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Thème :

**L'ENSEIGNEMENT ET LA RECHERCHE DANS LE CONTEXTE DE LA COVID-19 :
NÉCESSITÉ D'UNE REDÉFINITION DE STRATÉGIES**

ACTES DU COLLOQUE

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ACTES
des
Premières Journées d'Etudes Scientifiques
(en visioconférence)

26 – 27 mai 2021

Thème : L'enseignement et la Recherche dans le contexte de la
COVID-19 : Nécessité d'une redéfinition de stratégies

SOUS LE PARRAINAGE DE

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L'UNIVERSITE D'ABOMEY-CALAVI*

1. Contexte et justification

La pandémie de la COVID-19 a indubitablement induit des changements radicaux et profonds dans nos habitudes de vie et dans nos relations interpersonnelles. Pour contenir cette pandémie, la plupart des pays ont adopté des stratégies de confinement total ou partiel, de couvre-feu ou de restrictions dans les déplacements de personnes. Les regards sont désormais tournés vers les écoles et universités en raison de leur forte implication dans la recherche et l'éducation, la formation et la socialisation de la personne humaine. Plusieurs écoles et centres de formation ont été fermés, des congés et vacances scolaires/universitaires ont été anticipés et la reprise n'a eu lieu que timidement.

En raison de cette pandémie, le monde de l'éducation en général et celui de l'enseignement supérieur en particulier connaissent actuellement de grands bouleversements en termes de comment trouver les meilleures méthodologies et stratégies d'enseignement-apprentissage qui conviennent aux directives d'endigement du virus qui a déjà, faut-il le rappeler, contaminé ou tué de

millions de personnes dans le monde. La massification des effectifs dans les formations universitaires classiques telles que les lettres, les langues, les sciences juridiques, les sciences économiques et de gestion, les sciences physiques, les sciences mathématiques et biologiques font craindre une contamination accrue si le virus venait à s'introduire dans nos amphithéâtres.

Heureusement, la vie continue malgré tout et l'enseignement et la recherche dans nos universités et centres de formation le doivent aussi pour assumer la postérité et la prospérité intellectuelles et économique aussi bien que le développement de nos pays. Il s'établit alors une crainte objective par rapport au respect des gestes barrières établis dans nos universités et centres de formations au regard des grands rassemblements en raison du manque d'infrastructures dans certains de nos lieux de formation. Un changement de paradigme dans la formation et la recherche s'avère donc nécessaire.

Plusieurs méthodes de recherche et stratégies pédagogiques aux moyens des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication (TIC) ont été innovées. Il s'agit désormais de l'introduction et de la formation au E- teaching/learning, des cours à distance, de la redynamisation des Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC), de l'utilisation des réseaux sociaux comme canal de transmission du savoir, etc. En matière de recherche, les rencontres scientifiques, autrefois organisées en présentiel sont de plus en plus virtuelles avec l'utilisation des outils tels que Zoom, Google meet, Microsoft team, etc. comme moyens d'interaction.

Les difficultés rencontrées dans la mise en œuvre des stratégies et méthodes d'enseignement en période de la COVID-19 amènent les enseignants- chercheurs et chercheurs à repenser la recherche et la pédagogie universitaires pour ne pas briser la chaîne de la transmission du savoir dans l'espoir que la vie redevienne normale dans les jours à venir. Les *Journées d'Etudes Scientifiques* sont donc l'occasion d'explorer les synergies actuelles en termes de pratiques d'enseignement et de recherche pour une meilleure adaptabilité.

2. Objectifs

2.1. Objectif général

Ces Journées d'Etudes visent à susciter des réflexions et partage d'expériences chez les enseignants-chercheurs et chercheurs sur les meilleures approches et stratégies à adopter ou à expérimenter pour un enseignement supérieur inclusif

et respectueux du droit des étudiants à un enseignement de qualité d'une part, aussi bien que la réorientation de la recherche en cette période critique de la pandémie de la COVID-19, d'autre part.

2.2.Objectifs spécifiques

Il s'agit pour les participants de :

- mener des réflexions dans le sens des conduites à tenir pour des cours en ligne réussis dans leurs matières respectives ;
- partager les expériences et expertises de l'utilisation des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication comme support de transmission du savoir ;
- analyser de façon critique la problématique de recherche et de l'enseignement/apprentissage des langues dans un système de cours à distance.
- Conduire des activités de recherche en ligne, seul(e) ou en équipe.

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Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1985). *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-semiotic Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

☞ Articles

Sahgui, N.P. (2017). Représentation socioculturelle de la dot chez les Fulbés de la commune de Matéri. *RESILAC : Revue des Sciences du Langage et de la Communication*, 4(1), 392-412.

Wenden, A.L. (1998). Metacognitive knowledge and language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 19, 515-537. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/19.4.515>

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SUSTAINABLE VIRTUE AS THE MOST IMPORTANT WEAPON AGAINST EVILS: KUNLE'S STRENGTH IN OGUNDIMU'S *A SILLY SEASON* VERSUS OBI'S WEAKNESS IN ACHEBE'S *NO LONGER AT EASE*

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at pointing out the war waged against bribery by Obi Okonkwo and Kunle Bangbelu in *No Longer at Ease* and *A Silly Season* respectively and its outcomes. Bribery has been prevailing in Africa from colonisation up to date. This theme has been dealt with by several authors such as Achebe, Soyinka, Armah and Ogundimu. In real life as well as in fiction, some people or characters always try to denounce and also fight against it. In this framework, Obi Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease* and Kunle Bangbelu in *A Silly Season* have played their parts. Obi Okonkwo has not been able to resist temptations until the end contrary to Kunle Bangbelu. In order to be able to examine deeply and properly the different aspects of the issue, I have used theories of socio-criticism and post-colonialism and the qualitative and quantitative method. It has revealed how virtue has helped Kunle Bangbelu to stay strong and consistent until the end whereas Obi Okonkwo has shamelessly failed by his lack of virtue through overambition and selfishness. It has also shown that there is hope in any fight no matter how tricky it is and how long it will last provided it is fair. In this light this paper also attempts to suggest ways to fight some vices like bribery.

Keywords: Bribery, bribe, Obi; Kunle, pressure.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption and prostitution are two worldwide realities that are said to be as old as mankind. The former has been dealt with by many surveys and studies either by historians or other researchers. It has also been dealt with by many writers in their works of fiction all through the world. Among these authors are Chinua Achebe and A. S. Ogundimu, two Nigerians, belonging to two different generations not only because of their age but also because of the years of publication of the two novels. As a matter of fact, *No Longer at Ease* was published in 1960 whereas *A Silly Season* was published in 2008. The protagonists of these two novels namely Obi Okonkwo and Kunle Bangbelu undertake to fight against corruption. What is the evidence of the prevalence of bribery in these novels?

Bribery galore in both *No Longer at Ease* and *A Silly Season*. In this part of the work, I have just given a few instances or illustrations in both novels. *No Longer at Ease* opens with the trial of the protagonist of the novel, Obi Okonkwo, because of bribery. All through the development, he is referred to either as Obi Okonkwo or Obi in short. In a flash ahead, the author introduces Obi in trial:

Obi's listlessness did not show any signs of decreasing even when the judge began to sum up. It was only when he said: 'I cannot comprehend how a young man of your education and brilliant promise could have done this' that a sudden and marked change occurred. (Achebe, 1960, p.02)

The phrase "could have done this" means explicitly "could have taken bribe". It also implies that Obi has or is supposed to have all necessary 'strength' to avoid taking bribe because of the high education he has had, his stay in Britain and his being a "Senior Civil Servant" with all that implies. The judge also says that he is "of brilliant promise".

