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To Simbo

'That our cross-cultural outreach across a chasm will be a regenerative bed-rock for them'
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Abstract

In many former British colonies independence from colonial rule has produced a myriad of post-colonial tensions. Increasingly, writers from the indigenous race in these former colonies have felt moved to respond to these tensions in their imaginative fiction. This study has undertaken a comparative cross-cultural analysis of the works of two writers from such societies whose indigenous cultures share common assumptions, to explore the underlying impetus of these tensions, and the writers' proposals for resolving them.

Chapter One assesses Witi Ihimaera as a writer, and explores his concept of biculturalism, with particular emphasis on the distinctly Maori point of view which informs his analysis of contemporary social problems.

Chapter Two assays Ihimaera's pastoral writings, Pounamu Pounamu, Tangi, and Whana, tracing in them the development of his concept of biculturalism, and also the changes in Ihimaera's writing that culminated in The new Net Goes Fishing, with the hardening of attitude that it expresses.

Chapter Three looks at the revisionism of Ihimaera's view of New Zealand history from a Maori viewpoint. It uses Ihimaera's The Matriarch not only as a means of exploring this revisionist Maori perspective, but also as evidence of the radicalisation of Ihimaera's views, and the broadening of the concept of biculturalism to embrace not only cultural, but social and political matters.

Chapter Four considers Ihimaera's The Whale Rider as a feminist restatement of earlier views and highlights the growing dilemma he faces concerning the concept of biculturalism.

Chapter Five focuses on Achebe, the writer, and his view of the role of the African writer in contemporary society. It argues that
Achebe views himself as a seer, a visionary writer who has the answer that could regenerate his society.

Chapter Six analyses Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, and argues that contrary to accepted views of Okonkwo, this character is not actually representative of his society but a deviant. It further argues that the post-colonial African societies' afflictions with irresponsible leaders were already manifest in the colonial period, through characters such as Okonkwo and Ezeulu, whom Achebe sees as guilty of gross abuses of power and privilege.

Chapter Seven looks at both *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the People*, and argues that the failure of the first indigenous administrative class stems both from their having an incomplete apprehension of all the aspects of their heritage and the responsibility which power imposes on those who exercise it, and also from lack of restraint in wielding of power. It further argues that the unbridled scramble for materialism has resulted in the destruction of democratic principles.

Chapter Eight analyses Achebe's post Nigerian Civil-War writings, arguing that these works depict both civilian and military politicians as having similar attitudes to power -- they wield it as if it were personal. The chapter also establishes Achebe's proposed solution to the perennial post-colonial malaise of abuse of power as being a thorough re-formation of the inherited cultural values around society's traditional world-views.

In the context of contemporary New Zealand society, Ihimaera sees the solution for Maori post-colonial tensions as bicultural integration, but he is having problems with the concept in the face of increasing radical activism from Maoris who see it as little better than assimilation. Achebe, however, has opted for re-formism, having discarded traditionalism because it is inadequate for people in the modern world.
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INTRODUCTION

With the first contact of the Maoris of New Zealand and the Ibos\(^1\) of Nigeria with Europeans and the dawning of the awareness that 'these strange men' had come to stay, and in fact dictate the terms of their stay, came a new era in the lives of these 'natives'. With the all-persuasive influence of European culture, and prodded by religious, political, and military authority, the 'natives' realised that their survival lay in surrender. Now, having subsequently surrendered, the second, third and present generations of these people have found themselves at crossroads. In both societies, New Zealand and Nigeria, the indigenous people have moved further to a sense of self, social, and cultural reassertions. Unlike in Nigeria, the situation in New Zealand is somewhat different in that Maoris have had to strike a balance between these cultural and social reassertions and accommodation because of their peculiar historical situation of being a minority indigenous people within a majority European settler society. In both countries, independence from colonial rule has produced a myriad of post-colonial tensions. Writers from these indigenous societies have attempted to understand their experience and these post-colonial tensions by writing fiction.

This thesis is neither concerned with colonialism nor post-colonialism per se. It aims at analysing both psychological and social

\(^1\)In view of the complex multiplicity of ethnic groups in Nigeria the use of 'Ibo', within the context of Achebe's analysis of societal malaise, becomes representative. Further more, it will be used interchangeably with 'Igbo'. This usage acknowledges the fact that while Igbo language purists (and people in learned circles and urban centres) would insist on 'Ibo' being used to distinguish the people and 'Igbo', the language; most contemporary writers now use 'Ibo' to represent both the people and the language, while 'Igbo' still represents only the language. However, in the rural areas the reverse is the case, as most people use 'Igbo' alone to represent both the people and the language.
tensions arising from such consequences of colonialism as the dissolution of family ties, urban drifts, the attraction of unbridled materialism, assimilation, and acculturation, on the one hand, and the indigenous peoples' response to these tensions on the other. This analysis will involve a selection of writers from two commonwealth countries whose indigenous cultures share common assumptions: New Zealand and Nigeria. Through examining the responses of the characters in the fictions of Witi Ihimaera and Chinua Achebe, (as representative New Zealand and Nigerian writers), one can demonstrate two basic issues: that the post-colonial tensions in the two indigenous cultures are very similar, and also that their problems arise from the same causes -- the dissolution of a way of life that was.

However, examination of the authors' views of the solutions shows that whereas the New Zealand writer, Witi Ihimaera, believes that the solution lies in the integration of the two cultures -- Maori and Pakeha, the Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe, disagrees on this score with respect to the Nigerian situation. Achebe believes that it is often not possible to extract the good qualities inherent in two basically different cultures to complement each other: "Unfortunately when two cultures meet, you would expect, if we were angels shall we say, we could pick out the best in the other and retain the best in our own, and this would be wonderful. But this doesn't happen often. What happens is that some of the worst elements of the old are retained and some of the worst of the new are added on to them."  

This divergence in the perception of the solution to the same problem between the two writers, stems from the different historical experiences of the two countries. In New Zealand, the colonialists stayed on to become part of the immediate society. The result is that the tension is polarised between the two groups -- Maori and Pakeha.

Nigeria, on the other hand, is a multi-ethnic and cultural nation. This, and the fact that the colonialists left after the country became independent, make these tensions more complicated and problematical.

The main justification for this thesis is that a comparative study of post-colonial tensions in the writings of Witi Ihimaera and Chinua Achebe has never been systematically pursued before. Upon investigating the critiques in the loose category classed as 'Commonwealth literatures', one finds that there is a dearth of comparative analyses that focus on authors from the two countries chosen. Despite the abundance of critiques on the individual authors, only J. P. Durix, Susan Beckman, and Nelson Wattie have written critiques that link some of the authors from these two countries. As well as similarities, this thesis aims also to consider divergences in the literary responses of the authors themselves. Where necessary, this work will explore any obvious correlations between the authors and their works, but in the main, the response of the characters in their fictions to the tensions mentioned will be the basis of this study. In view of the cross-cultural approach which this study is adopting, this thesis also aims at easing comprehension of the fundamental messages of the works chosen.

Ihimaera's lament at the near extinction of the Maori race, and his appraisal of the 'new dawn' has shaped his advocacy for adaptation. His concept of biculturalism as a response to the Maori sense of post-colonial tensions is both a buffer against total assimilation, and a structured form of adaptation to the inevitable. Ihimaera's writings aim to reconcile Maori and Pakeha, and project a response which he

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believes will best 'arm' the Maori for the days ahead. He sees biculturalism as a three-legged race, involving both Maori and Pakeha. If both run in harmony, they would finish the race victorious; but if they are not synchronal, they would both fall. As he says: "We're both in this waka together." 

The theme of biculturalism runs through Ihimaera's fiction in varied guises. He sees the concept as representing both, "an equality between Maori and Pakeha in New Zealand" and the ability of either a Maori or Pakeha New Zealander to bestride both worlds without feeling a stranger in either. This thesis will explore Ihimaera's struggle to define and defend the concept through the medium of his fiction. It will also assess to what extent the characters represent responses to the stresses and strains of inter-cultural and bi-cultural existence in a post-colonial milieu. In the course of Ihimaera's defining, articulating, and defending the concept of biculturalism, an attitudinal shift has occurred -- not in the concept itself, but in the method of its realisation. He has moved from an initial stance of celebrating the past as a means of coming to terms with the present, and facing the future with confidence, to literarily cajoling the two races to embrace this concept. He has progressively become more militant, out of a sense of disillusionment, at the slow pace of change from both sides; ending up in an ambivalent and paradoxical situation. But despite this, his quest for a solution to the post-colonial tensions of the Maoris through bicultural integration, is still pronounced. Faced by a "wall" of increasing radical and militant Maori advocacy for separatism, he remains true to the concept as the most viable option for a stable New Zealand.

In the first section of this thesis, I intend to extrapolate, by

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studying his fiction, what Ihimaera perceives as the post-colonial tensions of his society, and also to assess the dialectics of his proposed solution. Chapter one will analyse Ihimaera, the writer, and his concept of biculturalism. Chapter two will explore Ihimaera's sense of the Maori past, tracing the development of the concept of biculturalism from this past, through the three phases in his writings, to the present. Chapter three will deal with the historical perspective -- Ihimaera's version of history from the Maori perspective -- and his proposal for coming to terms with the new way. It will also explore the radicalisation of his views as evident in his post 1975 writings, particularly in The Matriarch. While Chapter four will look at the modern reality for both the urbanised Maori and his rural counterpart, and Ihimaera's belief that both cannot adequately face the future without the risk of either extinction or total assimilation, except through the aid of structured adaptation.

The second section of the thesis will deal with Chinua Achebe's treatment of post-colonial tensions and his search for a solution. Achebe, as mentioned earlier, believes that, were it possible, the solution to the post-colonial tensions would be resolved by a synthesis of the positive qualities in both cultures -- European and indigenous. But unfortunately, he argues, this is not often the case. Achebe identifies a frequent lack of a sound sense of political responsibility, and a lack of moral and social conscience, together with a tendency of African leaders to lose touch with the ordinary citizens of their respective nations as the main sources of post-colonial tensions in the new nations of Africa. He believes that the black administrative leaders of these nations have not adequately addressed themselves to the social and political responsibilities of their positions. Achebe sees two possible

6Another Nigerian writer, Wole Soyinka, in an interview with Biodun Jeyifo in 1983 also indicts this first batch of administrative class, particularly legislators, saying: "I took one look at our first set of legislators ... when they visited the UK and talked to students, I listened to them, watched them, and I knew ... That instant, I think I received what the Japanese might term
solutions: he believes that given the post-colonial social and political structures which demand different values of reference compared with those that operate in traditional societies, the men empowered to order society's future should responsibly exercise these powers for the benefit of the society. He further argues that where reforms are necessary for the benefit of the society, they should be structured around that society's existing inherent world-views.

What Ime Ikiddeh says concerning Ngugi's essays could rightly be applied to Achebe's writings. Ime Ikiddeh sees the dominant concern of these writings as "the confusion in values that has resulted from a drastic historical change in the political, economic and cultural ethos; the effect of such confusion on both society and the individual psyche; and the need to retain what is ours and recreate from it a new set of living values," only that Achebe would suggest retaining what is best in ours. Particularly appalling to Achebe, is the brazen materialism of post-colonial society. He notes that "today we have kept the materialism and thrown away the spirituality which should keep it in check."  

Achebe's fictions depict a variety of responses on the part of the author, ranging from laudatory celebrations of African culture in Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God, through satirical criticisms of the black administrative cadre that inherited the post-colonial Civil Service in No Longer at Ease, to outright lambasting of both the apathetic populace and the corrupt rulers in A Man of the People and Anthills of the Savannah.


Through all these, Achebe paradoxically evaluates the general response of the people to their peculiar predicaments, yet remains within the confines of his goals as espoused in his essays "The Novelist as Teacher", "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation", and "The Black Writer's Burden", among others. These writings, while explicating the underlying world-views that engender the specific responses to these colonial and post-colonial tensions, also suggest viable options for their resolutions for both the characters and the society. I intend to educe Achebe's charge of shirking of responsibilities and betrayal of faith, which he levels on the colonial and post-colonial "participants in Africa's drama of change." While chapter five will assay Achebe, the writer, and the formulation of his views on the role of the writer in contemporary African societies, chapter six will appraise, first, the abeyance of the theme of abuse of power in favour of putting in a word for one's culture. It will also explore Achebe's intention to reclaim the African historical past, and his sustained accusation against leaders in indigenous societies of gross abuse of power. Chapter seven will examine Achebe's early disillusionment at the debasement of the political legacy by the black administrators who inherited office from the colonial powers, and the accusation of betrayal of trust that he levels against them. Chapter eight will analyse his arguments for the prevailing circumstances in contemporary new nations of Africa, and his proposal for their resolution.

The conclusion will examine cultural similarities between the Maoris and the Ibos such as extended family ties, attitudes to elders in the community, and the acquisition and use of material resources, in elucidating the basic communal approaches on which many of the assumptions in the chosen literatures are based. It will also draw inferences about the ascertainable lessons of post-colonial tensions as

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9This phrase is most often used to include both the colonised and coloniser, but Achebe's interest is primarily with what the African's themselves are making of their inheritance.
evinced from the responses of the two indigenous societies in the writings of the two authors.
CHAPTER I

Ihimaera and the Maori Perspective

Much has been said of Bill Pearson's essay "The Maori and Literature 1938-65" which was published in 1969, as being the catalyst that galvanized Witi Ihimaera into writing, but it was not the only one. Richard Corballis and Simon Garrett have identified four important factors that contributed to Ihimaera becoming a writer: In addition to Bill Pearson's essay, in which he mentioned that there were still no Maori novelists or dramatists, they noted the encouragement of Jane Cleghorn, who later became his wife, and his personal interest in telling stories. As Pearson states in a later essay: "I have no doubt that Witi Ihimaera would have started writing sooner or later." This assertion is partly because Ihimaera has always been interested in writing:

Ihimaera remembers an early interest in telling and writing stories for his little sisters. One recollection he has is of writing stories across the whole wall of his room at the family farm at Whakaraupou. He would wake up from a dream and look round for a place to write down its details while they were still fresh. Although his mother pinned sheets of paper to the wall, these did not always accommodate what he wanted to write down, and he would stray on to the wallpaper. Written in the dark, these lines were not always straight. Nevertheless, when his room was redecorated, Witi urged his mother to preserve the old wallpaper because all

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his 'good ideas' were written on it.⁴

But most especially, "Ihimaera cites the fact that he is a Maori as an important element in his ambition to become a writer. Writing was to be his way of doing something for the Maori people, he would express how it felt to be Maori to them as well as to the Pakeha."⁵ The importance of this aspect of his 'inspiration' is underscored by the fact that Ihimaera has reiterated this commitment so very often, both in his fiction and essays:

My first priority is to the young Maori, the ones who have suffered most with the erosion of the Maori map, the ones who are Maori by colour but who have no emotional identity as Maori. My second priority is the Pakeha -- he must understand his Maori heritage, must understand that cultural difference is not a bad thing and that, in spite of the difference, he can incorporate the Maori vision of life into his own personality. Thirdly, I write for all New Zealanders to make them aware of the tremendous value of Maori culture and the tragedy for them should they continue to disregard this part of their dual heritage.⁶

Writing was thus, for Ihimaera, a way of redressing the dearth of Maori voices on contemporary issues of relevance to them, a way of bringing the Maori culture "into the world of light," and most importantly, his way of saying to both the Pakeha and the world -- here we are, this is us, Maori.

Critics such as John Beston have noted that Ihimaera "grew up during the time of quickest change in Maori life."⁷ Ihimaera, Beston says, "was old enough either to realize at the time what was happening or to observe the changes and interpret them in later years."⁸ What

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⁵Ibid., p. 10.
Ihimaera observed was a migration of Maoris from their rural and agriculturally based communities to the urban areas, a population inversion in the ratio of rural and urban Maoris, and an attendant cultural discontinuity. At the time Ihimaera was born, about eighty-five percent of Maoris still lived in rural areas and that most were agricultural and seasonal workers. But after the Second World War, they began to migrate to the urban centres. Between 1970 and 1975, according to Beston, startling changes occurred: the proportion of Maoris living in the rural areas and the cities was inversed from a sixty percent rural and forty percent urban ratio in 1970 to thirty percent rural and seventy percent urban ratio in 1975.

Ihimaera thus witnessed the gradual assimilation of the Maori into the dominant Pakeha culture, and that while "the Maori [was becoming] increasingly integrated into the Pakeha way of life, that integration has always been a one-way process." And also relevant is that "the severing of the strong ties binding the Maori to their tribal lands when they moved to the cities has been the major threat to their cultural identity." Hence, Ihimaera's initial bid to use his writing as he has said, to "encourage Maori people to resist further change in the villages" which hold "the spirit of Maoritanga" and "the heart of our culture." It is this response and the fact that, as Ihimaera later said, "the landscape I wrote about had its roots in the earth" that led to the pastoral nature of the early works. He classes this early works

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8Ibid., p. 19.
9Ibid., p. 19.
10Ibid., p. 19.
11Ibid., p. 20.
12John B. Beston, "Interview with Witi Ihimaera," World Literature Written in English 16.1 (Apr. 1977), p. 120.
with what he calls "the pastoral tradition of written Maori literature" because they lack "anger and political thought" and are "tender, unabashedly lyrical evocations of a world that once was."\textsuperscript{14}

When one considers Ihimaera's written works, it becomes obvious that he has a distinctive analysis which voices a contemporary Maori point of view. Ihimaera, on the one hand, has been accused by Maori activists of being an 'uncle Tom', a 'brown Pakeha', and of voicing his masters' (Pakeha) voice instead of a Maori one. His stories, as Bill Pearson states, "have disappointed some Maori activists who think writing by Maoris should advance the cause of Maori rights: 'middle-class Maori', 'Pakeha pet', are some of the names he has been called."\textsuperscript{15} Atareta Poananga says of Ihimaera: "He is a representative of the ... apologists for the white man."\textsuperscript{16} On the other hand, he has also been upbraided by both Pakehas and Maori elders for being vocal. Pakehas have chided him for voicing Maori disenchantments, and threatened his career: "He was told he could be fired too because he had also gone public."\textsuperscript{17} To further complicate matters, Maori elders have themselves been upset that he was exposing the sacredness of Maori ways to profane gaze: "They were reluctant because of their sense of the sacredness of Maori ways. They felt putting such things into print was a sacred matter, a tapu matter."\textsuperscript{18} Maintaining a balance between these three groups has

\textsuperscript{14}ibid., p. 50.
\textsuperscript{15}Bill Pearson, "Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace," Critical Essays on the New Zealand Short Story, p. 167.
\textsuperscript{17}Nicola Legat, "Atareta Poananga and Te Ahi Kaa: What Do Maori Nationalists Want?" Metro 5.57 (Mar. 1986), p. 54.
\textsuperscript{18}Roy Murphy, "A Boy From Gisborne Pens a Success Story in the Big Apple:
entailed a kind of tightrope walking for Ihimaera.

He is a socially conscious writer in the vein defined by David Cook: "The socially conscious writer does not set to work in a vacuum, but urges his society from what it is towards what it might be." It is this social consciousness and his avowed aim, "to make New Zealanders aware of their 'other' heritage," that informs Ihimaera's view. While some of his views, particularly on biculturalism, have come under a barrage of criticisms from Maori 'nationalists' who claim that it is a "Pakeha co-optive strategy . . . assimilation in another guise," Ihimaera firmly believes that it is the only viable option left for the Maori. He says: "If we don't establish a sense of biculturalism in New Zealand now, which is an equality between Maori and European in New Zealand then either New Zealand will be completely monocultural, or else there will be another revolution or retaliation like Te Kooti's and after it there will be another backlash against the Maori people. In both cases, Maoris will lose."  

He uses his fiction as a means of persuasively articulating his concept of biculturalism which, apart from the social, political, and cultural equality which the above definition implies, he extends further to include individual bicultural integration -- the ability of a Pakeha New Zealander to understand and appreciate Maori culture, and Maoris to be at home in both cultures without feeling a stranger in either. Ihimaera's fiction analyses both the consequences of

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20 Witi Ihimaera, "Why I Write," World Literature Written in English, p. 118.
22 Roy Murphy, p. 13.
colonization and the post-colonial tensions from a Maori perspective. His views hinge upon his perception of an ironic sense of the gap between the Maori dreams to make it in the Pakeha world and of parents to give their children a better future among others, and the reality of frustrated hopes, urban alienations, and family disintegrations as revealed by the course of history. In examining the origins and manifestations of these post-colonial tensions, from the advent of the Pakeha, through the settler period, and the period of initial Maori drift to the city, until the present day, his fiction shows a marked shift in attitude. From having a non-activist stance, Ihimaera has become more militant as he probes the historical causes of the present reality of the Maori predicament.

His fiction conveys a message which fervently urges biculturalism; however, in conveying this message, Ihimaera constructs an account of the historical origins of the present Maori predicament from a Maori vantage point that is polemical. Believing that there are always two sides to any story, he is concerned to present a Maori one to correct and counterbalance traditional Pakeha versions that he considers partial and biased.

With the publication of *Pounamu Pounamu* in 1972, Witi Ihimaera began to raise some contemporary issues in Maori consciousness for analysis, the predominant issue being the need to convey the Maori heritage to the rest of the world, from a Maori perspective. Considering that the New Zealand literary landscape has been dominated by Pakeha writers, who write both on Pakeha and Maori issues, Ihimaera, in his novels (*Tangi*, published in 1973, *Whanau*, published in 1974, and *The Matriarch*, published in 1986) in his second book of short stories (*The New Net Goes Fishing*, published in 1977),
and in his most recent novel *The Whale Rider*, published in 1987, has sought to present a Maori insight into some of these contemporary issues. Ihimaera's distinctive analysis of issues such as Maori alienation and land problems aims at enhancing this comprehension of what it means to be Maori in post-colonial New Zealand. As Ihimaera acknowledges, "conveying this heritage through writing has not been very easy." Nevertheless, he believes that his social consciousness has been the main springboard of his artistic creativity. As has been mentioned, Ihimaera started writing to rectify the dearth of Maori writers, spurred on by Bill Pearson's comment mentioned earlier, among others. In rectifying this anomaly, he has been motivated by the desire to make an authentic Maori world-view comprehensible both to young urban Maoris and Pakehas alike.

His other motivation, as also noted, has been his vision of a bicultural New Zealand, and to make the Pakeha realise that there are positive aspects of the cultural differences that exist in New Zealand. This explains why he has been very preoccupied in reconstructing a view of history that is Maori. It is a tribute to his social consciousness that when, in 1975, he felt that in his bid to fulfil this social obligation he had created a stereotype Maori which is at variance with contemporary reality, he made himself stop writing for a time:

I could not, in all conscience, allow people ever to consider my work was the definitive portrayal of the world of the Maori. In my attempts to help, I considered I had created a stereotype. Of warm caring relationships. Of a people, who lived in rural communities. But what was the reality? The reality of 1975 was a hardening of attitudes on both sides. Of inflexibility. Of infighting.  

An offshoot of this social consciousness has been Ihimaera's

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changing attitude. In the earlier fictions, *Pounamu Pounamu*, *Tangi*, and *Whanau*, there is a pronounced restraint, and Ihimaera held firmly to his belief of biculturalism through a non-activist style of writing saying: "My way is with the pen; others of my people use more forceful methods."\(^{25}\) And in spite of very severe criticism from Maori activists such as Atareta Poananga, Ihimaera has maintained that: "Mine is not essentially an activist approach and I have been accused of not being 'political' enough or critical enough of our Pakeha-dominated society or hitting hard enough at the very real social, economic, legal and other problems facing the Maori people today."\(^{26}\)

With the publication of *The New Net Goes Fishing* in 1977, his *New Zealand Listener* editorials "The Maori Landscape" and "The Maori Affairs Syndrome" written in July 30 1977 and August 27 1977 respectively, and publication of *The Matriarch* in 1986, it became obvious that Ihimaera has been progressively becoming more militant. From creating a character like Hepa Walker, who shows indignation at the constant moaning and pointing of accusatory fingers by radical Maori activists, Ihimaera has moved to creating fiery characters such as Api in "Clenched Fist" and "Tent on the Home Ground." Of Hepa Walker, Ihimaera writes:

> Not having experienced overt discrimination, he finds it hard to believe that it does exist. What's more, he is actually embarrassed by it . . . . As far as he is concerned the problems are social ones, not racial at all. Holding this view, Hepa is therefore puzzled by the rise of the young Maori radicals. He does not mind too much when they point out areas where social adjustments are necessary, but he is enraged at the indiscriminate way in which they apportion the blame. You'd think they would know better than to accuse the Pakeha for all their 'problems' or to say that these are due to a White racist system. Always ready to blame somebody for their ills, that's their trouble.\(^{27}\)

\(^{25}\)Witi Ihimaera, "Why I Write," p. 117.

\(^{26}\)Ibid., p. 117.
There is an authorial ambivalence implied in the characterisations of Hepa Walker and Api which will be looked into in a later chapter, but even George, despite his initial rebuttal of Api's accusation against the system as racist, ends up joining Api and his friends when he comes face to face with racism directed at another Maori. Artemis Mahana, the matriarch, exhorts Tamatea Mahana time after time not to trust the Pakeha:

'I have taught you to be a Maori and to fight in a Maori way. But there is another lesson which you must learn, one which my great-uncle taught me when I was a child. He sent me away from this place to another across the sea. I did not understand then, but I did when I returned . . . . I have taught you to fight the Pakeha. But I had forgotten that to fight the Pakeha you must learn to be like him. You must become a Pakeha, think like him, act like him and, when you know you are in his image then turn your knowledge to his destruction.'

These radical characterisations, coupled with Ihimaera's extra-literary activities noted above indicate a changed attitude. It is noteworthy however, that despite this changed attitude, Ihimaera still recognises the society's need for a bicultural New Zealand, and consistently upholds this view.

Although Ihimaera has written a book of essays, Maori, and has co-edited an anthology of Maori writings, Into the World of Light, with D.S. Long, it is through his fiction that he most persuasively articulates his view. His acknowledgement of the tremendous strides which the Maoris have made in the post-colonial era notwithstanding, Ihimaera lays bare the deep gap between the dreams and aspirations of Maoris and the reality of their situation, through the medium of his fiction. In

27 Witi Ihimaera, Whanau, pp. 91-2.
29 See Richard Corballis and Simon Garrett, Introducing Witi Ihimaera, p. 66.
this first section I shall trace Ihimaera's concept of 'bicultural integration' or 'biculturalism', which has already been defined, as a response to the Maori post-colonial tensions and Ihimaera's subsequent struggles to define, develop, and defend the concept through the medium of his writing.  

In looking at the development of this concept of biculturalism I shall structure my argument chronologically according to the different phases in Ihimaera's development as a writer: the 'pastoral phase' which will deal with his earliest works, Pounamu Pounamu and Tangi, and the initial desire to capture the maori heritage and the world that was; the 'transitional phase', which will deal with Whanau, showing the rural decline and his awareness of the problems of urban migration; and the 'political phase', which will deal with The New Net goes Fishing, the Turnbull Lectures, The N.Z. Listener editorials, The Matriarch, The Whale Rider, and after. I shall also deal with Ihimaera's view of the influence of the historical background on the later Maori dream, showing that the dream itself was initially a reaction to Maori disenchantment at the lack of justice in the early relationship between Maori and Pakeha. I shall, in the course of this, analyse Ihimaera's depiction of present Maori disillusionment at the shattering of that dream, showing his change of attitude, and the ambivalence implicit in this attitude. It will also be made apparent that the tensions inherent in some of his characters arise from the fact that these characters are often nearly as inextricably committed to Pakeha values as they are to Maori ones.

In dealing with his views as they relate to the development of his concept of biculturalism I shall be following the chronological order in

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30 Roy Murphy, p. 13.
which his works were written. However, the analyses of the historical background will not follow this chronological order because Ihimaera did not deal with the earlier history until his views had become more radical, so that, in some cases, his later writings actually provide a wider context in which to place the earlier ones. Moreover, in dealing with his total view of the Maori post-colonial situation, it is useful to analyse his views and perspective on the historical background, which can be gleaned most fully from *The Matriarch*, a novel that also gives the clearest indication of his new radical stance. However, *The Matriarch* is, more than anything, a work of fiction. In spite of the polemical nature of the historical perspective already mentioned, it contains an ambivalent attitude that complicates such issues as biculturalism and the demands of Maoritanga.

In a later chapter, I intend to use *The Matriarch* to elucidate Ihimaera's perspective on some of the accepted historical notions as indicated above, as well as to illustrate his changing attitude. However, Ihimaera's ambivalence, which is very pronounced both in his depiction of character and narrative, will be treated along with his changing development of the concept of biculturalism.
CHAPTER II

A Changing Way of Life: Ihimaera's Early Pastoral Writings

I. The Pastoral Phase

Pounamu Pounamu, "the first collection of short stories by a Maori writer to be published,"¹ was intended by Ihimaera to be an "offering from the Maori side" to both young urban Maoris, alienated from their culture, and to Pakehas, who do not know the Maori part of their heritage, in the hope that the pastoral life it depicts and the values they represent "will never be lost."² For a culture that had no tradition of written literature, and which was reluctant to expose its tradition and cultural values to public gaze because it considered its way of life as sacred, and that "putting such things into print was a sacred matter, a tapu matter," Ihimaera's Pounamu Pounamu was a trail-blazer.³ It was Ihimaera's 'feelers' and like the delicate feelers of a snail had to be flicked cautiously, to break the barriers between

¹Witi Ihimaera in his review of J.C. Sturm's collection of stories, The House of the Talking Cat, acknowledges that Sturm "began writing in the 1940s, was published in Te Ao Hou and Numbers in the 1950s, and achieved a success d’estime in the 1960s when C. K. Stead chose one of her stories for New Zealand Short Stories 2. But Ihimaera is the first Maori to have a book of short stories published. "A New/Old Collection," Rev. of The House of the Talking Cat by J.C. Sturm, New Zealand Listener (Mr. 17, 1984), pp. 91-2.
²Witi Ihimaera, "Inside Cover," Pounamu Pounamu (Auckland: Heinemann, 1982).
what was permissible by tradition for 'outsiders' to know and read about and what was taboo. The dilemma was that, concerned as Ihimaera was with the preservation of the culture which he saw disappearing all around him, he had to be conscious of the reticence of tribal elders, and therefore selective as to what aspects of the 'tale of the tribe' could be told without offending tribal sensibilities.

The recurrent concern of Ihimaera's fiction, as Bill Pearson notes, is: "... cultural identity crisis, provoked by the rapid shift of Maoris to the cities and the passing of the old spiritually relaxed, emotionally assured way of life that had prevailed in villages for half a century or more, involving the personal sustenance and obligations provided by the extended family, mutual aid, and a sense of fullness of living."4 Pounamu Pounamu deals with family and village interactions and aroha, and celebrates the Maori culture. Ihimaera says that pounamu symbolised the preciousness of Maori culture and that he used greenstone "in association with the rural part of Pounamu Pounamu" to signify "Maori life in its good old days."5

The rural setting of Pounamu Pounamu and its idyllic nature is in consonance with Ihimaera's aim of showing both urban young Maoris and Pakehas what it is that they are missing. He says that "the spirit of Maoritanga is most alive in rural areas; the villages hold the heart of our culture."6

A dominant underlying theme in the early stories contained in Pounamu Pounamu is "the irrepressible spirit of the Maori community" and the evocation of the communal spirit which sustains

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4 Bill Pearson, "Witi Ihimaera and Patricia Grace," *Critical Essays on New Zealand Short Story*, p.166.
6 Ibid., p. 120.
the culture. Richard Corballis and Simon Garrett have analysed the imagery of games in both "A Game of Cards" and "Beginning of the Tournament" particularly in terms of its function as a means of bringing the people together. To the characters in "A Game of Cards", the game itself is not as important as the bickering: "If there was nobody to play with her, she'd always play patience . . . . She used to try to teach me some of the games, but I wasn't very interested, and I didn't yell and shout at her like the women did. She liked the bickering." For these old women, as for Maoris of their generation, the cultural discontinuity that was developing between them and their descendants meant that any game or gathering afforded them an excuse to try and stem the tide, by endeavouring to sustain the communal spirit of oneness. The narrator in Ihimaera "Beginning of the Tournament" mentions that:

"The game is important, but it's meeting together that's more important. Meeting together and laughing together and having fun together. For a few days each year we meet each other. We might never meet again until the next year. So we make the most of these days . . . . But even having just this little time together is good, Jerry. This is a tournament, yes; but more than that, it's the gathering of the family . . . ."

The essentiality of "the gathering of the family" and Ihimaera's concern for a retention of Maoritanga has to be set against the backdrop of Maori problems of the time. As already noted, Ihimaera began writing at a "time of the whirlwinds", as he terms it. The future for Maori culture seemed bleak, and the spirit of Maoritanga, whanuanga-tanga and manaakitanga were under assault by the

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7Richard Corballis, and Simon Garrett, Introducing Witi Ihimaera, p. 16.
8See Richard Corballis, and Simon Garrett, Introducing Witi Ihimaera, p. 16.
9Witi Ihimaera, "A Game of Cards," Pounamu Pounamu, p. 3.
10Witi Ihimaera, "Beginning of the Tournament," Pounamu Pounamu, pp. 12-3
11Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 45.
12Kinship and family responsibility; and reciprocal assistance to one another.
prevalent new wave of individualism which the Pakeha-dominated society and urban migration were fostering. It then was necessary that the people use any opportunities they had of gathering together to renew and freshen these cultural links and bonds. Ihimaera writes from a premise that before the advent of the Pakeha, the cohesion and intra-communal bonds within Maori tribal and extended families were tight, with everyone within the family acting as their brothers' keepers. He sees this quality as being most evident in the villages which, he says, hold the heart of Maori culture, as the narrator in "Fire on Greenstone" indicates: "When my Nanny Miro died, her husband, my Nanny Tama, stayed alone in their old homestead . . . . The people of the whanau would often visit him, bringing with them their crates of beer, and they would sing songs and talk about the old days with him. Nanny Tama liked that." The elderly's needs, both material and spiritual comforts, are provided for by the young exemplified by Nanny Tama's remarks to his grandson in "Fire on Greenstone" that: "That was Joe Baker . . . . He brought your Nanny some kainga kopro." The elders are in turn expected both by society and the young, to provide guidance and to inculcate a sense of cultural awareness, propriety, and traditional values in the young as shown through the interchanges between Nanny Tama and his grandson: "He nodded his head. Then his eyes twinkled. He motioned me to a cupboard and brought out a wakahuia, a small carved box. - You remember this? he asked."

Through such stories as "The Makutu on Mrs Jones" and "One Summer Morning", Ihimaera explores the concerns, gossips, and interactions that give meaning to rural existence. Ihimaera's balanced

13Witi Ihimaera, "Fire on Greenstone," Pounamu Pounamu, p. 33.
14Ibid., p. 37.
15Ibid., p. 37.
handling of the parries and ripostes between Mrs Jones and Mr Hohepa inclines one to Corballis and Garrett's interpretation that the story "is really also about a game -- a sex-game."\(^{16}\) This reading is heightened, not only by the circumstances of Tawhai's narration of the story,\(^ {17}\) but also by Ihimaera's comment that the other women could see "behind [Mrs Jones'] bluff and cheekiness to the lonely woman inside."\(^ {18}\) If the women could see this, certainly the men also could, given Ihimaera's pointed emphasis on Mrs Jones' attractiveness and her desirability: "She'd still been in her thirties when her husband had died, and the men hadn't even let him be dead a respectable time before they'd started making a play for her . . . . The trouble was that she was such a damned handsome woman and had so much spirit, that men found her irresistible."\(^ {19}\) But more important is the fact that despite the general flirting of the men with her, there exists a spirit of camaraderie even with the women who did not find her a threat to their marriage: "Especially around the pa, she was very popular . . . . Because of her attitude, the women weren't at all jealous of her."\(^ {20}\)

While Hema in "One Summer Morning" agonises about the chores that a thirteen-year-old "recently become man" in a family of girls has to perform, and the fact that he was only 'five foot two and a quarter inches', he however, admits that life on the farm is good: "It is a good life."\(^ {21}\) Considering Hema's very sustained moans about the hardship that rural existence involves, the admission of its good aspect only highlights Ihimaera's awareness of the threats to the rural world.

\(^{16}\)Richard Corballis, and Simon Garrett, _Introducing Witi Ihimaera_, p. 17.

\(^{17}\)See Corballis and Garrett's interpretation on this. _Introducing Witi Ihimaera_, pp. 17-8.

\(^{18}\)Witi Ihimaera, "The Makutu on Mrs Jones," _Pounamu Pounamu_, p. 16.

\(^{19}\)Ibid., p. 16.

\(^{20}\)Ibid., p. 16.

\(^{21}\)Witi Ihimaera, "One Summer Morning," _Pounamu Pounamu_, p. 86.
of the Maori. This is a theme which Ihimaera develops in his later writings but which nonetheless, is equally pronounced in Pounamu Pounamu. Hema agonisingly complains: "A young boy like him, stuck out in the sticks while everybody else in the world must be having a good time in their neat city apartments and going on round-the-world cruises . . . . What a dump."22

In both "The Child" and "The Whale", Ihimaera dramatises with a telling poignancy the fate of the old folks caught in a world that is divorced from anything they were brought up to believe in. Through recreating the world of Heta's Nanny Violet in the child's mind, Ihimaera attempts to "make the past live in the present."23 For, as Heta tells his school friends who think that his Nanny is porangi: "No! I've seen what she looks at . . . . I've seen her world. She's taken me there."24 This theme is emphasised in "The Whale", but what pervades this story and raises the Kaumatua's passing to a symbolism is the portentous sense of a demise of the world of the Maori, of Maori ways. Ihimaera writes that: "In this whanau, this old one is the last of his generation."25 Commenting, Corballis and Garrett say that, "as the story proceeds we see that 'generation' signifies more than just age; the old man is the last living embodiment of the traditional Maori ways -- of the 'happiness and aroha', the thriving whanau, the concern for Maoritanga and the Maori language itself."26 Ihimaera captures the Kaumatua's heart-rending grief as he notes: "The houses [which] are clustered close together, but [which are] closed to one another" symbolising the lack of aroha and the spirit of whanaungatanga for one another.27

22Ibid., p. 72.
26Richard Corballis, and Simon Garrett, Introducing Witi Ihimaera, p. 22.
More visitors had arrived. They had come from the Whangarei, and they were tired and hungry. He saw their faces in the light. But people of his whanau, they were quarrelling with the visitors. They would not open the door to the storeroom. It was locked now. There would be no kai for the visitors. They had come too late. Heart was locking out heart. He was stunned, this old one. Always there was food, always aroha, always open heart. That was the Maori way. Aroha.

. . . . Bring me the axe . . . . The axe in his hand. He lifted it and . . . . -Aue. . . . The first blow upon the locked door.\

Ihimaera even at this stage of his development as a writer was painfully aware of the loss of the old values, as the Kaumatua realises: "Ae, even in his own day, Maoritanga had been dying. But not the spirit, not the joy of aroha. . . . The respect for Maori customs and Maori tapu, that too was disappearing . . . . The Maori of this time is different from the Maori of his own time." It was such "unMaori-like" attitudes as denying visitors traditional welcome and refreshments, coupled with the fact that attempts by elders to inculcate a view and appreciation of Maori cultural values in the new generation often meet with resistance, because the new generation could not reconcile the paradoxes inherent in both cultures of which they were hybrid products, that broke the Kaumatua's heart:

He'd told her that when she was a little girl. Even then the world had been changing. Hera, she'd been one of the few of his mokopuna who'd been interested in the Maori of the past. The rest, they'd felt the pull of the Pakeha world, like fish too eager to grab at a dangling hook. Only in Hera had he seen the spark, the hope that she might retain her Maoritanga. And he had taught her all he knew . . . . Even Hera had changed as she grew older. She too, like many of the other young people, had gone away to the city. And when she had returned for a visit, this old one could see that the Pakeha life

28Ibid., p. 121.
29Ibid., pp. 118-9.
had proved too strong for her. He had tried to lead her back to his world, and she had quarrelled with him. - Don't, Nanny! The world isn't Maori any more. But it's the world I have to live in. You dream too much. Your world is gone. I can't live it for you. Can't you see? 30

It is such apostasies as Hera's, the loss of spirit of oneness and aroha, and particularly the fact that the old man is powerless to change 'the tide' in the face of the new wave of individualism which pervades the period that finally disillusion the Kaumatua as he intones the rhetorical question: "Where lies the blame?" 31

In "The Other Side of the Fence" Ihimaera confronts some of the tensions of a multi-racial urban existence. He also contrasts the differences of general perception inherent in both cultures and explores the ambivalence and dilemma of the new generation of Maoris. Through the analysis of the Heremaia children, Ihimaera looks at some of the fundamental cultural differences in perception:

But these were only incidental flaws, and all the Heremaia children possessed them. Jack Simmons could tolerate them, but there were two traits he would not stand: the curiosity in the Heremaia children which led them to 'borrowing' and then the audacity to deny that they were responsible .... Jack Simmons had since come to understand that borrowing was a common Maori trait: what's yours is mine, what's mine is yours. Maybe it was acceptable practice among Maori people but this city suburb was certainly not a Maori community 32

Ihimaera is implying that Maoris and Pakehas have some adjustments to make if they have to live as next door neighbours: if Maoris want to move to urban areas with dominant Pakeha residency, they have to recognise that a different code of values operates there -- a Pakeha scale of values -- which they would be expected to observe. If

30 Ibid., pp. 116-7.
31 Ibid., p. 121.
32 Witi Ihimaera, "The Other Side of the Fence," Pounamu Pounamu, pp. 44-5.
they, however, want to practice the Maori cultural and traditional values, they have to either do that in Maori communities where they would be understood and appreciated, or make allowances for Pakeha ignorance and misunderstanding. Ihimaera's observation that the Heremaias "stick out like a sore thumb in the neighbourhood" and that Maoris "have not yet learnt the art of living with European people who may not understand their ways nor like them" is his way of acknowledging the earlier comment made by Jack Simmons that "times had changed" and "the sooner they [Maoris] understood that, the better." This difference is also exemplified by the Heremaia children's utter disregard for the fence that separated their property from the Simmonses': "Jack Simmons watches as she runs across the back yard and climbs the fence between the two properties. He erected that fence three years ago. Come to think of it, the Heremaia children had helped him build it .... . Jack Simmons smiles to himself. The fence might as well not exist." By introducing the Maori dictum of "we share and share alike, ay," later down the page, Ihimaera shows that the two families are operating according to different cultural codes and values. While the Simmonses are bent on maintaining their individualism and separateness, the Heremaias are exhibiting the openness of attitude which, Ihimaera believes, characterises Maoris. Jack Simmons admits that "their humour may not always be in the best taste, but it is honest and open. And to hear them laugh is to hear laughter as it should be: punched straight from the chest with no holds barred." He also makes another admission:

There were other characteristics in the Heremaia family which redeemed them totally. The greatest of these was their generosity. When the Simmonses had first settled in their

33 Ibid., pp. 46, 58.
34 Ibid., p. 46.
new house they had had no furniture or cooking utensils because their household effects were still in transit from the landing port of Wellington. Sam and Millie had come to the rescue, and Millie had taken great delight in providing Maori bread along with the cutlery. Later, when the furniture arrived, Sam came around every day to help Jack Simmons move it into the house. . . . And it had been Millie apparently, who'd told Sam to get out the scythe and cut the Simmons's long grass when they were away on holiday one Christmas.  

One dominant issue, though, is Ihimaera's recognition of the desirability for Maoris to be aware of their Maoritanga while at the same time acknowledging the need for them to accommodate Pakeha values. Being aware of their Maoritanga includes a level-headed appraisal of its strengths -- family aroha, whanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and the premium placed on the elders as custodians of traditional and cultural values, as well as its negative aspects: "The quicker Maoris adjusted to European life the better. It was no use their trying to live in their old careless manner. They had to have some regard for their neighbours, accustomed to a more private mode of living. An Englishman's home was his castle; he preferred it that way." The above remarks from Mr Simmons shows Ihimaera's awareness of the erroneous belief that the solution to the Maori's post-colonial tensions lies in assimilation. Ihimaera believes that the key to the future for young Maoris lies in their knowledge and adequate appreciation of their past, and an integration of this past with the present. Achebe puts it most succinctly with an Ibo proverb: "that a man who can't tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body."

36 Ibid., p. 53.
37 Ibid., p. 52.
that, for a Maori to be truly biculturally integrated, he has first to come to terms with his Maoritanga, and then to reconcile it with Pakeha values. Ihimaera's concern with the positive affirmation of Maoritanga is mirrored by Richard Corballis' self-confessed "oversimplified" summary of *Pounamu Pounamu*.\(^{39}\) He notes a "movement from hope and laughter to despair and tears . . . in the volume as a whole."\(^ {40}\) Continuing, Corballis says that:

... at the front are the happier stories in which Maori values are affirmed positively . . . at the back are the darker ones, in which these values are expressed in a negative way, through disillusionment, deprivation and death. In between lies a set of rather ambivalent stories: 'Fire on Greenstone', in which a disastrous fire interrupts a loving affirmation of the spirit of the whanau; 'The Other Side of the Fence', which depicts an uneasy truce between Maori and Pakeha values; and 'In Search of the Emerald City' in which the child-narrator (Matiu) is left poised between town and country.\(^ {41}\)

What is striking in Corballis's summary is the appreciation of Ihimaera's hesitant mooting of the concept of biculturalism in both "The Other Side of the Fence" and "In Search of the Emerald City". Concerned as Ihimaera was with depicting the virtues of Maori rural life in *Pounamu Pounamu*, and with breaking the literary barriers mentioned earlier, he nevertheless realised that the most practical solution to Maori post-colonial tensions is an adjustment of the demands of both Maori and Pakeha values to suit the new social structure.

The world of Ihimaera's "Tangi" encapsulates a dimension of Maori culture -- the emotional aspect. By projection, it also reflects the whole complex issue of traditional values, and Tama's attempt to come

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\(^{40}\)Ibid., pp. 65-6.

\(^{41}\)Ibid., p. 65.
to terms with those values while still retaining his foothold in the Pakeha world. Tama's father, before he died, had passed on the mantle of responsibility to Tama stating: "You must always look after your younger sisters and brothers, Tama. Your mother too, if I should die. Remember, Tama, always. Yes, Daddy. You are the eldest. That is your duty, your obligation. I was taught that as a child. I teach you that now." These words complement Tama's Pakeha heritage, and he intones them as he tries to come to grips with his grief at the loss of his father. Ihimaera has consistently upheld that his intention is to expound the 'Maori landscape of the heart' as a complement to what John Beston describes as "emotional suppression in the white culture of New Zealand." Ihimaera sees Maori people's emotional effusiveness as a celebration of Maori culture. He tells John Beston that: "I looked for the one major physical institution that Maori people retain in the most positive way and found it in the tangi, our ceremonial of mourning . . . virtually the only institution we have for conveying our feelings about being Maori." Ihimaera's short story, "Tangi", deals with themes which are developed in the novel, Tangi. Paul Katene remarks that: "Tangi is not only a personalised vision of the author, it is the personalised experience of a people -- it is the heartbeat of Maoridom, told with great subtlety and sensitivity within a framework that remains peculiarly Maori."

Tangi therefore represents a synthesis of Maoritanga, for Ihimaera, and reflects his belief in Maori traditional values -- of family commitments, collective participation, and the communal nature of

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42 Witi Ihimaera, "Tangi," Pounamu Pounamu, p. 129.
45 Paul Katene, Rev. of Tangi by Witi Ihimaera, Te Ao Hou No. 75 (Mar. 1974), p. 60.
Maori ceremonials such as the tangihanga itself. The traditional event becomes a vehicle, for Ihimaera, of examining his people's cultural values in a changing world. Two aspects of Tangi are worthy of our special attention -- the significance of 'tangi' to the concept of Maoritanga, and Tama's initial attempts at biculturalism.

Richard Corballis and Simon Garrett, in discussing the structure and narrative levels of Tangi, have noted its tripartite structure and that the novel relates three stories: "Firstly, there is a detailed account of Tama's changing reaction to his father's death . . . . Then there is the history of Tama's family and of his own upbringing. Thirdly, there is the legendary history of the Maori." The second and third levels of these stories afford Ihimaera the scope to expatiate on the concept of Maoritanga from different perspectives. Corballis and Garrett assert that through documenting Tama's family life and upbringing, Ihimaera tells "the story of one representative Maori family making its way in a world more and more dominated by the materialistic values of the Pakeha, but nevertheless a world in which an awareness of an older, indigenous culture still exists." By adopting a typically Maori response, "the whole-hearted abandonment" to the 'tangi' as opposed to "the awkward reserve of the Pakeha," Ihimaera highlights and enlivens its traditional basis. Drawn between two worlds, Maori and Pakeha, Tama needed the ceremonial progression of the tangi to reconcile himself to all the values of his Maori culture. His initial response when he heard the news of his father's death on the phone, and despite the restraint which his Pakeha environment demands, was to cry although he cautions himself: "There is no time for tears."

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46 Richard Corballis, and Simon Garrett, Introducing Witi Ihimaera, p. 29.
47 Ibid., p. 32.
48 Ibid., p. 27.
49 Witi Ihimaera, Tangi, p. 19.
But later, in a traditional environment he abandons himself to the grief: "Now that he is gone, they weep. Don't brush your own tears away. There is no shame in weeping. Let them fall, let them fall."\(^{50}\)

By the end of the tangi Tama's Maoritanga has asserted itself through his having to perform the rites and calls associated with the tangi, and with it Tama not only conquers the initial emotional crisis, he "is ready for the responsibilities of manhood" and of the leadership of the tribal family as the eldest son.\(^{51}\)

Ihimaera's use of Maori mythology both in the structure of *Tangi* and to carry the narrative is also an affirmation of Maoritanga. In using Maori myths, Ihimaera claims (as already mentioned) that he is trying "to make the past live in the present."\(^{52}\) But essentially, the mythological background becomes a vehicle through which Tama conquers his grief, as each remembered myth narrative re-lives a memorable and happy occasion with a well-loved father: "And I remember one magical afternoon when we were walking along Wainui Beach... Dad knelt beside me, pointed toward the floats, and whispered a dream to me. -Look, Tama! See the Fleet coming? ... I followed his gaze and the floats indeed became the seven legendary canoes which brought the Maori to Aotearoa."\(^{53}\) Tama can only cope with the overwhelming sense of panic at "the toppling over the abyss of his world", occasioned by his father's death, through these recalls.\(^{54}\)

The narrative technique flits forward and backwards in time, capturing each moment in the immediate past at which his father had played a prominent part in his life, and the calm which a father figure

\(^{50}\)Ibid., p. 136.


\(^{52}\)Ibid., p. 34.

\(^{53}\)Witi Ihimaera, *Tangi*, p. 48.

