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The Legacy of Colonialism in Chinua Achebe's work

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The Legacy of Colonialism in Chinua Achebe`s Works

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Résumé de synthèse

Les auteurs post-coloniaux Africains, qui généralement écrivent a une grande audience anglaise, soulignent l'idée que la plus part de la littérature écrite au sujet des colonies Britannique dans ces ères, a été écrite d'une vision dérivée de leur tradition culturel et système politique qui avais justifie et célèbre le colonialisme. Les auteurs Africains se sont trouves provoques et forces a répondre a de telles écritures et a la re-ecriture au sujet de leurs histoires, cultures et traditions. Ils ont voulu retracer une nouvelle image qui reflète leur vraie vie cependant il se sont rendus compte que ce serait une tache compliquée voir impossible, a moins qu'ils emploient une nouvelle mode d'écritures et une nouvelle langue. En créant un nouveau modèle d'écriture et une nouvelle langue ils ont réellement cherche a créer une nouvelle littérature post coloniale qui fournirait ce qu'ils considèrent comme plus authentique et qui pressente une représentation indigène de leurs traditions, cultures, espoirs et inspirations. Un des auteurs brillants qui a écrit a propos de ces issues avec succès était l'auteur Nigérian Chinua Achebe. Cette thèse se concentrera sur l'expérience de Achebe à propos de sa réplique à une portion de la fausse déclaration des impérialistes Européens et du stéréotype de la culture et du caractère Africains. Achebe avait réussi a exposer les divers mécanismes de la complicité entre, d'une part, les pratiques de l'expansionnisme approuvées par les puissantes nations coloniales, et d'autre part, la littérature pro impérialiste qui a été crée pendant l'age de l'impérialisme Européen. Nous discuterons l'ouvre de Joyce Cary dans *Mister*

Johnson et la réponse d'Achebe dans *Things Fall Apart,* Achebe a aussi réussi a exposer le nouveau nationalisme et les politiques fascistes et littéraires élites qui ont émerge a près l'indépendance et ont essaye de voler l'espoir du peuple envers leurs libérations et leurs développements. Ces élites, dans la plupart des pays post colonial Africains, ont forme des alliances avec les mêmes vieille puissances impériales aux quelles elles ont prétendu de s'opposer vigoureusement. Je discuterais ces issues et d'autres dans les œuvres d'Achebe : *No Longer at Ease, Man of the People,* et *Anthills of the Savannah..* A travers les issues de discussion de la corruption, la dictature et la malaise politique, Achebe aborde les questions des luttes continues dans la vie Nigérienne entre les valeurs modernes et traditionnelles, les valeurs individuelles et communales, la fidélité a la tribu et la famille et celle a la nation et la loi et l'ordre. Je examinerais l'énorme effet de l'impérialisme et colonialisme sur tous les aspects de la vie au Nigeria postmoderne comme représente dans ses romans, essais et discours rassembles dans : *Morning yet on Creatioin day, The Trouble with Nigeria,* et *Home and Exile.* Je prêterais attention aux points de vues d'Achebe et de se perspective sure le rôle de l'élite instruite et des écrivains qui créent et forment la conscience nationale et la conscience politique. Selon Achebe leur rôle est d'éclairer et mener les peuples et qu'il ne devrait pas être excusées ou être grêles quand ils essayent de se retirer et se séparer de ces masses.

Mots clés : colonialisme et impérialisme – post colonialisme – attitude envers la langue – attitude envers le passé – didactisme – féminisme – modération – radicalisme – écriture colonialiste – élite littérature – élite politique – dictature et autoritarisme.

Abstract

Anglophone African postcolonial writers who write to a larger audience, emphasized the idea that all or part of the literature that has been written about the British colonies in these eras was written from a vision derived from tradition of culture and political system that justified colonialism and celebrated it. African writers found themselves provoked and forced to respond to such writings and to rewrite about their histories, cultures and traditions from inside. They wanted to depict a new picture that reflects their real life and realized that this would be a hard, if not impossible task, unless they use a new modes of writings and a new language. By creating a new style of writing and a new language they actually sought to create a new postcolonial literature that would provide what they considered to be a more authentically indigenous representation of their traditions, cultures, hopes and aspirations. One of the brilliant writers who wrote a bout these issues successfully was the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. This thesis will focus on Chinua Achebe's response to some of the European imperialists' misrepresentations and stereotypes of African culture and character. Achebe was successful in exposing the various mechanisms of complicity between, on the one hand, the practices of expanisionism endorsed by the powerful colonial nations, and, on the other hand, the pro-imperialist literature that was produced during the age of European imperialism. We will discuss Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* and Achebe's response in his *Things Fall Apart* from that Perspective. Also, Achebe succeeded in exposing the new nationalist and fascist political and

literary elites that emerged after independence and tried to highjack people's hopes and aspirations of liberation and development. Those elites, in most African postcolonial countries, formed alliances with the old imperial powers that they pretended to oppose vehemently. We will discuss these issues and others in Acheb's *No Longer at Ease*, *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah.* Along with discussing issues of corruption, dictatorship, and political unrest, Achebe addresses the issues of ongoing struggles in Nigerian life between modern and traditional values, between individualistic and communal values, between loyalty to the tribe and family and that to the nation and law and order. We will examine the enormous effect of imperialism and colonialism on all aspects of life in postmodern Nigeria as depicted in his novels and collected essays and speeches in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* and *Home and Exile*. We will pay attention to how Achebe's, as a committed writer, views the role of the educated elite and writes to create and form a national awareness and political consciousness. According to Achebe the elite's role is to enlighten and lead the masses and that they should not be excused or hailed when they try to alienate and separate themselves from those masses.

Keywords: colonialism and imperialism – post colonialism – attitudes towards language – attitudes towards the past – didacticism – feminism – moderation – radicalism – colonialist writing – Things Fall Apart – Mister Johnson – literary elite – political elite – dictatorship and authoritarianism – A Man of the People.

Introduction

Postcolonial writers succeeded to a large extent in exposing the various mechanisms of complicity between, on the one hand, the practices of expansionism endorsed by the powerful colonial nations, and, on the other hand, the pro- imperialist literature that was produced during the age of European imperialism. Also, they succeeded in exposing the new nationalist, political and literary elites that emerged after independence and highjacked people's hopes and aspirations for liberation and development. Those elites, in most postcolonial countries, formed alliances with the same old imperial powers that they had opposed vehemently. Writers of the colonial and imperial eras have been retroactively revealed to be extremely biased in their treatment of the "other"-- the colonized, and to have almost invariably failed to reflect critically upon the prejudices and dehumanizing practices of imperialism. Anglophone postcolonial writers emphasize the idea that all or part of the literature that was written about the British colonies in these eras was based on a vision derived from a tradition of culture and political systems that justified colonialism and celebrated it. Writers in postcolonial countries found themselves provoked and forced to respond to such writings and to rewrite their histories, cultures and traditions from the inside. They wanted to depict a new picture that reflected their real life, and they realized that this would be a hard, if not impossible, task, unless they used new modes of writing and a new language. By creating a new style of writing and a new language they actually sought to create a new post-independence national literature that would provide what they considered to be a more authentically indigenous representation of their traditions, cultures, hopes, and aspirations. The importance of

language as a means of communication was the most pronounced challenge facing these writers. They were aware of the need to write in a language that appeals to a larger audience, like English. But did these writers write in the same cosmopolitan English, the English of the center, that they had long challenged as an inappropriate means of expressing their own experience, or did they write in their own English instead? One of the brilliant postcolonial writers who used English as a means of writing and communication was the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, who says in *Morning yet on Creation Day*:

> I recognize of course that be.... problem is not exactly mine, but I feel that the English language is not exactly mine, but I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English still in full communion with its ancestral home but attend to suit its new African surroundings. (Achebe 62)

Achebe feels that the English language with its lucidity, its shamelessness in borrowing from other languages, and its flexibility can carry the "weight" of his African experience. He appreciates his ability to write in a world language as a means of reaching a wider audience than others who write in local languages and dialects. The combination of a rich language, like English, that is adapted to express the experience of a rich culture, like the Igbo, by a talented writer like Achebe were important factors in the wide success that his novels achieved. Achebe has asserted on many occasions that his use of English does not result from his desire to show off or to flirt with or flatter Western audience but it is out of the need to express his own African

experience:

> Therefore those African writers who have chosen to write in English or in French are not unpatriotic smart Alecs with an eye on the main change- out side their own countries. They are byproducts of the same products of the same process that made the new nation states of Africa. (57)

And he says:

> but for me there is no other choice. I have been given this language and I intend to use it. I hope, though, that there always will be men, like the late chief Fagunwa, who will choose to write in their native language and ensure that our ethnic literature will flourish side by side with the national ones. For those of us who opt for English there is much work ahead and much excitement. (62)

Achebe does not criticize other writers for choosing to write in their native languages. And despite his confidence and appreciation of the English language, he realizes, like other African writers, the danger of competing with the center's writers, who claim the exclusivity of that language. He also realizes the danger of using the same language that has been used as a means to dominate by colonialists and imperialists. Achbe is aware of the ongoing debates on the issue of language by African scholars, writers and critics. Many African critics argued compellingly against writing in colonialist European languages and they had many scores on this issues. In his book, *Decolonizing the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, Ngugi Wa Thiong`o argues that adopting European colonialist languages as official languages and the languages of learning and writing in some African countries is destroying these countries' cultures and identity. He asserts that language is

not only a means of communication but it is the carrier of people's culture and history and the adoption of English language, for example, as an official language and the language of learning means adopting every thing that that language carries and represents . He also argues that African writers' business should be enriching African languages not the colonialist languages. He asserts that African writers' concern and attention should be their African readers or audience and they should leave the task of translation of their writings to western Audience to translators. He realizes the importance of language as a means of domination; he says `the domination of a people's language by the language of the colonizing nation was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized' (Ngugi 16); and he says somewhere else that 'Language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation'(Ngugi 9). He emphases that European domination on African soul and mind is still there and it is simply represented in the definition of African countries in terms of the language of imperialist imposition as English-speaking, French- speaking or Portuguese- speaking. But Achebe's distinct conviction that English can be appropriated and modified distances him from other radical writers who call for the abrogation of the English language. Instead, he calls for the appropriation and modification of English so that it can convey the African experience. He stresses on the point that the

battle and the debate should not be on the writer's choice of using European language or not because writers should be given that choice and they should write in the language they feel themselves comfortable with and they feel it can carry their thought and experience . If a writer writes in English, for example, his writings can be translated into African languages and if the same writer opted to write in Swahili, for example, his writings can be translated into English. What is more important for Achebe is the theme, the idea, the subject and the final goal of any writer's writings. Imposing certain languages on certain writers in the name of nationalism, decolonization, and liberation is not an alternative for him. In their book *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature: African Fiction and Poetry and their Critics,* Writers like Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike agree with Achebe on the need to modify English or any other colonial language so that it carries African culture. Chinweizu argues that ` writing in an English different from standard English should not be construed as letting Africa down' and she says that 'Africans have no business speaking the King's English indistinguishably from an English don and they have no business trying to prove to Europeans that Africans can speak or write European languages indistinguishably from Europeans. Therefore, no sense of embarrassment is warranted when an African deviates from standard English by speaking or writing an African variant (Chinweizu 264)'. I will discuss that conception in Achebe's writings in detail when I come to discuss his

novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Man of the People* and how he uses a combination of African English, vernacular and pidgin in these works.

This project will focus on Achebe's response to some of the European imperialist's misrepresentations and stereotypes of African culture and character. Achebe, western-educated and an expert in both the African and European cultures, can provide a unique double perspective by exposing the various injustices that his people have been subject to and how these injustices were justified by imperialist administrators and writers alike. Indeed, he finds it to be " the writer's duty" to respond to these misrepresentations and stereotypes:

> Whether we like to face up to it or not Africa has been the most insulted continent in the world. African's very claim of humanity has been questioned at various times, their persons abused, their intelligence insulted.These things have happened in the past and have gone on happening today. We have a duty to bring them to an end for our own sakes, for the Sake of our children and indeed for the safety and happiness of the world. (*Morning yet on Creation Day 75)*

He has said on another occasion that the main theme of any African writer should be " that African peoples did not hear of culture for the first time from the European"(Killam 8). Achebe is not content only with rewriting his people's history and re-representing their cultures, but he has taken it as his task to show the ongoing conflict between European and African values: between individualistic and communal values, between oral and written

cultures. He emphasizes, for example, the differences between the two cultures in understanding and dealing with natural phenomena. He exposes the difficulties of communication and the consequences of judging each other's culture from the outside or from the surface. Also, one of the central themes in Achebe's writings is the use of different styles, imagery, and meanings for English words. His extensive and fascinating use of proverbs that derive from the Igbo culture is another characteristic of his style. I chose to write on Achebe not only because he is one of the rare writers who writes in a brilliant and innovative style, but also because he distances himself from the radical and controversial theories that seek to abrogate the colonizer's language, whether it was English, French or some others. He believes in the mutual erosions that were adopted by some postcolonial writers as a reaction to the colonizer's misconducts and misrepresentations. The mutual erosion that those writers called for required, first, that each part of the relationship to erode and abrogate the pre-established views and judgments on each other in their own societies and re-establish and recreate new beliefs and views based on equal admission and acceptance of each other. At this point the old view of center and margin, metropolitan and provincial, authentic and non-authentic, insider and outsider, and linguistic exclusivity should all be radically changed or erased. One of the main tasks of the postcolonial writer was to create a national literature that rejects the claim of the center to exclusivity and to the sense of being an unmatched insider by virtue of experience. Also, to undergo a process of self -

awareness leading to self-confidence which, in turn, will lead to a final stage of mutual understanding among cultures. Achebe simply has preached and done all that. He has remained true to himself and to his readers. He does not glorify every single incident in his people's history and every custom and tradition in their culture on the one hand and he does not abuse all Western achievements in his country on the other. To put it simply, he was a moderate and a committed writer who sought to restore his people's self-confidence, which had been lost through centuries of subjugation, dehumanization, marginalization, and association with Europeans. He attempted to write the past in the present: to give his reader confidence in his culture's vitality and continuity as well as to enlighten his Western readers and help them to get rid of their conception of African culture, as he did in his *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. At the same time, he is keen to analyze the political and social and economical turmoil that his country has been going through since independence till the present, as in his *Man of the People, No Longer at Ease* and *Anthills of the Savanna*. His use of English as a medium of expression is a choice that was not the result of an intention or desire to promote, celebrate or impose any of the values or ways that this language offered his readers. His creativity and his unprecedented use of English words in different meanings that suit the Igbo culture, his use of imagery, metaphors, and expressions and proverbs that derived from this culture, all should be looked at positively, because it proves that English is capable of carrying the experience of more

than one culture. Besides, his use of English in such a way should be viewed as something authentic, because what counts in any language is its actual use and practice, not abstract linguistic theories. As for other radical postcolonial writers and critics who have sought to revive pre-colonial languages and cultures, they have argued that this goal can only be achieved by decolonizing their societies and cultures. They view colonization as a passing historical phenomenon which can be left behind altogether once independence is achieved. These writers do not put too much weight on cultural interaction, hybridity, and assimilation. They show more enthusiasm about their exclusivity, their linguistic and literary issues and concerns, than western scholars show about their own. Although Achebe calls for the same meaning, he sets himself aside from those writers by asserting that such theories should be momentary and not a goal in themselves. They should be a tactical plan to be abandoned once the goal is achieved. He says:

> Here then is an adequate revolution for me to espouse- to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self- abasement. And it is essentially a question of education, in the best sense of that word. Here, I think my aims and the deepest aspiration of my society meet. For no thinking African can escape the pain of the wound in our soul. You have all heard of the African personality; of African democracy, of the African way to socialism, of Negritude, and so on. They are all props we have fashioned at different times to help us get on our feet a gain. Once we are up we shan't need any of them any more. But for the moment it is in the nature of things that we may need to counter racism with what Jean-Paul Sartre has called anti-racist racism, to announce that we are not just as good as the next man but that we are much better. The writer cannot expect to be excused from

> the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. (Innes 105)

I have quoted this passage at length because it explains Achebe's way of thinking about and handling such theories. He rejects the mutual abrogation of language by insisting on writing in English and not denying others' right to write in local languages and dialects. Also, he is not obsessed with the destruction of the historical past as a means of escape from all of the pains and humiliations that were inflicted on his people during that imperial past.

Thus, Achebe's success lies in his challenging of such theories and in his objective writing about his people's history. He wrote about the colonial period in a way that sheds light on the relationships between the colonized and the colonizer that were a mystery or were in the documentary archives and not revealed to readers for a long time. He uncovered and re-documented, in an imaginative literary way, the path that brought his people under the domination of foreign rule. He showed his readers how each party, native fellows and foreign colonizers, dealt with one another, from a native writer's point of view. Thus the aim of writing back is to depict a new African picture, to restore the long lost African dignity and self-confidence, to establish a new relationship with overseas readers by bringing the African world to them and familiarizing them with it, to expose and analyze the conflicting western and African cultural values that effect contemporary modern life, and to try to establish and create a new African identity out of all the political, social, and economical

turmoil. Achebe never dreamt of a historical past as a means of escape but, on the contrary, he invested too much of his time, effort and talent in writing about his people's past. He asserts that the present must be seen as a continuation of the past and a product of it. Ignoring people' past simply would not solve their problems, nor would it lead to a brighter future. Achebe urges his readers to make no mistake about that in his *Things Fall Apart* and its extension, *No Longer at Ease*. Those two novels cover four generations of Ibo people's life. While *Things fall apart* treats the traditional Igbo life at the beginning of this century and the struggle of those people, embodied by the radical cultural hero Okonkwo, to preserve their traditional life under the domination of colonial rule, *No Longer at Ease* came to tell us about the change that resulted from colonial domination and the start of a new kind of struggle and a new cultural tension between traditional and modern values, the individual and the communal. The direct consequences and effects of that struggle showed themselves in the self-division, identity- loss and uncertainty of ordinary Igbo people, embodied in the character of Okonkwo's grandson, Obi. Obi believes that an individual has the right to choose his own private life, and part of that is his own right to choose his own wife regardless of his parents' or community's opinion. Obi's individualism and his adapted western values will come into a direct clash with his people's communal and traditional values. Achebe asserts the inevitability of the change in postcolonial societies and this change is not necessarily, as some postcolonial writers assert, a negative one. Societies are

destined to interact with each other, destined to learn, borrow from each other, and they are all destined to change whether they liked it or not. Edward Said writes on this subject, though from a different regional context:

> There is in all nationally defined cultures, I believe, an aspiration to sovereignty, to sway, and to dominance. In this French and British, Indian and Japanese cultures concur. At the same time, paradoxically, we have never been aware as we now are how oddly hybrid historical and cultural experiences are, of how they partake of many often contradictory experiences and domains, cross national boundaries, defy the *police* action of simple dogma and loud patriotism. Far from being unitary or monolithic or autonomous things, cultures actually assume more "foreign" elements, alterities, differences, than they consciously exclude. Who in India or Algeria today can confidently separate out the British or French component of the past from present actualities, and who in Britain or in France can draw a clear circle around British London or French Paris that would exclude the impact of India and Algeria upon those two imperial cities? *(Culture and Imperialism* 15)

