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Echoes of Ancestral Drums: Critique of Mainstream Modernity

in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*

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By

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Echoes of Ancestral Drums: Critique of Mainstream Modernity in Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease*” submitted to Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Tribikam Bhusal has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## Echoes of Ancestral Drums: Critique of Mainstream Modernity

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### Abstract

*This thesis examines the negative impact of mainstream modernity upon Nigerian society in Chinua Achebe's novel No Longer at Ease, set on the eve of Nigeria's independence from British colonial rule. Recounting the incidents in the life of the protagonist, Obi Okonkwo, the novel foregrounds the consequences of Western values instilled in him after studying in England. His attitudes and beliefs regarding Igbo tradition and communal values change, consequently, affecting the whole Igbo community. Obi's father, Isaac, a convert to Christianity, immerses himself in Christian values over Igbo tradition, while his mother, Hannah, forbids him from marrying the outcast Clara Okeke, clinging to the discriminatory aspects of tradition that require reformation for a more robust Igbo tradition. It is a qualitative research that deploys the theoretical lens of Transmodern Studies. In my thesis, I have adopted Enrique Dussel's concept of 'transmodernity', Ziauddin Sardar's differentiation of 'tradition and traditionalism', Frantz Fanon's approach to 'decolonization', and Paul Gilroy's 'transnational approach'. Transmodernity offers an alternative to Western Modernity in order to incorporate tradition and communal values in the context of a Nigerian society. Decolonization enlightens how Western values were used to support colonial projects in Nigeria and exposes their perceived superiority as an illusion. Meanwhile, transnational approach strategically unites Nigerians worldwide to continue their traditional values wherever they reside. This study concludes that non-Western societies including African societies should critically engage with and challenge Western modernity, promote their own valuable traditions, reform discriminatory aspects, and reject uncritical cultural assimilation.*

Keywords: tradition, traditionalism, modernity, post-modernity, trans-modernity, colonialism, decolonization, Igbo culture

This research project explores the role of ancestral traditions in the contemporary era of (post-) modernity in Chinua Achebe's novel *No Longer at Ease*. Published in 1960, the novel captures Nigeria's transition from the late 1950s to the early 1960s as it gains independence from British colonial rule. During the period of colonial rule, the Britishers not only installed a governing system, administrative units, and other institutions similar to the British system but also imported Western values and religion to a new colony. Institutions such as the Public Service Commission, Scholarship Board, and Court System are noticeable in the novel. British values and religion stand in contrast to the values embraced by the native Igbo and Yoruba people in Nigeria. As Britishers occupied the top positions in Nigerian governance and administration, they disseminated their religious values through religious conversion hegemonically. These differences in values and religious beliefs created social, cultural, and religious turmoil in the Nigerian society, resulting to the erosion of Igbo traditions. Meanwhile, the Igbo people, devoted to their traditions, continue to preserve them through communal ceremonies, marriage functions, farewell ceremonies, death rituals, festivals, and feasting. These indigenous values are so ingrained in the Igbo community that these values guide and influence their lives.

On the other hand, Western value is 'deceptively justified' as modern value, seen as prerequisite for progress, advancement, and development, while traditional value is depicted as its foil. During the final phase of the colonial rule, young Nigerians were allowed to study in England through a rigorous selection process. This abroad education not only educates young Nigerians but also imparts Western values and ways of life at an early age, creating a rift from their own traditions. They find themselves unable to fully accept Western culture and are treated as outsiders by Westerners. Natives question their loyalty to their traditions and community, triggering alienation, displacement, and confusion among young Nigerians studying abroad. Educated

Nigerians cannot accept the exploitative nature of superstition, malpractice, and discrimination disguised as tradition. Modernity disrupts traditional social structures and values, creating generational divides and identity crises. At this point, it is the responsibility of the younger generation to make their parents aware of the dynamic and evolving nature of tradition, rather than discarding it entirely as obsolete and superstitious. Thus, traditions bestowed by ancestors help to shape cultural and individual identity and connect individuals to their roots and history.

Western modernity endorses individualism, evaluating the worth and capacity of individuals through material success and personal fame. As a result, individualists may engage in any activities without assessing their societal consequences, sometimes violating morality and ethics to achieve personal recognition. In contrast, non-Western cultures view individual as a part of a larger community and emphasize on collective identity. The comfort associated with Western modernity, driven by high capital and economic boom, encourages people worldwide to pursue wealth and a lavish lifestyle. This pursuit often pressurizes individuals, particularly the youths in non-Western cultures, to focus on personal success at the expense of traditional communal values. The education system encapsulating morality, ethics, spirituality, and ancestral knowledge along with modern education balances the hunger for success and methods to achieve success in one's own way. Defining modernity, the brighter sides are exposed, while defining tradition exclusively the darker sides of tradition are explored, denying its brighter sides. Although the progress of Western science and development is undeniable, the responsibility for the consequences of such advancements is often minimal. So, it is the duty of the educated new generation of the non-Western world to excavate the lessons of tradition from the womb of their past and incorporate them in daily life.

