of thick plywood consisting of different thin sheets lying at different angles to each other. The basics of a text consist of syntax and lexicon; its grammar, morphology, phonology and semantics. However, the understanding ... of grammar and lexicon does not constitute the understanding of ... text.

Consequently, CDA goes beyond linguistic knowledge to provide profound insight into the tenor of discourse in a text. Hence, Kaplan (ibid) further submits that rhetoric intent, coherence and the world-view that author and receptor bring to the text are essential.

Again, according to Dellinger (1995):

The comprehension of meaning ... lies not in the text itself, but in the complex interaction between the author's intent and his/her performative ability to encode that intent and the receptor's intent and his/her performative ability not only to decode the author's intent but to mesh his/her own intent with the author's.

Inherent in Kaplan and Dellinger's postulations above is the fact that mutual contextual beliefs (MCBs) and ideology are essential factors in CDA. Both are essential because they deepen textual comprehension. Hence, in the appropriation of CDA to analyze a text, the analyst must focus on the MCBs and ideologies that impinge on textual meaning. Ideology is particularly of interest in CDA because it unavoidably shapes textual construction by virtue of which it largely influences textual meaning. This is why Dellinger (ibid.) expends much space and time to explicate the place of ideology in CDA. In order to firmly grasp this indispensable point about CDA, let us take further insights from Dellinger's exposition:

In most interactions, users of language bring with them different dispositions toward language, which are closely related to social positionings Language can never

appear by itself; it always appears as the representative of a system of linguistic terms, which themselves realize the discursive and ideological systemsThe speaker (or writer) expresses ideological content in texts and so does the linguistic form of the text Texts are selected and organized syntactic forms whose content structure reflects the ideological organization of a particular area of social life.

Dellinger's views are corroborated by Thompson (2002) who holds that CDA depicts the correlation between language use and the exercise of power, especially political power.

Still on the fundamental objectives of CDA, let it be stated here that while most forms of DA aim at providing a better understanding of socio-cultural background of texts, the target of CDA is to render accounts of the production, internal structure and overall textual organization. Therefore, in tandem with Dellinger's view, CDA thrives on precise analysis as well as the descriptions of the materiality of language. All of these go with unearthing implicit textual meanings, which may correspond with what Van Dijk terms underlying ideologies. To underscore the significance of "the systematic analysis of implicitness," Van Dijk states in his thesis that:

The text is really like an iceberg of information and it is really only the tip which is actually expressed in words and sentences. The rest is assumed to be supplied by the knowledge scripts and models of the ... users, and therefore, usually left unsaid.

Nevertheless, the analyst must be extremely cautious dealing with implicitness in a text. This is crucial because implied messages or implicatures are subject to misinterpretation, depending on the cultural background of the analyst versus that of the author. Hence, CDA, simply defined, is 'criticalized' DA. In other words, CDA is Discourse Analysis (DA) done, following criticalist tradition. This tradition integrates DA with radical social and cultural theories.

Van Dijk's (1999) CDA model anchors the analysis in this study. The model is adopted as the main analytical tool for this study, because it enhances a broad social, cognitive, as well as political interpretation and explanation of the (underlying) ideologies reflected in texts. As referenced in Massi (2001), it specifies as follows:

1. Investigate word inflection, derivation, formation as well as neologism at the morphological level.
2. At the lexico-semantic level, analyze lexical choice and variation as well as use of lexical metaphors.
3. At the syntactic level, do the following:
 - (a) Proceed to agency analysis by identifying and explaining power relations in the text.
 - (b) Identify and explain nominalization features in the text to reveal crucial omission of information about agents of power.
 - (c) Investigate topicalization as deployed in the text since it reflects perspectives that influence the reader's perception.
 - (d) Analyze word order as conventionally applicable to English, i.e., grammaticality.
 - (e) Identify and explain all ambiguities or insinuations contained in the text to depict misappropriation of power to the detriment of the downtrodden.
 - (f) Analyze every instance of impersonalization and subjectivity to depict deliberate omission of facts achieved by means of agentlessness and also identify every instance of prejudice: investigate the use of passive (and active) syntax in the text.

