5.1 Introduction

Chinua Achebe is such a significant novelist, short story writer and poet on the African scene that bypassing him would be rude. Indeed, his standing among the fellow African writers is no small indication of his commitment to his art and his land. The fact that he comes from Nigeria - an African country that is typical and at the same time a country with its own special cultural problems - also makes it necessary that Achebe must be given the critical attention he deserves. Moreover, the 'schema' of the 'homecoming' I have prepared in the second chapter of the present dissertation would be more sufficiently justified if I include him in my analysis. I see that in him there is a serious and sustained search for an alternative identity and an alternative vision for the future Africa. In his later novels and particularly in his latest novel 'The Anthills of Savannah' there appear certain thematic patterns which dovetail with similar patterns in the authors in whom one clearly perceives their urge to express a 'homecoming' vision. Therefore, I offer here a rather brief analysis of Achebe's 'homecoming vision' as I understand it on the basis of the fictional world he has created through his five novels. My emphasis in this brief analysis is on the last two novels, 'A Man of the People' (1966) and 'Anthills of the Savannah' (1987).
5.2 A Brief Biographical Sketch

Born in 1930 of Christian parents in Ogidi, Eastern Nigeria, Chinua Achebe attended the Government College, Ibadan from 1948-1953. In 1954 he took up a job as the Talk producer with the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation and visited England in 1956 where he studied with BBC in London. In 1958 his first novel Things Fall Apart was published. In 1960 Nigeria got her independence and Achebe published his second novel No Longer at Ease. The novel was awarded the Nigerian National Trophy for Literature. In 1960-61 he went to East Africa on a Rockefeller Fellowship. In 1961 he married Christie Chinwe Okoli and was also appointed Director of External Broadcasting for the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. In 1962 he became the editor of African Writers Series for Heinemann Educational Books. In 1964 Arrow of God was published and he received the Jack Campbell Award and the New Statesman Award. In 1966 there were two military coups in Nigeria and there was a large-scale massacre of Igbo in the North. Achebe returned to Eastern Nigeria and later visited a number of African states, Europe and North America as a spokesman for Biafra after it declared secession from the federation of Nigeria. In 1967 Christopher Okigbo, a young poet of promise, died in the civil war, which was a great shock to Achebe. In 1970, however, Biafra surrendered. In 1972 he was awarded the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for Beware Soul Brother (1971). In 1972 arrived his collection of short stories Girls at War and Other Stories. In 1975 there was a coup by Murtala
Muhammed. In 1976 Murtala Muhammad was assassinated and Obasanjo regime was introduced. From 1972 to 1976 Achebe was, however, away from Nigeria, as a professor in the U.S.A. In 1976 he returned and became Professor of Literature in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In 1979 there were elections in Nigeria after a long interval and the second Republic came into power with Shehu Shagari as President. Achebe received the Nigeria National Merit Award, and the Order of the Federal Republic (OFR). He was also elected Chairman of the Association of Nigerian Authors. In 1982 he edited Akaweta, an anthology of 'egwu' verse in association with Obiora Udechukwu. In 1983 Achebe became the Deputy National President of the People's Redemption Party after the death of Kan. He also published his first overtly political analysis of the Nigerian situation The Trouble with Nigeria. At the end of the year there was a Military coup and General Buhari became the Head of the State. In 1985 there was yet another coup and Major General Babangida's regime began. In 1986 Achebe was appointed Pro-Vice-Chancellor, State University of Anambra, Enugu. In 1987 his latest novel Anthills of the Savannah was published. During 1967 to 1987 he was politically active and those are the years that matter most so far as his 'homecoming vision' is concerned.

5.3 Achebe's Trilogy

There is a close similarity between Achebe's novels and Ngugi's first three novels, which perhaps is indicative of
the fact that the novelists of that generation were obsessed with a reinterpretation (in fictional mode of course) of the advent of the white Man (that is colonialism) and his religion and the impact of this at various levels on the indigenous cultures. Ngugi and Achebe have tried to trace the history of their lands from pre-colonial times to the day of political independence in their first three novels. Achebe's trilogy Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease, and Arrow of God covers the history of Nigeria from the 1870's to the late 1950s.

