CHAPTER 5
THE COLONISER AND THE COLONISED: CULTURAL IDENTITIES AND MODES OF RESISTANCE

Joseph Conrad wrote his novels in the heyday of European colonialism. Even though he is considered as a writer who criticized the subjugation of the colonized, his novels fed on and reinforced the dominant racist stereotypes circulated about ‘the other’ as being irrational, immoral, and barbaric. In postcolonial times, a true liberation of the colonised occurs only when they are able to create a valid cultural identity as a paradigm of resistance which can uplift their status both political and cultural. Chinua Achebe does this job in his fiction where he asserts the dignity of his people by presenting them as having a coherent culture and a valid cultural identity.

The cultural encounter that the Ibo world of Achebe’s novels undergoes can be mapped on different levels but what seems to be of fundamental importance is the notion of identity formation as a paradigm of cultural resistance against colonial rule. The intercultural processes that lie at the heart of colonial experience results in an essential hybridity leading to the subsequent erasure of identities of the colonized. The course of anti-colonial resistance movements puts to
question this very process, and the social vision that emerges challenges the hegemonization of dominant structures that threaten to erase the values the civilization so far had cherished. Achebe’s novels go a step forward to conceptually re-capture not only the older forms of existence but also locate the problems of contemporary Nigeria. The historical context that shapes Achebe’s writings takes into account three essential moments of African and Nigerian history. The early phase of colonial encounter critically embodies the loss of the pristine glory of a civilization that had flourished on the strength of its own merits and demerits. The painful experience of colonisation involves a process of internal de-stabilization, struggle against foreign domination, and establishment of indigenous rule. This is followed by the emerging contestation of various conflicting tendencies arising out of poverty, corruption and progressive pauperization of the people.

The representation of Africa that emerges through Achebe’s novels is not a homogenized monolith that finds articulation in the European writings of the colonial world. The genre of the African novel in English is pivotal in the formation of the new African identity in the postcolonial context. The task of nation building also implied the creation of a secular, social vision that transformed the collective identity of the African people who had unique ways of living, quite
opposite to the practices of the white men. The white Christian world threatened to tear asunder not only the physical and material riches of the land, but also supplant the very essence of everything that was African. The new literature that came into being reflected the process of identity formation, contested colonial paradigms and mirrored the spirit of resistance that paved the way for the birth of independent nations in Africa.

What characterizes African literature is a matter of debate as there are several perspectives that combine to define the literature of this continent. Per Wastberg’s opening remarks in the African Scandinavian Writers Conference of 1967 are pertinent in this context. He refers to the development of ‘tribal literature’ and ‘tribal literature’ and says that the distinctive feature of both is the representation of things and ideas that are African. He rightly points out that “the concepts such as ‘African socialism’, ‘African personality’, ‘Pan Africanism’ and ‘the African mind’ are difficult to understand (24). It is so because such essentialization of categories of reflection posits impediments that bar the comprehension of a context that has to be understood and appreciated in its own terms. Taking this point further, he questions the validity of whether ‘African literature’ as a category is meaningful and says that with the growth of national literatures in the continent, soon the
relevance of it will diminish. Despite the differences in ethnic and national and sub-national identities, the literatures relating to Africa and the African experience reflect a ‘multi-leveled reality that too many try to squeeze into a cliché’ (Wastberg 11). Readers outside, according to him, are likely to homogenize it into one singular entity, just like such terms as European or Asian literature, which are hardly useful as points of reference. An interesting question that can be put here is how the colonial tendency of homogenization gets subverted into a category of cultural resistance through the politics of negritude. This amounts to a translation of colonial subjugation into a celebration of the material and spiritual consciousness of the disparate cultures of Africa with different languages, modes of living, and even different governing deities.

The African writers had to wage a prolonged struggle in order to articulate what was authentically African. The radical element in African writing is in fact inspired by the desperate need for the assertion of the ‘self’ both in individual and collective terms. The social commitment of the writer emerges from the trying context in which he/she is embroiled. Gun holding and pen wielding become simultaneous and related activities here. The constant efforts to create new images and metaphors in English delineating the African experience is a kind of cultural phenomenon that finds significant space
in the writings of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiong’O, Buchi Emecheta, Wole Soyinka, Alex La Guma and Dennis Brutus. Giving voice to the collective desire of a group of people, re-writing their history through the medium of literature, expressing their anxieties, fears and hopes makes this literature an intensely emotional experience.

The notion of commitment is central to Achebe’s vision of the function of the individual writer. He dwells on the role of the ‘writer as teacher’ in the broadest sense. The teacher/novelist according to him is an explorer who has the ability to ‘draw out’ and ‘discover’ and thereby articulate one’s ‘commitment to his vision of world, to truth as he understands it, including the truth of fiction’ (Wilkinson 47-48). The role of the intellectual is an organic one and Achebe’s protagonists are all rooted in a context that is undergoing the process of transition. Conflict or tension and the wish to resolve it creates the inner world of the protagonists and it is in the complexity of the dialogue within these characters that contradictions tend to resolve while new ones inevitably arise. Consequently, one sees in Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, Ezulu in *Arrow of God*, Obi Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease* or Odili Samalu in *A Man of the People*, a struggle to come to terms with contending realities of a world that is ripped apart from the centre.
The importance of the collective, the unity of the tribe and the adherence to the principles of religious traditions create a society that has an essentially communal ambience. It is this structure and cultural identity that Achebe and several other African writers attempt to recreate in their fictional rendering. It is the focus on the will of the collective as opposed to that of the individual that marks the tension in the narrative which tries to portray not only the fate of the individual’s assertion of beliefs but also the community’s fate. The impulse towards modernization inevitably splinters the tribal world, resulting in the tragic collapse of both the inner and outer worlds of the individual and the collective being of a society in transition. The history of novel writing in Africa, as in the other colonies of the European powers, begins as a fallout effect of colonization. The engagement with the literature of the coloniser’s world and the incorporation of the master language to suit the needs of aesthetic representation creates a cultural space where the ‘empire writes back,’ producing a conceptual lineage that is autonomous and unique. The first phase of the writings recreates the pre-colonial world, through the twin faculties of memory and association, and reimagines the identity of a pristine Africa with its unsullied and colourful culture. Colonization implied not only the material and physical exploitation of the tribes but a systemic attempt at supplanting
everything that had been cherished as hallowed by the old world. An uncritical glorification of the past is not, however, the central emphasis of African writers. Along with this nostalgic strain there is a conscious endeavour by writers like Achebe to see the problems of the present as rooted in the past. The concept of cultural encounter is thereby seen as a process that can hardly be wished away. And again, the maladies that ail the contemporary world, especially the issue of corruption as detailed in *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the People* undoubtedly arise out of the colonial experience.