The narrator displays ironically how people corrupt other people mainly Senior Civil Servant, in order to attend a trial for corruption. Here bellow is an illustration of such a state of affairs:

Every available space in the court-room was taken up. There were almost as many people standing as sitting. The case had been the talk of Lagos for a number of weeks and on this last day anyone who could possibly leave his job was there to hear the judgement. *Some Civil Servants paid as much as ten shillings and sixpence to obtain a doctor's certificate of illness for the day.* (Achebe, 1960, p 1, Italics mine)

Both doctors who give certificates of illness and those who pay for them are aware that they are to be used to attend a corruption trial. This means that the Nigerian society described in *No Longer at Ease* is very spoilt. The fact that each of the words of the phrase "Civil Servant" start with a capital letter simply implies that it is higher Senior Civil Servants that are concerned. Doctors too are higher and Senior civil servants. In other terms, Higher and Senior Civil Servants are involved in corruption. The amount paid to get this certificate, ten shillings, proves that it is only people of a certain social class that can afford it. This is not less than 'the snake that chases its own tail'. The most worrying is the prevalence of corruption as described in *No Longer at Ease* is what is reported of a Minister's opinion about bribery. The narrator says:

A man to whom you do a favour will not understand if you say nothing, make no noise, just walk away. You may cause more trouble by refusing a bribe than by accepting it. Had not a Minister of State said, albeit in an unguarded, alcohol moment, that the trouble was not in receiving bribes, but in failing to do the thing for which the bribe was given? And if you refuse, how do you know that a 'brother' or a 'friend' is not receiving on your behalf, having told everyone that he is your agent? (Achebe, 1960, p.80, Italics mine)

The way things are led lets one think that bribery is also an established vice. Another instance of bribery as an establishment is the fact that most people take measures not to "have accident", meaning not to be caught. In *No Longer at Ease*, an Ibo points out Obi's inexperience in bribery as he has let himself be caught. This fellow villager of Obi's says:

'It is all lack of experience,' said another man. 'He should not have accepted the money himself. What others do is tell you to go and hand it to their houseboy. Obi tried to do what everyone does without finding out how it was done.' (Achebe, 1960, p. 5)

The use of the indefinite pronoun "everyone" is an exaggeration by the character but it is nevertheless an expression of the fact that bribery is not only rampant but also taken in a well-organised way in the Nigerian society as described in *No Longer at Ease*.

After the evidence that bribery prevails in *No Longer at Ease*, it is worth showing how it prevails in *A Silly Season*. Apart from the military regime in power in *A Silly Season* contrary to a civilian one in *No Longer at Ease* on the one hand, the setting of *No Longer at Ease*, the late 1950s and early 1960s contrary to the one of *A Silly Season*, late 1990s and early 2000s on the other hand, the main theme of the two novels is the same: Bribery.

The first instance of corruption in *A silly Season* is about authorities' full involvement in bribery and their hypocrisy about fighting this social vice or plague. Akwa tells his colleague made commissioner for Works, Kunle Bangbelu, what follows:

There is rot at the three levels of government: Federal, State and local, including all ministries! What can a lone ranger like you do? That people in government shout anti-corruption slogans does not necessarily imply that they mean it. That is the bitter truth. As a matter of fact, the situation has gone from bad to worse. The more they shout the more corrupt they are.

The scourge is spreading appallingly. The leaders are teaching the art of corruption and the populace are learning fast. At the movement, *it is only those who pass the implicit aptitude test of palm greasing that are fit to participate in governance. So, if you have an opportunity to enrich yourself, better go ahead and grab it. Only a fool will miss a golden opportunity like that.* (Ogundimu, 2008, pp. 24-25; italics mine)

The quotation is very explicit as far as governance mixed with malpractice is concerned in Ribalia, the fictitious country in which the novel is set. It expresses clearly how, from the masses to the highest authorities, almost everybody is involved in bribery including graduate people like Akwa. It also points out how corrupt people are the most preferred for promotion to governance position. This is but the promotion of corrupt people. The populace is so cynic that instead of denouncing and combating the social plague that bribery is, they proudly cope

with it and enjoy it too. Taking bribe as shown here is seizing a “golden opportunity” and not do it is an expression of your foolishness.

Kunle’s mother, disappointed with her son’s honesty, tries, in her turn, to convince him to take bribes by telling him how people refer to the government! She says: “Do you know what people call government? You eat and I eat. We all eat; everybody is happy: That is good government.” (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 34) Such an idea is so spread that anybody who tries to go against it will lose the battle and be ‘rewarded’ accordingly. It is in this vein that a Minister who is “fool and coward” displays ‘arrogantly’ “a very perverse selfishness” (Armah, 1968, pp. 51-52) and therefore has “lost his job and redeployed” by having had, boldly written in his ministry: “No bribe, Please.” (Ogundimu, 2008, pp. 29-31) There beyond are the proofs that bribery galore in Ribalia and Nigeria, the two countries described in *A Silly Season* and *No Longer at Ease* respectively.

The objective of this study is less to display bribery in its manifestations and its consequences than to show how sustainable virtue, self-confidence and self-respect are powerful weapons to succeed in one’s undertakings.

In order to be able to examine deeply and properly the different aspects of the issue, I have used socio criticism post-colonial criticism theories and the qualitative and quantitative methods. In short, I have used socio-criticism because the two novels describe the socio-economic realities of post-independent Africa almost the same way the populations experience it. As a literary theory, postcolonialism is used because the social classes described in both novels are deeply culturally and materially influenced by colonialism through their lust for money and material acquisition which is not a characteristic of pre-colonial Africa. Moreover, the civilian and military rulers of post-independent Africa show their carelessness towards the welfare of both their countries and their populations as the former colonizer used to do. The use of the qualitative method is justified by the fact that the study is based on two narratives. As far as the quantitative method is concerned, it is because some figures in terms of amount of money owed, earned, needed, borrowed and embezzled and or given or accepted as bribe have been among the ‘raw materials’ taken into account in the analysis.

This study is divided into three unequal parts. The first part is an exploration of the background and personality of each of the two characters. The second one deals with Obi’s deplorable failure in his fight against corruption. The third and

last part displays the encouraging and sustainable efforts made by Kunle Bangbelu and the hope they yield

1. A Sketch of the backgrounds and personalities of the two characters

1.1. *Obi Okonkwo's background and personality*

According to what the narrator unfolds about him, Obi Okonkwo is from a modest family who just have the strict minimum to provide for their needs while the father is still at office. When he retires, their standard of living worsens

Obi Okonkwo's father is Isaac Okonkwo and has been a Christian. He has been an available, respectfully devoted and dutiful catechist. He has given all his children a Christian education since their childhood. He has tried to make them good Christians as well as good citizens. In this framework, he has succeeded insofar as Obi Okonkwo is very respectful and humble from his childhood till his early youth even if some circumstances have betrayed him. Obi's father is a fervent Christian. For him, the observance of biblical principles is a must. In his opinion, he who does not apply God's words is an outcast. He does not want to be anybody's friend at any cost or close or even the closest relation (acquaintances) of anybody by neglecting his biblical principles. As a matter of fact, he objects to people breaking kola nut in his compound at the beginning of the welcome prayer in his son Obi's honour. He is strict. He tells them "This is a Christian house." meaning that it is a mistake or precisely a sin to break kola nut in a Christian house, anyway, the pagan way they do it (Achebe, 1960, pp. 47-48). He does not want to betray his faith by accepting anything against his faith in God. He prefers to annoy his people by objecting to this kola breaking the way they do it. He wants to be in harmony with his God and faith. For him his faith will lead him to salvation but not necessarily in harmony with his people.

Besides, When Obi is about to leave Umuofia for England through Lagos, his parents Isaac and Hannah Okonkwo called a prayer for their son's departure. This is done in the presence of one of the highest authorities of the church they are members of. The narrator relates:

Obi's going to England caused a big stir in Umuofia. A few days before his departure to Lagos his parents called a prayer meeting at their home. The reverend Samuel Ikedi of St Mark's Anglican Church, Umuofia, was chairman. He said the occasion was the fulfilment of the prophecy:

'The people which sat in darkness
Saw a great light,
And to them which sat in the region

and shadow of death
To them did light spring up.'
He spoke for over half an hour. Then he asked that someone should lead them in
prayer. (Achebe, 1960, p. 07)

What does Obi Okonkwo's childhood look like and how has he, Isaac Okonkwo's son, performed at school?