\(^{54}\)phrase borrowed from Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, (London: Eyre Methuen, 1975), p. 75.
gives to the intimidating world of a child:

Do you remember, e pa, that time when you took me into town one crowded night so many years ago? I was only a little boy then, about five, I suppose. You wait here, you said. . . . I waited and waited, e pa. I was frightened. All those people, they jostled and pushed against me. They couldn't see me; I was so small. I felt as if I was in a land full of giants. In the end I cried, Dad. I couldn't help it. . . . and decided I would find you.\textsuperscript{55}

By narrating the calm which attended his world, at the resolution of each of such incidents and fears with the appearance of his father, and linking his parents with the Maori creation myth Tama attempts to stabilise himself, and contain his grief: 'His calm was his greatest possession. . . . My father was the Sky. He held dominion over night and day. He was both sun and moon, keeping constant watch over his children . . . . Now the Sky has fallen.'\textsuperscript{56} Corballis and Garrett both see Ihimaera's use of "the myth of the discovery of New Zealand" as being "intimately associated with the idea of being Maori . . . . Rongo Mahana repeats their names to his son . . . . They are the Maori, Tama. \textit{As long as you remember them you are a Maori.}"\textsuperscript{57} They also see Ihimaera as functioning as "the traditional artist whose task is to resuscitate the myths that bind his culture together" and this task is most effectively summarised in their comment that:

The story of Tama's personal discovery of his place in Maori society becomes a story of the reintegration of all the elements that constitute that society. The individual is incorporated into the family, the family into the tribal unit. This in turn is based upon, and given status by, the communal ownership and nurturing of the tribal land; and finally the whole social system and its attendant values are given meaning within the framework of a specific system of myths. These are some

\textsuperscript{55}Witi Ihimaera, \textit{Tangi}, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{56}ibid., p. 52.
\textsuperscript{57}Richard Corballis, and Simon Garrett, \textit{Introducing Witi Ihimaera}, p. 34 (my italics).
of the elements that constitute the idea of Maoritanga.\textsuperscript{58} Tama's initial attempts to reconcile the two cultural values, Maori and Pakeha, of which he is a product is particularly significant to Ihimaera's concept of biculturalism. Having partly mastered his grief at the passing away of his father, Tama embarks on his journey to confront his other heritage, his Pakeha side. But he bears the traditional Maori values on this journey. The tangi, its rites and rituals, and the remembrances during this harrowing period, of his father's teachings and efforts to inculcate the traditional values in him, all, arm Tama with enough knowledge for this future. Tama assures his dead father: "E pa, I remember."\textsuperscript{59} But he is also aware that he cannot put the clock back, and must stride forward into a future that is dominated by Pakeha values: "The clock ticks, the clock ticks. Here I am on the railway platform, waiting for a train. I cannot stop the clock. You have left me, father."\textsuperscript{60}

While Ihimaera moots and explores the concept of biculturalism, and shows the functioning of Maoritanga through the tangi, he also notes the problems associated with a multi-racial society. He sees the problems of racial discrimination, isolation, ignorance of the complexities and 'otherness' of the other culture, and the handicap of competing with more adequately groomed Pakeha children at school, as something that all Maori children in similar circumstance have to take in their stride as part of the general experience of growing up: "They were a part of growing up."\textsuperscript{61} Tama's puzzlement at the spite in the voice of the little girl as she calls him: "- Maori boy! Maori boy!" and the racially discriminating mother of his friend who refuses to allow

\textsuperscript{58}ibid., pp. 34-5.
\textsuperscript{59}Witi Ihimaera, \textit{Tangi}, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{60}ibid., p. 13.
\textsuperscript{61}ibid., p. 77.
him at her son's birthday party because he is Maori, are all part of a growing-up experience which, Ihimaera believes, Maori children should not allow to destroy either their aspirations or future:

I made friends with a boy who'd come from England and he asked me to come to his tenth birthday. Then his mother rang up and said he was sick so I couldn't come. I'd already bought him a present. - You take it round to his place, Mum said. You take some books for him too. So I went to see him. I knocked on the door. His mother answered it. Behind her, I could see my friend and other kids, dressed in party hats and playing. He saw me and was embarrassed.

. . . . -Do you want to come in? his mother asked me hesitantly.
- No thank you, I answered, trying to be brave. I gave my friend his present. . . . All this time, I could hear those other children laughing. . . . Then I went away, and I couldn't help it, the tears just came. I couldn't understand. 62

Ihimaera also believes that it is experiences such as this that encourage Maori children to drop out from school with the false notion that by working and being independent they are automatically shielded from such further humiliations. Mere chose to drop down from the top form to a lower class because, as she says: "There's no other Maoris in that class. I didn't want to stay." 63 Tama mentions that "school became more lonely as I progressed upwards from one form to the next. My Maori mates dropped out earlier and went out working." 64 He claims that "I stayed on because that was what Dad wanted." 65 But as he grew older, and tenaciously stayed on he realised that: "By then, it seemed as if the world had indeed changed. Or perhaps it's only as a child or young boy that you are hurt. I was never hurt again because I took a firm step forward into the Pakeha world." 66

62 ibid., p. 77.
63 ibid., p. 78.
64 ibid., p. 78.
65 ibid., p. 78.
66 ibid., p. 78.
To Ihimaera, achieving this feat is difficult and, as in Tama's case, requires both firmness, tenacity of purpose, and some parental encouragement, if necessary: "With some amusement, I recall it was difficult at first." Yet, no matter how difficult bestriding both world is, Ihimaera's message seems to be that "the world [that Maori children are] growing up in [is] a Pakeha one" and they have to make the effort to fit into that world and also retain their Maoritanga. Tama recollects that because he was growing up in a dominant Pakeha world, "it was difficult to retain my Maoritanga . . . . Sometimes, I even forgot my Maoritanga and its values." In Ihimaera's views, the actions of some Maori parents and elders inadvertently encouraged this loss. Tama shows this as he questions why his uncle and his wife should prefer to sleep "on a mattress on the floor . . . . in the sitting room" and allow him, a younger person, to sleep on their double bed contrary to Maori custom.

Ihimaera concedes that bestriding both worlds could equally be difficult because there is always a tendency to conveniently forget the Maori part of one's heritage, especially by the younger generation who view its obligatory demands as cumbersome: "It was more difficult to live in two worlds as I grew older. The Maori part was so easy to forget. Not being Maori, but what being Maori meant; the customs, the traditions, Maori aroha." Tama needed constant reminders: "After a while I discovered that all I needed to do was to remember Dad and

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67 Ibid., p. 78.
68 Ibid., p. 78.
69 Ibid., p. 78.
70 Ibid., p. 78.
71 Ibid., p. 79.
72 Ibid., p. 79.
my whanau, my big Maori family, and my world would right itself." Ihimaera has often stated his belief that even though much of what constitutes Maoritanga is being eroded by the demands of an individualistic social structure, that a vital component -- "Maori aroha, the love we hold for one another" -- still survives and will never die. Tama's remark that "even when I was a boy... [Maoritanga] was dying" echoes the words of the Kaumatua in "The Whale", but Tama pledges to teach his younger brother and sister, "Hone and Marama of Maori aroha, the love we hold for one another, so that they will never be alone if some day they leave Waituhi and go to the city. I will teach them open heart and open life... and the humour to laugh if the values of the Pakeha are too strong for them." So in Tangi, through Tama, Ihimaera begins a sustained advocacy for biculturalism which is carried over into his second novel, Whanau.

II. Transitional Phase

Whanau marks a new phase in Ihimaera's writing: of intensified awareness and confrontation with the reality of the disintegrating effects of urban migration on Maori consciousness. As Tama remarks in Tangi, "going to Wellington or any big city is the dream of most young people who live in a small country settlement far from anywhere." What started as a gentle probe of the disenchantment of the younger generation with rural living and the attraction that urban

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73 Ibid., p. 79.
74 He uses similar words "Ae, even in his own day, Maoritanga had been dying" and it's for the similar reason given by Tama for wanting to teach Maori traditional values to his younger brother and sister, that the Kaumatua teaches Hera. "The Whale," Pounamu Pounamu, pp. 117-9.
75 Witi Ihimaera, Tangi, pp. 79-80.
76 Ibid., p. 158.
centres hold for them in *Pounamu Pounamu* and *Tangi*, is given a poignancy through the evocation of an almost swan-song lament in *Whanau* for the world that was. While in *Pounamu Pounamu* and *Tangi*, Ihimaera celebrates the affinity of the main characters with the land, Waituhi, and Maoritanga, his stance in *Whanau* is more explicitly didactic. Tama and his parents saw coming back to Waituhi as a kind of 'home coming': "All our lives our family had lived so much a gypsy life that we held fast to Waituhi. For us, Waituhi wasn't just a few houses strung along a country road; it was our home and we had finally come home to stay. Unlike my friends who dreamed of leaving, I didn't care that the work was hard . . . . It didn't matter to me for Waituhi was my home."  

Despite the monotony of rural existence which was driving other young men away, Tama avows his contentment: "for me, there was always a sense of contentment in feeling a rhythm beneath my feet. The heartbeat of the land. That season would follow season and that the rhythm would never alter. Knowing this brought me peace like no other I had known."  

Yet, in spite of his professed love of the land and his family, Tama left Waituhi for Wellington, because like most young men of his generation he felt "a certain restlessness" -- the pull of the city was too strong for him to resist. As he claims: "The bright lights of Wellington attracted me."  

In *Whanau* Ihimaera sees this migration as only one of the many threats to both the spirit of Maoritanga and his concept of biculturalism.

In *Pounamu Pounamu*, *Tangi*, and *Whanau* Waituhi is presented as a sanctuary from which some of the characters could

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77 Ibid., p. 158.
78 Ibid., p. 158.
79 Ibid., p. 159.
escape the vicissitudes of life, their individual failures to make it in the more competitive Pakeha world, and social changes exemplified by the materialism and individualism that many felt were the hallmarks of the Pakeha-dominated society. Characters such as Mattie Jones, Sam Walker, and Jack Ropiho, although they cling to this hope that Waituhi might serve as a sanctuary, also realise that it has become a kind of prison from which they cannot hope to escape because they have already failed in the Pakeha world.

By evaluating what he sees as the positive aspects of village existence in relation to the reactions of the younger generation, Ihimaera shows the decline of the attraction of the old communal and traditional ways of life for the younger generation of Maoris as constituting a real threat to the existence of the whanau and the sustenance of the spirit of Maoritanga. Brian Murton illustrates this decline of the attraction of the old ways for young Maoris in his analysis of Waituhi. He notes the ambivalence in people's attachment to places and comments that it "is not entirely a pleasurable experience. The place to which they are most committed may be the very centres of their lives, but they may also be oppressive and imprisoning. There is a sheer drudgery of place, a sense of being tied inexorably to the place, of being bound by the established scenes and symbols and routines." But Murton also believes that this "drudgery is a part of profound commitment to a place, and any commitment must involve an acceptance of the restrictions that that place imposes. Our experience of place, especially of home, is a dialectical one -- balancing a need to stay with a desire to escape." This ambivalence of his characters concerning Waituhi occurs in much of Ihimaera's writing. As

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81 Ibid., p. 31.
already indicated, this is expressed succinctly by Tama Mahana in 
*Tangi*, who left Waituhi "for Wellington after he saw his friends going:
he was content yet discontent, happy yet unhappy."\(^{82}\)

Corballis notes that *Whanau* "is a celebration of the spirit of 
whanau (family)."\(^{83}\) But it is a celebration tinged with regret at the
change that is taking place in Maori communities and villages, the 
disillusionment of more and more Maori children with rural way of
life, and the intensified urban drift occasioned by landlessness and
attraction of the bright lights of the city.

The opening chapters of *Whanau* introduce both the aroha and
camaraderie which only the closeness of a village atmosphere can
foster in people as diverse as Ihimaera assembles in Charlie Whatu's 
truck; and also the disillusionment of some of the villagers with rural
existence: "People of the village of Waituhi huddle together on the tray.
They are past caring about their neat clothes, the clothes they put on for
special occasions. . . . Hine leans back against the side of the tray. She
is blissfully tired. For one day she has been happy, one solitary day
among all those stretching backward and in front of her. But not to
worry about the grey days ahead."\(^{84}\) In spite of his introductory
remark depicting Waituhi as "a back-water place," the warmth
Ihimaera feels for the village is apparent. He sees the family, both the
nuclear and extended, as the singular most important unit in the
propagation of a culture as orally based as Maori culture is. Ihimaera,
however, also sees the family as the first casualty of both the new wave
of individualism which Maori children are embracing, and the
depression of the 'stress-absorbing' system of *manaakitanga* in the
urban environment. Ihimaera uses family, particularly the Maori

\(^{82}\)Ibid., p. 31.

\(^{83}\)Richard Corballis, "Witi Ihimaera: Literary Diplomacy," p. 70.

\(^{84}\)Witi Ihimaera, *Whanau*, pp. 2-3.
word 'whanau', symbolically to represent Maoridom in microcosm. Nelson Wattie states that the full meaning of the word 'whanau' "can scarcely be conveyed in English, except perhaps by writing the novel [Whanau] which Ihimaera has done", and that Whanau "from one point of view . . . is the definition of a word."85

Ihimaera thus equates the disintegration of many Maori families which he sees taking place in the face of the harsh realities of an urban environment with what was happening to a larger Maoridom. The family disintegrations have far-reaching consequences for Ihimaera's concept of biculturalism, and a brief analysis of the traditional Maori family structure will show how its collapse contributes to the post-colonial tensions depicted in Ihimaera's fiction.

The Maori notion of family differs radically from the Pakeha concept in many ways. Although the extended family system is practised by both Maoris and Pakehas in differing guises, the Pakeha society's emphasis on individualism makes the nuclear family the focus. Conversely, the Maori family is all-encompassing. The clan in a traditional society is the first level of the family. The clan in this context will be defined as an 'extended family unit', who in all probability bear the same surname by virtue of descent (women often change their surnames when they marry, but they and their children retain their kinship and affiliation to the maternal clan by descent). This clan is apart from what Ihimaera calls a sub tribe: "the effective unit was the sub tribe with strong local ties, very definite boundaries and membership demarcated by a combination of descent from a local ancestor and residence . . . . the sub tribe were further divided into extended family units or kinship groups, closely related by blood and

centred on a village gathering place.\textsuperscript{86}

Essentially the extended family unit would have one person as the head of 'the family'. Traditionally this position is hereditary and is occupied by the eldest son of the eldest son \textit{ad infinitum}. Rongo before he died tells Tama in \textit{Tangi}: "You just remember, Tama. You're the eldest. Look after your mother and the family. Okay?"\textsuperscript{87} Tamatea in \textit{The Matriarch} echoes this, saying: "I was the eldest son of an eldest son, and the mantle of responsibility for the tribal family was mine whether I wanted it or not."\textsuperscript{88} Ihimaera writes that although "the active leadership of [the family] was generally a male prerogative", where the eldest son at any point does not have a son, at his death, leadership of the family could still be retained by the eldest daughter, "sometimes, however, it happened that the first-born of the senior rangatira line was not a male but rather a woman. She was then made a priestess and accorded the greatest respect as a wahine ariki."\textsuperscript{89} The essentiality of this headship is to ensure that the adage "an elder does not watch a nanny goat parturiate on tether" holds true.\textsuperscript{90} This implies that elders have a duty to perpetuate the culture through teaching the younger generation. As Ihimaera says: "The eldest always look after the younger ones of the family. Not only his own family, but all the family."\textsuperscript{91}

The traditional family, as already noted, is structured on the basis of loyalty to the family and the tribe rather than personal individuality. Ihimaera mentions the importance of this aspect of Maori culture in his book of essays, \textit{Maori}: "... the tribal identity rather than individual

\begin{footnotes}
\item Witi Ihimaera, \textit{Tangi}, p. 22.  
\item Witi Ihimaera, \textit{The Matriarch}, p. 53.  
\item Ibid., pp. 207-8.  
\item \textit{Ibo} adage.  
\item Witi Ihimaera, \textit{Whanau}, p. 112.  
\end{footnotes}
identity is expressed. It is an emotional identity based on the concept of aroha or love and sympathy for one another as members of a family, and whanaungatanga which stresses the obligatory links of duty and aid for each other."92 This concept is reflected by David Cook who notes that:

In traditional society, the individual is seen first and foremost as part of a corporate whole, and his existence as part of the social pattern overwhelms any private life he might lead within the confines of his own consciousness. Such a life is relatively public: it is not easy to keep secrets nor is it thought desirable to do so. In such a situation, social conventions exert great authority. The communal good is all-important and any personal denial of group commitment appears to weaken the whole and is deplored. Contribution to the life and welfare of the community is the greatest good, and hence individualism is seen as negative.93

This type of family structure does not only emphasise these obligations, but the existence and continued sustenance of the whanau depends on the contributions of all individuals in the family to it. In turn the individual is dependent on the family for his economic and social well-being, since farming, fishing, and hunting are communal activities as well as affairs like marriages and deaths, including burial ceremonies. During farming periods, for example, the whole family (comprising all the nuclear families) would gather, plough the family lands and cultivate them:

Until last year, the Mahana clan would get together at a family meeting, dub in some money and buy seed to plant in the family paddocks. Then they would fix a time for the planting, calculating it the old way by the shape of the moon and the position of the stars in the night sky. Once that was done, they would all come together at the planting. It used to be a good time. A family occasion. A gathering of the Mahana clan. Kids and all would come to follow the tractor

92 Witi Ihimaera, *Maori*, p. 11.
and plant the seeds in the furrows. And although it was hard work it didn't seem to take long because everybody was too busy chucking off at each other to think of how hard the work was.94

When the farm crops are harvested, each nuclear family gets an equitable share corresponding to its need and size: "But once the crop was ready, the Mahana clan would come together again. They would gather the harvest and there would be fulfillment of family reaping a shared labour."95 Ihimaera thus sees these interdependencies as forces of cohesion, binding the members of the whanau firmly together. He also believes that the growing emphasis on individuality, in the post-colonial era, has eroded these cohesive forces, creating tensions. Whereas in the pre-European era, it was a community spirit that was applauded, the post-Pakeha social structure emphasised the security inherent in self-dependency:

There is security in having and keeping one job, in having permanent employment. And living in the cities is nothing but an attractive trap. It binds you to itself with contracts: with high mortgages or steep rents, with hire purchase payments and threats of repossession. And it asks more of you: more of your money and more and more for things you did not really want. A venus flytrap. And once you're caught, you can never escape. You must keep working and keep working to keep up the next payment. You can't afford to take a week or two off for something as ridiculous as the family planting.96

Even more than the economic function of the family structure, are the social and cultural functions. The society, as Ihimaera mentions, regulates the behaviour of its members and has checks and balances that ensure their adherence to societal norms, and also curb excesses. This is particularly effective in traditional rural areas where everyone

94Witi Ihimaera, Whanau, p. 50.
95Ibid., p. 51.
96Ibid., p. 53.
knows everyone else. These mechanisms of censure are most effective because the young are socialised from birth to be conscious of their cultural and social obligations and to perform those duties that enhance the common good of the community. One of the mechanisms which the society utilizes is the closeness of individuals in a family. Ihimaera sees the family bond as very important in Maori relationships and, even without the almost suffocating love that Tama exhibits for his father in Tangi as an example, the effects, or lack of it, of this bond pervades Ihimaera's writing.

In Whanau, despite the kaleidoscope of characters, the children playing outside the houses are recognised and acknowledged by each passing individual and the whanau. What is important, in Ihimaera's view, is that through these acknowledgements we become aware that the society is ever watching after these children. Nothing they do -- their plays, pranks, fights -- passes unnoticed. For example, Pene and his Nanny Paora notice the kite that the children are flying making Pene recall the story of Tupurupuru, while Andrew Whatu, cleaning Rongopai with his father, also notices the same kite:97 "He looks up and sees the painted eaves of Rongopai holding up the sky. High above it a kite is dancing in the wayward current."98 And Miro Mananui yells at the children to "take [their] fullas football somewhere else. . . . watches with eagle eyes to make sure those kids shut the gate after them."99 The closeness of members of both the nuclear family and the extended family coupled with the spirit of manaakitanga makes anyone's business everyone's business. This ensures the conformity of the individual with the traditional norms and fosters cultural

97See Richard Corballis and Simon Garrett's analysis of Ihimaera's use of the kite as a linking device in Introducing Witi Ihimaera, p. 39.
98Witi Ihimaera, Whanau, p. 124.
99Ibid., p. 102.
continuity, although to the younger generation, this 'noseyness' is restrictive and claustrophobic. Hence away from these cultural restrictions, the individual experiences a kind of liberation which together with the wave of individualism, make some of these children reckless. To Ihimaera, there is a contrast between the children raised in traditional rural Maori hearths and their counterparts in urban environments. While in the rural environment it is the duty of parents and the society -- represented by the extended family -- to mould the characters of the young, in an urban environment this is left to parents and to some extent, teachers alone.

But these affirmations of communal values and the inherent advantages of rural existence are not shared by many of the younger generation. Yet Ihimaera's effusive feelings for Waituhi is such that it gives rise to the authorial intrusion noted by Michael King, which is most obvious when Ihimaera describes the aroha and communal spirit that suffuses the village. This is exemplified by the way he intones the kind of reception a stranger to Waituhi would receive from the villagers, and his comments of even how the stranger would feel about the People: "He may ask you: Have you relations in the village? And if you've none, he'll say: Well, where will you stay? . . . . Then he'll probably tell you you'd better stay at his place for the night and catch the bus back to the city with him in the morning . . . . You'll remember them with affection."

Excluding the whanau itself, which is the central character in Whanau, Ihimaera creates four distinct types of characters and uses their feelings and affinity for the whanau and Waituhi as reference points in assessing the degree of their biculturalism. This barometric

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100 See Michael King, Rev. of Whanau, New Zealand Bookworld No. 14 (Feb. 1975), pp. 24-5.

101 Witi Ihimaera, Whanau, pp. 7-9.
pointer is of utmost importance to Ihimaera's concept of biculturalism because Waituhi is representative of a wider Maoridom, and as already mentioned, Ihimaera sees a truly bicultural character as anyone who could effectively integrate his or her dual -- Maori and Pakeha--heritages without feeling a stranger to either world.

Characters such as Sam Walker, Mattie Jones, and Jack Ropiho constitute the first group who fit neither into the Maori world, because they cannot reconcile themselves to its rigid demands and ethics, but are willing to benefit from that society's open-handedness, nor into the Pakeha world, having already failed in that system. Sam Walker had gone to jail for bashing a taxi driver over the head; Mattie Jones has an illegitimate child and is still to recover from the trauma of being jilted by George Karepa; Jack Ropiho could not hold down a job out of laziness and drunkenness, and eventually was driven back to Waituhi by near-starvation.\textsuperscript{102} Ihimaera does not believe that there is much to expect from these characters and sums them up as no-hopers: "Good old Sam, who knew exactly what he was, a no-hoper, and that nothing he could do would ever change that. . . . Good old Sam with good old Mattie. Two of a kind, the bad kind. Both of them back here where they know they belong. Back here, \textit{because there is nowhere else to go.}"\textsuperscript{103}

Charlie Whatu, his wife, Rongo Mahana, Miro Mananui, and Nanny Paora belong to the group who fit only into the Maori world because that is where they feel most at home. They are so steeped in the Maori way of life that they feel alienated in a Pakeha world. This is the group which, as Ihimaera says, "will never leave because they and the village are inseparable. They have been too steeped in family life . . . .They give life to the village; the village gives life to them. Away from it they will wither."\textsuperscript{104} Hana Walker and Sonny Whatu are

\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., pp. 57, 60-1, 112-4.
\textsuperscript{103}Ibid., p. 57 (my italics).
typical examples of the third group -- of the restless young generation who are disillusioned with rural existence and the old ways of life. For them, Waituhi is a "dump, a hick town, and a nothing place", they believe that there is nothing in such a place for them.\textsuperscript{105} Ihimaera says that for this group, "getting away from the village is like a fever."\textsuperscript{106}

Ihimaera illustrates his initial concept of biculturalism through such characters as Hepa Walker, Pene Jackson, and Andrew Whatu. These are the ones who fit into both worlds without being strangers in either. Using Hepa Walker to define his concept, Ihimaera says:

[Hepa Walker], like his Pakeha friends, believed that the future for New Zealand lay in the integration of the two races Maori and Pakeha. One particular incident had convinced him of this. He had been invited to a lecture given by a Wellington economist at which that learned gentleman had illustrated with graphs, statistics and demographic projections that more movement of Maoris from the lower classes into the middle class bracket was necessary to promote the quicker integration of the Maori into the European way of life. At first, sitting there, Hepa had felt both rage and embarrassment. But as the lecture had continued, he had found himself agreeing with the economist.\textsuperscript{107}

This economic theory, of an upward movement of Maoris in the social and economic ladder promoting a faster rate of bicultural integration, is one with which Ihimaera agrees. His reservation, it must be said, is not with the concept, but with characters such as Hepa Walker who see the theory as having a one-dimensional application -- that of enhancing their prestige. Ihimaera's initial definition of biculturalism included characters such as Hepa Walker, for at this stage Ihimaera's main concern was in fostering a desire to integrate

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{104}ibid., pp. 17-8.
\item \textsuperscript{105}ibid., p. 14.
\item \textsuperscript{106}ibid., p. 14.
\item \textsuperscript{107}ibid., pp. 35-6.
\end{itemize}
the positive aspects of both Maori and Pakeha cultures and a realisation that it behoves all New Zealanders to create an environment in which both races could live together in peace. His subsequent portrayal of Hepa Walker as having a minimal understanding of what really constitutes biculturalism points to Ihimaera's awareness of the shortcomings of the concept (this will be treated later in this section).

Ihimaera, like Hepa Walker and other Maori elders, believes that educational achievement is a key factor in this upward movement, and consequently on biculturalism. Ihimaera demonstrates this belief not only through the pronouncements of characters such as Hepa Walker and Huia Mahana in Whanau, Mrs Heremaia in "Catching Up", and Teria Mahana in The Matriarch; he is himself a living example and symbol of this:

When you thought about it, more middle-class Maoris would solve many problems, many inconsistencies in the present situation. The crime rate would go down, wouldn't it? The social differences would be minimised, wouldn't they? The intangible and never-to-be admitted discrimination between Maori and Pakeha would disappear, surely? All this would happen, yes, when the Maori rose from lower to middle-class stature.\textsuperscript{108}

Despite the irony implied by such rhetorical question as: "The intangible and never-to-be admitted discrimination between Maori and Pakeha would disappear, surely?", Ihimaera believes that this upward mobility has the potential for good, and sees characters such as Pene and Andrew Whatu as embodying this hope.

III. The Political Phase

The New Net Goes Fishing symbolises the beginning of Ihimaera's political development as a writer and spokesperson on

\textsuperscript{108}ibid., p. 36.
contemporary issues of relevance to Maoris. Having realised the disintegrating effects of urban migration and the discontent of the younger generations with rural existence, Ihimaera in *The New Net Goes Fishing*, analyses the break-up of the family unit and the loss of the community spirit and solidarity on which the culture had hitherto depended and been sustained. Themes that he had explored in such short stories as "In search of the Emerald City" and "The Whale", among others in *Pounamu Pounamu*, and in *Tangi* and *Whanau*, are once more highlighted. But in *The New Net Goes Fishing*, these themes are given an urgency which is illustrative of their contemporary importance.

Considering, as Ihimaera notes, that "oral literature, up until the 1960s, was the means of cultural transmission and preservation" and that the urban centres could not adequately propagate the traditional Maori cultural values, the inability of some Maori parents to perform this function of perpetuating the culture through teaching their children these cultural values resulted in the development of what Ihimaera calls a cultural faultline. 109 Ihimaera believes that, unfortunately, some of these parents were themselves in dire need of guidance to adapt to the Pakeha ways, and that they genuinely felt that Maori culture would be an impediment rather than an asset to their children and so refused to impart what they themselves knew of Maori culture to their children. Coupled with the new wave of individualism which saw children doing whatever they felt like doing, with many rootlessly and aimlessly drifting without guidance, the elders could not impart the culture to them even if the elders wanted to, because the younger generation were not always there to listen, in the first place: "How can the old generation teach the new generation if they are not

there to listen? Ah yes, this is how the discontinuity developed between the old and the young. It was a great faultline, right across the population."\(^{110}\)

Ihimaera's *The New Net Goes Fishing* presents an urban reality that is at variance with what obtains in rural Maori villages. He shows, as Alistair Fox acknowledges, that "the land where dreams may come true turns out in fact, for some, to be the infernal city . . . . Through the eyes of two young children, we see how the old family unity and aroha can disintegrate under the pressures of urban society."\(^{111}\) The dream to make it in the Pakeha world like "the myth of the search for emerald city" is shattered by the realisation that "it is not a generous world in the city."\(^{112}\) And also that "the pavement of the emerald city could be hard on the soles of the feet."\(^{113}\) As these pressures mount, the traditional bonds of "aroha (love and sympathy for one another), Whanaungatanga (kinship and family responsibility), and manaakitanga (reciprocal assistance to one another)," all come under severe strain and as in the case of "Big Brother, Little Sister," shatter.\(^{114}\) Parents become individualistic, placing their own happiness or the pursuit of this happiness above their responsibility both to their family and the larger society. Thus the family bond and aroha which Ihimaera sees as sustaining the whanau and the culture also shatter.

Ihimaera gives varied reasons for the break-up of the families. One is the migration to urban areas occasioned by the lack of permanent jobs in the rural areas: "No more jobs back home, he told

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\(^{111}\)Alistair Fox, "In Search of the Emerald City: the Short Stories of Witi Ihimaera," *Pilgrim* (New Series) 8 (Summer 1980), p. 91.

\(^{112}\)John B. Beston, "An Interview with Witi Ihimaera," p. 122.

\(^{113}\)Witi Ihimaera, "Why I Write," p. 118.

uncle. Plenty of the seasonal work, yes, but me and Hine had enough of that. We had enough of shearing, the fruit-picking and the going down south to shear some more. No, plenty of work in Wellington. Plenty of factories.\textsuperscript{115} Ihimaera sees the consequences of these migrations as, first, the splintering of the whanau as families such as Matiu's leave, and the loss of both the communal spirit and the solidarity which had been the corner stone of the villages. In "Gathering of the Whakapapa" Ihimaera says that it is the love that Nanny Tama has for the village family that drove him on to reconstruct the Whakapapa in spite of his failing health and old age: "slowly and gradually he had gathered the whakapapa. Painstakingly, he'd assembled it and checked it and added to it. His strength went into the whakapapa. His aroha for us drove him relentlessly to the task."\textsuperscript{116}

Ihimaera shows that this aroha is reciprocated by the village, and showing the communal spirit that exists in the whanau, he writes: "The village people should have been asleep but no, there they were, waiting for us. The tears flowed down Nanny Tama's face. - Huh? he asked Dad. What's wrong with you fullas! Loving hands reached out to him as we carried him through the assembly. Everywhere, voices welcomed him."\textsuperscript{117} Arvidson commenting on the naturalness of the traditional bonds notes that in "Gathering of the Whakapapa", "we see the subtle strength of aroha as an ethical principle . . . . it is the only story in \textit{The New Net Goes Fishing} which asserts unhesitatingly and without qualification both the fundamental sufficiency of Maoritanga and its ability to survive without deliberate conscious cultivation."\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{115}Witi Ihimaera, "Yellow Brick Road," \textit{The New Net Goes Fishing}, pp. 5-6.


\textsuperscript{117}ibid., p. 36.

\textsuperscript{118}K. O. Arvidson, Rev. of \textit{The New Net Goes Fishing}, by Witi Ihimaera, \textit{New Zealand Bookworld} No. 42 (Nov. 1977), p. 20.
Whanau, Ihimaera mentions that in earlier times it was the communal spirit that sustained even large tournament huis:

In the old days, the whole whanau would help out with the tournament. You didn't really need money to feed visiting people. Somebody donated a pig, somebody else a sheep . . . . The men took time off to put up the marquees. The women baked the bread . . . . People spared what they can, both time and money. It may not be much, but at least it's something.119

But he sees the modern individualistic social structure as destroying this community spirit: "People couldn't come for a week in the spring. If they came, they lost their jobs. . . . Can't blame them really. And can't blame people when they don't pitch in together to help out at the tournaments. Money is hard to come by these days. Time is hard to give, too. It's not that people around here are lazy; they're just too busy to help I suppose."120

The other reason, in Ihimaera's view is the dream to make it in the Pakeha world, and the additional desire of parents to give their children a better life than they had, which most felt could best be achieved in urban areas. Matiu remarks in "Yellow Brick Road" that:

'We'll make lots of money and be rich as anything because Wellington is where the money is. And you have to go where the money is, ay Dad. No use staying in Waituhi and being poor all the time, ay . . . . I want us to have a good life, a new start, Dad tried to explain. 'A new start for my kids. Me and Hine, we've always had nothing. But my kids? They're going to grow up with everything. I'll fight for it, because they must have it.'121

The conceptualisation of these dreams and their many facets is essential for an appreciation of the subsequent 'reality-generated' tensions. These dreams are arbitrarily divided into three categories for ease of comprehension. The first category, as mentioned above, was

119 Witi Ihimaera, Whanau, p. 85.
120 Ibid., p. 85.
121 Witi Ihimaera, "Yellow Brick Road," The New Net Goes Fishing, pp. 3-6.
people's dreams to make good in the Pakeha world, and the dream of parents for their children. Ihimaera links urban migration with joblessness, as Matiu's father says earlier, and with land issues saying: "the landlessness of the people combined with the power of the Pakeha coin to attract Maoris to the cities in great numbers." This attraction of "Pakeha coin" is considerable and when combined with the scintillating tales of the fun to be had in the cities, often proved irresistible. Watene in "The House with Sugarbag Windows" is drawn by the dream of riches: "He wanted what he'd never had. He visualised it in terms of a two-storey red brick house, money in the bank and two cars in the garage. Nothing was going to stop him from getting it." Some of these dreams, as Hana Walker's in Whanau, were alluringly childish, and sometimes negative:

She wants to have a good time now. All the other kids leave school early, so why can't she? Yes, and once she gets away from here, she'll buy lots of dresses and go to all the dances. She'll never go to bed; why sleep when there's so much to do . . . . And she envies her older cousins when they come back to the village from Auckland or Wellington. They tell her of the fantastic time they're having.

But in spite of Hana Walker's apparent naivety, her disillusionment with her environment and yearning for city life epitomise the predicament of many post-colonial Maori children (this disillusionment is at variance with children in a pre-Pakeha traditional set up for reasons which have already been appraised). An extension of this, as also mentioned, is the dream of parents to make the lives of their children better than theirs. It is of course the dream of all good parents to make the lives of their offspring better, but the

post-colonial tensions of the Maori parents add a poignancy to this dream:

The Rongo Mahana family live in the city, in a tidy wooden house in a tidy wooden suburb. They have lived there three years now. That Huia, that hoha wife of Rongo's, had suddenly decided it would be best for the kids. She's wanted them nearer to the schools, nearer to the library and away from the no-hopers of the village. She wasn't going to see her kids going to the pack and growing wild, not on your life! No, her kids were going to get the best -- whatever that was -- and be nearer to civilisation. You think she slaved all her life for nothing? Think she went out into the paddocks picking maize all day for fun? Well if you did, just you think again. She's done everything for her kids. Suffered for them. Fought for them. And she'll keep on fighting for them. Because she's known what its like to go to school in rags, to know nothing and have nothing, and to be laughed at for being so poor . . . she's known it all, known it all. And she's making sure that her kids don't feel the pain and the hurt of being dirt.\(^\text{125}\)

Most Maori parents, Ihimaera says, realised that with the changes wrought in their society by the coming of the European, with the limited farmlands available and even more limited capital to develop the land in tune with the modern concepts of farming, the only lasting legacy that they could leave their children was to equip them to fit into the 'new ways' through education. Matiu, Christopher's father in "Return From Oz", who is also the young Matiu of "Yellow Brick Road", puts this dream and the attendant urban migration succinctly for his young son, Christopher:

Waituhi. . . . Not as far as London or New York, but Dad told me that for him and for all Grandfather's family that journey they took so long ago was as great and important as any taken by people coming to New Zealand from overseas. . . . Just as Mum's parents had come by ship from England in search of a new life, so had his parents come from Waituhi for the same reason. It didn't really matter . . . that the distances were different because their dreams and hopes were just the

\(^{125}\text{Ibid., p.48.}\)
Matiu's father expatiates on this, saying that his wife had only come along to Wellington twenty years ago because she felt it was an obligation she owed her children, to give them a better chance to fit into the 'new world': "You know, son, some times I wonder whether her heart was in our coming down here. She knew we had to come but I don't think she wanted to leave Waituhi. She was a brave woman, your mother. During all the years we lived here in Wellington she pretended to like it. But the truth is that she hated it. . . . We only came down here for him [Matiu] and your Auntie Roha." To Christopher's pointed question of why they really came to Wellington, his grandfather answers:

Because I wanted the family to have the best of both worlds . . . . Twenty years we lived here, mokopuna. I steered my family down here, I suppose just like the navigators of the canoe which brought our people to Aotearoa long ago. Your Nanna didn't want to come but she knew we had to. There were no jobs back home. There didn't seem to be any future for our family if we stayed. . . . And we saw our children, your father and your Auntie Roha, do well in the world, and we were satisfied. We gave them the best we could.

The second category is the nostalgic dream for the 'old ways'. The dream for a retention and preservation of whatever is left of the traditional ways. At its simplest level, it is an unadulterated appreciation, and contentment with the kind of communal existence which only a closely knit village can engender: "she looks out at the village. All her life she has lived here. She has never known any other life except village life. Yet, her breath still catches at this sight of it, so bright and beautiful in the morning sun. Home." Mrs Charlie

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127 Ibid., p. 192.
128 Ibid., pp. 195-6.
Whatu's unbridled contentment with, and appreciation of the village in Whanau again emphasises the predicaments of the new generation, particularly when juxtaposed against Sony Whatu's disillusionment: "Yeah, back to the sticks, Sony Whatu growls moodily. Back to the nothing place, the nowhere place. Back to the boredom and a life which is a wash of grey without any bright colour. Back in Waituhi. Back in the middle of silence." This appreciation of the 'old ways' which was a dominant theme in Pounamu Pounamu, Tangi, and Whanau is echoed in such short stories as "Gathering of the Whakapapa" already discussed, "The Greenstone Patu", and "Return from Oz" in the reason given for Christopher's grandfather's journey back to Waituhi -- which according to the grandfather, is to draw his family there so that they "can get to know [their] Maori home" while he (the grandfather) is still living.

Included in this second category are the middle-aged parents caught between two worlds: the old Maori ways in which they grew, and the new Pakeha ways in which their children must find their individual places. As Christopher's grandfather tells him in "Return from Oz": "Mokopuna, the Pakeha way is hard to fight and it is much easier to give in to it, to drift along with it. It was only when your Nanna died and was taken back to Waituhi that I saw how far the family had drifted apart from their people. No matter how often we'd returned to Waituhi I could see in their eyes the very thing I'd been blind to: that we were strangers to them at home." The predicaments and agonies of some of these parents are even more poignant because they 'know' that some of the traditions they valued while still useful to them, are useless to their children in the face of the

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130 Ibid., p. 6.
131 Witi Ihimaera, "Return from Oz," The New Net Goes Fishing, p. 196.
132 Ibid., p. 196.
new values. Yet, they as parents even while helplessly bewildered by these new values, have to help their children overcome the fear of the unknown. Some of them, even as they fight for their children, push and cajole them to find their feet in the new Pakeha world, themselves crave for the peace and tranquility that only the known, the familiar, the village can give: "Yes, there was no doubt about it. Someday, maybe when the kids had found their own ways in the world, he and Huia would return. This is their home. This is their heart."  

The third category is the dream of bicultural integration. This in Ihimaera's view, essentially involves an acceptance of the dual heritages, Maori and Pakeha, which he sees as the birth-right of all New Zealanders, and coming to terms with the demands of both. It is the realisation of the distinction between assimilation and biculturalism -- that acculturation is the attendant consequence of assimilation, while biculturalism implies a retention of both Maori and Pakeha cultures -- which has shaped Ihimaera's modern perspective. This distinction is vital to an appreciation of Ihimaera's application of the concept of bicultural integration or biculturalism. Carroll Wall writes that:

The concept of assimilation that I was brought up with and which seemed such a fine idea at the time, has been flung aside by the Maori. They don't see themselves as being merely providers of a few dusky and musical genes to shore up the easily-sunburned and Calvinistic features of the white majority. What they want is their own racial identity, and they are going for it with a gusto.

Ihimaera believes that there is a general misconception which equates biculturalism with assimilation, hence the distinction which he makes between the two concepts. While many of the short stories in

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133Witi Ihimaera, Whanau, p. 48.
The New Net Goes Fishing explore the concept of biculturalism, with characters such as George in both "Clenched Fist" and "Tent on the Home Ground", Matiu in "Return from Oz"\textsuperscript{135}, and Rangi in "The Kid Downstairs", all exemplifying the concept, most of the stories also confront the doubts and unease about the concept highlighted in Whanau and the earlier 'pastoral' writings without any easy answers. "Big Brother, Little Sister" exposes the assaults on such concepts as family aroha which is the result of parents striving for personal happiness and individualism without regards for the traditional concept of whanaungatanga. Ihimaera believes that in the new social structure, and away from the support of such traditional values and concepts as manaakitanga, some parents's failures to make it in the more competitive Pakeha-oriented social structure generate intra-punitive attitudes within the nuclear family, with the children bearing the brunt of such failures:

Hema ran to the door and opened it. Dad had forced Mum against the wall and his hands were squeezing her throat. Dad. Mum. Don't. Dad yelled at him and pushed him back into the bedroom. -Get back to bed, you damn kid. . . . Uncle Pera had taken off his belt. Just before he began to thrash Hema with it, he kicked the door closed. -Mum, Hema had called. The door was closing on her face. She did not come to stop this man. She did not come to her son. She did not . . . .The pain. He held his body tight against the blows. All he could think of was his mother, standing there, not helping him . . . . -Mum doesn't need us any more, he'd said. She doesn't need me.\textsuperscript{136}

Not only that, Ihimaera believes that such brutalized children would grow up assuming aggression as normal, resulting in such attitudes as shown in "Passing Time". To these children forming

\textsuperscript{135}This is implied by his father's comments about Matiu and his sister making it, and Matiu's marriage to a Pakeha (which in Ihimaera's fiction is a symbol of this concept) but it was not categorically stated.

\textsuperscript{136}Witi Ihimaera, "Big Brother, Little Sister," The New Net Goes Fishing, pp. 9-26.
gangs and flitting in and out of jails become a way of life:
She'd become accustomed to seeing the six kids together . . . At the time the kids had seemed frightening. Menacing. Vibrating an aura of such hostility that people entering or leaving the concourse would by-pass them warily and isolate them in a distinct space which served only to make them appear more obvious, more ominous. . . . Even their silences caused tension, that was the strangest puzzle of all. It seemed they didn't need to do anything to cause it at all except just be there. . . . Behind the blackness, beneath the skin scored like the jackets with tattooed stars and strange dedications, underlying the hard eyes and arrogant lips, she had seen kids, who'd probably just left school. Bored. Wanting a bit of fun. The trouble was the world they lived in was no playground. Perhaps that was why two of the kids were missing today.\textsuperscript{137}

Ihimaera's fiction captures the hopelessness of these children, as they bait the police while 'passing time', waiting to be thrown into jail for the umpteenth time. To them going in and out of prison is their own idea of having a bit of fun: "The kids laughed and their eyes sparkled with excitement. -Oh, we'll wait here until the other cops come . . . . When they arrive they'll hassle us and we'll hassle them. It's a kind of game, see. And maybe they'll take us for a ride, ay. We'll have a bit of fun."\textsuperscript{138} Also one of the two nameless characters in "Truth of the Matter", narrating their misadventure to a cell mate says of his associate: "But my mate didn't want any trouble. . . . Never been inside before. Shit, he has to learn. Soon be thinking of this place as home, yeah."\textsuperscript{139}

But it is Ihimaera's development, and unease with some aspects of the theme of biculturalism that many of the stories are concerned with. All of his earlier writings have delved into this theme, \textit{Pounamu}

\textsuperscript{138}ibid., p. 68.
\textsuperscript{139}Witi Ihimaera, "Truth of the Matter," \textit{The New Net Goes Fishing}, p. 124.
Pounamu and Tangi only lightly, with Whanau sustaining as well as mooting Ihimaera's ambivalence with the concept particularly because, as mentioned earlier, many erroneously equate it with assimilation. However, the characterisations in Ihimaera's fiction reflect the degree of individual character's integration into the society. The most developed characters are either those who have found their niche in the new world and literally bestride both worlds, or are contentedly entrenched in their maoritanga. An analysis of this category of the dreams, makes it clear that some characters equate economic success, which is a realisation of their dream to make good in the Pakeha world, with being biculturally integrated. Hepa Walker in Whanau, for example, equates the outward show of affluence with bicultural integration: "Hepa had taken a long and critical look at his own way of life. It was not that it was wanting anything; just that it could be improved by at least another car, a cocktail cabinet, a few pieces of crystal and a classical record collection."\textsuperscript{140} Also he is happy with his son's academic progress because it makes him proud and proves that the Maori is as good as the Pakeha, not because of his son's self-improvement: ". . .like Frank, the clever one at University, the one who is doing something to prove the Maori is just as good as the Pakeha. . . . I was just thinking of our son Frank. . . . Oh, just how proud he is making me feel."\textsuperscript{141}

Ihimaera is of the opinion that Hepa Walker does not realise that his material acquisitions do not constitute Pakeha values for, "they had given only a semblance of middle-class standards. Actually attaining the attitudes that went with them was much harder."\textsuperscript{142} Ihimaera has reservations about Hepa Walker despite the latter's social and material

\textsuperscript{140}Witi Ihimaera, Whanau, p. 36.

\textsuperscript{141}Ibid., pp. 31, 93.

\textsuperscript{142}Ibid., p. 36.
successes: "But he has made it. A personnel officer in a local city firm, Hepa can socialise with the best of them. He plays golf on Saturdays, drinks in the best bars, attends the best church, and is on first-name terms with the district elite. In every way, he is a success." This reservation stems in part, from Hepa Walker's attitude, and inability to transcend the limitations of his background:

He . . . had not even been aware of the qualities, social and personal, which were required if ever he was to prove acceptable to Pakeha society. His progress had been marked by one social gaffe after another, but his saving grace had been an honesty which led his Pakeha friends to overlook his deficiencies with good humour. They had tolerated him, he was quite a fine chap really, and anyway they needed a Maori to sit with them at the opening ceremonies -- of a new post office, new municipal building, new school -- and to appear with them in the social pages of the local newspaper.

Ihimaera's reservation also stems from Hepa Walker's limited perception of what bicultural integration really entails: that it is more of an attitude than a matter of material success. Ihimaera believes that economic and academic success, although they are keys to this integration, do not in themselves constitute the essence of this integration, contrary to Hepa Walker's view. It is this limited vision also that makes Watene, in "The House with Sugarbag Windows", perceive Pakeha values purely in material terms: "He visualised it in terms of a two-storey red brick house, money in the bank and two cars in the garage. . . ." To Ihimaera, these one-sided perceptions are wrong. Even Jimmy Heremaia in "Catching Up" realised that 'debiting' his Maori side while 'crediting' the Pakeha side was not a satisfactory response:

Then the old woman looked into his face and imprisoned him.

143Ibid., p. 36.
144Ibid., p. 35.
in her eyes. -Aah, aah, she breathed. Ka pai e tama. Ka pai. Kua u nei koe ki tena taumata o te matauranga. Jimmy could not look away. He saw a flicker of puzzlement cross quickly over the old woman's eyes like a shadow. -I'm sorry, he answered. I don't understand. I don't understand Maori. The look in the old woman's eyes bruised him. ... He had been racing all these years. He had caught up, yes. He had won, but he had also lost.  

This echoes Alistair Fox's comment that, "for the new generation, success merely in Pakeha terms is not enough if Maori identity is lost."  

While it could be argued that Ihimaera holds up characters such as Rongo Mahana and Hepa Walker in Whanau, George in "Clenched Fist" and "Tent on the Home Ground", Jimmy Heremaia in "Catching Up", even Miriama in "The Escalator", and Tama Mahana in The Matriarch, who attain individual successes as beacons for young Maoris to emulate and follow, they are not all shown to be biculturally integrated. Ihimaera in further differentiating these characters who achieve their dreams, allows the reader the choice of which characters could truly be said to be biculturally integrated. However, this choice is limited, for as Michael King notes, Ihimaera through authorial intrusion and prompting makes his preferences obvious: "He stands at the shoulder of the reader and tells him how to react, how to think and feel about the characters and the village."  

Thus when Christopher's grandfather tell Matiu (the same Matiu of "Yellow Brick Road"), "Twenty years . . . Twenty years" and asks, "but were they worth it, son? Were they? Were they?" one cannot but agree with Matiu and answer "Yes, . . . I think so."  

But even without Ihimaera's prompting, the reader is still aware

147 Alistair Fox, "In Search of the Emerald City: the Short Stories of Witi Ihimaera," Pilgrim, p. 92.  
148 Michael King, Rev. of Whanau, NZ Bookworld (Feb. 1975), pp. 24-5.  
149 Witi Ihimaera, "Return From Oz," The New Net Goes Fishing, p. 199.
But even without Ihimaera's prompting, the reader is still aware of a distinction between characters like Tama Mahana in The Matriarch, George in both "Clenched Fist" and "Tent on the Home Ground", Rongo Mahana, Andrew Whatu, and Pene in Whanau; from the other characters like Jimmy Heremaia in "Catching Up", Watene in "The House with Sugarbag Windows", and Hepa Walker in Whanau, in spite of the fact that they are all portrayed by Ihimaera as either having realised their individual dreams or on the verge of attaining them. This distinction is basically one of comprehending what Ihimaera feels actually constitute bicultural integration.

On the other hand, not one of Ihimaera's characters who is a failure or a drop-out is shown to be biculturally integrated. Assuredly, Ihimaera believes that success in the Pakeha world enhances a character's chances of being biculturally integrated, but he does not see such success as a prerequisite. Rather, he views economic, academic, and social successes merely as means to the ultimate goal of bicultural integration. This is in so far as such successes tend to eliminate the frustrations and further alienations which failure in Pakeha terms could engender in characters.

Although Ihimaera captures the dilemma and alienation of those characters who are failures and drop-outs with pathos, it is evident that he disapproves of their response to the post-colonial tensions. Through characters like Api in "Clenched Fist" and Tent on the Home Ground", Koro, Rose, Thelma, Sambo, and Jonny-Mack in "The Kids Downstairs", Ihimaera exposes the futility of mouthing Black-American slogans and living aimless existences as solutions to the alienation and tensions. Api's extremist stance, as Peter mentions, is because he had failed to realise his dreams: "You see racism in everything... the system as you call it. Everything. And only because
you haven't been able to make it."\textsuperscript{150} Although Ihimaera uses Api conveniently and unobtrusively to challenge the popular historical notion of Abel Tasman discovering an area already inhabited, the belligerent exchanges between Api and Peter serve the literary purpose of setting the scene for Ihimaera to explore the separatist ideology which a lot of radical Maoris are advocating.

Ihimaera's earlier writings viewed separatism with suspicion, believing that it is not a solution to Maori problems, for as George tells Api in "Clenched Fist": "I don't think you realise what you're doing or what you really want. Get back our Maoritanga, yes. But don't divide us in the process."\textsuperscript{151} This is reiterated by Hepa Walker in \textit{Whanau}, who states that:

You'd think they would know better than to accuse the Pakeha for all their 'problems' or to say that these are due to a 'White racist system' . . . . What do these kids really want? Separatism? They're sure causing it with all their moans and menacing talk. They're promoting discrimination, not solving it, and they're causing ill-feeling between Maori and Pakeha and also between Maori and Maori.\textsuperscript{152}

Ihimaera thus sees biculturalism as the only viable alternative to separatism. In "The Kids Downstairs", Ihimaera in contrasting the set of characters who have made it in the Pakeha world, with those who have not, shows an instance where success in this term, creates a sense of bicultural integration. Rangi is a Maori, a Civil Servant married to a Pakeha. In Ihimaera's view, Rangi has found his footing in the Pakeha world, for not only is the mixed marriage symbolic of this biculturalism he advocates, it also signifies Rangi's acceptance and integration into the Pakeha society. The kids downstairs: Koro, Rose, Thelma, Sambo, and Jonny-Mack, however, are another

\textsuperscript{150} Witi Ihimaera, "Tent on the Home Ground," \textit{The New Net Goes Fishing}, p. 150.

\textsuperscript{151} Witi Ihimaera, "Clenched Fist," \textit{The New Net Goes Fishing}, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{152} Witi Ihimaera, \textit{Whanau}, pp. 92-3.
proposition. They are also Maori, but shiftless and irresponsible -- irresponsible not only in not taking their jobs seriously, necessitating the sack for Sambo, but also in spending whatever money that came their way in drinking sprees and having fun. Even when they were on the brink of bankruptcy, "they continued to go out to the movies and the pub and to have their parties during the weekend."\textsuperscript{153}

Ihimaera's dripping irony is most evident in these young people's repetitious use of "not to worry."\textsuperscript{154} The kids are neither worried about their desperate economic situation nor about their rootlessness: "They had still not learnt anything, the kids. They were as careless as ever, as 'not to worry' as ever. The only way they knew of not worrying was to walk away from their problems and leave them behind -- the bills, the responsibilities, everything -- and start up somewhere else until the accumulation of worries compelled them to move again."\textsuperscript{155} They are content to drift on the brink of society, neither part of society, nor outside it. In Ihimaera's view, these characters are too rootless and too unconcerned about their future or society's to be biculturally integrated.