Van Dijk's CDA specifications above embody eight distinct levels of analysis. However, the analysis in this paper is limited to three of the levels for reason of spatial constraint: 2, 3 (b, c and e). In connection with 2, the analysis is restricted to use of lexical metaphors.

The focus on ideology in this study is anchored on the theoretical premise that ideologies are typically, though, not exclusively expressed in every discourse or communication, including non-verbal semiotic messages such as photographs and movies. In other words, ideologies can even be expressed, non-verbally, by means of various forms of representation or interaction. Nevertheless, among these other forms of articulating ideologies, discourse as verbal communication, whether written or oral, remains the preferential springboard for persuasive ideological propositions. This theoretical premise is mirrored in Van Dijk's own (1993) theoretical assertion on the same subject matter, quoted below:

Obviously, ideologies are also enacted in other forms of action and interaction and their reproduction is often embedded in organisational and institutional contexts. Thus, racist ideologies may be expressed or reproduced in racist talk, comics or movies in the context of the mass media, but they may also be enacted in many forms of discrimination and institutionalized by racist parties within the context of the mass media or of western parliamentary democracies.

A Brief Insight into Ideology as a Concept

The foregoing clearly shows that ideology is theoretically central to the principles and techniques of CDA. Hence, it is necessary to briefly conceptualize it. Van Dijk advances a triangular notion of ideology that connects society, discourse and social cognition within a CDA framework. Hence, ideologies are both social and cognitive and can be viewed as the basic frameworks for organizing the social cognitions shared by members of specific social groups, organizations or institutions. That is, ideologies function as the interface between the cognitive representations and processes underlying discourse and action, on the one hand, and on the other, societal position and the interests of social groups. From this perspective, ideologies are rightly considered to be the overall abstract mental systems that organize socially shared attitudes and given the interlinked relationship between ideology, discourse and cognition as already explicated, it is indisputable that critical discourse analysis is synonymous with ideology analysis. To Eagleton (1991), ideology, among other conceptualizations, refers to action-oriented sets of belief as well as identity thinking. In other words, ideology epitomizes the mindset that drives human attitudes (impressions) and actions.

Levels of Meaning in Linguistics

For the purpose of this study, meaning refers to textual messages, ordinarily known as themes. Basically, meaning is explicit or implicit; denotative or connotative; extended or transferred. See Alo (2004) and Oluikpe (1981) for detailed explications. What Alo and Oluikpe have identified as connotative meaning is synonymous with implicit (underlying) meaning in the context of this study.

As deducible from the expository insights on CDA above, underlying meaning is equivalent to contextual meaning. Contextual meaning arises from either linguistic or situational context. Linguistic context comprises semantic and pragmatic presuppositions, while situational context or context of situation resides in semantic and pragmatic or conversational implicatures. For details of these context specifics, see Firth (1957), Malinowski (1923), Palmer (1981), Leech (1983), Mey (2001), Mbisike (2002), Saeed (2003), Obioha (2008) and Onyemelukwe (2011).

Underlying meaning is certainly worth objectifying in every text, especially a literary text such as *AMOP* in view of its contextual value. Its contextual value endears it to a reader because of its direct link with Malinowski's (1923) Contextual Theory of Meaning, which has received scholarly acclaim as the best theory of meaning. Contextual Theory of Meaning is the best theory of meaning because it enhances the capturing of all shades of textual meaning including the explicit. That is, relying on it, a reader grasps both what is said in a text and what is not said.

Consequently, the analysis section of this study targets underlying meaning in all its ramifications including both ideological and non-ideological meanings. Hence, the analytical interest of the study chiefly configures those stretches of text in *AMOP* that embed figurative, idiomatic, axiomatic and proverbial expressions.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Among others, Achebe's *AMOP* reflects the use of these lexical metaphors: bulwark, tiger/lion, national cake, playing, bond, pot, rain, crown, grasshopper/elephant and swords. This means that these words and phrases are used in the novel such that they convey metaphorical meanings. For want of space, only the first three of the metaphors are discussed here. Bulwark is a metaphor for economic pillar, i.e., an astute economist. The narrator uses it in the course of addressing some issues relating to the national economy of his country, the backbone of which are coffee and coffee farmers by extension. It, therefore, refers to coffee farmers to aptly imply that they are indispensable in socio-economic terms. Arising from the intra-textual context of this metaphor is the underlying message that productivity is a treasure or an asset, having the capacity to increase a person's self-worth and social rating.