Things Fall Apart set in Umofia, a small village in South East Nigeria, is a work that is very well structured, economical and somewhat bare in style, though grand in its conception. Through the portrayal of Okonkwo and his family Achebe portrays the Igbo society and also analyses and interprets the impact of the coming of the colonial rule and Christianity into their midst. The novel is divided into three parts. The first part depicts the peaceful and well regulated life of a small village community living in harmony with the nature's cycle. The institutions like marriage, judiciary and administration function smoothly. Children receive their traditional practical education. Ancestor worship, rituals, customs and favourite pastimes like wrestling matches are depicted with great affection to give us the feel of the village life pulsating steadily. Politics and religion are in the hands of the village dignitaries representing the egwugwu - the ancestral
spirits. Achebe does not offer a glorified picture of this community. It is a highly materialistic and competitive patriarchal world with a harsh side to it. Twins are a bad omen and are mercilessly thrown into the bush in a spartan way. Hostages are killed without compunction. People suffering from abominable diseases are left to die in the forests. The second part takes Okonkwo away from the village scene to his years of exile spent in his maternal uncle's village. The third part depicts the rapid disintegration of the village as a result of the direct administration introduced by the British District Officer.

The story moves around Okonkwo's character and a psychological flaw in his personality - his fear of being called weak and womanly. This leads to his stern behaviour with his wives and children and also to his active part in killing Ekemefuna, a boy from the neighbouring village kept in his custody as a hostage, who has come to look upon Okonkwo as his father.

Many Western and African critics have looked upon Okonkwo as a tragic hero after the Aristotelian conception. Abiola Irele identifies Okonkwo's 'inflexibility' as his tragic flaw. (1) Gerald Moore thinks that Things Fall Apart has 'austere tragic dignity' (2). G.D. Killam says that:

'Okonkwo's story is presented in terms which resemble those of Aristotelian tragedy - the working out in the life of a hero of industry, courage and eminence, of an insistent fatality... which transcends his ability to fully understand or resist a fore-ordained sequence of events.' (3)
'Okonkwo is a hero with exceptional bravery, firmness and even greatness of soul,' according to David Cote. He is not an Everyman but he has the qualities of a typical man of title in his society. He many times flouts the set norms of his society most of the times due to an unfortunate turn of events, an accident or due to his short temper. And on these occasions we find him accepting in all humility the punishment given according to the unwritten social code for the crime he has committed. He is firmly anchored in the social and moral framework of the Igbo community.

That is why we cannot look at him as a tragic hero. When there is a new alternative culture introduced and there is a culture shock, his immediate response is one of 'rejection' of the new culture and assertion of his own traditions. When he is thoroughly disillusioned at the end and fully understands the nature of the betrayal perpetrated by his clansmen on him, moral values lose their meaning for him. He opts out of this society through death.

I do not think that Achebe wants to glorify Okonkwo. Okonkwo denies 'life' through his inflexibility. The collective will of the community, however, knows that 'the surrender of collective identity' is essential for survival. That is what the rest of the village does.

Achebe's second novel so far as the chronology of the colonial encounter is concerned is Arrow of God. It depicts the early years of transition during the first few decades of this century, particularly the years marked by the implementation of the famous Lord Lugard policy of indirect
administration. Here we meet another heroic figure, Ezeulu, the village priest of the god Ulu who has been asked to become the village chief by Wintabotta, (Winterbottom) his friend and the District Officer. The novel centres around Ezeulu’s decision to say ‘No’ to this request-cum-command and to face the consequences of his action. He says, ‘Tell the white man that Ezeulu will not be anybody’s chief, except Ulu.’ (5) According to his logic he is fully justified in his refusal. But due to the culture clash Ezeulu’s answer is interpreted as an affront and act of arrogance. At the religious level his physical imprisonment causes delay in the declaration of the New Yam Festival and pushes people towards Christianity. At the political level it leads to Nwaka’s emergence as a chief. The situation at the end of Things Fall Apart is further perpetuated at the end of Arrow of God. Life has to go on. If Ezeulu does not declare the date of the New Yam Festival people cannot start eating the new crop and will have to starve. They seek an alternative by accommodating Christianity into their life pattern and offering the New Yam at the Church pulpit.