By contrasting the remarks of the landlord about Koro and his friends with the remarks about Rangi, Ihimaera explores a misconception about biculturalism. The landlord, remarking about 'the kids downstairs' who had left without notice, mutters that: "This is the last time I'll ever let a place of mine to Maoris."\textsuperscript{156} And on learning that Rangi is also Maori states that he [Rangi] is different because he is married to a Pakeha: "Now wait a minute, . . . I'm a Maori too, you know. The landlord looked at him, astonished. His

\textsuperscript{153}Witi Ihimaera, "The Kids Downstairs," \textit{The New Net Goes Fishing}, p. 93.
\textsuperscript{154}Ibid., p. 94.
\textsuperscript{155}Ibid., p. 96.
\textsuperscript{156}Ibid., p. 98.
mouth fell open, his cheeks flushed and his eyelids began to beat fast like batwings. Oh, but you're different, he smiled. You're married to Mrs Johnson."\textsuperscript{157} Ihimaera views biculturalism as a matter of attitude. Rangi is different because success in the Pakeha world coupled with marriage to a Pakeha has made him acceptable within the new society. The landlord's reaction to Rangi shows Ihimaera's awareness of the pejorative application of biculturalism. The racist condescension implicit in the landlord's definition of different -- "Oh, but you're different [because] you're married to [a Pakeha] Mrs Johnson" -- exposes Ihimaera's unease about the application of 'bicultural integration', and its confusion with the concept of assimilation.

It could be argued (as Maori activists particularly the Te Ahi Kaa -- Keepers of the Fire do) that such integration presupposes a loss of individuality as a Maori or a Pacific islander. Ihimaera does not agree. He believes that one can be biculturally integrated and still remain either a Pakeha or a Maori. As Hepa Walker says: "It isn't as logical as people think, to assume that if you walk into a Pakeha life you walk away from a Maori life. That if you credit yourself in the European world you debit somewhere in the Maori world."\textsuperscript{158} But Ihimaera accepts that the magnitude of change already wrought in the Maori psyche is formidable. He also believes that while certain aspects of the culture could be salvaged, there are however, some losses that are irreversible. And there are other losses that are both inevitable and necessary, if the Maori is to adapt to the new world: ". . . Maori people will have to begin to understand and to have more grace about the creative spirit of Pakeha people. We are not the only ones who will interpret our culture . . . now or in the future."\textsuperscript{159} Ihimaera is of the

\textsuperscript{157}Ibid., p. 98.
\textsuperscript{158}Witi Ihimaera, \textit{Whanau}, p. 36.
view that Rangi’s anonymity, in the context of the story, is similar to the anonymity of New Zealanders of either Scottish or Dutch origins, who both remain Pakeha while still retaining some of their ancestral links.

As already mentioned, Ihimaera sees success in Pakeha terms as a means of achieving bicultural integration. Whereas such a success does not equate with biculturalism, a failure in the Pakeha world most often leads to non-integration for most of these Maoris. Ihimaera touches on some of the reasons for the non-realisation of the dream for some of these Maori kids. With the urban drift, Ihimaera says that a lot of Maori children were thrown into the Pakeha world without adequate preparations because their parents were themselves bewildered by the Pakeha values, as Charlie Whatu explains to his son:

I know in my heart that I'm Maori. The world hadn't changed too much when I was a boy, so my whole upbringing was Maori. But you? Well, you live in a Pakeha world and perhaps your Mum and me should have taught you more about your own people. Except that we could see it would be no use. You're a throwback, son. You feel the old Maori in your blood and it fights with your Pakeha learning. You have to make your own decision about who and what you are. Maybe you'll be able to live in both worlds without feeling a stranger in either. . . . Whatever happens, I can't help you and I feel sorry.160

These children are then left to plot their own destinies without adequate parental guidance. For their parents, in their own ignorance, to have guided them would have been tantamount to the blind leading the blind. Unlike in the villages where Maori children are free to roam from house to house, eat, play, and fight with each other, some of these children are confronted with an absolutely incompatible set of values when they step into the Pakeha world. For

159Roy Murphy, p. 13.
160Witi Ihimaera, Whanau, p. 68.
example, not used to individual privacy as a way of life, they cannot
comprehend their Pakeha neighbours' obsession with protecting their
privacy, and often take it for snobbery and racism: "He himself knows it
is too much to expect that the Heremaia children would go to bed so
early. Heavens, he is lucky that the tribe has not invaded his house yet!
He winces to himself."\textsuperscript{161} In the school, they are faced with the
complex riddle called education, which most feel they cannot unravel:
"Right from the beginning, getting educated had seemed like a
marathon most of the other kids had already begun while he was still
approaching the starting line. Even then they seemed to have the right
equipment -- track shoes, good coaching and the encouragement of
their parental onlookers -- while he stood there waiting in his bare feet
and bewilderment."\textsuperscript{162} Ihimaera indicates that at this early period,
the parents often spoke Maori as their first language in the home:
"Mum and Dad. . . .They'd had no formal education, could barely write
a sentence of English and their sole book was a Bible they could read
only haltingly and with much difficulty. Their language was composed
of broken English and broken gestures."\textsuperscript{163} Consequently the English
the children are exposed to in class has little in common with that
spoken by their parents and elders both syntactically and phonetically.
Jimmy in "Catching Up" saw English language at school as
"incomprehensible chatter which surrounded him" and which
sounded "strange to his ears."\textsuperscript{164} Such children have to contend with
such problems as grammatical faults and first-language interference.
Coupled with these, was the fact that some Pakeha teachers do not
appreciate the social and psychological tensions which these children

\textsuperscript{161}Witi Ihimaera, "The Other Side of the Fence," \textit{Pounamu Pounamu}, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{162}Witi Ihimaera, "Catching Up," \textit{The New Net Goes Fishing}, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{163}Ibid., pp. 47-8.
\textsuperscript{164}Ibid., p. 46.
are experiencing. These teachers, having been themselves taught to be fair to all their wards and to treat all their pupils equally, will not even be aware nor recognise the peculiar needs of these Maori children:

He'd been the only Maori in his class and had again been the least qualified of a magnificently-endowed field. However, what he did not have in natural ability, he made up with in plain mule-headed stubbornness. He clenched his teeth. All he wanted to do was keep up, keep abreast, keep going. . . . But no amount of forcing could get him through University Entrance. 'I'm sick of failing exams, Mum.'

At a time most Pakehas did not fully realise how difficult it was for the Maori children to fit into an alien, predominantly Pakeha system, and equated poor academic performance by Maori children with dull-wittedness. In Ihimaera's view, it was only the "determined push" by some Maori parents that kept their children from dropping out:

It hadn't helped when he heard a teacher say: - I just cannot imagine why the Maoris in my class are so hopeless. I am beginning to doubt if they possess any intelligence at all. He'd felt his heart thudding with rage. Then he'd wondered if it was true. He'd asked his mother. - You tell that teacher to stick his words up his bum, she'd sworn. You tell him to meet us on our home ground, in our own language, and we'll soon see who's intelligent and who isn't.

That in a world where it was a feat for a Maori child to get through high school and pass School Certificate as Jimmy does in "Catching Up", and where the easiest way out was to get a job, it needed the constant prodding of parents for some of the Maori children to keep on:

Although his jump was ungainly, legs and arms flailing, he made it, scraping through School Certificate with the bare minimum: 200 marks . . . . Then he had started looking for a job.

- Oh no you don't, Mum said. - But I've finished now, Mum.
- Oh no you haven't. We got to think about University Entrance now.
- I'll never make that, Mum. . . . After you get your

165 Witi Ihimaera, Whanau, p. 56.
166 Witi Ihimaera, "Catching Up," The New Net Goes Fishing, p. 50.
University Entrance, then you can leave school. 
- But that's what you said when I was going for School Certificate, Mum. -So what! I've changed my mind!\textsuperscript{167}

Ihimaera implies that if left alone, virtually all the Maori children would prefer to drop from school. And it is a short hop from dropping out of school to drugs: "I think they went down to Wellington last week to pick up your cousin Raina. They say she's back on the drugs again."\textsuperscript{168} To forming gangs, and committing crimes: "Good old Sam, he went to Wellington, bashed a taxi-driver over the head and ended up singing the jail-house blues."\textsuperscript{169} Defeated by the city, such people had to take one of two options, swallow their pride and humiliation and head for the village, as Sam Walker (above) and Mattie Jones did in \textit{Whanau}:

Remembering those few months, those good months, when she and George lived together in a small flat in Newtown. . . . \textit{And then the long lonely times of waiting for George, always waiting. . . . And knocking on door after door, doing the rounds of the party houses, trying to find him . . . moving through grey days and morning sickness. Alone, but not alone. . . . Refusing help. Too proud to admit to her boss why she is always late for work. Not letting Mum and Dad know about Kara. . . . And finally, forgetting pride. Ringing home. -Dad? Dad? Please come and get me. . . .}\textsuperscript{170}

Or form gangs and indulge in petty larcenies. Which ever of these options these people took, it still boils down to the same basic issue, which is that they are failures. I believe that Ihimaera makes a distinction between the characters who positively attempt to make their lives better, from fritterers: "They're all wasters around here, wasting away good sunny days."\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{167}Ibid., p. 55. 
\textsuperscript{168}Witi Ihimaera, \textit{The Matriarch}, p. 85. 
\textsuperscript{169}Witi Ihimaera, \textit{Whanau}, p. 57. 
\textsuperscript{170}Ibid., pp. 60-1. 
\textsuperscript{171}Ibid., p. 65.
Ihimaera's *The New Net Goes fishing*, attempts to correct what he says was the "mismatch" of the 'pastoral' reflected by *Pounamu Pounamu*, *Tangi*, and to some extent *Whanau*, with what he sees as the actual situation of the Maori people -- rootless Maori children drifting aimlessly in urban centres with the misguided notion that they are having fun; some parents venting their frustrations on their children by brutalising them.\(^{172}\) It is obvious that if the kids in "Passing Time" were in a rural environment, their concept of having fun would be different from "hassling the police and being hassled by them."\(^{173}\) Ihimaera's short stories "Passing Time" and "The Kids Downstairs" among others, make social statements and ask the question of what degree of control parents and the society have over the behaviour of these children in urban environments. Ihimaera, having established the absolute control that rural societies have over the behaviour of children through their parents and elders, shows through these short stories, just how urgent the problem of urban alienation has become.

As mentioned earlier, Ihimaera's concept of biculturalism is based on a presumption that the individual has to be able to retain and harmonise both cultures. Most urban Maori children find it impossible to be biculturally integrated because, in the first instance, they have lost touch with a part of their heritage -- the Maori part. Ihimaera sees biculturalism as a possible answer to both Maori sense of alienation and post-colonial tensions, and a counter to the separatist ideology which some radical Maoris are opting for. But he also feels that it is a concept that will be difficult to achieve because it entails the cooperation of both the Pakeha and Maori. He believes that Maori issues and problems "can best be resolved within the established

\(^{172}\)Witi Ihimaera, "Maori Life and Literature: a Sensory Perception," p. 50.

Continuing, Ihimaera says:

At the moment we have a situation where the power to determine what is happening in New Zealand rests with Parliament and Pakeha people, and Maoris have no power in that sense. . . . They can be outvoted whenever the European majority wants to. Biculturalism will only work if Maoris implement it and Pakehas allow it. It's an equality of power; that's what biculturalism is all about. Power to make decisions about New Zealand's destiny, a destiny which involves two peoples in the South Pacific.

Ihimaera's admission paradoxically props the stance of the advocates of separatism such as Atareta Poananga "who no longer advocates biculturalism since she believes that it offers Maori power sharing on Pakeha terms." Atareta Poananga says that:

Whatever the Pakeha decides for us it can only ever be on their terms, according to their needs. This means we as Maori, slot into their culturally alien structures. English language, education, culture and religion, are seen as the natural targets of attainment for Maori people. . . . You are socialised from birth into believing everything Maori is bad or inferior. You see there is only one destiny -- to be white, to succeed in white things.

She questions Ihimaera's belief that the goal of biculturalism is attainable because, as she argues, "if it hasn't been instituted in 150 years it's not going to be now." It is Ihimaera's difficulty in resolving this paradox, that the Maori activists could possibly be right, which partly led to his self-imposed break and the hiatus in his writing career. George's despair at the end of "Clenched Fist" as he ponders whether Api and his friends are right in their advocacy for separatism,
reflects Ihimaera's dilemma. George, like Ihimaera, has tried to have an objective view of society and 'establishment' based on his belief in the concept of biculturalism. This has led to incessant quarrels with Api, his radical friend, but George has come to the conclusion that biculturalism is the answer and that "Api was wrong and he [George] was right." However, the incident of the Maori lady caught in the middle of traffic being called a "black bitch" causes George to doubt his earlier unequivocation:

Suddenly, shouting. George turned to look back. The lights had turned green and cars were moving across the intersection. . . . Caught in it was a woman late in crossing. A car was speeding toward her. -Get back. Get back you black bitch. The words cracked above the roar of traffic . . . . Laughter spilled from the receding car. Amusement in the eyes of bystanders. The woman remained there, bewildered and frightened. A knot of despair tightened in George's stomach. Trembling, he stood there. Was he wrong after all?

These doubts that assail Ihimaera are further explored in "Tent on the Home Ground" as he analyses the reasons for George not being promoted. George's Pakeha friend, David, agrees with Api that "George should have been promoted" except that Api gives the reason as being because George "is a black man and this is a white system." Api further argues: "And does the white man want us in positions of power? Like hell he does." While Ihimaera rationalises, albeit tongue in cheek, that: "Apparently [George] still didn't fit in, still appeared to lack that special sense of administrative ability and those nebulous qualities which interviewers were instructed to seek out in those applying for promotion," Api on the other hand believed that

180 Ibid., pp. 41-2.
George was being discriminated against because he is Maori: "You take a good hard look at the system you've created. It's in your image, not ours. Everything about it is white. Religion. Education. Politics. You name it. And I'll bet you there's hardly any of us in it. Why? Because you're scared of us. So you keep us down. At the bottom of the system." 183 The similarities between Api's arguments and those of Atareta Poananga as noted above, are indicative and mirror Ihimaera's concern that there possibly exists some justification for the stance of the Maori activists.

The hiatus in Ihimaera's writing career 'radicalised' his views about contemporary Maori issues, his concept of biculturalism, and edged him closer to the activist's camp. His Turnbull Library lectures and two *New Zealand Listener* editorials are ample testimonies of his concern on contemporary issues of relevance to Maoris -- land rights, urban alienations, high infant mortality rates among Maori children, and the lack of impetus for educational achievements among Maori children which leads to their early drop-outs from schools. In the editorial titled "The Maori Landscape" Ihimaera writes that Maori culture "needs air to survive, it needs land to stand on. To survive with any strength and beauty it needs more than a cultural renaissance to support it; it needs a cultural revolution." 184 Ihimaera goes further to say that it requires this revolution to impress on all New Zealanders the need for "commitment to change, to the alteration of what New Zealanders feel themselves to be, and to the establishment of symbols of culture which we might in time come to hold in common." 185 He notes that:

185 Ibid., p. 10.
The irony, of course, is that to achieve these things may require what look like "separate" institutions or separate programmes of support -- such as Radio Polynesia and Maori language courses in schools. Indeed, the establishment of a new Council for traditional Maori and Polynesian Arts by the Government has already been criticised as being a move towards apartheid. The answer to that criticism is: without a Council we do have apartheid, with it we don't, because, for the first time ever, we have given due recognition to the Maori gifts of culture. Are New Zealanders able to make such a special commitment and accept that some separate development is necessary to the alteration to our direction as a nation?186

This sharpened awareness of "the very real social, economic, legal and other problems facing the maori people today" and Ihimaera's new radical viewpoint are most fully articulated in his recent writings -- The Matriarch and The Whale Rider.187

186 Ibid., p. 10.
187 Witi Ihimaera, "Why I Write," p. 117.
CHAPTER III

Coming to Terms with the New Way: the Radicalisation of Ihimaera's Views in The Matriarch

The Matriarch marks the flowering to full bloom of Ihimaera's social consciousness. It reaffirms Ihimaera's consistent vision of a bicultural New Zealand, his commitment and conviction that it is the only viable option for New Zealand, and the Maori in particular. Paradoxically, it acknowledges the validity of some of the agitations of Maori activists, and the Maori grievances for past injustices conditioned by the nature of the early contacts between Maori and Pakeha. The Matriarch exhorts the Pakeha to realise this. It further explores the concept of biculturalism as a difficult but necessary alternative to separatism. In adopting this stance, however, Ihimaera probes the historical cause of the present Maori alienations and post-colonial tensions in the firm belief that the acknowledgement by all New Zealanders of these past injustices is a prerequisite to solving the attendant Maori frustrations, for as Wole Soyinka says, "the turning up of the maggot-infested underside of the compost heap . . . is a prerequisite of the land's transformation."¹

To convey this message, Ihimaera constructs an account of the historical origins of the present Maori predicament from a Maori vantage point to counterbalance traditional Pakeha versions that he considers biased. An analysis and appreciation of Ihimaera's account

¹Quoted by Alan Riach, Rev. of Six Plays by Wole Soyinka, Landfall 41.1 (Mar. 1987), p. 79.
and views on the historical origins of Maori grievances is necessary for a comprehension of both his new radical stance and the paradox of his continued advocacy for biculturalism. This chapter will deal with Ihimaera's establishment of a Maori sense of history, and what he views as the historical causes of the present situation; and his proposal for coming to terms with the "new way".

The first Europeans encountered a communal-based agrarian Maori society. Bill Pearson writes that: "We should recall that in pre-European times the Maori were an industrious people, that their main energies went to producing food and clothing and shelter with primitive implements."2 Ihimaera concurs, saying: "The Matriarch's people were renowned fishermen and agriculturists."3 He quotes Joseph Barrow Montefiore, Sydney merchant, as saying in 1838 that: "Their potatoes are cultivated better than those grown by many of the settlers in New South Wales."4 Ihimaera ends by adding, "but with the change to sheep farming, on sheep runs which were already leased or sold to the Pakeha, the agricultural basis of the people collapsed."5 By 1896, the Maori "race was thought to be dying" and the former 'industrious' Maori had gotten "the reputation among the Pakeha for indolence, improvidence, shiftlessness and unreliability."6 Ihimaera's fiction attempts to rationalise what had happened in the

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4Ibid., p. 46.
5Ibid., p. 46.
interim to engender such a colossal reversal in the Maori psyche. The way Ihimaera restructures and uses the accepted historical accounts of the first contact between the European and the Maori provide the first focus for this study. This chapter will also explore the ambivalent education of Tamatea into both the matriarch's understanding of the Maori sense of alienation and her vision of ways to right it; and her darker side -- the use or misuse of traditional occult powers. A section of this chapter will deal with the controversy about Ihimaera's concept of biculturalism, and its reappraisal which his latest book, The Whale Rider, seems to imply.

I. The Historical Background and Ihimaera's Revisionism

The discovery of New Zealand on 6 October 1769 by Captain James Cook, and subsequent European contacts with the Maoris in the intervening years between 1779 and 1840 saw "the gradual coming of the Pakeha -- first as whaler, . . . then as flax trader . . . tree feller, evangelist and, settler and farmer"-- of different nationalities to New Zealand. Although, "the first European traders, like the explorers, were not interested in living permanently in New Zealand. They wanted to make profits from the sale of natural resources like flax, timber, sealskins or whale oil. These products fetched good prices in Europe . . .", Pakehas eventually started settling in New Zealand. This early contact between Europeans and Maoris is intriguing from

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7 Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 46.
the literary perspective, for in the words of Lawrence Jones, "if there is one story, there are two ways of telling it."

One way of telling recalls a famous Maori chief, Te Horeta Taniwha, as saying of this first contact that:

In the days long past, when I was a very little boy, a vessel came to Whitianga .... when our old men saw the ship they said it was a tupua, a god, and the people on board were strange beings. The ship came to anchor, and the boats pulled on shore. As our old men looked at the manner in which they came on shore, the rowers pulling with their backs to the bows of the boat, the old people said, 'Yes, it is so: these people are goblins; their eyes are at the back of their heads; they pull on shore with their backs to the land to which they are going .... We were now at quiet and peace with them, and they gave us some of the food they had brought on shore with them. Some of this food was very hard, but it was sweet.

Ihimaera, writing about the same early contacts, says:

All New Zealand schoolchildren are taught about Captain James Cook's discovery of New Zealand and his historic landfall at Poverty Bay in the Endeavour in October 1769. They are told that the event was quite glorious .... They are told, to some amusement, that the reaction of the Maori people on the shore was one of awe for the huge white bird, the floating island, and the multicoloured gods who come on the bird .... But what the schoolchildren are not told is that Cook's first landing was marked by the killing of a Maori called Te Maro, shot through the heart by a musket bullet, Monday 9 October, 1769. Then on the morning of Tuesday 10 October, 1769, another Maori called Te Rakau was shot and killed, and three others were wounded. During the afternoon of the same day a further four Maoris were murdered .... and three of their companions were taken captive. Captain James Cook claimed New Zealand for Britain. The Endeavour finally left Poverty Bay on Thursday

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12 October, 1769. The glorious birth of the nation has the taste of bitter almonds when one remembers that six Maoris died so that a flag could be raised . . . .

Ihimaera's revisionist version questions the widely held historical beliefs and accounts of the harmonious first contact between the European and Maori. The sharp contrast between this "taste of bitter almonds" version and Te Horeta Taniwha's recall, of "quiet and peace" and the sharing of "sweet" tasting food is but an instance of what he views as historical bias. Ihimaera writes that the first Europeans in New Zealand -- whaler, flax trader, evangelist, settler, and farmer -- had one thing in common: "All these Pakeha strode through the villages, the hundreds of pa sites, smothering the Maori fires and razing the temples of pagan religion." In his earlier short story, "Tent On the Home Ground," Ihimaera refutes the claim that Abel Tasman discovered New Zealand on the basis that what he 'discovered' was an area already discovered and inhabited by a people -- that the credit of 'discovery' belongs to Kupe:

You ask for proof [of racism] and there's so much of it I don't know where to begin.
- Because there isn't any, Peter said.
Api narrowed his eyes. Then he flashed the quick smile of a panther.
- Who discovered New Zealand? he asked Peter.
- Eh? Oh, Abel Tasman, Peter answered startled.
And Api grinned with triumph.
- Man, he said. Your answer is your proof. Long before Abel Tasman got here, Kupe discovered this country. But you've probably never heard of him. After all, he was only a Maori.
Peter reddened with anger.
- Kupe? He's just a legend.
- Your second proof, Api answered. Anything that happened to us you call myth or legend. Anything that happened to you

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12 Ibid., p. 46.
is called history.\textsuperscript{13}

Ihimaera views the relegating of the story of Kupe to the class of a legend, as perpetuating the notion that there was no Maori history to talk of until the coming of the Pakeha. Ihimaera equates this Pakeha assumption of a barren historical landscape with their earlier attitudes which saw the traducing of a people's entire world-view leading to Maori disillusionment up until the closing years of the Nineteenth Century. It is evident from the foregoing and Ihimaera's advocacy of biculturalism that he is not opposing the advent of Pakeha settlers per se, but rather the changes wrought in the Maori way of life and what he sees as distortion of historical facts to accommodate Pakeha perspectives.

Ihimaera acknowledges that some of these changes, such as the introduction of advanced techniques of farming and farm implements, the abolition of such practices as cannibalism, and the reduction of incidents of inter-tribal wars, were essentially beneficial to the Maoris. But to him, other changes like the destruction of a cultural heritage, land dispossession, and its attendant dissolution of family ties due to urban drift, were very harmful. Mention should be made of Ihimaera's views on a few other relevant issues of the Nineteenth Century as a background to appraising his proposed resolution of Maori post-colonial tensions, and his concept of bicultural integration. This is because in Ihimaera's accounts, these issues have a cause and effect relationship. They include the role of the missionaries, the treaty of Waitangi and formal settlements, the land wars, the Land Courts, the Te Kooti uprising, and the early attempts to integrate Pakeha and

\textsuperscript{13}Witi Ihimaera, "Tent on the Home Ground," pp. 149-50.
Maori values, as symbolised by the paintings in Te Rongopai.14

Unlike "the traders who did not wish to change Maori society [though] their new goods and techniques did eventually bring about big changes, the missionaries . . . did want to change the Maori society."15 Considering that the aim of these missionaries "was to bring civilization and Christianity to a heathen world," the fact that they "tried consciously to change Maori culture" was inevitable.16 Apart from the destruction of Maori culture and traditional religious customs which are consequent upon these changes, Ihimaera believes that the evangelists often initiated clashes between the Maoris and Pakehas: "There had already been violent clashes and slayings: Maori and Maori, Maori and Pakeha. The former were continuations of earlier conflicts in line with the concept of utu. Those between Maori and Pakeha were frequently caused by the violation of the laws of tapu -- even by the evangelists."17

In other instances, the evangelists aggravated existing conflicts:

... there is one point in John Lawrence's delivery which I would agree with and which needs further amplification. This is the role of the church in extending the conflict between Maori and Pakeha over the spiritual domain. Possibly my visit surprised John . . . for I am sure that he would have elaborated on the role of the Christian religion in aggravating Maori-Pakeha relations. It wasn't good enough just to take away our lands. Oh no, the Pakeha had to take away our souls too! Not only did we have to give up our physical world; we had to give up our spiritual world as well.18

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14Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p.190.
15Judith Bassett, et al., The Story of New Zealand, p. 35.
16Ibid., pp. 35, 37.
17Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 47.
18Ibid., p. 71.
Ihimaera particularly views it as "intolerable that Christian ministers could equate [the Maori] people with savagery and paganism and therefore quite blithely establish a religion that was just as savage and as pagan."\textsuperscript{19} The Maori, as he asserts, places a high premium on his spiritual well-being because it literally governs almost all aspects of his life, and quotes the late Te Kani Te Ua as saying that "while the Maori people might be called a barbaric and savage race [their] knowledge and conception of the spirit world show a high plane of thought similar to the philosophical speculations of the earliest Greek philosophers --Empedocles, Anaximander and others."\textsuperscript{20}

Ihimaera also remarks that the Christian concept of retribution for sins committed differs from that of the Maori. This, he says, influences the way the two peoples perceive issues: "The Christian was punished in an after life; the Maori was punished here and now in this world. This is why the Maori has always been more careful than the Pakeha in observing religious customs."\textsuperscript{21}

Some aspects of Ihimaera's writings expound the fact that while the coming of the Pakeha precipitated a great number of changes, the degree of change varies. Some issues, such as the Treaty of Waitangi, have a chain-reaction effects of such magnitude that the reverberations still linger in Maori consciousness. His incessant mention of the Treaty implies that Maori land issues and consequently Maori alienation cannot be adequately discussed without recourse to the Treaty. If there is anything that exemplifies Lawrence Jones' comment, mentioned earlier, that where there is one story there are

\textsuperscript{19}ibid., p. 69.  
\textsuperscript{20}ibid., p. 252.  
\textsuperscript{21}ibid., p. 256.
more than one way of telling it, it is the Treaty of Waitangi.

Judith Bassett writes that it was, among other things, the flurry of land speculations and activities of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, his brother Captain Arthur Wakefield and other land speculators between 1838 and 1840 that prompted William Hobson to "summon Maori chiefs to a meeting at Waitangi on 5 February 1840" and which led to the signing of the Treaty on 6 February 1840.22

Ihimaera’s ambivalent attitude to the Treaty reflects the complexity of the arguments about it. D. F. McKenzie claims "that Maori assent to the treaty became the substantive ground of British sovereignty over New Zealand."23 This supports Ihimaera’s view that "It was the instrument by which the British decided to extend their sovereignty to New Zealand."24 Also that organised Pakeha settlement and colonisation started in 1840 and was consequent on the Treaty.25 But there is another body of opinion. This, as acknowledged by McKenzie, "regards the treaty as having no effect and British sovereignty as arising rather from the occupation and settlement of lands inhabited by uncivilized native peoples."26 What everyone agrees on, however, is that the Treaty is open to a myriad of interpretations. As Bassett mentions, there are "doubts over the true meaning of the Treaty of Waitangi . . . ."27 Apart from it being "difficult to understand", it was drawn up in a hurry, by a man who

24Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 73.
25Ibid., p. 238.
26D. F. McKenzie, Oral Culture, Literacy and Print in Early New Zealand, p. 9.
27Judith Bassett, et al., The Story of New Zealand, p. 47.
was not a lawyer, and had no [legal] training in such matters.28

Ihimaera’s belief that: "The trouble is that the Treaty has never had any status in domestic or international law" and that "the Pakeha signed it knowing it was worthless", is linked with the treaty’s problems of multiplicity of versions and interpretative bias arising from its wordings.29 Bassett writes that "the Maoris at Waitangi signed the Maori version, some Waikato chiefs later signed the English version" and that "the two versions are not exactly the same."30 McKenzie says that, in fact, there are five English versions: "Hobson also sent abroad. . . five English versions of the Treaty. There are minor differences in three of them, but the other two bear a different date, differ from the others in the wording of their preamble, and differ critically from each other in the second article."31 Quoting Ruth Ross, McKenzie writes: "The extant Maori version, the actual treaty as signed by the chiefs on 6 February, is not a translation of any of these five English versions, nor is any of the English ones a translation from the Maori."32 The apparent implication of the above, according to Ross, is that the Maori version is the real Treaty of Waitangi, but nevertheless, Ihimaera insists that the treaty is legally binding.

Ihimaera’s argument that the Pakeha signed the Treaty knowing it was worthless emphasizes his opinion that the Treaty was based on deceit. McKenzie argues that the signatories to the Treaty "could not have read [the Treaty] even if they had known the [English]}

28Ibid., pp. 43-7.
29Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 73.
30Judith Bassett, et al., The Story of New Zealand, p. 47.
31D. F. McKenzie, Oral Culture, Literacy and Print in Early New Zealand, p. 33.
32Ibid., p. 33.
language. Having made the point about European assumptions about the comprehension, status, and binding power of the written word, and the questionable Maori translations with regards to the Treaty, McKenzie further states that:

Without begging any questions about Pakeha intent to deceive, even the Maori language itself was used against the Maori. First, much of the detail of the English draft was presumed by Williams to be inexpressible in Maori translation. Second, the form of Maori used to communicate Pakeha intentions were . . . not indigenous Maori but protestant Pakeha missionary Maori. . . . Not only the concepts, but many of the words, for all their Maori form, were English.

He further argues that: "By choosing not to use either 'mana' or 'rangatiratanga' to indicate what the Maori would exchange for 'all the rights and privileges of British subjects', Williams muted the sense, plain in English, of the Treaty as a document of political appropriation", and believes that, "had any Maori heard that he was giving up his mana or rangatiratanga he could never have agreed to the treaty's terms."

Coupled with the above, Bassett agrees with Ihimaera that Henry Williams, who translated the Maori language at the signing of the treaty "was very concerned about protecting all the land he had bought. Williams claimed ownership of 11,000 acres." Ihimaera mentions that Reverend Archdeacon Henry Williams, missioner for the church missionary society in answer to accusations of having appropriated Maori lands said: ". . . the missionaries had done sterling services in

33 Ibid., p. 33.
34 Ibid., p. 35.
35 Ibid., p. 42.
36 Judith Bassett, et al., The Story of New Zealand, p. 45.
New Zealand; they had laboured long hours in the service of others, that he himself had a family to support -- eleven children in all -- and, why, surely the land he had was not excessive given the fact that it would have to be divided eleven ways on his death?"³⁷ Ihimaera thus implies that it is unlikely that a man like Henry Williams, with vested interest in Maori lands would be fair in the translations particularly when he had to improvise and coin new non-Maori words like 'Kawanatanga'. But most importantly, Ihimaera feels that Maoris have been deceived:

... the Crown said that all property belonged to the Maori and could not be taken without our consent and without payment. Land was made available for European settlement, but the interests of Maori owners were protected by restricting to the Government the right to purchase their land. Other intrinsic rights were also guaranteed.... The Pakeha signed it knowing it was worthless.... For most assuredly you, Pakeha, began taking the land from us as you were signing your worthless Treaty.³⁸

McKenzie's analysis of Pakeha assumptions about Maori attitude and early comprehension of English language lends support to Ihimaera's view of implied deceit, considering Ihimaera's emphasis on the oral nature of Maori culture. The Treaty, in McKenzie's opinion, "offers a prime example of European assumptions about the comprehension, status and binding power of written statements and written consent on the one hand as against the flexible accommodations of oral consensus on the other."³⁹ He argues that it is absurd for Europeans to think that what took Europe two millennia to accomplish -- conversion from oral culture to a written one -- had been

³⁷Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 72.
³⁸Ibid., pp. 73-4.
³⁹D. F. McKenzie, Oral Culture, Literacy and Print in Early New Zealand, p. 9.
achieved in a mere twenty-five years in New Zealand. McKenzie's premise is that there would be a cultural reluctance to readily "shift from memory to written record . . . to surrender the relativities of time, place and person in an oral culture to the presumed fixities of the written or printed word." But most especially, he argues that:

Maori understanding of the treaty was undoubtedly formed by their sense that the independence (the rangatiratanga) and the sovereignty (the mana) they had affirmed in 1835 and reaffirmed by further subscriptions as late as 1839, was not nullified by the treaty . . . . for the Maori one document did not supersede the other: they lived together, one complementing the other.

This, McKenzie believes, is the basis of Maori assent to the Treaty, and Ihimaera says that the Maori chiefs who signed the Treaty, and the present generation of Maoris, believe that the Treaty is legally binding on all parties: "All you Pakeha lawyers can argue until the cows come home that the Treaty wasn't a legal document but we believe it is." It is thus the differences in perception occasioned by the inherent cultural differences between the Maori and Pakeha, exemplified by their different perspectives on both the Treaty and other issues concerning land, that eventually led to the land wars.

Ihimaera's fictions, his New Zealand Listener editorials, and extra-literary activities collectively indicate that more than any other factor, land issues are at the root of most Maori versus Pakeha

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40 Ibid., p. 10.
41 Ibid., p. 10.
42 Ibid., p. 41.
43 Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 73.
44 Brian J. Murton's arguments on this score is particularly perceptive. "Waituhi: a Place in Maori New Zealand," New Zealand Geographer 35.1 (1979), pp. 24-33.
conflicts. And that Maori sense of frustrations and alienation are most perceived through their expressed grief for lost lands. The stridency evident in his writings, particularly in The Matriarch, about Maori land issues exists because of this belief (that land dispossession is at the heart of the post-colonial tensions of the Maori people); claiming that "... before the arrival of European settlers, the Maori had 66 million acres of land, today they have less than three million," a claim that some disagree with. Ihimaera views the effects of this landlessness as three dimensional -- economic, social, and cultural. Having mentioned the varied guises under which the Maoris lost their lands, he believes that apart from the apparent economic loss to those whose lands are forcibly taken without compensation; that where a member of a family single-handedly sells the family land in opposition to the wishes of other members of the family, there is bound to be acrimony, which will in all probability lead to ostracising of the culprit. Other ramifications of such an event would be the weakening of family ties, splintering of the whanau, depriving some members of the family of a means of livelihood -- the farmland (particularly if it is a very large family), reduction in agricultural productivity due to reduced farmland, hence forcing the younger

45 See Richard Corballis, and Simon Garrett, Introducing Witi Ihimaera, p. 66.
46 Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 235.
47 Gordon Parsonson, among others, argues that most of the lands in New Zealand did not actually belong to Maoris, and further alleges that Maoris had never set foot on most of these lands: that it was the realisation of the economic value of land in the post-Pakeha period, and the subsequent wording of the Treaty of Waitangi that has given rise to claims such as Ihimaera's. See his unpublished paper: "The Road to Waitangi," (2 August, 1983), courtesy of both Prof. Parsonson (for permission to use it) and Dr. T. Brooking (for drawing my attention to it) History Department, University of Otago.
48 Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, pp. 319-20.
members to *drift* to the urban areas: "Yes, it is true -- the land has been taken and where there is no land the people must leave and find new livelihood in the cities to the north and to the south. Gone, gone, they have gone, the iwi from the land."\(^49\)

Linked to the economic effects, are the social and cultural consequences. Ihimaera acknowledges the fact that the predilection of the government which is predominantly Pakeha would be to want to buy lands needed for Pakeha settlers. Also that the government would pass legislation that would make this task less onerous, but he sympathizes with the Maori stance: "the views of Maori and Pakeha about the future of the country were absolutely incompatible. The government attempted to buy more and more land, urgently needed by the Pakeha settlers; the Maori people considered these attempts to be against their express wish to retain the land."\(^50\) Since not everyone would agree to sell their lands, those who were willing to sell would, as mentioned, most probably be censured leading to quarrels: "tribes were divided as individuals defied chiefs to sell land."\(^51\) Ihimaera views the social consequences of such defiance as grave -- a total breakdown of traditional norms. He argues that the urban drifts of young Maoris was consequent on these economic and social effects, resulting in the cultural dislocation discussed earlier. According to him, despite the opposition of some tribes to the sale of land, the sales continued: "from the very beginning of organised Pakeha colonisation in 1840, many Maori tribes had opposed the sale of land."\(^52\) In Ihimaera's view, this

\(^{49}\) Ibid., p. 50.
\(^{50}\) Ibid., p. 238.
\(^{51}\) Ibid., p. 239.
\(^{52}\) Ibid., p. 238.
opposition to the sale of land in some cases, stemmed primarily from
the elders' knowledge of the long term consequences on the younger
generation of such sales. John Lawrence tells Tama Mahana in The
Matriarch that: "Your grandmother was one of the old people who
could see what was happening. She realised that it was important to
try to bring the land back into Maori hands because otherwise the
young would continue to leave it." Ihimaera realises that
economic reality is always inextricably entwined with most urban
drifts, and so it is with the post-colonial Maori people. He also believes
that the centrality of land to all the tensions, and Maori versus Pakeha
conflicts is because the Maori generally has a deep-rooted spiritual
attachment to the land which many Pakehas find incongruous.
According to Brian J. Murton:

While land can mean many things to Maori New Zealanders
an important dimension of Maori land is the spiritual
attachment which its owners feel for it, not as mere economic
space, but as place. This feeling for land clashes with the
way land is viewed by New Zealand's dominant Pakeha
culture . . . . but perhaps even more significant was that the
settlers, creatures of their culture, valued land in terms of
the productive use man could make of it. From the classical
economic perspective, land was only beautiful which was
most fruitful.

Brian Murton's comment is echoed in Ihimaera's view that:
"land means much more to the Maori people than it does to any other
New Zealander. To them it has a deep spiritual value. You can realise
then the frustration the Maori people have had over the last 150 years as
they have seen their lands gradually fall out of their hands."

53 Ibid., p. 232.
The colonial and post-colonial Pakeha domination of both government and the judiciary, Ihimaera alleges, coupled with a thirst for arable lands by Pakeha settlers meant that it was easy for Maori land to pass into Pakeha hands. Ihimaera's argues in The Matriarch, that, deprived of their only source of sustenance, young Maoris had no alternative but to drift to the city in search of a means of livelihood. He says that: "The Maoris have no other earthly possessions than the land which they inherited from their ancestors."\textsuperscript{56} Ihimaera recognises very many factors as responsible for the colossal reversal of Maori land ownership from Maori to Pakeha. The first obvious factor was the greed of a few individuals for the valuable things that the Europeans exchanged for land:

The matriarch's own great-great-uncle was one of the first Pakeha to own land in the Gisborne district, the block known as 'Pouparae' which he acquired on 18 December 1839: 1004 acres in exchange for £80 cash, four double-barrelled fowling pieces, 40 shirts, 36 plane irons, 60 blankets, 36 iron pots, 24 hoes, 400 Ibs of tobacco, 36 hatchets, 130 razors, 30 knives, 40 spades, and 22 pairs of scissors.\textsuperscript{57}

Ihimaera mentions that traditionally, most lands belonged to either the community as a whole, or the individual families, with the result that often, no one person could sell a piece of land without the consent of the other members of the Whanau or the chief. Land legislation then became a factor through which the government could ease the acquisition of Maori lands by Pakeha settlers: ". . . it was the land legislation which had the most disastrous results for the Maoris who became involved. Transactions were swift and shady, the land

\textsuperscript{55}Witi, Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 235.
\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., p. 333.
\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., p. 46.
speeding from beneath the toes of the Maori."\(^{58}\) Ihimaera sees the land legislations as part of a wider pattern of deceit through which the Pakeha gained control of Maori land:

> Under the Native Land Acts of 1862 and 1865 the Crown's right of pre-emption was abolished, a Maori Land Court was established to individualise Maori land titles, and European settlers were permitted to purchase land directly from the individuals named in the court's orders. Oh, it could make you weep, but the Pakeha foisted this one on the Maori by claiming that this land legislation was part of a wider policy designed to fulfil the promise of the Treaty of Waitangi to grant Maoris the rights and privileges of European citizens.\(^{59}\)

A gross sense of injustice in the use of the arena of justice -- the courts, to deprive the Maori of their land pervades Ihimaera's *The Matriarch* particularly about the functions of Native Land Courts. In Ihimaera's view, by using the courts to individualise Maori lands, the Maori could not get any redress in the courts. Ihimaera writes that: "another evil is that, if one of the Natives sells his share to a European, the shares of the whole of the others who have not sold go to the European as well. By this means the lands of some people are taken from them unjustly."\(^{60}\) Since it was the courts that individualised the lands, in the first place, there was no remedy for the Maoris so injured in "the arena of the Maori Land Courts" for the "Europeans, being the superior race, superior in education, . . . took advantage of our ignorance."\(^{61}\) The Maori thus lost faith in the Pakeha concept of justice.

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\(^{58}\) Ibid., p. 239.  
\(^{59}\) Ibid., p. 239.  
\(^{60}\) Ibid., pp. 319-20.  
\(^{61}\) Ibid., p. 320.
Ihimaera sees Maori insurgencies of the Nineteenth Century -- the Hauhau war, the land wars, the Te Kooti uprising -- as resulting first from the loss of land, and this lack of justice for the Maori. According to Ihimaera, "Maori tribal lands from the very beginning, even before the ink was dry on the document, have been illegally taken, granted, sold, leased and wrongly withheld, misused and misplaced. There have been losses of forestry rights, mineral rights, fishing rights and Maori tribal cultural rights."\(^{62}\) The Maori, believing that they lose everything if they lose their land, that they become nothing, particularly as the Treaty on the basis of which they felt British sovereignty was established, was now an issue of controversy, decided to go to war.\(^{63}\) Ihimaera claims that their Maori "forefathers had fought and died last century to rectify the inconsistencies and injustices that the Treaty embodies."\(^{64}\) And that the essence of the land wars was to prevent further Maori lands from being "swallowed up by the greedy Pakeha speculators" and also to prevent their customs and traditions from being "trampled on by the Pakeha."\(^{65}\) However, the land wars, rather than stem the change of ownership of lands from Maori to Pakeha, actually accelerated it, especially with the land confiscations which were the aftermath of the war.

In Ihimaera's view, these wars which "lasted from 1860--1881," and which the Maoris lost gave the government the opportunity to appropriate more Maori lands: "altogether 3,215,172 acres of Maori land were confiscated in the Waikato, Taranaki and the Bay of Plenty to

\(^{62}\)Ibid., p. 73.  
\(^{63}\)Ibid., p. 236.  
\(^{64}\)Ibid., p. 73.  
\(^{65}\)Ibid., pp. 73-4.
pay for Maori insurgency." Although punitive by import, the actual execution of the exercise Ihimaera believes, further alienated the Maori people. The government's initial intention was to confiscate only the lands belonging to the rebels. However, in returning some lands, the government realised that the task of winnowing was almost impossible, it then:

Proposed that the loyal chiefs should magnanimously and voluntarily hand over blocks of land in Poverty Bay, Wairoa and on the East Coast as representing the land interests of the rebels; in turn, the Crown would waive any claim to rebel interests outside the blocks so ceded. . . So the Maoris who had fought for the Crown were confronted with the humiliation of handing over to the Crown tribal land as the fine for the rebels whom they, the loyalists, had fought against. . . . This was the way in which the Pakeha rewarded [their] friendliness.67

Ihimaera's view of these actions by the government and his comment that "in parliament questions were asked whether rebels could be deported without trial. . . it was rumoured also that one of the reasons for the deportations was so that the government could move quicker to confiscate Maori land," provide another instance of the way in which land is central to these post-colonial tensions.68

As already mentioned, in Ihimaera's view, these issues -- the role of missionaries, the Treaty of Waitangi and formal settlement, the land wars, the land courts, Te Kooti rebellion, and modern land marches -- all have a common root. They are all collectively, an expression of Maori disenchantment at what Ihimaera sees as lack of justice for the Maori. Ihimaera sees the Te Kooti rebellion as a justified reaction of a

66 Ibid., p. 239.
67 Ibid., pp. 240-1.
68 Ibid., p. 135.
man deprived of justice. Ihimaera's "The Song of Te Kooti" and analysis of "the Matawhero Retaliation" in The Matriarch are evidently attempts to present an alternative viewpoint to the prevailing assumptions on these topics, in accordance with his concept that: "All truth is fiction really, for the teller tells it as he sees it, and it might be different from some other teller. This is why histories often vary, depending on whether you are the conqueror or not."69 Other writers have referred to these incidents both as "the Te Kooti rebellion" and "the Matawhero massacre", and Ihimaera quotes Sir Apirana Ngata as saying:

> With the end of the Hauhau War... we reach the last landmark in the historical past of the Maori race. Te Kooti is the last and greatest representative of the worst side of the Maori character -- its subtlety, cunning and treachery; its cruelty and love of bloodshed; and its immorality and fanaticism. His character had no relieving trait; no anecdotes of liberality or magnanimity extenuate the horror we must feel for him. It was not to be wondered at; he was not a chief. In all his schemes and undertakings there is lacking the kindly liberality, the magnanimity, the true dignity of the Maori chief.70

In "the Song of Te Kooti", Ihimaera makes a distinction between the two points of view, Pakeha and Maori, on Matawhero. He says that "when [John Lawrence] refers to the 'Matawhero massacre' what he really is referring to is Te Kooti Rikirangi's retaliation against a whole history of Pakeha abuse of Maori people, custom and land."71 Ihimaera not only justifies Te Kooti's taking up of arms to defend both himself and his followers on the basis of his having been "falsely

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69 Ibid., p. 403.
70 Ibid., p. 196.
71 Ibid., p. 71.
imprisoned . . . and exiled", he mentions that Te Rongopai was established as a "tribute to Te Kooti's struggle to retain Maori identity during the years of the whirlwind."72 He also portrays Te Kooti as acting in self-defence: "The Pakeha wished to hunt him down like an animal. Only then did he take up arms against Pharaoh and against all Egypt."73

Maurice Shadbolt in *Season of the Jew*, analyses the varied concepts of justice in the Te Kooti affair.74 Although Ihimaera and Shadbolt differ in both the scope and analysis of some aspects of the Te Kooti uprising, it is pertinent to note that both believe Te Kooti to have been treated unjustly in the first instance. Ihimaera writes that: "It was Captain Read who instigated it all to prevent Te Kooti from hurting his own trade . . . . Ah yes, and the Pakeha also wanted to remove all those who were troublesome and all those who persisted in disturbing the peace of Egypt."75 Shadbolt is even more explicit on this score. Read says in *Season of the Jew*: "The sod started out working for me. Here. He could add. Price. Write good English. Deal with skippers. And sell a lion's skin before he'd shot the lion . . . . He was smart."76 His crime according to Read was that he turned from being a servant to a competitor: "He started his own store across the river. . . . He took native trade. Even if they didn't like him, they liked his prices."77 Shadbolt writing about the lack of justice in major Biggs's treatment of Te Kooti as a prelude to the eventual revolt states: "The more you stir

72 Ibid., p. 135.
73 Ibid., p. 134.
75 Witi Ihimaera, *The Matriarch*, p. 135.
76 Maurice Shadbolt, *Season of the Jew*, p. 56.
77 Ibid., p. 56.
turd, the worse it stinks . . . . I understand that Read made land available for the settlement at Matawhero on the condition that he was rid of Coates.\textsuperscript{78} Thus the real reason for the exiling of Te Kooti was that then, "Read [would have] no rival in trade."\textsuperscript{79}

Both Ihimaera and Shadbolt believe, unequivocally, that there were three major reasons for Te Kooti's deportation and none of them had anything to do with law and justice. The first was his land: "Land . . . He surely had some he called his own. Yes . . . he had some quite handsome acres."\textsuperscript{80} The second was at the instigation of Read to further his desire to maintain a monopoly of trade in the area, coupled with Biggs' explanation that: "land was required to bring in colonists . . . Read had it. As you know, Maoris are now reluctant to part with theirs."\textsuperscript{81} The third, as Shadbolt says, was that Coates showed surprising initiative, was vocal, and so had to be contained: "No one would contest Coates' sly intelligence . . . . That made him the worse. At the slightest excuse he would go running to the law. He had a reputation for driving magistrates insane."\textsuperscript{82} This buttresses Ihimaera's earlier comment "Ah, yes, and the Pakeha also wanted to remove all those who were troublesome."\textsuperscript{83} Particularly disquieting to Fairweather in \textit{Season of the Jew} was that a man who fought for the Crown should be imprisoned and exiled without so much as a court martial: "It surely cannot be that Coates had no trial at all. He carried

\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., p. 93.
\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., p. 93. (Note that Te Kooti and Coates refer to the same person and would be used interchangeably.)
\textsuperscript{80}Ibid., p. 92.
\textsuperscript{81}Ibid., p. 93.
\textsuperscript{82}Ibid., p. 62.
\textsuperscript{83}Witi Ihimaera, \textit{The Matriarch}, p. 135.
arms for the Queen; he at least earned a court martial. 84

Fairweather's quibble with Biggs on points of law in respect of Te Kooti, highlights Te Kooti's reluctance to submit himself to a law he was justifiably suspicious of:

'They give offence to law and order.'
'To order, perhaps. Of law I have less competence to speak.'
'They have taken it into their own hands.'
'Which seems not unfamiliar in Poverty Bay.'
.... 'The prisoners will have to be contained.
Persuaded to give up their arms and loot.'
'And surrender themselves to colonial justice?'
'Entirely'
'Then you have a distinct problem, Major Biggs. Coates, in his past incarnation, has cause to believe there is none. 85

It is in the context of the foregoing, that Ihimaera's insistence on portraying a historical perspective which takes 'the other side of the story' into account, can be understood. He uses the biblical allusions not only to foster a feeling of righteousness but also to accentuate the necessity of Te Kooti's actions. This necessity, in Ihimaera's view, is part of the chain effect of colonialism and oppression. Ihimaera's argument is that Te Kooti was persecuted, denied justice, falsely imprisoned, and exiled because he is Maori, not because he had committed any crime, since no charges against him were proved. 86

Ihimaera's attempts to present a committed Maori writer's view of the Te Kooti and Matawhero issues might have sounded unconvincing but for his artful use of these biblical allusions because of their emotiveness, which he acknowledges. His intricate weaving of myth with historical fact means that The Matriarch does not pretend to

84 Maurice Shadbolt, Season of the Jew, p. 62.
85 Ibid., pp. 81-2.
86 Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 135.
offer an 'objective' view of history as commonly understood, but a polemical counterbalance, from a Maori viewpoint, to Pakeha-biased versions. Ihimaera is aware of the polemical nature of the issues raised. David Young writes that: "Ihimaera acknowledges that his historical working in the novel will be regarded as partisan, even by many Maoris. He also admits that it contains some deliberate historical inaccuracies 'just to help maintain the fiction.'" This awareness, and Ihimaera's use of the term "retaliation" as opposed to "massacre" in referring to Te Kooti's actions, among other things, exemplifies the gap between the Maori and Pakeha perspectives; for, from the massacre onwards Shadbolt and Ihimaera part ways in their narratives.