Obi Okonkwo has been educated at the mission school. This means that he has had both school instructions and biblical education there. The reader knows more about his academic performance than his biblical one. He performs well at school. Without repeating any level, he gets his primary school certificate, then his "O" levels and last his "A" levels. The narrator says of him:

At the age of twelve or thirteen, he had passed his Standard Six examination at the top of the whole province. Then he had won a scholarship to one of the best secondary schools in Eastern Nigeria. At the end of five years, he passed the Cambridge School Certificate with distinction in all eight subjects. He was in fact a village celebrity, and his name was regularly invoked at the mission school where he had once been a pupil. (Achebe, 1960, p. 07)

Obi has performed well at the primary and secondary school levels and has been a pride for a whole village or a whole community.

As one of the first students of his area who has passed the exam to enter university, his education becomes everybody's concern. His case is a special one since his parents don't have the means to provide for all that he needs to pursue his studies at university. In this perspective, Umuofia Progressive Union (UPU) has raised fund as a loan to him so that he could go to England to study law. The reimbursement of this loan will be one of the causes of his downfall.

1.2. Kunle Bangbelu's background and personality

Contrary to Obi Okonkwo, we hardly have information about Kunle Bangbelu's childhood or his primary and secondary school studies. Neither do we have detailed information about his parents during his childhood. We have learned that he is a graduate from university and also a secondary school teacher at Kajola High School. (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 17) He is from a noble father even if the latter has not been materially and financially wealthy. His father has been a "responsible, respectable and a respected" teacher. (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 37). He has given a good education to his children among whom Kunle Bangbelu so has Obi Okonkwo's father. He has taught him that if he can't promote their family, he should not spoil it. And Kunle takes it as granted, like a word from a Holy Book. He decides to observe the advice from his father. He relates.

My father's name was important to me. Father used to warn, if you cannot lift my good name, don't drag it in the mud. If you can't build onto the family's reputation, don't damage its moral standing". And father was serious about his word. He meant every one of them. (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 37)

Kunle's father is as strict as Obi's. How has Kunle spent his childhood?

Like many other children of his age, Kunle has had a peaceful childhood in his family. He has been brought up by his extended family. His father has died before he completes his studies but his mother is still alive. If we take into account his aunt's words, his father has died relatively young, early or very early after his marriage. The aunt repeatedly says that they, the parents mainly his mother and she herself plus other relatives, have invested in Kunle's studies. Here are some of the things she is used to recalling her nephew Kunle: "My sister has explained certain things to me and I thought I should come immediately- It is annoying. We have been sowing since you entered primary school. Now is our time to reap." (Ogundimu, 2008, p.38)

"Sowing" here means the fact of investing in Kunle's education since his primary education. Children's education in Africa, mainly in traditional Africa precisely past Africa, even rural Africa nowadays, is the family concern, not a concern of a nuclear family alone as already said when dealing with obi's case. What does Kunle's education yield?

Not much is said about Kunle's primary and secondary school studies. At University, Kunle has been a hard-working and brilliant student like Obi. When discussing Kunle with his first cousin, Yaro, the Head of the military junta, Yusuf Mallam Dogo, Kunle's former University lecturer, has eulogized his performance at university. Yusuf Mallam Dogo, Kunle's university lecturer, confesses to him:

... I have discussed you with Yaro. I explained him that you graduated as one of my trusted and hardworking students; I added that you would be a dependable partner, a responsible and honest manager. He was delighted to hear this; he said you were the type of credible citizens he would like to involve in his administration. Although I don't know at what level yet, you are going to be offered an appointment. (Ogundimu, 2008, pp. 104-105)

Obi and Kunle's backgrounds are known. How does each of them fight against corruption and what is the output?

Kunle Bangbelu has not been appointed haphazardly. He has been recommended by his former university lecturer, a relative of the head of the military junta

2. Obi's conception of bribery

2.1. *Obi, the theoretician of the 'old school': his idealism about the fight against bribery*

The phrases "old school" and "new school" refer to people who are against bribery or corruption and people who, on the contrary, adhere to it and advocate it, respectively. This part is divided into two subparts namely first Obi's determination to fight against bribery and second his total adherence to corruption or his collapse in front of bribery.

Once back from England to his native Nigeria, Obi starts working after going through the work interview. He is the secretary of the Scholarship Commission. As soon as he comes back to his country and still at the docks in Lagos harbour, the first thing he is faced with is corruption. As a matter of fact, when Obi reaches his country's harbour in Lagos as mentioned further up, he notices that corruption is almost an established order. For his customs formalities, a young customs agent demands money from him in order to help him as it is illustrated by the following dialogue between the two:

Customs formalities here took thrice as long as 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 ship-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.'

For a few seconds Obi was speechless. Then he merely said: "Don't be silly. If there was a policeman here I would hand you over to him." The boy fled his cabin without another word. Obi found him later attending other passengers. (Achebe, 1960, p. 27)

In short, Obi is welcomed in his home country by corruption and a corrupt person. Because he has refused to cooperate with a corrupt young customs agent, he must wait "for another official to come to his cabin". Unfortunately, it is only "in the end that one came when all the other passengers had been attended to." (Achebe, 1960, p.28) The description of the customs agent who is in charge of Obi's cabin as "a young, almost a boy" is to show the reader that corruption is spread and anyone in position to take or claim bribe can do it freely no matter their position in the civil service of the Nigeria of the early 1960s as described in *No Longer at Ease* without fearing anybody including the person who is giving the bribe or from whom it is being claimed. Besides, talking of the young customs agent, the word "boy" has been used more than once. It is to insist on both his

age and the short time he has spent as a civil servant but has reached this level of talent in "the national game" which Kunle's colleague Akwa refers to as "fast game". (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 21) This is the way the people like Obi who 'rebel against' the social norm of the moment that bribery is are treated in Obi's country. Any person who is really a patriot or who plays to be one or 'Mister Clean' by refusing to give bribe willingly or freely or even spontaneously when he or she is expected to do so or when it is claimed from him openly or in a hidden way, must answer this reckless action. This is what the narrator lets the reader know about the 'rebel' Obi's case by saying: "In the end one [a customs agent] came when all the other passengers had been attended to." (Achebe, 1960, p. 28, Square brackets mine) Explicitly, Obi has been punished for his boldness consisting in defying a young customs agent representing an established and solid system of corruption. The behaviour of the other customs agents, because they have supported their young colleague in a hidden or clever way, shows that they have willingly punished Obi in order to teach him that in the Nigeria of their time, nobody can do without bribery.

After this misadventure (mischance), Obi continues his everyday life. He first lives with his friend Joseph before joining his own house, the senior service flat in Ikoyi. As friends, they sometimes argue about some issues. At Joseph's and after a cinema, Obi and Christopher have arguments about corruption. Through this discussion, Obi proves to be too idealistic about bribery. At this stage, he is still a young 'been to', meaning, he has just come from overseas. There are two other occasions during which he will be perplex about bribery and corruption. The former is the suggestion made by the vice-chairman of the Umuofia Progressive Union (UPU) to him during the reception in his honour prior to his job interview. The narrator reports:

'Of course those of you who know book will not have any difficulty,' said the Vice-President on Obi's left. 'Otherwise I would have suggested *seeing* some of the men beforehand.'

"'It would not be necessary,' said the President, 'since they would be mostly white men.' (Achebe, 1960, p. 30)

This quotation implies that one can become a civil servant without deserving it provided he gives bribe to the members of the interview board or to some of them or to a member of the secretariat of Scholarship Commission or to the secretary himself or herself.

There is another statement which comes as if to convince Obi that corruption is a common place in Nigeria. It is from one of the members of the interview board.

The latter has slept all the time the interview has lasted. When he is given the floor, after his sleep, he asks Obi an awkward question as the narrator reports it here: ““Why do you want a job in the civil service? And without letting Obi answer his question, he adds the following one “so that you can take bribes”. Obi gets angry and shows his disapproval in the following terms: ““I don’t know how you expect me to answer that question. Even if my reason is to take bribes, you don’t expect me to admit it before this board. So, I don’t think it’s very useful question. (Achebe, 1960, pp. 36-37) So that you can take bribes?”” That question is not less than a negative one therefore requires a positive answer. This is the reason why Obi has reacted the way it is just reported. Through his reaction, Obi shows his disappointment and disapproval of the fact that taking bribe is almost a legalized and recommended behaviour. He has also shown his despise for those who cope with this malpractice.