Margaret Turner states:
He (Achebe) shows that the Africans had to succumb totally to the imperialist power or be destroyed, while the brave like Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart destroy themselves; the struggle to retain a system of values and an awareness of the past is a precarious enterprise on both the cultural and personal level. (6)

By the time we reach the social scene depicted in No Longer at Ease i.e. the early 1950’s, we realise that ‘the awareness of the past’ has gone out of the lives of Obi
Okonkwo - Okonkwo's grandson - and the generation he represents. Here we notice that education has done the damage. The close-knit integrated society of villages is replaced by the metropolis, the citadel of colonial rule. The western liberal values are completely absorbed by the new generation along with the abstractions of nationalism and patriotism. The city world depicts the disintegration of the Nigerian society in which slums and the posh localities co-exist. The hybrid culture and the hybrid language, markers of 'progress', are abundantly present. Obi is full of empty idealism, but is in fact a self-seeking young man. He does not mind enjoying the prestige and the comforts offered by the job and thinks that 'living in style' is part of the game. As a result of recklessness, he soon finds himself in financial doldrums, he is not able to pay the instalment of the loan scholarship, nor is he able to send money home. He lacks a sense of responsibility and firmness and as a result loses both Clara as well as his mother. He allows himself to slide into living a degenerate life. He becomes one of those corrupt executives he looked down upon at the beginning of the novel.

Okonkwo and Ezeulu were misfits in the changing social pattern but they were nonetheless men of 'character'. Obi is a misfit and a man without 'character'. The disintegration of values leads to creation of Obis who take their country further down the path of degradation.

No Longer at Ease, the last novel in the trilogy,
brings us in terms of the Nigerian history to the point of political decolonization but there is a premonition at the end of this novel suggesting the continuation of the sorry state of the people. True decolonization is still far away. The black neo colonialists will very soon step into the shoes of the white colonizers and the new republics will be the centres of new opportunism. All this has been suggested in No Longer at Ease and yet when we find this corrupt socio-political scene in A Man of the People it grieves our hearts. Exile still continues and 'Home' is not in sight. Nevertheless Achebe is fully aware of his commitment as a writer and knows that the ultimate solution will be found in the 'humanity' of man.

5.4 A Man of the People

Achebe reaches the post-colonial scene in Nigeria in his fourth novel A Man of the People. Here Achebe begins his efforts to put his finger on the cause of the malaise produced by colonialism in No Longer at Ease. In A Man of the People Achebe tries to depict where and how the rain exactly began to beat the Nigerians.

A Man of the People is a departure from his trilogy in two significant ways. In the first place it is narrated by the protagonist Odili Samalu - a teacher at a village grammar school. Secondly it presents a direct confrontation between Chief Nanga and Odili Samalu on two important issues - politics and sex.

The story records Odili's growth through the gap
between the happenings of the events and the time of narration. The technique is reminiscent of Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*, and adds to the complexity even as it creates the distancing needed for the reader's assessment of Odili. His narrative is on the levels of honesty, near honesty—tongue in cheek—or doubtfulness and the reader has to find out what Odili is exactly doing while he interacts with the characters in his world and what he has learned from his own interaction which will be revealed to the reader only through his narration. This also helps us to sort out and interpret the gap between Odili's intentions and his actions. In many ways Odili is an extension of Obi. He is a university graduate—a westernized idealist, who partly due to the education he received and partly due to the fact that he has been a motherless child in a large family, is quite ignorant about the culture and traditions of his own people. At times he is even contemptuous of them.