Ihimaera further confirms his intention of presenting an alternative viewpoint by mentioning the popular assumption: "According to popular belief, the white settlers were at prayer when the raiders made their attack on the settlement. A raid of this sort is much more indictable and much more of an atrocity if it is perpetrated before the face of God." He then systematically reconstructs the actions to contend this assumption. In Ihimaera's version, the actual killings happened on Tuesday November 10, not on a Sunday. He asserts that, "there was no slaughter of innocents in the church at Matawhero." In Ihimaera's account, the raiders only killed those

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87 David Young, "An End to the Silence," Rev. of The Matriarch, by Witi Ihimaera, New Zealand Listener (June 7, 1986), p. 25.
88 Also while Ihimaera's narration of this incident accounts for a small fraction of The Matriarch, Shadbolt's Season of the Jew, is based entirely on the incident. Therefore, his development of the theme is much more detailed.
89 Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 159.
90 Ibid., p. 160.
who had a hand in their wrongful imprisonment and, or their families, or who were soldiers, or enemy sympathisers -- Major Biggs: "Biggs, my old enemy, my nemesis. . . . You sent me away without trial"; J. R. Wyllie: "He was a party to my exile"; Sergeant James Padbury, who was their "guard on Wharekauri"; and Capt. James Wilson. The graphic details of the killing of predominantly white families during the Matawhero massacre, Ihimaera asserts, is to hurt the European reader: "One of his primary motives in writing The Matriarch was revenge on the European. He wanted to hurt the European reader. . . . That was why he wrote in such graphic details about the deaths of the mostly white military men and their families during the Matawhero massacre." This motive, he says, "stems from the predominant European view of New Zealand history." For like most stories, the narrator's slanting and perspective of the tale reflect the teller's stance or put bluntly, what side one is on. But these comments of Ihimaera's are only examples of the effect of criticism from Maori nationalists which are edging him closer towards the 'radical' camp.

II. Assimilation or Bicultural Integration?

The tensions generated by this early contact between the Maori and Pakeha induced, in the Maori, an initial dream of assimilation. By 1896, the "Maori race was thought to be dying" and the pressure was on them to either integrate themselves into the dominant Pakeha society or become extinct. Most Maoris felt that there was no hope

91 Ibid., pp. 160-70.
92 Roy Murphy, p. 13.
93 Ibid., p. 13.
for them as a distinct people. So through marriages and migration to the urban areas, they gradually started being assimilated. Ihimaera sees the painting of Te Rongopai -- the Gospel, as an instance of early Maori attempt to integrate Pakeha and Maori values in the 19th Century. Following the various confrontations between Maori and Pakeha, and considering that the Pakeha were in the majority, held the power and dictated the future, young Maoris realised even then that their future lay in an integration of both cultures. Ihimaera states that the young people "... made the house into a likeness unto themselves, the iwi, and their dreams."\textsuperscript{95}

The painting of Te Rongopai eloquently testifies to this dream of a bicultural integration, and it is through this that Ihimaera traces and further analyses both the concept's historical origins and what they represent for the Maori. He states that while the more traditional elders felt that the young people had painted the meeting house "with little reference to tradition, an obvious break with the past", that he "always liked to think that the prophet would have approved, for just as he had blended the Christian faith with Maori culture to speak for the people in the new world, so also the young people attempted to show the blending of the old ways with the new and the world of the Maori in the lands of Pharaoh."\textsuperscript{96} Continuing this analysis, Ihimaera claims that "the gravity and reverence for the past were evident on all rafters, painted in the typical designs of the Kowhaiwhai, bold red, white and black curvilinear designs. . .the same reverence was also evident in the

\textsuperscript{94}Bill Pearson, "Attitudes to the Maori in Some Pakeha Fiction," p. 48.
\textsuperscript{95}Witi Ihimaera, \textit{The Matriarch}, p. 185.
\textsuperscript{96}Ibid., p. 190.
reed work. . . the basic concept of the interior illustrations, whether carved, painted or woven, conformed to the outlines of tradition."\textsuperscript{97}

But according to Ihimaera:

It was the filling in that was different . . . unveiling the subconscious of the Maori, the persona, in highly romantic and yet realistic terms . . . it was not hopelessness that the young painters showed; rather, faith . . . the dream was of a new, brave, world, the new Eden where the Kowhaiwhai was embellished with new colours, where painted spirals and floral patterns provided a panacea for war and a prayer for peace. It was the kind of dream that people associate with the psychedelia; it placed the Maori in the position of centrality but gave him the moko of a Pakeha.\textsuperscript{98}

Ihimaera concludes this analysis by saying that the human figures were "painted in the traditional style, flourishing the taiaha and mere weapons, but with blue eyes and short hair parted in the European way", exemplifying this dream of biculturalism.\textsuperscript{99} Also, that even then, the young Maoris had started feeling the resultant tensions of their dual inheritance. But unfortunately this initial dream, in Ihimaera view, had an unpleasant tang: "Integration of people does not automatically make for integration of culture."\textsuperscript{100}

Ihimaera writes that the Maoris were actively "encouraged to embrace Pakeha ways."\textsuperscript{101} While doing so, "we did not really think to interpret our position in society because we were all merrily rolling downhill towards integration or assimilation, either quite sure we could retain our identity during the process or thinking to Hell with it anyway."\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{97}Ibid., p. 191.
\textsuperscript{98}Ibid., p. 191.
\textsuperscript{99}Ibid., p. 191.
\textsuperscript{100}Witi Ihimaera, "Maori Life and Literature: a Sensory Perception," p. 54.
\textsuperscript{102}Witi Ihimaera, "Te Taha Maori (the Other Side) Belongs to Us All," New Zealand
Because of this initial apathy on the part of Maoris, the tendency was towards assimilation rather than bicultural integration.

Ihimaera sees the Maoris as being faced with the grim realisation that their continued alienation as a people, and from their land, coupled with the exodus to the city, which does not have the facility nor conducive atmosphere for the continued transmission of the culture from the elders to the younger generation, meant that their culture would die:

Continued alienation of Maori land and of Maori people from their culture meant that the Maori was becoming landless and cultureless in his own country. As well, he was moving in greater numbers from rural areas, the earth-base of his culture, into urban areas where traditional tribal values and transmission of culture by Maori methods could not be sustained; nor were urban areas equipped then for providing for the transmission of the culture.103

The result was what he has come to view as "a dislocation and disruption of cultural continuity -- a cultural faultline."104 This cultural faultline was consequent on the urban 'drifts', and Ihimaera believes that these 'drifts' had a common denominator -- the dreams that this study has already analysed. In the course of this analysis it has been established that Ihimaera's characterisation reflect the individual characters' level of bicultural integration. The Matriach confirms this. There is no doubt that, to Ihimaera, Tama Mahana is truly biculturally integrated. While he is successful by Pakeha standards, he is also shown to retain his Maoritanga. He is not only married to a Pakeha, he has in fact indoctrinated his wife into knowing

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103 Witi Ihimaera, and D.S. Long, p. 3.
104 Ibid., p. 3.
and accepting some basic Maori values: "What I understand is that I didn't marry just you, I married all of you." Regan, realising what having a male issue means for Maori families, particularly to the first son of a rangatira line, "wept when our first child, a daughter, was born. 'I am so sorry. I wanted to give you a son, so sorry,'" and later Regan again apologises, "I am so sorry, Tamatea... that I have not given you a son." It has to be understood that for Regan, brought up in a tradition that does not discriminate between male and female children, to feel as apologetic as she does about a natural phenomenon over which she has no control, means only one thing — she really does appreciate Maori culture. These emotional outbursts do not suggest in the least, that either Regan or Tamatea are dismissive of their daughters, for Tamatea argues for his daughters with grandfather Ihaka, reminding him: "My grandmother... succeeded to chieftainship. And she was a woman... Do not be dismissive about my daughters, grandfather. Or my wife." Rather, they are expressions of appreciation of a cultural reality. If Tamatea were a woman, it is obvious that grandfather Ihaka would have succeeded in foisting Toroa as heir to the leadership of the Mahana clan. Regan's understanding and appreciation of Maori ways of life, in spite of her being Pakeha, is thus ample testimony that Tamatea Mahana still retains his Maoritanga. Coupled with Tamatea's Maoritanga, are his achievements in the Pakeha world: "You know how proud Mum and Dad and us kids are of you. I mean, gee, you're famous."
However, *The Matriarch* also confronts the many facets of Ihimaera's theory of biculturalism, exploring both its strengths and weaknesses and confronting the criticisms by the opponents of the concept. It also gathers the earlier themes explored in his other writings into a larger historical pattern. The rural versus urban Maori theme becomes relevant partly for the elicitation of the consequences of urban migration, while the failures of characters such as Tama's cousins to make it in the Pakeha world of competitive economic structure seem to highlight the frustrations of those who don't: "'Perhaps we're too competitive and that makes us jealous of each other. But we all started off the same, surely? And we can't help it that Mum and Dad kept us at school and made us get good qualifications. Our cousins had the same opportunities as us. I think you're right. We took the opportunities and they didn't.'"\textsuperscript{109} The attitudes of Tamatea's cousins, Sammy and Raina, typify the destruction of the traditional concept of family aroha because they have come to hate Tamatea, and blame him and his arm of the family for depriving them of their share of 'mana' because the matriarch showered all the love on him: "'Anyway, she stopped me in mid-sentence and she said that the reason why you've gotten on is because you were given special treatment by our grandmother'... 'According to Raina, our whole family has been given a head start. It has to do with the fact that Dad is the eldest son and therefore the head of the Mahana clan. And you're his eldest, and a son. The heir.'"\textsuperscript{110} Sammy confirms Raina's accusation saying: "You are the cause of all our troubles, Tamatea. Our Uncle Alexis, his *mate* is because of you. My sister, Raina, her

\textsuperscript{109}ibid., p. 89.
\textsuperscript{110}ibid., p. 89.
sickness also. Why? Because that old lady, our grandmother, she gave you our souls, Tamatea, and left us prone to all illness. Aunt Circe tried to prevent it, but you got everything, Tamatea. Everything. 111

Also the headship of the clan which in the cultural and traditional context functions to bring the members of the family closer to each other, becomes a reason for disharmony. Even the Maori past, the traditions, and the culture are reviewed as evidence of attendant losses and record of historical injustices:

Then there it was, the gateway to Waituhi, the once-palisaded hill, its crumbling steps incised in dark silhouette against the sky. My heart began to swirl with the same maelstrom of past and present, of light and darkness, of elation and sadness. Every approach to Waituhi was a rebirth. At the same time it was also an acknowledgement of loss, for this was the womb of my life and it had given life to the family of the womb, generation after generation. 112

Considered from this perspective, and viewed alongside the foregoing expositions, The Matriarch exposes the the evolution of Ihimaera's radicalised thinking. It shows, as this analysis has proved, that Ihimaera uses the novel to explore and confront the historical origins of the Maoris' present sense of alienation and post-colonial tensions.

111 Ibid., p. 357.
112 Ibid., p. 90.
III. Symbol of Biculturalism

Tamatea Mahana (The Matriarch) is Ihimaera's most fully developed individual character to date (except the village of Waituhi which is itself a character in most of his fiction), and so a worthy example for the analysis of Ihimaera's concept of biculturalism. Ihimaera has, in characterising him, integrated the positive values of both cultures to enable him "bestrade both worlds, to be a taniwha to both Maori and Pakeha," in the image of the matriarch.113

Ihimaera's consistent repetition of the matriarch's 'refrain' that she has made Tamatea into her own 'image' and 'likeness'114, and the comments by such critics as C. K. Stead that Tamatea's identity cannot be divorced from that of the matriarch means that neither Tamatea nor Ihimaera's radicalised views on biculturalism which Tamatea symbolises can be adequately addressed without recourse to her.115 Ihimaera describes the matriarch mostly in superlatives: "Hers is a blinding presence, imperious and commanding . . . . She was a most striking lady, very beautiful in a Roman sort of way . . . . you can glimpse just enough to realise how breathtakingly stunning she must have been."116 Although throughout the novel she is described in lofty language and often shown to be an extraordinary woman, Tamatea's cousin, Whai, tells him that it was Wi Pere that deliberately fostered her this way:

113Ibid., p. 27.
114Ibid., pp. 13, 17. She repeats the phrase "I have made him into a likeness as unto me", in various other forms.
But she just didn't happen to be that way. It was cultivated in her. She was made that way. She had few peers, in the Maori world . . . . There was more -- her accomplishments in the *Pakeha* world . . . . Your grandmother was a fine huntswoman. Well, *that* part of her life is derived directly from the Thomas Halbert line, down through Wi Pere. I suspect that Wi Pere cast his mantle on your granmother . . . . Perhaps he wanted her to bestride both worlds, to be a taniwha to both Maori and Pakeha? Certainly her power, her charisma to Maori people and to Pakeha alike came from the fact that this dual training set her apart, just as it had Wi Pere himself.\(^\text{117}\)

Cousin Whai, pondering on the reasons for Wi Pere's actions, tells Tamatea that: "He probably wanted to make her into a likeness. Like himself."\(^\text{118}\) This explains the matriarch's obsession with this 'phrase' which she uses many times in respect of Tamatea, and her insistence that Tamatea learn all the basic rules and skills of both Maori and Pakeha ways of fighting. She tells Tamatea that: "One day, e mokopuna, this will be your task. You must grasp the tools of the pakeha and understand them. Particularly, you must understand the words of the white man, not only what he says but what he really means."\(^\text{119}\) And later still the matriarch in dedicating Tamatea to what she perceives as his destiny -- to fight to regain and secure the land for the people -- tells him:

'I have taught you to be a Maori and to fight in a Maori way. But there is another lesson which you must learn, one which my own great-uncle taught me when I was a child. He sent me away from this place to another across the sea. I did not understand then, but I did when I returned . . . .I have taught you how to fight the Pakeha. But I had forgotten that

\(^{117}\text{bid., p. 27.}\)

\(^{118}\text{bid., p. 27. [The similarity and usage of the phrase 'into ... likeness' and the idea of bestriding both the Pakeha and the Maori worlds are consistent with the matriarch's intentions for Tamatea.]}\)

\(^{119}\text{bid., p. 230.}\)
to fight the Pakeha you must learn to be like him. You must become a Pakeha, think like him, act like him and, when you know you are in his image then turn your knowledge to his destruction.¹²⁰

It is probably in the nga pungawerewere scene that Ihimaera most dramatises the potency of some of the powers that the matriarch had infused Tamatea with, powers which he was later to demonstrate in the succession fight with Toroa for the leadership of the Mahana clan. But the spider scene, apart from any other thing, serves to establish the fact that Tamatea, in inheriting the matriarch's mantle, has also inherited some of this awesome powers for, as he mentions, "there is no doubt that the matriarch called to Uncle Manaaki and Hiraina guard the child (and years later, I called in the same fashion to my daughter, Miranda, and she appeared beside me saying, 'Yes, Daddy? You wanted me?'"¹²¹

In spite of Tamatea's symbolic representation of Ihimaera's concept of biculturalism, it is apparent that the author's characterisation of the matriarch, imbuing her with such domineering and larger-than-life characteristics, stunts some aspects of Tamatea's development. Yet given the impression which the title and the matriarch's dominance of the novel creates, some critics, amongst them Janet Potiki and Atareta Poananga, have expressed reservations about how realistic Ihimaera's characterisation of the matriarch is. Janet Potiki writes that: "Though a woman is at the centre of the book, and others are included, I felt lonely for any sense of companionship among women. Tiana, Artemis and the mythical Hine Te Ariki join in

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 427.
¹²¹Ibid., p. 289.
times of extreme danger, but in day-to-day life warm, shared relationships between women are missing." It is probably this lack of warmth in the female characters particularly Tiana, and Ihimaera's insistence on the noa nature of women in respect of certain Maori ceremonies that has led Atareta Poananga to absurdly see the novel as a "profoundly woman-hating book." Despite these comments, the matriarch, as Elizabeth Caffin says, is convincing: "As a tyrant within the family, shaping her relatives to her will, and as a woman of stature on the marae, she is entirely convincing." The matriarch is particularly convincing in what Caffin sees as her representative role in expressing "the Maori anger at the pillage and destruction by the Pakeha, at the loss of land and mana," and in embodying Ihimaera's radicalised concept of biculturalism: "A warrior since birth, she must retain what is Maori and reconcile with this those Pakeha things that have become part of herself. The weight of both cultures is in force against her and she strives to retain the balance, the mana Maori that asserts Maori as equal to Pakeha."

Ihimaera believes that this balance is consistently becoming more difficult to retain. As the matriarch symbolised a synthesis of Te Kooti as her darker side and Wi Pere as her lighter side, so does Tamatea Mahana. All the dedications and teachings were towards Tamatea

125 Ibid., p. 52.
126 Janet Potiki, "A Dance With the Past, p. 55.
accomplishing what the matriarch had realised was beyond her to do -- a unification of both forces, the darker and the lighter, a merger of both cultures, Maori and Pakeha. Ihimaera's extensive inclusion of Wi Pere's parliamentary debates and the comments that Wi Pere chose Artemis "to carry on his fight" support the bicultural argument in a vicarious way.\textsuperscript{128} Wi Pere's arguments are demonstrably for solutions to the issues of land sales that would neither "estrange the two races" nor stir up "fighting between them."\textsuperscript{129} This is consistent in some aspects with the matriarch's, and Ihimaera's views on the issue. But its significance lies in Ihimaera's identifying with Wi Pere because he, as Ihimaera argues, attempted to effect and fight for changes and bicultural integration from within the system. Atareta Poananga says of Ihimaera, that: "He has said publicly he identifies with Wi Pere for he worked from within to make change."\textsuperscript{130}

Ihimaera's characterisation of Tamatea Mahana reflects the author's present ambivalence about the concept of biculturalism in the face of the slow pace of change, and the body of opinion that see biculturalism as little better than assimilation. Ihimaera's views on the concept has progressed beyond seeing it as merely an integration of Maori and Pakeha cultural values, to embracing the economic and social realities of existence. Tamatea demonstrates an awareness of all the dialectics of biculturalism -- cultural, social, and economic.

The earlier analysis of Artemis' mantle and the attendant potent powers which Tamatea inherited testify to his mana and Maoritanga

\textsuperscript{127}Witi Ihimaera, \textit{The Matriarch}, p. 294.
\textsuperscript{128}ibid., p. 346.
\textsuperscript{129}ibid., pp. 336-7.
being not only intact, but augmented by the tempered restraint of imbibed Pakeha cultural values. This is exemplified by the long drawn out 'heir crises', instigated by grandfather Ihaka. The five years of festering conflict culminates in the duel on the marae, and Tamatea has to call, not on his Pakeha heritage and learning (in law), but on the very depth of his Maori teachings to overcome Toroa:

I was being faced by the most important test of my life. I was contesting my grandfather and his whangai for my mana. By doing this publicly all of us risked everything; the winner would take all . . . . Despite my objections, Ihaka would not waive his purpose . . . I stood up. I put both my hands into the air and began to squeeze. Toroa started to gasp, to fight against an invisible presence. I squeezed even tighter and he was forced to the ground . . . . Bewildered, Ihaka tried to support him. Then he knew. He looked across at me in fear . . . . 'Enough, Tamatea!' Tiana said . . . I stopped and Toroa reeled from my grasp.131

Arguably, Ihimaera lauds Tamatea's possession of the positive qualities of the matriarch as much as he criticises his evident possession of the destructive ones, but this is a reflection of the author's ambivalence which has already been noted. But the narrative while not highlighting Tamatea engaging in "wars" with the Pakeha as the matriarch intends, provides Ihimaera the avenue to explore those specifics that he believes are obstacles to biculturalism. Chief amongst these obstacles is the concept of separatism which has been mentioned with respect to Api in both "Clenched Fist" and "Tent on the Home Ground", but which will also be discussed later under "The Dilemma". As has been highlighted in the course of this analysis, critics of Ihimaera's concept of biculturalism particularly the Maori 'nationalists' believe that essentially, there is no distinction between the

131 Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, pp. 400-2.
early dream of assimilation and the later dream of biculturalism. Atareta Poananga asserts in the passage quoted earlier that: "Today a new Pakeha co-optive strategy is coined --biculturalism -- assimilation in another guise, because the outcome is the same . . . . You see there is only one destiny -- to be white, to succeed in white things."\(^{132}\) It is on the basis of this assertion, that there has been a concerted assault on the concept of biculturalism by what Maori 'nationalists' see as the reality of their situation in New Zealand, leading both to a shattering of the dreams already analysed, and to Ihimaera's noted ambivalence and his radicalised views in *The Matriarch*. However, *The Matriarch* raises some unresolved issues, such as the tantalising fleeting glimpses which one catches of Tiana at critical moments in Tamatea's life. She is never allowed to develop as a character, but the indications are that she would play a major role in the sequel to *The Matriarch* which Ihimaera has promised. Also crucial but unresolved in *The Matriarch* is Ihimaera's fear that bicultural integration may not go far enough, and that the resistance necessary for Maoritanga to survive may tip over the edge and become complete separatism. These are probably, issues which the sequel to *The Matriarch* may have to address.

CHAPTER IV

Myth and Modern Reality: the Dilemma of Biculturalism in Ihimaera's Recent Fiction

I. Ihimaera's Recent Fiction: The Whale Rider

Richard Corballis and Simon Garrett in their analysis of the allegorical nature of Ihimaera's short story "The Whale" in Pounamu Pounamu, and the whale's powerful symbolism, establish Ihimaera's personification of the waning Maoritanga in the dying Kaumatua, who embodies "the traditional Maori ways."\(^1\) They further extend this imagery through anthropomorphosising the whale, stating that: "The old man has become the dying whale."\(^2\) The fleeing gulls in Ihimaera's story clutch "in their claws' not the whale's flesh" which they have been stripping but the old man's "shouted words", which indicates Ihimaera's further extension of this allegory.\(^3\) Ihimaera therefore equates both the dying whale and the stranded Kaumatua with the declining Maoritanga. The Whale Rider evokes this image, but with a significant qualification. While in the short story, "The Whale", the Kaumatua did not see any hope for Maoritanga, since the only grandchild that had shown any enthusiasm for Maoritanga had turned her back on both the old man's teachings and the Maori world, in the belief that neither could equip her to cope with the Pakeha world in which she has to live, in The Whale Rider Ihimaera is more hopeful. He sees the fate of Maoris as inextricably entwined with the

\(^1\)Richard Corballis, and Simon Garrett, Introducing Witi Ihimaera, p. 22.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 22.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 22.
"fate of the sea's denizens" symbolised by the whale; for as Koro Apirana pointedly says: "The whale is a sign...It has stranded itself here. If we are able to return it to the sea, then that will be proof that the oneness is still with us. If we are not able to return it, then this is because we have become weak. If it lives, we live. If it dies, we die. Not only its salvation but ours is waiting out there."5

As in his earlier works, Ihimaera's The Whale Rider covers a wide-range of themes, some parallel with many of the issues already explored by them. However, some old themes are modified in the new novel. Such issues as urban migration and its attendant problems for the urban Maoris are viewed through the travels and experiences of Rawiri. Faced with the reality of urban existence in a modern economy, and without skills, some of these young Maoris in urban centres have made dramatic changes, "...to themselves or their lives... In the search for fame, fortune, power and success, some of my cousins had opted for the base metal and not the gold. They may have turned their lives upside down in the process, like Sydney Bridge's reflection in the harbour, but they always craved the respect of our whanau."6 Ihimaera writes that such characters become reluctant for their whanau to see or know how they live: "But always, in the early morning, when the sunlight was beginning to crack the midnight glamour, the memories would come seeping through. 'How's our Nanny? How's our Koro? If you write to them, don't tell them that you saw us like this...'...They weren't embarrassed, but

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4Ihimaera, as with the Kaumatua in "The Whale", also likens Koro Apirana in The Whale Rider to a stranded whale: "Our Koro was like an old whale stranded in an alien present, but that was how it was supposed to be because he also had his role in the pattern of things, in the tide of the future." (The Whale Rider, p. 59).


6Ibid., pp. 51-2.
hiding the way they lived was one way of maintaining the respect."7

Ihimaera highlights such issues as Maoritanga and Maori nationalism through Koro Apirana's *wananga* sessions from which he hoped to "pass on the knowledge, the sacred kumara" to the younger generation.8 This and his other efforts are made to ensure that while the people are being "prepared . . . to cope with the new challenges and the new technology" that they would still be Maori.9 Also, Ihimaera in *The Whale Rider* vicariously confronts such other issue as racism through Rawiri's experiences in Australia and Papua New Guinea through which Rawiri states that he "grew into an understanding of [himself] as a Maori."10 Clara's blatant racism, likening Rawiri to a stray dog which her son has brought home, and her comment at the accident in which Bernard was killed that: "It's only a native", leads Rawiri to sadly ponder at Jeff's own reactions: "I don't blame you," I said to Jeff. 'You can't help being who you are' . . . [and feels] sadness that a friend I thought I had would so automatically react to the assumptions of his culture. *And would I be next?"*11

But it is through the exposition of the traditional concepts of conservation of nature and the stranded whales that Ihimaera develops his call for a heightened sensitivity to the Maoris' avowed affinity with nature. Richard Corballis and Simon Garrett in their explanatory note on stranded whales in "The Whale" say: "In Maori folk-lore beached whales generally signify an abundance of food."12

7 Ibid., pp. 51-2.
8 Ibid., p. 59.
10 Ibid., p. 57.
11 Ibid., p. 61.
Ihimaera confirms this view stating that "in Maori terms a stranded whale was traditionally a gift from the Gods." But Koro Apirana views the massive destruction and wastage of nature's resources which the beaching of two hundred whales signified as being consequent on man's transgressions of his pact with nature: "But we have not always kept our pact with Tangaroa, and in these days of commercialism it is not always easy to resist temptation." Koro Apirana's argument stems from Ihimaera's claims, mentioned earlier, of a living relationship and affinity between the Maoris and the land, the elements, and nature. This is an aspect of Maoritanga which he believes is being eroded within the new social structure, and the urban environment. In Ihimaera's writings, one of the effects of the coming of the Pakeha, he says, is that the Maoris have lost touch with the natural forces with which they were meant to be in harmony. Koro Apirana's karakia and korero explicates this point: "Once, our world was one where the Gods talked to our ancestors and man talked with the Gods. Sometimes the Gods gave our ancestors special powers. For instance, our ancestor Paikea . . . was given power to talk to whales and to command them. In this way, man, tipua and Gods lived in close communion with one another." Ihimaera continues that:

He came riding through the sea, our sea god Kahutia Te Rangi, astride his tipua, and he brought with him the mauri, the life-giving forces which would enable us to live in close communion with the world . . . . They were very special because among other things, they gave instructions on how man might korero with the beasts and creatures of the sea so that all could live in helpful partnership. They taught oneness.

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13 Witi Ihimaera, The Whale Rider, p. 84.
14 Ibid., p. 41.
15 Ibid., p. 95.
In The Matriarch both Tamatea (tutored by the matriarch) and the matriarch, herself, had learnt how to harness some of these natural forces for specific purposes. Although some of the uses are destructive, as shown in the nga pungawerewere episode at the hui in Wellington and Tamatea's fight with Toroa on the marae, they however, are evidence of the potency of the forces which were available to man when he was close to nature. In his essay, "Environment, Security and Identity: a 'maui-esque' viewpoint" (1984), Ihimaera argues that this is an aspect of the Maori culture that cannot be sustained in the urban centres, and shows some modern responses to such Maori claims and beliefs as this: "For Maori people the environment has been, and still continues to be, living, breathing and possessing a life force. . . . At birth, for instance, the afterbirth of a child was buried in the earth not only to bind the child with the earth but also to reinforce, in a psychical manner, his or her relationship with a particular hearth -- the marae or turangawaewae."

Ihimaera says that "in most cases, whenever this concept of a living relationship between the Maori and his environment is mentioned", one of the reactions of the audience "is to dismiss the concept as being unsophisticated, rather romantic but irrelevant." Koro Apirana, in The Whale Rider, blames this on man's arrogance and compartmentalising of nature and the world into "that half he could believe in and that half he could not believe in. The real and the

16Ibid., p. 27.
17Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, pp. 245-427.
18Ibid., pp. 280-427.
unreal. The natural and supernatural. . . . The scientific and the fantastic. He put a barrier between both worlds and everything on his side was called rational and everything on the other side was called irrational. Belief in our Maori Gods,' he emphasised, 'has often been considered irrational."21 This response, Ihimaera argues, is fostered by the cultural dislocation which is a logical consequence of urban migration. He repeatedly makes the point that these migrations "drove the wedge between the old and the new; emphasising the difficulty of urbanised Maoris imbibing these traditional concepts, and world views."22 However, The Whale Rider urges the reestablishment of this rapport and communion with nature, arguing as Koro Apirana does that, "if we have forgotten the communion then we have ceased to be Maori."23 It also seeks to disclose the similarity and relevance of some of these Maori traditional beliefs and world-views to contemporary society's, being analogous in many respects to the current wave of conservation of nature: "We try never to overfish for to do so would be to take greedy advantage of Tangaroa and would bring retribution."24

Ihimaera's The Whale Rider fulfils two other basic functions apart from the re-affirmation of the fundamental principles of the concept of biculturalism. It is a feminist restatement, appropriately recanting, of some of the views expressed in Ihimaera's earlier writings. Views on women in Maori traditional societies and the marae, the mantle of leadership, and laws of tapu, which were strongly expressed in The Matriarch, and for which critics such as Atareta Poananga erroneously characterised that novel as biased, and

22 Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 232.
24 Ibid., p. 40.
imbued with male chauvinism and arrogance: "The Matriarch is in fact a profoundly woman-hating book." Nevertheless, Ihimaera specifically restates the idea of male dominance on the marae which is a central focus of some of the conflicts in The Matriarch and writes:

She was a big chief, descended as she was from Apanui, after whom Nanny's tribe was named. The story we liked best was the one telling how Mihi had stood on a marae at Rotorua. 'Sit down,' a chief had yelled, enraged. 'Sit down,' because women weren't supposed to stand up and speak on the marae. But Mihi had replied, 'No you sit down! I am a senior line to yours!' Not only that, but Mihi had then turned her back to him, bent over, lifted up her petticoats and said, 'Anyway, here is the place where you come from!' In this way Mihi had emphasised that all men are born of women.

Although Mihi encounters similar attitudes from the men on the marae as the matriarch, she does not engage in protracted squabbles for ascendancy or even the right to speak, but rather, she silences

25 Atareta Poananga, "The Matriarch: Takahia Wahine Toa -- Trample On Strong Women, Part I," Rev. of The Matriarch, by Witi Ihimaera, Broadsheet No. 145 (Dec. 1986), p. 27. Ihimaera's fiction unequivocally states, both in The Matriarch and The Whale Rider, that "by Maori custom, leadership was hereditary and normally the mantle of mana fell from the eldest son to the eldest son." (The Whale Rider, p. 14). Also that: "The active leadership of the tribe, the iwi, was generally a male prerogative." (The Matriarch, p. 207). The Maori proverb which some elders used to reprimand the matriarch saying that: "[Her] neck should be wrung because it is only the rooster which crows" also reflect this custom. (The Matriarch, p. 112). But despite these assertions, the custom, as exemplified by the matriarch herself, makes allowances for circumstances where the first-born is female:"Sometimes, however, it happened that the first-born of the senior rangatira line was not a male but rather a woman. She was then made a priestess and accorded the greatest respect as a wahine ariki. . . . The East Coast tribes revered such high born women and allowed them to speak in council on the marae. . . . The matriarch was one such woman, a wahine ariki." (The Matriarch pp. 208). I believe that Atareta Poananga's comment manifests an absurdity which, considering the context and emotiveness of the whole critique, probably stems from an undue extension of feminist criticism.

26 Witi Ihimaera, The Whale Rider, p. 66.
them with irrefutable and effective but unorthodox 'logic'. Ihimaera also uses Muriwai's comment that: "Now I shall make myself a man", to symbolise her assumption of the powers and 'tapuness' that traditionally accompany tasks such as she was undertaking -- to save the maataatua canoe.\textsuperscript{27}

But should one wish to disregard the dedication of \textit{The Whale Rider}: "For Jessica Kiri and Olivia Ata, the best girls in the whole wide world", Ihimaera's two daughters, one cannot but notice the similar repetition which has Koro Apirana recanting his earlier views about the leadership quality of women and declaring to Kahu, whom he has consistently rejected because she is female: "You're the best mokopuna in the whole wide world. . .boy or girl, it doesn't matter."\textsuperscript{28} Ihimaera states in \textit{The Whale Rider} not only that: "Girls can do anything these days", but that often they can do them better than boys, as is exemplified by Kahu's success in bringing the stone from the depth of the ocean where all the boys failed.\textsuperscript{29} According to Kai Karanga, the female whale, "it takes the males longer than the females to understand."\textsuperscript{30} But above all else \textit{The Whale Rider} is an affirmation of hope in the survival of the Maori race, which is signified by Kahu's success in saving the stranded whales, recalling Koro Apirana's earlier comment that the Maoris' fate was inextricably entwined with that of the stranded whales.\textsuperscript{31} It also reviews biculturalism from a feminist view-point, acknowledging that in these troubled times, the salvation of the world of the Maori lies in the hands of Kahu and other women, as the last \textit{mauri} that Paikea

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{27}ibid., p. 17.
\textsuperscript{28}ibid., pp. 120-1.
\textsuperscript{29}ibid., pp. 65, 74-5.
\textsuperscript{30}ibid., p. 115.
\textsuperscript{31}ibid., p. 96.
\end{flushleft}
had thrown saying: "'Let this one be planted in the years to come when the people are troubled and the mauri is most needed.' And the mauri, soaring through the sky came to rest in the earth where the after-birth of a female child would be placed."\(^\text{32}\)

While it is not within the ambit of this thesis to assess the influences of criticism on Ihimaera's writings in general, it is obvious that some of these criticisms are affecting the consistency of his views, especially as they relate to his concept of biculturalism.

II. The Dilemma of Biculturalism

While Ihimaera's later writings present a reality for the Maori which is contrary to the dreams reviewed in his earlier writings, they particularly accentuate a dilemma inherent in the concept of biculturalism. The stark reality of attempts at biculturalism as evinced in his writings, shows a marked tension consequent on the dispossession of land, urban drift, frustrated hopes, racism, social injustice, which eventuate in only a minority of Maoris making it in the Pakeha world:

> We are Maori. We are Polynesian. We inhabit a minority frame space within a majority frame work. We are the unemployed, the social time bomb. About eighty per cent of us live in city areas. Half of us are under the age of 19 and without skills in our culture. Our world is beset with pressures from within and without . . . . We are the dispossessed, the under-educated . . . . We are one in four children who appear before the Children's Court . . . . This is the bleak scenario.\(^\text{33}\)

But the paradox, which Ihimaera's concept of biculturalism spotlights, is how to reconcile Maori traditional values and demands

\(^{32}\)Ibid., p. 115.

In a modern, and very competitive, social system. Ihimaera recognises the reality and stifling nature of some of these demands and obligations on the young Maoris as they try to find their feet in the new world, particularly the insensitivity of the elders to the constraints of the new social structure, where time is of the utmost importance, and in which one does not leave one's work or means of livelihood at whim:

I had just sneaked into work, late again as usual, when the phone rang at my desk. - Hullo? I answered. There was a click at the other end and muffled mutterings of the caller as she tried to answer me.

- Hullo? she called. Anybody there? Aue, damn phone! - Auntie? Auntie Hiraina? I guessed. I heard a long sigh of relief. - I been trying to reach you for ages, Auntie said. Ever since the plane got in at Wellington. - What the heck are you doing here? - I'm waiting for you, Tama. Can you come and pick me up? - Oh Auntie . . . . - Never mind about work. This is important. I've come to collect our patu pounamu.34

While Maoris are in a rural setting, their culture deems it appropriate, and indeed socialises the young, to be at the beck and call of their elders. This response is neither practicable nor desirable in the new social structure. Yet Ihimaera feels that some of these cultural and social values should not be allowed to perish: "I hope that I can encourage Maori people to resist further change in the villages."35 This paradox accounts for some of the stresses in his fiction. It is, however, on the basis of the traditional family concept already discussed that an issue such as the one raised by Ihimaera in Whanau -- of what to do with an aged kaumatua -- becomes relevant and poignant. Does one follow the Pakeha solution of confining him to a home, where he will get excellent medical attention, but probably

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35 John B. Beston, "An Interview with Witi Ihimaera," p. 120.
die of loneliness in the cold anonymity of such a place: "After what Doctor Park told me about his condition, I feel worried. Annie shouldn't have taken him from the hospital. And as for my putting him in a home, I wasn't doing that to get rid of him . . . . I wanted him to receive proper medical attention. I was doing it for Dad . . . ." Or does one keep him amongst his people where he, again, probably would die, but where he would be happy among the familiar family aroha and warmth:

Oh, David, I thought that Annie could, just probably, be right about Dad. That being in a hospital would not be as good for him as recuperating in the village, among the people who mattered most to him. That if there was no hope of his getting better, then he should live his remaining days in the place where he'd been born. And then, I saw what my actions must look like from Annie's point of view . . . . It's just that my people value their old ones so highly that they feel disgust for anyone who would do that to their father. They hate me because I would do that not only to my father but to their kaumatua.37

This dilemma if anything, is probably, the most "powerful dramatization of the problems facing the new [Maori] generation in its attempts to find a relation between two worlds with ostensibly opposed sets of values."38

Ihimaera's fiction also establishes a link between urban drifts, the individualism and anonymity of city life with the reality of the high incidence of crimes involving Maoris. In his view, the total lack of the traditional mechanism of censure in the urban environment, as mentioned, results in Maoris throwing caution to the wind. They often do what they would not dare to do in the village, because there is

36 Witi Ihimaera, Whanau, p.126.
37 Ibid., p.127.
38 Alistair Fox, "In search of the Emerald City: the Short Stories of Witi Ihimaera," Pilgrim, p. 88.
no one to censure their actions.

Ihimaera's analysis of who is to blame on issues of social injustice, racism, and frustrated hopes and ambitions, also exposes the dilemma of biculturalism; and his frustration at the slow pace of change. While he accepts the practicality of the Pakeha social structure which encourages individuals to be responsible for their fate, and exhorts Maoris to discard their reticence and integrate themselves into the larger society, he also holds this society culpable for creating an atmosphere that disadvantages the Maori, even before the race is started.

Ihimaera feels that some Pakeha attitudes to Maoris accentuate the disadvantages already inherent in the social and cultural differences of the two races. He shows this through the comments and actions of characters such as the man in "The Escalator" who tells Miriama that the stairs, not the escalator are meant for people like her.\textsuperscript{39} Or the woman in "A Sense of Belonging" who refused to be served by the teller, Pari Wharepapa, because she is Maori.\textsuperscript{40} Even through the university lecturer in The Matriarch who, "pointing out a typically Maori home" tells his class "with a sneer" that: "No matter what opportunities one gives Maoris, one will always find them in homes like these."\textsuperscript{41} While the resolution of some of these episodes, shows an awareness that these attitudes and actions are not condoned by all, as exemplified by the encouragements of the shop attendant in "The Escalator" to Miriama, and Mr Morley, the bank manager, in the case of Pari Wharepapa in "A Sense of Belonging", they also throw Ihimaera's dilemma into broad relief, showing why he cautions

\textsuperscript{39}Witi Ihimaera, "The Escalator," The New Net Goes Fishing, pp. 69-75.
\textsuperscript{40}Witi Ihimaera, "A Sense of Belonging," The New Net Goes Fishing, pp. 99-106.
\textsuperscript{41}Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 105.
that it is hard to know when a slight or discourtesy is meant, implied, or imagined: "In New Zealand Pakeha-Maori relations aren't black and white, they're gray, or brown-white. It's difficult to say when hurt is intended or imagined, or when there's discrimination."42

Ihimaera gives the reasons for his initial restraint and disinclination to take potshots indiscriminately at the Pakeha as stemming from his "having a foot in both Maori and Pakeha camps."43 He sees his role as that of fostering the spirit of "te manaaki - mutual respect, mutual aroha among Maori and Pakeha for each other's cultural values and attitudes."44 In his view, an ability to bestride both worlds is an essential quality for this role. Ihimaera sees himself as ideally suited for the role, not only because he is trusted and respected by both Maori and Pakeha, but also because he has been married to a Pakeha, and so personally embodies the idea of biculturalism which he advocates. He is the first Maori novelist and short story writer to be published, and thus presents the Maori side of the story and has opened the door for other Maoris to follow suit. This act alone has ensured a place and high mana for him in Maori thinking. Atareta Poananga states that: "Witi Ihimaera, the author, has become a legendary figure among the Pakeha literary establishment, one of the first school of Maori writers to appear in the 1970s. He is now firmly entrenched as one of the leading Maori writers -- [and has a] reputation assured even if he never writes again."45 Also his posting as New Zealand Consul in

44Ibid., p. 1.
New York, a responsibility that recognises his talent and ability to represent New Zealand on the international scene, is indicative of his high standing among the Pakeha. Combined together, both these vocations, that of writer and that of diplomat, have amply endowed him with the qualities necessary to mediate between the Maori and Pakeha. This includes an ability to be heard by both parties and this is where his writings become invaluable. Atareta Poananga describes Ihimaera as having "an engaging, charming, open, disarming personality, embracing of both Pakeha and Maori, thoroughly bicultural in Pakeha eyes but without a trace of hostility to the Pakeha and their ways . . . . He is a Maori Pakeha can feel comfortable with, for unlike Maori 'radicals' and 'separatists' he is easy to be with, nonchallenging, non-threatening and undemanding."\(^46\) In spite of the apparent sarcasm and criticism directed at Ihimaera implied by Atareta Poananga in her essay, the kernel of her assessment is correct, and the qualities she identifies are essentially those that equip Ihimaera ideally for the role of mediator.

Viewed from the above perspective, and considered alongside his own argument for a broader application of biculturalism, Ihimaera's new stance and radicalised viewpoint (which urges the necessity of separatist programmes to ensure the survival of Maori culture) becomes paradoxical: "... to achieve these things may require what look like 'separate' institutions or separate programmes of support."\(^47\) Ihimaera himself recognises the validity of some of the arguments that have led to concerted assaults on the concept of biculturalism by Maori activists. This is seen in his advocacy of the

\(^46\)ibid., p. 26.

idea. As he says: "some separate development is necessary to the alteration of our direction as a nation." Even his comment to the notion "that the Maori cultural base needed to be regained if the Maori was not to become simply a brown Pakeha", echoes the stance of members of Te Ahi Kaa, Keepers of the Fire:

We are not anti-white. We are pro-Maori. So many of our people are told in so many ways every day that it is not good to be Maori. We want to rebuild the sense of pride in the Maori identity . . . so that our people will take that identity with them and wear it proudly and consciously where ever they are -- at home, at work, on the marae, in the institutions where they work.

Critics of biculturalism such as Maori 'nationalists' represented by Te Ahi Kaa--Keepers of the Fire, argue that the Pakeha does not want Maoris in positions of power nor do they want to share power with Maoris. This parallels Ihimaera's comment that: "The Pakeha do not want the Maori to be equal." Ihimaera seems to buy their argument that separatism would enhance the survival of Maori culture but with the added belief that on attainment of 'equality' and "establishment of symbols of culture" that both Maori and Pakeha would then be able to hold such symbols in common. Sceptics of both races would find this theory impracticable, but what is most pertinent is that it has created a dilemma for the proponents of the concept of biculturalism which is hard to reconcile to his views on racial harmony, particularly as it strengthens the arguments of Maori activists who are opting for separatism.

This thesis has striven to plot Ihimaera's definition,

48 Ibid., p. 10.
49 Witi Ihimaera, and D.S. Long, Introduction, Into the World of Light, p. 3.
50 Nicola Legat, p. 46.
51 Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch, p. 50.
52 Witi Ihimaera, "The Maori Landscape," p. 10.
development, and application of the concept of biculturalism as a response to the Maori sense of post-colonial tensions and alienation. In the process it has noted the often subtle shifts and changes of emphasis with regards to the concept, which are indicative of Ihimaera's changing attitude towards the Pakeha, and his vacillations in the face of concerted criticism from Maori activists. The change of tack is not surprising, given Ihimaera's stated aim of becoming a writer who can present the Maori side of the story from a Maori perspective. It thus stands to reason that he should listen to 'the voices' of the people whom he believes that he represents:"... he has always been conscious of pressure from the past -- voices chanting in the dark and saying, Yes that's right, No that's wrong."53

While Ihimaera the diplomat is a mouthpiece for all New Zealanders, Ihimaera the writer sees himself as a mouthpiece for Maori people. As he says, it is "apparent that I have been sometimes a writer, something more of a Maori", and this dual role has its resultant paradoxes which are made more complex by the stridency in the voices of Maori activists with their demands for separatism.54

It has been noted that Ihimaera's social consciousness and socialisation presupposes that he should articulate Maori concerns and grievances while at the same time remaining accountable to Maoridom for his utterances. This has led, in some instances, to Ihimaera's later writings restating, modifying, or refuting views already expressed in his earlier works. This thesis has already shown the restatements in The New Net Goes Fishing and The Matriarch of views contained in Pounamu Pounamu, Tangi and to some extent

53 Roy Murphy, p. 13.
54 Witi Ihimaera, "Maori Life and Literature: a Sensory Perception," p. 47. (my italics)
Whanau, which Ihimaera felt no longer reflected current realities of the Maori. The same is true of The Whale Rider, which restates concepts already covered by his earlier writings, but with an added feminist variant.

However, underlying all the views, and subtle shifts, Ihimaera's faith in biculturalism as a structured form of adaptation and a viable form of Maori response against the possibility of total assimilation, or cultural annihilation, remains strong. Ihimaera sees it as the only logical answer to Koro Apirana's vital questions: "Will we have prepared the [Maori] people to cope with the new challenges and the new technology? And will they still be Maori?" Even his admission that: "However, our journey was possibly more difficult because it had to be undertaken within Pakeha terms of acceptability. We were a minority and much of our progress was dependent on Pakeha goodwill" is basically an acknowledgement of social reality. The reality Ihimaera acknowledges is that New Zealand now belongs to both races, Maori and Pakeha, with the Pakeha comprising the majority, and that within this framework both races have to work together for the good of all.

If one compares the Maori response articulated by Ihimaera, with that reflected in Chinua Achebe's Nigerian fiction, however, a significant difference emerges. The Ibos of Nigeria, and other ethnic groups in Africa, were faced by a different situation, despite the similarities of colonial experience and British rule. Achebe's writings address these distinctive issues, and it is to the explication of his treatment of them that I now turn.

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56 Ibid., p. 57.
57 One acknowledges that the South African situation defies this assertion.
CHAPTER V

The Seer as Custodian of Regenerative Wisdom in Traditional Society: Achebe's View of the Role of the African Writer

Whereas in response to the New Zealand manifestation of post-colonial problems Ihimaera advocates biculturalism, the Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe proposes a different solution: reformism. Comparison of the two writers shows that this is because of the different historical contexts, and in part two of this thesis I will be demonstrating that Achebe's proposals are influenced by prevailing contemporary social situations in Nigeria. Such a comparison will prove the general proposition that there is no universal solution to post-colonial tensions, as each response reflects the peculiar nature of the problems that individual societies face.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to establish the circumstances that have conditioned Achebe's writing career. Achebe himself has written about the early influences that spurred him to become a writer, and what he sees as the writer's primary functions in contemporary African societies. He has several times said that reading Joyce Cary's Mister Johnson among other works of the period made him realise "that the story we had to tell could not be told for us by anyone else no matter how well gifted or well-intentioned." In an interview with Lewis Nkosi in 1962, Achebe, elaborating on this, said:

I was quite certain I was going to try my hand at writing, and one of the things that set me thinking was Joyce

Cary's novel set in Nigeria, Mr. Johnson, which was praised so much, and it was clear to me that this was a most superficial picture of -- not only of the country, but even of the Nigerian character and so I thought if this was famous, then perhaps someone ought to try and look at this from the inside.²

Achebe also mentioned that he has always been interested in stories: "I have always been fond of stories and intrigued by language -- first Igbo, spoken with such eloquence by the old men of the village, and later English which I began to learn at about the age of eight."³ Coupled with this was Achebe's "fascination for the ritual and the life" of the non-Christian neighbours of his childhood.⁴

In his answer to one of Lewis Nkosi's questions in the interview mentioned above Achebe said: "Well things are changing very fast but if one is interested, one can still see signs of what life used to look like."⁵ The implication of this is that Achebe, in writing, was aiming at preserving "what life used to look like", and to tell "their story" from the perspective of an indigenous African. As Philip Rogers notes: "Each of Achebe's four novels has had an obvious (but never obtrusive) purpose. Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God both aim to show that the African [had a] past."⁶ It could be argued that this act of preservation of the past is in consonance with his stated role of teaching, for Achebe grew up at a period when Anglophone school

⁴Ibid., p. 68.
⁵Nkosi Lewis, "Interview with Chinua Achebe in Lagos, August 1962," p. 5.
children were fed a diet of English literature that most felt they did not relate to culturally: "In those days the new British-style universities in Africa were intended to transplant into African soil what established academic circles in England regarded as the best features of English universities, without much regard for the special needs of the countries where they were set up."\(^7\) This was a period which also saw the traumatic results on the African psyche of decades of European calumniation of their cultural and religious heritages:

When I was a schoolboy it was unheard of to stage Nigerian dances at any of our celebrations. We were told and we believed that our dances were heathen. The Christian and proper thing to do was for the boys to drill with wooden swords and the girls to perform, of all things, Maypole dances. Beautiful clay bowls and pots were only seen in the homes of the heathen. We civilized Christians used cheap enamel-ware from Europe and Japan; instead of water pots we carried kerosine cans. In fact, to say that a product was Ibo-made was to brand it with the utmost inferiority. When a people have reached this point in their loss of faith in themselves their detractors need do no more; they have made their point.\(^8\)

One of the results of this sort of attitude was what Achebe sees as manifest "self-contempt" which leads the African into believing that they are inferior to all other races: "If I were God I would regard as the very worst our acceptance --for whatever reason -- of racial inferiority."\(^9\)

Chinua Achebe is most forthright when he delves into what he believes the role of a writer, particularly an African writer, to be. Many


\(^9\) Chinua Achebe, "The Novelist as Teacher," \textit{Morning Yet on Creation Day}, p. 44.
critics have made much of Achebe's essay, "The Novelist as Teacher", in which he makes mention of a boy in his wife's class who was ashamed of writing about the harmattan because he was afraid that the other boys would ridicule him and writes:

It is my business as a writer to teach that boy that there is nothing disgraceful about the African weather, that the palm-tree is a fit subject for poetry. Here then is an adequate revolution for me to espouse -- to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement. And it is essentially a question of education, in the best sense of that word. Here, I think, my aims and the aspirations of my society meet . . . . I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past -- with all its imperfections -- was not one long night of savagery from which the Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them.\(^{10}\)

The above factors have had the cumulative effect of sharpening Achebe's social consciousness. And it is this social consciousness, Cairns says, that informs Achebe's writings: "In that his political and philosophical stance so consciously informs his novels, Achebe's 'applied art' continues the tradition of the old-time Ibo artists. The productions of these artists were functional and utilitarian, with a clearly defined place in the social and spiritual life of the entire community."\(^{11}\) Achebe is adamant about the African writer's relationship to his society, as Rogers notes: "In Chinua Achebe's view, the African writer of our time must be accountable to his society; if he fails to respond to the social and political issues of his age, to espouse the 'right and just causes' of his people, he is no better than 'the absurd

\(^{10}\)Ibid., pp. 44-5.

man in the proverb who deserts his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames." 12 For Achebe, the African novelist as teacher has three primary functions in relation to his society: as historian, rescuing its past; as critic, analyzing its present; as mentor, helping to guide it towards its future.

In Achebe's view the African writer's first task is to rescue the African past from the colonial misrepresentation and biased stereotyping to which it had been subjected. Kofi Awoonor writes that: "Achebe's Things Fall Apart seems to have been inspired by a need to respond to what seemed to be Cary's sniggering laugh at Africa, whose image of filed teeth and bones stuck in the nose has scarcely receded in the Europe of Cary's colonial experience." 13 Continuing, he notes that: "To Achebe, the African world before the arrival of Europe was a well-integrated one, with dignity and honour . . . . As a story of the tragic encounter between Africa and Europe, [Things Fall Apart] is an attempt to capture and restate the pristine integrity which has been so traumatically shattered by that confrontation." 14

In Achebe's views, the artist -- writer, carver, composer, or dancer-- in contemporary African societies has to perform the dual function of educating his audience and helping them reclaim their past heritage. As he says, these artists like their historian counterparts, have the necessary function of "replacing short, garbled, despised history with more sympathetic account . . . . because we must begin to correct the prejudices which generations of detractors created about


14 Ibid., p. 252.
This, he saw in 1964 as a necessary step before any meaningful progress:

This is my answer to those who say that a writer should be writing about contemporary issues -- about politics in 1964, about the last coup d'etat. Of course, these are all legitimate themes for a writer but as far as I am concerned the fundamental theme must first be disposed of. This theme -- put quite simply -- is that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans, that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry, and, above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period, and it is this that they must now regain.