As for Achebe, he does not deny or try to "separate the British component of the past from the present actualities"; on the contrary, he always emphasizes the importance of the cross-cultural conception in reaching a wider global understanding. But that does not mean embracing everything that imperial forces brought to his society without questioning it or dealing with it on a basis of cultural equality. In his, *Arrow of God*, Achebe insists on the openness of his people toward other cultures and values and their concern about the necessity to change in a changing world, embodied in the character of the Chief Priest of Ulu, Ezeulu. Ezeulu seems even more open -minded than the Whiteman in accepting his lifestyle and his approaches to things. He sends his son, despite his people's

vigorous protest, to learn about the White man's religion, language, and customs. He tells his son that a man must move with the times. He uses a supporting proverb to make it easier for his puzzled son to understand: he says, " I am like the bird Eneke-nti-oba. When his friends asked him why he was always on the wing he replied: "men of today have learnt to shoot without missing and so I have learnt to fly without perching" (Achebe 55). And he further elaborates on that by saying that

> I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying *had we known tomorrow.* (55)

Like *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* tells the story of Igbo peoples' past under colonial rule. But by addressing this subject Achebe tries to distance himself from the temptation of idealizing this past. G.D. Killam reflects on this issue in his *The Writings of Chinua Achebe*. He quotes from Achebe's *The Role of the Writer in a New Nation,* the following:

> The question is how does a writer re-create this past? Quite clearly there is a strong temptation to idealize it- to extol its good points and pretend that the bad never existed. This is where the writer's integrity comes in. Will he be strong enough to overcome the temptation to select only those facts which flatter him? If he succumbs he will have branded himself as an untrustworthy witness. But it is not only his personal integrity as an artist which is involved . The credibility of the world he is attempting to recreate will be called to question and he will defeats his own purpose if he is suspected of

> glossing over inconvenient facts. We cannot pretend that our past was one long, technicolor idyll. We have to admit that like other people's past ours had its good as well as its bad sides. (Killam 10)

Achebe said on many occasions, that he was against those views that seek to romanticize or idealize the African past as one long, peaceful, idyllic and romantic. In his writings, he shows that his people's past is no different from others; it was peaceful and violent, good and bad, happy and sad, prosperous and poor. His characters at one time are lucky and fortunate and at other times are pathetic and miserable; at one time they are strong and fearless and at another time they are delicate and pacifist; at one time they are honest and hardworking and at other times they are corrupt, dishonest and lazy. In short, his people and the characters in his novels are human beings like others and the traits and characteristics they have are what other human beings have. Their concerns and aspirations are universal; their sufferings and feelings are genuine and human. But they behave and speak out of their situations and positions and according to their own cultural background. It is important to assert that this impartial attitude on the universality of traits and characteristics of human beings and the embracing of cross-cultural viewpoints is shared by other African writers and critics on the African continent. Those writers tried to distance themselves from Négritude theories and all theories that sought to glorify the African past and personality; instead, they tried to give that past and personality a human dimension. One of the strong and vigorous statements

comes from the writer and critic Kwame Nkrumah, who says

> Who is so stupid to deny the historical fact of Negritude as both protest and a positive assertion of African cultural values? All this is valid. What I do not accept is the way in which too much of the poetry inspired by it romanticizes Africa - as a symbol of innocence, purity, and artless primitiveness. I feel insulted when some people imply that Africa is not also a violent continent. I am a violent person, and proud of it because it is often a healthy human state of mind; someday I am going to plunder, rape, set things on fire; I am going to cut someone,s throat; I am going to subvert a government; I am going to organize a coup d'etat; yes I am going to oppress my own people; I am going to hunt down the rich fat black men who bully the small; weak black men and destroy them; I am going to become a capitalist.....The image of Africa consists of all these and others. And Negritude poetry pretends that they do not constitute the image and leaves them out. So we are told only half- often even a falsified half- of the story of the story of Africa. Sheer romanticism that fails to see the large landscape of the African makes bad poetry. (Quayson 56)

A similar view is expressed by the South African writer Ezekiel Mphahlel, who reflects on the rapid changes in language and culture that were taking place in South Africa; he says:

> I personally cannot think of the future of my people in South Africa as something in which the White man does not feature. Whether he likes it or not, our destinies are inseparable. I have seen too much that is good in western culture- for example, its music, literature and theater- to want to repudiate it. If the Whiteman shut his eyes to the good that is in my culture, he is the poorer for it and I am one up on him. There is nothing I can do to cure his malady. He has used the labor of my people for three centuries. To this extent he is deeply committed to a co-habitation with us- and that is reducing the relationship to its barest terms. He has no just reason to deny me the political rights many other workers in the world enjoy, and the other good things education creates an awareness of and

> a desire for. The white man has detribalized me. He had better go the whole hog. He must know that I am the personification of the African paradox, detribalized, westernized, but still African. (Postcolonialism.38)

"Detribalized, Westernized, but still African"; this is the formula that most of the moderate and radical African writers and critics embrace, and it is their response to all biased, partial and imperial accomplice Western or non-Western writers. It is the stress on the Africanness of Africa.

What a writer like Achebe is looking for in his writings is not only an economical or political decolonization, though this is important in itself, but, rather, a cultural decolonization. He seeks the liberation from the cultural hegemony that has justified and supported the brutal and exploitive practices of European empires. His main aim is to reveal to his reader the affiliation and complicity between intelligentsia and the political imperial powers. These writers gave the imperial powers the ideological authorization to control and exploit other peoples inhumanly and ruthlessly. They justified colonization as a means of bringing native peoples to light and civilization. Among the writers whose writings provoked Achebe and made him start writing, as he himself mentions, were Joseph Conrad and Joyce Cary. Catherine Lynette Innes mentions in her interesting book *Chinua Achebe* that

> As an arts student, Achebe encountered a syllabus similar to that taught in British universities, but with some additions. He read Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth, but he also read writers considered 'relevant' to a Nigerian student: Conrad, Joyce Cary and Graham Greene. The

> history classes he attended were taught from a British point of view, but they, together with the course taught by Dr J. Parrinder , a pioneer in the study of West religions, stirred him to investigate further the history and theology of his own people, mainly through oral account, but also through written records of missionaries, administrators and anthropologists. (Innes 8)

These, then, were Achebe's main provocative reasons that started his interest in what other writers wrote about his country and his culture. That interest and curiosity, as we will see, had turned to rejection and resistance and was mainly the result of his sense of insult and humiliation as a native African. He felt that his debased image and stereotyped character as African in the European's mind are derived from the incessantly inauthentic and deformed portrayal and misrepresentation of that image and character depicted by biased imperial oriented writers. By rewriting from his African point of view, Achebe corrects and stabilizes a balance that has been long lost to the imperial writers. He is not interested in theorizing about race, class, history language and culture; he is not speculating on theories that seek to prove that the African race is the best, as some European imperial writers had tried to prove the opposite before. He is interested in creating an African literature that refutes imperial theories and establishes a new literary style and mood to compete with the imperial literature in giving a more credible and authentic picture of African character and culture. Achebe has been attacked by some fellow Nigerian writers who tried to belittle his achievements and who blamed him for being too soft on western cultures and values, and for not supporting Afro-

centric movements; he has also been blamed for using the English language in his writings. Achebe was aware of the danger of such movements, and he put the Afro-centric on the same level as the Euro-centric, because they both eventually lead to racism. In the process of discussing African identity, culture, language and history Achebe seems to stand on solid grounds of rationality, reason and validity in his arguments. He is a great defender of African culture and this is very well established in his novels and short stories.

In imperial writings Africans are depicted as primitive and mindless savages who do not possess any set of beliefs or system of values; they do not have a language of their own. Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* is an example of this legacy of racist writings. In this novel readers are told that the Blackman is a "prehistoric man", "a conquered monster", "inhuman," "savage"(44) " poor devil", "rudimentary soul", " cannibal"(30) and so on. Africa is described as a land of darkness, wilderness, desolation, and loss. The reason for such a misrepresentation and racism in early nineteenth and twentieth century European writings is the need to affirm the European imperial identity by depicting the opposite of that identity. Achebe asserts this when he says: "In western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negation at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest...."(*Heart of Darkness*). It is the pressure to confirm one's own identity through setting the 'negation' of this identity. Setting or forming the negation requires representing its

differences in intense, repeated, and varied ways so that it brings about familiarity and awareness of the different "other", and not necessarily acceptance of it. To achieve that goal imperial writers tend not to represent the differences of others in an objective or abstract way but in a way that depicts the other's differences as inferior compared with their, the writer's, superior ones. It is relevant to quote Edward Said about the misrepresentation of the Orient and Orientals in European writings. For Said the Orient is

> not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilization and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other. In addition, the orient has helped to define Europe (or the west) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. (*Orientalism* 3)

The same idea is echoed elsewhere when Said says that

> Many terms were used to express the relation (Oriental-European): Balfour and Cromer , typically, used several. The Orient is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different"; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, normal". (40)

Thus, part of the reason for depicting the image of the "other" in that way is the need for self-definition. That definition would be crucial in justifying decisions of colonizing and controlling that different "Other". All brutal genocides and inhuman disastrous practices committed by imperialist powers were justified by these powers which were dealing with " primitive people" " savages", and "monsters". Achebe perceived this very clearly in Conrad's comparison of the Thames to the Congo River, where he says:

> *Heart of Darkness* projects the image of Africa as "the other world, the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality, the book opens on the river Thames, tranquil, resting peacefully "at the decline of day after ages of good service done to the race that peopled its banks." But the actual story will take place on the river Congo, the very antithesis of the Thames. The river Congo is quite decidedly not a river emeritus. It has rendered no service and enjoys no old- age pension. We are told that " going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginning of the world". (Achebe 252)

It seems that the show of superiority is not limited toward other races and cultures but it extends to other geographical and natural dimensions, otherwise how can one explain such comparison between the two rivers. It is as if Conrad wanted to say that, since those two rivers differ completely from one another, the people who live along their banks were accordingly different; one is good and the other is bad; one is "tranquil" and peaceful and the other is violent, one is productive and the other is idle and lazy. Achebe draws our attention to another comparison that Conrad draws between black and white colors as another example of racism, he says:

> A black figure stood up, strode on long black legs, waving long black arms...As though we might expect a black figure striding a long on black legs to wave white arms! But so unrelenting is Conrad's obsession.
> As a matter of interest Conrad gives us in A *Personal Record* what amounts to a companion piece to the buck nigger of Haiti. At the age of sixteen Conrad encountered his first English ma in Europe. He calls him in the following manner: " (his) calves exposed to the public gaze... dazzled the beholder by the splendor of their marble- like condition and their rich tone of young ivory.... the right of a heading, exalted satisfaction with the world of

> men...illumined his face...and triumphant eyes. In passing he cast a glance of kindly curiosity and a friendly gleam of big, sound, shiny teeth... his white calves twinkled sturdily. (Achebe 258)

In quoting this passage, Achebe tries to show Conrad's failure or lack of judgment, despite his talent as a writer, when he appreciates and admires men on color basis. But again Achebe shows self-restraint in avoiding the temptation of responding to such writings in the same racist way. He seems more reconciliatory and he always appreciates his privileged position in African and Western cultures and his ability to write on and to both. But his passion for Africa and African culture remains strong, and this is clearly rooted in his writings. He often explained that radicalism deprives writers of their credibility; it defeats their case and leads to racism and counter-racism. Another reconciliatory African philosopher and writer, the Ghanian Kwame Anthony Appiah, shares Achebe's conviction, as he declares that:

> In the prewar era, colonial Africans experienced European racism to radically different degrees in differing colonial conditions, and had correspondingly different degrees of preoccupation with the issues. But with the reality of Nazi racism open to plain view- a reality that still exhausts the resources of our language - it was easy in the immediate postwar era for anyone to see the potentialities for evil of race as an organizing principle of political solidarity. What was hard to see was the possibility of giving up race as a notion altogether. Could anything be more real than Jewishness in a world where to be Jewish meant the threat of the death camp? In a world where being a Jew had come to have a terrible- racial- meaning for everyone, racism, it seemed, could be counted only by accepting the categories of race. (Appiah 6)

In his book *In My Father's House* Appiah analyzes and theorizes race, culture, language, history, postcolonial literature and African identity in a very persuasive and candid way. Because of his reconciliatory attitude, he seems not to be favored by many. Appiah stands firmly against any theory that embraces race as an essentiality for political and social solidarity. He also refutes Crummel's theory that minimizing race differences comes through confirmation of these racial differences, not by denying them, and that every race in the universe has its own mission to deliver and its own message to achieve. Appiah's rejection comes from his consciousness that adopting such theories and other theories of Afro-centrist writers would provide false solutions and would lead to the same trap of racism and racial hatred that these themselves suffered from. He is acutely aware that the mission of humanity is not the mission of one group or one race, and that the message of humanity is not the message of one group or one nation but of all humanity and all races. Racial differences cannot vanish through simply confirming them but only through the interaction and cooperation of all humanity.

As for Achebe, he does not deny the intercultural and interracial realities in modern Africa and he is aware of the inescapable influence that centuries of contact with the West have imposed on his own career as a writer and on his people's life, culture and literature. In his essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," he says:

> In my original conception of this essay I had thought to conclude it nicely on an appropriately positive note in

> which I would suggest from my privileged position in Africa and western culture some advantage the west might derive from Africa not through a haze of distortions and cheap mystification but quite simply as a continent of people-not angel, but not rudimentary soul either-just people often highly gifted people and often strikingly successful in their enterprises with life and society. (Achebe 261)

This is exactly what Achebe does in *Things Fall Apart*, some aspects of which I will discuss in detail in a separate section. In *Things Fall Apart* Achebe writes about African culture, traditions and customs, about people, real people, not savages or poor devils or monsters, but people with deep human feelings and concerns, thoughtful and caring; who work hard on their land and who have their own languages and songs. Achebe, by developing a mature professional enthusiasm for everything African, resembles many other postcolonial writers. This shows that the writings of Achebe or any other postcolonial writer, whether African or Asian, are not produced in a vacuum. These writings voice a shared set of genuine concerns and struggles that a large portion of their populations went and are still going through. For example, What Salman Rushdie says about the British imperial legacy in India is echoed by other African writers in Ghana or Nigeria or somewhere else in the extended and varied geographical territories and regions that shared the same colonial legacy.

Yet we can imagine that Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* comes as part of a wide African literature that resists the colonial legacy and tries to repair the damage that had been done to the image of Africa and its people. In reading

this story we meet the character of the District commissioner, who appears at the end of the novel, and strikes a familiar chord with readers of the novel. He is not entirely different from Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness.* He is arrogant, dismissive of African people, and deeply ignorant of the complexity and richness of Igbo life. However, his attitude clearly reflects the depiction of Africa; this attitude, following Achebe's depiction of the Igbo, seems empty and malicious. This is why *Things Fall Apart,* as a story written in English, is considered a direct and early response to both *Heart of Darkness* and *Mr Johnson.* It gives Igbo people an opportunity to express themselves on their own terms, as well as an opportunity fore readers to see Ibos through their own eyes.

As for post-independent Nigeria, Achebe seems more concerned with the issues and troubles that emerged after the problematic achievement of political independence. It was a problematic independence because it was only a partial independence, and because it created a very complicated situation fraught with political and economical corruption, dictatorship, ethnical and religious tensions, the tensions between western and traditional values, and the economic subservience to the West. The emergence of the new political and literary elites was and is still a matter of interest to him. These issues and others are dealt with in the novels that address the present Nigeria like *No Longer at Ease, Man of the people*, *Anthills of the*

Savannah, his collected short stories in *Girls at War and Other stories* and his collected essays in *A Morning Yet on Creation Day* and *Home and Exile and The Trouble with Nigeria.* Dictatorship and totalitarianism are the most persistent problems in postcolonial countries. Totalitarian regimes not only high jacked, the hard-won independence but also destroyed all of the population's hopes and aspirations for a better life and a better future for their children. Achebe is aware that the main source of the troubles, miseries, and turmoils that the African continent has been suffering from in recent history is the failure and the mismanagement of the corrupted upstart political elites. Much of that elite's legitimacy is derived from its nationalist ideology and much of the nationalist ideology in Africa and other postcolonial countries depended on the realities of colonial powers. The nationalist ideologies were either opposing imperialist theories or views or were establishing a nationalistic awareness. Nationalism necessarily leads to the vision of a revolutionary regeneration of national culture. That regeneration of national culture might be promoted and led by a literary and academic elites or the intelligentsia. These elites pay little attention to the direct and urgent economical, social and political problems their societies suffer from, and they attend to rhetorical discourses. In his book *Culture and Imperialism* Edward Said shows this trend in the Indian scholar and theoretician Partha Chatterjee' s writings:

> Chatterjee shows that successful anti-imperialist nationalism has a history of evasion and avoidance, and

> that nationalism can become an interruptive and a delaying period for not dealing with economic disparities, social injustice, and the capture of the newly independent state by a nationalist elite. But he does not emphasize enough, I think, that the culture's contribution to statism is often the result of a separatist, even chauvinist and authoritarian conception of nationalism. There is also, however, a consistent intellectual trend within the nationalist consensus that is vitally critical, that refuses that short -term blandishments of separatists and triumphant slogans in favor of the larger, more generous human realities of community among cultures, people, and Societies. This community is the real human liberation portended by the resistance to imperialism. (Said 217)

Said, clearly, recognizes two models of nationalism. One seeks to promote and regenerate national culture in a chauvinistic and separatist way that oversees social, economic, political realties and disregards any human factors among societies and cultures. This type of nationalism tends to breed totalitarian and fascist rule designed to achieve the unachievable goals and slogans. To a certain degree there is a complicity and undeclared cooperation between these dictatorial regimes and the same former imperial powers that ruled postcolonial countries.