Chinua Achebe (1930-2013), a Nigerian novelist, poet, and critic is considered

as the central figure in modern African literature. His major works include a trilogy of *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Arrow of God* (1964), and *A Man of the People* (1966), and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987). Raised in a Christian convert family, Achebe writes about issues related to Africa and African society in the English language. Despite receiving a British education and a Christian upbringing, Achebe writes from the perspective of Igbo tradition about Nigeria and African society, embracing the prevalence of ancestral tradition. Achebe counters the derogatory and simplistic representation of African people and African life presented in Western writings. He respects the traditions and religious practices of his ancestors. His novels explore themes of Igbo tradition and Christianity, tradition and modernity, colonialism and its impact on the post-colonial period, cultural and individual identity in the contemporary era, and the struggle for indigenous identity. These novels address the socio-political issues faced by African nations, particularly in the context of independence and post-colonial governance.

In his highly celebrated novel *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe tells the story of Okonkwo, a respected Igbo leader whose life unravels as his community confronts the disruptive forces of British colonialism and Christian missionaries. Similarly, the other parts of this African trilogy share a similar setting and theme. In *No Longer at Ease*, Achebe writes the issue of post-colonial society where the protagonist Obi Okonkwo hailing from a Christian upbringing and educated abroad fails to navigate Nigerian society. Through the story of Obi, Chinua Achebe demonstrates tradition as an alternative philosophy about life, and its growing role in shaping individuals' identity and power in a fluid world. Achebe also underscores the incapability of Western philosophical values to fully comprehend native Nigerian life. Obi's life exemplifies the challenges of navigating a new atmosphere and serves as a cautionary tale, awakening people to the relevance of tradition even in the contemporary age of modernization.

Achebe's writing is distinct, characterised by its clear, accessible prose and traditional storytelling techniques. As an essayist and critic, he was a vocal advocate for the importance of African literature and played a significant role in promoting the work of other African writers. His critical essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (1977) is particularly well-known for its critique of Joseph Conrad's portrayal of Africa and Africans, sparking widespread debate on the representation of Africa in Western literature. Achebe's contribution to literature lies not only in compelling storytelling but also in his ability to articulate the complexities of African experiences in the face of colonialism and modernity. His work continues to inspire and influence writers, scholars, and readers around the world.

In *No Longer at Ease*, the protagonist Obi Okonkwo, filled with enthusiasm to serve his homeland, returns to Nigeria after completing his education in England. Initially planning to study law, Obi switches to English upon arriving in England. While in England, Obi becomes attracted to Clara, a fellow Nigerian, after seeing her at a social gathering of university program. Their relationship begins in the ship and deepens upon their return to Nigeria. He asserts that the presence of uneducated Nigerians in the Civil Service is the root cause of corruption in Nigeria. Welcomed by the Igbo community and joining the civil service, Obi becomes a symbol of hope, holding a prestigious position.

Although Obi enjoys a better lifestyle than ordinary people, he hastens to live an even better life by imitating Western standards. He buys a car and rents a flat, reflecting his desire to adopt modern lifestyle at the cost of traditional norms. He shifts his focus towards improving personal life over serving his own Igbo community. Obligated to repay the Umuofia Union, which funded for his abroad studies, Obi struggles with financial pressures. He secretly maintains his relationship with Clara, which is complicated by her status as an Osu outcast. This relationship strains Obi's ties with his

family and community, as his mother threatens to commit suicide if he marries Clara, and his Christian father disapproves this relation despite knowing Clara's father is also a Christian. Clara's unexpected pregnancy further complicates Obi's situation.

Financially stretched, Obi borrows money from Clara but rejects a sexual favour from a girl as a bribe for a scholarship, reflecting his commitment to morality.