Achebe goes on elsewhere to say that: "The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact he should march right in front." He believes that in performing these functions the contemporary artist will only be following in the footsteps of their ancestors in traditional African societies: "Our ancestors created their myths and legends and told their stories for a human purpose . . . . Their artists lived and moved and had their being in society, and created their works for the good of that society." But the writer, Achebe says, must provide a view of this past (both colonial and early post-colonial past) which is not romanticised, but which is authentic and takes into consideration what he terms the "human condition."

The African writer must not only rescue his society's past, but

16Ibid., p. 8.
19Ibid., p. 24.
must also be a commentator on its present course. Achebe believes that the writer has to be a free critic in a society lacking such criticism. On this Chukwudi Maduka writes that to Achebe as to "most of the African writers . . . there is a direct relationship between literature and social institutions. The principal function of literature is to criticise these institutions and eventually bring about desirable changes in the society."\(^{20}\) It is pertinent to note that this function of social criticism, in Achebe's view, has to be for the benefit of that society. An example of this social consciousness and the over-riding impulse for "the good of the community" which informs his writings is seen in the preface to Achebe's book of essays, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, with its overt comment on public interest being an essential criterion to the resolution of any artist's doubts in his creation. Reacting to a widespread sentiment in the years following the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970, that the recent past was best forgotten, Achebe says:

> I do not agree. I believe that in our situation the greater danger lies not in remembering but in forgetting, in pretending that slogans are the same as truth; and that Nigeria, always prone to self-deception, stands in great need of reminders . . . . I believe that if we are to survive as a nation we need to grasp the meaning of our tragedy. One way to do it is to remind ourselves constantly of the things that happened and how we felt when they were happening.\(^{21}\)

This function of social criticism, is the least expounded part of Achebe's exposition of the artist's role in traditional African societies, and he sees it as a direct extension of the function of a teacher, namely, to chastise. Achebe acknowledges this not so pleasing but necessary aspect of the teacher's role when he tells other African writers that "we


must seek the freedom to express our thought and feeling, even against ourselves, without the anxiety that what we say might be taken in evidence against our race." He believes that contemporary African writers ought to seek out and criticise corruption and all forms of evil in the society without pausing to consider whether such criticisms will become ammunition for their detractors. Adrian Roscoe says, in discussing the above comment by Achebe, that: "The feeling of forever standing before a tribunal must be discarded."

Achebe sees this extension and application of the writer's role as important because in traditional African societies the two roles, that of critic and social commentator, are merged. Achebe's teachings, which are often scathing, presuppose the duty of chastisement as an integer of the role of a teacher. If the African writer should influence his society's perception and sense of direction, Achebe argues that he should have "a proper sense of history" and most importantly he should tell his society "where [they] went wrong, where the rain began to beat [them]." This is a function which Achebe believes has already been abdicated in contemporary African societies by those whose duty it rightly is as in other modern societies, the press:

Those who enter politics do so mainly out of self-interest; those who actively comment on the political scene, the journalists, are also clearly seeking their own interests in their manner of reporting political incidents. The mass of the people who are caught in the turbulence of politics are easily swayed and as easily erupt into violent action. The

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23 Ibid., p. 138.
press is resented but has to be stilled by bribery.\textsuperscript{26} Achebe puts it more bluntly through Chief Nanga in \textit{A Man of the People}: "If I don't give him something now, tomorrow he will go and write rubbish about me. They say it is the freedom of the Press. But to me it is nothing short of freedom to crucify innocent men and assassinate their character . . . . I don't say they should not criticize--after all no one is perfect except God -- but they should criticise constructively."\textsuperscript{27} To Achebe, then, freedom of the press represents an essential precondition for the existence of a meaningful democratic governance. He would agree with David Murphy that the press "is in some sense a bastion of democracy, a safeguard against the various assaults which are made on democracy."\textsuperscript{28} Achebe finds this function of the press comparable to the functioning in traditional village in African societies of consensus, where every adult male is entitled to contribute to debates on issues of concern to the whole society.\textsuperscript{29}

As historian of his society's past and critic of its present state, the African writer, Achebe believes, should not be a passive observer and recorder but should help form a vision of the future direction of his society. In the words of René Wellek, literature is a "reflection of reality" and provides the "truest mirror . . . if the author shows an insight into the structure of the society and the future direction of its evolution."\textsuperscript{30} Achebe's social consciousness is heightened by this

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Chinua Achebe, \textit{A Man of the People}, p. 74.
\item \textsuperscript{28} David Murphy, \textit{The Silent Watchdog: the Press in Local Politics}, (London: Constable, 1976), p. 11.
\end{itemize}
general belief, as noted by Chukwudi Maduka, which seems to pervade the African literary scene that: "Literature can play a great role in straightening the patterns of social change in Africa." Quoting Kofi Awoonor of Ghana, he argues, as Chinua Achebe does, that if the writer "has to provide a vision for those who are going to order his society . . . he must be a person who has some kind of conception of the society in which he is living and the way he wants the society to go." This parallels Achebe's views in his interview with Bernth Lindfors in which he states:

Yes, I think by recording what had gone on before, they [the African writers] were in a way helping to set the tone of what was going to happen. And this is important because at this stage it seems to me that the writer's role is more in determining than merely reporting. In other words, his role is to act rather than to react . . . 'Let us map out what we are going to be tomorrow.' I think our most meaningful job today should be to determine what kind of society we want, how we are going to get there, what values we can take from the past, if we can, as we move along.

He further states that "a writer in the African revolution who steps aside can only write footnotes or glossary when the event is over." This again is reflected in Maduka's statement that: "The African writer cannot afford the luxury of withdrawing into the cocoon of creativity in the name of art for art's sake. As a participant in the drama of social change in Africa, he can use his skills to help shape the future of the society."

32 Ibid., p. 13.
34 Ibid., p. 6.
35 Chukwudi T. Maduka, p. 17.
Achebe's writings highlight the above commitments and motivations. Those set in the past espouse the African cultural heritage while his more recent writings have aimed at ascertaining "where we went wrong, where the rain began to beat us" as a prerequisite to "knowing where to begin to dry ourselves." But in all his writings, Achebe has been consistent in the role he has chosen to play -- that of the teacher. He has not spared the rod as an instrument of chastisement where necessary. Achebe has seen it as necessary sometimes to change the focus and direction of his message, but the fundamentals have always been consistent and intact: "Having fought with the nationalist movements and been on the side of the politicians, I realized after independence that they and I were now on different sides, because they were not doing what we had agreed they should do. So I became a critic . . . . I was still doing my job as a writer . . . . I think what you do as a writer depends on the state of your society." It is this social consciousness and the added complication of a civil war (the result of the nationalists not doing what they agreed they should do) that induced the hiatus in Achebe's literary career which will be discussed later in this section.

It is my contention, therefore, that in spite of Chinua Achebe's remarks in his essay, "Colonialist Criticism", about European critical perception concerning "the African and responsibility", that he perceives the evasion and shirking of responsibility, as central to the

36 Chinua Achebe, "The Novelist as Teacher," Morning Yet on Creation Day, p. 44.
38 Chinua Achebe's essay, "Colonialist Criticism", is based on a paper read to the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies at Makerere University, Uganda, in January 1974; it is included in both Killam's African Writers on African Writing and in Achebe's book of essays, Morning Yet on Creation Day.
resolution of his people's post-colonial tensions. In Achebe's view, this is particularly important if meaningful democratic governance is to eventuate in African new states.

In line with the aim of this thesis, which is to assess the responses of two indigenous peoples to their respective post-colonial tensions through the fiction of the two writers chosen, this section will show that unlike Ihimaera, who believes 'bicultural integration' to be a viable solution to Maori post-colonial tensions, and contrary to his own critical views in "Colonialist Criticism", Achebe sees such post-colonial tensions and their solution in an entirely different light. While he believes that it is probably all right to apportion blames and point accusatory fingers at the evils and disruptions wrought by colonialism, he is also of the view that the African has not fared better at the hands of the post-colonial black administrative class. Coupled with the above views, on responsibility and governance, is a firm belief that a critical appraisal of Achebe's writings from the perspective that I have adopted will elucidate a more detailed perception of the writer's views on "how we have fared in the post-colonial period", his disillusionments and the reasons for them, and particularly what he sees as the solution.

It is my considered opinion that Achebe sees a fundamental reason for some of the post-colonial tensions as being the absolute lack of responsibility, restraint, and tolerance that necessarily go with democratic governance of any form: family, village, clan, or country. It becomes necessary at this juncture to define my use of the term --

responsibility, and its relevance and application to the thesis. Frequently when the term "responsible" is used in African societies, it is applied so as to distinguish between right and wrong. The interest of this thesis in this aspect of responsibility is only peripheral, for it is on its other definitions (as meaning 'accountable', 'answerable', 'deserving credit or blame for stewardship', 'reliable', and 'an ability to meet obligations', especially moral ones), that this analysis focuses. Neal Ascherson in his review of Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah makes much the same point:

In his new novel, his first since A Man of the People (1966), Chinua Achebe says, with implacable honesty, that Africa itself is to blame [for the corruption, mismanagement, collapse of democracy], and that there is no safety in excuses that place the fault in the colonial past or in the commercial and political manipulations of the First World. The first postcolonial leaders, for all their European educations and sophistication, utterly failed to meet their responsibility. And by the time that they began to understand the scale of their failure, their own brief period of hegemony was beginning to fall apart as power passed into the hands of more limited and infinitely more ferocious men, usually military . . . . It is a tale about responsibility, and the ways in which men who should know better betray and evade that responsibility.41

While one notes Achebe's call that African writers and critics should "... emulate those men of Benin, ready to guide the curious

41Neal Ascherson, "Betrayal," New York Review of Books 35.3 (Mar. 3, 1988), pp. 3-6. "Some of the points which Neal Ascherson's review makes of Achebe and his writing, particularly his stress on the issue of lack of responsibility, I have already arrived at independently. Also Nadine Gordimer's review harps on this issue of individual responsibility:'The ethos of this book is individual responsibility, and, whatever one's experience on the individual's limited effectiveness in the struggle for justice may have been, this ethos is presented with overwhelming conviction.' "A Tyranny of Clowns," New York Times Book Review (Feb. 21, 1988), pp. 1, 26.
visitor to the gallery of their art, willing to listen with politeness even to his hasty opinions but careful, most careful, to concede nothing to him that might appear to undermine their own position within their heritage or compromise the integrity of their indigenous perception", it is equally of primary importance that a perceptive analysis of his writings should elucidate those lessons of history which he seems so anxious to teach and should take cognizance of all facets of the inherent truth in those writings.42

Achebe's writings fall into two broad categories. The first, those set in the past -- Things Fall Apart (1958) and Arrow of God (1964) both examine a particular cultural world view prior to, and immediately preceding the advent of Europeans. The second, includes No Longer at Ease (1960), A Man of the People (1966), his book of short stories, Girls at War (1972), and his latest novel, Anthills of the Savannah (1987), which are set in the present and deal with contemporary Nigeria as it has developed over the thirty years of his writing career. This section of the thesis will, following the argument that Achebe's writings typify his people's response to their post-colonial tensions, show what Achebe believes to be his people's post-colonial tensions and the solution. It will also highlight Achebe's persistent probing of the issues of abuse of power and irresponsibility as reflected in his novels, and the centrality of these issues to the overall theme of his people's post-colonial tensions. In doing so, I intend to divide his writings into two broad categories -- those set in the past and the ones set in the present. Instead of basing my analysis on the chronological order in which his books are written, the arrangement will be based on the time and chronology of events. This, therefore, means that Arrow of God will

come immediately after *Things Fall Apart*, rather than after *No Longer at Ease*. While *A Man of the People* will follow *No Longer at Ease*, rather than *Arrow of God*. 
CHAPTER VI

The Manifestation of Abuse of Power in Achebe's Early Fiction

I. Things Fall Apart: Okonkwo: The Embodiment of Ibo Traditional Values and its Excesses, and Okonkwo the Deviant

Achebe believes that for contemporary African societies to make any meaningful progress, they have to establish concrete links with their past. In considering the first category of his fiction, those set in the past, and the fundamental messages that have given rise to his present disillusionment, it becomes necessary to observe from the outset that this belief has not changed: "But what I mean is that owing to the peculiar nature of our situation it would be futile to try to take off before we have repaired our foundations. We must first set the scene which is authentically African, then what follows will be meaningful and deep." This is because Achebe sees a people's apprehension of their world as reflective of their general perception of life, and their place in it.

Most readers and critics of Achebe's early writings agree that in Things Fall Apart Achebe aims to show the African society before the coming of the European. Critics such as G.D. Killam, Adrian Roscoe, Eldred Jones, and Kofi Awoonor among others, also acknowledge that in recreating the Ibo society of his grandfather's generation, Achebe paints a very realistic portrait of this people. Killam writes that: "Things Fall Apart is a vision of what life was like in Iboland between 1850 and 1900. Achebe makes a serious attempt to capture realistically


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the strains and tensions of the experiences of Ibo people under the impact of colonialism. What ultimately gives this novel its strength is Achebe's feelings for the plight and the problems of these peoples."² Achebe shows through an exposé of their daily routine and the complex nature of the interactions between individuals, with their gods, and their society, a deep awareness and understanding of the structural complexity of even the simplest societal organisation. Such social activities as inter-village wrestling matches become avenues of cultural exposition: "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 . . . . The whole village turned out on the ilo, men, women and children."³ Even family affairs such as marriages highlight the communal nature of the society's life. Such occasions not only afford both villages (the suitor's village and the woman's village)⁴ an opportunity of interacting socially, but also to examine and compare the different customs of the various neighbouring clans, and consequently theirs:

As the men ate and drank palm-wine they talked about the customs of their neighbours. 'It was only this morning,' said Obierika, 'that Okonkwo and I were talking about Abame and Aninta, where titled men climb trees and pound foo-foo for their wives'. . . . 'All their customs are upside-down. They do not decide bride-price as we do, with sticks. They haggle and bargain as if they were buying a goat or cow in the market.'

³Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, pp. 40, 42.
⁴In Ibo culture it is taboo in most places for people of the same village to intermarry because of the descent pattern from which villages are derived. Most families within a village trace their origins to the same ancestor, hence most public addresses begin with the greetings: "Umunnem na Umunnam" meaning fellow descendants from the same ancestral mother and father.
'That is very bad' . . . . 'But what is good in one place is bad in another place.'

As Awoonor says, Achebe's exposition is realistic for he recreates a society that is "governed by its well-tried mores, laws, sanctions, taboos, is well integrated, a living structure, an organism animated with the life and movement of its members and gods."  

*Things Fall Apart* thus symbolised for Achebe the beginning of this restoration and repair of "our foundations". Achebe's account and historical perspective is realistic, for despite his proclaimed goal, Awoonor acknowledges that:"As a man who set out to redress the balance and tell the African side of the story, he [Achebe] has done more than a propagandist's hack job." Things Fall Apart also sets out to correct assumptions that Africa is an historically barren landscape, both in the eyes of its detractors, Achebe says, and also in the eyes of its people themselves: "A writer who feels the need to right this wrong cannot escape the conclusion that the past needs to be recreated not only for the enlightenment of our detractors but even more for our own education."  

Achebe portrays Umuofia of *Things Fall Apart* as a pluralistic society which admires energetic, aggressive and ambitious members, one that is patient, tolerant and forbearing, entrenched in the wisdom of its ancients, yet flexible and adaptable when necessary. This is a society which, in Achebe's view, is not given to rashness, particularly as "its Oracle never sends it out to do battle in an unjust cause."  

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8 Kofi Awoonor, p. 280.
While the society extols the virtues that Okonkwo cultivates, its dynamic lies in its flexibility. Achebe shows that this society is accommodative. David Carroll makes the point that: "This open form of society is also very susceptible to outside influence, always ready to examine new ideas, . . . adaptable in the extreme if it finds these ideas acceptable." ¹¹ Arthur Ravenscroft observes that through Achebe's vivid presentation of the elaborate rituals of the society's life, "the impression emerges of a carefully ordered yet flexible culture, communal in nature yet allowing for a considerable measure of individuality." ¹² And as Carroll further remarks, "the flexible, non-authoritarian system fosters and is fostered by the highly individualistic temperament of the Igbo." ¹³ This society is like Achebe's Onitsha which "sees everything", and because of its belief that its survival as a social organisation lies in its flexibility, it "has come to distrust single-mindedness." ¹⁴ It is in this flexibility or lack of it that the difference between Okonkwo and his society lies: "Okonkwo aims to embody every virtue of his clan but he fails to achieve the balance and caution valued by his culture." ¹⁵

But Achebe does not only portray the virtues of the society, he also shows the society simultaneously practicing superstitious beliefs. These include the practice of viewing twins as portending evil, and of throwing them into the Evil Forest to die, human sacrifices, and exaggerated shows of manliness, such as when tribal members drink

¹³David Carroll, *Chinua Achebe*, p. 16.
publicly from the human skulls of their first victims during certain ceremonies. Oladele Taiwo writes of Achebe's fiction, that:

Besides the strengths in tribal society he gives the weaknesses. We therefore have a true and complete picture in which the whole background is fully realised . . . . He realistically and convincingly presents many aspects of village life -- the feast of the New Yam, the wrestling contest at the 'ilo', the display of the 'egwugwu' on festive occasions, the religious beliefs and activities of the people. . . .

Achebe's descriptions of either the virtues or weaknesses of the society are portrayed by showing how individuals fit within the communal life of the society. It is also through the collective participation of members of the society, in their daily rituals of existence, as noted by Taiwo above, that Achebe creates the impression of 'a world'. However, it should be noted, as Taiwo says, that Achebe does not judge the issues he presents; rather, he looks "at a situation from very varied points of view, sometimes bringing them before the reader simultaneously. The reader finds, almost invariably, that no one point of view is wholly acceptable and that, to reach a satisfying conclusion, several points of view have to be taken into consideration."

Realistic and enlightening as Achebe's portrayal of his society is, his writing is above all else a thematic exploration of the responsibility power imposes on those who exercise it, and of the consequences of its

16 Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, p. 10.
18 Eustace Palmer does not share this view. He notes in An Introduction to the African Novel that Achebe "does not merely record these instances of savagery without implying any judgement, for he carefully leaves clues and hints, structural as well as textual, as comments on the nature of the society he describes." pp. 52-3.
19 Oladele Taiwo, p. 112.
abuse. Achebe creates a cohesive society in *Things Fall Apart*, "with a stable system of values, with precedents of long-standing acceptance, supported by an oral tradition expressed often in proverbial fashion."\(^{20}\) This is a society that values masculinity, and measures success "in terms of a full barn, a big household of wives and children, a revered position in the councils of elders, titles, and respect due to his position, becomes the factor that defines Okonkwo, gives him respect in the eyes of his clansmen."\(^{21}\) Okonkwo epitomises his society, reflecting as he does its values: "The Igbo, like most African peoples, place great store on the manly virtues as depicted by the wrestling matches and the continuous warring between the various clans."\(^{22}\) Achebe's characterisation of Okonkwo accords with Awoonor's observation; and G. D. Killam puts it most succinctly: "At the centre of the community is Okonkwo, a character of intense individuality, yet one in whom the values most admired by Ibo peoples are consolidated."\(^{23}\) Illustrating further, and analysing Okonkwo's traits both as an individual, and as an embodiment of the values of his society, Killam says:

Okonkwo was 'one of the greatest men of his time', the embodiment of Ibo values, the man who better than most symbolized his race . . . [and] the premium which is placed on wealth, courage and valour among the Ibo people. Okonkwo was 'clearly cut out for great things' but he had earned his reputation, as a wrestler (he brought fame to himself and his village); as a warrior (he had taken the approved symbols of his prowess, the heads of five victims by the time he was twenty-one years old); as a man who had achieved personal wealth symbolized by his two barns full of yams, his three wives and, of great importance, the two titles


\(^{21}\)Kofi Awoonor, p. 262.

\(^{22}\)Ibid., p. 252.

\(^{23}\)G. D. Killam, *The Novels of Chinua Achebe*, p. 16.
he had taken, titles which can only be acquired when wealth has been achieved and quality proven.\textsuperscript{24}

Eustace Palmer, making basically the same points as Killam, explores the negativism of the society's values:

Okonkwo is what his society has made him, for his most conspicuous qualities are a response to the demands of his society. If he is plagued by fear of failure and of weakness it is because his society puts such premium on success; if he is obsessed with status it is because his society is preoccupied with rank and prestige; if he is always itching to demonstrate his prowess in war it is because his society reveres bravery and courage, and measures success by the number of human heads a man has won; if he is contemptuous of weaker men it is because his society has conditioned him into despising cowards. Okonkwo is the personification of his society's values, and is determined to succeed in this rat-race.\textsuperscript{25}

Critics such as Killam, Palmer, Ravenscroft and Awoonor, among others, all agree that Okonkwo incorporates the virtues of his culture as well as its excesses. Awoonor writes that: "Okonkwo . . . embodies all the virtues and excesses of this society. He is a wrestler, a leader, an intrepid farmer, a man of wealth, unyielding in the pursuit of the ways of his fathers . . . . Around Okonkwo is heard the rhythmic beats of Umuofia's heart."\textsuperscript{26} But Achebe's characterisation of the society highlights the existence of a balance of values. This is maintained by the integration of the male and aggressive qualities of the society with the female and protective qualities which some of Okonkwo's actions do not reflect. Obierika's counselling and Uchendu's explanation of the philosophy embodied in such a name as 'Nneka' meaning "Mother is supreme" were all attempts to remind Okonkwo of this principle.\textsuperscript{27} To Okonkwo the only emotion worth

\textsuperscript{24}ibid., p. 17.


\textsuperscript{26}Kofi Awoonor, p. 253.
displaying is that of anger, or of a show of strength and manliness, for to him love and affection exemplify weakness. This is the reason for Okonkwo's refusal to believe Obierika's statement that Ogbuefi Ndulue was a strong man in his youth who "led Umuofia to war in those days." In Okonkwo's mode of reasoning, a man who "could not do anything without telling" his wife can not be a strong man. Arthur Ravenscroft notes that "Okonkwo ... cannot see the wise balance in the tribal arrangement by which the female principle is felt to be simultaneously weak and sustaining." It is on account of Okonkwo's refusal to acknowledge this fundamental concept in his society's world view that, I believe, he parts ways with his society; and this mostly accounts for his tragedy. Most critics of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, particularly Killam, believe that Okonkwo is primarily a victim of the undermining of his culture by the colonisers. However, Achebe's characterisation of Okonkwo indicates that the colonial factor is a catalyst for Okonkwo's excesses are entirely his own responsibility. As will be seen in the cause of this analysis, these excesses are inherent, having manifested themselves time and again before he ever comes into contact with any European. For as Ravenscroft notes:

> Achebe implies throughout that Okonkwo is no mere automatic victim of a social setting which encourages the qualities he has cultivated. He does have the power of choice; men as highly regarded as he for courage and strength of character are shown not to have expunged gentleness from their hearts. Umuofia may place less value on these gentler virtues but does acknowledge and provide for them.

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28 Ibid., p. 62.
29 Ibid., p. 62.
This flexibility of the society contrasts markedly with Okonkwo's single-mindedness, and is most exemplified in the society's legal process. Carroll notes that the judgement scene in Things Fall Apart is unique, in that no attempt is made to extract the correct version of the story from the conflicting accounts of the disputants because, "the aim, characteristically, is to balance the disputing claims in order to achieve social justice . . . . By observing the spirit of the law a satisfactory compromise is usually reached which safeguards the solidarity of the group."\(^{33}\)

Okonkwo, as already mentioned, is shown to symbolise his society's values and exemplifies its virtues, but in Achebe's view he also contrasts with the norms of his society in the degree to which he is inflexible, preferring to apply the letter of the law pertinaciously, rather than to observe its spirit.

Okonkwo's discussion with Obierika after the killing of Ikemefuna highlights this inflexibility. He argues that Ala, the earth goddess could not punish him for obeying her dictates: "The Earth cannot punish me for obeying her messenger . . . . A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm."\(^{34}\)

While this argument is sound on a literal level, Ogbuefi Ezeudu's advice to Okonkwo that he should not have a hand in the killing of Ikemefuna because "that boy calls you father", which he ignores shows Okonkwo's lack of appreciation of the cyclical and interweaving nature of the deity's relationship with its worshippers.\(^{35}\) Obierika reiterates the same warning when he tells Okonkwo that: "But if the Oracle said that my son should be killed I would neither dispute it nor be the one to do it."\(^{36}\) In Ibo world-view a deity may demand, as

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\(^{33}\)David Carroll, Chinua Achebe, p. 16.

\(^{34}\)Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, p. 61.

\(^{35}\)Ibid., p. 51.

\(^{36}\)Ibid., p. 61.
Obierika says, that one's child be sacrificed. But unlike the Biblical Abraham, the person is neither expected to participate in, nor be the one to do the actual killing. To do either is sacrilegious, nso ani, an offence against the earth which was bound to bring retribution on the person from the Earth Goddess despite the argument that the act was committed at the instance of the deity, as Okonkwo reasons. David Carroll's definition aptly describes the role of the Earth Goddess and the deity's relationship with its worshippers:

Ala, the earth goddess, is usually considered the most powerful deity; she is the queen of the underworld and 'owner' of men both dead and alive. Closely associated with the cult of the ancestors, she is also responsible for Igbo morality and her priests provide a powerful integrating force in society by guarding her laws and punishing offenders.

However, Achebe indicates how Okonkwo's inherent fear of being like his father, of being thought weak and effeminate, leads him to excesses, even to killing Ikemefuna, who has become like a son to him. Many critics, among them Awoonor, trace Okonkwo's final tragedy to this singular act; an act which Obierika prophetically says is "the kind of action for which the [earth] goddess wipes out whole families."

Okonkwo's family is later symbolically wiped out when he commits nsoani, (crime against the earth) by inadvertently killing a kinsman. But the underlying impetus of Achebe's exploration is the question: To what extent should a man of valour, a man in authority, an elder of the clan, and a possessor of power exercise these? The answer to this question recalls Wole Soyinka's much maligned and often misunderstood comment that a Tiger has no need to proclaim its

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[38] David Carroll, Chinua Achebe, p. 17.
tigritude; because as Soyinka reasons, when the king of beasts appears it does not need to announce its presence, power, or prowess: it manifests them. All the other animals know this.40 In Achebe's own words: "You can tell a ripe corn by its look."41

Okonkwo's fear of being seen to resemble his father, which in turn informs many of his actions, is shown to be unreasonable when Achebe asserts that this society judges a man by his own worth and not that of his father:

Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father .... Okonkwo ... had risen so suddenly from great poverty and misfortune to be one of the lords of the clan .... But the Ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his chi says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so his chi agreed. And not only his chi but his clan too, because it judged a man by the work of his hands.42

Okonkwo has risen from rags and poverty to become one of the lords of the clan, representing his entire village among the assembly of the nine ancestral spirits that symbolise the nine children of the founder of the clan:

Each of the nine egwugwu represented a village of the clan .... The nine villages of Umuofia had grown out of the nine sons of the first father of the clan. Evil Forest represented the village of Umueru, or the children of Eru, who was the eldest of the nine sons .... Okonkwo's wives, and perhaps other

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40 Critics have Soyinka as supposedly having said that: 'I don't think a tiger has to go around proclaiming his tigritude', which Soyinka corrected in a recording taped by Janheinz Jahn in 1964, because it was taken out of context and says: I said 'A tiger does not proclaim his tigritude, he pounces .... When you pass where the tiger has walked before, you see the skeleton of the duiker, you know that some tigritude has been emanated there.' For context and more details see Hans M. Zell, and Helene Silver, comps and eds, "Wole Soyinka," A Reader's Guide to African Literature (London: Heinemann, 1972), pp. 191-2.

41 Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, p. 20.

42 Ibid., pp. 7, 24-5.
women as well, might have noticed that the second *egwugwu* had the springy walk of Okonkwo. And they might also have noticed that Okonkwo was not among the titled men and elders who sat behind the row of *egwugwu*. . . . The *egwugwu* with the springy walk was one of the dead fathers of the clan.\(^{43}\)

At the point at which Achebe opens the narrative Okonkwo has achieved both status and power in the society. What Achebe thus explores is how Okonkwo, having achieved these, uses them. *Things Fall Apart* being Achebe's first novel and dealing (as it was meant to) with the over-riding theme of showing that Africa had a past and history worthy of note before its first contact with Europe, has this parallel theme of abuse of power, subsumed. But as this thesis will show, it is a theme of which Achebe was conscious even at that early stage in his career as a writer, and which is present in all his writings. This theme is particularly significant to Achebe's exposition of his society's post-colonial tensions. Its germ was sown in *Things Fall Apart* and this is reflected in Achebe's characterisation of Okonkwo and exemplified by what eventually happens to him and the clan.

Achebe writes that Okonkwo was impatient with less successful men: "But he was struck, as most people were, by Okonkwo's brusqueness in dealing with less successful men."\(^{44}\) It is manifest that, having attained a position of success in the society, Okonkwo has forgotten the primal saying that "all fingers are never equal", and that no matter how industrious everyone is, they can never all attain the same measure of success. This insensitivity leads Okonkwo into insulting Osugo, who has taken no title, for contradicting him during a meeting: "Only a week ago a man had contradicted him at a kindred meeting which they held to discuss the next ancestral feast. Without

\(^{43}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. 81.\)

\(^{44}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. 24.\)
looking at the man, Okonkwo had said: 'This meeting is for men.' The man who had contradicted him had no titles. That was why he had called him a woman. Okonkwo knew how to kill a man's spirit."\textsuperscript{45} But the ramification of Okonkwo's attitude, his impatience, hot-temper, and brusqueness is more than he even realises, for Achebe says that he was impatient with his father also: "He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had had no patience with his father."\textsuperscript{46}

Unaka's fault, Achebe writes, was that he was improvident and a loafer, and not that he was a bad father \textit{per se}. Achebe mentions that when Okonkwo's crop failed in that terrible year of bad harvest, Unaka, like any father consoled his son, Okonkwo. But even the act of listening to his father was a trying experience for Okonkwo: "Unoka was like that in his last days. His love of talk had grown with age and sickness. It tried Okonkwo's patience beyond words."\textsuperscript{47} And as Awoonor mentions, Okonkwo's response to his father is unnatural and runs contrary to their society's world-view: "This intolerance of failure and contempt for lesser men marks his dealings with his own father, a behaviour which men in Umuofia find unnatural."\textsuperscript{48} A point which Achebe recalls and reiterates in \textit{No Longer at Ease} with respect to Obi, whose refusal to attend his mother's burial ceremony the people see as an aberration.\textsuperscript{49} Given the nature of Umuofia's cultural heritage, a culture where the line of division between the dead, the living, and the unborn is shown to be so thin as to be almost nonexistent, where their symbiotic interaction helps maintain the cosmic cyclical balance of the

\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., p. 24.  
\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., p. 23.  
\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., p. 23.  
\textsuperscript{48}Kofi Awoonor, pp. 262-3.  
\textsuperscript{49}Chinua Achebe, \textit{No Longer at Ease}, pp. 159-60.
Ibo world-view, Okonkwo's relationship to his father, which continued even after the man's death, though pragmatic, is nonetheless unwise. In Carroll's definition of the earth goddess (above) he notes that she is "closely associated with the cult of the ancestors" and goes on later to mention that "there is constant interaction between the world of the living and the dead, between the visible and invisible, the material and the spiritual."\(^{50}\) Okonkwo's spurning of his father therefore constitutes a break with one of the links that should bind him to the goddess and his other ancestors.

Okonkwo is also shown to be at variance with societal norms in another aspect. Achebe acknowledges that members of Ibo society are traditionally acquisitive and materialistic, but have a spirituality which helps keep the materialism in check:

> Anyone who has given any thought to our society must be concerned by the brazen materialism one sees around. I have heard people blame it on Europe. That is utter rubbish. In fact the Nigerian society I know best -- the Ibo society -- has always been materialistic. This may sound strange because Ibo life had at the same time a strong spiritual dimension -- controlled by gods, ancestors, personal spirits or *chi*, and magic. The success of the culture was the balance between the two, the material and the spiritual.\(^{51}\)

He goes on further to say: "Today we have kept the materialism and thrown away the spirituality which should keep it in check."\(^{52}\) Though Okonkwo's "wealth meant the strength of [his] arm" he is however, portrayed as ignoring this spirituality while single-mindedly embracing the materialism.\(^{53}\)

Added to the above failing, from the traditional society's point of

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\(^{50}\)David Carroll, *Chinua Achebe*, p. 18.


\(^{52}\)Ibid., p. 11.

\(^{53}\)Ibid., p. 11.
view, Achebe describes Okonkwo's short-temper and heavy-handedness, both with outsiders and with members of his household, as constituting grounds for reproach:

When he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he used his fist . . . . Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children.54

His inability to control his temper leads him time and again to transgress against the earth goddess, laying a foundation for societal sanction and the explication of the proverb of nza the little bird.55

Killam has noted that Achebe understates issues, preferring to express more through suggestiveness: "His typical method is based on allusion and implication which leaves much unsaid and thus his writing achieves a suggestiveness which communicates far more than he might achieve in long passages of explicit description."56 This leads, often, to the apprehension of the symbolic nature of some of Okonkwo's actions, and the society's response to them, only in retrospect.

Achebe characterises Okonkwo as intrepid and aggressive, both in war and on issues of concern to his clan. When one considers this, his high-handedness with members of his immediate family, especially with Nwoye and his younger wives, becomes irrationality bordering on an inability to know when and where to draw the line in exhibiting his manliness. This is most exemplified in his rash reaction to Ekwefi's disparaging remarks about guns that never shot:

And so when he called Ikemefuna to fetch his gun, the wife who had just been beaten murmured something about guns

54Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, pp. 4, 12.
55Ibid., p. 28.
56G. D. Killam, The Novels of Chinua Achebe, p. 11.
that never shot. Unfortunately for her, Okonkwo heard it and ran madly into his room for the loaded gun, ran out again and aimed at her as she clambered over the dwarf wall of the barn. He pressed the trigger and there was a loud report accompanied by the wail of his wives and children.\textsuperscript{57}

The repercussion to Okonkwo and members of his family would have been very grave had he killed his wife. But most importantly, Achebe suggests that this is an act of irresponsibility. Okonkwo, as a husband, should know and expect that a wife recently chastised or physically brutalised would resort to her most handy weapon -- her mouth. He, Achebe believes, should not expect her to extol the praises of her husband under such circumstances, but rather to 'rain' abuses and sarcasm on the husband. Again Okonkwo conveniently forgets the Ibo proverb that "one does not beat a child and forbid the child to cry." Okonkwo's tendency to overreach himself, his inability to control himself and his reaction to events, then, constitute Achebe's charge of abuse of power.

Okonkwo's desecration of the Week of Peace typifies this inability to rein in his temper and his reaction to events. As Achebe notes through Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess, the forefathers of the clan had ordained that for the good and benefit of the community, no matter what the provocation, no member of the clan should during this week exhibit any manifestation of anger. Ezeani tells Okonkwo that:

'You are not a stranger in Umuofia. You know as well as I do that our forefathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbour. We live in peace with our fellows to honour our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops will not grow' . . . . 'Your wife was at fault, but even if you came into your obi and found her lover on top of her, you would still have committed a great evil to beat her' . . . . The evil you have done can ruin

\textsuperscript{57}Chinua Achebe, \textit{Things Fall Apart}, p. 35.
the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish." 58

Achebe writes that Okonkwo's other wives in consternation reminded him that it was the sacred week and adds: "But Okonkwo was not the man to stop beating somebody half-way through, not even for fear of a goddess." 59 Achebe believes that one of the qualities of a wise person in any society, including the society of Things Fall Apart, is for that person to know and acknowledge when he is wrong. This idea is summed up in the Ibo saying that "admitting one's errors is not a mark of cowardice but wisdom." 60 Achebe thus suggests through the comment that Okonkwo was not one to stop anything half-way through, not even when he is in error, that he was not wise. He further states that although inwardly Okonkwo was contrite, "he was not the man to go about telling his neighbours that he was in error." 61

The effect of this stifling of his emotions was that "people said he had no respect for the gods of the clan. His enemies said his good fortune had gone to his head. They called him the little bird nza who so far forgot himself after a heavy meal that he challenged his chi." 62 Kofi Awoonor establishes the link between Okonkwo's arrogance, his tendency to overreach himself, and his abuse of power and his final tragedy by extending Achebe's imagery of 'the little bird nza', and "the great wrestler who, after having defeated all men, went into the spirit world and was confronted with a small wiry spirit who smashed him on the stony earth." 63 He further suggests "that perhaps by the

58 ibid., p. 28.  
59 ibid., p. 27.  
60 Ibo adage.  
61 Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, p. 28.  
62 ibid., p. 28.  
63 Kofi Awoonor, p. 267.
very nature of his character, Okonkwo was trying to overreach himself in the public display that accompanies the firing of cannons and guns to salute the dead. So at the height of his achievements and on the verge of achieving greater glories, the gods single him out for humiliation and destruction."  

If Awoonor's reading of Okonkwo's tragedy, that he was singled out for destruction by the gods, is correct, Achebe suggests that his fate is consistent with his calling as a warrior, but most especially it reinforces the traditional belief that the tribal gods are efficacious. Achebe believes that the dawn of colonialism rendered Okonkwo's type functionally redundant. It was therefore judicious and necessary that the gods, in performing their traditional function of protecting the clan, and seeing the old warrior who now constituted a time-bomb whose explosion would annihilate the whole clan as exemplified by the story of Abame, should defuse him the way they did. Achebe notes Okonkwo's deviation from the traditional norm of concert, particularly on decisions about whether or not to go to war which would affect the whole clan: "If Umuofia decided to go to war, all would be well. But if they chose to be cowards he would go out and avenge himself . . . . If they listen to [Egonwanne] I shall leave them and plan my own revenge . . . . I shall fight alone if I choose."  

Some critics have noted that Okonkwo commits suicide because he could not face the prospect of seeing the tribe disintegrate under the impact of colonialism. Their reading is based partly on Achebe's comment that Okonkwo was grieved because he felt that the clan has lost the will to fight like their ancestors: "Okonkwo was deeply grieved. And it was not just a personal grief. He mourned for the clan, which

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64 Ibid., p. 264.
65 Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart, pp. 179-81.
he saw breaking up and falling apart, and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia, who had so unaccountably become soft like women."66 But Achebe sees his tragedy as essentially that of some one whose parochialism blinded him to a complete awareness of the dynamic functioning of his society's response: "Life just has to go on and if you refuse to accept changes, then tragic though it may be, you are swept aside."67 The society's ability to adapt to any situation, which Carroll has already noted, is a survival mechanism appropriate to the new threat. The clan's action, of choosing not to fight a war they knew they could not win, was consistent with the wisdom of their ancestors: "The man who cannot discern his superior is immature."68 Achebe's remark that Okonkwo was swept aside because he refused to accept change accords with the theme of this analysis, that in certain ways he was not representative of his society. While he embodies the acquisitiveness of his society, its materialism, and its love of manliness, Okonkwo persistently shows an aversion to the other 'female' side on which its survival depends, and it is this that leads to his tragedy. In Achebe's view, Okonkwo's established deviation from his society, and the fact that most of his excesses were already manifest before he ever comes into contact with any European, indicate abuse of both power and responsibility. These are charges that are even more sustained in Arrow of God.

68Ibo adage.
II. Arrow of God: The Man Behind the Priest -- Ezeulu's Usurpation of Ulu's Power and Role

Achebe in an interview with Robert Serumaga in February 1967 says of Arrow of God that the society is essentially the same as in Things Fall Apart: "It is the same area - the supporting background and scenery are the same - I'm writing about the same people." But he notes the essential difference between Ezeulu and Okonkwo as being that Ezeulu like the society in this novel, and unlike Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart, is "ready to accept change... ready to come to terms with it... except where his dignity is involved." Killam writes that given the prevailing circumstances at the period, "aware that to resist the white man is impossible and foolhardy, concerned to know as much as he can about the intention of the white man and the nature of his religion and to turn it to his own account, Ezeulu has sent his son Oduche to the mission school" to be his eye there. Ezeulu rationalises his action by likening the world to a mask dancing: "If you want to see it well you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying had we known tomorrow." Carroll agrees and says that at the point at which the narrative begins, Europeans had established contact and "the villagers realise they must come to terms with this alien rule which is both powerful and permanent." As with Things Fall Apart, most readings and critics of Arrow of God consistently recognise the colonial intervention as a factor in Ezeulu's downfall, even as they

69 Chinua Achebe, "Interview by Robert Serumaga," p. 16.
70 Ibid., p. 16.
72 Chinua Achebe, Arrow of God, pp. 45-6.
73 David Carroll, Chinua Achebe, p. 88.
acknowledge Ezeulu's tendency, in Arrow of God, to mix his wishes with that of his deity. But I believe that Achebe views the colonial intervention as catalytic not causal: "It looked as though the gods and the powers of event finding Winterbottom handy had used him and left him again in order as they found him." And as will be evident in the course of this analysis, Achebe believes Ezeulu, even more than Okonkwo, to be guilty of an abuse of power. Achebe sees the fundamental reasons for his fall as woven into the answer to Ezeulu's own opening analysis of the basis of his power. The colonial factor, in Achebe's view, only accelerated the resolution of the issues which Ezeulu's analysis highlights.

Arrow of God extends the historical perspective found in Things Fall Apart and, as in that other novel, Achebe evokes a very realistic world as Carroll notes:

After the priest's familiar world, the most striking feature here, is the externality of the landscape and the climate. As the European records the threat of this alien environment, he makes us realise how convincingly normal is the African world which Achebe has created. There, rituals reflect harmoniously the movement of the seasons as the individual and the environment function together.

Arrow of God is also thematically consistent with Things Fall Apart; but even more than in that book Achebe's examination of the use and abuse of power is dominant in this novel. While in Things Fall Apart this theme was subordinated to that of "putting in a word for [one's] history, . . . tradition, . . . religion, and so on", in Arrow of God Achebe culls it out for in-depth analysis and, "chooses for his

75 David Carroll, Chinua Achebe, p. 95.
central character someone who embodies this dilemma in its most acute form -- the chief priest of Ulu." More than in any other of his writings, it is in this novel that Achebe delineates the relation between the society and their gods, and significantly, what emerges is an illustration of the reciprocity of this relationship. Achebe writes that Ulu was created in response to a special need of the clan:

In the very distant past . . . the six villages . . . lived as different peoples, and each worshipped its own deity. Then the hired soldiers of Abam used to strike in the dead of night, set fire to the houses and carry men, women and children into slavery. Things were so bad for the six villages that their leaders came together to save themselves. They hired a strong team of medicine-men to install a common deity for them. This deity which the fathers of the six villages made was called Ulu . . . . The six villages then took the name of Umuaro, and the priest of Ulu became their Chief Priest. From that day they were never again beaten by an enemy.

Therefore Ulu's primary purpose and function is the protection of the clan, and as if to underline this utilitarianism Nwaka recounts the experience of a deity in Aninta which failed its society: "And we have all heard how the people of Aninta dealt with their deity when he failed them. Did they not carry him to the boundary between them and their neighbours and set fire on him?"

But between the people and their deity is the priest; whose primary function is to interpret the will of the god to their society. In Nwaka's words, "the man who carries a deity . . . is there to perform [its] ritual and to carry sacrifice to him." Carroll writes:

Ezeulu's role is to interpret to Umuaro the will of the god and to perform the two most important rituals in the life of the village -- the Festival of the Pumpkin Leaves and that of the New Yam. The first of these ceremonies cleanses the six

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77David Carroll, *Chinua Achebe*, p. 91.
79Ibid., p. 28.
80Ibid., p. 27.
villages of their sins before the planting season . . . . The second . . . sanctifies the harvest and so marks the end of the old year and the beginning of the new.81

Achebe's exploration exposes not only the dilemma and stresses of a man poised between two worlds, "intermediary between the human world and the spirit world", but those of a man nonetheless who is prone to human foibles.82 On this, Achebe, talking to Lewis Nkosi, says: "I'm interested in this old question of who decides what shall be the wish of the gods, and . . . that kind of situation."83 Achebe's characterisation of Ezeulu assumes importance in the overall quest, particularly because, as I intend to show, Achebe believes that Ezeulu's abuse of the powers vested in him stems from arrogance and total disregard for the ultimate source of his power -- the people.

Achebe establishes Ezeulu's arrogance and pride early in the narrative. His philosophical speculations on the nature and scope of his power and relationship to his god and the people only go to underscore this arrogance, pride, and ambition:

Whenever Ezeulu considered the immensity of his powers over the year and the crops and, therefore, over the people he wondered if it were 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? No Chief Priest had ever refused. So it could not be done. He would not dare.84

81 David Carroll, Chinua Achebe, pp. 88-90.
82 ibid., p. 89.
It needs be mentioned at this point that Achebe's characterisation of Ezeulu as one in an intellectual mould ensures that the issue of ignorance becomes untenable, for Ezeulu in his ruminatnigs would have realised that Ulu, and consequently himself, remain strong and powerful because they are faithful to the original motive and justification for the creation of the god -- the protection of the clan; and the clan reciprocates. Achebe in his discussion with Robert Serumaga says of Ezeulu: "He is an intellectual. He thinks about why things happen -- of course as a priest; you see, his office requires this -- so he goes into things, to the root of things."  

In Achebe's view, being the priest of the most powerful deity in a confederation of six villages in a society that traditionally abhors the concentration of too much powers in an individual hand, should have sufficiently allerted Ezeulu to the dangers of even the slightest excesses. Achebe outlines some manifestations of Ezeulu's vanity and pride as prelude to the subsequent happenings: "Ezeulu did not like to think that his sight was no longer as good as it used to be and that some day he would have to rely on someone else's eyes as his grandfather had done when his sight failed .... But for the present he was as good as any young man, or better because young men were no longer what they used to be."  

Achebe goes on to show the sort of pranks that he plays on unsuspecting young men: "There was one game Ezeulu never tired of playing on them. Whenever they shook hands with him he tensed his arm and put all his power into the grip, and being unprepared for it they winced and recoiled with pain."  

84Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God*, pp. 3-4. (my italics)  
85Chinua Achebe, "Interview by Robert Serumaga," p. 16.  
87Ibid., p. 1.
irresponsibility bordering on juvenility in Ezeulu's act, but more than this, it highlights Ezeulu's human side which he seems to acknowledge only when it suits him (I will deal with this later).

Achebe seems to sustain Nwaka's accusations that Ezeulu was ambitious and wanted to arrogate more powers to himself, for he told Bernth Lindfors: "What [Nwaka] was saying in reality was that Ezeulu was getting too powerful . . . . The word 'king' was used here to describe someone who was trying to become too powerful. And this runs against the Ibo belief in the complete integration of life, against their concept of an individual versus society." The concept which Achebe mentions relates to the republican nature of Ibo traditional society, and their recognition of the human tendency to abuse unfettered power.

Continuing, Achebe agrees that Ezeulu "had enough priestly arrogance to attempt [to assume too much power]. This shows from time to time, [as] when he is confusing his thinking with the thinking of the god." As Carroll observes, "by means of these two festivals Ezeulu controls both planting and harvesting, and the village year which is dependent upon them", and consequently the people's lives.

The central question which plagues Ezeulu is the extent to which the power he wields is discretionary. This as illustrated in Carroll's analysis emanates from the fact that: "As his ceremonial appearance indicates, Ezeulu is half man, half spirit; in the world of man he is very powerful, in the world of spirits he is a servant." Ezeulu's

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89 This has been highlighted by Carroll's comments about Ibo traditional society's attitude to change and the individual, mentioned in relation to Okonkwo, but it is unequivocally illustrated in Achebe's analysis of power in Anthills of the Savannah which will be discussed later in this section.
91 David Carroll, Chinua Achebe, p. 91.
92 Ibid., p. 91.
dilemma is to find the appropriate position of the individual (himself) in the scheme of things. This also raises two fundamental questions whose resolutions are linked to Ezeulu's final tragedy: "What is the true relationship between the two roles? Where does his primary duty lie, with the god or the tribe?" Achebe's earlier comment is echoed in Carroll's statement that Ezeulu, "like Okonkwo, . . . is convinced that he must obey to the letter the commands of the god; unlike Okonkwo, he alone is equipped to translate these commands to the tribe. In this situation, Ezeulu is constantly tempted to mingle his own wishes with those of the god and then assert his authority over the six villages by means of Ulu's oracular power." This implies that Ezeulu was aiming at absolute powers which as Achebe mentions is alien to Ibo traditional world views. In an essay on chi, Achebe says:

At the root of it all lies that very belief . . . in the fundamental worth and independence of every man and his right to speak on matters of concern to him and, flowing from it, a rejection of any form of absolutism which might endanger those values. It is not surprising that the Igbo held discussion and consensus as the highest ideals of political process. This made them 'argumentative' and difficult to rule. But how could they suspend for the convenience of a ruler limitations which they impose even on their gods.

Against this view of chi, Ezeulu's rhetorical question to his friend, Akuebue: "Who tells the clan what to say? What does the clan know?" implying as it does that since he knows better than the clan what is best for it, the clan should have taken his advice; assumes significance in contrast. In Achebe's view, Ezeulu's two roles -- as

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93 Ibid., p. 91.
94 Ibid., pp. 91-2.
96 Chinua Achebe, Arrow of God, p. 131.
the powerful intermediary for the people and servant of the god -- need
not be at variance if he adequately recognises his responsibilities and
the ultimate source of his power -- for the simple reason that Ulu
belongs to, and functions for the benefit of the society. He is therefore
both the servant of the god and the people. The inclination of
individuals in positions of power to forget the derivative source of their
power thus constitutes the main focus of Achebe's enquiry.

To Achebe, the harmonious integration of the traditional society,
and the individual's place in that society are reflected in the
relationship that exists between the society in its entirety and the deity
or deities to which it subscribes. In the Igbo world-view propitiatory
rites become essential rituals in the maintainance of this cosmic
balance. As Onenyi Nnanyelugo, one of the ten most titled elders and
leaders of Umuaro says: "'We have asked Ezeulu what was Ulu's
grievance and he has told us. Our concern now should be how to
appease him. Let us ask Ezeulu to go back and tell the deity that we
have heard his grievance and we are prepared to make amends. Every
offence has its sacrifice, from a few cowries to a cow or a human
being.'"97 Ezeulu's response highlights his reluctance to acquiesce
to their request: "'If you ask me to go back to Ulu I shall do so. But I
must warn you that a god who demands the sacrifice of a chick might
raise it to a goat if you went to ask a second time.'"98 Moreover, such a
quibbling response makes his subsequent pronouncements suspect. It
is pertinent to recall the argument of Onenyi Nnanyelugo, representing
the voice of Umuaro, that the deity would not want Umuaro to perish:
"'Although I am not the priest of Ulu I can say that the deity does not
want Umuaro to perish. We call him the saver.'"99 He goes on to spell

97 Ibid., pp. 208-9. (my italics)
98 Ibid., p. 209.
out Ezeulu's duty and responsibility for him: "Therefore you must find a way out, Ezeulu... It is for you, Ezeulu, to save our harvest."

The most important issue in this argument, in Achebe's view, is the fact that, as representatives of Umuaro, the elders and leaders have the inherent right to absolve Ezeulu of any repercussions from the deity for any acts resulting from his obeying their collective wishes:

'Yes, we are Umuaro. Therefore listen to what I am going to say. Umuaro is now asking you to go and eat those remaining yams today and name the day of the next harvest. Do you hear me well? I said go and eat those yams today, not tomorrow; and if Ulu says we have committed an abomination let it be on the heads of the ten of us here. You will be free because we have set you to it, and the person who sets a child to catch a shrew should also find him water to wash the odour from his hand. We shall find you the water.'