The insistence of colonialists and imperialists on setting foot in these countries even after independence is cleverly depicted in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight*'s *Children*. When Ahmad Sinai, one of the main characters in the novel, buys one of Mr. William Methwold's houses in Bombay, Mr. Methwold, the English representative of the Raj offers to sell his luxurious houses, to selected people, under the condition that the houses be bought with their entire contents, which were to be kept and maintained by the new owners,

such as the pets, the two dogs, the gold fish, the piano, the hanging fan, the champaign and whisky sets. The second condition was that the actual transfer of the houses must take place at midnight as the same day of the declaration as independence in 1947. This incident is very symbolic; it suggests that imperialism is not over after independence, that imperialism does not leave when the imperialist leave the country. Second, it shows the strong desire of imperialists to show their superiority through their attempt to impose their life styles and habits on the indigenous people. Third, it tells us that the people who came to power after independence were mostly selected and favored by the British administration, so that the transfer of the houses resembled the transfer of political power, in that it was conditioned. This cooperation and complicity, which is deeply rooted in the complicated system of bribery and political corruption, comes to assure both sides' interests. Said gives a striking example of this kind of complicity between dictatorships in the third world, that is most, if not all, postcolonial, countries and a Western super-power that advocates democracy and human rights in the world, the United States of America. He says:

> Democracy in any real sense of the word is nowhere to be found in the still " nationalistic" Middle East: there are either privileged oligarchies or privileged ethnic groups. The large mass of people is crushed beneath dictatorship or unyielding, unresponsive, unpopular government. But the notion that the United States is various innocent in this dreadful state of affairs is unacceptable, as is the proposition that the Gulf War was not a war between George Bush and Saddam Hussein– it most certainly was- and that the United States acted solely and principally in

> the intrust of the United Nations. At bottom it was a personified struggle between, on the one hand, a third world dictator of the kind that the United States has long dealt with(Haile Selassie, Somoza, Syngman Rhee, the Shah of Iran, Pinochet, Marcos, Noreiga, etc.), whose rule it encouraged, whose favor it long enjoyed, and, on the other, the president of a country which has taken on the mantle of empire inherited from Britain and France and was determined to remain in the Middle East for its oil and for reasons of geo-strategic and political advantage. (217)

It seems that ultra nationalist movements and authoritarian regimes were and are unsuccessful in striking alliances and having intimate relationships with imperial powers because, when their people rose up against them, the imperial powers did not protect them and left them to their own fate, as were the cases with the above mentioned dictators. However, this model of nationalism tends to be coupled with a radical Marxist ideology during the process of its legitimate attempt to revive its national cultures. The intelligentsia of this model tend to be dogmatic and it takes radical ethical attitudes and it tries to distance itself from any compromising or reconciling attitudes as Ato Quayson explains in his book *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or process?* He accuses Postcolonial writers of being contradictory and contaminated by being part of a compromised world. And he calls for responsible postcolonial studies with radical ethical attitudes. He also shows the failure of Marxist discourse in addressing the problems of Africa:

> Marxism did provide a prime anti-hegemonic discourse by which to contest the west. However, within the dynamics of certain newly independent states that opted to turn to Marxism to mobilize the ordinary people for business of

> building viable post-independence societies, the rhetoric hardly ever matched with the practice, partly because this derivative ideology had to take shape within contexts that were riddled with their exacerbated cultural contradictions. Thus, in practice, the mobilization of the masses actually entitled the concentration of power in the hand of radical elite who turned out not to be very different from the western bourgeoisie they have vehemently criticized. In the hands of certain postcolonial nationalists, this mass mobilization impulse was conjoined to the consolidation of a cult of the leader as culture hero entailed a series of tragic distortion in social arrangements, with an entire cohort of sycophants growing a round the nationalist leader to prop up his self-image and to project him (they were variably men) as the representative of the nation. (Quayson 15)

Achebe does not endorse such radical ideologies, which proved to be worse than imperialist ones in practice, and he remains moderate without lacking the moral and ethical courage to be critical. He attacks dictatorships and the concentrated powers in the hands of the corrupted political elite but he does not shift the blame completely from imperial powers to native dictatorships. He treated these issues in his *Man of the People*, *No Longer At Ease*, *Anthills of the Savannah* and even in his *Arrow of God.* In Arrow *of God* we understand Achebe's remarks in the complaints of the British officers about their administration's orders of assigning or imposing some native regional chiefs on African people who lived their life freely and decided their issues collectively without the authority of a king or a government. In a letter from the British lieutenant Governor to Mr. Winterbottom, the British district officer, we read:

> To many colonial nations native admiration means

> government by white men. You are all aware that H.M.G considers this policy as mistakes. In place of the alternative of governing directly through administrative officers there is the other method of trying while we endeavor to purge the native system of its abuses to build a higher civilization upon the soundly rooted native stock that had its foundation in the heart and minds and thoughts of the people and therefore on which we can more easily build, moulding it and establishing it into lines consonant with modern ideas and higher standards, and yet all the times entitling the real force of the spirit of the people, instead of killing all that out and trying to start a fresh. We must not destroy the African atmosphere, the African mind, and the whole foundation of his race. (Achebe 56)

Achebe realized that the conception of imposing loyal rulers on postcolonial societies is more dangerous than direct colonialism because these rulers use the tactic of insisting that they are against imperialism, in order to strengthen their positions. They establish themselves squarely in the anti-African camp while parading as African nationalists. They use the claim of being African in much the same way, as imperialists seemed to use the claims of bringing light and civilization as a shield to exploit Africans. Achebe stresses that both must be viewed as imperialist in their orientation, selections, attitudes, purposes, and interests. He urges his reader to question their orientation, because they both engaged in an attempt to delay, destroy and cut the heart out of the African liberation and progressive movements. He says:

> The point I want to make here is that the creative writer in independent Nigeria found himself with a new, terrifying problem on his hands. He found that the independence his country was supposed to have won was totally without content. The old white master was still in power. He had got

> himself a bunch of black stooges to do his dirty work for commission. (82)

Those black stooges are the real challenge and danger posed by colonialism to traditional integrity. *Man of the People* portrays corruption as so savage and inescapable that it pervades all institutional structures, jeopardizing the moral fiber of society. The distribution of social amenities between the members of the elite, who takes over the colonialist's role, creates social inequality, and that leads to a normal reaction of distrust, bitterness and resistance. These issues and other approaches are addressed in this novel that I will discuss in the third section of this thesis.

Chapter one: *Things Fall Apart*

> "I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past- with all its imperfections- was not one long night of savagery from which the first European acting on God's behalf delivered them"(*Morning Yet on Creation Day* 45)

Things Fall Apart, published in 1958, is set in the 1890s, during the coming of the British to Nigeria. It is the seminal African novel in English. Although there were other important works, none has been as influential, not only in African literature, but in literature around the world. One of the novel's most important features is to create a complex and sympathetic portrait of traditional village culture in Africa. Achebe tries not only to inform the outside world about Igbo cultural traditions, but also to remind his own people of their past and to assert that it had contained much of value. All for many Africans in his time were ready to accept the European view that Africa had no history or culture worth considering. He also fiercely resents the stereotype of Africa as an undifferentiated primitive land in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Thus part of the novel is a response to a large tradition of European literature in which Africans were depicted as primitive and mindless savages. Achebe realizes that the attitudes present in colonial literature are so ingrained into western readers' perception of Africa that his task as an African writer, who wants to change these attitudes, is enormous. Throughout the novel Achebe shows how African cultures vary among themselves and how they change

over time. Before Achebe's writings, African literature, taught, consisted entirely of works by Europeans about Africa, such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson.* The latter portrays comic African characters who slavishly adore their white boss, to the point of gladly being shot to death by him. About this Achebe says:

> What *Mister Johnson* did do for me was not to change my course in life and turn me from something else into a writer; I was born that way. But it did open my eyes to the fact that my home was under attack and that my home was not merely a house or town but, more importantly, an awakening story in whose ambiance my own existence had first begun to assemble its fragment into a coherence and meaning; the story I had begun to learn consciously the moment I descended from the lorry that brought me to my father's house in Ogidi, the story that, seventeen years later at the university, I still had only a sketchy, tantalizing knowledge of, and over which even today, decades later, ?I still do not have sufficient mastery, but a bout which I can say one thing: that it is not the same story Joyce Cary intended me to have. (Achebe 38)

In this interesting book, *Home and Exile*, Achebe describes his early beginnings as a writer and his early awareness of his African identity, when he was a young university student. He realized that Cary, for example, could not have written a Nigerian novel that Nigerians could have accepted as their own story, not because Cary was European, "but rather because he was the product of a tradition of presenting Africa that he had absorbed at school and Sunday school, in magazines and in British society in general, at the end of the nineteenth century. In theory, a good writer might outgrow these influences, but Cary did not" (*Home and Exile* 40). What is it, then, that makes *Things*

Fall Apart an authentic picture of Africa that is more accepted by Nigerians than *Mr Johnson*? How could Achebe have succeeded in giving a less superficial picture in depicting an African character such as Okonkwo, who differs profoundly from the character of Johnson. Johnson is depicted by Cary as "a young clerk who turns his life into a romance, he is a poet who creates for himself a glorious destiny" (Cary 5).Ironically this romantic African character caused much humiliation and embarrassment to some African English literature students in Ibadan University, rather than impressing them. Achebe was one of these students, and he describes the students' reaction to the main character's "glorious" death.

> The intention of my English professor to introduce us to such an outstanding novel written about a place and people we would be familiar with and therefore easily able to appreciate, was quite unexceptional. But things did not turn out the way they should have. One of my classmates stood up and told an astounded teacher point-blank that the only moment he had enjoyed in the entire book was when the Nigerian hero, Johnson, was shot to death by his British master, Mr. Rudbeck. The rest of us, now astounded too, offered a medley of noises in reaction. My own judgment was that our colleague, and the rest of us perhaps, still had a lot to learn on how to express adverse literary opinion; but beyond that we all shared our colleague's exasperation at this bumbling idiot of a character whom Joyce Cary and our teacher were so assiduously passing off as a poet when he was nothing but an embarrassing nitwit. (Achebe 22-23)

A part from Achebe's opinion of Johnson's character, we come to know this character thoroughly during reading the novel. We get confused by its contradictory and abnormal traits and habits, and it gets and sustains our sympathy but, for sure, not our respect or admiration. First of all, we get puzzled about his

background. The writer does not give the reader a clue about where Johnson comes from and to what village or tribe he belongs, contrary to Achebe's characters, who belong to villages and tribes, and who are part of a tangled web of extended parental and maternal relationships. This depiction of a rootless character, no family, no tribe no background or any social context would make it easier later for him to develop and acquire distinctive and unconventional characteristics. Johnson's individuality and his hatred of African customs and traditions results from his rootlessness. Thus, according to this depiction, Johnson's enthusiastic adoption of the British colonizer's values, to the extent that he thinks of himself as British, is justified from the author's point of view. This is, of course, contrary to the depiction of Okonkwo's traditional character, whose unwillingness to change sets him apart from community and makes him fight alone against colonialism, and who finally gets destroyed. However this discontinuity of Johnson's origin shakes the credibility of the character itself and puzzles the reader, who might deeply realize that this character is more a European creation than an African. We are told that Johnson wears a white tropical suit and leather dress shoes even in the summer's fierce heat; He speaks of "our" standards and our " home", Britain, our "institutions" and our "king" (*Johnson* 36). He places his trust in his district officer, while failing to understand that the purpose of British laws in Nigeria is to protect the British and subdue Africans like himself. He is a cheerful man hurrying through the district, flirting with the pretty girls, reprimanding laggards for not being up to his standards, and for not being civilized. He identifies himself with the colonizers and he is completely loyal to the

British district officer:

> He is loyally determined to complete the filling with extraordinary speed and skill. Besides, he thoroughly enjoys opening a mail- that is, tearing open large, expensive envelopes and throwing them on the floor. This gives him a sense of the wealth and glory of the empire and he becomes part of it. (Cary 52)

Mister Johnson does not hide or shy off from announcing his relationship and admiration for the British colonizers; on the contrary, he parades this relationship in such an arrogant and insensitive way that he provokes some of his friends, the villagers, and sometimes even the British soldiers and administrators themselves. The story of Johnson is the story of an African clerk who works efficiently for his boss, Harry Rudbeck, who is obsessed with the dream of building a great road into the wilderness and connecting his outpost with the capital. Perhaps Rudbeck sees himself as a local version of an empire- builder. There is, alas, not enough money for the road, and it looks like work will have to be halted, until Johnson suggests to Rudbeck that they juggle the books a little until the next year's budget comes through. Rudbeck agrees, but when the deception is discovered it is Johnson who must be dismissed for the bookkeeping infraction. Loss of his position and status, as a government clerk, is a serious blow to Johnson, who has a good many debts to pay. But he soon finds another job, although with no more than two pounds a month, working as a clerk for Sargy Gollup, the hard-drinking British owner of the local general store. Gollup has a drunken love-hate relationship with Africans, whom he sometimes beats and

kicks violently for their own good, and the desperate Johnson agrees with him - partly because he has no other choice, but also because, in his increasingly confused mind, he identifies with him. Johnson is always able to transform a story of failure into triumph. He parades his new friendship with the indecent British shopkeeper everywhere. But soon, thoughtless Johnson is kicked out, after fighting with Gollup over giving a big and noisy party to more than fifty people in the store. He regains his job with Mr Rudbeck and he helps and encourages this colonial officer to build the road, and embezzles taxes to do so. When he illegally collects road fees and steals from the zungo money, he is suspended and fired. Johnson grows more angry and irritated, robs Mr.Gollup's store, and, when he is caught he murders the white storekeeper. He is tried and sentenced to death by Rudbeck. He forgives Rudbeck for the sentence he has to carry out, and even sympathizes with him and tries to cheer him up. He asks Mr Rudbeck to carry out the execution himself:

> Johnson, seeing his gloom and depression, exerts himself. 'Don' you mind, sah about dis hanging. I don' care for it one lil bit. Why'- he laughs with an air of surprise and discovery- 'I no fit know nutting about it- he too quick. Only I like you do him yourself, sah. If you no fit to shoot me. I don' gree for dem sergeant do it, too much. He no my frien'. But you my frien'. You my father and my mother. I tink you hang me youself.' (224)

The novel is loaded with examples of Johnson's speeches on behalf of the British colonizer and in favor of his values, systems, goodness, and the prosperity he brings to Nigeria. The creation of Johnson's character is part of the effort of the

colonizer's propaganda machine; it is as if the heavy material presence of the British troops and administration was not enough, so that they need the help of a native African to justify and glorify their occupation to that country and to ridicule the costumes and the traditions of the indigenous people. Johnson, as a half- educated Blackman, the author does not inform his reader where Johnson got his little education from, or his semi-evolved character, is an oddity who does not fit in with the native or the British. He considers himself English, though he has never been to England, as we understand in this conversation between him and Mr. Gollup:

> 'Oh, yes, Sargy, it's at home in England where you sit when you finish you chop.'
> 'Home. Haw, haw. Scuse me, Wog- always makes me laugh to 'ear a nig talk of England as 'ome w'en he never see so much as a real chimney pot.'
> 'Oh, sah, but I true Englishman for my heart.'
> 'You 're quite right, Wog. And never mind wot they say. You got the guts even though you 'aven't the physique. 'Ere, drink up and forget your face. You can't see it, any'ow.' (127)

We quote also from his conversation with the Emir's deputy, Waziri,: ' No, No, In England, Waziri, we do not beat our wives. That is a savage, low custom' (Johnson 129).

The insignificant speech of Johnson and his silliness is confusing. We often get confused and puzzled about whether he himself was aware and convinced of what he was saying. His conviction of his being an English gentleman and of England as being his country is the same whether he is

drunk or sober. When he is drunk, he sings of England:

> 'Oh, England, my home, away der on de big water.
> England is my country, dat king of England is my king.
> His heart is big for his children-room for everybody.'

In another conversation with the general store clerk, Ajali, he shows his deep contempt for native African marriage costumes and traditions :

> 'dese savages people tink I make savage wedding like bush people. Dey never understand Christian marriage.''But Bamu not Christian?''No, but I make her proper marriage for government lady.' (38)

This contempt for African marriage and traditions and customs suggest that the fight for Africa's soul is fought as much in the real world as it is fought in the symbolic and mythical world. Replacing the traditional African marriage with a Christian one has the same implication as replacing the African heathen gods by Christian God. In his *Culture and Domination in Arrow of God*, Simon Gikandi sees ```Christianity as the cultural arm of colonialism whose main function is the degradation of Africa's traditional symbols``(Gikandi 154). Part of his argument is that African myths and traditions are important and were exploited and used by colonialist for cultural and political domination. Gikandi elaborates further:

> Old standards are being questioned and new ones instituted in an arbitrary manner. Myths become instruments of domination when historical events are represented as manifestations of historical and natural order. Thus in the lieutenant Governor's memorandum to Captain Winterbottom, the Igbo`s system lacking natural rulers. The memorandum does not even deal with the obvious point that the whole notion on natural rulers is absurd or even contested; it is taken for granted that there are rulers who have been appointed by God, and that the political system

> they represent provides a standard for the rest of the world.(Gikandi 154)

But the irony of the situation is that the district officer himself has a shallow knowledge Nigeria. However, Chinwe's Christiana Okendukwe brilliant description of this character and the meaning of the name itself in her essay ``Oratory and Social Responsibility: Chinua Achebe *Arrow of God*,' gives a clear idea of the character's features. She suggests that the name Winterbottom is a metaphor for the man's character and his inefficiency. She describes how winter is a cold season that has been inserted into the tropical climate of Africa. Bottom refers to the part of the body used for sitting down that houses the anus through which feces come out of the body. She continues:

> Bottom also has the connotation of stark stupidity in Igbo language. if an Igbo person says to someone,`` I bu ike`( you are bottom`), that person means that the other is stupid, has no clue to anything at all. Mr. Winterbottom`s initials also signify ignorance. T.K.`bears the connotation of someone who thinks he knows when in fact he does not. hence the initials I.T.K. in pidgin English mean I too know.` you earn this name when you behave as if you know it all when in fact you are ignorant. To be the captain of I.T.K.s is therefore, to represent the ultimate in delusion, arrogance, presumption, and ignorance.(Okechukwu 8)

Then, in Mister Johnson, the story of the road itself and the benevolent colonial officer Rudbeck who wants to build that road in order to increase trade and create a prosperous region, the zeal and enthusiasm that Johnson works with to finish that road, though by embezzling the native treasury money, has only one purpose: it is to justify and legitimize colonizing and exploiting Africa in the name of civilizing

and improving African people's lives. Building new cultural and political systems, even arbitrarily, goes hand in hand with building new infrastructures even in embezzling money. Ignorance and arrogance go hand by hand in ruling African people.

The role of Johnson character makes colonialism more acceptable and adds some flavor to the bitter fact of the colonialists existence in Nigeria. Cary's readers, at the time, may have found some mild amusement or excitement when they met such a humorous character with his intimate relationship and loyalty to the British district Officer. There is a striking similarity between the character of Johnson and the character of Kim in Kipling's *Kim*. Kim is also a European creation in India and he always behaved like an outsider or a tourist who is sometimes fascinated by the diversity and mysteriousness and mysticism of Indian life. Likewise we are told that Johnson is an African 'tourist' who is touring Nigeria with a European eye:

> To him Africa is simply perpetual experience, exciting, amusing, alarming or delightful, which he soaks into himself through all his five senses at once, and produces a gain in the form of reflection, comments, songs, jokes, all in the pure Johnsonian form. Like a horse or a rose tree, he can turn the crudest and simplest form of fodder into beauty and power of his own quality. (92)

There is an explicit reference, by the author, that the character of Johnson is unique and "pure" and that the "Johnsonian form" is not obtainable

or performed by everybody. With his unique qualities, Johnson would provide the colonial officer with the inspiration and energy as well as the labor force and with the stolen money with which they would build the African and European dream road. The author's explicit implications that Johnson's qualities must be linked to and put to the service of Rudbeck's vision and technological knowledge to reach a state of consistency and harmony in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is well discussed in Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*. Said analyzes this relationship in a speech on *Culture and Imperialism*, though with reference to India rather than to Africa:

> The idea that India existed to be ruled by England, as Kipling represented in his novel *Kim*, principally, but also in some of the short stories, and he has Indian chanters say this, without the English, India would disappear. It would just not be the same place. So that these people and territories require domination as well as forms of knowledge that one affiliated with domination. (Said 154)

Said elaborates further on this issue when he says that

> For the enterprise of empire upon the idea of having an empire, as Joseph Conrad so powerfully seems to have realized in *Heart* of *Darkness*. He says that the difference between the Romans' and us is that the Romans were there just for the loot. They were just stealing. But we got there with an idea. He was thinking obviously, of the idea, for instance in Africa, of the French and the Belgians that when you go these continents you are not just robbing the people of their ivory and slaves and so on you are improving them in some way.(Said 154)

Thus, imperialism and its direct result, colonialism, are legitimized and justified by such appealing ideas as "improving" and helping other primitive or half-civilized nations. This idea is celebrated and glorified by many other European writers besides Kipling and Cary. However, part of those writers' effort was to create native characters that have and express admiration and appreciation for the presence, the charitableness and the benevolence of the empire in their countries. Other black characters, clerks, colonial police personnel, mailmen and court messengers are all depicted in a comic light with the emphasis on their role in the execution of colonial policies. They are presented, not in intimate detail, but only in functionalist terms, which minimalizes their humanity. The presentation of these characters as a bunch of idiots, as objects of ridiculous laughter for the entertainment of readers and the depiction of their complete loyalty and devotion to their duties of serving the colonizers and facilitating colonization is well approached by Edward Said in analyzing Kipling's *Kim*. Said refers to the Indian mutiny which was subdued violently by the British forces. This mutiny as Said says: " for the Indian, the mutiny was a nationalist uprising against British rule" was reduced by Kipling's choice of an Indian loyalist soldier to an act of madness. Said quotes this soldier's version of the mutiny:

> A madness are into all the Army, and they turned against their officers. That was the first evil, but not past remedy if they had then held their hands. But they chose to kill the sahib's wives and children. Then came the sahibs from over

> the sea and called them to most strict account.(147)

Said comments on that as follows:

> To reduce Indian resentment, Indian resistance (as it might have been called) to British insensitivity to "madness," to represent Indian actions as mainly the congenital choice of killing British women and children- these are not merely innocent reductions of the nationalist Indian case but tendentious ones. And when Kipling has the old soldier describe the British counter-revolt-with its horrendous reprisals by white men bent on "moral" action- as "calling" the Indian mutineers "to strict account," we have left the world of history and entered the world of imperialist polemic, in which the native is naturally a delinquent, the white man a stern but moral parent and judge. Thus Kipling gives us the extreme British view on the mutiny, and puts it in the mouth of an Indian, whose more likely nationalist and aggrieved counterpart is never seen in the novel. (147-148)

Thus, this "imperialist polemic" which can change facts and truths and turns white into black, wrong into correct, bad into good, and colonialism into goodness and its acts into acts of morality and benevolence. Kipling gives us no choice but to see him as an accomplice with, and promoter of, European colonial theories and practices in India. He is not only supporting colonialism, but he also tries to create a whole world of rejoicing, appreciating and understanding native Indians, who applaud the British colonialism and reject and despise any resistance movement as a mere savage and ungrateful act. In the imperialist polemic, the condemnation of natives' savagery and the glorification of the colonizer's morality would always come in the mouth of the native who should be grateful and happy for being colonized.