Tiger/lion refer, metaphorically, to the prime minister. They make up his parliamentarians' praise names for him while in session. He earns the names after addressing the parliament in defence of his sack action against the ex-minister of finance, Dr. Makinde, and a host of other ministers. Defending the action, he accuses the ministers of terrorism. According to him, the ministers committed the fallacious treasonable offence in collaboration with foreign enemies with the ambitious aim of dethroning the government in power. Consequently, he wins the heart of his audience who is yet to grasp the truth of the situation, namely that the ministers were relieved of their portfolios for criticising the prime minister's retrogressive economic recovery measures, especially his decision to mint money. Hence, the praise metaphors underscore the pungency and the damaging consequence of political propaganda, which should and must be avoided.

"National Cake" is a metaphor for political benefit in terms of employment opportunity. It is Mr. Nanga's offer to Odili, his friend. He offers the opportunity to Odili on the platform of his political connection, being a serving minister. The purpose of the offer is to enable Odili to leave his village teaching job for a choice appointment in the city. Mr. Nanga's use of the metaphor embodies two underlying textual messages. The first is that it is gratifying to be favoured with such an opportunity, i.e., such an opportunity should and must not be missed. Hence, Odili jumps at the offer. Nevertheless, considering his eventual disappointment, the reader is solemnly cautioned to very carefully look before leaping at such an opportunity and others too. The second which is the ultimate import of the metaphor is that choice city jobs are chiefly if not strictly for those who have the privilege of high-profile political connection. What a most unfortunate matter-of-fact situation to the detriment of 'unconnected' job seekers!

Nominalisation as a syntactic and rhetorical device features substantially in *AMOP*. So, there are several nominalised expressions or nominals in the novel. A nominal is a single noun, noun-phrase or noun-clause derived from another part of speech such as a verb or an adjective. It could be a gerund, derived or mixed nominal. Among several others, the following sentences embed nominalised expressions as italicised:

- (a) He was not going to risk losing the election by cutting down the price paid to coffee farmers at that critical moment (p.3).
- (b) Talking is now in my blood— from teaching into politics—all na so so talk talk (p.67).
- (c) They say it is the freedom of the press (p.74).

(a) is a gerund nominal and a noun-phrase that grammatically functions as a complement in the alpha clause of its parent sentence. It forms part of the narrator's assertion that highlights the prime minister's tyranny and political deception. The prime minister is not prepared to lose the next election. Consequently, he turns down the austerity economic measure recommended by the finance minister, a professional economist with a PhD in Public Finance. Showing no regard for the merit of the austerity measure, he sacks the minister together with two-thirds of his cabinet members who support the recommendation, describing them as traitors. To him, minting new currency notes holds the solution to the economic slump faced by the new independent nation. So, he instructs the National Bank to print fifteen million pounds, thus, signaling his economic ineptitude, minting being in no way the appropriate solution to national economic depression. Hence, (a) serves to underscore the unfortunate consequence of having an ignoramus at the helm of affairs in a nation. The reader is, therefore, prompted to abhor and denounce tyranny, political propaganda and ignorance in (national) politics.

(b) is also a gerund nominal and an instance of lexical nominalisation. It is the subject of its parent clause. It begins Chief Nanga's boastful claim with reference to public speech delivery. Beyond his boastful claim, howbeit, the utterance underlines the similitude between teaching and politics, declaring both to be two closely related professions that obligatorily involve talking. Hence, the reader is informed that in a sense a politician is a teacher and a teacher is a politician. This being the case, teachers and politicians are enjoined to always complement one another, professionally.