More than a mere expression of disapproval, Obi has laughed at the man who has asked him such an awkward question for people who still walk with their feet. As if to convince Obi that bribe must be given and taken, there is an event which comes to prove him that it is not only the civil servants who give and/or accept it but also workers of the private sector. As a matter of fact, Obi has witnessed a scene of bribe giving and taking when going to Umuofia for the first time after his coming back from England. This incident makes him realise, once again, that bribery is a common place and it is and it will be difficult to put an end to it. It is while he is waiting for the result of his interview that he decides to pay a visit to his parents in his home village, Umuofia. During this journey that an incident takes place. Here is a dialogue between the driver and Obi, the former protesting against the latter’s curiosity to scrutinize what is taking place between the driver and the policeman:

‘Why You look the man for face when we want give um him two shillings?’ he asked Obi.

‘Because he has no right to take two shillings from you’, Obi answered.

‘Na him make I no de want carry you book people,’ he complained. ‘Too too know na him de worry una. Why you put your nose for matter way no concern you? No that policeman goes charge me like ten shillings.’

It is only some minutes later that Obi realized why they had stopped. The driver’s mate had run back to the policeman knowing that they would be more amenable when there were no embarrassing strangers gazing at them. The man soon returned panting from much running.

‘How much they take?’ He asked

‘Ten shillings,’ gasped his assistant.

'You are now,' he said to Obi, who was already beginning to feel a little guilty, especially as all the traders behind, having learnt what was happening, had switched their attacks from career girls to "too know" young me. For the rest of the journey the driver said not a word more to him." (Achebe, 1960, pp. 39-40)

The quotation above shows that almost everybody complies or is almost obliged to comply with corruption except Obi Okonkwo for the time being. Those who try to help others not to give bribes become their enemies. Corruption becomes such a common place that some people think that it is more harmful not to take bribe than reject it. (Achebe, 1960, Op. Cit.)

This reflection comes from a minister and then a Senior Civil Servant. It is a way to say that bribe taking is a not blamable at all costs. Christopher expresses the same idea in his own way when he is having an argument with Obi about money and sexual bribe. He tells Obi: "But I'm surprised you cannot see that the same argument can be used for taking money. If the applicant is getting the job, anyway, there is no harm in accepting money from him." (Achebe, 1960, p. 110) Corruption does not have to do with money or tangible goods only. It has to do with sex and other forms of behaviour that can influence too. For people like Christopher, there is nothing wrong in having sex with a woman in order to do her a favour. The narrator reports what he has told Obi: "If a girl offers to sleep with you, that is not bribery." (Achebe, 1960, p.109) Later on, during the discussion, he insists:

'You see, the difference is this.' He paused. 'Let's put it this way. No man wants to part with his money. If you accept money from a man you make him poorer. But if you go to bed with a girl who asks for it, I don't see that you have done any harm,' (Achebe, 1960, p. 111)

This form of insistence or confirmation by Christopher of his position about bribing with sex is surprising mainly from a Senior Civil Servant who has graduated from the London School of Economics. Fortunately, Clara confesses that this position is wrong. Obi has the same view with Clara by expressing his disagreement with Christopher about having sex with a girl without any guilt. Here below is Obi's reaction:

Don't be silly,' replied Obi. "you mean you honestly cannot see anything wrong in taking advantage of a young girl straight from school who wants to go to university ... I was not imagining any such thing. But it is scandalous that a man of your education can see nothing wrong in going to bed with a girl before you let her appear before the board (Achebe, 1960, 110)

Obi Okonkwo has always been against bribery in all its forms in the early years of his career. He nurses a grudge against those who are involved in corruption.

But once he is confronted to some realities, things have changed in him. The following development will show the change in Obi as far as bribery is concerned.

2.2. *Obi Okonkwo, the 'scholar' of the 'new school'*

The phrase "new school" refers to the trend which sees no harm in both bribe taking and giving. Despite all his determination to fight against bribery and corruption, Obi shows some weaknesses to resist it until the end. Without backing him, one can nevertheless recognize that there are some factors that have pushed and encouraged him to indulge in corruption. As a matter of fact, not only has Obi taken bribe but he has also enjoyed it, both money and sex. Here is an instance of sexual bribe enjoyed by Obi. The narrator describes:

'You dance very well,' he whispered as she pressed herself against him breathing very fast and hard. He put her arms round his neck and brought her lips within a centimetre of his. They no longer paid any attention to the beat of the high-life. Obi steered her towards his bedroom. She made a half-hearted show of resisting, then followed.

Obviously she was not an innocent school-girl. She knew her job. She was on the short list already, anyway. All the same, it was a great let-down. No point in pretending that it wasn't. One should at least be honest. He took her back to Yaba in his car. On his return journey he called on Christopher to tell him about it so that perhaps they might laugh it off. But he left again without having told the story. Some other day, perhaps. (Achebe, 1960, p. 153)

The quotation above is evidence that Obi has enjoyed sexual corruption. During the dance, Obi and the applicant girl for a scholarship behave as if they were lovers who have known each other for a long time. The lady "pressed herself against him breathing very fast and hard." (Achebe, 1960, op. cit p. 153) It has never been neutral or innocent when an adult woman pushes herself against a man. When a woman starts breathing fast and hard while she is simply with a virile male person, having or giving sex or even making love is no longer too far. It is a sign of yielding and even a selective calling either because she wants or because she is appealed to it. The direct consequence can be noticed in the present case: after a seeming resistance, which is understandable in the normal course of things in the African context, Obi and the girl have ended in bed. The narrator reveals that "obviously she was not an innocent schoolgirl. She knew her job. She was on the short list already, anyway." This girl looks like the one talked about by Christopher to Obi in the following terms:

You are being sentimental. A girl who comes the way she did is not an innocent little girl. It is like the story of the girl who was given a form to fill in. She put down her name and her age. But when she came to sex she wrote:

"Twice a week." Obi could not help laugh thing."

...

"The girl was appearing before the board, anyway. That was all she expected you to do: to see that she did appear. And how do you know she did not go to bed with the board members? (Achebe, 1960, p. 110)

To justify his point of view, Christopher lured Obi into the fact that if Obi does not have sex with the girl, she will "probably think" that he is impotent. But the idea which comes to one's mind is that whether the girl has come to check Obi's virility or to ask for his help. Whether a person, be they a man or woman, thinks that another person is impotent or not, what is the matter with that since they are not your wife. In a nutshell, for Christopher, a man must use his position to prove his virility. Here, we must point out that Christopher is contradicting himself because he has said and it is quoted here that "corruption is improper use of influence." (Achebe, 1960, 110) Obi himself, finds it bad to behave the way his friend and brother of the same ethnic group advises him to do even if he will fail to be coherent. He tells him (Christopher): "I was not imagining any such thing. But it is scandalous that a man of your education can see nothing wrong in going to bed with a girl before you let her appear before the board." (Achebe, 1960, 110)

It is clear now that Obi Okonkwo is driving even fast and also on wide and long roads. This is undoubtedly the direct consequence of his learning the lesson taught to him by Christopher as dealt with in the previous lines. These imageries of "learning lessons", "driving", "roads" and "accidents" have been used by Oyo, the man's wife in *The Beautiful ones are not Yet Born* by Ayi Kwei Armah. (Armah, 1968, 58-59) One can fear for Obi Okonkwo because the speed at which he is driving is likely to lead him to accidents.

Apart from sex there are instances where Obi has taken bribe. One of these instances is described here. The scene is described through a dialogue between the man who has given him the bribe so that his son's name appear in the short list:

The man tells him: "My son is going to England in September. I want him to get scholarship. If you can do it for me here is fifty pounds.' He brought out a wad of notes from the front pocket of his *agbada*.

Obi told him it was not possible. 'In the first place I don't give scholarships. All I do is go through the applications and recommend those who satisfy the requirements to the Scholarship Board.'

'That's all I want,' said the man. 'Just recommend him.'

'But the Board may not select him.'

'Don't worry about that. Just do your own...'