Said's theory applies perfectly to Cary's native character, Johnson, whose absolute loyalty to the district officer, Mr. Rudbeck, displays, theoretically, what and how the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized should be. Johnson considers himself as English, even if only by heart, and England as his home, though he has never been there, and the king of England as his king. He sees Mr. Rudbeck as his "father and mother" and the kindest heart in the world. He thinks of every English soldier and administrator as his friend and of every English lady as his wife's friend. He is depicted as a liar, burglar, anarchic, drunk, sly, scheming, sentimental, flirting, opportunist, incompetent employee, and finally as a murderer. All these traits and qualities of an African character come to clash with those of the British officer who has to deal with this character to subdue, oppress and curtail some of the Dionysian character's traits and finally, with no choice left, crushes and destroys it because it becomes annoying, dangerous and threatening. Johnson goes happily to his fate because he was convinced that he was tried and sentenced by the same charitable and highly refined British law that came to serve him and his native people. And the most fortunate thing to him is that Rudbeck himself would execute him. This kind of imaginative relationship between the colonizer and colonized remained unchanged in the minds and writings of some of the early and mid-twentieth century British writers and intellectuals. Achebe observes that, when his *Things Fall Apart* first appeared, it was attacked vehemently by a British

writer as a mere invitation to anarchy; Achebe says:

> When my first novel appeared in 1958 with the allusive title *Things Fall Apart*, an offended and highly critical English reviewer in a London Sunday paper titled her piece- cleverly; I must admit- Hurray to Mere Anarchy! But in spite of the cleverness, she could not have known the cosmological fear of anarchy that burdened the characters in my novel, and which W.B. Yeats somehow knew intuitively. In her brightly sarcastic mind, Anarchy, pronounced tongue-in- cheek, could only stand for British imperial rule under attack in some backward corner of the Empire by an ungrateful upstart of a native; she did not hear, blending into it, the resonance of an immemorial anxiety. She did not know that metaphor's extravagant attire was donned for good and sober reason. (Achebe 18-19)

So Mr. Johnson was the right picture of an African and any other picture is mere anarchy and a poor attempt of an upstart and ungrateful native. We do not think that anarchy is necessarily rooted in any artist's or a novelist's attempt of reviving his or her own cultural traditions and values. The real anarchy, according to Achebe, is the one that happened to the lives of African people. The real anarchy happened when African sets of beliefs and values collapsed under the pressure of the European persistent cultural assaults. Nobody felt and experienced the meaning of anarchy as much as Africans. Beginning of the interior struggle and committing suicide by Okonkwo came to show the depth of the tragic lost and the crisis of "cultural anarchy" European colonizers had created to Africans. Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* emphasizes that the destruction of the traditional systems and sets of beliefs, the way it has been done in African local

communities, was an unjustified act of aggression on sovereign localities and autonomous communities. Thus, destroying the working traditional systems, once and for all, was a mere invitation to anarchy and then to the creating of dictatorial states with all kinds of catastrophic consequences from wars, political corruption to committing unprecedented genocides on high scales. However, after the Second World War, the British, except the critic mentioned in the above quotation, as Achebe suggests, have realized that the monster and the destructive power is not the African people but the European themselves. The catastrophic consequences and sense of chaos and anarchy of the Second World War on humanity and the damage it has done to European civilization, image and life in general was more than could Yeats himself have imagined in his *The Second Coming*. Achebe says in *Anthills of the Savannah*:

> After a long career of subduing savages in distant lands they discovered the most dangerous savage of all just across the English Channel and took him on and brought him to heel. But the effort proved too great and the cost too high, and although they acquitted themselves with honor that made sure that they would not be called upon to do it again. (Achebe 1)

Achenbe's main character in *Things Fall Apart* is Okonkwo who expresses in his actions the spirit of an indomitable culture hero who refuses to be suppressed by dominant forms of behavior. His life is depicted as ambitious and he is a powerful leader of the Igbo community who counts on physical strength and courage. Okonkwo's life is good: his compound is large,

he has no trouble with his wives, his garden grows yams, and he is respected by his fellow villagers and clansmen. His reputation as a courageous and prosperous leader comes from his hard work and good, as well as from his reputation of being an unbeatable wrestler in a community that greatly appreciates personal achievements:

> Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on his solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the cat. Amalinze was a great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umofia to Mbaino ... in the end Okonkwo threw the cat.That was many years ago, twenty or more and during this time Okonkwo 's fame had grown like a bush fire in the harmattan. When he walked, his heels barely touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use his fists. He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had no patience with his father.(1)

But this success is always mixed with the perpetual fear of failure, and also with the haunted internal struggle that rejects any compromise or tolerance towards any appearances of effeminacy, such as the one of his father, in himself and in his family. This rigidity in Oknokwo's life is evocatively depicted in this passage:

> Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children. Perhaps down in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness.

> It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of forest, and of the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo's fear was greater than these. It was not external but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself, least he should be found to resemble his father. Even as little boy he had resented his father's failure and everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was genteelness and another was idleness. (10)

In creating such a character as Okonwkwo, Achebe tried to achieve three goals. First, he seeks to voice his rejection of the superficial character of Johnson in *Mister Johnson* by creating a deeply human and complex African character with all kinds of haunting memories that press for interior struggle and cause external extreme reactions. Cary's stereotyped African character is not accepted by Africans as real or as the norm in Africa and Okonkwo's rejection of his father's character is parallel to that of Achebe's rejection of Cary's Johnson. The second goal is to create an extremely independent character that defies and violates the collective will and consciousness of his society. Simon Gikandi uses this feature in Okonokwo`s character to argue against theories of G.T Basden and others which assert that African character is controlled by the will of the tribe and the family and not by logic. Gikandi asserts that the tragedy of Okonkwo results out of ' pursuing the logic of his own existence too much, pushing the communal ethos to the limits and hence undermining it in the process' (Gikandi 28).Achebe's third goal in creating Okonkwo is to voice his disapproval of some of the stiff and rigid aspects of

Igbo traditional life. Jude Chudi Okpala agrees with Gikandi in the interpretation of the exceptionality and individuality of Okonokwo's Character, but he interprets this character's fall from a metaphysical point of view in his essay, Igbo metaphysics in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. In this essay Okpala argues, " Okonkwo's fall cannot be explained away by focusing on the culpable presence of the white man. A fuller understanding of his fall comes from exploring the metaphysical nature of Igbo person's existence" (Okpala.3). Okpala, like Gikandi, asserts that Okonkwo's fall was due to his extreme adoption of the old values and traditions and his defiant attitude towards his community and other gods. He does not seem to understand the importance of community and that one's well-being is dependent on how one lives in that community. Okpala asserts that the principle interaction of the physical and non-physical beings in human existence is causality "that every event has a cause, but not every event has explainable cause" (3). This applies to Okonkwo's fall and tragic death. Okonkwo seemed unable to understand the chain of events that followed his inadvertent killing of his fellow kinsman and his subsequent exile. When he is back from exile he seems more confused about his people converting into Christianity and their submission to the White man's authority. He feels that he, and his people, were abandoned by their gods and their ancestors. He blames his decline on his personal god, his chi, who seems not as strong as Okonkwo himself.

Achebe, as a man of the 20th century realizes and recognizes the huge change that happened in the life of his people and the continuous necessity for change as a natural trend in human life. Adherence to rigid traditions and customs can be seen as a destructive element. Here, Okonkwo's rigid life, caused by his own personal problems and memories, and his adherence to the most inflexible traditions and customs in his society, leads to his tragic end. He is similar to a Greek tragic hero in his being doomed by his god, and also he is doomed by his own flaws, like any other Shakespearean tragic hero. The death of Johnson is caused by his affiliation with the British colonizers and his enthusiastically embracing their values and ways of life, and then by his inability to carry on to the end in imitating such a costly life. Johnson's inability to recognize and admit his problem and his situation leads him subsequently to more trouble by conducting acts of embezzlement, robbery and finally murder. The death of Okonkwo, on the other hand resulted from his blindness to circumstances around him and from the missionary church that brings with it the new authority of the British district commissioner. His stubbornness, his inability to reach a compromise, and his fear of losing his authority dooms him. Okonkwo's inflexibility alienates him not only from his society but also from his son, Nwoye. Nwoye, in his turn, rejects his father's rigidity, especially after the killing of his friend Ikemfuna by his father, and he decides to convert to Christianity. Except for the character of Okonkwo, who also changes from poor to prosperous and from ordinary man to a tribal leader

with many titles, Achebe emphasizes that his characters always long for change and they undergo character development with time. Nwyoe's looking for response or meaning to things around him and his looking for justice and fairness makes a zealous convert to Christianity of him. His son, Obi, in *No Longer At Ease* dismisses his father's refusal to marry an Osu girl as something unchristian and uncharitable. But Nwyoe, his name now is Isaac, justifies his refusal by the strong tribal traditions and customs, because of them he himself has broken up with his father, which if they are broken can cause disastrous consequences. There is a change but it is always slow and gradual, not radical or revolutionary one. The individual's will and desire to change is always restrained and clashed with the hegemonic traditional communal will. Achebe exposes the injustices in the traditional Igbo life and some of its cruel established realities. By the missionaries' survival and their embrace by the wretched and outcast people, some of agonizing mothers who lost their twins to the evil forest, and people like Nwyoe Achebe seeks to show how inevitable it is that cruelty and superstitions, even the implacable judgment of elders, about Osu, about twins, or about mystic powers of the royal python, must all go down when challenged. Some of these issues are repeated in many of Achebe works such as the Osu and their experience of isolation and segregation for no reason he or she committed only for being born of Osu parents and then labeled as such. Achebe says about Osu:

> He was a person dedicated to a God, a thing set

> apart-a taboo forever, and his children after him. He could neither marry nor be married by a free- born. He was in fact an out-cast, living in a special area of the village, close to the great shrine. Wherever he went he carried with him the mark of his forbidden caste- long, tangled and dirty hair. A razor was a taboo to him. An Osu could not attend an assembly of free born, and they, in turn, could not shelter under his roof. He could not take any of the four titles of the clan, and when he died he was buried by his kind in the evil forest. (14)

When Achebe exposes and focuses on the brutalities of some the Igbo traditions and costumes, he is, for sure, not looking for admiration or sympathy with these traditions among his readers, especially the western, but he conceives it as part of his duty to deliver an authentic, realistic and less superficial picture of his people and their culture, in his view, it is part of the writer's duty to teach his reader and society and to open their eyes to the existence of such injustices in their life. Exposing these images of social injustice and yielding to superstitions, such as killing twins, in Achebe's writings serves to refute the arguments of many writers who accuse Achebe of overlooking such brutalities. Wilson Harris criticizes Achebe for not touching or mentioning such things when he discusses *Heart of Darkness*. In his article, "The Frontier on Which Heart of Darkness *Stands*," Wilson says:

> At no point in his essay does Achebe touch upon the crucial parody of the proprieties of established order that mask corruption in all societies, black and white, though this is essential, it seems to me, to a perception of catastrophe

> behind the dignified personae monoliths wear. (And, in this context, one is not speaking only of conquistadorial monoliths but of mankind the hunter whose folklore is death; mankind the ritualist who sacrifices female children to maintain the symmetry of males, or mankind the priest who once plucked the heart from the breast of a living victim to feed the sun.) These distortions of the human mask (hunter, priest, ritualist) set their teeth upon African charters like an initiation ceremony at the heart of the bush to bite deep as well into the European conquistador/ butcher/businessman Kurtz. (265)

Despite the fact that Achebe has responded to such accusations in many of his essays and writings, such as his collected essays in Morning *Yet on Creation Day* and in some of his collected speeches in *Home and Exile*, and in his book *The Role of* the *Writer in a New Nation*. In his book The *Writings of Chinua Achebe*, G. D. Killam asserts that Achebe's success lies in his ability to see his people's past as neither idealistic nor dishonest. Achebe resists the temptation to exhibit the past in idealized form. Killam quotes Achebe's statement about this issue:

> The past needs to be recreated not only for the enlightenment of our detractors but even more for our education. Because the past with all its imperfections, never lacked dignity.This is where the writer's integrity comes in. Will he be strong enough to overcome the temptation to select only those facts which flatter him? If he succumbs he will have branded himself as an untrustworthy witness. But it is not only his personal integrity as an artist which is involved. The credibility of the world he is attempting to recreate will be called to question and will defeat his own purpose if he is suspected of glossing over inconvenient facts. (Killam 14)

Another writer, Annie Gagiano, shares and confirms the same idea of Achebe's objectivity in her book *On Power and Change in Africa*. She quotes from his interview in 1967: " I am not one of those who would say that Africa has gained nothing at all during the colonial period. We gained a lot. But unfortunately when two cultures meet some of the worst elements of the old are retained and some of the worst of the new are added on to them"(21). There is an explicit acknowledgment of the existence of "some of the worst elements of the old" in this statement. However, Achebe's preferred response to the "worst elements" of the old and new cultures remains within his novels themselves, where his characters show much discontent and longing for change and reformation, with standing firmly against the brutal and inhuman traditions and costumes as Nyoue did.

The main difference in Achebe's characters is that they are mostly complex individuals with deeper internal conflict, concern and involvement in what happens around them than a character like Johnson, who is self-indulgent and self- absorbed. Okonkwo's insistence on values of masculinity and other tribal values of courage and war would destroy him and his relationship with his son, exactly like his father Unoka, who is destroyed because of his insistence of indulging, in what are female principles of tolerance and warmth which he undermines by means of cowardice, idleness, and irresponsibility. Achebe's disapproval of Okonkwo's rigidity shows itself

in Obeirika's voiced protest at the unnecessary killing of Ikemefuna by Okonkwo himself, even when the Oracle has ordered this killing. The following conversation shows the wisdom and tolerance of Obiereka, Okokwo's close friend, and Okonkwo's extreme adherence to values of masculinity:

> 'I cannot understand why you refused to come with us to kill that boy,' he asked Obierika.
> Because I did not want to,' Obierika replied sharply. 'I had something better to do.'
> ' you sound as if you question the authority and the decision of the oracle, who said he should die.'
> ' I do not. Why should I? But the oracle did not ask me to carry out its decision.'
> 'But someone had to do it. If we were all afraid of blood, it would not be done. And what do you think the Oracle would do then?'
> You know very well, Okonkwo, that I am not afraid of blood; and if anyone tells you that I am, he is telling a lie. And let me tell you one thing, my friend. If I were you I would have stayed at home. What you have done will not please the earth. It is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families.'
> 'The earth cannot punish me for obeying her massanger,' Okonkwo said. ' a child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of yam which its mother puts into its palm.'
> 'That is true, Obeirika agreed. But if the oracle said that my son should be killed I would neither dispute it nor be the one to do it.' (Achebe 59)

We are told that, after his friend was killed by Okonkwo, 'something seemed

to give way inside Nyoue, like the snapping of a tightened bow' (43). The brutal killing of Ikemefuna by Okonkwo, whom the boy used to call father, comes as a turning point in Nyoue's life. It cracks the shield of his relationship with his father and his people, and leads him to seek a more humane community among the Christians.