Ultimately, Obi accepts a bribe, believing it to be the only way to resolve his crises. This decision contradicts his ideals and commitment to working for a corruption-free Nigeria. He is caught and taken to court. Regretful, Obi faces the loss of his mother and the end of his relationship with Clara. Throughout the story, Obi attempts to challenge the malpractices and discriminatory superstitions that persist under the guise of tradition. Embracing tradition, he advocates for its cultivation and flexibility in a changing world but fails to implement these principles in his own life. His immaturity in relationships leads to Clara's suffering. His decisions are sometimes too early, sometimes too late, reflecting a lack of balance due to his youthful inexperience. He struggles to adhere to his original ideals, thus, failing to be a champion of progressive Igbo tradition this time, although he possesses potential to do so in the future. Regretful actions at the end, the support from the Igbo community during his hard times, and the lessons learned from his failed relationship with Clara, Obi shows promise for growth after his time in jail. His incarceration may offer the introspection and experience needed to mature and embody the change he once sought.

The novel has been analyzed from diverse perspectives since its publication in 1960. Among them, C. A. Babalola explores the challenges that emerge in Obi's life due to the interplay of both present values and ancient values: "[L]ocated in the city, Obi the civil servant man never again attains a meaningful state of adulthood which requires a harmonious combination of present values and ancient ideals, and not just the awareness of forms of culture in one limited point" (142). It implies that Obi's maturity

begins with an understanding of the strengths and limitations of both modern and traditional values. Complete understanding means reflecting these insights in his decisions and actions. Obi feels solace from incorporating traditional values into his life while remaining open to their evolution over time. Similarly, Adebola Rayon points out the protagonist Obi Okonkwo's changing relationship with Clara:

On one hand, it shows his mental desire to subvert harmful norms. On the other hand, it reveals the breaking point at which Obi aligns with patriarchy (refusing to accept help from Clara), with culture (postponing his marriage because his mother threatens suicide), and with corruption (accepting bribes to solve his financial woes). (Para.11)

It highlights difficulties in translating ideals, thoughts, and commitments into actions. Obi's rejection of Clara's help reflects his adherence to traditional male responsibilities. His failure to persuade his family and community about his marriage choice underscores his immaturity in his interpersonal relationships. Bribes are not only used to boost earnings but also to cover debts and expenses. This illustrates the gap between ideals and bitter reality.

Jago Morrison scrutinizes the interplay between tradition and Modernity in Chinua Achebe's African Trilogy, emphasizing the role of ancient values as a determining factor in Igbo community as "in *No Longer at Ease*, however, we see the ways in which, under his Christian roof, the communal ethos of conversation and respect for ancient traditions continue to be upheld. Achebe underlines this most clearly when Obi's parents learn of his relationship with a girl whose ancestors were Osu" (18). Despite Obi's family's embracing Christianity, they still maintain aspects of communal ethos and respect for tradition. This underscores the persistence of traditional beliefs within a modern context, disclosing the enduring legacy of cultural heritage in a changing society. Igbo traditions are woven into daily life. The roles of

Christianity like intertwining with colonialism and missionary efforts are necessary to understand Modernity.

Examining the novel in the light of tradition versus Modernity, Adina Campu describes the relationship of tradition and Modernity in the form of adaptability and associates with colonialism:

The process of adaptation is a slow and painful one during which various aspects of indigenous and European cultures are combined during which the colonized must look for synthesis. Colonialism inevitably produces in the colonized society a period of chaos during which old values no longer apply and the new ones have not yet been found. (6)

This period of transition is marked by confusion as societies seek to blend old and new identities. After gaining independence, formerly colonized societies must integrate and preserve their cultural heritage, which was often suppressed or altered by colonial rule. They need to revive traditional and indigenous practices, reconcile them with modern realities, and rebuild a strong cultural identity. Replacing their own practices with those of others is not a solution. Postcolonial identity is created through a rational synthesis of indigenous and European elements to form a cohesive postcolonial identity.

Considering the cultural conflict arising from navigating two worlds, Salma Khanam Barbuiya discloses: “Obi is used by Achebe to explore the dilemma of the young ‘Nigerians trapped by the conflicting demands of two worlds, exiled from both the traditional and the contemporary situations’” (161). It highlights how Achebe uses the character of Obi Okonkwo to represent the struggle of balancing traditional values with the pressures of modern, Western influences. It also illustrates the complexities of colonial impact on Nigerian society. Obi’s exposure to the Western values through his education distances him from traditional Igbo roots, creating a sense of displacement and hybrid identity. He feels disconnected from his heritage. The Whites view and

criticize him as a native. Obi critiques and seeks to reform Igbo traditions by addressing its malpractices and superstitions. His journey from a confused individual to a catalyst for the regeneration of Igbo tradition demonstrates the challenging but possible reconciliation of colonial and indigenous life.