The initial phase of colonial encounter is the social matrix on which *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* are based. Through the creative process of recollection and association, Achebe foregrounds what the ancient world of the Igbos must have been like. However, this is not an uncritical rendering, as what he attempts to do is to recreate the past and in the process question the very nature of change or cultural transition. He invokes with delicate poignancy the primal force and beauty of the achytypal image of Africa and this spirit imbues both Okonkwo and Ezeulu in different ways. In his discussion of the role of a writer in a postcolonial nation, Achebe addresses the issue of how the writer re-creates the past and why it is necessary to do so:
When I think of this I always think of light and glass. When white light hits glass one of two things can happen. Either you have an image, which if faithful but somewhat unexciting or you have a glorious spectrum which though beautiful is rather a distortion. Light from the past passes through a kind of glass to reach us. We can either look for the accurate though somewhat unexciting image or we can look for the glorious technicolour.

(Killam, 9)

Achebe chooses the latter although he admits that ‘we cannot pretend that our past was one long, technicolour idyll’ (9) and that it had both good and bad sides. The sense of the collective that he attempts to present emerges as important as the individual protagonist and through the portrayal of the rituals associated with birth, marriage, death and the rites of passage, festivals like the New Yam festival, the Feast of the Pumpkin and ceremonies associated with pregnancy rites, egwugwu dances, and wrestling matches, he attempts to recreate the entire flow of Ibo life. In *Arrow of God*, in fact Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of Ulu, questions the nature of his own power:

Whenever Ezeulu considered the immensity of his power over the year and the crops and, therefore, over the people he wondered if it was real. It was true he named the day for the feast of the
Pumpkin Leaves and for the New Yam feast: but he did not choose the day. He was merely a watchman. His power was no more than the power of a child over a goat that was said to be his. As long as the goat was alive it was his; he would find it food and take care of it. But the day it was slaughtered he would know who the real owner was. No! The Chief Priest of Ulu was more than that, must be more than that. If he should refuse to name the day there would be no festival – no planting and no reaping. But could he refuse. (4)

It is this frenzied assertion of individual power that marks the downfall of Ezeulu whose wisdom fails him in not realizing that the individual should never hold himself greater than his own community even though he is the Chief Priest.

If Ezeulu tried to explore the limits of his individual powers as opposed to the sanctions imposed by traditional society, Okonkwo tries to test the limits of his physical strength and courage by refusing to accept the flow of time. His qualities as a man make him a respected leader of the Ibo community. But what he failed to contend with was the intrusion of a new authority embodied in the person of the British District Commissioner. The accidental killing of a fellow clansman leads to his banishment from the village for seven years and after his
return from Mbanta he realizes that the decay has set from within. In the
feast that he arranges for his mother's kinsmen after the seventh year of
his exile to express his gratitude, where ‘all the descendants of Okolo,
who had lived about two hundred years before’ (151) assembled, an old
member of the umunna gives vent to the community’s fear in the event:

I fear for you young people because you do not understand
how strong is the bond of kinship? You do not know what it
is to speak with one voice? An abominable religion has
settled among you. A man can now leave his father and his
brothers. He can curse the gods of his fathers and his
ancestors, like a hunter's dog that suddenly goes mad and
turns on his master. I fear for you; I fear for the clan. (152)

The social order that so long responded to authority and the
bonds of kinship is fast disintegrating. The communal fabric of the tribal
order is in disorder but unlike the hope of revitalisation in Yeats' Second
Coming, the future being ushered in anticipates only a hopeless
situation. Okonkwo in his decision to fight alone chooses his own death,
and his fall becomes a metaphorical rendering of the fall of archetypal
Africa, which is also commensurate with the fall from wholeness during
the advent of colonialism during the 1890s when the Europeans with
their band of missionaries, policemen, interpreters and the coastal
converts changed the entire destiny of not only the Igbo people but that of the very continent. If one compares the character of Ezeulu with Okonkwo, one finds him to be more mature as he accepts at least externally the authority of the likes of Captain T.K. Winterbottom. The novel charts the gradual erosion of the old ways of living, and the fault definitely lies not with individuals but with the civilization that has failed to hold itself together. The predicament of Oduche, the son of Ezeulu who is sent to learn the ways of the whites, their language as well as customs and also about their gods so that he could be his father's eyes and ears in the enemy camp, ultimately betrays his own people. Oduche transgresses everything that is held sacred by his own people and in the end; Ezeulu himself fails his people by refusing to name the day of harvesting the yam.

The characters of Obi Okonkwo in No Longer at Ease and Chief Nanga in A Man of the People are reflections on the contemporary ills of society. While A Man of the People is a satire on corruption and power struggles in an African state in the 1960s, the story of Obi Okonkwo in No Longer at Ease deals with conflicts over moral issues. Both the novels mark important critical engagements with contemporary Nigeria. The ambivalent modernity that the post-colonial nations experience makes the exercise of cultural re-writings of histories an exploration into
the myriad complexities that enmesh societies trying to live on their own terms. But the question that naturally arises is, are they really trying to live on their own terms? What does it really mean to live on one's own terms? The retreat of European colonialism was not a complete process in itself. The rise of global empires under the aegis of one or the other imperial powers makes the question of cultural sovereignty a near impossibility. Even the credentials of political sovereignty are now and again challenged as the nexus between economic and political relations and its impact on the social and cultural sphere can hardly leave the individual's integrity intact. If the past century witnessed the demise of colonial rule the world over, it also stands testimony to the ushering in of a new form of global subjugation imperialism - a form of colonization that rules through the power of transnational finance capital leading to the era of colonialism without colonies. The collapse of the Nigerian state machinery, the breakdown of all democratic institutions, the increasing economic divide between people, poverty, disease and hunger-all create a horrifying spectacle of violence that stands as mute testimony to the rape of all ideals that the nation in its process of coming into being always stood for. The unease that Achebe himself faces as a committed intellectual comes forth in the relentless critique that he offers in the novels A Man of the People and No Longer at Ease.
No Longer at Ease is set in the late 1950s and is a sequel to Things Fall Apart. Through the ambivalences of Obi, the grandson of Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart, the novel portrays the nature of corruption and decadence that has set in contemporary Nigeria. The ‘investment’ that the Umoufia community makes in supporting his education makes them expect heavy dividends. Obi is treated as ‘an invaluable possession’. The missionary upbringing that he had received and the four years in England that he spent while completing his B.A. made him develop a perspective that was quite opposed to that of the tribal world where he belonged. Hardly did the elders of his clan realize that:

The process of education is... complex. Not only has it raised his status, it has done something to his personality, something which he cannot reverse even if he would: it has made him see himself as an individual. (Cook, 84)

Taking up the post of an Inspector of Schools, he finds it difficult to adjust to the compelling realities of the time. His conflict with tribal ethics and morality first surfaces when he expresses his wish to marry Clara, a beautiful girl from the Osu community with whom marital relationships are outlawed. He finds it difficult to find a footing in the
old world and meet the expectations of his people. His own needs and the pressure of circumstances make him a corrupted man.

The narrative structure of the no longer at ease is in the form of a long flashback that it begins with Obi’s trial for taking bribe as a civil servant. The reverse arrangement that begins with the end of Obi’s career makes the chain of the narrative a metaphor for a reflection of the present in terms of the past and the story thereby becomes an introspection not only into the protagonist's immediate past but also into the changes that mark the present history of the nation. As the title suggests, the novel expresses the discomfort of living at a strange historical juncture, marked by a movement away from the old, tribal world of Okonkwo. The turmoil and the anxiety reflected in Okonkwo's failure to understand the changed situation in *Things Fall Apart* mirrors the conflict that marks the advent of colonial rule. Its sequel is an organic development of Achebe's critique of the present in the light of the past. The notion of the fall and disintegration metaphorically captures the central web of ideas that Achebe tries to weave toward making Okonkwo's life a veritable symbol of an individual's destiny and also the destiny of nations and cultures in moments of upheaval. The fall is repeated in Obi's career too and the structural replication works in conjunction to amplify the crisis that the Nigerian nation faced on the
eve of her independence. In the failure of Obi trying to come to terms with the complex reality of his times, Achebe charts with pathos the alienation of the protagonist who is a product of colonial education and is unable to endure the Janus-faced acculturation process that he undergoes. The city and the culture that he comes back to after his years in England give him a kind of emancipation that is in reality self-defeating. He finds his context far removed from the dreams and ideals that he had harbored during his stay in London and his first fall occurs in his inability to hold on to his own decisions in life when he encounters the hostility of even his mother about his desire to marry Clara.

The role of colonial education and its impact on Obi is one of the central themes delineated by Achebe. The alienation that he suffers is a necessary consequence of the lop-sided modernization process that he undergoes. The family is a central institution in African life and the place of the individual is necessarily subordinate to it. Obi’s desire for Clara is a transgression of Igbo codes of conduct and the series of disjunctions that he encounters in the course of the novel renders him impotent as he is unable to create a balance between the forces that hold him in thrall. The predicament that he is in, between the twin forces of acceptance and rejection, is equivocal in nature and the crisis of indecision that he faces makes him a kind of African Hamlet torn
between extremes, but this time the problem is not merely a flaw in one's character, but rather the conflict of identities and beliefs about what constitutes one's existence. The tension in Obi's inner consciousness is a symbolic play of the contradiction that transformed an entire generation of Nigerians who tried striking new roots by blindly following the external cultural patterns of the master race. In contrast, the cosmopolitan ideals of the people who form the backdrop to Obi's life in Lagos and their rampant consumerism are hardly a threat to their being as they are happy in living the hollow lives they lead. The imagination of this milieu hardly goes beyond the selfish ends they try to meet and the heights they try to scale are all materially determined. The world of corruption that they are enmeshed in is undoubtedly physical in nature and therefore external to their being, but Obi, the grandson of the great Okonkwo, could hardly be like them. His conflict arises out of a self-realization that is constantly at odds with the consciousness of his existential being. His ambivalence arises out of the sense of dislocation that he finds himself in. He is neither an outsider nor an insider to his culture as his changed consciousness makes him critical of both the worlds. He finds the rigid mind-sets of his own people a problem that could hardly be wished away. The outdated customs that his community followed - the payment of bride price,
marginalization of the Osu community - are evils that his altered consciousness cannot accept. Such experiences could be juxtaposed with comparable practice sin the rest of the postcolonial world such as the custom of sati or bride-burning, child marriage, treatment of Dalits and the other lower castes, discrimination against widows and the exclusion of women in India. The reform movements led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and the others were largely a result of an altered consciousness that arise from the colonial pedagogical practices. If one takes a look at the regional literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, be it in Bengali, Hindi, Tamil or Marathi, one find a similar impact. The influence of the West, and the role of secular education and training in the sciences is regarded as a welcome process, but at the same time, the blind aping of foreign manners and customs becomes a matter of common derision. But Achebe's Obi is hardly a blind follower of the west. He is in a way a projection of the changing consciousness of Nigerians on the eve of independence. But why is it that Obi is not the hero that he should have been and instead turns out to be a pathetic figure who could hardly follow what his own moral world forced him to realize?

The impact of western education changes Obi’s entire attitude to life. Achebe's critique of western civilization is inherent in his
conceptualization of Obi and he becomes a complete failure and a total misfit in both the worlds. Through the portrayal of Obi, Achebe probes the dilemma of contemporary Nigerians who too were caught between an alien system of living and the paradox of a changing context where the tribal values no longer inspired an indigenous consciousness and thereby created an Afro-centric identity. The spiritual world of the Ibos, their ancient customs and practices, their gods and spirits, the community-orientation of their lives, their values and ideals - everything was torn asunder by the forces of western enlightenment. It is Obi's education that makes him a complete misfit and his double alienation occurs due to his inability to understand his own people and to adjust to the changed circumstances of life.