(c) is another instance of lexical nominalisation and a derived nominal. It is, grammatically, a complement and features in an assertion that articulates Chief Nanga's notion of press freedom from the perspective of a politician. As he subsequently ruminates, he declares that the freedom of the press is nothing more than the power to assassinate the character of powerful people like him, unless money changes hands. In other words, to the average politician, press freedom is synonymous with the liberty of the press to blackmail the politically powerful. Given the scenario in which a journalist collects five

pounds from Chief Nanga in order to withhold an unfavourable news report about him, his postulation appears absolutely right. If, however, a government official has no stain on his conscience, why should he be afraid of being blackmailed?

Topicalisation, like nominalisation, is both a syntactic and rhetorical device and features substantially as such in *AMOP*. It involves the placement of a single noun, noun-phrase or noun-clause at sentence initial position for the purpose of foregrounding a desired textual message which is usually topical. Topicalisation is a highly foregrounded device in *AMOP*. So the novel contains numerous topicalised expressions including the following which are purposefully selected for analysis and discussion in this study:

- (a) Teaching is a very noble profession (p.10).
- (b) The row of ten houses belongs to the minister of construction (p.60).
- (c) The most astonishing thing Max told me about the new party was that one of the junior ministers was behind it (p.93).

Note here that each topicalised expression above like every other one contains a topicalised element as highlighted in the examples. A topicalised element can be a simple (lexical) or complex one, depending on whether it is just a single noun/a noun-phrase or a noun-clause.

(a) is an instance of lexical topicalisation that embeds a simple topicalised element. It proceeds from the minister, a former teacher as a placebo doxology for the teaching profession as part of his speech at the Anata rally. It is considered a placebo doxology, because even though the minister appears to mean what he says, the sad mood of the teachers at the rally obviously depicts dissatisfaction with the government in power over their remuneration for which no action plan is in place. This explains why the remark is greeted with uncontrolled laughter. Hence, in the words of the narrator, the remark is simply unbelievable. In other words, the assertion expresses the prevalent truth gap between the political actions of government and the political statements of government officials. The reader is, therefore, exhorted to regard with a pinch of salt, the political statements that come his/her way.

(b) is a noun-phrase and a simple topicalised element used to foreground a glaring case of corrupt self-enrichment by a government official, the minister of construction, particularly. Clearly, albeit subtly, underlining one of the causes of political leadership failure, it immediately calls to mind the case of the governor of an Eastern Nigeria state once reported in *The Punch* newspaper to have acquired one hundred and twenty-four (124) houses while in office. In other words, the whole statement identifies corrupt (self-) enrichment as being seriously symptomatic of gross abuse of political power.

(c) is a complex topicalised element and a noun-clause. It topicalises one of the remarkable statements made by Max to the narrator in connection with their newly formed revolutionary political party (CPC). Max is one of the founding fathers of the new party. However, as stated elsewhere in *AMOP*, the party has a political godfather in the person of the incumbent junior minister. The junior minister's status as the secret godfather of CPC implicitly indicates his general satisfaction with the government in power, which validates the critical opinions replete in the novel against the government. The narrator confirms this observation as he queries the minister's double dealing in an inter-personal discussion with Max, his closest friend. Hence, (c) raises the big question of godfatherism in global politics, especially in relation to developing countries. This question is raised and given an implicit topical answer found in the discussion between Max and the narrator, which concludes that godfatherism is indispensable in the formation of a political party, particularly if the founding fathers are young professionals with a relatively weak financial base.

Ambiguities and insinuations are both rhetorical devices. They reflect in *AMOP* as backgrounded features quite unlike lexical metaphors, nominalisation and topicalisation all of which are foregrounded. An expression is ambiguous if it is subject to two or more interpretations. On the other hand, an expression insinuates if it suggests that an unpleasant impression is true, i.e., if it contains what can be termed negative (unfair) presupposition. The following are virtually the only examples of the devices in the novel:

A₁ Although Mr. Nwege had begun by saying that the distinguished guest needed no introduction, he had gone on all the same to talk...largely in praise of himself and all he had done for the party in Anata and environs (p.14).

I₂ The minister's excellent behaviour was due to the sound education he had received when education was education (p.12).