Achebe deftly structures the complex issue of motive in such a way that, given the society's world-view and the sequence of the events, Ezeulu stands convicted of abuse of power, of arrogating the powers of his deity to himself. As Carroll remarks, "the complexity of [the] opening situation is controlled by the author's narrative focus", but by the time the different points of view in the argument have been considered, "Ezeulu the man begins to appear from behind the priest." As has already been mentioned Achebe uses foreshadowing as a structural device. In considering the Umuaro versus Okperi land dispute which is the root of the acrimony in Umuaro (If one excludes the jealousy of the gods and their priests for the moment), the situational ambiguity from which Ezeulu advises the clan has to be put into proper perspective. Of note is that throughout Ezeulu's advice and

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99 Ibid., p. 207.
100 Ibid., p. 207.
101 Ibid., p. 208.
102 David Carroll, Chinua Achebe, p. 94.
warnings to the clan, Achebe was careful in his diction; Ezeulu never told the clan that Ulu has categorically forbidden it to go to war because it was a war of blame: "Who would have thought that they would disregard the warning of the priest of Ulu who originally brought the six villages together and made them what they were?" As Ezeulu himself suggests: "One half of him was man and the other half mmo -- the half that was painted over with white chalk at important religious moments. And half of the things he ever did were done by this spirit side."

By acknowledging that half of the things Ezeulu ever did were done by his human side, Achebe creates interpretative ambiguity. Later Ezeulu warns: "'Is there any man or woman in Umuaro who does not know Ulu, the deity that destroys a man when his life is sweetest to him? . . . Do [they] think illu [will] fight in blame?'" Again he does not state that illu says it will not fight a war of blame.

The issue is further compounded by Nwaka's snide but true remark that Ezeulu's mother came from Okperi. Achebe intends the attendant raillery: "One man said that Ezeulu had forgotten whether it was his father or his mother who told him about the farmland" to emphasise the fact that this was a normal village palaver at which every one was entitled to contribute opinions as of right, including Ezeulu.

Achebe underlines Ezeulu's later reluctance to accede to the wishes of the clan: "Leaders of Umuaro, do not say that I am treating your words with contempt; it is not my wish to do so. But you cannot say: do what is not done and we shall take the blame. I am the Chief

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104 Ibid., p. 192.
105 Ibid., p. 27.
106 Ibid., p. 17.
Priest of Ulu and what I have told you is his will not mine . . . . The
gods sometimes use us as a whip."\(^{107}\) To Ezeulu's argument that they
cannot ask him to "do what is not done", a statement which Achebe
highlights by italicizing, the elders of the clan replied by giving
"numerous examples of customs that had been altered in the past when
they began to work hardship on the people."\(^{108}\) This shows that
irrespective of what the problem is, its resolution should take account of
the general welfare of the clan as its first priority.

Achebe does not only unequivocally indicate Ezeulu's
unwillingness to undertake the task of presenting the clan's request to
their deity, but when he eventually does accede he is distracted, thus
casting doubts on the final result of the quest: "As Ezeulu cast his
string of cowries the bell of Oduche's people began to ring. For one brief
moment he was distracted by its sad, measured monotone and he
thought how strange it was that it should sound so near -- much nearer
than it did in his compound."\(^{109}\)

If one agrees with such critics as Killam and Eldred Jones
amongst others that the narrative structure of *Arrow of God* is
carefully and competently organised, the final resolution of the
narrative becomes anticlimactic in that it raises the question of
Ezeulu's credibility as a priest. Is he telling the truth when he tells the
elders of the clan that the message he has is from Ulu? Carroll,
Awoonor, Killam, and even Achebe all agree that Ezeulu had a
tendency to ascribe his wishes to the god, but there is more. This
question assumes importance if one recalls that chapter sixteen of the
novel ends with the deity, Ulu, mortifying his priest, Ezeulu, for

\(^{107}\) Ibid., p. 208.
\(^{108}\) Ibid., p. 209.
arrogating to himself the powers that rightly belongs to his deity, and for plotting revenge, and even scheduling it to suit his convenience: "'Ta! Nwanu!' barked Ulu in his ear, as a spirit would in the ear of an impertinent human child. 'Who told you that this was your own fight?' . . . . 'I say who told you that this was your own fight to arrange the way it suits you? . . . . Beware you do not come between me and my victim or you may receive blows not meant for you!'"^110

But most significant is that Ulu's chastisement comes immediately after Ezeulu has decided what time he plans to have his revenge on Umuaro: "Behind his thinking was of course the knowledge that the fight would not begin until the time of harvest, after three moons more. So there was plenty of time."^111 So one would naturally assume that after Ulu's rebuke, Ezeulu would shelve his plans and allow the deity to decide how he wants to conduct the fight, particularly as Ezeulu comments: "It was a fight of the gods. He was no more than an arrow in the bow of his god."^112 But again Achebe foreshadows Ezeulu's later action by adding: "This thought intoxicated Ezeulu like palm wine,"^113 an expression which connotes relish. If one were to believe, for a moment, that Ezeulu were carrying out the wishes of Ulu, and that he had interpreted Ulu's words as assent for him to punish Umuaro, the above comment dispels that belief. One would think that, in recognition of his role as an intermediary and the portentous implications of the punishment for the clan, "the thought" would not "intoxicate Ezeulu like palm wine."

The opening statement of chapter eighteen plainly demonstrates that Ezeulu's subsequent pronouncements and arguments are suspect.

^110 Ibid., pp. 191-2.
^111 Ibid., p. 191.
^112 Ibid., p. 192.
^113 Ibid., p. 192.
Achebe writes: "After a long period of silent preparation Ezeulu finally revealed [what he had been planning all along] that he intended to hit Umuaro at its most vulnerable point -- the Feast of the New Yam."¹¹⁴ There is no indication that this was Ulu's decision. Because Ezeulu's actions are premeditated and calculated to mortally wound, if not destroy the clan, no other resolution of the conflict would have sufficed because as Ezeulu remarks "the punishment was not for now alone but for all time. It would afflict Umuaro like an ogulu-aro disease which counts a year and returns to its victim" in order to make the deity impotent, thus destroying the people's dependence on it.¹¹⁵ Achebe remarks for the second time that:

So in the end only Umuaro and its leaders saw the final outcome. To them the issue was simple. Their god had taken sides with them against his headstrong and ambitious priest and thus upheld the wisdom of their ancestors - that no man however great was greater than his people; that no one ever won judgement against his clan.¹¹⁶

The concluding paragraph is remarkable for its introvertive irony:"If this was so then Ulu had chosen a dangerous time to uphold that truth for in destroying his priest he had also brought disaster on himself."¹¹⁷ This was precisely the point: that Ulu, by destroying itself, was upholding the basis of its own existence, which is to protect the clan. In a world in which it was progressively being made redundant, being likened to a dead god, it was proper that in its death throes the deity should in the face of such unimaginable recurrent calamity as faced Umuaro raise "to the stature of a ritual of passage" its demise.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 201.
¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 219.
¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 230.
¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 230.
Obika's death thus becomes an appropriate propitiation in this ritual of passage in conformity with the people's world-view, recalling Onenyi Nnanyelugo's comments about sacrifice of appeasement: "Every offence has its sacrifice, from a few cowries to a cow or a human being."\(^{119}\) It has to be recalled that at Ulu's creation the clan had sacrificed one of themselves as appropriate to the potency of the "medicine" that became the deity. The god, in reciprocation, efficaciously carried out its functions: "From that day they were never again beaten by an enemy."\(^{120}\) Faced once more by a threat of similar magnitude, an impending calamity, it is fit that the god should rise to the challenge. But this time the resolution of the foreboding disaster requires the death of the deity itself to avoid the annual recurrence of the problem: "the punishment was . . . for all time. It would afflict Umuaro like an ogulu-aro disease which counts a year and returns to its victim."\(^{121}\) Hence this, as in the creation of the deity, requires a propitiatory sacrifice that is commensurate with the 'task' the deity has to perform, of saving the clan. To 'cushion' its demise, as in its creation, in accordance with Ibo world-view, requires appropriate sacrifice. Obika's death fulfils this function, but more than this, it represents the most proportional resolution that conclusively incorporates Ezeulu without leaving any loose ends. As in Okonkwo's case, the final resolution has to leave the existence of the society itself uncompromised. Ulu has to vindicate the society's original belief and trust in it, even at the risk of its own destruction, or the downfall of its priest:

It was not simply the blow of Obika's death, great though it was. Men had taken greater blows: that was what made a

\(^{120}\)Ibid., p. 15.
\(^{121}\)Ibid., p. 219.
man a man. For did they not say that a man is like a funeral ram which must take whatever beating comes to it without opening its mouth; that the silent tremor of pain down its body alone must tell of its suffering?

At any other time Ezeulu would have been a match to his grief. He would have been equal to any pain not compounded with humiliation. But why, he asked himself again and again, why had Ulu chosen to deal thus with him, to strike him down and then cover him with mud? 122

In this final resolution, Achebe's repetitive proverb, "that no man however great was greater than his people; that no one ever won judgement against his clan" becomes symbolic. 123 For it evokes and underlines the derivative basis of power which its holders are wont to forget. And in a rhetorical manner the proverb becomes the answer to Ezeulu's earlier questioning of the nature of the power and authority which he holds. It also emphasises Achebe's established enquiry, of the responsibility power imposes on those who exercise it, which is taken up in his subsequent writings, particularly his 'political' fictions.

122 Ibd., p. 229.
123 Ibd., p. 230.
CHAPTER VII

A Legacy Squandered: Achebe's Disillusionment at Post-colonial Irresponsibility in No Longer at Ease and A Man of the People

I. No Longer at Ease: The Failure of the First Indigenous Administrative Class

No Longer at Ease is Achebe's second novel, but in the historical time sequence which he has adopted for his works it falls into the third slot after: Things Fall Apart, which deals with the period, 1850 - 1900,1 and Arrow of God, which deals with the period from 1900 to the late 1920s.2 No Longer at Ease thus brings the period up to approximately 1960. Because of Achebe's conscious use of this time sequence it becomes necessary to disregard the fact that No Longer at Ease was published before Arrow of God, in order to appreciate not only his development of the themes already identified, but also the progressive sense of disillusionment that pervades both this work and A Man of the People.

Achebe's Things fall Apart and Arrow of God, while establishing the fact that Africa had a past before its contact with Europe, also show that not all post-colonial tensions have their origin with the colonial encounter. Achebe believes that some of the problems have their roots in pre-colonial society. That these problems arise as a result of some individuals apprehending only partial truths in their society's world-

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2 David Carroll, Chinua Achebe, p. 88.
view. In Achebe's view, they have assumed significance and become contemporary problems as a result of society's initial lack of foresight. He believes that the society, in adapting to the 'encounter', failed to be discriminating in its choice of what is necessary from its past for the future: "What values we can take from the past, if we can, as we move along", and what we should not. As Achebe says in the interview with Serumaga:

But unfortunately when two cultures meet, you would expect, if we were angels shall we say, we could pick out the best in the other and retain the best in our own, and this would be wonderful. But this doesn't happen often. What happens is that some of the worst elements of the old are retained and some of the worst of the new are added on to them.

Achebe illustrates this lack of foresight with some examples, two of which will suffice to exemplify the point. He sees the imported cash economy of Europe as being in consonance with the traditional society's inherent materialistic tendencies. Nevertheless, he says that the post-colonial society's refusal to temper this acquisitive tendency with the traditional spirituality which had hitherto held the materialism in check and maintained a balance, has compounded some of the original problems which the traditional society was able to contain by an adherence to this spirituality. Killam, talking specifically of Things Fall Apart, mentions how the traditional system was upset by the coming of Europeans with their "alien and more powerful system of government, law and Christian religion, coupled with the introduction of a cash economy, the traditional balance between the temporal and spiritual, the male principle of acquisitiveness of which Okonkwo is the archetype, and the female principle of religion embodied in Ani, the Earth Goddess, is upset."

Killam's comment ignores the


individual's role in maintaining this balance. It ignores the fact that in this society, the balance, welfare, and society's survival, are nurtured by the integration of both the male and female principles, but that the society depends on the individual's appreciation of these for their perpetuation.

Achebe also mentions the inclination of individuals in contemporary society to repudiate traditional values without acquiring adequate substitutes as engendering some of the tensions: "One of the most distressing ills which afflict new nations is a confusion of values." 6 Achebe goes on to describe an incident which he says happened in "1958 or 59":

There was an accident at a dance in a Nigerian city. Part of the wall collapsed and injured many people -- some seriously. Incredible as it may sound some car-owners at the dance refused to use their cars to convey the injured to hospital. One man was reported as saying that his seatcovers would be ruined . . . . It merely shows a man who has lost one set of values and has not yet acquired a new one -- or rather has acquired a perverted set of values in which seatcovers come before a suffering human being. I make bold to say that such an incident could not have happened in a well-knit traditional African society. 7

Achebe sees this clash of values or more appropriately, lack of values in the post-colonial society as one of the principal causes of the post-colonial tensions in the society. Obi Okonkwo, the protagonist, of Achebe's No Longer at Ease illustrates this modern phenomenon, as this analysis will prove. But more important in Achebe's view, is the fact that at the period just before independence the destiny of many of

7Ibid., pp. 10-11.
the new nations of Africa were in the hands of the emergent black administrative class, represented by Obi Okonkwo. In this class were vested the authority and privilege of shaping and mapping out the course that these colonies would take on independence, and of laying the foundations on which democracy could be built. Neal Ascherson, remarking of the hope placed on Obi's generation, states: "In this decade of African catastrophe, it is hard to reconstruct the optimism and certainties of the emergent African political class thirty years ago, and of their liberal-minded European sympathizers. Independence seemed the happy-ever-after conclusion. . . ."8

It is necessary from the outset to establish that Obi Okonkwo is a representative character and that Achebe uses him to illustrate the dilemma of the society at large, and of "the Nigeria" in a state of flux: "Obi Okonkwo is a representative of the African intelligentsia which, on the eve of independence, looked upon itself -- and was looked upon by ex-colonial powers, as well as by the masses of Africa -- as the natural leaders of the new society."9 They were thus accorded all the privileges, and given all the authority necessary to accomplish this task for the future of their people. The society, in Achebe's view, had also gone to an extraordinary length to 'create', equip, and set this class apart, as its future leaders through education: "Six or seven years ago Umuofians abroad had formed their union with the aim of collecting money to send some of their brighter young men to study in England. . . . They had taxed themselves mercilessly to raise eight hundred pounds to send him [Obi] to England. Some of them earned no more than five pounds a month. . . . They had wives and school-going children."10

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Achebe further states that the society had "laboured in sweat and tears to enrol Obi", and by extension his class, "among the shining élite."\(^{11}\)

But the society had done these things, creating and educating the 'Obis', with specific expectations. In the traditional society, one's first responsibility is the recognition that within the framework of that culture from which the individual sprang, the person's duty, as defined by Carroll, "is the constant awareness of the self as an integral part of the organic whole of the village or tribe through which one acts or achieves identity."\(^{12}\) The society, in recognition of the above, trained this class of people in the belief that whatever skills they acquire would be used for the benefit of the society. Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, therefore, explores how this class discharged their mandate, and what the consequences have been for society of their failure to discharge this obligation honourably.

Achebe, at the time of writing *No Longer at Ease*, was concerned that, as heirs of the new order, this new emergent black administrative class might not have been adequately equipped for the task of self governance (since it is assumed that democratic processes demand very high standards of commitment, honesty and, above all, responsibility in those vested with authority, to be productive, meaningful and sustained). Mr Green tells Obi that:

\[\text{You know, Okonkwo, I have lived in your country for fifteen years and yet I cannot begin to understand the mentality of the so-called educated Nigerian. Like this young man at the University College, for instance, who expects the government not only to pay his fees and fantastic allowances and find him an easy, comfortable job at the end of his course, but also to pay his intended [fiancée]. It's absolutely incredible. I think}\]

\(^{11}\)Ibid., p. 98.  
\(^{12}\)David Carroll, *Chinua Achebe*, p.78.
Government is making a terrible mistake in making it so easy for people like that to have so-called University Education. Education for what? To get as much as they can for themselves and their family. Not the least bit interested in the millions of their country-men who die everyday from hunger and disease.'13

Granted, Mr Green 'is not an agreeable man to represent a moral stand point';14 but despite his sarcastic tone, or even because of it, Achebe uses him to point at underlying problems of both the emergent black administrative class represented by Obi, and to Nigeria as a country in transition: "There is no single Nigerian who is prepared to forgo a little privilege in the interest of his country. From your Ministers down to your most junior clerk. And you tell me you want to govern yourselves."15 Considering the social circumstances of the period, that this was a society in transition, Achebe believes that Obi and his class were symbolic pioneers. The philosophy espoused by the President of Umuofia Progressive Union shows what the society expects of its pioneer class: "We are pioneers building up our families and our town. And those who build must deny ourselves many pleasures."16

Ironically, the antagonism of Obi Okonkwo for "the Greens" and the stereotypical picture of Mr Green, dims the poignancy of his message -- 'that a country that is born on a cesspool of bribery and corruption' was not matured enough to value democracy.17 I should hasten to say that the Nigeria of No Longer at Ease, on the verge of transiting from a colony into an independent nation, is not unlike a villager from a rural

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16Ibid., p. 82,
community in his first journey to an urban environment. Both demand tentative, almost hesitant steps and constant vigilance, or else, just as the villager is liable to be run-over by a moving vehicle in the unaccustomed bustle of the city if he is not careful, or miss his way, the country is also liable to collapse or be destroyed, if those vested with authority are not honest, responsible, and careful.

It is my contention that Achebe portrays this Nigeria in terms that are similar to the way he portrays the main character, Obi Okonkwo. The problems that beset both are similar, and their solutions or lack of solutions are also similar. Achebe's analysis of the problems and challenges that this emergent black administrative class, which Obi represents, face as a result of both societal and family demands and expectations, and how they respond to these, shows why he indicts them of irresponsibility.

It is through the effective use of flashback, that Achebe attempts to explore the various factors that are responsible for the failure of Obi and his class. The satirical ending Achebe gives No Longer at Ease, which is also the beginning of the narrative, begins this exposition: "Everybody wondered why. The learned judge, as we have seen, could not comprehend how an educated young man and so on and so forth. The British council man, even the men of Umuofia did not know. And we must presume that in spite of his certitude, Mr Green did not know either." 18 By beginning the narrative at the end, and doubling back, Achebe traces 'where the rain began to beat the society'.

Achebe believes that members of this class did not seem to comprehend the enormity of the responsibility asked of them as representatives of the people at large. They are depicted as having

18Chinua Achebe, No longer at Ease, p.170.
adopted the common attitude which sees the government as an amorphous, unquantified establishment to which they owe no personal commitment: "'Have they given you a job yet?' the Chairman asked Obi over the music. In Nigeria the government was 'they'. It had nothing to do with you or me. It was an alien institution and people's business was to get as much from it as they could without getting into trouble."\textsuperscript{19}

Even the education which the society makes possible for this class, becomes for them, a means to material acquisition:

A University degree was the philosopher's stone. It transmuted a third-class clerk on one hundred and fifty a year into a senior Civil Servant on five hundred and seventy, with car and luxuriously furnished quarters at nominal rent. And the disparity in salary and amenities did not tell even half the story. To occupy a 'European post' was second only to actually being a European. It raised a man from the masses to the elite whose small talk at cocktail parties was: 'How's the car behaving?'\textsuperscript{20}

As Mr Green remarks, education, to Obi and his class, is a means "to get as much as they can for themselves and their family." None of them is shown to be "the least bit interested in the millions of their country-men who die everyday from hunger and disease."\textsuperscript{21} Neither were they prepared, as Mr Green says, "to forgo a little privilege in the interest of [their society]."\textsuperscript{22}

Achebe views maturing for an individual as having a lot in common with a country on the verge of attaining independence, both demand more than the average sense of responsibility. Obi and his class are shown to be interested only in the material perquisites of their positions: "Obi bought a Morris Oxford \textit{a week} after he received his

\textsuperscript{19}ibid., p.33.
\textsuperscript{20}ibid., p.92.
\textsuperscript{21}ibid., p. 116.
\textsuperscript{22}ibid., p. 153.
letter of appointment. Mr Green gave him a letter to the dealers saying that he was a Senior Civil Servant entitled to a car advance. *Nothing more was required. He walked into the shop and got a brand-new car.*"23 Earlier in the day Obi had been given sixty pounds as 'outfit' allowance: "'You think Government give you sixty pounds without signing agreement?' It was only then that Obi understood what it was all about. He was to receive sixty pounds outfit allowance."24 Even this early in Obi's career, he is shown to embody the perverse corruption which he criticises, as he falsifies his statement of expenditure after receiving another allowance because he "had not realised that the allowance was not a free gift to be spent as one liked."25

The scramble, for Obi and his class, is for the distribution of what Nigerians call 'the national cake.'26 This metaphor likens the economic resources of the nation to a cake which exists so that anyone in a position to do so, might carve from it as big a piece as he possibly can for himself and his family and, by extension, for his tribe or ethnic group.

Achebe thus identifies Nigeria's tragedy as the fact that the country, even at birth, already carried the germs of decay, through the still-born idealism of such people as Obi Okonkwo. As Gerald Moore notes: "Achebe does not see Obi Okonkwo as a tragic hero. The pressures that pull and mould him are all pressures making for compromise and accommodation . . . . But Obi is destroyed by 'doing what everyone does;' by running away from scandal, living above his

23Ibid., p.66 (my italics).
24Ibid., p.67.
25Ibid., p.155.
income, taking bribes."^{27}

The economic and materialistic tensions that Obi Okonkwo experiences in *No Longer at Ease* need be put into perspective to explain why Achebe is preoccupied with the notion of 'responsibility'. It is my view that to Achebe, the term 'responsibility' is central to the resolutions or understanding of the tensions and problems of Obi Okonkwo, the Nigerian elite class he represents, and the Nigerian state.

If we organise the 'evidence' which Achebe presents to us, and if we treat Obi as a real person, as Achebe's kind of social realism invites us to do, then we find that a lot of Achebe's criticisms and his stern reproof of this class begin to make sense. Obi is on a salary of forty-seven pounds and ten shillings (£47.10). Tabulated below are the economic demands on him both obligatory and self imposed:

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<td>Incidental expenses</td>
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^{27} Gerald Moore, *Seven African Writers*, pp. 70-1.

^{28} Chinua Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, pp. 61, 69, 89,95, 99, 100, 125.

*Steward's actual salary is not indicated, but given the status consciousness of the society, and that salary differences are normal ways of emphasising this status, it could not be less than the amount stated here when compared to the gardener's salary of 10s.6d x 6 flats = £3.3s monthly.*
Achebe, foreshadowing Obi's financial irresponsibility, had said through Mr Green that: "You will do well to remember... that at this time every year you will be called upon to cough up forty pounds for insurance... It is, of course, none of my business really. But in a country where even the educated have not reached the level of thinking about tomorrow, one has a clear duty." When the insurance letter came, Obi "had just a little over thirteen pounds in the bank", thus proving Mr Green's assessment of him, and the class he represents, to be correct. For a civil servant who has no other source of income, but his monthly salary of forty-seven pounds and ten shillings (£47.10), to be spending about seventy-four pounds, three shillings and seven pence indicated financial imprudence and lack of planning and foresight -- or an anticipation of illegal means of getting the difference.

Considering the earlier remark about the society's expectations from its class of pioneers, it is enlightening at this point to analyse Obi's expenses with a view to determining which of them are not really important or necessary. This exercise will also be helpful in ascertaining Achebe's views about the main character and his role. The first thing to note is that Obi's pride and his refusal to accept the four months period of grace before starting the repayment of the loan for his studies, put pressure on his finances and compounded his lack of planning (which I will come to later):

Take this matter of twenty pounds every month to his town union, which in the final analysis was the root of all his troubles. Why had he not swallowed his pride and accepted the four months' exemption which had been allowed, albeit with bad grace? Could a person in his position afford that

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29 ibid., p. 95.
30 ibid. p.95.
kind of pride? Was it not a common saying among his people that a man should not, out of pride and etiquette, swallow his phlegm? 31

Obi did not need a driver and could have saved himself the monthly payment of four pounds and ten shillings ( £4.10), but in keeping with the status of a 'senior service' and to boost his ego, he hired one. Also with his deep involvement with Clara, and by the steward's admission that Clara still cooks for Obi, his need for a steward was minimal. Achebe indicates this through Sebastian's statement that: "God knows Clara used twice as much meat when she made the soup herself!" and so Obi could have dispensed with the services of a steward. 32 This could have saved him not only the salary, but another mouth to feed and thus also reduce his monthly feeding expenses. Since Clara's feeding in Obi's house cannot be quantified because she has her own house and Obi, we will assume, also eats at her house when he visits her, one will base the analysis on the fact that only two people live in Obi's house -- Obi himself and the steward. Therefore, dispensing with the steward would reduce the feeding expenses by almost fifty per cent (although there are other variables that one should not go into here for the sake of simplicity). Doing away with the services of the steward would also reduce the consumption of electricity because the steward's quarters would then not use as much power as when occupied, plus the other sundry expenses and electricity consumptions which Obi pays for by virtue of the steward's presence in the house.

So merely dispensing with the duties of the driver and the steward would have reduced Obi's expenses by as much as fifteen pounds a month both in wages, feeding, and lighting. Thus, with the other

31 Ibid. p.155-6.
32 Ibid. p.100.
adjustments that any responsible man 'starting life' has to make in his
day to day existence, like not being pig-headed, swallowing his pride
when it is necessary, budgeting his expenses against his income and
avoiding such extravagance as buying an engagement ring worth
twenty pounds (£20.00) at a period when one shilling could buy fifty
cups of garri, Obi could have lived within his means.

Having looked at the financial demands on Obi Okonkwo, it is
necessary to also assess the societal expectations and demands on him.
This is important as both demands cannot really be divorced from each
other. Society expects Obi and his class to reflect their pioneer status in
their behaviour. Paradoxically, the same society expects them to live
like elites, with all the trappings that the type of life demand -- a car,
driver, steward and other such luxuries:

What they did not know was that, having laboured in sweat
and tears to enrol their kinsman among the shining elite,
they had to keep him there. Having made him a member of
an exclusive club whose members greet one another with
'How's the car behaving?' Did they expect him to turn round
and answer: 'I'm sorry, but my car is off the road. You see I
couldn't pay my insurance premium.' That would be letting
the side down in a way that was quite unthinkable. Almost
as unthinkable as a masked spirit in the old Ibo society
answering another's esoteric salutation: 'I'm sorry, my
friend but I don't understand your strange language. I'm
but a human being wearing a mask.' No, these things could
not be.

The society also expects that they use their positions to the benefit
of their own people. Umuofia Progressive Union's discussion on
Joshua's plight, reflects this:

'Joshua is now without a job. We have given him ten pounds.
But ten pounds does not talk. If you stand a hundred pounds
here where I stand now, it will not talk. That is why we say

33 Garri is a Nigerian staple food.
34 Chinua Achebe, No Longer at Ease, p.98.
that he who has people is richer than he who has money. Everyone of us here should look out for openings in his department and put in a word for Joshua . . . . Thanks to the Man Above," he continued, 'we now have one of our sons in the senior service. We are not going to ask him to bring his salary to share among us. It is in little things like this that he can help us. It is our fault if we do not approach him. Shall we kill a snake and carry it in our hands when we have a bag for putting long things in?'

The society, represented in this instance by Umuofia Progressive Union, expects Obi to use his position to the advantage of the immediate family represented also in this context by the people of the same tribe or kindreds -- to find jobs for his people irrespective of whether the applicants are qualified for the jobs or not. No one questions the morality of the expectations. The prevailing feeling is that as long as he is doing it for 'us' it is all right, 'us' referring to people from his tribe, clan, or kindreds.

Obi is also expected to look sophisticated, dress in European suits and speak like a 'been to':

Everybody was properly dressed in agbada or European suit except the guest of honour, who appeared in his shirt sleeves because of the heat. That was Obi's mistake Number One. Everybody expected a young man from England to be impressively turned out . . . . Obi's English on the other hand, was most unimpressive. He spoke 'is' and 'was' . . . . when he sat down the audience clapped from politeness. Mistake Number Two.

While expecting him to be sophisticated, dress and generally behave like a 'been to', the society also believes and expects Obi to maintain his links with the tradition and culture of his people. More than anything, it is this antinomy that Obi finds hardest to reconcile.

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36 'Been to' is a Nigerian euphemism in the 1950's and 1960's for Nigerians who have travelled overseas, particularly to Europe.
37 Chinua Achebe, No Longer at Ease, pp.31-3.
The vehemence with which his association with Clara -- an Osu-- is received by everyone clearly exemplifies this duality.

At this point it becomes necessary to define what an Osu is in order that Obi's predicament may be more easily appreciated. An 'Osu' in Igboland is a person, male or female, who is dedicated to any of the gods or goddesses. The person's origin is immaterial. He or she becomes the property of the god or goddess and may not marry or be married by any person other than another Osu. Because they are taboo, even their intercourse with the freeborn are very limited, and it was not until the advent of christianity into Igboland that it became possible for an Osu and a freeborn to sit under the same roof. The traditional sanction on the Osu system is so powerful that to this day, in some areas of Igboland, any freeborn who marries an Osu automatically becomes an outcast or Osu and their offspring forever become outcasts.

When Joseph heard that Obi intended to marry an Osu, his reaction typified the traditional reaction to such a 'preposterous' idea: "'You know book, but this is no matter for book. Do you know what an Osu is? But how can you know?'" In that short question he said in effect that Obi's mission house upbringing and European education had made him a stranger in his country -- the most painful thing one could say to Obi.38

The President of Umuofia Progressive Union in his own reaction says: "You may ask why I am saying all this. I have heard that you are moving with a girl of doubtful ancestry, and even thinking of marrying her . . ." and that is as far as he gets before Obi's rage erupts and he stumps out of the meeting.39 Christopher, who is the only character in the book most likely to understand Obi's predicament and

38 Ibid., p.144.
39 Ibid., pp.82-3.
appreciate his point of view, is even more dogmatic: "You may say that I am not broad-minded, but I don't think we have reached the stage where we can ignore all our customs. You may talk about education and so on but I am not going to marry an Osu."40

Obi's father's reaction is even more graphic. On learning the name of Clara's father, he laughed. Achebe writes that: "It was the kind of laughter one sometimes heard from a masked ancestral spirit... And the meaning of that laughter was clear: 'I did not really think you would know; you miserable human worm!'"41 When Obi uses the biblical arguments that "we are Christians", and that "the Bible says that in Christ there are no bond or free", he only elicits a pause and a sombre reply from his father.42 Obi's father goes on to explain:

'My son, ... I understand what you said. But this thing is deeper than you think. ... I know Josiah Okeke very well. ... I know him and I know his wife. He is a good man and a great Christian. But he is Osu. Naaman, the captain of the host of Syria, was a great man and honourable, he was also a mighty man of valour, but he was a leper.' ... Osu is like leprosy in the minds of our people. I beg of you, my son, not to bring the mark of shame and of leprosy into your family. If you do, your children and your children's children unto the third and fourth generations will curse your memory. ... You will bring sorrow on your head and on the heads of your children. Who will marry your daughters? Whose daughters will your sons marry? Think of that, my son. We are Christians, but we cannot marry our own daughters.'43

Isaac Okonkwo thus sums up the society's attitude to the 'Osu' and more importantly shows that the problem transcends the immediate. If Obi marries Clara, their offspring become outcasts and subject to societal discrimination for ever. Obi's dilemma is that his

40Ibid., p.144.
41Ibid., p.132.
42Ibid., pp.132-3.
43Ibid., pp.133-4.
Christian upbringing, western education, and his own emotions have not adequately prepared him for these antinomies -- demanding that he be sophisticated and urbane while at the same time retaining and espousing the tradition and culture of his people, even when these traditions and cultures run counter to his own wishes and principles.

Having said all this, one questions why Achebe should choose for his hero, a man who is naive enough to leave the sum of fifty pounds (£50.00) which he borrowed, in the glove compartment of his car while going into a night club, particularly at a time when he is in a financial crisis, and a man who does not know that a worker who earns income has to pay income tax? The answers to these questions are interwoven with Achebe's belief that Obi and his class lacked any sense of both individual and collective responsibilities. Achebe in an analysis of what he believes is the trouble with Nigeria, in a booklet, The Trouble with Nigeria, writes that: "The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership." Achebe also questions, through Mr Green, whether Obi and his class actually appreciate the 'responsibility' that is demanded of them by the very act of setting them apart. He consistently contrasts Mr Green's attitude to duty with Obi's to expose the difference between one attitude that is responsible and another one that is not. It is of note that Mr Green tendered his resignation when he felt that the country was going to be granted independence in 1956: "they said he had put in his resignation when it was thought that Nigeria might become independent in 1956. In the event it did not happen and Mr Green was persuaded to withdraw his resignation."

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45 Chinua Achebe, No Longer at Ease, p.105.
In Mr Green, Achebe has painstakingly portrayed a man of unquestionable integrity, devoted to his duties and very responsible. As Obi himself agrees:

Take, for instance, his devotion to duty. Rain or shine, he was in the office half an hour before the official time, and quite often worked long after two, or returned again in the evening. Obi could not understand it. Here was a man who did not believe in a country, and yet worked so hard for it. Did he simply believe in duty as a logical necessity? He continually put off going to see his dentist because, as he always said, he had some urgent work to do.46

It is evident from the above, and the comments of Miss Tomlinson that "he pays school fees for his steward's sons," coupled with the fact that all his comments about the emergent administrative class -- the educated Africans -- are true; that Achebe has sympathies for Mr Green's point of view.47 For Mr Green, it is not just a question of not believing in the country as Obi says, but not believing in the administrative capabilities of the new emergent black administrative class which Obi represents. Miss Tomlinson comments that Mr Green "says the most outrageous things about educated Africans", and as Achebe indicates, all his comments about educated Africans 'not being capable of handling their own affairs', in respect of Obi, prove to be true.48 It is no wonder then that a man as dedicated to building the country as he is, humane to his employees, understandably could not

46Ibid., p.105.
47Ibid., p.104.
48Ibid., pp.104-5. (Note Mr Green's comments on the issue of yearly car insurance which questions Obi's level of responsibility. Surely, anyone who buys a car should be aware that periodically he would be expected to renew the person's car and driver's licences, and the car's insurance policy on expiry. But Obi proves this assumption wrong as evidence shows: when his insurance policy expires he was not prepared. Also note Obi's naivety as analysed by Ravenscroft in relation to the issue of income tax which will be looked into later.)
bear to see his years of hardwork dissipated by the naivety and incompetence of administrators like Obi Okonkwo: "Charles -- you know the messenger -- told me that sometime ago the A.A. wanted to sack him for sleeping in the office. But when the matter went up to Mr Green, he tore out the query from Charles's personal file. He said the poor man must be suffering from malaria, and the next day he bought him a tube of quinacrine."49

Achebe sees Obi's argument, that the black emergent administrative class learnt their corrupt attitudes from their colonial masters, as balderdash: "It is not the fault of Nigerians. . . .You devised these soft conditions for yourselves when every European was automatically in the senior service and every African automatically in the junior service. Now that a few of us have been admitted into senior service, you turn around and blame us."50 Obi's comments about Mr Green's dedication to service, cited earlier, proves this assertion wrong. When one compares Obi's frequent leaves of absence with Miss Tomlinson's remarks that Mr Green even defers seeing his dentist because of his commitment to duty, it becomes obvious that Achebe also does not agree with Obi's above assertion.51 Miss Tomlinson states that: "'There's a lot of truth in what he [Mr Green] says, ' . . . I'm sure there is.' I don't mean about you, or anything of the sort. But quite frankly, there are too many holidays here. Mark you, I don't really mind. But in England I never got more than two weeks' leave in the year. But here, what is it? Four months.'"52

Even if Obi's statement were true, there is an Ibo adage that 'a

49 Ibid., pp.104-5.
50 Ibid., p.154.
51 Ibid., pp.153-4.
52 Ibid., pp. 153-4.
man does not toss his loin-cloth into the fire because he sees those of his relations in flames.' This implies that even if the colonial administrators were corrupt, the emergent black administrators as 'sons of the soil' need not have followed suit, were they truly responsible and committed to building up their country. Instead, they destroy what 'the Greens' have already built.

Obi and his class have, by virtue of academic attainment, been admitted into the privileged circle of leaders without having acquired the intrinsic qualities that go with it. They have in the course of gaining western type education (which calls for a whole new way of evaluating issues) lost or discarded their traditional values. But in acquiring the academic knowledge, they have not acquired those intrinsic cultural qualities which only long-term socialization in the culture can give. As Carroll notes, talking of Christian converts and educated Africans:

Converts were not simply substituting a Christian for a tribal god; they were exchanging a religion through which they were identified with the tribe for a religion without any such affiliations. This is why the security and power offered by the impressive missionary educational system were so necessary. The converts for a variety of reasons had jettisoned the rationale of traditional African life, and now they were to be given a vital role in the new forms of society which the missionaries were creating out of the destruction of the old. These forms, it should be added, were often opposed to those predictable structures legislated by the administrators.\(^53\)

But Achebe sees a fundamental flaw in the whole equation as being that certain values (some already mentioned) can only be internalised through thorough socialization. This could not be acquired with a three or four years stint abroad. Achebe, I believe, is concerned that with products like Obi at the helm of affairs, Nigeria

\(^{53}\text{David Carroll, } Chinua Achebe, \text{ pp. 9-10.}\)
was not adequately prepared for the responsibility of being independent. Achebe's problem was that to openly assert that this was the case would have turned the ire of the people against him, particularly at a time that people were clamouring for independence. Odili nevertheless makes the point in *A Man of the People*: "Poor black mother! Waiting so long for her infant son to come of age and comfort her and repay her for the years of shame and neglect. And the son she has pinned so much hope on turning out to be a Chief Nanga. . . . It is a favourite of my father's who, by the way, still thinks we should never have asked the white man to go." And also the Minister, Hon. Sam Okoli in *No Longer at Ease*: "Whiteman don go far. We just dey shout for nothing' . . . . Then he seemed to realise his position. 'All the same they must go. This no be them country.'" Hon. Sam Okoli concluded by saying that "... our people have a long way to go."^56

Achebe is particularly disgusted with the institutionalisation of corruption as a way of life by the high and low of the country. He painstakingly documents the views of people from all walks of life on bribery, because it is an issue that he sees as central to the whole concept of responsibility. Achebe is of the view that the corruption of illiterate officials while inexcusable could be understood within the context of Obi's analysis: "But take one of these old men. He probably left school thirty years ago in Standard Six. He has worked steadily to the top through bribery -- an ordeal by bribery. To him the bribe is natural. He gave it and expects it. Our people say that if you pay homage to the man on top, others will pay homage to you when it is your turn to be on top."^57

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^55| Chinua Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, p.68.

^56| Ibid., p.69.
But Obi and his class were pioneers; their job was to liberate the society from such social injustices inherited from the ancients as the caste system. They were to map out the direction for the future of the society by dismantling such structures that necessitate an "ordeal by bribery". Most especially, having been to 'the mother country', and having witnessed democracy in practice, and all that sustains and buttresses it, Obi and his class were expected to 'show' their people the light. They were expected to lay the precedents by which the society would function, evaluate, and judge the actions of their leaders. This is particularly important since the checks and balances which functioned well in the traditional system, were now powerless in the new dispensation.

But the perpetuation of the status quo which Obi's succumbing to corruption implies represents a negation of this hope. It also suggests that the minister, and the class that Obi referred to in his analysis of "ordeal by bribery", would continue to flourish. The Ibo have an adage which states that 'it is when people are drunk that they lose all inhibitions and reveal their real and innermost thoughts.' The Minister in "his unguarded moment" had actually revealed a view held by most people in the country, that there is nothing wrong with giving and receiving bribes. One of the members of the panel that interviewed Obi when he applied for job, as if to confirm that bribery had been ordained, asked Obi: "Why do you want a job in the civil service? So that you can take bribes?" It is pertinent to remember that this statement or question is the man's only contribution

57 Ibid., p. 21.
58 Ibid., p. 88.
59 Ibid., p. 88.
60 Ibid., p. 40.
throughout the lengthy interview.

To Achebe, the most repulsive thing about bribery is not the custom officer's open extortion: "I can be able to reduce it to two pounds for you. . . . I fit do it, but you no go get Government receipt."61 It is not even the policemen's history of demanding bribes on the highways: "'How much they take?' asked the driver. "'Ten shillings" gasped his assistant."62 It is the general apathy of the people to corruption.

Obi is generally blamed either for taking a paltry sum: "... the president said it was a thing of shame for a man in the senior service to go to prison for twenty pounds. He repeated 'twenty pounds', spitting it out. 'I am against people reaping where they have not sown. But we have a saying that if you want to eat a toad you should look for a fat and juicy one.'"63 Or, blamed for being naive in the art of taking bribes: "It is all lack of experience . . . . He should not have accepted the money himself. What others do is tell you to go and hand it to their houseboy."64 Obi is never blamed for the corrupt practise itself. To the people, Obi's sin is not in being corrupt, but inept.

It is true that there are societal demands on Obi and his class. For, Achebe does not underrate the difficulty of the task that Obi and his class are called upon to perform. Some of these demands are apparently conflicting, but Achebe questions if the tensions such demands generate are too much for Obi and this class to contain. As has been mentioned, Achebe considers the issue of both personal and collective "responsibility" as central to the whole concept of self-governance, and he sees Obi Okonkwo as typical of the average Nigerian graduates of the period who were the inheritors of the new

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61 Ibid., p.30.
62 Ibid., p.43.
63 Ibid., p.6.
64 Ibid., p.6.
nation. As has also been illustrated, society expects Obi, by virtue of his position, to demand and accept bribes as his due. As Joseph's friend tells him in respect of Obi:

'E go make plenty money there. Every student who wan' go England go de see am for house.' "E no be like dat," said Joseph. "Him na gentleman. No fit take bribe." 'Na so,' said the other in unbelief.

The society also expects those who indulge in such dishonest activities, as Obi does, to be clever enough not to be caught: "Obi tried to do what everyone does without finding out how it was done." Paradoxically the same society, as exemplified by Joseph's implicit defence of Obi, believes that he and his class should be gentlemen of honour, and that they should refuse such corruptive influences, and thus usher in a new era. It is therefore these contradictions, and Achebe's comments about no one understanding why Obi succumbs to corruption, that No Longer at Ease tries to explicate.

Achebe sees the resolution of these conflicting demands as only possible through the actions of people who are exposed to both worlds, as Obi and his class are. As already indicated, Achebe like Ihimaera, sees the ideal solution to the post-colonial tensions as being the merger of the positive values of both cultures -- European and indigenous -- but this, he says, is not always possible. Achebe believes that it is only Obi and his class, by virtue of their exposure to both cultures that could begin to even contemplate this merger. Obi and his class thus represented, for the society, this hope. They also embodied the society's main hope of being liberated from both old dogmas and the shackles of established corruption. For, as Achebe explains, only those with a

65ibid., p.77.
66ibid., p.6.
"proper sense of history" and a vision of where their society should be heading, could help their society.68

Unfortunately Achebe characterises Obi as both naive and having no proper sense of history. He achieves the first by exposing the superficiality of Obi's responses in his dealings and relationships with other characters, particularly with Clara and with Umuofia Progressive Union. As Cook says: "In all these delicate relationships Obi contrasts unfavourably with the elders of the Union."69 Achebe achieves the second through glimpses of Obi's past, and his alienation from his people, and from his roots.

Obi's alienation stems both from his upbringing and his liberal western education. Traditionally, a child in Igboland belongs to the community, and his obeisance to the culture and tradition of his people rests as much on what the child picks up instinctively by association with other children and the community at large, as on the parent's teachings. By depriving Obi of this second and fundamental part of his 'childhood lessons,' his parents had helped alienate him from his roots:

Isaac Okonkwo was not merely a Christian; he was a catechist. In their first years of married life he made Hannah see the grave responsibility she carried as a catechist's wife. And as soon as she knew what was expected of her she did it, sometimes showing more zeal than even her husband. She taught her children not to accept food in neighbours' houses because she said they offered their food to idols. That fact alone set her children apart from all others, among the Ibo, children were free to eat where they liked.70

This childhood upbringing has not only estranged Obi from his culture, it has also made him ignorant of his responsibility to the community. Recalling Carroll's comment on the place of the

70Chinua Achebe, No Longer at Ease, p. 58.
individual within the traditional society, and Cook's similar views, Obi exhibits a marked ignorance of his society's world-view. This ignorance is further compounded by his sense of individualism resulting from his western education.

The society had trained Obi with the expectations that he would return to them "with the boon of prophetic vision."\(^{71}\) But Obi returns with an acquired and heightened sense of his individuality, plus an inclination to benefit from the traditional communal sense of solidarity and kinship. Obi seeks the benefit of the communal solidarity which made his education possible along with the liberal notion of individuality which has no place in the traditional society. In his address to the Lagos branch of Umuofia Progressive Union Obi had said that: "Our fathers also have a saying about the danger of living apart. They say it is the curse of the snake. If all snakes lived together in one place, who would approach them? But they live every one unto himself and so fall prey to man."\(^{72}\) It is evident that Obi cannot have the best of both worlds. His insubordination to Umuofia Progressive Union is only an expression of the desire to be his own man, but viewed from the cultural perspective, Obi is seen as an ingrate. Obi's inability to appreciate the role of elders in the Igbo world-view, as aptly described by Adrian Roscoe, testifies to his alienation:

In the society that Achebe's novels often portrays, it is the tribal elders who are the great masters of the proverb and the most fervent believers in its power. Enjoying the status of patriarchal sages, they see themselves as the guardians of the clan's cultural heritage, much of which has been handed down in the form of proverbs . . . . This society does not regard the aged as a burden but rather as its venerable mentors who are expected to counsel and advise.\(^{73}\)

\(^{71}\) Chinua Achebe, "Named for Victoria, Queen of England," *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, p. 68.

\(^{72}\) Chinua Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, p. 81.

\(^{73}\) Adrian A. Roscoe, *Mother is Gold: A Study in West African Literature*, p. 54.
The individualism which Obi expresses: "I am not going to listen to you anymore . . . . But don't you dare interfere in my affair again," is not compatible with the society that makes it the duty of elders to advise and when necessary admonish the young.\textsuperscript{74} As the Ibo adage says: "An old man does not watch a nanny-goat parturiate on the tetter."\textsuperscript{75} The society also enjoins this mutual appreciation of the role of elders by another adage that "seeing young people go astray without admonishing them is [causes] the death of elders but stubbornness and recalcitrance are [cause] the [premature] death of the young." The implication of which is, from the society's point of view, that without this guidance from elders the propagation of their cultural heritage cannot be assured; but more than that, it ensures both the conformity of the individual within the society and his acquisition of a proper sense of history. Cook's comments quoted in the first section of this study succinctly express this world-view. As he says:

In the traditional society the individual is seen first and foremost as part of a corporate whole, and his existence as part of the social pattern overwhelms any private life he might lead within the confines of his own consciousness. Such a life is relatively public: it is not easy to keep secrets nor is it thought desirable to do so. In such a situation, social conventions exert a great authority. The communal good is all-important and any personal denial of group commitment appears to weaken the whole and is deplored.\textsuperscript{76}

One must admit that Obi's attempts at individualism are heroic, particularly his stand on wanting to marry Clara in spite of her being an Osu and against social convention, and his stand on the inconvenience of starting an immediate repayment to Umuofia

\textsuperscript{74}Chinua Achebe, \textit{No Longer at Ease}, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{75}Ibo proverb.
\textsuperscript{76}David Cook, p. 4.
Progressive Union of its loan. However, such stands are also naive. The adage that, 'an individual may cook a meal for the whole clan to eat [they will finish the food and still have the capacity to eat more] but if the clan as a whole cooks a meal for one person, the person will not be able to consume all' is an affirmation of the potency of clan solidarity, and an acknowledgement of the collective might of a united front. Obi in his quest for individualism had conveniently forgotten that issues like marriages and deaths in the traditional Igbo society are not private affairs but public matters, where often, the individuals concerned are relegated to the background. Again Cook makes the point that, "in a village there are very few places where an essentially private existence can be pursued. Contribution to the life and welfare of the community is the greatest good; and hence individualism is seen as negative." 77 The implacable stance of the society on the Osu issue is enshrined in the words of Obi's father: "Osu is like leprosy in the minds of our people." 78

In pitching Obi against the society on a vital issue as the Osu caste system, Achebe exposes one of the endemic injustices in Igbo culture and recognises that it is an issue that can only be overcome by the collective will of the people. Obi remarks that his "mind was troubled not only by what had happened but also by the discovery that there was nothing in him with which to challenge it honestly." 79 It is evident through Achebe's exposition, that Obi cannot rouse any 'righteous indignation', for the simple reason that his father's stance represents the views of the whole society. Achebe asserts this point most forcefully in Arrow of God when he concludes that "no man however great can

77 Ibid. p. 4.
78 Chinua Achebe, No Longer at Ease, p.133.
79 Ibid. p.137.
win judgement against a clan."\(^{80}\)

But more relevant than the highlighting of these social injustices -
- the caste system, bribery, and extortion -- is Achebe's exposure of Obi's
ineffectualness in confronting these issues. Having portrayed the
hopes that the society places on Obi and his class, Achebe
systematically analyses how well this class fulfills those hopes,
through Obi. Achebe views Obi's attempt at emancipation, in
proclaiming his intention of marrying an osu, as a fatuous gesture.
Not just because he failed to carry out his intentions, but more
importantly, because he did not have the moral strength to stand by
Clara in her time of need. Obi's action alienates him from friends and
family, and destroys Clara's life, forcing her to prefer absconding
rather than staying in Lagos. Also when Obi, on his way to Umuofia,
sees his chance to challenge corruption positively by confronting the
policemen extorting money from drivers on the highway, all he does is
stare at the policemen, which results in the driver paying ten shillings
instead of two shillings.\(^{81}\) All Obi does is mutter to himself: "What an
Augean stable!"\(^{82}\) It is pertinent that Obi does recognise that what the
society needs is "even one man with vision", but he fails to see himself
as a possible candidate.\(^{83}\)

Achebe believes that no meaningful democracy can exist in the
face of such pervasive corruption: "But what kind of democracy can
exist side by side with so much corruption and ignorance?"\(^{84}\) It is
precisely because of the "Augean" nature of corruption, and the fact
that it pervades all facets of public life, that Obi and his class were seen

\(^{82}\)ibid., p. 43.
\(^{83}\)ibid., p. 44.
\(^{84}\)ibid., p. 44.
as the hope of the society, and of democracy. Obi in his analysis of "bribery in Nigeria's public life" had argued that the Nigerian public service was corrupt because the top positions were occupied by people who got to their present positions by bribery, and that it would remain so until the young graduates take over because, as he says: "To most of them bribery is no problem. They come straight to the top without bribing anyone. It's not that they're necessarily better than others, it's simply that they can afford to be virtuous. But even that kind of virtue can become a habit."85 Viewed from this perspective, Obi's action, his succumbing to corruption, assumes the significance of a betrayal. It is a betrayal of both the society that placed so much hope on him and his class, and of his theories; hence Achebe's (and the society's) disillusionment with this class.

Thus far, we have noted the demands and often contradictory expectations from Obi both by the Union, the extended family system, and the larger society. Given Achebe's characterisation of Obi as a weak man, it is my view that some of these demands are excessive. It requires more than an 'ordinary' character to hold a balance between being sophisticated, urbane and 'Europeanised', and retaining a meaningful foothold on one's cultural heritage. But Obi is an ordinary character. Gerald Moore and Arthur Ravenscroft have noted how 'unheroic' and 'simple-minded' Obi is: "It is a very simple-minded young man indeed who does not expect to receive a demand for income tax or an electricity bill."86 Achebe's sympathy for Obi, I believe, is not in the financial and materialistic demands made on him, for these (as has already been indicated) can be resolved by a careful balancing of

85 Ibid., pp. 20-1.
'want and have', but in the emotional demands on him and the class he represents. That Obi's greatest dilemma is the resolution of the conflicting demands that he live and act like a 'been-to' and at the same time retain the tribal mores has also been highlighted, but there is one other dimension which Oladele Taiwo observes: "Because members of the Union think of Obi's education as a means of protecting their own interests against the claims of others, they expect him as a senior Civil Servant to continue to share communal ideals and values, however limited in orientation, and to refrain from any assertion of his individualism."87

Stifling of individualism is not compatible with Western education which is "a means of self-improvement and individual growth."88 The tragedy is that the traditional society did not appreciate the inherent psychological changes that go with formal education: "Neither the old colonial administration nor the traditional communal group can comprehend the strength of the forces at work on members of this young professional elite."89 This is one of the issues that Achebe's No Longer at Ease highlights. Unfortunately, Obi can not contain these tensions, neither does he communicate the problems he is facing adequately for them to be appreciated by those with whom he comes in contact.