Odili starts his narration along with a piece of information about Chief Nanga being the most approachable man. 'Whether you asked in the city or in his home village, Anata, they would tell you he was a man of the people' (7)

As the members of the hunters' guild arrive to display their skills in the honour of Nanga and the women sing and dance, Odili describes their skills with a clinical contempt. He is full of righteous indignation:

'Here were silly, ignorant villagers dancing themselves lame and waiting to blow off their gunpowder in honour of one of those who had started the country off down the slopes of inflation'. (8)
When the minister actually arrives and is being introduced to the staff, the minister recognizes him and says, 'I taught him in. Odili completes the sentence by saying 'in standard three' (9) and informs him that he had graduated from the University and had been teaching for the past eighteen months. In the second chapter the narrator says:

'But much as I wanted to go to Europe, I wasn't going to sell my soul for it or beg anyone to help me.' It was the minister himself who brought up the topic and even invited Odili, 'If you come as soon as you close,' he said, 'you can stay in my guest-room with everything complete.' (10)

Even before that chapter closes Odili has told us about his girlfriend Elsie. He is aware of the problems of narrating his own story and says, 'As far as is humanly possible I shall try not to jump ahead of my story.' (11) Elsie was a vivacious girl with whom he had grown friendly. In his own words, 'Elsie was such a beautiful, happy girl and she made no demands whatever.' (12) The thought of having a nice time with her takes Odili to honour Chief Nanga's invitation and go to Bori. He meets Mrs. Nanga after a long interval and finds her very warm, friendly and hospitable. After her departure to the home-village Anata for the holidays Odili arranges to invite Elsie to the guest room. Nanga is with him. He asks:

'Tell me something, Odili, now serious are you about this girl Elsie?
'You mean about marriage... Good Lord, no! She is just a good-time girl.' (13)

Thereupon Chief Nanga sleeps with the girl. Odili is sexually humiliated and prepares to leave his house. Nanga does not understand Odili's reaction. Odili tells us:

'Look here, Odili,' he turned on me then like an incensed leopard, 'I will not stomach any nonsense from any small boy for the sake of a common woman, you hear? If you insult me again I will show you pepper. You young people of today are very ungrateful!' (14)

This is the turning point in the novel. Odili goes and stays with his lawyer friend Max and his beautiful fiancee Eunice, who is also a lawyer. During his stay he learns that Max and his other intellectual friends are forming a new party and one of the junior ministers in the Government is behind it. Odili asks him naively, 'Why doesn't he resign?' (15)

Max defends the junior minister's being in the Government in various ways and finally adds, 'But having a man like him right in the Government is very essential, I can assure you. He tells me all that goes on.' (16)

Odili returns to his village and plans his revenge by seducing Edna, whom Nanga has helped financially and whom he plans to marry eventually. He befriends himself with Mrs. Nanga and gets information about the girl; that her mother is unwell and is in hospital and that she stays in another and very distant part of the village. He finds her father's - Odo's house, pretends that he wants to deliver a message from Chief Nanga and offers to take Edna to the hospital on
his bicycle. Being the trusting type she agrees and even praises him, 'You are eating all the hills like yam.'(17) On the last bump he meets with a she goat, has to brake and falls down throwing the food on the road. He buys bread and corned beef for her mother. During his second visit he tries to dissuade her from marrying Nanga. As she desists, he is forced into playing a misunderstood champion and asks her for forgiveness. The girl says, 'I am sorry Odili. Have I offended you?' (18) Her innocence melts Odili's heart.

Later when he decides to contest elections against Nanga he finds himself most unpopular and is hated by the villagers, his own father, Mrs. Nanga and Edna. Nanga tries to tempt him into withdrawing through sweet talk, through attempts to bribe and finally through thuggery. Odili is beaten up by Nanga's men. Edna is the only person in the crowd who tries to resist, however meekly. Finally there is a coup and the military takes over as Odili is convalescing. Nanga tries to escape from the state in the garb of a fisherman and Odili's father asks for Edna as his son's bride. The bride price has already been returned from the election funds that have been left over. Max has been in the meantime murdered by Chief Koko, another minister, and Eunice has taken instantaneous revenge by shooting Koko on the spot. Odili and Edna are happily married.