Obi was silent. He remembered the boy's name. He was already on the short list, 'Why don't you pay for him? You have money. The scholarship is for poor people.' The man laughed. 'No man has money in this world.' He rose to his feet, placed the wad of notes on the occasional table before Obi. 'This is just small kola,' he said. 'We will make good friends. Don't forget the name. We will see again. Do you ever go to the club? I have never seen you before.'

'I'm not a member.'

'You must join,' he said. 'Bye-bye.'

The wad of notes lay where he had placed it for the rest of the day and all night. Obi placed a newspaper over it and secured the door. 'This is terrible!' he said aloud. He woke up with a start in the middle of the night and he did not go to sleep again for a long time. (Achebe, 1960, pp. 152-153)

Obi has just taken a financial bribe. In addition to this one, he has also accepted financial bribe several times. The narrator reports that here:

Others came. People would say that Mr so-and-so was a gentleman. He would take money, but he would do his stuff, which was a big advertisement, and others would follow. But Obi stoutly refused to countenance anyone who did not possess the minimum educational and other requirements. On that he was unshakeable. (Achebe, 1960, p. 153)

Obi has accepted and enjoyed both financial and sexual bribe. How does a person like him that has been against corruption fail in this easy way? Unfortunately, when he decides to stop, he is caught red-handed. 'He has had an accident'. The following passage describes how Obi is caught:

'Are you Mr Okonkwo?' asked the stranger. Obi said yes in a voice he could hardly have recognized. The room began to swim round and round. The stranger was saying something, but it sounded distant—as things sound to a man in a fever. He then searched Obi and found the marked notes. He began to say some more things, invoking the name of the Queen, like a District Officer in the bush reading the Riot Act to an uncomprehending and delirious mob. Meanwhile the other man used the telephone outside Obi's door to summon a police van. (Achebe, 1960, p. 153)

Obi is caught red handed taking bribe. He has had accident. In the beginning, both Obi Okonkwo and Kunle Bangbelu have a good idea, that is to say, they refrain from taking bribe and also criticize its acceptance by others. I have not dealt with Kunle's case yet but it is clear Obi has failed at a certain moment. Obi is more ambitious than Kunle Bangbelu but nevertheless of good will. (Achebe, 1960, pp 28-34) Contrary to Kunle Bangbelu he is too materialistic. He has a luxurious car, a houseboy; he lives in a place for upper social classes called Ikoyi. There are other things that differ him from Kunle Bangbelu. But these cannot be taken an excuse for him.

3. Kunle Bangbelu's bold and pragmatic fight against bribery

The coming to power of the military junta has favoured Kunle Bangbelu's appointment as Commissioner for Works. After the appointment, the swearing-in ceremony has been held and he is now in his seat of State commissioner. The newly established commissioner has now started working as a politician even if he himself does not like this term. About seven months of tenure, Kunle has worked under pressures. Commissioner Kunle Bangbelu has undergone pressures from almost everywhere. First, the members of his extended family are those from whom he starts undergoing pressures; then his colleague teachers; next his collaborators or the staff of his ministry and last his colleague commissioners. As I progress in the analysis, the pressures on Kunle Bangbelu will be followed by his reactions to them.

3.1. *Kunle Bangbelu's resistance to pressures from his family*

In actual fact, before the members of his family, the commissioner's acquaintances are those who have started to put pressure on him the very day of his swearing-in ceremony. Pa Shittu is the most noticeable member of this group. Apart from him, there are others too among whom people who usually don't greet him. Even when he himself greets them they hardly answer. These people can be referred to as profiteers, social parasites. The words uttered by Pa Shittu the very day Kunle Bangbelu has sworn-in are expressive he says:

Wonders will never end, as they say. When I got home after the ceremony, many of our neighbours were waiting to congratulate me. Really amazing! These were people who hardly greeted me. Usually, even when I took the initiative and greeted them, they still found it unrewarding to respond.

Now they had gathered to celebrate my appointment.

Apparently, my circumstances had changed. I had become a hero, a big gun of sorts. What added to their awe and respect for me was that none of them could tell exactly how I became a commissioner. All they knew was that a radio announcement was made and the power conferred on me. Just like that. To them the undisclosed process and amazing attainment gave weight to the appointment and enhanced my newly acquired status.

Some of the neighbours went away after hailing me outside. A few of them followed me into Grandpa's parlour. I removed my agbada and brought out a handkerchief from my sokoto pocket to mop my face. (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 10-11)

Even if African hospitality or warmth is pointed out here, to some extent, a person you usually don't greet, you should not be waiting to congratulate him because he has had a promotion. Pa Shittu's statements such as "so, even if Government continues to forget us, you will remember us; I'm sure" and "I wish you good luck; but don't forget us", no one needs to be a specialist of discourse

analysis to decode the message of these neighbours of Kunle Bangbelu's mainly Pa Shittu's. They are putting pressures on the newly established commissioner so that what he is expected to snatch (steal) from the people's properties, the common goods he will be obliged to share it with them.

After Pa Shittu it is the turn of Abeji, the Commissioner's fiancée to start putting pressures on him just a few hours after his swearing-in ceremony. Here is a dialogue between the two fiancés, Kunle Bangbelu and Abedji:

"You have to do something for our friends," she insisted
"Like what?", I was forced to ask.
"Awarding contracts to them, for example."
"Are they contractors?"
"They are not. But that's one way to help them."
"Help...? I stared at her. "Are they in distress or something? Is the ministry of works a cooperative union?"
"Remember what they did for us?"
"What did I ask anybody to do for me? I got an appointment; I dressed up and reported for inauguration. That's all.
"They were all at Oké Aléébù with us; remember? More importantly, they organized a cocktail for you; it takes love, time and money to do such things."
"Did I ask anyone to organize a party for me?"
"Why did they decide to waste their money?"
"Am I to pay my friends for organizing a party on my behalf?"
"Not directly, but do you know what Oyin said last night when I thanked her for all the trouble she took? ...She said, 'we're all sowing so that we can reap! (Ogundimu, 2008, pp. 17-18)

Abeji can be considered as the spokesperson of her friends and Kunle Bangbelu's and their colleagues who have taken part in the inauguration and who have also organized the cocktail party for the newly appointed state commissioner's swearing-in ceremony. Abeji reports to her fiancé what Oyin, Abeji's co-worker has told her: "We're all sowing so that we can reap!" (Ogundimu, 2008, pp. Op. cit.) What Oyin means by sowing here is the fact that they have spent their money and time to attend the inauguration ceremony but also by contributing money to organize the cocktail party. Reaping here means that when their friend who is appointed state commissioner will give them the opportunity to have their own share of the "national cake".

Kunle has objected to all the requests by his fiancée. He laughs at her without any fear of losing anything including herself. Through Kunle's reactions to his fiancée's requests, we can draw several lessons. The first reason is that he is a patriot and also an honest patriot. The second reason is that he is intelligent and knows how to hold people by their belt. He masters the use of humour and irony and this mastery of this way of communication is an important arm to convey messages. Before reacting to all that his fiancée is requesting for their colleagues

and friends, Kunle always starts with a question. Some of these questions worth repeating: "Are they contractors?" and his fiancée is obliged to provide a negative answer. If they are not, so they don't deserve being awarded any contract. The next four questions are the answer to only one request. They are: "Help ...? Are they in distress or something? Is the ministry of works a cooperative union?". His listener, his fiancée, must be aware that her fiancé does not want to yield. The last two questions are the reactions to two concerns from Abeji, Kunle's fiancée. These questions are: "What did I ask anybody to do for me?" and "Did I ask anyone to organize a party for me? Apparently, Kunle is ungrateful but in actual fact, he is expressing clearing, without beating about the bush, as a responsible person, his refusal to be indulged in any practice that can lead him to immorality. The most important thing to keep here is that even with one's fiancé(e) or one's wife or husband, the truth must prevail over any other considerations. After his fiancé, Kunle's mother comes to convince her son to enjoy palm greasing.