There is an explicit difference in the way of describing African settings, characters, traditions, and customs in the two novels. The detailed description of Achebe is concrete and reflects an objective detachment. He describes his people, their ceremonies of marriage, death and new birth, the welcoming of the new year, the arrival of the locusts, their relationship with each other, the arrival of the ancestral spirits or *egwugwu*, their relationship with nature (moon, dark, light, plants, animals, soil, forest,), their assembly of the clan to discuss their urgent issues, with all the rhetoric and boasts, their human moments of weakness, fragility, triumph, rejoicement, loss and despair, fears and hopes; all these are depicted in the smooth flowing language of the third person narrator without undergoing any partial or subjective judgment. Achebe does not dispossess or try to deny his reader the space to judge his African characters and their life by imposing his hegemonic authorial judgment, as we will see with Cary in *Mister Johnson.* When he describes his people's rejoicing and excitement when they welcome the arrival of the locusts, for example, we feel and share that excitement. We enter the

realm of imagination and familiarity with his people, and we feel that their relationship to nature is distinctive and unique:

> Everyone was now about, talking excitedly and praying that the locusts should camp in Umuofia for the night. For although locusts had not visited Umuofia for many years, everybody knew by instinct that they were very good to eat. And at last the locusts did descend. They settled on every blade of grass; they settled on the roofs and covered the bare ground. Mighty tree branches broke a way under them, and the whole country became the brown-earth color of the vast, hungry swarm. Many people went out with baskets trying to catch them, but the elders counseled patience till nightfall. And they were right. The locusts settled in the bushes for the night and their wings became wet with dew. Then all Umuofia turned out in spite of the cold harmattan, and everyone filled his bags and pots with locusts. The next morning they were roasted in clay pots and then spread out in the sun until they became dry and brittle. And for many days this rare food was eaten with solid palm-oil. (Achebe 48-49)

This, smooth, vivid, and harmonious description of the experience of Igbo people receiving the locusts is one of many similar descriptions of the traditional Igbo life in *Things Fall Apart.* This experience is delivered to the reader as the author lived, saw or experienced it as Igbo native himself. The tone is not that of an all-knowing but a restrained and modest onlooker with an objective detachment. In his book, *Chinua Achebe*, David Carroll comments on the tribal meetings and the debates he says:

> The gestures, the ritual, the formal greetings are in no sense merely part of the African local color. We approach these

> meetings of the clan from the inside, from the point of view of the major chanters. The debates, which follow, we witness their private fears and hopes becoming formalized in the communal decisions.The success of these scenes is due in large part to Achebe's sensitive control of the narrative voice. The novel is narrated in the third person, but there is no suggestion of an omniscient observer scrutinizing and analyzing the customs and habits of this Ibo community. The voice is that of a wise and sympathetic elder of the tribe who has witnessed time and time again the cycle of the seasons and the accompanying rituals in the villages. This measured tone of voice implants in the reader's mind the sense of order, perspective, and harmony whose later destruction is most poignant. (Carroll 37)

In evoking the vitality and high spirit of the Igbo society, and the zeal with which the people conduct their duties and daily activities, their consciousness and observation of the seasons, Achebe challenges the image of a static society that is evoked by Cary's description of one of the Nigerian villages, Fada, in Mister *Johnson:*

> Fada is the ordinary native town of the Western Sudan. It has no beauty, Convenience or health. It is a dwelling-place at one stage from the rabbit warren or the badger burrow; and not so cleanly kept as the latter. It is a pioneer settlement five or six hundred years old, built on its own rubbish heaps, without charm even of antiquity. Its squalor and its stinks are all new. Its oldest compounds, except the Emir's mud box, is not twenty years old. The sun and the rain destroy all its antiquity, even of small. But neither has it the freshness of the new. All its mud walls are eaten as if by smallpox; half of the mats in any compound are always rotten. Poverty and ignorance, the absolute government of jealous savages, conservatives as only the savages can be, have kept it at the first frontier of civilization. Its people would not know the change if time jumped back fifty thousand years. They live like mice or rats in a palace floor; all the magnificence and variety of the arts, the ideas, the

> learning and the battles of civilization go on over their heads and they do not even imagine them.
> Fada has not been able to achieve its own native arts or the characteristics; no painted or moulded courtyard walls.
> The young boys, full of curiosity and enterprise, grow quickly into old, anxious men, content with mere existence.
> Peace has been brought to them, but no glory of living; some elementary court-justice, but no liberty of mind. An English child in Fada, with eyes that still see what is in front of them, would be terrified by the dirt, the stinks, the great sores on naked bodies, the twisted limbs, the babies with their enormous swollen stomach and their hernias; the whole place, flattened upon the earth like the scab of a wound, would strike it as something between a prison and a hospital. (Cary 99)

I quote this passage at length because it gives a very clear example of the difference between the objectivity of Achebe's writing and the subjectivity of that of Cary, and because of the striking resemblance between the comparison that Cary makes between the English child and the children and people of Fada on the one hand, and, on the other hand the comparison that Conrad makes between the Thames river and the Congo river in *Heart of Darkness*. Cary's description is undermined by a harsh judgment that is associated with lack of sensitivity and arrogance. Cary's sarcastic tone when he speaks about African characters and traditions is apparent everywhere in the novel and nowhere in *Mister Johnson* does Cary show that Africans might have their own system of values, wisely created and based on a long and developing tradition, recognizing concern for others and the well-being of the community. In *Mister Johnson* they do not posses even a 'primitive' set of

beliefs for any action in terms of mind rather than feelings or sensual gratification; as we can see in this passage from Cary's description of the villagers' festival after the harvest:

> In the morning no one gets up till the sun is high and warm. Everyone has sore eyes, sore feet, sore heads and many are bruised and cut all over. One has a torn ear, he does not know how he hurt himself. Another has a bite in his cheek, but he does not know what woman has bitten him or why. He lolls in the shade with a group of his friends, all sulky and languid. Some have strings tied round their heads to ease their headaches. The girls wander a bout in groups, with their arms about each other's waists; they too groan, feel their heads, show their cuts and bruises. But they are not so languid. They laugh among themselves and some of them, telling a story of the night, sketch a dancing step. They have not drunk so much as the men and they are not so exhausted by love-making. (155-156)

Moreover, all of Cary's characters are described as inferior human beings; they are closer to savages than to human beings. Ajali, Johnson's friend, is depicted as spiteful and jealous, Benjamin as an idler and loser, Matumbi as a thoughtless and greedy prostitute, Sozy as a creep and a fool, Waziri as a greedy, wily, and dishonest old man whose "shaved head without its turban looks as a small and narrow dog's, the skin hangs on his face in deep wrinkles like an old boot and his eyes are sunk and bloodshot" (76). As for Johnson himself, he is given all these traits and characteristics, beside his admiration and absolute loyalty to the British administration. This kind of narrative makes African writers suspicious and provokes them into a kind of a challenge to defend their questioned humanity and their vigorously attacked

cultures and life styles. Achebe says about this kind of description in *Home* and *Exile*:

> My problem with Joyce Cary's book was not simply his infuriating principle character, Johnson. More importantly, there is a certain undertow of uncharitableness just below the surface on which his narrative moves and from where, at the slightest chance, a contagion of distaste, hatred and mockery breaks through to poison his tale. Here is a short excerpt from his description of a fairly innocent party given by Johnson to his friends: " the demonic appearance of the naked dancers, grinning, shrieking, scowling, or with faces which seemed entirely dislocated, senseless and inhuman, like twisted bags of lard, or burst bladders." haven't I encountered this crowd before? Perhaps, in *Heart of Darkness,* in the Congo. But Cary is writing about my home, Nigeria isn't he? (Achebe 23)

Such descriptions of African life and culture give the impression that Cary was not merely an outsider who wrote partially but, a first rate colonial administrator who came to Africa on a colonial mission. Cary's attitudes can be understood fully in the light of the British government's colonial policies. These policies sought to depict colonized people as primitive, living in static communities with no will or ability to develop and change. By likewise depicting every negative aspect in the African life in the most fluent, economic, and charged words, Cary reminds the British reader and audience of the importance of subduing and ruling such people for their own benefit, because otherwise these "poor savages" with their demonic appearance will never come into the light of the civilized world. Cary's loyalty to the British imperial government and its policies in Africa as one of its officials in

Nigeria, a loyalty reflected in his sarcastic and taunting style, exposes him as an obvious example of the complicity between the European imperial power and its writers. Also, his description comes out of context of colonial structures, and it forms part of a vast European literary tradition that came to justify colonizing native people all over the world, as Edward Said asserts in his *Orientalism* and *Culture* and *Imperialism*. C.L. Innes makes a related point in her book, *Chinua Achebe,* when she says that

> Cary maintained that his characters were ' real people in a real world or they (were) nothing'. His assertion is valid only with regard to his European characters. His characterization of Africa and Africans can be seen in the context of colonial interests and a whole tradition of colonial writing that contributed to the justification of the colonial presence in Africa. (Innes 16)

Actually there are many other writers, including Innes herself, who examined this tradition of such writings and decided to join African writers in their rejection and resistance. Some tried to shed light on the other side or the other version of the story by presenting African writings to their readers. And while Achebe mentions the aggressive response to his novel, *Things Fall Apart*, by a typical pro- colonialist writer, he also mentions the sensitivity and, to some extent, the objectivity of another English writer, F. J .Peddler, and his book which is called simply, *West Africa*. Achebe writes about this book:

> Although the book was not entirely free of the stereotypes of contemporary British colonial writings, it was in some ways

> remarkably advanced for its time, and even for today. One small example will suffice. " It is misleading," Mr. Pedler wrote, " when Europeans talk of Africans buying a wife." Although he did not mention Joyce Cary by name it is inconceivable that he would not have been aware of him or of his much celebrated novel *Mister Johnson*, in which that very stereotype was exploited for all it was worth in the episode in which Johnson, After much haggling, buys himself a local girl, Bamu, as wife.But what I find truly remarkable about Pedler's book is the prominence he gave to, and the faith he had in, African literature that was not even in existence yet: " A country's novels reveal its social condition. West Africa has no full-length novels, but a few short stories may serve the purpose. We quote from two recent publications which show how educated West African themselves describe some of the features of social life in their own countries." pedler then proceeded to summarize for his reader two short stories published in a magazine in 1945 in the British colony of the Gold Coast. He devoted almost three pages of his short book to this matter and then concluded as follows: " here is a dramatic treatment of a contemporary social phenomenon which leaves one with the hope that more West Africans may enter the field of authorship and give us authentic stories of the lives of their own people."
> The brief quotations speak volumes to us on the issue of peoples and their stories. We should note Pedler's phrases: west Africans themselves; their own country; authentic stories; of their own people. Without calling any names this extraordinary Englishman seemed to be engaged in running argument against an age-old practice: The colonization of one people's story by another. In sidestepping Joyce Cary and all the other high-profile practitioners of this brand of writing and going, in search of authenticity, to two unpretentious short stories written by two completely unknown West African authors whose names did not ring any bell at all, Pedler was putting himself decisively and prophetically on the side of the right of a people to take back their own narrative. (*Home and Exile* 242-244)

The passage is self-evident and it does not need further clarification, but what draws our attention are the contradicting scenes of the traditions of marriage in the two novels, and the insistence of Achebe on correcting and depicting another image

of this tradition. While the writer of *Mister Johnson*, as Pedler mentions, writes about the buying of women, as wives, with much haggling, as is the case with Bamu and Johnson, Achebe gives us another picture of the marriage ceremony and the settling of the bridal dowry. We are told that first, there is a considerable time of drinking and chatting, verifying the other party's opinion and will before the business of settling the bridal dowry is brought up, as in the case of the marriage of Obierika's daughter, Akuke. The Igbo tradition of settling the bride price is done with a bundle of sticks, without much bargaining and quarreling as in *Mister Johnson*. Achebe is not satisfied with correcting the image, but he also criticizes the way marriage is conducted in *Mister Johnson* in a more direct way by putting that criticism in the mouth of an Igbo man who shows his contempt for some of other tribes who changed their customs: 'All their customs are upside down. They haggle and bargain as if they were buying a goat or a cow in the market'(65).

As for the language that is used in the two novels, we find real differences. In *Mister Johnson* the language is simple and the dialogue among the African characters is always in Pidgin English. Pidgin English does not reflect the real African character or the real values it holds; and it tries to show that African people have no real language of their own. Language means knowledge, and knowledge means power, so portraying these peoples with no significant language of their own implies that they have no knowledge and consequently that they are powerless. The British colonizer with his universal

language of English, a language which cannot be compared to African vernaculars and dialects, with his superior knowledge and his overwhelming and formidable power, can fill the gap and make use of undiscovered whole continent of Africa and can spread prosperity and happiness to its wretched people, as is symbolized in the benevolent British officer character, Rudbeck.

Most of the characters in *Mister Johnson* speak child-like babbling and there is no clear communication as can be seen in the relationship between Johnson and his wife, Bamu, who constantly wanders what her husband means whenever he talks to her, on the one hand, and, on the other hand the old Sozy, who always shrieks, groans and screams whenever Johnson is sick or in trouble, without uttering one word. There is no communication between Johnson and his in laws, Brimah and Audu, who only talk to him when they come to ask about money, and who sometime even do this silently. Most of the speech among other characters is conducted in short simple sentences.

In *Things Fall Apart,* however, this picture is completely contradicted by Achebe, whose extensive use of African tribal proverbs, expressions, similes and rhetoric come to assert the richness of the Igbo language. In his essay, Rhythm and Narrative Methods in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart,* B. Eugene McCarthy asserts that "readers are often struck by the simple mode of narration and equally simple prose style, which critics have seen as Achebe's

desire to achieve an "English… colored to reflect the African verbal style with stresses and emphases that would be eccentric and unexpected in British or American speech . He reshapes English in order to imitate the "linguistic patterns of his mother tongue, "Igbo (Understanding...41). Also, the significant uses of proverbs and similes in the novel come to assert the continuity and validity of the accumulated wise experiences and morals of the tribe's or the community's ancestors, which are expressed in a very economical and concise language. Moreover, the use of African proverbs, derived from African context and experience, invokes the cultural difference and the otherness of the African character and its values. About this G. L. Innes says:

> The language used by the narrator is also closely related to the speech of the Igbo characters that are at the center of the novel. Expression used by Okonkwo, Obeirika and others are repeated or echoed by the narrator, and thus the identity of the narrator as spokesman for the Igbo community is emphasized. At the same time, the dialogue is seasoned with proverbs that give the conversations flavor (for proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten) and at the same time characterize the speaker, his mood, and the values of the society he represents. (Innes 33)

Here are some of the proverbs and similes that are used over and over in the novel:

> -Like a bush fire in the Harmattan (1).
> -The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them. (5).
> -If a child washed his hands he could eat with kings (6).
> - A man who pays respect to the great paves the way

for his greatness (16).
-The lizard that jumped from the high Iroke tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did (18).
- You can tell a ripe corn by its look (18).
-Like pouring grains of corn into a bag full of holes (19).
- Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble (22).
- When a man says yes his chi also says yes (23).
- As water had been poured on the tightened skin of drum (42).
- Like a yam tendril in the rainy season (45).
-Like the snapping of tightened bow (53).
-As busy as anthill (100).
- I cannot live on the bank of a river and wash my hands with spittle (148).
- As a man danced so the drums were beaten for him. (165).

Actually there are many other sayings and proverbs and similes that are used in *Things Fall* Apart and more of them in Achebe's interesting novel *Arrow of God.* As for other linguistic techniques, Achebe tends to use rhetoric in an extensive way, as Emmanuel Edamer Egar asserts in his book, *The Rhetorical Implications of Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart.* In this engaging book, Egar divides the rhetorical implications in the novel, because they are many and varied, into numerous categories such as the rhetorical implications of the theme, the rhetorical implications of women and their pain, the rhetorical use of proverbs, the rhetorical implications of the Greek connection, etc. I will quote three rhetorical speeches, two about the character

of Okonkwo and his fear of effeminate qualities in his son, and the other about his fear of the new religion and his hatred of change; the third is about the position of woman in the clan. In the following passage, Okonkwo expresses his deep fear and anxiety about having a weak son who would not be as strong and courageous as his father:

> I will have a son who cannot hold his head in the gathering of the clan. I would sooner strangle him with my own hands. And if you stand staring at me like that... Amadiora will break your head. (Egar 13)

The next passage is about the new religion that, according to Okonkwo, came to destroy the clan and the relationship among its members, on the one hand, and in the individual family, on the other hand. The reader knows that Okonkwo's fierce rejection of the new religion results mainly from his fear of the new humane and charitable qualities that this religion brings with it. Also, his rejection comes from his unwillingness to give up his position and his titles in the clan; he simply cannot accept the egalitarianism of sitting side by side with Osu and poor people on one bench in the church and worshiping the one same God. He expresses his concerns to his clan in this speech:

> An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and his brother. He can curse the gods of his fathers and ancestors, like the hunter's dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you. I fear for the clan. (14)

The following interesting rhetoric is said on the importance of woman's

role as the source of fertility and continuity in the clan. The banishment of Okonkwo to his mother's clan after the accidental killing of a clansman "shows the vital place of the woman as a bridge-builder for communal survival. The wisdom of Uchendu, the wise man in the novel, clarifies the critical role a woman plays in the culture":

> " Then listen to me," he said, and cleared his throat, "it is true that a child belongs to his father. But when a father beats his child, it seeks sympathy in the mother's hut. A man belongs to his father when things are good, and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you. And that is why we say mother is supreme." (19)

But idealizing woman as a mother in Igbo tradition is not a reason for Achebe to depicts all the female characters as generally stunted individuals. These characters are seen but not heard, just like the female characters in Cary's *Mister Johnson*. They are idealized as mothers in the best of the negritudal manner as Rose Ure Mezu says in her essay "*Woman* in *Chinua Achebe* world". She asserts that

> The only women respected in Umuofia are those like Chielo, the priestess of the oracle of hills and caves, who is removed from the pale of normalcy. Clothed in the mystic mantle of divinity she serves, Chielo transforms from the ordinary, she can reprimand Okonokow and even scream at him.(Mezu)

But the respect that Okonkow holds for Chielo is not necessarily the same one that he holds for his wives. He treats his wives differently. Chielo acquires her

strength from her mystical and metaphysical being. Her supernatural powers stop her short from being a real woman in a patriarchal society. However, Achebe's opinions and views on womanhood, feminism and the role of woman in Nigerian society will be changed as we will see in discussing his most recent novel *Anthill of the Savannah*.

Achebe's detached and controlled voice and manner belong to a universal literary tradition in writing, but introducing the traditional Igbo linguistic skills of metaphors, similes, proverbs, images, the traditional folk stories and some particular Igbo words and phrases is something innovatively done and it is unique in *Things Fall Apart* and other Achebe's writings. Achebe's ability in combining as rich a language, in its vocabulary and flexibility, as the English language with the richness of the oral traditions and the linguistic skills of the Ibo people, along with serious themes such as man's pre-determined fate, as that of Okonkwo, lack of judgment and adherence to rigid traditions, the cultural tensions and clashes, the conflict between the individual and communal and others themes; all this make *Things Fall Apart* a serious work and a different picture that comes from an insider African innovative writer.

The Dictatorship in Post-independent Nigeria and the Role of Intellectuals.

I have chosen to write about *No Longer at Ease*, *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* because these three novels represent Achebe's depiction of the life in Nigeria during the transitional period, during which sovereignty was being transferred to Nigerians, and post-independent Nigeria with all of its political, cultural, social, economical problems. Also, they give a clear idea of Achebe's perspective and thoughts of what was and is going on and the role of the educated elite in these affairs.

Achebe writes about three types of intellectuals or educated characters in these three novels: the first type, is the soft-headed and lax intellectual who fails to live up to his or her beliefs and principles and is finally reduced to the level of the corrupt and bribed, as is the case with Obi; the second type is the opportunist and selfish educated character who starts resisting only when he or she is personally harmed or hurt by a corrupt regime, as is the case in Odili with Chief Nanga; the third type is the noble and moral one who feels his or her own people's misery and suffering and gives up all his comfort for the fight for what he or she believes in, as is the case with Ikem, Chris and Beatrice.