The emphasis on the transmutation that Obi undergoes reflects the criticality with which Achebe regards the postcolonial condition. The strengths and weaknesses of Obi make him a paradoxical figure who is hardly able to handle the contradiction between the two opposing worlds. And again there is hardly any kind of moral paradigm that can justify the fall of the protagonist. His character at times seems very pathetic rather than heroic. Although he has the potential for standing up for what he believes in, resisting the system of taking bribes and leading an over-opulent, ostentatious life as well as rebelling against the
prohibitions of the elders in his family regarding the issue of marriage with Clara, he fails to complete the task or tasks he has set out to do. His dilemma arises from the sense of belonging that he naturally harbours but he is unable to articulate a worldview that would have given him the moral strength to combat the evil around him. Western education and the programmes of emancipation of natives had within its core a latent racism that one necessarily imbibed both consciously as well as unconsciously and it is this rationale of progress that Achebe is trying to unravel through the failure and ultimate breakdown of Obi.

A similar theme is invoked in *A Man of the People* but the corruption that is elucidated here is more of a political nature as the novel in interesting ways mirrors the complexity of post-independence Nigeria. Odili, the narrator, questions the corruption of Nanga, the minister for culture ironically regarded as ‘a man of the people’, but he hardly has the interests of the community in his mind. It is rather a personal score that he sets out to settle and in the process what is unleashed is a train of violence that has no redeeming moral purpose. The wishes of the collective have little meaning for him as he too has parted ways from the old worldviews of the Igbos and the individualist streak in him makes him take the battle further forward. The lack of a comprehensive social vision and the emptiness of modern existence
have no relation to the past that Achebe has portrayed in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. What he sets out to explore in this novel is the politics of post-independence Nigeria and if in *No Longer at Ease* his subject was the failure of the individual, in *A Man of the People* his subject was the system of governance which was rotten at the very centre:

The trouble with our new nation was that none of us had been indoors long enough to be able to say 'To hell with it'. We had all been in the rain together until yesterday. Then a handful of us—the smart and the lucky and hardly ever the best—had scrambled for the one shelter our former rulers left, and had taken it over and barricaded themselves in. And from within they sought to persuade the rest through numerous loudspeakers, that the first phase of the struggle had been won and that the next phase—the extension of our house—was even more important and called for new and original tactics; it required that all argument should cease and the whole people speak with one voice and that any more dissent and argument outside the door of the shelter would subvert and bring down the whole house. (42)

Both the individual and the system in post-colonial Nigeria bore in them the imprint of the colonisation process and the crisis arises from
the very genesis of the evolution that is not only alienated from the earlier modes of living but is also alienating in nature. In his ironic portrayal of Chief Nanga who spouts tribal values and cherishes the old identity of pre-colonial Nigeria, Achebe attempts to examine once again the practice of identity-formation. Through Odili one comes to realize how Nanga, representative of the voice of the people, uses his power to abuse the system. Financial corruption is only a natural consequence of the tyranny he unleashes against those who oppose him. His corrupt means of using public funds for private purposes and the influence that he wields in winning women and others to his side make him the representative of those forces in Nigerian society that masquerade a hollow identity in order to achieve their own ends. Nanga was Odili's teacher and his voice he had learned to trust. His disillusion mirrors the breakdown of all structures of faith in the nexus between money and power that has replaced colonial administration. The evil of colonialism and the lop-sided modernity that is ushered in creates a complete imbalance as people like Nanga learn to use the system for furthering their own interests. The mockery that he makes of democracy by using public money to bribe his way through, his interests in property dealing and accumulation of rent capital reflect a reality of post-independence Nigeria that parallels the situation in many third-world
nations. When Odili chooses to go against the vicious political circle by creating a party of his own, he hardly has the interests of his community in mind. He leaves Nanga's residence and with his earlier school buddy 'cool Max' forms his own party and decides to contest the elections as it was the only option left for him to prove whose voice was closer to that of the people. He hardly understands why his father too sides with Chief Nanga and asks him to abstain from the elections. He is baffled by the lure of money that Nanga offers him in order to buy him out of the race and is completely taken aback when he learns that Max had accepted money in order to quit the elections. It is later that one learns that Max outwitted Nanga and beat him at his own game as he accepted the money in order to fund Odili's election campaign.

The two novels also trace a development in Achebe's career as a novelist, as it has often been pointed out that in his scheme of things women hardly had a place. In both No Longer at Ease and A Man of the People, Achebe attempts to delineate women characters who do not form merely a colourful backdrop to the novel. The portrayal of Clara as an economically independent woman who could live on her own by working as a trained nurse and the depiction of Eunice (Max's fiance), who is a lawyer and the founder of the Common People's Convention, showcase the newly emergent working women who are part of the
changed Nigerian reality. When Max is shot dead, Eunice takes revenge by killing Chief Koko. Feminist readings have often held Achebe responsible for not giving enough attention to the portrayal of women, but what one fails to realize is that in his corpus women are not willfully marginalized. In his anti-colonial stance what he undertakes to do is create an organic African identity as an axis of resistance in the matrix of his novels. The energy and vigor that demarcate his primarily male protagonists are part of the reality of the tribal world where women were largely denied public spaces.

The departure from the collective modes of living has been a fact in the evolution of all societies that have embarked on the path of industrialization, whether through the evolution of its own structures of production or as appendages to colonial administration. The search for raw material and markets ushers in the phase of cultural encounter that finds its place in the literatures of the post-colonial world. In fact in trying to delineate the broad perspectives of African literature, David Cook makes an interesting observation while trying to draw an analogy with the tradition of novel-writing in Europe and America:

The problem for the Western protagonist is how to approach more closely with other human beings; the problem for the leading character in an African novel is more likely to be how to
assert an individual viewpoint, without becoming a total outcast...