It is pertinent at this point to remark Achebe's use of the proverb that, 'if a finger brings oil, it soils the others' as an abiding principle in the Igbo world-view. It is this tendency for 'evil'90 to pollute whatever

88 Ibid. p. 125.
90 The analysis of the Osu caste system shows that Ibo elders regard it as evil.
it come in contact with that accounts for the vehemence with which everyone, including the elders of Umuofia Progressive Union, tries to dissuade Obi from marrying an Osu, but all rally round him in times of trouble. The failure of Obi and the class he represents to fulfil the hopes and expectations of the society, like the oil in the proverb, has resulted in a perpetuation of such social evils as forbode a danger for democracy.

In No Longer at Ease, therefore, Achebe through Obi Okonkwo illustrates the lack of responsibility, among other things, exhibited by the inheritors of the new nations of Africa, whose primary functions should have been to lay the concrete foundations for post-colonial developments but who, instead, 'like the absurd man who was pursuing rats while his house was in flames', preferred to allow their houses to be razed rather than salvage what they can, by institutionalising corruption, graft, and tribalism. By the time Achebe came to write A Man of the People, his pessimism had turned to despair at what "we have made of independence."

II. A Man of the People: Achebe's Despair with the Political Mess

A Man of the People brings Achebe's tetralogy up to the period from 1960 to 1966. Achebe, in his interview with Serumaga soon after the publication of the novel, said that "every society has to grow up, every society has to learn its own lesson, so I don't despair." But A Man of the People reflects Achebe's intense disillusionment with the way things had gone, and a general sense of despair at the mess that

had been made of self-rule. Achebe in the same interview said that, "if it were for me to order society I would be very unhappy about the way things have turned out" and went on to say categorically: "A Man of the People is a rather serious indictment... of post-independence Africa." Neal Ascherson, writing specifically of Anthills of the Savannah says that instead of independence, when it came, fashioning "something modern and democratic" out of the existing social structure "in a slow, natural evolution", that as "so often [happens] although not everywhere, independence set off a degenerative process: freedom became corruption, while democracy collapsed into autocracy." 

In No Longer at Ease Achebe establishes that the emergent black administrative class who inherited the 'new order' from the colonial administrators have exchanged the tribal traditional values for 'new values'. With A Man of the People Achebe indicates that they, along with their politician counterparts, have not been adequately socialized to appreciate all the dialectics that energise and make democratic governance meaningful. Wilfred Cartey writes that: "Many of the characters and types presented in the urban political novels enter politics specifically for its lure, for the momentary glitter and glamor that accompany it, for the prestige and power it gives them. Entry into politics seems to destroy morality of any kind, transforming the politician into a self-seeking and unscrupulous activist."

Achebe shows that such concepts as moral principles, tolerance for opposition, and most importantly the use of power for the benefit of the people do not have much meaning to the politicians as they

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93 Ibid., p. 13.
94 Neal Ascherson, p. 3.
95 Wilfred Cartey, Whispers from the Continent, p. 158.
scramble for the most lucrative offices and appointments. Odili's discussion with Max about the morality of a junior minister in government being involved in the formation of the new party, Common People's Convention, highlights this point:

I knew very well and needed no reminder that we were not in Britain or something, that when a man resigned in our country it was invariably with an eye on the main chance -- as when a few years ago ten newly elected P.A.P. Members of Parliament had switched parties at the opening of the session and given the P.O.P a comfortable majority overnight in return for ministerial appointments and -- if one believed the rumours-- a little cash prize each as well . . . . You take a man like Nanga now on a salary of four thousand plus all the -- you know. You know what his salary was as an elementary school teacher? Perhaps not more than eight pounds a month. Now do you expect a man like that to resign on a little matter of principle. . . .96

Achebe writes that both Odili himself and Chief Nanga knew that Nanga would win his electorate in the forthcoming election, with or without Odili's opposition: "Although I had little hope of winning Chief Nanga's seat, it was necessary nonetheless to fight and expose him as much as possible."97 Chief Nanga confirms that he was bound to win the election when he tells Odili: "I am not afraid of you. Every goat and every fowl in this country knows that you will fail woefully. You will lose your deposit and disgrace yourself."98 But despite this assured knowledge, Chief Nanga was not willing to tolerate any opposition at all, preferring to be elected unopposed, as that would enhance his prestige at the capital and would also be an endorsement of the people's trust and confidence in him: "I am only giving you this money because I feel that after all my years of service to my people I deserve to be

96 Chinua Achebe, A Man of the People, p. 93.
97 Ibid., p. 121.
98 Ibid., p. 132.
elected unopposed so that my detractors in Bori will know that I have my people solidly behind me." Achebe indicates that the Nangas and the Kokos would stop at nothing; from bribery, through intimidation of the village people at large, to physical assault and battery to get what they want. And as Ascherson notes in his review of Anthills: "During the years of open political contest, the first 'independence' generation recklessly allowed the distinction between power and force to be blurred, until those whose trade was force began in increasing numbers to drive their tanks across that line." To Nanga and his type, the wisdom of the ancients which advises tolerance among contestants, does not apply to politics. Odili's father states this need for tolerance through the Ibo proverb that: "I believe that the hawk should perch and the eagle perch, whichever says to the other don't, may its wing break." Chief Nanga's sinister and intimidating moves to ensure that he retains his seat in parliament, and consequently his ministerial position, typifies the problem with many new African nations. Odili narrates one of such moves:

'On top of that he has brought you two hundred and fifty pounds if you will sign this paper' . . . 'Chief Nanga moved swiftly and, as you would expect, ruthlessly'. . . . It was announced that Mr Hezekiah Samalu, chairman of P.O.P. in Urua, has been 'ignominiously removed from his office for subversive, anti-party activities. . . . The next day . . . the local council Tax Assessment Officer brought him a reassessed figure based not only on his known pension of eighty-four pounds a year but on an alleged income of five hundred pounds derived from 'business' . . . . The culmination came at the weekend when seven Public Works lorries arrived in the village and began to cart away the pipes they had deposited several months earlier for projected Rural Water Scheme.102

99 Ibid., p. 132.
100 Neal Ascherson, p. 3.
101 Chinua Achebe, A Man of the People, p. 138.
Achebe has consistently maintained and defended the didactism of his writings. It is in the light of this overt intent that *A Man of the People* scrutinizes what has gone wrong with both the Nigerian people and their rulers: "What we need to do is to look back and try and find out where we went wrong, where the rain began to beat us." He identifies four basic factors as responsible for the deplorable state of affairs and the resultant tensions. These factors, as Achebe's fiction indicates are: the lack of adequate moral and ethical monitoring yardstick for the actions of people in politics, private greed, society's apathy, and lack of political vision, personal responsibility, and direction on the part of leaders.

Achebe's writings depict that although the traditional society's culture is oral, the close-knit nature of the extended family and village systems ensures the accountability of tribal elders and leaders. But on a national level the village code of ethics was powerless. As Odili says: "But in the affairs of the nation there was no owner, the laws of the village became powerless." Achebe illustrates this powerlessness, as Carroll remarks, with the example of Josiah, whose behaviour to the blind man the tribal society found objectionable and proceeded to tell him so in no uncertain terms: "Unlike the village where unscrupulous Josiah is quickly and effectively outlawed, the country as a whole has no kind of political morality by which to judge and condemn a Nanga . . . . The results of this are the recurrent political and economic crises with which the events of the novel are punctuated." Achebe sees this lack of political morality as compounded by a lack of any meaningful

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102 *ibid.*, pp. 132, 146-9.
103 Chinua Achebe, "The Novelist as Teacher," *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, p. 44.
105 David Carroll, *Chinua Achebe*, p. 130.
objective criticism, the press having already abdicated this responsibility. It is for this reason that Achebe along with other writers believes that they, the writers, now have to perform this function as social critics. On this, Soyinka says: "When the writer in his own society can no longer function as conscience, he must recognise that his choice lies between denying himself totally or withdrawing to the position of chronicler and post-mortem surgeon."\textsuperscript{106}

Achebe believes that another contributory factor to the post-colonial tensions of the society in the new nations is the tendency among those who find themselves in positions of power, to see those positions as their birthright. They therefore utilise any and every means to perpetuate themselves in such positions. Odili uses the metaphor of "the rain" to succintly expresses the driving impulse of personal greed and the hankering for power:

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 had 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.\textsuperscript{107}

Achebe views this inclination to cling to power as arising from the lack of established ground rules, and the society's conception of what


\textsuperscript{107}Chinua Achebe, \textit{A Man of the People}, p. 42.
colonial and post-colonial politics means. To them it is not an extension of the traditional set-up, particularly as the traditional Ibo societies did not recognise nor invest individuals with absolute powers to control the society’s destiny. Achebe’s astute depiction of the distance that exists between those who wielded authority in traditional society and the colonial administration in both Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God, and his comment that the Christian church first attracted the efulefu and societal outcasts is important. Its importance lies in the colonial administration’s method of choosing those they invested with authority. Achebe gives an example of this in Arrow of God:

"Three years ago they had put pressure on Captain Winterbottom to appoint a Warrant Chief for Okperi. . . . After a long palaver he had chosen one James Ikedi, an intelligent fellow who had been among the very first people to receive missionary education in these parts . . . . The man was a complete nonentity until we crowned him, and now he carries on as though he had been nothing else all his life."

Achebe’s fiction consistently suggests that these characters who were functioning as links between the colonialists and the indigenous people -- interpreters, government clerks, warrant chiefs, and court messengers among others -- were famous for their high-handedness and were consequently hated. Odili relates one of such experiences: "But it was not until many years later that I caught one fleeting, terrifying glimpse of just how hated an Interpreter could be." He goes further to explain that his friend’s father on learning that Odili was the son of Hezekiah Samalu, "a retired District Interpreter" told him quite bluntly: "Then you cannot stay in my house. . . . I don’t blame you, my son, or you either, because no one has told you. But know it from today that no son of Hezekiah Samalu’s shelters under my

109 Chinua Achebe, A Man of the People, p. 33.
This reaction of the people to these government functionaries created a gulf between the two sets of people, and Achebe's writings further suggest that the society at the point of contact saw such characters as Chief Ikedi, nonentities who were created by the 'new order', as symbols of colonialism and oppression. Achebe believes that since most of the early converts were efufus and outcasts, they would have no regards for the culture of that society, but most importantly they would have no compunction to oppress the society which had hitherto looked upon them with contempt, and this would in turn be reflected on the relationship between the colonial administration and the indigenous people. Achebe illustrates this further through Chief Ikedi:

Within three months of this man receiving his warrant Captain Winterbottom began to hear rumours of his high-handedness. He had set up an illegal court and a private prison. He took any woman who caught his fancy without paying the customary bride-price. Captain Winterbottom went into the whole business thoroughly and uncovered many more serious scandals . . . . The latest thing he did was to get his people to make him an Obi or king, so that he was now called His Highness Ikedi the First, Obi of Okperi. 'This among a people who abominated kings! This was what British administration was doing among the Ibos, making a dozen mushroom kings grow where there was none before.'

This "distance" is also exemplified by the comments of Edna's mother when she is told that Odili is contesting Chief Nanga's seat: "She listened carefully, thought about it and then said: 'What is my share in that? They are both white man's people. And they know what is what between themselves. What do we know?'" This apparent unconcern typifies the society's attitude to national politics. To them it

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110 Ibid., pp. 33-4.
112 Chinua Achebe, A Man of the People, p. 119.
is the "white man's" system, an innovation that came with colonialism, even when as since independence, it is their son's and daughter's who are ruling. Achebe sees this non-identification with the political system by the society; and the concept of seeing it as no concern of theirs as having resulted in a general apathy to whatever goes on.

The cynicism of the people is the product of the foregoing issues, and more. From the outset, most of those who were given the warrant to rule saw it as an opportunity, in an acquisitive society, to become rich. Having set the trend and, given the protection of 'their creators', these emergent black 'rulers' and administrators waxed strong. Winterbottom, smarting from his superiors over-riding his decision about Chief Ikedi states that: "But after three months, the Senior Resident who had just come back from leave and had no first-hand knowledge of the matter ruled that the rascal [Chief Ikedi] be reinstated. And no sooner was he back in power than he organized a vast system of mass extortion." Achebe believes that it is for this reason also that they would do anything to perpetuate themselves in power. So the society comes to see being in power as a short cut to riches:

'The first thing critics tell you about our ministers' official residences is that each has seven bedrooms and seven bathrooms, one for every day of the week . . . . I was simply hypnotized by the luxury of the great suite assigned to me. When I lay down in the double bed that seemed to ride on a cushion of air, and switched on that reading lamp and saw all the beautiful furniture . . . the gleaming bathroom and the towels as large as a lappa I had to confess that if I were that moment made a minister I would be most anxious to remain one for ever.'

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113 Chinua Achebe, Arrow of God, p. 57.
114 Chinua Achebe, A Man of the People, pp. 41-2.
Eldred Jones writes that the central concern of *A Man of the People* is the cynicism of both the politicians and the people which brings about a situation that invites intervention. The politicians cynically use their positions to enrich themselves at the expense of the people, while the people, with the philosophy born of despair tamely lie down under the imposition.\(^{115}\)

Achebe makes the point that to the people the two systems of government -- traditional and colonial -- are seen as diametrically at variance. Chief Nanga, Chief Ikedi and their like wield almost absolute powers over the lives of the society, to which the society has no (or thinks it has no) recourse to redress: since their oppressors control the system of law, the press, and ultimately dictate the terms of their governance. Conversely, in the traditional society the people themselves have a say in what happens, and how their lives are to be governed. Morality is held in high regard and the actions of individuals and the society are motivated by what they feel is in the interest of the community. The traditional mores and beliefs foster the social and moral ethics ensuring mutual co-existence of all. Even outcasts, though socially discriminated against, are also given some form of protection. Molesting of their person, for example, is taboo and in some societies any member of the community who so much as causes an outcast to bleed without the express injunction of the gods performs certain prohibitive propitiatory rites.

But most importantly, the system of government is intrinsically interwoven with these mores. In Achebe's writings the ancestors are seen to be ever present and watchful through the interactions and the presence of the *egwuegwu, mmo*, priests and priestesses. Quarrels

are settled not by any strict adherence to right and wrong, or censure, but by such compromises as are necessary and required to maintain intra-communal fellowship. Paradoxically such settlements, which must be accomplished on the basis of a detailed knowledge of tradition, must also be flexible enough to accommodate the ever changing needs of the society as a living structure.

Achebe particularly shows the mechanics by which the society controls its own governance. He indicates that individuals are allowed to have their say in matters of general concern. Individuals who disagree with any verdict reached by the society have access to a superior authority for redress, as shown by the land and domestic disputes settlement scenes in *Things Fall Apart*. The society acknowledges that such individuals could bring such matters (even trivial ones) to the assembly of only the titled elders. If they are still not satisfied, or the matter gets beyond the titled elders the individual has recourse to the powers of the ancestral spirits through the invocation of the *egwuegwu*. Since these are representatives of the spirit world and founders of the clan, the general belief is that they are beyond bias. Even though no one could be imagined as refusing to abide by the decisions of the ancestral spirits, yet lurking behind this formidable arbiters are the gods and goddesses themselves to whose shrines any individuals who are sore pressed could bring their supplications and cases, as the ultimate arbiters. However, any one getting this far realised that they are in the realm of spirits, and transgression has sometimes only one penalty, death. The belief being that one would be foolhardy to allow matters to get this far without being satisfied: "I

117 Ibid., pp. 79-85.
118 Ibid., p. 85.
don't know why such a trifle should come before the egwugwu,' said one elder to another. 'Don't you know what kind of man Uzowulu is? He will not listen to any other decision,' replied the other.\textsuperscript{119} This is a major reason that despite the presence of this other avenue to the society, no one allows disputes to get so out of hand that its final resolution can only be at the feet of a god or goddess. Achebe sees the workings of these checks and balances as curbing peoples' inherent tendency for excesses. Even a character such as Nwaka, with all his wealth and exaggerated antagonism for Ezeulu is also conscious of the power of the gods and while he throws his challenges, deliberately couches his language in such a way that he could not be said to have challenged Ulu personally.\textsuperscript{120} But more relevant is that as one of the leaders of the clan, Nwaka is doing what he feels is for the good of the community. He fears, and Achebe agrees, with good reason that Ezeulu was trying to usurp the powers of the clan to determine their destiny. He gives one of his reasons for wanting the clan to war against Okperi as stemming from a desire to avoid Umuaro being seen by other communities as too weak to protect its lands. Other reasons notwithstanding, he cannot be accused of not having the good of Umuaro at heart from this perspective. Even some of Ezeulu's convoluted reasons for not eating the sacred yams, or announcing the new season, could be seen, probably in a twisted way, to be out of interest for the clan: for if he eats the yam, he would transgress, and Ulu in punishing him may punish the clan.

But no such soul-searching, or community-oriented thinking governs the actions of the black administrators and leaders. They approach their responsibility with what the society sees as "chop-

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. 85.
\textsuperscript{120} Chinua Achebe, \textit{Arrow of God}, pp. 39-40.
make-I-chop" philosophy. Achebe believes that they have substituted
the erstwhile colonial administration with a more insidious form of
government. Achebe's depiction of Chief Nanga exemplifies the
corruption, graft, tribalistic patronage, and the undermining of such
democratic principles as free press and competition which most
African nations are afflicted with. As Cartey says:

The chicanery, folly, corruption, and violence of a changing
political order are at the center of the novel, A Man of the
People. . . . Practical politics on the local level, its inner
workings and functions, are all presented through the
central figure, Chief Honoroble M. A. Nanga, M.P., a
satirical portrait of one of the many new ministers who
control the reins of government in many of the developing
countries.121

The narrative opens with Achebe portraying Chief Nanga's
affability, and the society extolling his virtues:

No one can deny that Chief the Honourable M. A. Nanga,
M.P., was the most approachable politician in the country.
Whether you asked in the city or in his home village, Anata,
they would tell you he was a man of the people . . . . She was
now praising Micah's handsomeness, which she likened to
the perfect, sculpted beauty of a carved eagle, and his
popularity which would be the envy of the proverbial
traveller-to- distant-places who must not cultivate enmity on
his route.122

But Achebe undercuts this benign exterior with a critique of the
political mess which Chief Nanga and his colleagues have made of self-
government:

The arrival of the members of the hunters' guild in full
regalia caused a great stir . . . . These people never came out
except at the funeral of one of their number, or during some
very special and outstanding event . . . . Occasionally a hunter
would take aim at a distant palm branch and break its mid-
rib . . . . But there were very few such shots. Most of the
hunters reserved their precious powder to greet the

121 Wilfred Cartey, pp. 147-8.
122 Chinua Achebe, A Man of the People, p. 1.
Minister's arrival -- the price of gunpowder like everything else having doubled again and again in the four years since this government took control.\textsuperscript{123}

Odili's initial disillusionment, as Achebe shows, is an outcome of the lack of principles, and the brazen selfishness with which those in power approached the responsibility of self-rule. Achebe illustrates this through the feral imagery with which Odili qualifies Chief Nanga and his associates. Achebe writes that Mr Nanga as "an unknown backbencher in the governing P.O.P", with some of his colleagues "seeing the empty ministerial seats, had yapped and snarled so shamelessly for the meaty prize."\textsuperscript{124} Continuing Odili, the narrator, says that:

Throughout the session he led the pack of back-bench hounds straining their leash to get at their victims. If any one had cared to sum up Mr Nanga's interruptions they would have made a good hour's continuous yelp. Perspiration poured down his face as he sprang up to interrupt or sat back to share in the derisive laughter of the hungry hyena.\textsuperscript{125}

Through such imagery as 'hounds', 'dogs', 'yelp', straining their leash', 'yapped and snarled', and 'hyena', Achebe creates a looming and foreboding image of the emergent black administrators and leaders which Chief Nanga and his political colleagues typify, but also which portends the 'death' of the new nations of Africa.

Underlying Chief Nanga's suave appearance Achebe portrays a calculating ruthlessness bordering on unscrupulousness. Apart from Chief Nanga's intolerance for any form of competition and his resort to bribery, and physical assaults on his opponents, he is depicted as seeing himself as accountable to no one, not even to his electorate. He blatantly uses his position to intimidate both his opponents and to blackmail the larger society, his electorate. Achebe indicates a society

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., pp. 1-2.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., pp. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., pp. 5-6.
caught in a hopeless situation, and which is at the mercy of its leaders. Odili states that:

Two nights later we heard the sound of the Crier's gong. His message was unusual. In the past the Crier had summoned the village to a meeting to deliberate over a weighty question, or else to some accustomed communal labour. His business was to serve notice of something that was to happen. But this night he did something new: he announced a decision already taken. 'The elders and the councillors of Urua and the whole people,' he said, 'had decided that in the present political fight raging in the land, they should make it known that they knew one man and one man alone -- Chief Nanga. Every man and every woman in Urua and every child and every adult would throw his or her paper for him on the day of the election' . . . . And I thought: 'if the whole people had taken the decision why were they being told of it?' Odili's doubts reflect the manner in which incumbents in power usurp 'the power of the people.' The people's fear of playing the role of sacrificial ram and losing their share of the 'national cake' drives the village to recant their earlier decision to support their son because Chief Nanga, as the Ibos say, 'has the yam and the knife.' Odili's comments that: "I couldn't say I blamed my village people from recoiling from the role of sacrificial ram. Why should they lose their chance of getting good, clean water, their share of the national cake? In fact they had adequate justification for their volte-face just two days later when the pipes returned." Such unscrupulous misuse of power is indicative of Achebe's emphatic indictment of post-colonial African leaders of whom Chief Nanga is typical. By demonstrating

\[126\text{ibid., p. 151.} \]

\[127\text{The proverb is used in contemporary African societies to support the unscrupulous use of "the power of incumbency". Chief Nanga's flaunting of 'power' gives rise to the belief that since he holds the power, and with it the people's welfare, he has a right to dictate to the people how they are to be governed, and who they should cast their vote for.} \]

\[128\text{Chinua Achebe, A Man of the People, pp. 151-2.} \]
Chief Nanga's far-reaching powers of intimidation (of the society), Achebe as Carroll acknowledges, shows that "there is a disastrous fracture between the morality of the village and the political affairs of the nation." The various instances of Chief Nanga's apparent control and manipulation of the Press, from his giving a "'dash' of five pounds" to the greasy-looking editor, to his remarks to the Minister of Public Construction: "Don't worry about the Press; I will make sure that they don't publish it"; reinforces Achebe's disillusionment with national politics.

While Achebe's disillusionment can be attributed to witnessing the adverse effects of the unscrupulousness of the actions of "the Chief Nangas" in government on the new nations, he is also critical of the society for its cynicism and apathy. Apart from the lack of precedents and ground rules on which the society could base its assessment of its leaders, Achebe is also concerned with the general trend of seeing political offices and appointments as short cuts to riches, as already discussed in this chapter. But an extension of this misconception is the society's motive for supporting candidates. Achebe believes that at the beginning the society saw politics as part of the package which came with colonialism. He states that change came with the realisation that politics carried an attendant fabulous cash prize: "Nanga must have gone into politics soon afterwards and then won a seat in Parliament. (It was easy in those days -- before we knew its cash price.)"

And so in spite of Chief Nanga's massive support in his electorate, the people of Urua decided to cast their votes to Odili. This is not because they see him as a better candidate to Chief Nanga, nor that he

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129 David Carroll, Chinua Achebe, p. 150.
130 Chinua Achebe, A Man of the People, pp. 47-8.
131 Ibid., p. 3.
has an alternative political ideology and vision, but because he is their son. They see his entry into politics as automatically drawing them nearer to the plate, and so affording them an easier reach at the cake. Max, arguing on why Odili’s village people should vote for him, states: "Last time you elected a member of parliament from Anata. Now it is your turn here in Urua. A goat does not eat into a hen’s stomach no matter how friendly the two may be. Ours is ours but mine is mine."132 Achebe sees Max’s speech and the old man’s remarks as the bane of the politics of the new nations of Africa:

'There is one word he said which entered my ear more than everything else . . . . That word was that our own son should go and bring our share. . . . The village of Anata has already eaten, now they must make way for us to reach the plate. No man in Urua will give his paper to a stranger when his own son needs it; if the very herb we go to seek in the forest now grows at our back yard are we not saved the journey? We are ignorant people and we are like children. But I want to tell our son one thing: . . . anyone who wants to look at our new tooth should know that his bag should be heavy.'133

But Odili’s father sums up this attitude. In spite of the gulf of antagonism between him and his son, he willingly supports Odili believing that he now has come to appreciate the necessity of ‘joining the rat race’: "When you came home with a car I thought to myself: good, some sense is entering his belly at last. . . . But I should have known . . . . If the money he was offering was too small why did you not say so? Why did you not ask for three or four hundred?"134 This criticism of Odili from his father for refusing Chief Nanga’s bribe and stepping down from the political race, indicates that nothing but the financial and material rewards of politics is of importance to the

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132 Iibid., p. 140.
133 Iibid., p. 141.
134 Iibid., p. 135.
society. In Achebe's view, as Carroll states, the national interest will always come second to this society.\textsuperscript{135}

While Achebe indicts those in power for their self-seeking propagation of tribalism and ethnicism, for their politics of intimidation and blackmail; and the people for their cynic acquiescence to the muddle, he also criticises 'the Odilis' and 'the Maxes' for their lack of political vision and direction. Michael Neill, making basically the same point, says: "At the end of [\textit{A Man of the People}] its protagonist-narrator, Odili the great, may have lived to triumph over his corrupt political and sexual adversary, Chief Nanga, but in the light of all that he has revealed about his own deeply equivocal relation to the 'eat-and-let-eat regime just ended', Odili's rhetoric of political awakening sounds a slightly hollow note."\textsuperscript{136}

Achebe sees both Max, Odili, and their new political party, C.P.C., as not providing any meaningful new sense of political direction, likening it as the ex-policeman, Couple, did to a third vulture: "There were three vultures, . . . the third and youngest was called C.P.C."\textsuperscript{137} Odili's remarks to Max that: "I would have thought it was better to start our new party, with a different kind of philosophy" implies that 'Couple' was right in seeing C.P.C. as another vulture.\textsuperscript{138} Also Odili's reaction on first learning that a "junior minister in the Government was behind" the formation of the new party exemplifies Achebe's outrage at their lack of moral principles. Max's rationalisation of both the man's presence in the party and his own acceptance of bribe from Chief Koko only confirms Achebe's feeling that democracy as an

\textsuperscript{135}David Carroll, \textit{Chinua Achebe}, p. 127.


\textsuperscript{137}Chinua Achebe, \textit{A Man of the People}, p. 140.

\textsuperscript{138}Ibid., p. 93.
institution has become so abused that the formation of a new political party does not offer any remedy. Achebe stated in the interview with Serumaga that:

If you take the example of Nigeria, which is the place I know best, things had got to such a point politically that there was no other answer -- no way you could resolve this impasse politically. The political machine had been so abused that whichever way you pressed it, it produced the same results; and therefore you wanted another force, another force just had to come in.139

Achebe equates a new political party founded on corruption (Max accepts bribes, Odili borrows party funds for non-party purposes at will) with still-birth as exemplified by Max's death. Eustace Palmer argues that given the same chance as Nanga, Odili would, in all probability become another Chief Nanga and writes: "The true subject of this novel is not really political corruption, but the corrupting power of privilege, position, and money."140 He goes on to add that "the interest lies in . . . the process whereby the supposedly idealistic Odili gradually succumbs to the temptations of political success and starts to resemble, in attitude at least, Chief Nanga himself."141

A Man of the People thus symbolised for Achebe, a reappraisal of what has been made of an independence that he feels was without substance, in the first place: "This is the beginning of a phase for me in which I intend to take a hard look at what we in Africa are making of independence -- but using Nigeria which I know best."142

141 Ibid., p. 73.
represented along with *No Longer at Ease*, an end to the age of pastoral writing, and of innocence. As Ngugi points out: "What Achebe has done in *A Man of the People* [and *No Longer at Ease*] is to make it impossible or inexcusable for other African writers to do other than address themselves directly to [contemporary social realities] their audience in Africa . . . and tell them that such problems are their concern."\(^{143}\) Achebe by confronting these post-colonial tensions, by moving "with a whip among the pupils, flagellating himself as well as them", is demonstrating and setting some critical standards by which the society could assess their hitherto irrepressible leaders.\(^{144}\) Henceforth, he is saying, the society can tell when their leaders "have taken enough for the owner to see."\(^{145}\)

But Achebe's long silence after *A Man of the People*, and his comment in November 1969 that even if he wanted he couldn't write a novel now; that he could only write essays or poems: short and intense works in keeping with his mood, illustrate the depth of his despair at the bastardization of the political legacy which has occurred.\(^{146}\)

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\(^{144}\) Ibid., p. 54.

\(^{145}\) Chinua Achebe, *A Man of the People*, p. 166.

CHAPTER VIII

The Unwanted Seer: Achebe's Short Stories, Poems of War, and Recent Fiction

I. The Still-Birth of a Dream: Achebe's Short Stories and Poems on the Nigerian Civil-War

That Achebe's social consciousness has been a motivating factor in his writing has been established in the course of this analysis. That he also believes the Nigerian political machinery to have been abused, possibly beyond remedy, has also become evident. In his essay "The Black Writer's Burden" (1966), Achebe passionately implores African writers and critics to face the "first real challenge" that the continent is witnessing -- to criticise without flinching the corruption and misrule which he sees as rife in the continent.¹ Both No longer at Ease and A Man of the People are attempts to do this. Achebe, talking to Serumaga in 1967 about the resolution of the political impasse in A Man of the People, remarks that: "Now when I was writing A Man of the People it wasn't clear to me that this was going to be necessarily a military intervention. It could easily have been civil war, which in fact it very nearly was in Nigeria."² He goes on to say: "But I think that all these things the next generation of politicians in Nigeria, when we do have them, will have experienced, and they'll have learned one or two lessons, I hope, from what happened to the First Republic. This is the only hope I have and if this turns out to be vain, it would really be

terrible.\textsuperscript{3} That a civil war finally eventuated was both a vindication of the seer's prophetic vision, and his realistic analysis of contemporary political trends, which he says was evident as far back as 1964: "And the indication as to how politics was going to develop in Nigeria was there already. If you cared to look, I think the signs were everywhere."\textsuperscript{4} Achebe sees the death of democracy as being a consequence of the lack of responsibilities already highlighted, and believed that the Biafran revolution (1967-1970) provided a chance for Africans to lay a political foundation that is authentically egalitarian and based on philosophies "which took into account their present conditions."\textsuperscript{5} Achebe, in an interview in 1969 saw the Biafran issue as, "a revolution that aims toward true independence, that moves toward the creation of modern states in place of the new colonial enclaves we have today, a revolution that is informed with African ideologies."\textsuperscript{6}

Achebe's deepened disillusionment, as reflected in his short stories and poems, is consequent upon the failure of this dream. Contrary to Kolawole Ogungbesan's criticism, Achebe does not see the failure of the Biafran revolution as an isolated case, despite his personal involvement in the crisis, but as another instance in a succession of squandered opportunities.\textsuperscript{7} In a recent essay, "Where

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., p. 14.
\textsuperscript{4}Bernth Lindfors, et al., eds, \textit{Palaver}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., p. 6.
\textsuperscript{7}Some Nigerian writers and critics, amongst them, J. P. Clark (see Bernth Lindfors, et al., \textit{Palaver: Interviews with Five African Writers in Texas}, pp. 15-22), and Kolawole Ogungbesan, (see "Politics and the African Writer," \textit{African Studies Review} 17 (1974), pp. 43-53), have been very critical of Achebe and other Ibo creative writers, particularly Christopher Okigbo, and
the Problem Lies", which is contained in his political booklet, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, Achebe writes that: "The fear that should nightly haunt our leaders (but does not) is that they may already have betrayed irretrievably Nigeria's high destiny."\(^8\) Having shown in the earlier fictions, that many of the excesses of the protagonists arise in part from their inability to use responsibly the powers and positions entrusted to them, and that the apathetic populace are also to blame for the derailing of the political machinery, Achebe in his short stories and poems shows how the gross abuse of power and privilege by the elites of Africa's new nations destroys even the best of dreams. While the first section of this chapter, dealing with the short stories and poems, exposes Achebe's intense disillusionment and bitterness at these wasted opportunities, the second section will explore his most recent fiction, and the 'conditional' hope it embodies.

Achebe's short stories span a period of twenty years, and many of them traverse areas already covered by his novels. "The Voter", as Carroll notes, "belongs to the world of *A Man of the People*, with the "Vengeful Creditor" and "Girls at War", they "diagnose the corruption of both private and public morality."\(^9\) In these stories Achebe astutely sketches those same destructive forces at work as were evident in the urban political novels. Carroll writes that some of Achebe's writings show his bitterness, particularly at, "the absurd rituals of the


\(^9\)David Carroll, *Chinua Achebe*, p. 162.
unscrupulous parliamentarians and the double talk of the obsequious newspapers."\textsuperscript{10} The stories "Civil Peace" and "Girls at War" broaden, and paradoxically, heighten Achebe's bitterness and disillusionment. These short stories and poems, while testifying to the shattering of this dream, reflect "a society [and dream] that had gone completely rotten and maggoty at the centre."\textsuperscript{11} Arthur Ravenscroft says of "Girls at War", that it "has much the same bitterness as A Man of the People, though now modified by a deep sense of the pity of lost ideals and untold derelictions."\textsuperscript{12} The Biafran experience, in Achebe's view, is the obverse side of the same coin -- a repetition of the same vicious circle of "untold derelictions" as plague the Nigerian state. The same unbridled materialism and selfishness that his earlier writings criticised, were evident and rife, even within the constraint of a civil war. Using the change in Gladys, from an initial nationalistic idealism to a realist, willing to do anything to survive the war as example, Nwankwo states that:

\begin{quote}
There must be some man at the centre of it [the corruption of Gladys], perhaps one of these heartless attack-traders who traffic in foreign currencies and make their hundreds of thousands by sending young men to hazard their lives bartering looted goods for cigarettes behind enemy lines, or one of those contractors who receive piles of money daily for food they never deliver to the army. Or perhaps some vulgar and cowardly army officer full of filthy barrack talk and fictitious stories of heroism.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

The same corruption and graft were now compounded by the fact

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10}Ibid., p. 163.
\item \textsuperscript{13}Chinua Achebe, "Girls at War," p. 114.
\end{itemize}
that people were unscrupulously willing to manipulate human hunger and near starvation to their advantage: "As his driver loaded tins and bags and cartons into his car the starved crowds that perpetually hung around relief centres made crude, ungracious remarks like 'War Can Continue!' meaning the WCC! . . . Nwankwo was deeply embarrassed not by the jeers of this scarecrow crowd of rags and floating ribs but by the independent accusation of their wasted bodies and sunken eyes."\textsuperscript{14} "Civil Peace", and particularly "Girls at War", illustrate the fact of this corruption, selfishness, unbridled materialism; and the death of a dream.

Achebe's "Civil Peace" is both a celebration of the resilience of the human spirit with Jonathan's constant refrain of "nothing puzzles God", and a remark at the level of societal degeneration.\textsuperscript{15} To Jonathan Iwegbu, the miracle of surviving the war with his family is occasion for praising God:

'Happy survival!' meant so much more to him than just a current fashion of greeting old friends in the first hazy days of peace. It went deep to his heart. He had come out of the war with five inestimable blessings -- his head, his wife Maria's head and the heads of three out of their four children. As a bonus he also had his old bicycle -- a miracle too but naturally not to be compared to the safety of five human heads.\textsuperscript{16}

And finding his house still standing albeit with missing doors, windows, and some roofing sheets was another miracle. While Achebe explores the optimistic fatalism of this character, he subtly analyses the brutalities of the war: "It wasn't his disreputable rags, nor the toes peeping out of the one blue and one brown canvas shoes . . . many good

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 102.
and heroic soldiers looked the same or worse."\textsuperscript{17} But the story particularly highlights the prevalent dishonesty which neither the suffering occasioned by the war, nor the abject poverty of the survivors could deter some from practicing: "He had to be extra careful because he had seen a man a couple of days earlier collapse into near-madness in an instant before that oceanic crowd because no sooner had he got his twenty pounds than some ruffian picked it off him."\textsuperscript{18}

As in his earlier fictions, Achebe indicts the society for its apathy. The comic charade of the robbers, from their cool announcement of their presence and who they are, to their helping Jonathan and his family raise the alarm of their presence, once more demonstrates the "spinelessness" of the society (neighbours). While Achebe highlights the heartlessness of the robbers, in depriving this poor family of their "egg-rasher", he criticises the society in which no one raises a finger to help a fellow in need of assistance -- a society in which robbers have the boldness and audacity to raise an alarm of their own presence, knowing that no one would have the guts to do anything.

Achebe's "Girls at War" looks at some of the internal tensions that destroyed the spirit of a revolution, highlighting the "maggoty centre." Achebe contrasts Gladys' initial zeal at the outset of the revolution with Reginald Nwankwo's hypocrisy: "That was in the first heady days of warlike preparation when thousands of young men (and sometimes women too) were daily turned away from enlistment centres because far too many of them were coming forward burning with readiness to bear arms in defence of the exciting new nation."\textsuperscript{19} Carroll writes that

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 90.
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 93.
\textsuperscript{19}Chinua Achebe, "Girls at War," p. 98.
through the eyes of Reginald Nwankwo: "We see the transformation of Gladys from her early military idealism in the Biafran cause through a period of uneasy normality to the simple and realistic desire for survival." 20 Achebe through narrating the second encounter between Reginald and Gladys at a check-point, explores the pretentiousness of the highly placed who, despite the circumstances of a war, were still engaged in a dialectics of status, privilege and hypocrisy: "Although intellectually he approved of thorough searches at road-blocks, emotionally he was always offended whenever he had to submit to them. He would probably not admit it but the feeling people got was that if you were put through a search then you could not really be one of the big people." 21 Reginald admits that Gladys "wasn't going to make an exception even for one who once did her a favour. He was sure she would have searched her own father just as rigorously." 22 Her subsequent degeneration, Reginald believes, could only be as a result of the corrupting influences of those in positions of authority, who were using their positions (just as he himself does) to accumulate scarce commodities for themselves, their families, and their scores of girl friends:

When their paths crossed a third time... things had got very bad. Death and starvation having long chased out the headiness of the early days, now left in some places blank resignation, in others a rock-like, even suicidal, defiance. But surprisingly enough there were many at this time who had no other desire than to corner whatever good things were still going and to enjoy themselves to the limit... Reginald Nwankwo lived in Owerri then. But that day he had gone to Nkwerr[e] in search of relief... So he went now to see an old friend who ran the WCC depot at Nkwerr[e] to get other items like rice, beans and that excellent cereal

21Chinua Achebe, "Girls at War," p. 98.  
22Ibid., pp. 100-1.
commonly called Gabon gari. 23

Reginald Nwankwo's self-righteous hypocrisy contrasts with his analysis of what has happened to change Gladys within the two years of the war. Carroll views "Girls at War" as attempting a diagnosis of social malaise by means of its ironic structure, in that Reginald Nwankwo self-righteously seeks to understand the problems that he and people like him have caused. 24 While he picks and chooses what type of food, from the pile he amasses from his sources, is terrible stuff and which is excellent in the midst of the starving masses; and goes to parties (but feels it's a sin to dance while the war lasts); picks up a young lady from the scorching sun while leaving an old woman behind; he still intellectually analyses the "tragedy" of the change that has taken place in Gladys.

Gladys however sees the issue of her change in very simple terms: "Now everybody want survival. They call it number six. You put your number six; I put my number six. Everything all right." 25 But in Achebe's views, both characters, Reginald and Gladys, mirror the rottenness of the society in their different ways. Reginald reflects the corrupting influence of those in positions of authority who are only out to enjoy themselves. They even perpetuate the misery of thousands of their fellows in the process: they garner all the good relief materials to the detriment of the starving population. They frivolously engage in parties using the same food materials which they have deprived the people of: "He hated the parties to which his friends clung like drowning men. And to talk so approvingly of them because he wanted

23 ibid., p. 101.
24 David Carroll, Chinua Achebe, p. 166.
to take a girl home! And this particular girl too, who had once had
such beautiful faith in the struggle and was betrayed (no doubt about it)
by some man like him out for a good time." 26 Gladys herself is a
reflection, as Reginald says, of a society that has gone all rotten and
maggoty at the centre: "With a down-to-earth immediacy she responds
directly to changing circumstances: in her idealistic phase she
searches cars methodically, later she is ready to profit from the black
market, is terrified by the bombing, gives her sexual favours casually,
and throughout accepts the inevitability of hardship and injustice:
'Monkey de work, baboon de chop'." 27

Kolawole Ogungbesan's critique "Politics and the African Writer"
(1974), while generally critical of Achebe's emotiveness in the poems
and short stories dealing with the war, is however, right in his
assessment that some of these short stories and poems "show a
closeness of observation and intense emotional involvement in the
situation . . . . Achebe has minutely recapitulated the ugly facts of life
in Biafra during and immediately after the war." 28 The
disillusionment after A Man of the People, and the eventual civil war
had left Achebe embittered; and the poems contained in Beware Soul
Brother (1972), as Carroll says, "constitute a moving account of the
poet's experience during this period and a searching examination of
his role after the fighting has ended." 29

Achebe attempts, in some of the poems, to evaluate the events
prior to, during, and after the war. In "1966" and "The First Shot"

26ibid., p. 106.
27ibid., p. 114.
29David Carroll, Chinua Achebe, p. 168.
Achebe explores the antecedent events to the war. He sees the necessity of this causal appraisal in the Igbo adage that: "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." Contrary to Philip Rogers's suggestion that "The First Shot" refers to "'The First Shot' of the revolution . . .", it is a reference to the causal anonymous 'first shot' which like the thrusting of fingers into eyes causes fights. Achebe infers that while memories of the actual civil war, 'the greater noises', would fade, even its brutalising effects and scars forgotten; that the actions that preceded the war, 'that lone rifle-shot' even though anonymous, will yet, ever be remembered 'lodge/ more firmly . . . /in the forehead of memory.' Rogers is however, right that "its human motion suggests the steady accretion of purposes and accidents which make up wars' beginnings."

As in "The First Shot", "1966" explores the destructive forces that led to the civil war. Achebe views the levity of the intelligentsia as a contributory factor. While they, who should know, absent-mindedly and thoughtlessly fixed their gazes on other things, 'absent-minded/ our thoughtless days', and 'played indolently'; forces were already surreptitiously at work, 'subterranean shaft', rousing jealousy and hatred between brothers, 'rare artesian hatred', resulting as between Cain and Abel, in brother killing his brother 'that once squirted warm/ blood in God's face.'

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33 Philip Rogers, p. 2.
Carroll writes that the "Poems about War which follow in the next section range from the laconic 'Air Raid', where the man 'is much too slow' crossing the road and is cut in two by a bomb, through the bitterness at civilian suffering to relief when hostilities cease." While these poems about war graphically reveal the sufferings and casualties of the war, in 'Beware Soul Brother' and 'Non-Commitment' Achebe re-examines the artist's role in society, and the issue of commitment. Rogers believes that: "Men of soul' is obviously intended to suggest artists, intellectuals, teachers, perhaps even politicians; the sense of the poem suggests, however, that he has his fellow-writers chiefly in mind." Earlier in his analysis he says that:"In the central metaphor of the poem, writers are dancers; the earth of the dancing ground is their inspiration and their responsibility." Achebe once more admonishes his fellow-writers, reminding them of their social commitment:

The meaning of both the writer's soaring away from the earth and returning to it is suggested in Achebe's recent speeches, in which he expresses the fear that African writers, in their preoccupation with defending and displaying the past, have become disengaged from the earth, 'that zone of occult instability where the people dwell', . . . and where 'the regenerative powers of the people are most potent'. Like a dance, the earth moves in time; if the writer falls behind, he will suffer the fate of the mango seedling trapped in elevated objectivity with no place for its roots. Or in the metaphor of 'Beware Soul Brother', he will 'become/ a dancer disinherit in mid-dance/ hanging a lame foot in the air like the hen/ in a strange unfamiliar compound'.

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34 Chinua Achebe, "1966," p. 3.
36 Philip Rogers, p. 9.
37 Ibid., p. 6.
38 Ibid., p. 6.
Achebe believes that even the mistakes of the past are valuable, if we learn a lesson by them: 'We have/ come to know from the surfeit of suffering/ that even the Cross need not be a dead end nor total loss'; and that whatever beauties a dancer's feet may weave in the air, it must return to earth for regeneration and safety.\textsuperscript{39} This he cautions his fellow artists to remember, for it is the reason that "Our ancestors" in their wisdom "gave Ala, great goddess/of the earth, sovereignty too over their arts."\textsuperscript{40} Failure to live up to their social responsibilities would lead to abandoning 'our soils' to "the long ravenous tooth/ and talon of" those who lie "in wait/ . . . only for the deep entrails."\textsuperscript{41}

"Non-commitment" partly addresses the consequences of non-commitment, and as Rogers notes: "The uncommitted are represented as emotionally sterile, cut off literally in the metaphor of [the poem] from the possibility of regeneration because their 'hearts are fitted with prudence/ like a diaphragm across/ womb's beckoning doorway to bar/ the scandal of seminal rage."\textsuperscript{42} Critics such as Kolawole Ogungbesan, Ali Mazrui, and John Pepper Clark have taken Achebe and Okigbo to task for their social consciousness and commitment which drove Okigbo to forsake his pen in exchange for the gun: "I repeat, the role of the poet is to create poems, and you don't have to go and carry a gun to create a poem about war"\textsuperscript{43}, and which leads Achebe to become so involved in the fate of his society "as to put forward solutions to the problems facing his people."\textsuperscript{44} Achebe's poem, 'Non-commitment', not only justifies the writer's need for social

\textsuperscript{39}Chinua Achebe, "Beware Soul Brother," p. 29.
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p. 29.
\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., p. 29.
\textsuperscript{42}Philip Rogers, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{43}Bernth Lindfors, et al., eds, Palaver, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{44}Kolawole Ogungbesan, p. 46.
commitment, illustrating the atrophying consequences of non-commitment but it also echoes Soyinka's comments quoted earlier that: "When the writer in his own society can no longer function as conscience, he must recognise that his choice lies between denying himself totally or withdrawing to the position of chronicler and post-mortem surgeon." 45

II. Re-formism as a Possible Solution to the Post-colonial Problems of Africa's New Nations: Achebe's Recent Fiction

While some of Achebe's short stories and poems have attempted to fill the void created by his 'silence' after A Man of the People (1966), they have also shown the awakening and shattering of Achebe's dream of an authentic African new nation in the still-birth that was Biafra. Achebe's latest novel, Anthills of the Savannah (1987), extends his structural time sequence to the present. It encapsulates both Achebe's original views and concepts on the role of the artist in African societies, as contained in his earlier fictions and essays, his disillusionment and despair at what we have made of independence, but most importantly, it propounds a remedy for what he has come to see as a political impasse. Anthills of the Savannah also dramatises what the true role of the artist -- writer, critic, carver, composer, or dancer -- in contemporary African societies should be; reinforcing the views expressed in "The Black Writers' Burden" among his other writings. In all these, there is a discernible shift in focus in Achebe's vision and

earlier concepts, and, paradoxically, in *Anthills of the Savannah* there is a synthesis and assertive projection of the views contained in the earlier works.

Achebe's latest novel highlights two basic changes in his writing. The first is the distancing of the authorial voice through the use of various narrative voices to create multiple points of view, while simultaneously explicating his social vision, and his sense of the nature and causes of the underlying post-colonial tensions of Nigerian society. The second change is his proposition that a solution to the endemic political tensions which plague new nations of Africa is possible.

Achebe's narrative technique gives rise to such observations as Oladele Taiwo's, mentioned earlier, that in Achebe's writing: "The reader finds, almost invariably, that no one point of view is wholly acceptable, and that to reach a satisfying conclusion, several points of view have to be taken into consideration." This is because Achebe 'objectively' presents different points of view in different speakers, and in thoughts of different characters, often allowing them only partial truths, as exemplified by the pronouncements of Mr Green and the comments of Miss Tomlinson in *No Longer at Ease*; Nwaka and Onenyi Nnanyelugo in *Arrow of God*; and even Odili in *A Man of the People*. Achebe withholds any final omniscient comment on the author's part, thus the reader, as Taiwo notes, comes to the realisation that only through a synthesis of the various partial truths advocated by the various individual voices could one appreciate Achebe's authorial intentions.

In *Anthills of the Savannah* Achebe presents various perspectives

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46 Oladele Taiwo, p. 112.
on the problems of contemporary African nations, represented by
Kangan, through the multiple narrative voices, fluctuating between the
first-person (Chris and Ikem), and the third-person limited point of
view. He employs the self-conscious narrative technique in Beatrice:
"For weeks and months after I had definitely taken on the challenge of
bringing together as many broken pieces of this tragic history as I could
lay my hands on I still could not find a way to begin." But Achebe
ultimately lapses into a mixture of the first-person and third-person
point of views, manifesting an inconsistency which is in itself a
measure of the complexity of the interactions of the varied perspectives.
Again, only through a synthesis of all the voices, embodying partial
truths, could the reader appreciate the author's intentions.

Achebe sees Chris' political pragmatism as an essential but
partial fraction of a whole. Similarly, he recognises the corrupting
influence of privilege and power which hampers Chris's awareness
and development, resulting in his initial inertia and unwillingness to
confront the corruption and abuse of power that he sees all around him.
Achebe also views Ikem's initial idealistic reformism as a vital part of
the overall political "re-form" that he advocates. Both characters'
perspectives complement Beatrice's feminist activism, projecting a
synthesis which, in Achebe's views, could lead to the resolution of the
political tensions of these new nations.

Achebe believed that the coup d'états that were taking place in
many African new nations were bows shooting the arrows of the gods,
and that despite their being an aberration, in a vicarious way they were
necessary as the only logical resolution, at the time, for the political
muddle that the Nangas have made of democracy. As he stated in the

47Chinua Achebe, Anthills of the Savannah, p. 82.
interview with Serumaga quoted earlier: "I mean the coups, themselves, are bows shooting the arrow of God. If you take the example of Nigeria, which is the place I know best, things had got to such a point politically that there was no other answer-- no way you could resolve this impasse politically."48

In Anthills of the Savannah Achebe sees the soldiers as not being any better than the civilians that they ousted; if anything, they have become worse, having perfected torture, intimidation, and cold-blooded killings as weapons to cow the opponents of their policies.49 And believing that they are accountable to no one but themselves, and having the ultimate weapon, the brute force of the army at their beck and call, they have come to see governance as a matter of how long they are able to stay in or cling to power. Achebe sees the morality of good governance, principles, or the remedying of those abuses of democracy which the military saw as the reason for their intervention in the first instance, as having all been swept aside in the afterglow of power-drunkennes. His Excellency sees the issues of governance in this light: "You see if Entebbe happens here it's me the world will laugh at, isn't it? . . . Yes, it is me. General Big Mouth, they will say, and print my picture on the cover of Time magazine with a big mouth and a small head . . . .It's not your funeral but mine. . . . So I don't fool around. I take precautions."50

Therefore those who oppose his policies become 'characterised as' saboteurs. Or are seen as being jealous of his person. Sam relates the

50 Chinua Achebe, Anthills of the Savannah, pp. 15-6.
personal views of the Attorney-General, that his boyhood friend, Mr Oriko, is jealous of His Excellency: "Two of you were after all classmates at Lord Lugard College. He looks back to those days and sees you as the boy next door. He cannot understand how this same boy with whom he played all the boyish pranks, how he can today become this nation's Man of Destiny." And he compares it with the views of his mentor, President-for-Life Ngongo, that: "'Your greatest risk is your boyhood friends, those who grew up with you in your village. Keep them at arm's length and you will live long.' 'The wise old tortoise!'" With this comparison, His Excellency comes to see the objections of his boyhood friends, Chris and Ikem, to some of his policies as traits of this jealousy and envy.