Odili is presented as an immaturity idealistic person. In a way he is like Obi Okonkwo. But unlike Obi he retains
some of his moral values till the end. He refuses to accept money from Nanga and then go back of his word and contest against Nanga. Doing so is not corruption in Max's eyes, who thinks that these things are accepted in politics. It is, however, corruption in Obi's eyes. The philosophy 'Ends justify the means' is firmly rejected by him. When he is accused as a liar by Nanga he shows courage to go to the dais and face the challenge. These are some morally courageous gestures on his part but he is inconsistent in his behaviour. He does not bother to find out where the money sent to him by CPC comes from. He also easily gives in to the argument make by Max regarding the dissatisfied minister's still holding his post. In his attempt to seek revenge on Nanga for ravishing his girl, he is being equally or perhaps more indecent than Nanga. Nanga had at least bothered to ask him if he was serious about Elsie. To both of them, women are just objects or instruments of revenge or sexual gratification. What they would have to say in the matter is irrelevant. That question does not arise either regarding Elsie or regarding Edna, his future parlour wife. She is, in his eyes, a made-to-order piece of decoration, bought and carefully groomed. Odili's own attitude is not very different until he realised that Edna is an innocent and very decent and humane person.

Odili is an egotist. Nanga, a worldly wise person, knows that Odili would like to be seen in the public as someone whom the minister recognises of his own accord. How accurate Nanga is in his assessment of Odili is made
apparent by Odili himself later when he forms a poor opinion about Jaliq, the famous novelist only because he does not remember Odili. Odili does not seek the comforts of Nanga's seven bedroom house but he does not miss the opportunity to enjoy it even when it could have been easily possible to avoid them. In a way he invites the treatment Nanga gives him.

His love for Edna is an effective cure for his egotism. He has become more realistic and has chosen his mission of starting a different kind of school in Max's memory. It is 'a woman' who is instrumental in bringing this about.

Odili's attitude to his own people however, is characterised by a peculiar contempt even at the end of the novel. Though he has not been able to put his finger on it he has sensed the nature of the problem. Quoting the Joshua episode, which holds a central place in the novel Odili says that in a village it is the will of the village that operates but in a nation it is not likely to happen. In short people have not grasped and internalised the concept of nationalism, which is in itself an idea that was borrowed from the white man. Odili's acquired knowledge of democracy and the value system attendant on it is not available to people and is misinterpreted by the Nangas. The real problem is one of proper leadership. Odili's cynicism need not be interpreted as the author's cynical vision. Achebe's vision is no doubt somewhat pessimistic but by offering a solution and a possibility of justice at least at the level
of individuals he suggests that through a woman's love one can still dream of a better humanity.

5.5 Anthills of the Savannah

Coming almost twenty one years after his previous novel A Man of the People, Anthills of the Savannah was received with great acclaim. Achebe was not silent during those twenty one years. He wrote poems and short stories, lectured extensively and gave innumerable interviews. He published a booklet The Trouble With Nigeria in 1983. The assertions made by Achebe in this booklet are very relevant and significant in the analysis of Anthills of the Savannah. Here he displays preference for radical populism and an unswerving conviction about the necessity for 'commitment' on the part of writers of fiction. In The Trouble with Nigeria he declares:

These are the real victims of our callous system, the wretched of the earth. They are largely silent and invisible. They don't appear on front pages; they do not initiate industrial actions. They drink bad water and suffer from all kinds of preventable diseases. The politicians may pay them a siren visit once every four years and promise to give them this that and the other. He never says that what he gives is theirs in the first place. (19)

The expressions like 'the wretched of the earth' suggest the use of Fanonist rhetoric and thereby, the endorsement of African Revolution. In his interview with Ann Rutherford he further asserts it. Here he is in line with Ngugi of the 1970's. There has also been a reviewing of the role of the artist on his part. In 1965 he took the role of a teacher. Anthills of the Savannah stakes a larger
claim for the writer or 'the story teller'. As the Old Man of Abazon asserts:

Because it is only the story can continue beyond the war and the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sound of war drums and the exploits of brave fighters. It is the story, not the others, that saves our progeny from blundering like beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort; without it we are blind. (20)

It is Agwu, the God of healers

who picks his disciple, rings his eye with white chalk and dips his tongue, willing or not, in the brew of prophecy, and right away the man will speak and put head and tail back to the severed trunk of our tale’. (21)

In the context of the novel this role is ascribed to Ikem, the editor of 'National Gazette', a school mate of Chris Oriko and the Commissioner of Information and Sam, the President of Kangan. He is also a foster brother of Beatrice Okolo, whose intelligent and sensitive mind and ‘aloofness’ he has always respected.