Neither type of protagonist chooses his basic position. One is born into a disjointed society and yearns for real human contact. The other is ordained to live in a contentedly conforming group and finds him restless within it. (16)

Coming back to the question of cultural dynamics in *Things Fall Apart*, one might say that the Igbo culture is a complex entity, and the boundaries which define it are diffuse. Intermarriages with people from other communities and colonial intrusion and its consequences have changed things to such an extent that it is difficult, if not impossible, to sift the past from the present. The process of disentangling colonial influences and non-Igbo influences from the core of traditional Igbo culture is an ongoing one. The Ibos have come to be known for their capacity to accept and absorb change. One major area of this debate concerns the status of women. Tradition, as exemplified in folk tale and custom, as well as historical material, reveals Igbo women possessing strength and determination, as well as organization. There is sufficient evidence that Ala, the goddess (Ana, Ani or Ajaala) was the major deity. In addition, there are epic tales of brave heroines, such as and *Equiano’s Travels*, the narrative of an Igbo slave. Historically, there is the evidence of December 1929, in which the Igbo women's stubborn
resistance to colonial authority over a tax question finally provoked colonial violence killing and wounding a large number of people. Many of the river areas of Igboland and of eastern Nigeria in general have goddess cults of various kinds, including the mammy water and the sea goddess Owu-Miri, who is worshipped around Oguta and Egbema. At the group level one of the chief deities of the Igbo people was Ani, the earth deity, the great mother goddess and the spirit of fertility. Every lineage and every homestead had a shrine dedicated to her. Ani had her own special priestesses who played leading roles in aspects of community life. They officiated during all religious ceremonies that concerned Ani and presided over all matters involving crime against the earth goddess. Their presence was vital when matters concerning incest, birth, death, and burial were discussed. The ultimate resting place for all men and women who had led a good life was in the bosom of Ani.

In traditional Ibo society, women did not have a political role equal to that of men. But they did have a role, or more accurately a series of roles, despite the patrilineal organization of Igbo society. The process of acquisition of status operated the same way for women as for men. Igbo women's public status was achieved not from their husbands but from their own acquisition of titles. Though men and women both attained public status in the same way, men's greater access to resources
gave them an advantage over women. Igbo society recognized that the activities assigned to women in the sexual division of labour were explicitly political. This included control of the market, and from here emerged the ‘Omu,’ the Igbo Woman Monarch, a role complimentary to that of the Obi, the male monarch. She had her own cabinet, she also had jurisdiction over men in market matters. Thus, Igbo society had a democratic ideology, but not an egalitarian one. In addition to unequal access to resources, African societies used many cultural restrictions to keep women in seclusion. These cultural patterns may represent a historical reaction by men against an earlier era when women's status was higher. Van Allen, who documents the process of decline of political power among Igbo women of southeastern Nigeria, attributes this decline to the fact that the British colonialists as a result of their ‘Victorian views’ saw politics as a man's concern.

Questions are often raised in the debates pertaining to the shocking depiction of violence against women in Igbo society, especially in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The perception that Igbo society is dominantly patriarchal where the status of women is vulnerable and weak is heightened by the events in the narrative where the protagonist's misogyny is encoded in his acts of violence and aggression, perpetrated on the women of his family/community. While such perceptions take
Okonkwo as a representative of Igbo male domination, they fail to take into consideration the condition of women in African society which is fraught with contradictions and oppositions, mostly arising out of the colonial domination of Africa, others intrinsic to the organisational structures of particular societies. Okonkwo, wanted his son Nwoye to grow into a tough young man capable of ruling his father's household ... he was always happy when he heard him grumbling about women. That showed that he would be able to control his women-folk. No matter how prosperous a man was, if he was unable to rule his women and his children and especially his women, he was not really a man (37).

Although Achebe did not create Okonkwo to be a representative of the Ibo culture, Okonkwo does demonstrate the destructive possibilities of societies and individuals who ignore the wisdom of their ancestors.

Okonkwo suffers seven years of exile in his mother's Mbanta because his masculine limitations hamper him and do not prepare him to face the changes that Umuofia has gone through under colonial rule. He is unable to reconcile himself to the loss of the past dignity of his people. His anger leads him to kill a colonial messenger and to finally commit suicide. Although Okonkwo had attained a high position in his society, he had failed to reconcile the male and female qualities and
principles of his Igbo society. He also fails because he ignores and
cannot accept the wisdom which accords reverence for mother. Just as
slavery exposed the black man to violence on a daily basis, the effect of
colonialism too was far-reaching. It intruded into people's intimate lives,
rendering men powerless and making women irrelevant. Without land
and without skills the African people were reduced to sub-human levels.

*Things Fall Apart* is about man's experience, colonial domination and
the struggles of African men, personal and political, within the
contemporary situation. Motherhood, then, is a symbolic representation
of tradition and Africa within a larger frame.

In *Things Fall Apart* Chinua Achebe maintains that the most
common name given to a child in Igbo society is Nneka — *mother is
supreme* (121). Okonkwo, struggles throughout his life not to be like his
father whom he considers a poor effeminate man. This struggle, which
compels him to reject the androgynous nature of his Igbo upbringing, is
a reflection of the masculine nature of colonial intervention. The Loss
of self and the loss of culture went hand in hand with colonialism. As a
leader of his clan he is a successful provider, ruling his compound with a
heavy hand, beating his wives, denying his children any tenderness, and
suppressing all emotions except anger. Okonkwo's aggressive
personality leads him to commit many crimes against the earth goddess.
In a fit of rage he accidentally kills a man on the day of the festival. This is called a ‘female crime’ as opposed to murder which is a male crime. He who had looked down upon his father and considered him to be woman was now forced to flee his father's village and seek refuge in Mbanta, his motherland. Okonkwo's hyper-masculinity finds this as a desperate situation. His maternal uncle Uchendu reminds him:

It's true that a child belongs to its father. But when a father beats his child, it seeks sympathy in its mother's hut. A man belongs to his fatherland 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. She is buried there. And that is why we say mother is supreme. (94)

Although the central action of the novel concerns man’s experience, there is a clear 'feminine principle' working at the symbolic level. Female roles are of importance and Okonkwo's abject helplessness with regard to the priestess Chielo heightens this importance. Ultimately Okonkwo's beating of his wives represents his total disregard for the female principle. At the source of his tragic trajectory lies his unnatural desire to impose his maleness. It is reflective of his deep-seated complex, which drives him into a denial of his feminine self. By doing so he embraces only one half of his psyche, thus crippling himself. Out
of this fear of the feminine stems his need to possess and control women and subjugate them through aggressive physical strength.