I₃ She was heavily painted and perfumed and although no longer young seemed more than able to hold her own if it came to that (p.15).

The ambiguity in A₁ resides in the third person pronoun 'he' contained in the co-ordinate alpha clause: and all he had done for the party in Anata and environs. Going by the syntax of the entire sentence, the pronoun makes a cataphoric reference to either Mr. Nwege or the distinguished guest, depending on the reader's focus of attention. Hence, the reader who simply focuses attention will naturally consider the referee of the pronoun to be Mr. Nwege, whereas the reader whose attention is focused on the intratextual context of the sentence will certainly consider the distinguished guest, that is, Mr. Nanga, the minister, to be the antecedent of the pronoun. Properly considered, the distinguished guest is the correct antecedent of the pronoun since every sentence in a text should be contextually interpreted. Contextually in *AMOP*, the distinguished guest is the visitor in Anata whom Mr. Nwege stands up to introduce but ends up singing his praises. Proceeding from the narrator, A₁ is therefore one of the authorial remarks that syntactically mirror the confusion of thought that incontrovertibly trails the psychology of the average politician in real life as evident in, the chief host of the minister's home visit.

I₂ contains the insinuation that educational standards have fallen. This insinuation is always the claim of those who lacked the opportunity for higher education. Like the narrator asserts, it is indeed a hobbyhorse of the likes of Messrs. Nwege and Nanga and it is as false as it is sickening. The falsehood of the claim is apparent in the disagreement between Mr. Nwege and the minister regarding what really is standard six equivalent in the upper educational ladder: Cambridge or B.A.? Hence, I₂ serves to lampoon and debunk the ageless claim of fallen standards of education characteristic of every generation.

I₃ makes reference to Mrs. Eleanor John, an influential party woman from the coast. She is part of the minister's entourage during his visit to Anata. It comes from the narrator and insinuates that the woman is the type that likes looking younger than her age. Consequently, she heavily applies make-up and perfume. Going by the beta clause of the assertion: ...seemed more than able to hold her own if..., she is also considered capable of doing without party politics. In other words, she is a money bag who is into politics just to make a name. She is certainly not a responsible woman, being a chain smoker as the narrator subsequently reveals and given her propensity to perpetually look young, though she is visibly old. Hence, one can rightly conclude that she is prepared to mortgage her feminine dignity in order to achieve her political goal even as she throws money around with no regard for her husband's sentiments, if she still has a husband. In view of these deductions, I₃ is a sad commentary on the personality of the women members of political parties in real politics as in the fictional world of *AMOP*, and so signifies Achebe's ideological opposition to senseless feminism.

Conclusion

The foregoing data analyses and discussion with reference to *AMOP* has evinced that a sentence or any stretch of utterance means much more than its literal significance (denotation). In other words, a text especially a literary one like *AMOP*, embeds multiples of underlying meaning once it is deconstructed from proper contextual perspectives, which could be intratextual and/or extratextual. The underlying meanings embedded in a text include both ideological and non-ideological textual messages. The former category is certainly more sensitive, and therefore more signficatory, than the latter. Consequently, whoever reads a text is urged never to fail to unearth its array of underlying meanings which, more often than not, translate to underlying ideologies. The underlying ideologies, together with other hidden meanings in a text, need to be captured, because they could represent the bait in the text that jointly conspires against the interest of the reader.

For instance, this concise textual deconstruction of *AMOP* clearly shows that the novel is a sharp (horatian) satirical criticism of bridled or adulterated democracy. This brand of democracy as a political leadership ideology is sharply criticized in the novel, because it is despotism in disguise. Despotism, in the overall contexts of *AMOP*, is an absolutely unacceptable political leadership ideology on account of its obnoxious demerits such as imposition, intolerance, subjugation and bullying as well as wanton deception and greed. In contrast, the major underlying textual message arising from the analyses is that participatory democracy is the only acceptable socio-political ideology. Participatory democracy is foregrounded in the text because it promotes a general positive attitude to life. The above

deductions notwithstanding, an unwary reader, who may or may not be a democrat, will however, peruse *AMOP* and simply consider it to be another fictional story from the stable of another creative writer.

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