Leadership and the role of the artist are thus, two important issues at the core of the novel.

Anna Rutherford asks Achebe in an interview:

I had the feeling that what you were suggesting was that the society reflected the quality of leadership; if the leadership was corrupt the society would also then turn to corruption - in other words, the negative aspects in the society could be directly related back to the negative aspects of the people.

Achebe in his answer stresses the need to solve this problem.
If you are 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 the leadership that the break must occur. (22)

The problem of leadership was central even in *A Man of the People*. In spite of his growing maturity, Odili, who remains cynical in his attitude to the people till the end, does not fully realize that people are in a way merely a distorted mirror image of the leaders. In *Anchilles of the Savannah* the problem assumes even more seriousness. Achebe is no longer recording the course of Nigerian history. He is trying to determine it. For this he makes use of the Igbo mythology and Igbo folk traditions. Discarding the linear and essentially a western model of history and adopting a mythical - legendary model is an integral part of his counter rhetoric. Attributing the role of the leaders of society to women completes this process of subversion and suggests a possibility of genuine decolonization - a true homecoming.

In *Arrow of God* we come across the myth of Idemili as contrasted against the myth of Ulu. Ulu is a god created by six villages coming together. They take the name Umuaro and the priest of Ulu becomes the Chief Priest. They need this because earlier the men from Abam would attack them at night and kidnap some of them to be sold as slaves. (23) Ezidemili, the priest of Edemili, tells Nwaka a man of title from Umuaro and his close friend, 'Every boy in Umuaro knows that Ulu was created by our fathers long ago but Idemili was there from the beginning of things'. (24)
The god that has been created by the six villages to protect them and keep their warlike spirit alive has pushed Idemili into the background. This is pushing back the feminine principle and asserting the masculine principle. It is further encouraged by the colonizer's male-dominated culture. The effective counter-rhetoric to neo-colonial situation would be the reassertion of the feminine principle, which is at the root of the African agrarian culture and which symbolized peace. The long prose poem Ikem leaves with Beatrice is titled, 'Daughters - Idemili'. It celebrates the Idemili myth:

In the beginning power rampaged through our world, naked. So the Almighty looking at his creation through the round undying eye of the Sun, saw and pondered and finally decided to send his daughter Idemili, to bear witness to the moral nature of authority by wrapping around Power's rude waist a loincloth of peace and modesty. (25)

Idemili came down in the resplendent pillar of water. This indescribable pillar of water fusing the earth and heaven at the navel of the black lake was worshipped in the form of a stick erect from the bare, earth floor. Idemili's contempt for man's unquenchable thirst to sit in authority is asserted again and again. Beatrice, the baptised woman, who brought in the Christian tradition is herself ignorant about these traditions but according to a newly minted proverb among her people, 'baptism is no antidote against possession by Agwu the capricious god of diviners and artists'. (26)

Thus Ikem is the chosen story-teller and Beatrice the
chosen priestess who will perform the role of the leader and the healer.

After Ikem's death Chris has to spend his days in the hide-outs chosen by Elewa and his true contact with 'the wretched of the earth' and their 'humane' behaviour begins. This brings about a change in Beatrice's attitude also. She looks after Elewa and scolds Agatha, her servant for not treating Elewa properly. At this point Beatrice's middle ear hears 'the narrator's voice coming through and declaiming: It is now up to you women to tell us what has to be done. And Agatha is surely one of you.' (27)

Beatrice goes to Agatha and placing her hand on Agatha's shoulder she says, 'I am sorry, Agatha' (27). The girl gives a sunshine smile.