Some critics suggest that Achebe did not give up writing about the Nigerian or Igbo past completely, because he wrote *Arrow of God*, which is as powerful as Things *Fall Apart* in dealing with Nigerian past and the relationship between the indigenous people and the colonizers, after *No Longer at Ease*. In fact, *No Longer at Ease* was not completely on modern

Nigeria, but it was on the transitional period. By "transitional period", I do not mean the political aspect only, but all aspects of Nigerian life. During this period, Nigeria was still struggling between the old and the new, the individual and the communal, traditional and modern, and between the allegiance and loyalty to the tribe and family, and that to the nation and the law and order. The meaning and sense of the Nigerian nation was not very well established at the time, and fears of racial, ethnic, religious conflicts and violence were looming. The new young government was all about corruption and securing its unstable position. The novel's protagonist, Obi, Nwyou's son and the grand son of Okonkwo is the product of all of that turmoil and struggle, and his later behaviors, acts and failure must be seen from this angle. Obi was neither able to live up to his grandfather's reputation and glory as a traditional cultural hero nor be able to stick to his modern values and beliefs. It is Achebe's belief that in times of uncertainty and chaos the real meaning of heroism is lost and unobtainable not because of one's self-deficiency or the external situations and one's circumstantial pressures but because of all of that together. About the clash between African attitudes and European views and life styles Ode Ogede says in his *Achebe and the Politics of Representation*:

> Obi is particularly suitable for bringing these conflicts to the surface because he is a transitional figure- the product of both European individualistic tradition and traditional African communalism. Growing up a time when colonialism had destroyed the indigenous basis of most African' economic viability (by restricting access to well-paid jobs to minority elite of Western educated African)

> gives Obi's first-hand experience of the dilemma unusual credibility. These elite face an unusual quandary. Though obligated to ameliorate the condition of others in their community, they invariably discover, to their chagrin, that they are severely constrained by the limited resources available to them.This predicament is most apparent when Obi finally returns after a prolonged absence from his village. There he discovers the barbarous deterioration in his parents' standard of living. (Ogede 55)

By creating the character of Obi, Achebe tries to show his reader that Nigerian intellectuals and educated society was developing its consciousness of the numerous problems, and that its awareness of the situation and its scepticism were growing, albeit mildly. Obi's failure and decline did not result from his an inherent deficiency, but from stronger forces that left him with no other choice. His honesty and integrity are clearly stressed by Achebe at the very beginning of the novel. When Obi is heading for a job interview at the public transportation company, he witnesses a policeman who is ready to take a bribe from a lorry driver, but who is scared by Obi's incriminating stare, and instead issues heavy fine to the lorry driver and detains the lorry. The lorry driver bursts out in anger against Obi, who has caused him the trouble, and he gets the passengers' sympathy. This incident illustrates three main issues. First, it shows Obi's rejection and resistance to bribery and corruption of civil servants. Second, it shows the society's negative attitude and its indifference towards such widespread phenomena. Third, it shows Obi's frustration and bitterness regarding his society's ignorance and

indifference:

> 'What an Augean stable!.. where does one begin? With the masses? Educate the masses?' he shook his head. 'Not a chance there. It would take centuries. A handful of men at the top. Or even one man with vision-an enlightened dictator. People are scared of word nowadays. But what kind of democracy can exist side by side with so much corruption and ignorance? Perhaps a half-way house- a sort of compromise.' (*No Longer at Ease* 34)

Such a response from Obi explains the difficulty of reform in corrupt Nigeria, as well as Obi's loathing and contempt for the unaware and ignorant masses. Obi's attitude gets him Oged's disapproval. Ogede suggests that the shallow-mindedness of Obi made him think of the wrong causes for the wide-spread corruption which is, according to Obi, the combination of the corrupt elite at the top and the passivity and lack of political and social consciousness of the Nigerian people. According to Ogede it is colonialism and its remaining effects that must be held responsible. In addition, Ogede suggests that the Umofia Progressive Union's noble attitude in helping and supporting Obi against any accusation comes as a refutation to the comment of Mr. Green, Obi's British Immediate Boss, that "the African is corrupt through and through". Oged tries not only to shift blame from the Nigerian people's side, but also to suggest that this is also Achebe's attitude on this matter. Actually, nowhere in the novel does Achebe suggest directly or indirectly that

corruption is caused mainly or only by colonialism, nor does he depict any colonialist character that encouraged, gave or took a bribe. On the contrary, Achebe depicts the character of Mr. Green as hard working with obsession or high sense of duty old British civil servant. This character won Obi's admiration and contempt at the same time. Obi admired his energy and being organized, but he hated and was puzzled by his obsession with work for a country he was supposed to leave soon. However, Achebe also did not suggest that corruption is an inherent African characteristic or trait, as Mr. Green tried to suggest. Mr. Green's statement indicates the colonialist's lack of sensitivity and arrogance toward native people. Also, it suggests the European's stereotypes and generalizations about Africans. He talks of Africans as if they were all one race, one nation and one culture, and as if they were all inherently corrupt. Achebe's criticism of his people flows in one direction; it is their impassivity and indifference to what people at the top are doing and their way of philosophizing about things to a degree that makes change almost impossible. Achebe gives his reader a clear picture of the difficulty of resisting and rejecting a well-established pattern of life, bribery, for a man like Obi. When Obi resists the temptation of a bribe from Mr. Mark, in return for Obi's recommendation of Lesly to the scholarship board, and when he resists Lesly, Mark's sister, offering herself for the same purpose, Obi feels better and self confident; he feels victorious:

> You may cause more trouble by refusing a bribe than by

> accepting it. Had not a minister of state said, albeit in an unguarded, alcoholic 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? Stuff and nonsense! It was easy to keep one's hand clean. It required no more than the ability to say: 'I'm sorry, Mr. So-and so, but I cannot continue this discussion. Good morning.' one should not, of course, be unduly arrogant. After all, the temptation was not really overwhelming. But in all modesty one could not say it had been non-existent. (Achebe 88)

Achebe soon contrasts this optimism and self-confidence with another picture or a philosophy that forces itself as the norm in Nigerian life. We have already understood part of the way of thinking and justifying of bribery in the above quotation, and the other part is revealed to us in this conversation between Obi and his educated friend, Christopher, about Miss Mark:

> If a girl offers to sleep with you, that is not bribery,' said Christopher.
> - '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?'
> - 'You are being sentimental. A girl who comes the way she did is not an innocent little girl. It's 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 laughing.
> 'Don't imagine that girls are angels.'
> 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 girl before you let her appear before the board.'
> - 'This 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?'
> - 'She probably did.' (120-121)

This kind of facilitating and justifying things, and this kind of suspecting everybody's corruption and everybody's readiness to accept bribery, as observed by Christopher, especially when it comes from the educated elite's conviction. However Obi's optimism and self-confidence quickly collapse when he is confronted with a real test of the sort of financial troubles and sad events like his breaking up with Clara and his mother's death. In his *The Writings of Chinua Achebe*, G.D. Killam suggests that the collapse of Obi comes as a result of his incapability to stand against traditional beliefs and his incapability to live effectively in modern Nigeria:

> One of the important ironies of the novel lies in the fact that Obi's Western education and the moral standard he derives from it render him incapable not only of standing against the traditional and conservative beliefs of his parents and their generation, but of existing effectively in 'Modern' Nigeria. Obi's idealism, his moral standards, are those, which Achebe, implicitly, recommends, although nowhere is any overt didactic purpose evident. Obi is a tragic figure and his tragedy proceeds from his modernity. He is, it is important to note, a victim of the same historical circumstances that overwhelmed his grandfather, the fact of colonialism. (Killom 6)

It is important to note that Nigeria, in *No Longer at Ease*, was neither completely traditional nor completely modern as Killam suggests; it was

somewhere between the two. Its people neither wholly absorbed and adopted Western values nor sustained their own traditional life and values. Obi was a victim of this transitional period in which two distinctive cultures clashed and struggled. It was a period where Nigerian people, as Achebe once commented, sustained and kept some of the worst of the two cultures. The worst of the old is exemplified in Obi's parents's adherence to some of the rigid traditions such as isolating and refusing to marry an Osu. The worst of the new was exemplified in Obi's adoption of the elite's lifestyle and then by his inability to afford such a life, so that he slides into a behavior, bribery, that he rejected and despised from the very beginning. Yet when Killam talks about Obi's grandfather, he overlooks the fact that while Obi's grandfather believed, dedicated his time and effort and died for the old and traditional values, Obi fails to live up to and defend his modern values personally and publicly. Actually even Obi's father was a more determined and resolute rebel who left his father's religion to join the Christian missionaries. Obi's troubles are part of those of the nation and his irresolution, struggle and uncertainty embodies that of the nation. No one denies the fact that modernity in Nigeria is held responsible for the high rates of corruption and bribery. Modernity created new patterns of life and it changed the social and economic life of Nigerians once and for all. Also, it changed much of the rural life into an urban one and it caused the dependency of a large proportion of the population on the government's services and jobs. With such huge changes in a growing society,

bribery comes as an expected problem. Part of the solution lies in understanding and admitting the existence of the problem and in creating the public sense of responsibility. The role of the educated and intellectuals, despite failures and stumbles here and there, remains crucial in creating and forming the public conscience and consciousness. Achebe exposes the inappropriateness of the response to Obi's problem through the Group of Umofia Progressive Union's meeting, where his people show less concern about the problem of bribery and their negative attitude from corruption:

> The president said it was a thing of shame for a man in the senior service to go to prison for twenty pounds. He repeated twenty pounds. Spitting it out. ' Iam against people reaping where they have not sown. But we have a saying that if you want to eat a toad you should look for a fat and juicy one.'
> 'It is all lack of experience,' said another man. 'He should not have accepted the money himself. What other 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 6)

Ogede disapproves of G. L. Inns' assumption that the Umofia Progressive Union " does not regard bribery as essentially wrong", and that " what it condemns is Obi's inexperience in handling it." If we go through the speech of the Union's president and some of its members we will find Inns' argument more convincing than that of Oged's, which places all of the blame on colonialism. After all, there was no real or strong condemnation of bribery by anyone in the Union. On the contrary the president is angry and bitter

because all the fuss was about twenty dollars, and he invokes a proverb that advises anybody who was obliged to do such a thing, bribery, to do it for a better reward. We feel the noble feelings and the Group's readiness to help a fellow man in trouble, but we do not feel the Group's sense of responsibility toward the problem of bribery. This lack of public responsibility is what Achebe always tries to emphasize. Also, Achebe asserts that the lack of an honest, and qualified government complicates the situation and makes corruption common in the society in his *The Trouble with Nigeria.* He asserts that the real trouble with Nigeria is its leadership. In his essay *Anthills of the Savannah* and the Ideology of Leadership, David Maughan-Brown confirms these views and he adds that when Achebe's interviewer Anna Rutherford said to him that she had the feeling that what he was suggesting was that " the society reflected the quality of the leadership; if the leadership was corrupt, the society would also then turn to corruption." Achebe agrees with this interpretation but he adds: " but I'm really interested in is how you could begin to solve this problem. If you're going to do that, you have to pinpoint the responsibility specifically before you can even begin to break out of the vicious circle. And it is at the level of leadership that this break must occur." (Chinua Achebe A celebration 140-1). Much of the respect and admiration that Achebe cherishes comes from his firm and balanced views on the political and social urgent issues that his country passes through, and also from his opinions on postcolonial theories. His moderate views distance him from, and

sometimes set him against, controversial writers and theorists such as Ogede, who puts the blame on Colonialism, and other postcolonial writers like Rushdi and critics like V.S. Naipaul who say: "they(everyone knows that "they" means coloreds, wogs, niggers) are to blame for what "they" are, and it's no use droning on about the legacy of imperialism"(*Culture and Imperialism*.19). Said and Achebe agree on the importance of a balanced and a fair attitude of the colonial and postcolonial legacies and situations even if they are accused of betraying their peoples' revolutions and causes. Said asserts " blaming the Europeans sweepingly for the misfortunes of the present is not much of an alternative. What we need to do is to look at these matters as a network of interdependent histories that it would be inaccurate and senseless to repress, useful and interesting to understand"(*Culture and Imperialism*19).

In *No Longer at Ease*, it is not only Obi who is frustrated with his own people and who thinks his people are as responsible as colonialism; it is Odili who also thinks so, unless Oged thinks that all of Achebe's protagonists are shallow -minded. In *A Man of the People,* Odili shows his resentment of his people's celebration of the arrival of the sly and corrupt Chief Nanga, the minister of culture:

> As I stood in one corner of that vast tumult waiting for the arrival of the minister I felt intense bitterness welling up in my mouth. Here were silly, ignorant villagers dancing themselves lame and waiting ton blow off their gunpowder in honor of one of those who had started the country off down the slopes of inflation. I wished for miracle, for a

> voice of thunder, to hush this ridiculous festival and tell the poor contemptible people one or two truths. But of course it would be quite useless. They were not only ignorant but cynical. Tell them that this man had used his position to enrich himself and they would ask you- as my father did- if you thought that a sensible man would spit out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth. (Achebe 2)

Again we meet words of bitterness and contempt that describe " ignorant" and "cynical" people. But does that reflect Achebe's own view of and attitude toward his own people? C.L. Inns argues that Achebe's attitude is completely different than that of Odili:

> One wonders how early reviewers and critics of this novel could ever have identified Achebe with Odili. The gap between Achebe's attitude toward the people of the villagers, manifested in all three of his previous novels, and Odili's dismissal of them is enormous. (Innes 84)

We might add that Achebe manifested the difference between his attitude and Odili's not only in his writings on his people in his other novels, as Inns mentions, but also in his essays and lectures and other forms of writing. Achebe never distanced himself from his own people and he criticized all other writers who tried to do so or who tried to copy the European existentialist writings. He never saw the problems of Nigeria as unsolvable, and he saw honest leadership and an active and principled intelligentsia as something crucial, and as part of the solution. Intellectual and educated people should not be excused if they take the role of onlookers or only observers of what is going around them, and they are not excused and

applauded when they place the blame on the ignorant masses only. Because of the broad knowledge and the prophetic vision they are supposed to have, their role as pioneers and guides to the masses is the key for change. The masses would be mobilized and would respond positively to attempts for change led by a trust-worthy and honest leadership. When some ordinary characters are put on edge and seriously tested, they show real interest in change and real courage to fight for values of justice and social integrity. The attitude of Odili's father was a surprise to Odili himself and came to refute his low opinion of his own people. Odili's father shows true features of the old and traditional courageous Nigerian character. In his *The Trouble with Nigeria,* Achebe asserts:

> The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership. (53)

And in one of his interviews Achebe also emphasizes the importance of hope and optimism as one of the themes in A *Man of the People*:

> *A Man of the People is* a rather serious indictment- if you like-on post-independence Africa. But I don't despair because I think this is a necessary stage in our growth.... if you take the example of Nigeria, which is the place I know best, things had got to such a point politically that there was

> no answer- no way you could resolve this impasse politically. The political machine had been so abused that whichever way you pressed it, it produced the same result; and therefore another force had to come in. Now when I was writing A *Man of the People* it was not clear to me that this was going to be necessarily military intervention. It could easily have been civil war, which in fact it very nearly was in Nigeria. But I think the next generation of politicians in Nigeria, when we do have them, will have learned one or two lessons, I hope, from what happened to the first Republic. This is the only hope I have and if it turns out to be vain, it would be terrible. (Killam 85-86)

It is healthy and correct to diagnose social problems and to put the finger on the root causes of the social and political diseases that obstruct the movement of development of the society, but it is wrong to use these problems as a pretext for attacking the people who suffer from them, as we have seen in earlier colonialist and imperialist writings. The writer who takes this path is no better than colonialist European writers such as Joyce Cary and others. In his *Morning yet on Creation Day*, Achebe criticizes the Ghanian writer Ayi Kwei Armah for distancing himself from his country and his people in his *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born:*

> True, Ghana was sick. And what country is not? But everybody has his own brand of alinement. Ayi Kwei Armah imposes so much foreign metaphors on sickness of Ghana that it ceases to be true. And finally the suggestion (albeit existentially tentative) of the hero's personal justification without faith nor works is grossly inadequate in a society where even a lunatic walking stark naked through highways of Accra has an extended family somewhere suffering vicarious shame. Armah is clearly an alienated writer, a modern writer complete with all the symptoms. Unfortunately Ghana is not a modern

> existentialist country. It is just a West African state struggling to become a nation so there is enormous distance between Armah and Ghana. There is something scornful, cold and remote about Armah's obsession with the filth of Ghana: Left-hand fingers in their careless journey from a hasty anus sliding all the way up the bannister as their owners made the return trip from the lavatory downstairs to the office above. Right-hand fingers still dripping with the after- piss and slate sweat from fat crotches. The callused palms of messengers after they had blown their clogged noses reaching for a convenient place to leave the well-rubbed moisture. Afternoon hands not entirely licked clean of palm soup and remnants of kenkey. (26)

Achebe compares this sort of scornful and sarcastic writing to that of Joyce Cary, specifically to *Mister Johnson.* He brands them both as alienated writers:

> Joyce Cary was an alien writing about Africa; Ayi Kwei Armah is the alienated native. It seems that to achieve the modern alienated stance an African writer will end up writing like some white District Officer. Armah is quoted somewhere as saying that he is not an African writer but just a writer. Some other writers (and friends of mine, all) have said the same thing. It is a sentiment guaranteed to win applause in Western circles. But it is a statement of defeat. A man is never more defeated than when he is running away from himself. (26-27)

From this uncompromising attitude, we come to know that Achebe diverges from Odili and that the creation of Odili is a fictional one. Odili's scornful tone should not be compared to that of Cary, for example, because the reader feels effortlessly Odili's contempt mixed with his bitterness through his speech. At the end of the novel, Odili's convictions are changed, his contempt for the poor and simple people is replaced by sympathy and

understanding. However, although the other African countries share almost the same troubles, problems, concerns, hopes and aspirations as Nigeria, Achebe has never adopted a scornful or sarcastic tone in dealing with Nigeria's problems or with Nigerian characters as Armah has done with dealing with Ghana's. When Achebe wrote *A Man of the People*, Nigeria was passing through its worst time, as he himself mentions:

> The British who had done precious little to create a spirit of common nationality in Nigeria during the fifty years they were in control, made certain on the eve of their departure that power went to that conservative element in the country. This would insure Nigeria's obedience even unto freedom. As a first sign of this, the British high commissioner took up residence next door to the prime minister who was of course a British Knight. Within six years of independence Nigeria was a cesspool of corruption and misrule. Public servants helped themselves freely to nation's wealth. A certain professor has recently described the government of many African countries as a kleptocracy. Nigeria could certainly be called that. Elections were blatantly rigged. (One British weekly captioned its story of a Nigerian election Nigerrimandering.) The national census was outrageously stage-managed; judges and magistrates were manipulated by politicians in power. The politicians themselves were manipulated and corrupted by foreign business interests. This was the situation in which I wrote *A Man of the People.* (Achebe 82)

At these hard times the political elite was engaged in securing its personal gains and doing favors for foreign investors on the pretext of pursuing the country's welfare and interest. 'The white master is still in power' and the nationalist leader of yesterday had become the not so attractive party boss. Independence had become without content and nationalist

movement became a repressive power that repressing identities and cultures. Colonial values, ways and methods were promoted, developed and propagated by the political elite. This elite, embodied in the character of the Honorable Chief Nanga, was never satisfied or gratified with what it gained of the ill-gotten wealth and power. The gap between the rich and the poor was expanding. The people's political consciousness and understanding was limited, and this applies not only to the literate or ordinary people but also to the educated people, such as Odili himself, who were repeating the political elite's propagandist slogans and mottos without any effort from their side to investigate and find out whether the elite behaved on the basis of scandalous political expediency or on sound common sense and morality. But again the period that followed the independence was very confusing phase in the life of Nigerian people. The political, social and economical turmoil and the ethnical, regional and religious conflicts and unrests have left even Nigerian writers confused about the nature and function of art. Simon Gikandi describes this situation:

> The moment of independence was supposed to usher in the future in which all the historical contradictions generated by colonialism in the past could be resolved. But when the new nation state became an instrument of repressing identities, even as it propagated colonial values, the writer found it difficult to find new narrative forms to express the terrifying problem on his hands. (Gikandi.146)

The political elite's corruption and its attempt to corrupt and recruit

intellectuals by offering personal gains, the ugliness of the anti-intellectual scapegoating in parliament, and the fascist trends in society are all issues that are well-addressed in *A Man of the People* and in the more recent novel *Anthills of the Savannah.* While *A Man of the People* ends in a military coup, the *Anthills of Savannah* ends in a counter- coup.