Achebe’s analysis and indictment of the educated elite that were the inheritors of power in the post-colonial era has highlighted the underlying reason for their collusion with corrupt political officials, and their own involvement with corruption. He sees both as being due to the unbridled materialism of the society; and the corrupting influence of both privilege and positions of power. Achebe’s diagnosis shows that the intelligentsia has been too spineless to resist these temptations, and in Anthills of the Savannah the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney-General, the Commissioner for Education, and even Mr Oriko, the Commissioner for Information, all exemplify this point. As Mr Oriko says of this class which includes himself: "I am not thinking so much about him as about my colleagues, eleven intelligent, educated men who let this happen to them, who actually went out of their way to invite it, and who even at this hour have seen and learnt

51 Ibid., p. 23.
52 Ibid., p. 23.
nothing, the cream of our society and the hope of the black race."  

Achebe writes that these elites in positions of responsibility, in their debasement, would stoop to flattery, boot-licking, and back-biting in order to ingratiate themselves with those in power. Chris assaying the existing relationship between Sam and his Commissioners states that: "On a bad day, such as this one had suddenly become after many propitious auguries, there is nothing for it but to lie close to your hole, ready to scramble in. And particularly to keep your mouth shut, for nothing is safe, not even the flattery we have become such experts in disguising as debate."  

He goes on to describe Professor Okong's dress which he says is aimed at impressing the military in power: "Professor Okong wears nothing but khaki safari suits complete with epaulettes. It is amazing how the intellectual envies the man of action." 

But, in Achebe's views, it is the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney-General who most typifies this obsequiousness: "As for those like me, Your Excellency, poor dullards who went to bush grammar schools, we know our place, we know those better than ourselves when we see them. We have no problem worshipping a man like you. Honestly I don't . . . . I say this, Your Excellency, to show that a man of my background has no problem whatsoever worshipping a man like you."  

Achebe sees the boot-licking of these officials, particularly of the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney-General of a nation, as portending doom for good government. Contrary to the truth of the outcome of the referendum, that the people were blatantly manipulated,

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53 Ibid., p. 2.
54 Ibid., p. 3.
55 Ibid., p. 4.
56 Ibid., p. 24.
the Attorney-General curries favour by proclaiming that: "The people have spoken. Their desire is manifest. You are condemned to serve them for life." And later, having earlier told His Excellency that: "My profession enjoins me to trust only hard evidence and to distrust personal feeling and mere suspicion", goes ahead to say "I have a personal feeling . . . . I don't think Chris is one hundred percent behind you. . . . my impression is that he does not show any joy, any enthusiasm in matters concerning this government in general and your excellency in particular."  

Through these scenes, Achebe exposes one of the raison d'être for the failure of most of these governments. This is the preference of those entrusted with the responsibility of advising people in power, to safeguard their jobs and privileges by giving advice that they feel would be pleasing to the ears of the man in power, rather than risk his anger by giving unpalatable but necessarily honest and well-informed advice.

Ikem comments that:

'The Emperor may be a fool but he isn't a monster. Not yet anyway; although he will certainly become one by the time Chris and company have done with him . . . . His problem is that with so many petty interests salaaming around him all day, like that shyster of an Attorney-General, he has no chance of knowing what is right. And that's what Chris and I ought to be doing -- letting him glimpse a little light now and again through chinks in his solid wall of court jesters.'  

Even Chris, who, as Ikem says, should not compete nor fawn for His Excellency's attention, having known him longer than most, has become desensitised to the corruption and abuse of power going on

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57 Ibid., p. 5.
58 Ibid., pp. 22-3.
59 Ibid., p. 46.
around him by privilege and his closeness to power:

Briefly our eyes had locked in combat. Then I had lowered mine to the shiny table-top in ceremonial capitulation. Long silence. But he was not appeased . . . . I conceded victory there as well. Without raising my eyes I said again: 'I am very sorry, Your Excellency.' A year ago I would never had said it again that second time -- without doing grave violence to myself. Now I did it like a casual favour to him. It meant nothing at all to me -- no inconvenience whatever -- and yet everything to him.60

Rather than accuse his friend, Sam, with the facts of his misrule, and if necessary "march to the stake like a man and take the bullet in your chest", Chris tries to intellectually rationalise his own inertia and cautions Ikem on his fiery crusading editorials as "'creating stupid problems for everybody . . . . They achieve nothing. They antagonize everybody.'"61 Achebe's criticism is that characters such as Chris and the other Commissioners, by turning courtiers and becoming "toadies in daily attendance" become caught up in their new role of fawning on the powers that be, and so lose touch with the reality of the people's everyday existence and problems."62 Achebe sees Chris's inertia and the general boot-licking charade of the other Commissioners as only one half of the problem, for as Ikem says "power is like marrying across the Niger; you soon find yourself paddling by night."63

The educated elite, by aligning themselves with those in power, turn a blind eye to the corruption around them, condone the abuses and excesses they see, and become themselves puppets in the hands of puppeteers. As Ikem says: "Worshipping a dictator is such a pain in the ass. It wouldn't be so bad if it was merely a matter of dancing

60 ibid., p.1.
61 ibid., pp. 38, 44-6.
62 ibid., p. 46.
63 ibid., p. 45.
upside down on your head. With practice anyone could learn to do that. The real problem is having no way of knowing from one day to another, from one minute to the next, just what is up and what is down."64 Chris's earlier analysis sums up the corrupting influence of privilege and power, for his closeness to His Excellency had prevented him from perceiving signs of misrule and abuses that Ikem was able to interpret accurately: "I have thought of all this as a game that began innocently enough and then went suddenly strange and poisonous."65 But Chris could not find the specific point "that everything went wrong and the rules were suspended" for the simple reason that he later came to realise: "And so it begins to seem to me that this thing probably never was a game, that the present was there from the beginning only I was too blind or too busy to notice."66 While Achebe's summation of "the cream of our society and the hope of the black race" is scathing, it is really on the 'saviours' that he directs his satire.67

Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* scrutinizes what the military in power in the new nations of Africa, who came ostensibly to correct the political excesses and muddles of the civilian politicians, as Ascherson says, to: "clear up the mess left behind by the corrupt civilian government that preceded [them]", are making of their intervention.68 Achebe believes that the original ideal, that of correcting the "many excesses", is still tenable but that something went awry in the execution. In his views, the change in the military leaders from crusading messiahs to corrupt military politicians was

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64 Ibid., p. 45.
65 Ibid., p.1.
66 Ibid., p.2.
67 Ibid., p. 2.
68 Neal Ascherson, p. 3.
not long in eventuating. Having become exposed to the perquisite privileges of their political office they were quick to change tack, to decide that remaining in power for ever was better than going back to the humdrum existence of barrack life. His Excellency's excitement while narrating his experience at the OAU meeting, particularly his star-struck attitude about President-for-Life Ngongo; and his bitterness at the failure of the referendum to make him one exemplifies this fact, and belies his banter to his cabinet: "When we turn the affairs of state back to you and return to barracks that will be the time to resume your civilian tricks. Have a little more patience." 69

Chris tells Ikem:

"But after the failure of the referendum he complained bitterly to Professor Okong that I had not played my part as Commissioner for Information to ensure the success of the exercise and that you had seen fit to abandon your editorial chair at that crucial moment and take your annual leave ... He said that he was deeply wounded that we, his oldest friends, found it possible to abandon him and allow him to be disgraced. Those were his very words." 70

Achebe's astute handling of the manipulation of the referendum highlights the underlying theme, the inclination of incumbents in contemporary African nations, both civilian and military, to cling to power at whatever cost. Exploring the deviousness of this manipulation, the old man from Abazon says:

"When we were told two years ago that we should vote for the Big Chief to rule for ever and all kinds of people we had never seen before came running in and out of our village asking us to say yes I told my people: We have Osodi in Bassa. If he comes home and tells us that we should say yes we will do so because he is there as our eye and ear ... There was another thing that showed me there was deception in the talk. The people who were running in and out and telling us

69Chinua Achebe, Anthills of the Savannah, P. 4.
70Ibid., p. 147.
to say yes came one day and told us that the Big Chief himself did not want to rule for ever but that he was being forced. Who was forcing him?"71

The above recalls Chief Nanga's blatant intimidation of the people of Urua in *A Man of the People*, which leads to their recanting of their support for Odili's candidacy, noted earlier. Achebe views the use of intimidation both at the individual, and the national levels as being consequent on this desire to cling to power. He sees the military rulers as having adopted the same tactics, to cow the people, as the Nangas whom they ousted. The parallel with *A Man of the People* goes further, for the old man continues:

'But that was not the end. More shifting-eyes people came and said: Because you said no to the Big Chief he is very angry and has ordered all the water bore-holes they are digging in your area to be closed so that you will know what it means to offend the sun. You will suffer so much that in your next reincarnation you will need no one to tell you to say yes whether the matter is clear to you or not.'72

*Anthills of the Savannah* illustrates the fact that the "soldiers-turned-politicians" have even gone further in this wise than their civilian counterparts.73 By creating the secret police, they are able to stifle any oppositions and criticisms: "There were unconfirmed rumours of unrest, secret trials and executions in the barracks."74 Achebe sees these blood-lettings and the use of the secret police to brutalize and cow any dissent, as presaging a "police state."75

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71Ibid., p. 126.
72Ibid., p. 127.
73Ibid., p. 141.
74Ibid., p. 14.
75Ibid., p. 220.
degeneration of the government and its security agents. As Chris says of Ikem's death: "I am saying that there is no shred of doubt that Ikem Osodi was brutally murdered in cold blood by the security officers of this government." 76

In Achebe's views, the circumstances of Chris's own death typify the depravity of military dictatorships to whom human life has become worthless. Achebe seems to raise the fundamental question of the humanity of a police sergeant who would attempt to rape a woman in broad daylight, and in the presence of scores of witnesses; and of the society that could condone such an act: "She threw herself down on her buttocks in desperation. But the sergeant would not let up. He dragged her along on the seat of her once neat blue dress through clumps of scorched tares and dangers of broken glass." 77 To Achebe, the cold-blooded deliberateness of the shooting indicts not only the government that breeds such monstrosities, but the apathetic society that countenances it: "The other said nothing more. He unslung his gun, cocked it, narrowed his eyes while confused voices went up all around some asking Chris to run, others the policeman to put the gun away. Chris stood his ground looking straight into the man's face, daring him to shoot. And he did, point-blank into the chest presented to him." 78

Achebe's A Man of the People has noted the cynicism and apathy of the society; Anthills of the Savannah reiterates this concern. Ikem states that: "But it wasn't Authority that worried me; it never does . . . . It was the thousands who laughed so blatantly at their own humiliation and murder." 79 That no one of the people present raised a finger to

76 Ibid., p. 173.
77 Ibid., p. 215.
78 Ibid., p. 215.
restrain the policeman either in his attempt to rape a young school girl, excepting Chris; or stop him shooting their fellow, is testimony to the degree of dehumanization which has taken place because the society has become "sapped by [successive] regimes of parasites."\textsuperscript{80} That no one also, except for Braimoh, makes any attempt to stop the murderer from escaping justice also illustrates the "I don't care -- it is not my business" attitude of the society. Achebe writes that: "A few of the passengers, mostly other women, were pleading and protesting timorously. But most of the men found it very funny indeed"\textsuperscript{81} He believes that the brutalities perpetrated by government security agencies, from the "darnnable shooting of striking railway-workers and demonstrating students" to the clamping into "solitary confinement at Bassa Maximum Security Prison" of innocent old men, have become common place occurrences, desensitising the society.\textsuperscript{82} Ikem sums up this insensitivity: "I knew then that if its mother was at that moment held up by her legs and torn down the middle like a piece of old rag that crowd [the society] would have yelled with eye-watering laughter."\textsuperscript{83}

In Achebe's view, the military leaders have also succumbed to the corruption and materialism that destroyed their civilian counterparts. Soon after ousting the civilian government for its excesses, the military leaders found it necessary to spend "twenty million" on the refurbishment of the presidential retreat built "at a cost of forty-five million", an act which Beatrice considers "irresponsibly extravagant in

\textsuperscript{79}ibid., p. 41.
\textsuperscript{80}ibid., pp. 141-2.
\textsuperscript{81}ibid., p. 215. (my italics)
\textsuperscript{82}ibid., pp. 141,153.
\textsuperscript{83}ibid., p. 42.
our circumstances." Achebe notes that while during the civilian era the politicians blatantly displayed their newly acquired wealth, the military in power has resorted to the subterfuge of using front men to enrich themselves. Chris informs Beatrice that:

'Alhaji Mahmoud is himself a bit of a hermit though. He hardly appears anywhere and when he does, hardly says a word. Rumour has it that he has in the last one year knocked all other Kangan millionaires into a cocked hat. Eight ocean liners, they say, two or three private jets; a private jetty... No customs officials go near his jetty and so... he is the prince of smugglers. What else? Fifty odd companies, including a bank. Monopoly of government fertilizer imports... What I find worrying and I don't think I can quite believe it yet is that (voice lowered) he may be fronting you know for... your host.'

Achebe believes that in a society where the people's basic need is of "water which is free from Guinea worm, of simple shelter and food", that it is the creation of such monstrous monopolies and officially sanctioned corruption that account for the perpetuation of the country's economic woes. In portraying the pervasiveness of corruption, from the Alhaji fronting for the president, to the "chaotic billing procedures deliberately done to cover their massive fraud" at the Kangan Electricity Corporation and their "readiness... to burn down the entire Accounts and Audit Departments if an enquiry should ever be mooted", Achebe shows that the military regime has not been able to remedy the mess or change society's attitude. Rather, they seem to have worsened the situation as exemplified by the blatant flaunting of bribery on the highways: "Police and army checkpoints came and went fairly

84 Ibid., p. 73.
85 Ibid., p. 117.
86 Ibid., p. 73.
87 Ibid., p. 159.
regularly and had dropped their pretence of looking inside the bus from the forward door. Now they took their money openly from the operators with seeming good humour on both sides. But the driver and his mate never failed to grumble and curse the fellows soon afterwards.\textsuperscript{88}

Achebe sees the ultimate reason for the failures, chronicled in his writings, of all the successive governments, past and present, as the failure of those in power to relate to "the very people who legitimize [their] authority."\textsuperscript{89} Ikem states that:

The prime failure of this government began also to take on a clearer meaning for me. It can't be the massive corruption though its scale and pervasiveness are truly intolerable; it isn't the subservience to foreign manipulation, degrading as it is; it isn't even this second-class, hand-me-down capitalism, ludicrous and doomed; nor is it the damnable shooting of striking railway-workers and demonstrating students and the destruction and banning thereafter of independent unions and cooperatives. It is the failure of our rulers to re-establish vital links with the poor and dispossessed of this country, with their bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation's being.\textsuperscript{90}

Achebe sees this as the major failure of the civilian government, and also of the present military one. Elewa's uncle sees the issues raised in very clear and simple terms: "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."\textsuperscript{91}

While \textit{Anthills of the Savannah} affirms and even exemplifies Achebe's concept of the role of the African artist in contemporary

\textsuperscript{88}ibid., p. 207.  
\textsuperscript{89}ibid., p. 73.  
\textsuperscript{90}ibid., p. 141.  
\textsuperscript{91}ibid., p. 228.
society, it signals, however, a lateral shift in his concept of power and change. Achebe's fiction has consistently upheld the views that power, whether political or religious, derives from the people and that its possessors should be accountable to the people. Many of the excesses of such characters as Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart, Ezeulu in Arrow of God, Chief Nanga in A Man of the people derive in part from their ignoring this fact. While fundamentally this belief still underlies Achebe's latest novel, he also recalls the idea of "an enlightened dictator" being what the new nations of Africa need to put them on the right track that he first moots in No Longer at Ease. 92

However, in Anthills of the Savannah, Achebe raises this issue once again for scrutiny. Chris remarks of his colleagues: "And some will add: That's a pity because what this country really needs is a ruthless dictator. At least for five good years. And we will all laugh in loud excess because we know -- bless our dear hearts -- that we shall never be favoured with such an undeserved blessing as a ruthless dictator." 93 But Achebe dismisses the idea not only because of his traditional distrust of the concentration of too much power in one individual, but mainly because he sees the wrong people as always being the ones to stumble into such positions of power; and for fear of the havoc that such individuals could wreak. As Ikem remarks about His Excellency: "If Sam were stronger or brighter he probably wouldn't need our offices; but then he probably wouldn't have become His Excellency in the first place. Only half-wits can stumble into such enormities." 94 Through Ikem's multifaceted examination of what the notion entails, Achebe rejects it as not being the solution to the post-

92 Chinua Achebe, No Longer at Ease, p. 44.
93 Chinua Achebe, Anthills of the Savannah, p. 3.
94 Ibid., p. 46.
colonial problems of governance in contemporary Third World countries: "I wouldn't put myself under the democratic dictatorship even of angels and archangels." Achebe's observation that no individual or group, in the new nations of Africa, aspire to power to use it for the benefit of the society; it is always out of self-interest. 

Achebe's analysis of the traditional concept and function of authority parodies the use to which power is put in contemporary African nations: "In the beginning Power rampaged through the world, naked. So the Almighty, . . . 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." It is this lack of modesty, and the inability of the possessors of power to recognise the obligatory "moral nature of authority", coupled with their "unquenchable thirst to sit in authority on [their] fellows", that Idemili holds them in contempt.

Achebe's characterisation of His Excellency illustrates the rapacious use of power. The cowed attitude of the eleven civilian Commissioners, in the presence of His Excellency, is indicative of the level of intimidation which they are being subjected to. Achebe dramatises the debasing effect of "naked" power on both its wielders and their subjects, through the profuse use of animal imagery. Chris narrates that:

On my right sat the Honourable Commissioner for Education. He is by far the most frightened of the lot. As soon as he had sniffed peril in the air he had begun to

95 Ibid., p. 155.
96 Ibid., pp. 155-7.
97 Ibid., p. 102.
98 Ibid., pp. 102-4.
disappear into his hole, as some animals and insects do, backwards. Instinctively he had gathered his papers . . . dragging them into his hole after him when his entire body suddenly went rigid.\textsuperscript{99}

The animal imagery magnifies the impression of "the hunter and the hunted", with the members of His Excellency's cabinet, as quarry, always "sniffing" the air for any signs of danger, and to avoid death.\textsuperscript{100} But it is really in the person of Sam who became His Excellency that Achebe shows how: "Amazing what even one month in office can do to a man's mind."\textsuperscript{101} Achebe writes that as he manipulates 'his victims', His Excellency "felt again that glow of quiet jubilation that had become a frequent companion especially when as now he was disposing with consummate ease of some of those troublesome people he had thought so formidable in his apprentice days in power: It takes a lion to tame a leopard, say our people. How right they are."\textsuperscript{102}

Achebe argues, through his analysis and accounts of the friendly relationships that have always existed between Chris, Ikem, John Kent (Mad Medico), and Sam, from their school days at Lord Lugard College, at London, and extending to Sam's early months as Head of State, that Sam is not a monster. Mad Medico sees the disintegration of this bond of friendship, and the change in Sam, as exemplifying the corrupting influence of power. He tells Dick that: "'You know something, Dick, the most awful thing about power is not that it corrupts absolutely but that it makes people so utterly boring, so predictable and . . . just plain uninteresting'. . . .I told you this boy was such a charmer when I first met him. I'd never seen anyone so

\textsuperscript{99}ibid., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{100}ibid., p. 2.
\textsuperscript{101}ibid., p. 38.
\textsuperscript{102}ibid., p. 22.
human, so cultured." As a student, Chris recalls, that Sam was exemplary:

Sam was the social paragon . . . He was the all-rounder -- good student, captain of the Cricket Team, Victor Ludorum in athletics and, in our last year, School Captain. And girls worshipped at his feet from every Girls' School in the province. But strangely enough there was a kind of spiritual purity about Sam in those days despite his great weakness for girls.

And later, as an officer, Ikem comments that: "But after Sandhurst [Sam] was a catalogue model of an officer." Even after he became Head of State, in the first few months, he still retained much of his untainted personality. As Chris remarks:

His Excellency came to power without any preparation for political leadership -- a fact which he being a very intelligent person knew perfectly well . . . . Sandhurst after all did not set about training officers to take over Her Majesty's throne but rather in the high tradition of proud aloofness from politics and public affairs. Therefore when our civilian politicians finally got what they had coming to them and landed unloved and unmourned on the rubbish heap and the young Army Commander was invited by the even younger coup-makers to become His Excellency the Head of State he had pretty few ideas about what to do. And so, like an intelligent man, he called his friends together and said: 'What shall I do?'

Achebe sees human nature as endowing individuals with the capacity both to be good and exceedingly evil. This duality, he argues, is ever present in everyone. But he believes that only one's resolve and individual circumstances determine where the balance will tilt, either to be good or bad. Ikem says that: "Man will surprise by his capacity for

103 Ibid., p. 56.
104 Ibid., pp. 65-6.
105 Ibid., p. 49.
106 Ibid., p. 12.
nobility as well as for villainy. No system can change that. It is built into the core of man's free spirit."107 Ikem remarks that this balance, in His Excellency's case, tilted with his first OAU meeting and his acquaintance with some military dictators from other new nations of Africa who had contrived to foist themselves on their respective nations as Presidents-for-Life. Ikem narrates that:

I think that much of the change which has came over Sam started after his first OAU meeting . . . . He spoke like an excited schoolboy about his heroes; about the old emperor who never smiled nor changed his expression no matter what was going on around him . . . . But the leader Sam spoke most about was . . . President-for-Life Ngongo, who called Sam his dear boy and invited him over to his suite for cocktails on the second day.108

Thereafter Sam also attempted, but failed, to foist himself on Kangan as President-for-Life, leading to his bitterness against Ikem and Chris (for not playing their parts towards the success of the referendum), and against Abazon as the only section of the country that did not return a clear mandate: "They were the only ones whose Leaders of Thought failed to return a clear mandate to Your Excellency."109 Achebe's argument is that no society or system of government is good or bad. That it is the individuals who order the society or who run the government that are good or bad, because as Ikem remarks: "Society is an extension of the individual."110

As already indicated, Achebe's fractured narrative technique creates multiple points of view. This not only presents the varied perspectives of the issues highlighted, it mirrors the progression and

107 ibid., p. 99.
108 ibid., pp. 52-3.
109 ibid., p. 18.
110 ibid., p. 99.
development of the individual characters. Through shifts in time and narrative focus, the changes from first-person to third-person points of view and, as in Beatrice, to a self-conscious retrospective narrator, Achebe is able to deal more effectively with the different stages of each character's developing awareness. Achebe is thus able to circumvent the restrictions which any one single narrative technique imposes, retaining a firmer authorial control. This narrative technique is particularly important in Anthills of the Savannah, as it enables Achebe to deal more overtly, and from varied perspectives, with a sensitive and contemporary post-colonial problem of some African new states -- misrules of gun-toting "politicians in uniform."

One of the narrators, Chris, seems to embody the fulfillment of Achebe's prediction that Odili (of A Man of the People) would probably return to do a better job next time. Talking to Bernth Lindfors, Achebe says of Odili:

He was very honest. He knew his own shortcomings; he even knew when his motives were not very pure, and he admitted that these motives were not very pure. This puts him in a class worthy of attention, as far as I'm concerned. And I think he probably would return to do a better job next time . . . . But he was learning very fast, and at the end I think he had improved his chances of being of service, of doing the things he thought should be done. He'd improved those chances.111

In many ways Chris represents a more matured and perceptive Odili. He also is basically honest and acknowledges the self-interest which partly accounts for his initial inertia: "And of course, complete honesty demands that I mention one last factor in my continued stay, a fact of which I'm somewhat ashamed, namely that I couldn't be writing this if I didn't hang around to observe it all. And no one else

would."\textsuperscript{112} He is dedicated enough to be "at work as usual long after everybody else had gone home, eaten their lunch and even had their siesta."\textsuperscript{113} At the outset of the narrative, Chris, as Mr Oriko, the Commissioner of Information, exemplified the corrupting influence of privilege. His lack of realistic analytical approach to social problems could only justify Ikem's criticisms, that he has chosen to rationalise corruption and Sam's progressive irrationalities because of his position.\textsuperscript{114} As Beatrice and Ikem remarked on his failure to see beyond His Excellency's comments about their roles in the failure of the referendum: "It doesn't speak too highly of your power of analysis or insight which is what I have always told you."\textsuperscript{115} It took Ikem's brutal murder to galvanise Chris from his political pragmatism, and animal sense of self-preservation, towards more courageous action. Achebe implies criticism by Beatrice's use of the term "reasonableness" when she cautions herself: "Careful now, before you find yourself slowly and secretly leaning towards Chris's reasonableness!"\textsuperscript{116} But by the end Chris was willing, even at the risk of his own life, to do "the things he thought should be done" such as protecting innocent civilians from the excesses of gun-toting men in uniform.\textsuperscript{117}

However, it is through Ikem Osodi, that Achebe explores and explicates many of the theories and abstractions that his earlier writings -- prose fiction, poetry, and essays, have sought to define: of the true role of the artist in contemporary African societies. This role, he

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  \item \textsuperscript{112} Chinua Achebe, \textit{Anthills of the Savannah}, p. 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} ibid., p. 71.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} ibid., p. 38.
  \item \textsuperscript{115} ibid., pp. 147-8.
  \item \textsuperscript{116} ibid., p. 73.
  \item \textsuperscript{117} ibid., pp. 215.
\end{itemize}
believes, is that they should have vision, criticise injustices in their societies, and through their vision and criticism, direct their society in the path that it should be heading. Nadine Gordimer rightly observes in her review of Anthills of the Savannah that: "Even a defence of the role of the writer as opposed to the demand that he become a revolutionary- or reformist-activist in relation to his people comes naturally, not authorially, from the mouth of an old Abazon storyteller." 118 Achebe dramatises the writer's function, through the old man's analysis; and Ikem embodies this concept. Gordimer, quoting Achebe writes:

'We all imagine that the story of the land is easy, that every one of us can get up and tell it.' But the writer is the one whose eye the gods have 'ringed... with white chalk... He may be a fellow of little account, not the bold warrior we all expect nor even the war-drummer. But in his new-found utterance our struggle will stand reincarnated before us. He is the liar who can sit under his thatch and see the moon hanging in the sky outside. Without stirring from his stool he can tell you how commodities are selling in a distant market-place. His chalked eye will see every blow in a battle he never fought." 119

Achebe sees the writer [press] as representing, in the final analysis, the conscience of the society; and should uphold and protect whatever fundamental principles on which that society is built. Ikem sustains Achebe's advocacy that: "One of the writer's main functions has always been to expose and attack injustice." 120 And that: "We must seek the freedom to express our thought and feeling, even against ourselves, without the anxiety that what we say might be taken in

evidence against our race."\textsuperscript{121}

Ikem is shown to be willing to undergo deprivation rather than forsake his principles. To Chris's exhortation for "editorial restraint" Ikem replies: "As for my editorials, as long as I remain editor of the Gazette I shall not seek anybody's permission for what I write . . . . If you don't like it you know what to do, Chris, don't you? You hired me, didn't you?"\textsuperscript{122} Chris admits that the mere notion of 'editorial restraint' outrages Ikem:

That's why I have said a hundred million times to Ikem: Lie low for a while and this gathering tornado may rage and pass overhead carrying away roof-tops and perhaps . . . only perhaps . . . leave us battered but alive. But oh no! Ikem is outraged that I should recommend such cowardly and totally unworthy behaviour to him.\textsuperscript{123}

Achebe believes that the responsibility that artists bear is such that their justification at all times for what they do should be what is best for the society, not whether those in authority agree to their views, not even whether the views antagonize or create problems for everyone, as Chris argues. Nor should it be based on its futility: "But supposing my crusading editorials were indeed futile would I not be obliged to keep on writing them?"\textsuperscript{124}

Again Chris argues that Ikem lacks political pragmatism. That he is "a romantic; [and] . . . had no solid contact with the ordinary people of Kangan."\textsuperscript{125} He further claims that Ikem is an "artist who has the example of Don Quixote and other fictional characters to guide him."\textsuperscript{126} Three separate incidents would suffice to illustrate not only

\textsuperscript{121}Ibid., p. 139.
\textsuperscript{122}Chinua Achebe, \textit{Anthills of the Savannah}, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{123}Ibid., p. 119.
\textsuperscript{124}Ibid., p. 38.
\textsuperscript{125}Ibid., p. 39.
Achebe's answer to this charge, but more importantly, they will exemplify how well Ikem lives up to the role which Achebe believes that he and his class should be performing. The incident of the public execution of armed robbers and Ikem's editorial "calling on the President to promulgate forthwith a decree abrogating the law that permitted that outrageous and revolting performance", leads to the promulgation of the Public Executions Amendment Decree (although Chris denies this), and testify to the efficacy of his editorials. But, it is probably the comments of the two taxi drivers, and from the old man from Abazon that fully illustrate the points that Achebe makes through Ikem.

The two drivers' visit illustrates the society's awareness to the functioning of good and responsible press. One of the men, though uneducated, yet showed a marked appreciation of the effectiveness of Ikem's editorials which Ikem found illuminating: "But na for we small people he de write every time. I no sabi book but I sabi say na for we this oga de fight, not for himself. He na big man. Nobody fit do fuckall to him. So he fit stay for him house, chop him chop, drink him cold beer, put him air conditioner and forget we. But he no do like that. So we come salute am." His friend's analysis of the remedial outcome of Ikem's editorial on the stinking "Central Taxi Park for Slaughter Road", clearly shows that Ikem 'is in touch with the ordinary people' of Kangan, that he articulates some of the society's aspirations, and that the society appreciates what he is doing.

126 Ibid., p. 119.
127 Ibid., p. 43.
128 Ibid., p. 136.
129 Ibid., p. 137.
But Achebe's most important illustration of the effectiveness of Ikem's editorials is given by the old man from Abazon. Overwhelmed by the campaign from those who wanted to influence their decision, to force them to acquiesce to the Head of State becoming Life-President, the people of Abazon decided to wait on "the bastion of democracy." Their reasoning was that the type of writers represented by Ikem were their eyes and their ears. That in this capacity, they would see and responsibly evaluate the pros and cons of the issues at stake. That thereafter, if Ikem asks them to acquiesce to the demand, either by coming personally or in his editorials, they would: "But he did not come to tell us and he did not write in his paper. So we knew that cunning had entered the talk." The old man, like most members of the society, and one of the Taxi drivers is uneducated, yet appreciative of the value of Ikem's editorials: "I have never read what they say he writes because I do not know ABC. But I have heard of all the fight he has fought for poor people in this land." That the society could come to depend on the Press for guidance, on an issue of national significance, is testimony that the Press was doing one of its jobs -- enlightenment: "I have shown what light I can with a number of controversial editorials."

Through Ikem's reformist analysis of power, societal ills, and vision for the future, one appreciates Achebe's modified proposal for the resolution of some of the post-colonial tensions of the society. Achebe believes that the solution to the perennial problems of constant change

132 Ibid., pp. 122-3.
133 Ibid., p. 46.
of governments and blood-letting, cannot be in the systems of
government whatever they are. Ikem states that the various
"simplistic remedies touted by all manner of salesmen . . . will always
fail because of man's stubborn antibody called surprise."\(^{134}\) In
Achebe's views, the "reformism", whether "bourgeois" or "democratic
dictatorship of the proletariat" that many of these new nations of Africa
advocate is doomed to failure.\(^{135}\) This is, Achebe says, because any
manner of reform could only be meaningful and viable if it is built
around society's existing core of values. To change the system totally,
he says, portends disaster. Ikem analyses and projects this views,
saying:

"The most we can hope to do with a problematic individual
psyche is to re-form it. No responsible psychoanalyst would
aim to do more, for to do more, to overthrow the psyche itself,
would be to unleash insanity. No. We can only hope to
rearrange some details in the periphery of the human
personality. Any disturbance of its core is an irresponsible
invitation to disaster . . . . It has to be the same with society.
You re-form it around what it is, its core of reality; not
around an intellectual abstraction."\(^{136}\)

Achebe sees this mode of reform as the "most promising" solution:
"Reform may be a dirty word then but it begins to look more and more
like the most promising route to success in the real world."\(^{137}\) Both
Ikem's advocacy for "re-form" and his departure from his earlier
arrogant male-dominance are expressions of a new awareness. And a
manifestation of his rejection of a hitherto held radical marxism;
recognising the viability of other forms of governance, but more
importantly, the fact that the "problem" is with the people --the

\(^{134}\) Ibid., p. 99.
\(^{135}\) Ibid., p. 155.
\(^{136}\) Ibid., pp. 99-100.
\(^{137}\) Ibid., p. 99.
governed and the governors -- and not with the system. His speech to the students is the culmination of his political development which has progressively become more pronounced as the extent of government excesses became apparent.

Starting with his fiery editorials, through his feminist discourse with Beatrice, and further expounded in his speech to the students, Ikem highlights the malaise of the polity; but he believes that no meaningful political progress could be made without including mass participation of the people -- taxi drivers, market women, students and labourers. For, these are "the very people that legitimate" the existence of any government. Ikem's speech to the students puts all classes of people into a political balance, and finds them all wanting; but his faith in the future transcends this immediate failing. His public proclamation of his intent to marry an "ordinary illiterate" petty-trader's daughter, like his preference for his old and battered car (to being chauffeur-driven in a company-car), pledges his faith in a society not governed by class and status. It is this faith that galvanises, not only his friend Chris, but the student leaders to see beyond his death to his vision of a tomorrow, in which "power" is used rightly for the benefit of the society. A vision which only began to dawn on Chris at his last moments: "Chris was sending us a message to beware. This world belongs to the people of the world not to any little caucus, no matter how talented." Elewa's child symbolises this faith and vision, not only as the living proof of a union that cuts across social barriers but, as Elewa's uncle and the whole assembly acquiesced, "the daughter of all of us."

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138 Ibid., p. 73.
139 Ibid., p. 232.
But his most profound advocacy, which is also built around the premise of society's existing inherent reality, is the invocation (and modification) of the female principle:

'But the way I see it is that giving women today the same role which traditional society gave them of intervening only when everything else has failed is not enough, you know, like the women in the Sembene film who pick up the spears abandoned by their defeated menfolk. It is not enough that women should be the court of last resort because the last resort is a damn sight too far and too late!' 141

Beatrice's function is not only as a narrative voice, articulating and projecting Achebe's new vision of the role of women in the 'days ahead', but she serves to moderate between the views of Chris and Ikem, and more importantly, to sharpen and focus Ikem's, and consequently Achebe's, proffered solution. Ikem's development is from (as Chris believes) a romantic idealism towards a more practical reformism, and from male arrogance to recognising that women have a new role to play in the times ahead; this development complements and heightens Beatrice's political perception. 142 Ikem claims that he owes his insight on the feminist concept to Beatrice. 143 He argues that from antiquity Man has chauvinistically assigned to women, the role of the world's "fire-brigade after the house has caught fire and been virtually consumed," 144 that through the ages, from the times of the Old Testament to the present, of the New Testament, Man has striven to relegate the female principle to a degree of irrelevancy:

'So the idea came to Man to turn his spouse into the very Mother of God, to pick her up from right under his foot

140 Ibid., p. 228.
141 Ibid., pp. 91-2.
142 Ibid., p. 98.
143 Ibid., p. 98.
144 Ibid., p. 97.
where she'd been since Creation and carry her reverently to a nice, corner pedestal. Up there, her feet completely off the ground she will be just as irrelevant to the practical decisions of running the world as she was in her bad old days. The only difference is that now Man will suffer no guilt feelings; he can sit back and congratulate himself on his generosity and gentlemanliness.  

Achebe believes that the time is now, for the new nations of Africa to invoke the female principle, not necessarily in its original form of keeping women "in reserve until the ultimate crisis arrives and the waist is broken and hung over the fire, and the palm bears its fruit at the tail of its leaf. Then, as the world crashes around Man's ears, Woman in her supremacy will descend and sweep the shards together." But in response to Beatrice's question: "What must a people do to appease an embittered history?" Ikem's visionary answer, which Beatrice echoes, is that: "It is now up to you women to tell us what has to be done." Achebe also uses Beatrice to synthesise both Ikem's and Chris's dialectics and views about the nature of society, and consequently project his own -- that the society belongs to everyone, and that those vested with authority exercise such on behalf of that society. Beatrice sums up these views, stating that: "This world belongs to the people of the world not to any little caucus, no matter how talented."

Anthills of the Savannah, finally advocates, in conjunction with the incorporation of the female principle, a system of government whose foundation would be laid on a deep appreciation of the ethnic and religious diversities of the new nations of Africa: "Well, if a daughter of

145 Ibid., p. 98.
146 Ibid., p. 98.
147 Ibid., p. 220.
148 Ibid., pp. 98, 184.
149 Ibid., p. 232.
Allah could join his rival’s daughter in a holy dance, what is to stop the priestess of the unknown god from shaking a leg?" But it is Elewa’s uncle that sums this views, in his prayer for the new born baby:

“But we have no quarrel with church people; we have no quarrel with mosque people. Their intentions are good, their mind on the right road. Only the hand fails to throw as straight as the eye sees. We praise a man when he slaughters a fowl so that if his hand becomes stronger tomorrow he will slaughter a goat. . . . May this child be the daughter of all of us . . . . May these young people here when they make the plans for their world not forget her. And all other children."

Elewa’s uncle’s prayer provides an appropriate way to conclude this chapter, in that its condensed aphorisms highlight some of the major flaws which Achebe’s writings have shown as being primarily responsible for the post-colonial tensions of the Nigerian state. His appreciation of the inherent good in opposed religions as Islam and Christianity embodies Achebe’s belief in non-sectarianism in policies of national significance. But, as has happened with the political legacy, “only the hand fails to throw as straight as the eye sees.” Anthills of the Savannah has shown that, as with their civilian counterparts the intentions of the military when they assumed office were good, but something went awry in the execution. The prayer that “those in whose hands it is to plan their world” should not forget the new-born child, and all other children, reiterates Achebe’s concern with the tendency of people in power to forget the people they govern. But while Achebe’s recent fiction proffers such solutions as “wrapping around power’s rude waist a loincloth of peace and modesty,” and

\[\text{\textsuperscript{150}}\text{Ibid., p. 224.} \]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{151}}\text{Ibid., p. 228.} \]
using power with responsibility, he advocates above all, that leaders of
Africa's new nations, particularly Nigeria, should take into full
consideration the needs and aspirations of their varied members.
CONCLUSION

When one considers that the historical contexts from which Ihimaera and Achebe are writing are very different, the parallels in their careers become very significant. Ihimaera is writing from within a white settler society in which European migrants outnumber the indigenous people by an overwhelming majority, while Achebe writes from a society that is totally indigenous, because the colonialists left after his society became independent. It is all the more suggestive, therefore, that their writings, their social vision, and their development as writers show marked similarities, extending even to the hiatus in their literary careers. Of particular relevance are their comparable views on the role of the imaginative writer in contemporary society. Ihimaera believes that his first priority for writing is didactic: to teach the young urbanised Maoris about the Maori aspect of their dual heritage: "My first priority is to the young Maori, the ones who have suffered most with the erosion of the Maori map, the ones who are Maori by colour but who have no emotional identity as Maori." 1 In an interview with Beston Ihimaera says of his first book: "I wanted *Pounamu Pounamu* to go into the schools, into English classes, because it would reach both Maori and Pakeha kids of age fourteen- fifteenth or higher. I wanted it to help other Maoris especially." 2 Ihimaera also believes that *Pounamu Pounamu* has

"given Maori kids an idea of what it's like to be Maori, the emotional experience."³

This echoes Achebe's comments in his essay, "The Novelist as Teacher", in which he relates the story of the boy in his wife's class, quoted earlier in this study, in which he states: "I think it is part of my business as a writer to teach that boy that there is nothing disgraceful about the African weather, that the palm-tree is a fit subject for poetry."⁴ Continuing, Achebe says that "I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past - with all its imperfections - was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them."⁵ Both writers have had to recreate their society's historical pasts to counter earlier assumptions that these indigenous peoples did not have any history or culture. Ihimaera repeatedly mentions the fact that: "For instance, ask who discovered New Zealand and you will be told Abel Tasman. But the answer, as given by Maori history, is Kupe. And that, quite simply, is why I began to write. To make New Zealanders aware of their 'other,' Maori, heritage."⁶ Achebe himself believes that the validating of his people's past which his early writings represented, was a form of protest:

I believe that it is impossible to write anything in Africa without some kind of commitment, some kind of message, some kind of protest. Even those early novels ... what they were saying, in effect, was that we had a past. That was protest, because there were people who thought we didn't have a past. ... The whole pattern of life demanded that ... you should put in a word for your history, your traditions,

³Ibid., p. 117.
⁴Chinua Achebe, "The Novelist as Teacher," pp. 44.
⁵Ibid., P. 45.
⁶Witi Ihimaera, "Why I Write," p. 117.
While in the early periods of their developments both writers assiduously cultivated and developed themes that highlighted the indigenous cultures and traditions of their respective societies, both for the enlightenment of their own culturally alienated peoples, as they both say, and for the larger societies, their later writings have shown shifts of emphasis. In the case of Ihimaera, his new fictions manifest a pronounced anger at the slow pace of change, leading to a more radical and militant literature; in Achebe's case, a marked sense of disillusionment at the mess that the emergent African administrative class, and by extension the self-governing countries of Africa, have made of self-rule. Of comparable significance is the hiatus in both writers' careers. While Ihimaera's was a deliberate decision to stop and re-evaluate his social consciousness in the light of prevailing circumstances affecting the Maori people at the time, Achebe's was partly forced on him by circumstances over which he had no control, but which nevertheless, affected his vision and social consciousness as a writer.

Ihimaera's hiatus, as already outlined in the course of this study, has led to his developing a more radical and sharpened awareness of Maori post-colonial tensions and 'the reality of the times' as he perceived them: "The reality of 1975 was a hardening of attitudes on both sides. Of inflexibility. Of infighting. By 1975 I felt my vision was out of date and, tragically, so encompassing and so established that it wasn't leaving room enough for the new reality to punch through. I made a conscious decision to stop writing." Ihimaera believed that

what was needed was a literature that could reach "across the empty spaces" and make the connection "between Maori and Pakeha in a more hard-hitting and realistic fashion." And as this study shows, *The Matriarch*, and to a lesser extent, *The Whale Rider* were designed to do just that.

Achebe's hiatus engendered a more intense sense of disillusionment, and of betrayal for, as Philip Rogers notes in his analysis of Achebe's poem, "Lazarus", in which Ogbaku people kill their kinsman 'on the threshold of a promising resurrection', "the moment of birth is blighted, but the blighting force can no longer be dismissed as external." This is a summation of Achebe's despair at what his people have become, or more appropriately, done with their inheritance. But more importantly, the hiatus has renewed in Achebe a determination to criticise the failings of those entrusted with the destinies of the new states of Africa, as evidenced by his latest novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*.

It is apparent from this study that both writers believe that their proposals for the resolution of their respective society's post-colonial tensions to be the most efficacious for that society. While I believe this to be so in both cases, it is my view also that Ihimaera's progressive inclination to review his stance in the light of external criticism, which seems to be the case now, is putting him in a paradoxical situation. Considering the social consciousness which his writings demonstrate and their concern for Maoritanga, his proposition for biculturalism, his particular definition of the concept, represent a legacy that would ensure the harmonious resolution of Maori post-colonial

9ibid., p. 53.
10Rogers Philip, p. 5.
tensions. But the equivocations, and some contradictions in his views, that this study has exposed, constitutes a danger for the concept of biculturalism. This could, nevertheless, be understood from the perspective of 'a lone voice in the wilderness.' In the light of the prevailing social and political climate of New Zealand, while much critical attention is given to vociferous nationalists, few critics have systematically elicited Ihimaera's overt concern to encourage biculturalism, and of his particular definition of the concept, as shown through his writings. It is not surprising then, given Ihimaera's sensitivity to Maori concerns, that he perceives the criticisms of such Maori nationalists as Atareta Poananga as questioning his commitment to Maori issues. It is for this reason that he has occasionally felt the need, unnecessarily I believe, to justify his position, action, fiction, or the use to which he puts materials in his writings. It is pertinent that Ihimaera mentions Atareta in *The Matriarch*. Whai Mahana tells Tamatea:

Atareta? Yes, her too... And there's Atareta -- the same thing, a brilliant degree in Political Science in Auckland, her father was with the UN Force in the Middle East, now she is with Foreign Affairs, looking like a Parisian model -- she is probably more of a radical than Donna is. She smoulders. Nobody can dampen her fire, her passion... .In fact, these days, you look around and, huh, it seems as if all our men have gone soft. The women seem to be doing most of the protesting and jumping up and down these days. Certainly they are the ones who are taking Maori issues to the extremities of action.11

Ihimaera's high regards for Atareta is evident. However, Atareta believes that Ihimaera, by not coming to her defense when she had the problems with their employer, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had betrayed the Maori bond of both *manaakitanga* and

whanuungatanga-- reciprocal assistance to one another and kinship and family responsibility -- as one Maori to another. In an interview with Nicola Legat, Atareta Poananga states that: "'Witi and I were called up. He was told he could be fired too because he had also gone public'. . . . 'Later he crumbled under the pressure. A year later he signed an affidavit against me. . . . When it comes to the crunch a lot of our men opt out. That's a lesson I've learned." Nicola Legat goes further to say of Atareta Poananga that: "There is a clear sense that she feels Ihimaera's action as a betrayal." Nevertheless, this study has shown that Ihimaera has been responding to such criticisms as Atareta Poananga's. His latest fiction, The Whale Rider, as already highlighted, shows a feminist bias that reflects Ihimaera's accommodation of the criticism that The Matriarch is misogynistic. Also Roy Murphy's remarks that "One of his [Ihimaera's] primary motives in writing The Matriarch was revenge on the European. He wanted to hurt the European reader. Hurt the European badly. That was why he wrote in such graphic detail about the deaths of the mostly white military men and their families during the Matawhero massacre," and Ihimaera's own admission that "If you want them to hurt, you don't write about the massacre of Maori people, you write about the massacre of European people . . . . My business is to make European people cry", both seem to stem from Ihimaera's desire to portray the image of a committed Maori writer. Ihimaera's critical analysis of both the Maori sense of alienation, and of the political and social injustices inflicted on the Maori by the Pakeha are adequately portrayed in his writings.

12 Nicola Legat, p. 54.
13 Ibid., p. 54.
14 Roy Murphy, p. 13.
Therefore, such Pakeha-alienating comments as the above seem aimed at refuting the accusation that he is not sufficiently political or committed to Maori grievances, rather than explicating his motive. But more importantly, such comments seem inconsistent with his concept of biculturalism, given his admission that "our journey was possibly more difficult because it had to be undertaken within Pakeha terms of acceptability" because the Maori "were a minority" within the framework of majority Pakeha domination, much of whose "progress was dependent on Pakeha goodwill."15 Such inconsistencies could inevitably lead to a compromising of the integrity of Ihimaera's writing, if his views are perceived to be easily influenced by critics, particularly as neither an exhibition of a Mongrel Mob patch, nor vociferous radicalism constitute the qualities of Maoriness. Therefore, given all the arguments for and against both concepts of biculturalism and separatism which Ihimaera's writings have highlighted, I believe that the concept of biculturalism as defined in his writings to be the most practicable, desirable, and in the long-run most beneficial to both races, Maori and Pakeha, and the future of the society.

Many critics of Achebe's post-war writings -- Kolawole Ogungbesan, David Carroll, and Philip Rogers, among others -- have noted his quest for the place of the modern artist.16 They have also

15Witi Ihimaera, The Whale Rider, p. 57.
16Achebe's vision of the sort of artist/critic that the contemporary society needs as against the one that had always operated in traditional society is compounded by the fascist-oriented governments within which such contemporary artists have to work. The role of the writer as artist or critic is more difficult in modern societies in which the freedom of criticism as functioned in traditional societies is curtailed by blatant intimidations and draconian decrees, and often physical incarcerations: "Mr Achebe said his relations with authorities are strained. He went home in
identified his sense of the writer as being an unwanted seer in contemporary, often militarily-ruled, nations of Africa. His *Anthills of the Savannah* attests to the end of the search, as he tells Kim Heron: "This horrendous experience [the Nigerian civil-war] was, for me, the end of an epoch, and it really drew a curtain across modern African history . . . I needed to sit back and reflect before saying anything more."17 In *No Longer at Ease* Achebe, even as he uses a character such as Mr Green to highlight some of the failings of the emergent black administrative class, he also holds 'the Greens' partly culpable for 'the Obis', who were "half-baked" products of partial socialisation; *A Man of the People* and now, *Anthills of the Savannah dump* most of the blames at the door-steps of Africans (and other indigenous people) themselves. Achebe's often quoted proverb, that "the man who brings ant-infested faggots into the hut should not grumble when lizards begin to pay him a visit", assumes relevance when juxtaposed with his criticism of what the indigenous peoples of Africa are making of their political inheritances.18 This is probably most exemplified by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's analysis of *A Man of the People*, which aptly applies equally to *Anthills of the Savannah*. Having established in his analysis that "The leaders of the anti-colonial struggle have become traitors to their peoples' cause and have sacrificed Africa on the alter of their own middle-class comfort,"19 Ngugi goes on to say that Achebe

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in *A Man of the People*:

... has turned his back on the European presence. He no longer feels the need to explain, or point out mistakes, by merely recreating .... Now, in *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* the teacher talks to his pupils, directly. He has lost patience. He retains self-control in that he does not let anger drive him into incoherent rage and wild lashing. Instead he takes his satirical whip and raps his pupils - with rage, of course, sometimes with pathos verging on tears, but often with bitterness, though this is hardly discernible because below it flow compassion and a zest for life.

Ngugi particularly notes that in these writings, "the teacher accuses them all of complicity in the corruption that has beset our society. Your indifference and cynicism has given birth to and nurtured Chief Nanga [Sam, and others like them], he says." Ngugi continuing, says that: "The teacher no longer stands apart to contemplate. He has moved with a whip among the pupils, flagellating himself as well as them", and as has been noted in the course of this study, he makes the point that: "What Achebe has done in [both] *A Man of the People* [and *Anthills of the Savannah*] is to make it impossible or inexcusable for other African writers to do other than address themselves directly to their audiences in Africa . . . and tell them that such problems are their concern."

Despite the different historical contexts from which Ihimaera and Achebe are writing, and the diverse nature of the impact of colonialism on the Maoris of New Zealand and the indigenous people of

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20 Ibid., p. 52.
21 Ibid., p. 52.
22 Ibid., p. 54.
Nigeria, their two writings exhibit similar cultural manifestations: the traditional society's attitude to elders and children, the extended family system as the base of identifiable village or group consciousness, and the communal response to such issues as mourning or tangi, marriages and births. Although, some of these traditions are being eroded in the wake of an accelerating sense of individualism, they nevertheless are central to the apprehension of both writers' fictions.

But while these different historical contexts, and the ratio of indigenous people to Europeans in the two countries have dictated the forms that their respective post-colonial tensions have manifested, Ihimaera and Achebe have demonstrated through their writings that there is no universal solution to post-colonial tensions, primarily because, as Ikem's analysis of oppression in *Anthills of the Savannah* suggests, "there is no universal conglomerate of the oppressed."23 Similarly, their writings suggest that while these tensions are mostly consequent or compounded by colonialism, their myriad nature precludes any universal classification and remedy. But in doing so, both writers have also demonstrated that, irrespective of the origin and nature of the contact, the present generation of the indigenous people have a salvaging job of paramount importance to them and posterity. They need to salvage what is useful from their past, and graft it to what is useful from European culture, as a means of re-forming the colonial political and social heritage around their existing cultural world-view. This is necessary if the present generation is to avoid the cultural dislocation that will condemn them, and future generations, to perpetual alienation.

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