Even Chris senses that Beatrice carries with her 'a strong aura of that other Beatrice whom he always described in fearful jest as goddessy'. (29)

Later on as Chris is travelling to Abazon he hears of a coup on the radio. The bus stops in the middle of the road and as the passengers get down he finds a police sergeant dragging a school girl in the direction of a cluster of huts. She protests and finally throws herself down on her buttocks in desperation. Chris holds the man's hand and orders him to release the girl at once. 'A police officer stealing a lorry-load of beer and then abducting a school girl! You are a disgrace to the force.' (30) The policeman cocks his gun at Chris. Chris looks straight into the man's face. The man shoots and Chris dies. It is the
the man's face. The man shoots and Chris dies. It is the same Chris, who had told Beatrice to be cool and keep all options open when she was invited by His Excellency to attend a party at his guest house. He becomes a man of action and bridges the gap between himself (an elite) and an ordinary school girl. Instead of remaining indifferent he makes a choice and willingly pays the price for it.

The ritual of the naming ceremony of Elewa's daughter symbolizes this change most prominently. It is Beatrice who decides to name the girl. Traditionally it would have been a man's prerogative. She is named 'Amaechina' (May the path never close.) in the memory of Ikem's path. At the actual name-giving ceremony Elewa's uncle breaks a kolanut after washing his hands and feet and wiping them on 'sparkling napkin' in Beatrice's flat which contrasts with his own 'dirt-and-sweat-tarnished jumper'. The entire ritual is a dream for a happy and peaceful coexistence and suggests an alternative way of life. He wants the girl to be a daughter of all of them. The chorus says 'Ise'. He says:

'We have seen too much trouble in Kangan since the white man left because those who make plans make plans for themselves only and their families.'

He continues:

'I say, there is too much fighting in Kangan, too much killing. But fighting will not begin unless there is first a thrusting of fingers into eyes. Anybody who wants to outlaw fights must first outlaw the provocation of fingers thrust into eyes.' (31)

Though in The Trouble with Nigeria Achebe writes about the wretched of the earth and reminds us of Fanon, his
counter-rhetoric in this novel is of peace, modesty and harmony. Achebe's version can be worked effectively only through the leadership of women. In this respect, his position is different from that of Fanon. The elite women will also decentralize leadership by accommodating others in the power base as Beatrice seems to be doing at the end of the novel.

In her very insightful article, 'Anthills of the Savannah: Postmodern or Post colonial Novel?' Viney Kirpal comments:

For example, she [Beatrice] takes him to task for not caring sufficiently about what happened to her at the party at Abichi [113] but easily dissolves into tears and melts on an embrace and a kiss from Chris. Her ideological conflict forgotten, she yields totally to him and even serves him food she cooks herself [116]. Elewa, similarly, forgives Ikem (without his apologizing for having sent her away from his flat at midnight) and calls him up at his office the following day asking him to take her to the beach in the afternoon to buy fresh fish from the fisherman coming ashore so that "I go cook you nice pepper soup, today" [36]. Both girls, therefore, irrespective of the difference in class and education, share patriarchal values. Neither is liberated. (32)

I beg to differ. I think that both of them are forgiving matriarchs. Elewa actually becomes one. Beatrice with her 'superior consciousness' has to play a greater role - that of the forgiving feminine principle which makes continuation of humanity possible. She is not a pillar of fire but a pillar of life-giving water.

Achebe's homecoming vision as suggested in the novel recommends a total loss of individualism of 'the people'. The people 'the mirror image' of the leaders will then be a
true image of themselves and not a distorted one. The picture is grim and yet not without hope. One, therefore, awaits with interest the further development of Achebe's vision in his novels to come.

NOTES


8 Ibid; p.2.

9 Ibid; p.9.

10 Ibid; p.20.


12 Ibid; p.28.

13 Ibid; p.66.

14 Ibid; p.81.

15 Ibid; p.93.
16 Ibid; p.94.
17 Ibid; p.105.
18 Ibid; p.111.
21 Ibid; p.125.
23 Chinua Achebe, Arrow of God, p.17.
24 Ibid; p.50.
26 Ibid; p.105.
27 Ibid; p.184.
28 Ibid; p.185.
29 Ibid; p.199.
31 Ibid; p.228.