In *A Man of the People*, the main character, Odili, shows some ambivalent characteristics and traits. Despite his idealism, most of his acts come out of spitefulness and revenge. We remain skeptical of his causes to the end of the story. He is the opposite of Ikem's character in *Anthills of the Savannah*. Ikem is depicted as *a* realistic character who shares people's sufferings and is ready to go to the extreme in defending what h*e* believes in. Achebe depicts three types intelligentsia in post-independent Nigeria. First, there is the resisting and authentic, so to speak, intellectual who stands up, at the risk of sacrificing everything, for what he or she believes in and desires, and who resists all aspects of corruption. Second, there is the confused and irresolute intellectual, who lacks broad vision, courage and the sense of being part of, or an important part of, the people and the nation's suffering, unless he or she personally experiences a difficult situation or is hurt. Third, there is the opportunistic and wish-washy intellectual who does not hesitate to cooperate with the corrupt regime in return for personal gains, and who is ready to launch fierce attacks on honest and hardworking people under many pretexts such as nationalism, Africanism and the nation's security,

independence and well-being. This part is always ready to distort and falsify truths and facts according to the corrupt regime's wishes and schemes. Such an opportunistic and manipulative complicit intelligentsia that serves as promoter and supporter of dictatorial and authoritarian regimes is actually more dangerous than the regimes themselves, for they attack under the guise of the above-mentioned pretexts and they make it more difficult for ordinary people to detect and find out the truth, as in the case of the crisis that erupted between the honest minister of finance and his corrupt prime minister. In *A Man of the People*, the tyrannical and oppressive government decides to get rid of its own most qualified and competent cabinet ministers, the minister of finance, Madiko, being the most famous one of them, because of their disapproval of government procedures in the time of inflation:

> The minister of finance at the time was a first-rate economist with a Ph. D. in public finance. He presented to the Cabinet a complete plan for dealing with the situation. The prime minister said 'no' to the plan. He was not going to risk losing the election by cutting down the price paid to coffee planters at that critical moment; the National Bank should be instructed to print fifteen million pounds. Two-third of the cabinet supported the minister. The next morning the prime minister sacked them and in the evening he broadcast to the nation. He said the dismissed ministers were conspirators and traitors who had teamed up with foreign saboteurs to destroy the new nation. (3-4)

Soon the radio and newspapers, mostly controlled by government, took sides with the prime minister and started turning the indignant masses against the minister of finance and his colleagues. People went onto the street demonstrating and calling

for trying the traitors, and newspapers produced wildly rhetorical editorials:

> Let us now and for all time extract from our body-politics as a dentist extracts a stinking tooth those entire decadent stooges versed in textbook economics and aping the white man's mannerism and way of speaking. We are proud to be Africans. Our true leaders are not those intoxicated with their Oxford, Cambridge or Harvard degree but those who speak the language of the people. Away with the damnable and expensive university education which only alienates an African from his rich and ancient culture and puts him above his people. (4)

Such attacks on educated people and intellectuals by the media and such editorials, supposed to be written by educated people, are echoing identically the government's attitudes. The prime minister's speech to the parliament on this issue does not travel too far from the above editorial: " Never again must we entrust our destiny and the destiny of Africa to the hybrid class of Western- educated and snobbish intellectuals who will not hesitate to sell their mothers for a mess of pottage..." (6)

Achebe tries to provide an accurate picture of the sly and manipulative ways in which authoritarian and corrupt regimes divert the public's attention from its bitter and scandalous facts and deeds. Whenever such regimes felt the danger of any opponent there was nothing better than the ready formula of treason and conspiracy on the future and security of the nation to attach to such opponent. The regime's accusation of intellectuals's and educated people's loyalty and allegiance to the West was meant to shift people's support to government and their anger onto the government's opponent, because African people, like most other post colonized

people, still have bad memories and bitter feelings toward European colonization and imperialism. Employing and exploiting national or patriotic feelings and passions by corrupt regimes is scandalous and dangerous trend meant to deviate people's recognition and attention from the fact that these regimes are themselves the production and are the real heirs of European imperialism. About this trend toward Pseudo-nationalist regimes in most postcolonial countries Edward Said says:

> Much but by no means all the resistance to imperialism as conducted in the broad context on nationalism. "Nationalism" is a word that still signifies all sorts of undifferentiated things, but it serves me quite adequately to identify the mobilizing force that coalesced into resistance against an alien and occupying empire on the part of peoples processing a common history, religion, and language. Yet for all its success- indeed because of its success- in riding many territories of colonial overlords, nationalism has remained a deeply problematic enterprise. When it got people out on street to march against the white master, nationalism was often led by lawyers, doctors, and writers who were partly formed and to some degree produced by the colonial power. The national bourgeoises and their specialized elites, of which Fanon speaks so ominously, in effect tended to replace the colonial force with a new class-based and ultimately exploitive one, which replicated the old colonial structures in new terms. (Said 223)

The regime's duplicity and its double-standard policies are well manifested in chief Nanga's insincerity and hypocrisy. He was one of the most zealous supporters of the regime at the time of the arrest and dismissal of the minister of finance, and he pronounced the death sentence many times on that minister in an attempt to gain favor with the regime. But when he is part of the elite government, despite the

superficial and pretentious contempt that politicians hold for educated people, he is not embarrassed to reveal to Odili his excitement and happiness at receiving an honorary doctorate from an American university:

> ' They are going to give me doctorate degree,' he pronounced proudly. 'Doctor of Laws, LL.D.'
> - 'That is great,' I said. Congratulation.'
> - 'Thank you, brother.'
> - ' so the minister will become 'Chief the honorable doctor M.A.,' Intoned the journalist, a whole second ahead of my own thoughts on the matter. We all cheered the impressive address and its future owner.
> - ' you no see say the title fit my name *Pem,* ' said the minister with boyish excitement, and we all said yes it suited him perfectly. (Achebe 20-21)

A Man of the People differs from *No Longer at Ease* in Achebe's giving his reader more and sufficient, explicit and implicit, references to the nationalist elite's involvement in the corruption and being the excess to the former colonial powers' dirty works and illegal businesses that built on favors and bribery. No one would believe that an American university would disgrace its image and reputation to the extent of giving a corrupt African politician an honorary doctorate unless this university gains considerable profit from students being sent by such minister to such university in the form of scholarships or student exchange programs etc. in another incident we are told about the four-story house that was built by a foreign company to Chief Nanga:

> The house in question was the very modern four-story

> structure going up beside the present building and which was to get into the news later. It was, as we were to learn, a 'dash' from the European building firm of Antonio and Sons whom Nanga had recently given the half-million-pound contract to build the National Academy of Arts and science. (108)

In another incident Achebe draws a clear picture of the decaying regime that drains the country's resources and wealth and stops at nothing:

> As the whole world now knows, our minister of Foreign trade, Alhaji Chief Senator Suleiman Wagada, announced on New year's Day a twenty per cent rise in import duties on certain types of textiles goods. On January 2nd the opposition progressive Alliance Party published detailed evidence to show that someone had told the firm of British Amalgamated of the minister's plan as long ago as October and that they had taken steps to bring in three shiploads of the textiles by mid-December. The cabinet was split overnight into the savage warring camps of those who wanted the government to resign and those, like Chief Nanga, who said that the matter concerned the minister of foreign trade alone and if it came to resigning he should resign by himself. And then the filth began to flow. The *Daily* Matchet for instance carried a story which showed that chief Nanga, who had himself held the portfolio of foreign trade until two years ago, had been guilty of the same practice and had built out of his gains three blocks of seven-story luxury flats at three hundred thousand pound each in the name of his wife and that these flats were immediately leased by British Amalgamated at fourteen hundred a month each. (111-112)

Ode Ogede suggests that Achebe " could not possibly deny positive attributes to Nanga because he is a product of his environment-rather than someone of inherent moral deficiency." Also, he indicates that Nanga is portrayed as having warmth

character, that he has respect for others and that he is most generous with his wealth; Ogede quotes from Nanga's speech to his own native people to support his statement:

> " I no de keep anini for my self, na so so troway. If some person come to you and say " I wan make you minister' make you run like blazes comot, na true word I tell you.To God who made me ... minister de sweet for eye but too much katakata for de inside. Believe me you're yours sincerely." (Ogede33)

This passage does not favor Nanga so much as it condemns him. If he is generous, it is, first because he always thinks of buying people's voices in the elections and, second, because his money is easy money that is collected by means of bribery and illegal transactions and commissions and by abusing his position as cabinet minister. The third important thing is that it is very clear to anybody going through the novel that Nanga is not honest and sincere about his disliking his position as a cabinet minister, because we observe him fighting fiercely and violently for this same position. He order the local police officers to threaten Odili's father with heavy fines for unpaid taxes, and then he orders the cutting off of the pipe-born water from Odili's village as a punishment for the village 's firm stand with Odili. Finally he orders the deadly physical attack on Odili, just like the attack that is ordered by his colleague Chief Koko and that causes the death of Max, for challenging him in the election campaign. For these reasons, we do not think that chief Nanga was sincere and honest. Clearly, what he said in this passage was mere pretension and pomposity for local consumption. He exploits his own people's lack of political consciousness

and their unawareness of the political game that he is, along with his regime, involved in with the British and American companies and investors as Max tells Odili:

> ' Oh, forget that. Do you know, Odili, that British Amalgamated has paid out four hundred thousand pound to P.O.P. to fight this election? Yes, and we also know that the Americans have been more even more generous, although we don't have the figures as yet. (Achebe 142)

By depicting such members in the government elite, and by showing how this elite's denunciation of the educated and its appeals to the rhetoric of independence and nationalism are self -serving, Achebe indicates that the colonialists left the country after they built it up and installed the basis for such corruption. To beautify Nanga's picture or to justify part of his actions and to say he is " part of his environment" is, first, to ignore Achebe's conviction that this character must be held responsible as much as other corrupt cabinet minister and also as well as the former colonial forces and the impassivity of the native people. Second, it gives the impression that all Nigerian people were corrupt and that there was no rejection or resistance whatsoever from people, and this is not true either, because we have seen how Odili, Odili's father, Max and his girlfriend, Elsi, as well as other members of their party and many other people joined the fight against the corrupt regime. Most critics underrated the character of Odili, first, as an unreliable first-person narrator and second, as being led by jealousy, spitefulness and a desire for revenge, and not by sense of duty toward his country or any other moral

principle. Despite the fact that Odili differs from Obi in his ability to get along easily with his own native people and his clear knowledge of the history of Nigerian political life and his connection with different types of peoples, despite all of that, his attempt to get a scholarship to continue his studies by means of Chief Nanga's favor, his staying un the latter's guest room and enjoying his hospitality in his house, his admiration of chief Nanga's actions and speeches at the very beginning, all that caused much damage to his character and discredited him as a reliable narrator or a genuine hero who was bound to lead and to have an effect on his people. Odili is described by G. D. Killam as a character whose motives are never entirely disinterested: capable of idealism, he nevertheless acts often out of self-centeredness and spitefulness in his dealing with Chief Nanga." As for Ogede, he analyzes Odili as a contradicting character who is dishonest and romantic idealistic at the same time:

> The main reason Odili accepts the Nanga's invitation is the expectation of romance. Odili sees the Nanga's home as a suitable place where he can go to have a good time with his girlfriend Elsie. However, being the enemy of the truth that he is when asked to define the exact nature of this relationship, Odili lies to chief Nanga that she is not all that important to him but merely a girl friend. Had Odili not given his host the wrong impression about Elsie-whom he describes as being nothing more than a libertine, freely seeking pleasure- chief Nanga might not have been so readily encouraged to seek his own delectation with her. (Ogede 134)

Again Oged tries to attribute good characteristics or traits to chief Nanga by

suggesting that he would or might not have seduced Odili's girl friend had he known she was Odili's girl friend and not a casual love or a 'slut'. We do not believe so, and we believe in the inherent deficiency in Nanga's character, and that he would stop at nothing in gratifying his desires. But what draws our attention in this passage is Odili's dishonesty and his lie to chief Nanga about his girl friend. We are left with the inescapable impression that he was so proud to be associated and connected to Elsie for one reason or another that he lied about it. Ogede also emphasizes that:

> When Odili confronts the slums in the city, Achebe's concern, as Rosemary Colmer points out, is "emphasizing Odili's blindness at this stage in the novel to the social issues which ought to concern an idealistic young politician. ((7)

However Ogede's overall analysis of Odili's character seems more convincing. He suggests that Odili's actions were motivated by his own desire to "take Chief Nanga's full identity" and to have power and control over others. We come to this revelation during his ride to visit Elsie in politicians' chauffeur-driven Cadillac:

> In our country a long American car driven by a white-uniformed chauffeur and flying a Ministerial flag could pass through the eye of the needle. The hospital gateman promptly levered the iron barrier and saluted. The elderly male nurse I beckoned to had spirited forward with an agility that you would think had left him at least a decade ago. And as I said earlier, although it was against all laws of the hospital, they had let me into the female nurses quarter and woken up Elsie to see me. (82-83)

C.L. Innes' analysis of Odili's character does not differ too much from

Ogede's and Killam's. She points out that the character of Odili is not fully developed and that Odili fails, most of the time to distinguish between the moral and esthetic. She asserts that Odili fails to note the contradictions and ironies in chief Nanga's behavior because his character is close to that of chief Nanga's. Inns quotes this passage from the novel in which Odili is defensively rationalizing his admiration of chief Nanga:

> Somehow I found myself admiring the man for his lack of modesty. For what is modesty but inverted pride? We all think we are first-class people. Modesty forbids us from saying so ourselves though, presumably, not from wanting to hear it from others. Perhaps it was their impatience with this kind of hypocrisy that made men like chief Nanga successful politicians while starry-eyed idealists strove vaingloriously to bring into politics niceties and delicate refinements belonged elsewhere.

Innes comments on this passage by saying:

> While Odili is not all wrong, he is, as usual, only partly right. The speeches quoted above are not the speeches of men 'impatient with... hypocrisy' of any kind, while Nanga's behavior as snarling backbencher simply does not belong to the category in which one thinks of 'niceties and delicate refinements'. Odili has not managed to separate ethical judgement from aesthetic ones, morals from manners, form from content. And indeed, the pomposity of his description of himself as one of those 'starry-eyed idealist(who) strove vaingloriously to bring into politics niceties and delicate refinements that belong elsewhere' is matched only by its banality and emptiness. 'Starry-eyed idealist' idealist was also one of Winterbottom's favorite dismissive phrases. (Innes 68)

Most critics agree about dismissing Odili's character as ambivalent,

undeveloped and even negative. Not only that, but Inns compares his pomposity, his sense of superiority and choice of words, consciously and consciously, to that of the colonialist district officer, Winterbottom, in *Arrow of God*. And she is right in and her comparison is precise. They are like one another even in their change. Odili starts changing and starts understanding just like Winterbottom at the end of the novel. Christina Chinwe says about the change of Winterbottom:

> It is only when he attains that level of knowledge that he can rightly claim a knowledge of the people. The drums will cease to disturb him at night, and will cease to make him 'wonder what unspeakable rites went on in the forest at night``. He will begin to see the drums as the native see them: as a form of entertainment or a means of communication and the heartbeat of the people. He will cease to be terrified of the African drumbeats.(Chinwe.8)

I quoted some of the critics' negative analysis of Odili's character in order to show that part of Achebe's plan, in most of his novels, not to create a cultural or national hero that has all good qualities or who has superior powers or will. Creating the flawed hero is something, Achebe believes, that makes people restrain from person worshiping and from depending heavily on characters with extraordinary powers and traits for their social and political salvation. The decisive factor in encouraging and making dictatorships is the people's submissiveness and their lack of self-assurance, which allow opportunists and ruthless fascists to become self-appointed rulers. Creating imperfect characters with moral flaws makes people think that politicians,

intellectuals and other such individuals are liable to moments of weakness and mistakes because they are simply human beings and not angels. These moments of recognition might lead people to stand up for the nation themselves and make them think of fighting corruption collectively. Achebe shares Fanon's beliefs in the important role of writers and intellectuals in promoting and fostering people's political consciousness and self-confidence:

> to educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnant it is their responsibility, and if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man who will take responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people. (Gagiano 35)

There are many references in *A Man of the People* to the importance of the people's *consciousness* and collective decisions and attitudes. The story of the greedy shopkeeper, Josiah, who steals the blindman Azoge's stick serves as an allegory of the Nigerian situation. This story is not often refereed to by many critics, despite its important allusions. The story invokes the villagers' indignation and contempt when it is told by the poor Azoge. To Odili's astonishment, the reaction of the villagers is rapid and strong. The curses and condemnation were said by all types of people like the old woman, the palm-wine tapper, and the middle- aged Christian and carpenter who said: " Josiah has taken away enough from the owner to notice." This incident meant a lot

to Odili whose change of character and way of thinking might have taken a turning point after it; he says:

> I thought much afterwards about the proverb, about the man taking things away until the owner at least notices. In the mouth of our people there was no greater condemnation. It was not just a simple question of a man's cup being full. A man's cup might be full and non be the wiser. But here the owner knew, and the owner, I discover, is the will of the people. Within one week Josiah was ruined; no man, woman or child went near his shop. Even strangers and mammy-wagon passenger making but brief stop at the market were promptly warned off. Before the month was out, the shop-and bar closed for good and Josiah disappeared-for a while. (Achebe 96-97)

This sort of symbolic, collective resistance by ordinary people displays Achebe's faith in the will of the people that can always be the winner against tyranny, greed and thuggery. Also, it is a sign of hope that shows Achebe's optimisim that his nation or people one day or another will know the truth and will act correctly and decisively for their own national well being. We did not meet such resistance in *No Longer at Ease,* except Obi's protest, expressed in his soliloquies or in his discussions with his friend, Christopher, and in his rejection of all forms of bribery. Achebe points out that Obi's decline, under the pressure of his financial troubles and the psychic troubles caused by his mother's death and his breakup with Clara, was not final and for good because Obi felt the gravity of his behavior and he regretted it. This sort of self-consciousness is important, according to Achebe, because it is part of the intellectual growing experience that leads to broader understanding. This self-

consciousness can be seen as part of the new nation's growing political and social experience. In *A Man of the People* we have witnessed more growing political and social consciousness on the part of the people, despite the fact the unconscious people were far larger in number than those who were aware and involved in one form or another of political activities or resistance. The reception of the corrupt politician, Nanga, with cries and slogan of nationalism, patriotism and "Nangism" suggest the dangerous ignorant zeal of the masses and the use of phrases such as "eat and let eat" suggest the depth of the impassivity and submissiveness that was represented by such phrases.

In *Anthills of the Savannah*, the narrator praises the British people's wisdom in not re-electing the same leader, Winston Churchill, who led his country to the victory over the armies of Germany in the Second World War. They supposedly took this decision for fear of repeating the mistake made by the Germans who have created a violent and brutal dictator out of a national hero:

> After a long career of subduing savages in distant lands they discovered the most dangerous savages of all-just across the English Channel and took him on and brought him to heel. But the effort proved too great and the cost too high, and although they acquired themselves with honor they made sure that they would not be called upon to do it again. And so they anointed the hero of their dazzling feat the greatest Englishman who ever lived, dumped him at the polls and voted Clement Attlee in. Whatever fear the ghost of British imperial vocation may still hold over the world's little people was finally removed when a renegade Englishman and his little band of thugs seized her majesty's colony in Rhodesia and held it for thirteen years.