In Achebe’s fiction one can find that Okonkwo was popularly called the 'Roaring Flame' (108). While he lived in exile in Mbanta, the white man had penetrated Umuofia and established a different world. In his search for an alternative to his father's preoccupation with masculine achievements and some of the excesses of his society, Nwoye, Okonkwo's eldest son, becomes the first in his family to join the Christian church. Okonkwo considers him an abomination. ‘How could he have begotten a woman for a son?’ (119). Angrily summoning his other sons, the youngest of whom was four years old, he warned them of dire consequences, ‘.... if any of you prefer to be a woman, let him follow Nwoye now while I am alive so that I can curse him’ (120). This will haunt him even after his death and force him to avenge himself on his children. ‘... if you turn against me when I am dead I will visit you and break your neck’ (122).

Okonkwo realizes that his daughter Ezinma is strong enough to understand her father’s need to reclaim his reputation in Umuofia. Ezinma convinces her sister Obiageli not to accept any proposals for marriage in Mbanta so that their father could find influential young men in Umuofia as sons-in-law. ‘Yet he never stopped regretting that Ezinma
was a girl....’ Achebe tells us (122). ‘I wish she were a boy’ (122) is a constant refrain in his heart. This rejection of the feminine and his inability to understand the androgynous nature of his Igbo culture proves to be Okonkwo's failure. He needs his wives, his daughters and his mother's land and family and the goddess Ala to nurture, heal and understand his chi. Yet his arrogance will not allow him to accept their importance. His decline begins even before the white men enter Umuofia. There is no evidence in the narrative of other men among the Igbo’s are being affected in this manner. His pride in being a clansman of Umuofia was justified. ‘Umuofia’ was feared by all its neighbours. It was powerful in war and medicine.’ What he had ignored was what everybody generally agreed about – ‘The active principle in that medicine had been an old woman with one leg. In fact the medicine itself was called agadi-nwayi, or old woman. It had its shrine in the centre of Umuofia’ (9).

There is no let up in the vehemence of his anti-woman feelings even after seven years of sanctuary offered by his mother's village. Ultimately it is a question of giving maniacal importance to power and domination which he perceives as male attributes and which is Okonkwo's tragic flaw. Deprived of clan positions by the white government and suffering from the betrayal of some of his clan brothers,
Okonkwo loses his relevance and is unable to reconcile himself to the changed conditions. He speaks of action and temporarily succeeds in stirring some of his clansmen to destroy the church. His bitterness drives him to anger and he beheads the white man's court messenger. But his machismo is of no use to him. His excessive anger has already punished him in exile from Umuofia and now he would be hanged by the white man.

In what can be described as one of the most tragic scenes in modern literature, the body of a proud Okonkwo is found hanging from a tree in his backyard. Okonkwo ‘was deeply grieved. And it was not just a personal grief. He mourned for the clan. ... and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia, who had so unaccountably become soft like women’ (129). In death there is no release for the mighty warrior who had forgotten the ways of his clan. ‘It is against our custom ... it is an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offence against the earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen ... his body is evil and only strangers may touch it ... that is why we ask you to bring him down, because you are strangers’ (147). The very people he hated would now take down his body and prepare it for burial. Filled with ironical sadness, one can see in Okonkwo's death the struggle of a misguided man whose life is an uncompromising battle to
establish his manhood. Ultimately in the choice of his death he loses his humanity and desecrates the earth. His friend Obierika's ferocious words to the District Commissioner sum it all: ‘That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself and now he will be buried like a dog ...’ (147). Okonkwo’s attempts of resistance against colonization and his subsequent failure as detailed above represent the fate of Africa itself.

Coming back to the issue of the cultural identities of the Igbo society, it is well documented that in Igbo society there is a definite female quality to religiosity. The most important Igbo deity is Ala, the Earth Goddess, who is characterized as the merciful mother who intercedes for her children, as the spirit for fertility who increases the productivity of the land. It is believed that women are closer to her than are men and can obtain quicker hearing. In what is described by Carole Boyce Davies as one of the most memorable scenes in African fiction, Achebe transforms an ordinary woman into the priestess Chielo, a person of great strength and wisdom:

She was the priestess of Agbala, the oracle of the hills and the caves. In ordinary life Chielo was a widow with two children.

She was very friendly with Ekwefi and they shared a common shed in the market ... anyone seeing Chielo in ordinary life
would hardly believe she was the same person who prophesied when the spirit of Agbala was upon her. (34)

Chielo images the strong Igbo women who did not passively allow colonialists to make inroads into their way of life. The Chielo-Ezinma episode is an important sub-plot in the novel. Okonkwo follows the priestess through the dark night as she carries his daughter on her back and his male aggressiveness is of no use in this context. In the troubled world of *Things Fall Apart* motherhood and femininity are the unifying, mitigating principles, the lessons for Okonkwo, the lessons for Africa and the world and also an option for cultural survival and resistance.

Uchendu draws attention to the distinction between male and female suffering: ‘If you think you are the greatest sufferer in the world ask my daughter, Akueni, how many twins she has borne and thrown away’(122). Female suffering is associated with the loss of motherhood. This prevails through all of African literature. It is the women writers who are now questioning their obsessive roles as mothers. Filomena Chioma Steady delineates the features of a distinct African feminism:

The birthplace of human life must also be the birthplace of human struggle, and feminist consciousness must in some way be related to the earliest divisions of labour according to sex on the
continent. But even more significant is the fact that the forms of social organization, which approach sexual equality, in addition to matrilineal societies where women are central, can be found on the African continent. ...true feminism is an abnegation of male protection and a determination to be resourceful and self-reliant. The majority of the black women in Africa and in the Diaspora have developed these characteristics, though not always by choice. (3)