When 'lecturing' her son Kunle on what public good and government are, his mother asks some questions and assuming that he does not answer properly, the mother answers them herself. It goes the following way:

Why do you drive away people who bring money to you? When do you want to enjoy your life? When do you want to draw on government? When do you want to use your power as commissioner? Do you know what people call government? You eat and I eat. We all eat; everybody is happy; that is good government ... You cannot continue throwing good food away like a reckless housewife toying with her evening meal'. (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 34)

Through these concerns, the reader can understand that once anybody is appointed at a political or administrative position, they have some rights over public goods. As a matter of fact, these behaviours are against morals. They must take bribe because, according to a commonly spread behaviour, taking bribe is not only a right but a must. As a commissioner of state or a member of a state government, you must take bribe and also use public goods as if they were your own. That is the reason why Kunle's mother is teaching him that people call government "you eat and I eat. We all eat; everybody is happy; that is good government" (Ogundimu, 2008, p.34).

After his fiancé and his mother, Kunle's aunt, in her turn, comes to encourage her nephew to take bribes.

To convince her nephew, Kunle Bangbelu, to take bribe, Auntie Toun tells him the following things: "Do you want to swim against the stream? How many

government workers can make it without these gifts, which you label bribes? Tell me, how many of them?" (Ogundimu, 2008, p.41)

Auntie Toun is a good communicator. She knows very well what she is saying and how to say it in order to reach her goal or goals. In actual fact, these three questions are not questions because the Commissioner for Works' aunt does not want any answer for any of these three apparent questions. One can imagine the gestures she is making through the movements of her whole body (feet, arms, fingers, face and eyes) when saying these things. She surely presents a disdainful face while talking to her nephew in order to let him deduce her deep disappointment and hatred for him whom she considers as awkward. By doing so, she expects the Commissioner for Works to yield. The first question is "Do you want to swim against the stream?" The verb to want in interrogative form implies that she is not quite sure her nephew has made yet his decision about taking or not taking bribes and therefore she expects to influence him so that he can change his mind by taking bribes eventually. The words "against" and "stream" are also very meaningful. A stream is a permanent running water. It usually goes in the same direction. If you go in the opposite direction to it, you are in trouble. Therefore, if a person swims against the stream, they face serious obstacles and difficulties before reaching the bank in case they succeed. Through her use of the saying "to swim against the stream" she warns or even threatens her nephew against the risks he is running by refusing to take the bribe of such a huge amount of money. The direction of the stream here is to accept bribes, accepting bribes being synonymous with playing "the national game". (A. K. Armah, 1968, p. 129) She insists on what she is saying through the next question which is not a question in actual fact as said earlier. She apparently asks the following question: "How many government workers can make it without these gifts, which you label bribes?" (Ogundimu, 2008, p.41). For her there are no bribes but gifts and no comments. For Auntie Toun, almost all the civil servants whom she refers to here as government workers are corrupt and accept bribe and even openly. For her, bribery is a "national game" that her nephew should take part in almost as it is said in *The Beautiful ones are not Yet Born*. (Armah, 1968, p. 129). Auntie Toun considers bribery as a common place or ordinary practice. It is in this framework that she compares it with gifts. Gifts are things given to someone who can take them freely or not. She wants her nephew to take/accept what she considers as gifts. When Kunle tells her that "there are some good people in" their "country who will never accept bribe", she replies that "such *fools* must be very few and nobody cares". (Ogundimu, 2008, p.41, italics mine) This is very

meaningful. Once again, she considers bribery as a common place or an ordinary thing and if you are not involved in it you are treated as a stupid or fool person. For Auntie Toun, her nephew is selfish, a hostile and perverse hostility to borrow words from Armah's first novel. (Armah, 1968, pp. 51-52)

Despite Auntie Toun's threats, injunctions or orders to Kunle Bangbelu such as "But, before them, give us money ... Do you want to be wiser than God? Do you want to swim against the stream? How many government workers can make it without these gifts, which you label bribes? Tell me, how many of them?" Kunle stays unruffled. (Ogundimu, 2008, pp. 40-41)

She adds a question: "Why do you want to be different?" (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 42) Still Kunle is not impressed and now she points out more threatening injunctions. Kunle reports: "But she stopped before she got to the door. She pointed a threatening forefinger at me and gave a stern warning. "Don't break my sister's heart! You hear me? Don't break her heart! ... good night." (Ogundimu, 2008, p.43) One can imagine the movements she is making with her whole body from the toes to the hair including the face which is certainly displaying disdain and despise.

Another person who also puts pressures on him in the same direction is his friend and colleague Akwa. For the latter, it is a good thing for a state commissioner to accept bribes. He tells his colleague and currently a State Commissioner: "You're still keeping your hands clean after three months in office? You must be a foreigner landing from the moon". (Ogundimu, 2008, p.20) Akwa means that it is common facts that bribe is taken in their country which Kunle seems not to be aware of or simply doesn't want to put into practice. In reaction to his colleague's advice, Kunle says: "I stared at him in silence, convinced that I had made my point. Nobody was going to grease my palm". (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 20) Greasing someone's palm is to corrupt him, which Kunle is actually fighting against.

Since Kunle does not yield, Akwa has another try in order to convince him. The narrator reports Akwa's speech: "Look, Kunle," Akwa laughed, "Don't turn down handsome offers..." If the government of my own state makes the mistake of appointing me a commissioner, I will be in money within weeks". (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 20) What Akwa refers to as "being in money within weeks" is that he will take bribes from his countrymen as quickly as possible in order to get rich in a very short time. He says "within weeks". For him, appointing him a commissioner is a way to make a mistake which will lead him to take bribes and then gets rich. As he mentions it, in their people's mentality, they "will bring the

money". (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 21) In other terms, Akwa swears 'to drive fast in long large with high speed.' and wide roads

As solid as a rock that he is, facing suborners and the people who advise him to accept bribe, Kunle Bangbelu 'lectures' Akwa on what should be his role as a teacher. For him, Kunle Bangbelu, and he is right, a teacher should be a model, not only for his students alone but also the whole society. Kunle gets angry and tells Akwa honestly:

You're not serious, I stared at Akwa earnestly, quite unbelieving. How could a teacher proclaim openly that he would take bribe in office? What kind of legacy was he going to bequeath to future generations? I fixed my gaze on him and I ventured, "what do you teach your students, if you could be saying things like these openly? (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 21)

Kunle shows clearly two things here. The former is that he does not take bribe and doesn't want to yield in front of any pressures no matter where it comes from. The latter is his annoyance and the role of adviser and conscience arouser that he is playing facing his friend and colleague Akwa here. To be clearer in his role of both a philosopher and intelligent and talented teacher, Kunle adds: "Good teaching goes beyond the four walls of a classroom. And one of the attributes of a good teacher is the ability to lead by example and the capacity to be a role model. No, Akwa. I will collect nothing. Things must change in this country". (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 24).

Fed up with his mother, relatives and friend's demands, as far as bribe taking is concerned, Kunle expresses here, in, as clear as possible terms, his opinion about bribery. He says: "I loved my mother and wouldn't do anything to break her heart. But I was not going to take a bribe to please anybody, including my mother. That was out of the question". (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 43) Kunle Bangbelu has not been shaken either, so far. This is the way humans in general and men in particular should behave: to work with discipline and self-respect and have in mind the common good. Kunle's staff has also put pressures on him

3.2. Kunle Bangbelu's staff's pressures on him

In the Republic of Ribalia, Officials, Commissioners and Ministers' collaborators are sometimes, if not often, middle people between the public or the suborners and them. This enables the transactions of bribe taking to occur unobtrusively and with discretion. This way avoids people being caught red-handed. It is in this perspective that Kayode, Kunle Bangbelu's Personal Assistant has been approached by "the landlords of Sabo area of the town" to speed up the

implementation of "an earlier government approved" purchase and installation of a new transformer in "Sabo area of the town eleven months before" Kunle Bangbelu's appointment. (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 50). He comes proudly to his state commissioner to deliver him the message, giving him the money sent to him by the suborners. Here below is an extract of the dialogue between Kunle Bangbelu and his Personal Assistant which describes the latter's attempt to transmit bribe to the former. Kayode is the first to speak:

"This is for you, Sir""

...

"I tore the sealed envelope open with suspicion.

"This is money?"

"Yes, Sir," I [SIC] said.

I was still at a loss as to what Kayode's real intention was. Hesitantly I counted the money; maybe, the young man needed my advice on a pressing family matter

"This is twenty thousand naira? I looked up at him questioningly.