> No, the English have, for practical purposes, ceased to menace the world. The real danger today is from that fat, adolescent and delinquent millionaire, America, and from all those virulent, misshapen freaks like Amine and Bokassa sired on Africa by Europe. Particularly those ones. ((51-52)

This clear statement by Ikem Osodi about the danger of authoritarian and dictatorial regimes reflects Achebe's conviction about this matter and this issue is one of the main themes in this novel and other novels about modern Nigeria. It shows that the people's consciousness and their determination is a decisive factor in preventing the creation of dictatorial regimes. Whatever is said or written about and against the manipulation, exploitation and bar barbarity of colonialism and imperialism is true but the fact remains that the dictatorial regimes in post-colonial countries proved, in most cases, that they are worst and more dangerous than colonialists and imperialists. The disasters and tragedies that some of them caused to their countries exceeded those have been done by colonialists. In his Devices of Evasion: the Mythic versus the historical imagination in the postcolonial African novel, Wole Ogundele stresses that Africa is not the making of colonialism alone, it is true that 20th c Africa is largely product of 20th c European, commercial, political and cultural colonialism on the continent but the overwhelming fact is that Africa is the creation of its longer centuries of its own internal histories. Most of its problems, conflicts and disasters come out of the repression and suppression of these internal histories on the hands of nationalist regimes. Wole Ogendel argues that nationalist historiography, like European historiography, is a repressive power in post-independent Africa that

seeks to repress other histories by its homogenizing ideology of nation states. Ogundele sees repression of regional and people's history by nationalist historiography as 'paralleled by the relegation of the pre-colonial past to prehistory by colonial'.(Wole Ogundele.8) He also emphasizes that past ought to be interrogated, exactly as the historical fiction does. Ogundele agrees with Simon Gikandi in this Argument. Gikandie, in his *Reading Chinua Achebe*: Language and Ideology in Fiction, asserts that Achebe`s historical novels were part of his scheme to create what he calls a national culture:

> Thus, the idea of a national culture that restores dignity to African peoples, describes and justifies, and praises the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence is an important function of Achebe's narrative and poetics.(Gikandi 7)

Glorifying nationalist figures could be as dangerous as taking the first step in creating dictators and dictatorships. This is what the English understood and this is what they wanted to avert after the Second World War. However, we learn more about Achebe from this passage. First, he shows more open-mindedness and willingness to learn from and reflect on others nation's experiences and histories. He is like Fanon, who believes in the national consciousness that intellectuals can help to form, which leads the nation to self-assurance and to Interaction and cooperation with other nations:

> National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension. This problem of national consciousness and of national culture

> takes on in Africa a special dimension. The birth of national consciousness in Africa has strictly contemporaneous connection with the African consciousness.... the most urgent thing for intellectual is to build up his nation.... far from keeping aloof from other nations, therefore, it is national liberation which leads the nation to play its part on stage of history. It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows. And this two-fold emerging is ultimately the source of all culture. (Fanon, cited in Gagiano 35)

Anthills of the Savannah depicts the struggle within a pseudo-national and dictatorial regime that seeks to galvanize and exploit national sentiments for the purpose of maintaining and sustaining power and authority over African people. On the one hand, it depicts the struggle of educated people such as, Ikem, Chris and Beatrice, who are aware of the dictatorial regime's nature and they resist and try to mobilize ordinary people to resist through creating and reshaping people's assurance and social and political consciousness.

This novel, unlike to *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the People*, depicts a kind of strong and intimate and relaxed relationship between intellectuals, embodied by the character of Ikem, the *National Gazette* editor, and later by Chris and Beatrice, and people from different types of backgrounds and milieus, embodied by Elewa, a saleswoman, Briamoh, a taxi driver, Emmenuel the student Union leader, the villagers of Abazon etc.

Ikem's relationship with his people was different from Obi's and Odili's, because the two later detached and distanced themselves from their people so that they were lass effective or inspiring to mobilize their people. With Ikem it is a different a story in which we witness a committed and self-conscious thinker, poet, and writer who has genuine sympathy and sensitivity toward his people's sufferings. He believes in his people so that they believe in him and his writings, speeches, and lectures prove inspiring to them. His murder brings a change of regime, just like the death of Max, though that change is by means of military coup d'etat. It is noteworthy that *A Man of the People* ends in a coup d'etat, while *Anthills of the Savannah* starts with a new one and ends in another. Taking into account that Achebe himself was victimized and was almost killed by the secret services of the dictatorial regime in the late sixties, we come to know that the ending or concluding of his two novels with military coup d'etat does not reflect his belief or his support for such an easy and worst solution, as he mentioned in an earlier quoted passage about A *Man of the People*, whenever things reached a deadlock. However, the actual coup d'etat that happened after *A Man of the People* came to assert Achebe's broad vision and knowledge of Nigerian issues and conditions. Achebe's concern is that, when a corrupt civil regime is left to violate laws and freedoms and mismanage the affaires of the state and nation, and when people are content with a philosophy of " eat and let eat," then these people should expect something worse than only a corrupt civil regime; they should expect no less

than a military dictatorial regime with harsh policies and a life of oppression, repression, silencing of voices, wars, ethnic or religious genocides, sacking of the state treasury, famine on a high scale etc. Most of these disasters happened in Nigeria after independence until the last brutal military regime that ended in 1999 with a new elected government. *Anthills of the Savannah* depicts part of the life under a dictatorial regime and some of the catastrophic policies it conducts to subdue the people. The resistance to such policies, as depicted in the novel, form two levels or fronts: the first, comes from intellectuals, embodied by Ikem, with his crusading editorials that expose the regime's practices; the second comes from ordinary people who believed in Ikem and his ideals, and from the villagers of Abazon, who believed in freedom and dignity and refused to vote for the dictator's life- long presidency.

Ikem was a real freedom fighter who never wavered or hesitated to say what he believed in despite his friend's ,the minister of information, discouraging and warning him of the futility and danger of what he was doing:

> Those who mismanage our affairs would silence our criticism by pretending they have facts not available to the rest of us. And I know it is fatal to engage them on their own ground. Our best weapon against them is not to marshal facts, of which they are truly managers, but passion. Passion is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble. When I took over the National Gazette from Chris I had no strong views one way or another a bout capital punishment. I even had no particular abhorrence about staging it publicly. If I had to vote I would probably vote against it by instinct but without much excitement. But all that was changed for me in of course of one afternoon. I became a passionate crusader. Chris said I was a romantic; that I had no solid contact with

> the ordinary people of Kangan; that the ordinary people of Kangan believed firmly in an eye for an eye and that from all accounts they enjoyed the spectacle that so turned my stomach. (Achebe 38-39)

There is a line of distinction that is drawn between the two characters of Ikem and Chris. While Ikem shows real concern for his own people, Chris shows a sort of indifference and complicity with the dictatorial regime. We come to know that he himself has chosen and elevated half of the cabinet ministers clustered around the dictator. His discouraging of Ikem and his justification of his opinion of the futility of Ikem's writings by his allegations about the people's strong belief in " eye for an eye" and public executions is a dangerous and scandalous trend. It is scandalous because it comes from an intellectual and highly educated character. Such a character is supposed to lead, not be led by mobs believe in public executions. Besides, we know that Chris is supposed to know that even the public execution is something became very symbolic and is exploited by the dictatorial regime that uses it whenever it wants to terrify and terrorize its political opponents. The irony in Chris's "eye for an eye" is that if that law is applied fairly, it would be applied, in the first place to the dictatorial regime and its cronies, and Chris himself would not be exempted or spared. Chris's justification for his remaining in the dictatorial government shows confusion and uncertainty or a lack of self-consciousness, He meditates on his situation:

> And so it begins to seem to me that this thing probably never was a game, that the present was there from the very

> beginning only I was too blind or too busy to notice. But the real question which I have often asked myself is why then do I go on with it now that I can see. I don't know. Simple inertia, maybe. Or perhaps sheer curiosity: to see where it will.... well, end. I am not thinking so much about him as about my colleagues, eleven intelligent, educated men who let this happen to them, who actually went out of their way to invite it, and who even at this hour have seen and learnt nothing, the cream of our society and the hope of the black race. I suppose it is for them that I am still at this silly observation post making farcical entries in crazy log-book of this our ship of state. Disenchantment with them turned long ago into detached clinical interest. (2)

Annie Gagiano suggests that the three characters Ikem, Chris and Beatrice had all undergone mental growth. We agree with this argument, but we just cannot put the character of one who contents himself with the idleness of observation and remaining in a corrupt government out of sheer curiosity regarding the character of Ikem, who risks his own life defending his own people. Gagiano says:

> Ikem, BB, and Chris form a trio of friends and thinkers whom the novelist contrasts with the all- male "troika of Proprietors who (imagine they) own Kangan itself" Sam and Chris and Ikem. For of course, Sam soon decides- due to his jealous insecurity- that the other two are power contenders who need to be "shed." first Ikem, then Beatrice, and ultimately Chris experience rapid spurts of mental growth in the months or mere weeks of intensifying crisis in their country. That their advances in personal, social and political understanding are forms of growth energy, wholesome and badly needed for the healing of this ravaged society, is shown in the way it extends their sympathies to people who had been, formerly, in one way or another, "beneath" their notice (or whom they had not encountered as full human equals from whom they- the educated ones- could learn). All three become rapidly or gradually more attentive to spheres of social life with or within which they can form a new alliance. (Gagiano 103)

We recognize the changes and the mental growth of Chris and Beatrice, but we need to notice that while Chris's and Beatrice's political, social and communal sympathy were achieved at the end of the novel, Ikem has shown a much more developed character and mature mentality from the very beginning. His not formed or determined views and attitudes on feminism and womanhood get a strong boost from a strong feminist character, Beatrice. Beatrice, who has an honors degree from Queen Marry College university, projects Achebe's new attitude of woman roles and clarifies Ikem's hazy thought on the issue. Ikem accepts that his former attitude toward woman has been too respectful, too idealistic. With Beatrice he gets insight into feminist concept of womanhood. He starts meditating on the appearances of male chauvinism in Nigerian society and he goes so far as to look to Igbo myth for an answer. He compares Igbo myth to the Christian and Judaic ones, and he concludes not only that they were no better than the Igbo's, but that actually they were worse in the meaning of abusing and denying women freedom and equality. It is important to notice that Ikem's mentality and his ability to analyze and his vitality and willingness to learn are clear from the very beginning. It contrasts with the picture that Chris has drawn about the eleven intellectuals and ministers whose remaining in posts under a corrupt government gave them nothing and might have taught them the ways and methods of a brutal dictatorial regime. Just as were the life and vitality of Ikem were impressive and encouraging, so is his death was inspiring and revitalizing to his people and to his friend Chris and Beatrice.

As for Chris's conscious personal development and his mental growth, it has continued gradually after the death of Ikem and during his journey as a fugitive to the North. He comes to an intimate relationship with the land of the North and becomes familiar with its people. He sees the disaster of the drought on the land, a disaster that is complicated by the dictator's order to cut off the flow of water to the people for their refusal to vote for his life-presidency. Chris now starts to remember the Abazonian delegation that came to beg the government's help for dying people of drought and famine. He discovers the enormous consequences of victimization of those people and starts to sympathize with them. He feels the disastrous failure of the nation state and its abusive policies. His final journey ' reminds us how economic and political inequality and neglect have contributed to the negation of the nationalist dream of one nation, one culture'(Gikandi 147). Now he starts to think like Ikem and starts to repeat Ikem's words of denunciations as Annie Gagiano asserts:

> This adds political insult to the injury effected by the drought- so the memory of the political victimization prompts Chris's sense of the outrageous absurdity of " security forces" at the border post. Now he asks (like Ikem earlier, in his denunciation of the presidential Retreat-73): " who or what they securing? Perhaps (they are there, he adds sardonically)... to prevent the hungry desert from taking its begging bowl inside the secure borders of the (more prosperous) South. (104)

The death of Chris is very symbolic and ironic at the same time. He does not die at the hands of the old regime's secret service and he survives all the troubles on the security borders and check points only to die at the hands of a maniacal police sergeant who takes the opportunity of the old regime's collapse to mess around and terrorize people. Chris is shot to death when he tries to save a little student girl from being raped by this crazy Sergeant. Now one might think that the death of Ikem was understandable and convincing because he challenged the old corrupt regime with its horrendous secret service machine, and that the death of Chris was unnecessary especially after the collapse of the old regime. The symbolic action of Chris and his death lie in the meaning of standing against oppression and tyranny in all their forms and manifestations, and the attempt at raping the little girl and the defense of her by Chris stands for this meaning. Chris's courageous interfering, while others were watching curiously, shows the tremendous change he has undergone mentally and personally. He has become more human and more sensitive to those around him, especially those who are weak and less privileged. His journey to the north comes as if something was necessary for Chris to reach this state of understanding, charitableness and graciousness. His death is as worthy as Ikem's, and dying saving a little girl is as noble as dying defending the whole nation. Chris understands this fact very well, and this is the source of the secret of the smile on his face when he died. Moreover, Achebe depicts and emphasizes that their death is symbolic because it is the kind of death that can create life for the new generations. Some critics interpret Chris's final action from a feminist perspective, as is the case with C.L. Innes, who

suggests:

> Chris's final Act is significant because he intervenes and acts rather than remaining detached, and also because his intervention is an outraged reaction to the most blatant abuse of male power against a woman. (Innes 157)

She also asserts:

> While the novel chiefly concerned with the abuse of power, and particularly male power, it also suggests the need for women to acknowledge and take upon themselves aspects of maleness. (158)

Because there were many critics and much of their criticism was directed on Achebe's previous attitude of womanhood and feminism, it seems that this flood of criticisms weighed on Achebe's mind when he began *Anthill of the Savannah* in the late Eighties. This novel works as a reconsideration of his past attitudes in his past writings and also It is a good and bold attempt to fight back the charges levied at him by those critics. Andy Greenwald suggests that Achebe was more apologetic in this novel for his attitude in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* and other novels. She asserts that women in his previous novels were voiceless and subordinated to male power in more patriarchal society in her essay, Postcolonial Feminism in Anthills of the Savannah. . This critical attitude is echoed in Rose Ure mezu's essay, Women in Achebe world, where she criticizes Achebe for his " un abashed without an apology attitude of women" in *Things fall Apart* . She asserts:

> A similar near invisibility of women in *Things Fall Apart* is acknowledged by the Omniscient narrator. Describing a communal ceremony, he confesses, "it was a clear from the way the crowd stood or sat that the ceremony was for men. There were many women, but they looked on from the fringe like outsider." For centuries, African women languished on the fringe of their universe… neglected, exploited, denigrated. And indeed made to feel like outsiders. They were not invited to stay when men were engaged in an any discussion, they were not included in councils of war, the did not form part of the masquerades representing the judiciary and ancestral spirit.(Mezu)

It is factual that women are described by Achebe as the rural workforce. They were farming, tending animals, nurturing children, coming and going with mounds of foofoo, pots of water, market baskets, bring Kola, being rebuked and beaten and ignored. Women are always seen but not hared. Actually, Achebe's female characters in *Things Fall Apart* and his previous novels are not different than those of Cary's Mister Johnson or those of Conrad's Heart of Darkness. As we have said before Andy shares the same critical view with Mezu on marginalizing of women in Achebe's previous novels and she supports her argument by quoting Kristine Holst Petersen who, in her turn , thinks:

> Achebe's much praised objectivity with regard to the merits and flaws of traditional Ibgo society becomes less than praiseworthy seen in this light: this traditional women are happy, harmonious members of the community, even when they are repeatedly beaten and barred from any say in the communal decision making process and constantly reviled in saying and proverbs in the obvious inequality of sexes seems to be the subject of mild amusement for Achebe.(Greenwald)

Again, both writers agree that Achebe 's attitude of woman and his new vision of woman role is changed radically in *Anthills of the Savannah.* This change comes after Achebe has realized the need of African women to affirm their own place in African society. The character of Beatrice is consistent, independent and strong. In Beatrice, Achebe now tries hard to affirm the moral strength and intellectual honesty and reliability of African women.

We agree with Innes's interpretations of the symbolic meaning of the naming ceremony, and we add that the symbolic naming of Elewa's girl child with a male name, Ameisechina, (may the path never close) by Beatrice comes to emphasis the hope that women will have larger role and they will lead their society. The name of Elewa's child is a continuation of Beatrice's other given name Nwanyibuif (A female is also something). Andy Greenwald puts much weight on the naming ceremony in her essay. She suggests that Beatrice insistence on naming the child is not only braking with the tradition, but also suggests a new beginning, a subverting of not only Western tradition, but African as well. And that Beatrice will lead the change, forcing the others to adapt with what is present.

Finally, Beatrice's strong will enables her to surmount her grievances and she, inspired by Ikem's and to larger degree by Chris's

death, starts to change; she becomes more compassionate and understanding. Her appearances to Elewa, Briomah, Abdul, Agatha and Emmanuel changes; she becomes more protective to those less privileged people, she starts providing place in her apartment for these peoples' meetings and becomes more interested in their discussions and aspirations, and her despair is replaced with hope. And the most important thing is ' while Chris and Ikem were engaged in retrospective narratives which would end with their silencing, she begins from the moment of silence and looks toward the future.'(Gikandi 146).Gikandi also Argues that Achebe might have intended Beatrice to be the proverbial anthills that survives to tell the tale of the drought and ' the ultimate witness to the tragic drama of the nation' and the 'voice that tries to reconcile the contrary forces and binary oppositions that define the postcolonial state'(Gikandi 147). likewise, Beatrice survives both Ikem and Chris and the contradictory feelings they have triggered in her. She observes and participates in Ikem's development from "a romantic idealist towards a more practical reformism, and a less male arrogance" as Umelo Ojinmah says in his *Chinua Achebe: New Perspectives*. As for Chris, Ojinmah argues that " it took Ikem's brutal murder to galvanize him from his political pragmatism and animal sense of self-preservation, towards more courageous action'(Ojinmah 98).Thus, as Ojinmah argues, Beatrice's function before the development and radical change of Ikem and Chris was not only as a narrative voice, articulating and

projecting Achebe's new vision of the role of women in the days ahead, but to moderate between the views of those two characters and to "try and reconcile the two distinct styles they typify and their unfulfilled search for reconciliation"(Gikandi 147).

Conclusion

Achebe's wide international recognition and success comes from his broad and insightful vision on African issues and from his balanced and firm attitudes towards a long established colonialist tradition of literature that sought to stereotype and dehumanize African character. It also comes from his critical attitude to some of the conflicting and contradictory postcolonial theories and views that seek to install themselves as alternatives to colonialist theories and methods in fighting back, while using the very methods that they objected to. Another important theme in Achebe's works was the emergence of the new nation states and the rising of nationalism and the disastrous consequences of the attempt to implement the slogan of 'one nation and one culture'. Achebe was aware of the wrong and dangerous practices of the dictatorial regimes that ruled Nigeria and most African countries and so he tried to expose their brutality in his novels, *Man of the people* and *Anthills of the Savannah.*

In his historical novels, *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* , Achebe was aware of the attempts to glorify the African past and he opted instead for a balanced attitude to the past. In these two novels, he wrote about African old traditions and systems of values and he refuted the prevalent image of African people as primitive and of Africa's past as pre-historic.

Achebe seemed firm on charges of betraying African revolution and using the colonialist language, English, in his writings on African issues. He believed that English can be modified and adapted to carry the African

experiences with the same efficiency that it served colonialist experiences and purposes.

In most of his writings Achebe emphasized the role of intellectuals in guiding and reshaping people's views and visions. Educated people are not excused when they abandon that role or when they simply turn into tools that serve to sustain and strengthen dictatorial regimes and justify their practices under false ideologies, and nationalist delusions.

Achebe shows himself a dynamic and open-minded writer who adapts and changes his mode and his visions with time. In his last novel, *Anthill of the savannah,* Achebe showed more interest in feminism and the condition of women in Nigerian society and he realized the need of women to establish their important and equal role in that developing society

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