Misconceptions about African women who doubly colonised were created during the colonial period and continue to be perpetuated up to the present times. Now women writers are telling their own stories, giving up their apolitical stand and moving towards a more militant feminist stand. Writers like Buchi Emecheta of Nigeria and Mariamma Ba of Senegal and young poets like Susan Kiguli of Uganda are questioning some of the traditional attitudes to womanhood and woman's place in society. In direct contrast to the glorified images of motherhood presented by male writers, the Igbo women writers challenge fairy-tale endings of motherhood, success, and happiness. Writers like Emecheta and Nwapa categorically state that women's lives have other dimensions and any attempt to define them purely as mothers compels them to live unfulfilled lives. Novels such as *Joys of*
*Motherhood* and *Efuru* deal with the subject of motherhood and its constricting limitations. In *Things Fall Apart* there is a separate world of women. Chielo in the novel expresses the spirit of a society which at one point had certain ideals of equality which gradually give way to other imperceptible socio-economic associations. The colonial masters, ignorant of the egalitarian structures of pre-colonial societies, failed to recognize women's economic and social status in those societies. Ezinma is articulate, beautiful, possesses all qualities that make her father wish she were a boy. Her bonding with both father and mother is perfect. The mother-daughter relationship is clearly seen in Ekwefi's struggle to keep her female child alive. Both her biological mother Ekwefi and her spiritual mother Chielo play important roles in Ezinma’s growing up. The journey motif of Ezinma and Chielo takes her out of the defined roles for women in Okonkwo's society and allows her to experience power and liberation. Okonkwo’s constant reminder, ‘sit like a woman,’ constricts her into gender-specific roles of which her father is a self-appointed guardian. The very fact that women like Chielo are outside of male control and cannot be subjugated by the machete, a symbol of male aggression, speaks of the presiding feminine principle in Igbo society. Although colonialism worsened the position of women, African women by no means reacted with apathy or inertia. They have struggled against
colonialism, just as men have—from the Igbo women's war in Nigeria to
the poll-tax demonstrations in South Africa. A reexamination of
Achebe's novel from a feminist position may reveal woman as
peripheral to the larger exploration of man's experience. Nigerian
women writers, on the other hand, create a world peopled by women and
give precedence to female experience, be it within the domestic space or
in public spaces such as war.

One has to acknowledge the role of the oral aspect of African
resistance in fiction through the inoption of proverbs, which are a
significant feature of the African cultural heritage. It is agreed that the
phase-shift from speech to writing, from the spoken to the written word,
was not merely a technical change, for it signalled a major transition in
modes of perception. But samples of African writing in English appear
to indicate that oral modes can survive despite the adoption of the
written medium in literature. It will be shown here how Chinua Achebe
employs the written form to represent an oral culture.

It is through the mode of writing that Achebe tries to reconstruct
Igbo history, which has a predominantly oral sensibility. This oral
demesion. The oral sensibility is a characteristic feature African society.
One has to acknowledge the role of proverbs in Achebe’s novels in
recreating the texture of African life and culture. It is legitimate to view
Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God as to the oral traditions of Igbo life. But the novels No longer at Ease, and A man of the people do not function in a similar manner. But they too conceal strikingly oral patterns and habits in their linguistic structure.

The legends of Okonkwo and Ezeulu, of Umuofia and Umuaro, are recounted by the oral teller of tales whose conception of history is very different from the western one. For he takes into account not only what has happened but also what is fabled to have happened. He reconstructs the history of his people largely by drawing on myth and legend. While the original artist has the freedom to distort historical facts if necessary, Achebe tries to be accurate in recording the colonial penetration into the bush land. Despite there being absolute fidelity to historical truth, the colonial experience is presented from the perspective of the Igbo. The Igbo voice of the novels perceives and re-creates this experience in the language of myth and legend. Oral forms, including myth and legend, draw heavily on the repertoire of communal corpus of a community. A passage in Things Fall Apart begins thus: ‘That was many years ago, twenty years or more, and during this time Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush-fire in the harmattan’(3).

The phrase – ‘many years ago’ (the familiar opening of folk tales and myths) - occurs several times in the course of the novel and
underlines the tendency to hark back to the past in order to specify a present event. 'Many years ago' reinforces the impression of a vague, indeterminate past in the manner of tales. The explanation, 'twenty years or more', indicates only an approximate rather than a precise number of years because, unlike modern man with his obsession for the minute segmentation of time, the African man makes only broad divisions to mark time. The history of the tribe is reconstructed not by naming and identifying dates and years but in relation to the phenomena and events that have significantly affected communal life. ‘The year that Okonkwo took eight hundred seed-yams from Nwakibie was the worst year in living memory ... That year the harvest was sad. And that was also the year Okonkwo broke the peace and was punished....’ (26).

The time-scheme of Arrow of God seems to be more elaborately worked out in terms of years. But the phrase 'five years ago' occurs more as a refrain. The emphasis falls more on the events that distinguished that particular year than the precise date: ‘In the five years since the white man broke the guns of Umuaro...’ (38). ‘It was five years since Ezeulu promised the white man that he would send one of his sons to church. But it was only two years ago that he fulfilled the promise’ (45).

Time seems to move in a much more leisurely way than in urban industrial societies. For nothing momentous appears to have taken place
during the intervening years. The memory of hurts and enmities incurred ‘five years ago’ are still fresh and pressing. Despite the years being numbered, the traditional ‘phenomenal calendar’ seems to be operating here rather than the 'numerical calendar' of the West. Time is still reckoned in relation to specific events like the war between Umuaro and Okperi, the breaking of the guns by the white man, the hostility between Ezeulu of Umuaro and Nwaka of Umuonneora. Five years here denote, as do the 'twenty years or more' in *Things Fall Apart*, a fairly flexible period not necessarily confined to an actual mathematical division of time. If ‘twenty years or more' are sufficient to convert a living person (Okonkwo) into a legend, 'five years' indicate a span whose events still possess an immediacy with respect to the community's life.

Again, the tendency to mythicize every significant event is aptly captured in the formula, 'the story was told': Abame has been wiped out,' said Obierika. It is a strange and terrible story (124). ‘The story of what these soldiers did in Abame was still told with fear’. (28). Here Achebe is making an actual historical reference to the resistance offered by the natives of Abame to the first British encroachment on the interior. But even everyday events pertaining to the members of the community become part of the common stock of the communal repertoire: ‘The story was told in Umuofia of how his father Unoka had gone to consult
the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves to find out why he always had a miserable harvest’ (15). ‘The story that the white man had whipped Obika spread through the villages’ (87).

The fact that the tribal, cyclic consciousness of time has been supplanted by the clock-time of Western industry and office in the world of Obi and Odili does not prevent the primeval perception from asserting itself every now and then. In A Man of the People, Odili combines a minute numerical awareness of hours with a traditional leisureliness in dissecting time:

I had not always disliked Mr Nanga. Sixteen years or so ago he had been my teacher ... The story had it that many years ago Mr Nwege was a poor, hungry elementary school teacher... The traditional manner of relating information still persists in Odili's style. They said this woman was a very close friend of the Minister's ... (2, 13, 15)

A common saying in the country after Independence was that it didn't matter what you knew but who you knew (17).