"That's. The Landlords' Association in my area brought it this morning. It was not ready last night"

What is it for?" I said, still at sea.

He explained that, acting on a technical report submitted by the Ministry of Works, Government had earlier approved the purchase and installation of a new transformer in his Sabo area of the town eleven months before I was appointed to speed up the implementation of the said government approval, the landlords had been advised to see my predecessor in office. (Ogundimu, 2008, pp. 49-50)

In spite of all these explanations and others that have not been quoted here, Kunle does not yield. He objects to bribe taking and tells it to who wants to listen to him. During his dialogue with his Personal Assistant, he seizes the opportunity to lecture the latter on the risks related to bribe taking. He mainly insists on the fact that no one should accept any gift, even freely given, for the work he is paid for. He clearly rejects the bribe brought to him by Kayode. The following brief dialogue between the two men is illustrative. The commissioner is the first to talk:

"But I had to control my temper; a commissioner should observe some decorum. So I asked calmly, "Are you suggesting that all past commissioners have been corrupt and I am just like any of them?"

"I am sorry I was only relating my experience."

"Well I don't like that kind of experience. I'll take your advice when I need it and when I ask for it. We don't take bribes in the office. And that is definite". (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 53)

Although the commissioner's conclusion is clear, Kayode insists hoping, certainly hopelessly, to convince the commissioner to reconsider his position:

When Kayode stood up slowly, I thought he was going to leave with his tail between his legs. But he spoke still. 'Sir I know there is a big gap between the muzzle and head of a horse. So, in principle, I am not supposed to give advice. However, we have to thread with care; our people are dangerous.'

"Yes, I know. Still, we shall not depart from professional ethics. Now you can go. But make sure you return this envelope to its owners. (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 54).

Not only does Kunle reject the bribe but he also strongly advises his Personal Assistant to give it back to its owners with the amount of money he has brought to him. Until further notice Kayode has failed or is failing and will certainly fail in his endeavour to bribe Kunle Bangbelu. The latter knows what to do to promote himself, his family, his society and his whole country.

3.3. External collaborators' pressures on Kunle Bangbelu: the case of the Engineer Contractors

When Kayode goes back to those who have trusted him with the mission to transmit the bribe to the commissioner for works, they are surprised and disappointed. Even after this, they do not despair. They still hope that somebody else than Kayode can succeed in convincing the state commissioner to take bribe in order to speed up the purchase and the installation of their transformer. In this framework, they send the engineer contractor himself. The latter has already been disappointed by the state commissioner, Kunle Bangbelu, because the latter, as usual, faithful to himself and disciplined, coherent in his way of thinking, has rejected the engineer's bribe of fifty thousand Nairas. The state commissioner reports that situation. He says: "This was 'Engineer', the contractor who had brought to me fifty thousand Naira a few weeks earlier. I had rejected the offer because I did not want to influence the award of that Totoro water project". (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 56) The offer of this bribe has taken place before. Now, it is another bribe to the state commissioner. He flatters him too much as his words show it in the extract of their dialogue below. The state commissioner speaks first:

"What's this supposed to be? I asked him"
"It's for you, Sir"
"How can it be for me?"
"We don't want to continue cheating you"
"I don't know what you're on about"
"We've been cheating you,"
"I'm not aware and I don't feel cheated"
"But we know, and we feel it's unfair"
"Don't worry about me because I won't pity you if you attract some trouble to yourself. Please take your bag away; I don't need it." (A. S. Ogundimu, 2008, p.58)

Through this quotation, the reader can notice Kunle ironizing his objection to bribery. Not only has Kunle rejected the bribe but he has also used humour and irony to laugh at his special visitor. The rejection of the bribe through the use of humour and irony is expressed through the way he reacts to his listener's concerns. The latter must realize that his own answers must bring him bear the refusal of the bribe. When you bring something to somebody who asks you how it can be for him or her; when you tell somebody that you don't want to continue

cheating him or her and he or she does not try to know how you have been cheating him or her but just tells you he does not know you were cheating him, you must know that that person does not want to cooperate with you. Here, it simply means that Kunle does not want to take bribe. He is also distrustful with his visitor-suborner.

In spite of all that the commissioner tells the Engineer contractor and the way he does it, distrustfully, the latter is not discouraged. He is determined to go forward in his endeavour to convince his listener to accept the bribe. To force or oblige him, the engineer contractor leaves the room, leaving without, knowingly, the bag containing the "untouched and mint-fresh 50 Naira notes", representing the bribe, the whole amount being ₦ 250,000.00 (two hundred and Fifty Nairas) or one quarter of a million, representing the bribe." (Ogundimu, 2008, p 60)

As clear and honest as he has always been, Kunle Bangbelu takes his decision about him. "Instead, I should find a way of teaching the unscrupulous agent a lesson of his life." (Ogundimu, 2008, p.58)

That was something fundamentally wrong." (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 123). The use of the verbs "to demand and to obtain" is to inform the reader that once he asks, satisfying him becomes a must. In the same way, the use of the adverb "steadily" specifies that receiving bribes is regular and the amounts constantly increases.

In Ribalia, clerks and civil servants in general and politicians are corrupt and the non-civil servants too are corrupt. Where does all this money go?

3.4. The sharing of bribes, another source of pressure on honest people

When corrupt people receive bribes, money or any other thing, usually, they don't use it alone. In order to continue enjoying the same privilege or position, in order to protect the system that enables them to take bribe without being denounced and eventually being caught, very often if not always, the bribe is shared among several if not many people. There are two ways of sharing the money from corruption as described in *A Silly Season*. There is the transversal or horizontal sharing and the vertical sharing.

In the vertical sharing it is a boss, no matter his or her position, who receives or takes a bribe and then shares it with his or her subordinates or collaborators. It may be planned in a way that the collaborators' share is taken into account directly by the giver of the bribe. It is in this light, that Kayode tells his commissioner: "As a matter of fact, I also collected another sum of ten thousand Naira for the members of staff. And in view of your position, I asked the

landlords to raise ₦ 25,000. 00 for you". (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 51) Through this statement, Kayode is informing his state commissioner that for the same matter, the other members of the staff deserve something, their shares, in the whole bribe.

As if his state commissioner does not understand or seems not to understand, according to him, Kayode uses another strategy to let him know or inform him that if he, the state commissioner, rejects the bribe, it won't be possible for the other members of the staff to have their shares which is their merit, according to the established system. He reacts to one of the commissioner's concerns about the surprise to be discovering or guessing that other people than him have their shares in the bribe or must be reached later on after him, the state commissioner. Kayode says:

Yes, Ministry workers stick together. And they have a saying: when you are invited as a group to join in a meal you don't decline on behalf of the party. Otherwise, you make enemies. That's why we can only speak for ourselves. For example, you and I may say that we shall not take bribes; that is the only conclusion we may reach; and we should stop at that; we cannot speak for others. (Ogundimu, 2008, pp. 53-54)

Once again, Kayode is telling his commissioner that if he refuses to take the money, the other members of the staff can't have their share either. He even goes far in putting himself at the same level as the commissioner. Here, the author uses humour to expose the greedy and corrupt person that Kayode is. When corruption catches Ribalian civil servants by their belts, they can't move or control themselves.

In order to convince his boss, Kayode is inviting his state commissioner whose Personal Assistant he is, to be aware that everybody knows that a bribe is given to him and therefore he should not prevent them from having their shares by rejecting it. The following dialogue enables Kayode to clarify the situation to Kunle Bangbelu.