It is to be noted that the degree of repetition present in oral specimens when incorporated into writing becomes tedious. But redundancy goes together with clarity. Redundancy clarifies underlines and reinforces. The garrulous narrative voice of Achebe's novel abounds
in redundancies. It provides many details where one would be sufficient. It repeats and recapitulates at every possible opportunity:

The drums were still beating, persistent and unchanging. Their sound was no longer a separate thing from the living village. It was like the pulsation of its heart. It throbbed in the air, in the sunshine, and even in the trees, and filled the village with excitement. (40)

The opening of this passage introduces an idea which is repeated in the following two sentences. The drum beat, indissoluble from the living village in the first, is defined as 'the pulsation of its heart' in the second. Its oneness is demonstrated by the way it permeates every living aspect of the village - 'the air', 'the sunshine', even 'the trees'. Repetition serves the function of defining and explicating. It simplifies, it lessens the task of comprehension in the listener's mind. It provides several examples to reinforce an idea and attempts to explore it from every possible perspective:

Perhaps in his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the 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, lest he should be found to resemble his father. (13)

The listing of the various fears, ‘the fear of evil and capricious gods ... forces of nature,’ accentuates the shared, communal phobias. Against these are placed the personal, internal anxieties of Okonkwo spelt as the ‘fear of failure and weakness.’ Achebe emphasizes Okonkwo's isolation, first by defining the communal framework and then by underlining the private nature of Okonkwo's insecurity. The passage illustrates the process by which the oral artist communicates with his audience, repeating for the sake of making his meaning clear, citing repetitious analogies to drive home his point. This is a manner eminently suited to the bard and the novelist who desire to educate the 'alien' as well as the 'alienated' in the grandeur of the African past.

The predilection for elaboration and explanation in the traditional bard is associated with his pedagogic function. The aetiological ending, ‘That was how’, underlines the bard's responsibility to answer the unvoiced queries in his audience's mind, to transmit the wisdom of his race, to explain the reason and motives for happenings. Achebe's resorting to the aetiological formula reflects a desire to leave very few questions unanswered, to explain motives and compulsions that give rise to a certain action or behaviour:
That was how Okonkwo came to know that *agbala* was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title. *(Things, 13)*

The man who had contradicted him had no titles. That was why he had called him a woman. *(24)*

He must go on treating his grown children like little boys, and if they ever said so there was a big quarrel.

This was why the older his children grew the more he seemed to dislike them. *(91)*

Repetition, in oral narrative, is justified as a mnemonic aid. But redundancy and digressiveness are also related to the general expansive tendency of oral narration. The same digressive pattern is typical of Achebe's novels:

Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men usually had. He did not inherit a barn from his father. There was no barn to inherit. The story was told in Umuofia of how his father, Unoka, had gone to consult the Oracle of the Hill and the Caves to find out why he always had a miserable harvest. *(Things 15)*

A couple of pages later the narrator resumes the same theme almost with the very word with which he left off:
With a father like Unoka, Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men had. He neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife. (17)

Isidore Okpewho describes this as the ‘ring composition’ (194). The natural accretive impulse of the bard, he asserts, leads Achebe to inflate and expand. In the passage above, for example, while recounting the tale of Okonkwo, the narrator makes a long detour which focuses not on Okonkwo but on his father Unoka. So the narrative first digresses into a description of the Oracle which Unoka has consulted and then goes on to give a detailed account of Unoka's conversation with the priestess of the Oracle. But despite his fondness for digressing, the 'bard' cannot afford to lose the thread of the main narrative. Therefore, he must return from Unoka to Okonkwo again. The ‘ring’, the resumption of the theme with a repetition of the previous utterance — ensures and brings about stabilization and control.

The digressive structures flow over into the urban scene in *No Longer At Ease* as well:

Mother's room was the most distinctive of the whole house, except for Father's. The difficulty in deciding arose from the fact that one could not compare incomparable things. Mr. Okonkwo believed utterly and completely in the things of the white man
and the symbol of the white man's power was the written word ...

Mother's room, on the other hand, was full of mundane things.

She had her box of clothes on a stool. On the other side of the room were pots of solid palm-oil with which she made black soap. (114-115)

The promise of a description of the 'Mother's room' leads to a digressive account of the father's. A couple of paragraphs later the narrative returns to Mother's occupations. The method of the 'ring composition' observed in the earlier novel is seen in this section as well. The paratactic construction of the text, ostensibly in conformity with the spontaneous, improvised procedure of oral composition, is designed to produce clarity:

   Unoka loved it all, and he loved the first kites that returned with the dry season, and the children who sang songs of welcome to them. (5)

   And what made it worse in Okonkwo's case was that he had to support his mother and two sisters from his meagre harvest. And supporting his mother also meant supporting his father (8).

*Arrow of God* reveals a larger occurrence of 'but':

   ‘But many people trembled for him that night in his compound when he had all but threatened Ulu would allow himself...’ (39).
More interesting, however, is the employment of the double connective 'and so'. Achebe finds in this combination an ideal way of summarizing the context of an elaborate argument or for underlining the effect of a certain action:

And so Okonkwo was ruled by one passion to hate everything that his father Unoka loved. (13)

And so Nwoye was developing into a sad-faced youth. (13)

The recurrence of parataxis in Achebe's works relates him to the oral storytelling traditions in Nigeria which carried on its narratives in an 'adding style'. Surprisingly, this particular method can be found in Achebe's novels dealing with urban themes as well. The employment of a first-person narrator in *A Man of the People*, who is so obviously 'telling' his story, permits the introduction of paratactic structures:

And when I got to the ward and was told with pointless brusqueness by a girl-nurse that my patient had been discharged yesterday I felt really downcast. ... So I drove from the hospital to Edna's place, although her father had told me three days earlier never to set foot in his house again. And for the first time since my return from Bori my luck was on. Edna was in and her father was out. (104)
Similar structures can be seen in No longer at Ease as well: ‘After this there was another long silence. Then his father spoke, but not about the thing that was on their minds’ (125). Hence, oral linguistic style seems to be adapted to the delineation of the contemporary Nigerian milieu in the urban novels too. Thus one can see that through the mode of proverbs and poetic prose Achebe is able to recreate an ethos of the African culture in his novels thereby creating a mode of resistance against Western stereotyping of Africa as a continent without a culture.