"I turned to Kayode. "How did you know the amount the governor demanded"
"His personal assistant told me and the contractor confirmed it".
"Are you saying that the contractor will also tell other people about what he has just given me?"
"You mean what he has just given us?"
"Well, okay, if you..."
"Of course, everybody knows that he has brought something. What they don't know yet is the actual amount... officially these things are confidential, but we do tell each other".
"Do you tell even messengers?", I gaped
"Are messengers not members of staff? Look, *Oga*, there are no secrets anywhere".
(Ogundimu, 2008, p.65)

Kayode misses respect for his state commissioner by telling him straightforward that the money brought to him, Kayode, is for both him as the commissioner of state and the other members of the staff. This is the reason why Kayode asks him ironically: "You mean what he has given us?" Kayode has lectured Kunle Bangbelu about bribe taking and or giving on all its ramifications; Debo, Kunle's former university course mate, "currently a senior officer at the National Security Service Headquarters" even knows that the state commissioner should share the money with the members of his staff, starting from Kayode. (Ogoundimu, 2008, p. 67) He tells him: "I would simply suggest you take part of the money and give the balance to your P. A. for sharing among your staff; at least this time around. The compromise will save you a lot of trouble,". (Ogundimu, 2008, p. 69) The majority of the ministers, the majority of the Governors, the majority of the state commissioners and the administrative staffs know that bribe is taken and must be taken. They also know that it must be shared. I have just dealt with the vertical sharing of the bribe. This appeals to the second way of sharing bribe which is the horizontal one.

The horizontal or transversal sharing of bribe consists in having bribe shared among people of the same rank. For example, the whole bribe taken by a commissioner or part of it is shared among commissioners. Another instance is that the whole bribe taken by a federal minister is shared among federal ministers. Kunle does not know all these things, 'son of his father' that he is. This is what the colleagues of Kunle Bangbelu have been expecting from him but in vain. He, unexpectedly, becomes aware that he must take bribe and also share it with both the members of his staff and also his other "colleagues from the other ministries". He confesses:

Many of my colleagues from the other ministries had been murmuring, buying men for failing to let them share from what they name my ministry's spoils. "How can I share what I don't have?" I kept laughing the matter off."

But they were adamant. For example, the Commissioner for Water Resources accused me of wanting to continue eating alone. She said my ministry was juicy and alleged that I was keeping the juice to myself. According to her, although the soup from her ministry was watery, she kept bringing it for sharing. (Ogundimu, 2008, p.72)

Kunle wonders how he can share what he doesn't have. He alone knows that he does not have anything to share. For his colleagues from the other ministries, he takes bribe and should share it with them. Surely that they take some and maybe or surely send him his share through some members of his staff but since they know that he is allergic to such a practice, they keep his share instead of giving it back to the senders. He even keeps "laughing the matter off".

In the group of frustrated people towards the Commissioner for Works is a woman. She does not hide her position. She displays her grudge against the innocent but responsible Commissioner for Works. It is the Commissioner for Water Resources who proves to be fully involved in bribery, a woman, surprisingly.

3.5. Kunle Bangbelu's resignation

There is evidence that Kunle Bangbelu has undergone pressures from everywhere mainly from his mother, his aunt, his colleague teachers, his fiancée, his staff and his colleague commissioners in order to take bribe. After six months spent in the State government, he decides to give up this position of a commissioner which has become unbearable for him. He confesses that he has failed as a politician. The direct conclusion he has reached is to resign, which he does. He says:

Now I was a corrupt agent in destructive era.
In the circumstance, the best thing for me was to resign honourably. And that was what I was going to do.

I picked a plain sheet of paper from my drawer and wrote:

...
However, I have a sad story to tell about my health. On these grounds I am seeking His Excellency's permission to opt out the position. I am sure that our State is endowed with enough human resources for my exit not to have any adverse effect on Government activities. (Ogundimu, 2008, pp. 105-106)

Kunle has resigned from his post of Commissioner for Works. Before resigning, he has made an indictment against the military junta. The list of things he reproaches the government with is long although it is not exhaustive. Kunle rightly confesses that the military governor is an intruder and a thief too; he adds that he is a corrupt person like his master, the President". He also asserts that the military governor "is not working for the development of the State" but busy "giving effect to self-enrichment. He compares him with "the Chief Crook in the state." He concludes his indictment by saying that the "State and Federal Government" have but achieved "the cowering of the citizenry and the silencing of journalist" and also "the steady popularisation of corruption." (Ogundimu, 2008, pp.107-108)

Kunle Bangbelu has failed to change both his fellow countrymen and the leaders of his country as he would like to do it. He has nevertheless proved that he is morally strong and this has led him to use the last bullet at his disposal which is resignation with the hope that this can bring a positive change in both the citizens' and the leaders' ways of seeing public goods.

CONCLUSION

Like most fights, the one against corruption is a long and everlasting fight and whether in real life or in works of fiction. Here, we are undoubtedly concerned with novels. Obi Okonkwo and Kunle Bangbelu have fought against corruption, each of them in his way. Obi Okonkwo is a good theoretician. He objects to bribing the customs agent by refusing to pay two pounds without any receipt instead of the official five. He also goes against Christopher's position to sleep with girls who offer themselves freely. Unfortunately, he yields in the end by taking bribes several times both sex bribe and money. To paraphrase what a member of his ethnic group said, Obi has eaten more bribe than those whom he has fought in the beginning of his career. Finally, when he decides to stop, he is caught red handed. Obi has betrayed himself and his own country. It is a failure, a shameful and lamentable failure due mainly to a lack of virtue noticeable in Obi.

Kunle Bangbelu, in the contrary, succeeds in refraining from taking bribe from anybody despite permanent pressures from almost everywhere. Besides, he goes further by resigning from his position of Commissioner for Works to show or display his disapproval of all the ill-practices in which almost all the whole country is involved in and the political and administrative authorities in particular. The wrong but understandable aspect of Kunle's fight is the hypocrisy that is noticed through his hiding the true reason of his resignation to the addressee. This is certainly for security's sake.

Obi Okonkwo and Kunle Bangbelu can be said to be two contradicting moral values because both are involved in the same fight but the former has failed because of material and financial considerations, whereas the latter, who he also has material and financial needs has stood firm until the end despite pressures from his family, the ministry and the colleagues too, to mention just a few. This has been possible because of his strong and sustainable moral value that has been his companion all the time.

People such as The Chief of the Military junta, Governors and most commissioners, most Ministers, Kunle's mother, his aunt, his fiancée, his colleagues mainly Akwa and Kayode represent the former colonisers and their African assistants in both the colonial and post-colonial periods whose main role and goal has been to plunder pitilessly African resources which they succeeded in doing. The pressures they put on people such as Kunle Bangbelu and Mrs Banji

can be considered as the ways and means the colonizers used such as gospel and soldiers to bring Africans to yield. Here, yielding means the acceptance by Africans, willingly or unwilling, of their lots consisting in the robbery or plundering of their own riches in their own soils and in their presence. Kunle Bangbelu, Mrs Banji represent these Africans who raised themselves against both colonization and its consequences, the robbery of their continent. Nigeria in *No Longer at Ease* and Ribalia in *A Silly Season* represent the whole continent that has been dominated and exploited by the white colonizers and their African apes during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods.

Kunle Bangbelu and Mrs Banji symbolise the Africans who have fought against the white colonizers in his so-called civilising mission through which they have stolen all kinds of African valuables including underground resources and earthly wealth plus arts tools.

In the fight against bribery there is hope, no matter its persistent character as shown in the two novels. For example, when people mainly young people reach or "come to the top straight or without bribing anyone", they "can afford to be virtuous" and "that kind of virtue can become a habit". (Achebe, 1960, p. 18) Whenever or wherever virtue becomes a habit, development can no longer be far. There is and there will be hope. In the mass of people approving or backing social vices like bribery, there still are other people, no matter how few they are, who are 'coward' and 'foolish' enough that are still reasonable or sensible. This is the case of the President of UPU who states that he is "against people reaping where they have not sown." (Achebe, 1960, p.05) It is a way to say nobody should consider bribes as parts of their rights such as salaries or allowances, to name just a few. This is a 'red card' or a blame to corrupt people, even if it is by principle. This inspires hope in the fight against bribery. It is in the same vein that during a UPU meeting, whereas "the meeting agreed that it was money, not work, that brought them to Lagos ... one of the young men suggested that it was immoral to use public funds to beer for one's private thirst." (Achebe, 1960, p. 72-73) This way of seeing things is positive and can be acquired and kept through educating and sensitizing people even if this can or will take much time even decades and centuries. Better late than never. There still is hope that the social plagues that hinder the Development will be vanquished one not only because some Africans still always work to that but also some developed countries of nowadays (of today) underwent such malpractices in their history.

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