Seyed Mohammad Mrarandi and Reyhane Sadat Shadpour examine how education in Obi serves as a means of instilling Western values, truth, and experiences, often at the expense of native, traditional, and communal values through conscience rather than direct imposition (938-944). Obi's exposure to Western education and Western lifestyle raises high expectations for a better life, leading him to overlook the weak economic conditions of his own society. Desire for progress is natural, but individual progress without the advancement of the community and others cannot be sustainable. Collective progress leads to the sustainable progress, which is a key approach to progress for the non-Western society.

Gordon Douglas Killam describes Obi's attempt to eradicate corruption as driven by 'idealism' and 'individualism,' attributing these traits to his English education: "[T]he main action of the novel begins with Obi's return after completing his B.A. degree. Filled with idealism, Obi is determined to rid his country of corruption and create a better nation" (37). While Obi does exhibit moral strength, labelling him merely as an idealist and individualist overlooks other significant aspects of his character. His actions are deeply rooted in family commitments and responsibilities, rather than just grand ideals. The pressure of being the sole breadwinner influences his decisions and reflects his dedication to the collective well-being of his family.

M. Adinkrah and H.A Adinkrah vehemently demand for lenient punishment to Obi by examining the nature and situation of crime through criminological concept. After scrutinizing the text, the researchers conclude:

Unlike some notorious bribe-takers elsewhere who demand or accept money

with impunity to indulge in extravagant displays of opulence, Obi Okonkwo took bribe money primarily to defray pressing financial obligations towards family and to maintain a lifestyle that was forced upon him by the arrant expectations of his society. He succumbed to the crime only after refusing numerous bribes offers and only after engaging in torturous calisthenics with his conscience, a process known in criminology as techniques of neutralization.

(371)

It discloses that Obi's actions are something obligatory and forced upon by societal expectations. Obi is 'young', 'immature', engendered shame and remorse for act and corruption not violent crime and so on. Obi's bribe-taking was not motivated by only personal gain but by the strong sense of duty to support his family and meet societal expectations. Obi's moral struggles, numerous refusals, and internal conflict illustrate the intense personal turmoil he experienced before accepting bribes. Perhaps prison will be the place where Obi will gain wisdom in his introspection.

From the aforementioned reviews and criticisms, it is clear that there are different views regarding the tension between tradition and modernity. The notion of tradition and modernity as binary opposites and inherently hostile is not entirely accurate; they are distinct but not opposite concepts. Many scholars propose that blending tradition and modernity is necessary to maintain coherence and progress in post-colonial nations. However, this approach is problematic because Western hegemonic force marginalizes younger generation of non-Western societies by creating self doubts about their own practices and way of life, leading to greater fragmentation than before. Mixing distinct traditions and modernity creates a mesh that benefits the neither sides; maintaining a distinct cultural identity is often more advantageous than creating such a hybrid position. An unhealthy hegemonic blending of Western and indigenous traditions erodes the indigenous elements over time. To examine the

incorporation of tradition into modern life, I will apply theoretical insights from Trans-modern Studies. This approach helps individuals and societies achieve a cultural identity that respects both historical heritage and addresses contemporary changes.

The tension between tradition and Modernity is widely discussed in post-colonial text. Modernity promotes Western values and culture and continues to marginalize local tradition and values in the guise of postmodernity, which itself is grounded on Western phenomena like colonialism, the world system, capitalism and globalization. The very existence of our culture is ignored and marginalised in comparison to European culture in the name of Modernity. In *No Longer at Ease*, the protagonist Obi as a mixed identity shaped by roots belonging to colonized natives [Igbo], acquiring education from the country colonizer [education promoting Western values], working for both colonizers and colonized in the native place, receiving wages from the colonizer, working under the leadership of the colonizer, and loving a girl who is marginalized within her own colonized country, embodies some characteristics of trans-modern identity. He embraces tradition, re-evaluates it through a sense self acquired from education, and questions discriminatory superstitions existing in the society. He critiques the notion of Western modernity as ideal and superior to tradition. In this situation, the proposed study aims to show how Obi studying abroad attempts to embrace tradition by questioning Western modernity. It explores why the local culture, values and beliefs are necessary in the life of an individual in a newly independent society.

True cohesion and societal coherence commences with embrace of one's own traditions and acknowledgement to differences in others. Allowing traditions to evolve independently through education ensures their sustainability and preservation. Thus, distancing oneself from dominant external influences is the first step toward preserving one's own tradition.

Obi Okonkwo's exposure to Igbo tradition and education provides him with a critical perspective on Western reactions to Igbo values. This insight enables him to counter the homogenizing effects of Western culture, understand the strengths of his traditions, and rejuvenate Igbo tradition with contemporary changes, thereby facilitating the liberal growth of all Nigerians. Critiquing Western modernity, his approach integrates ancestral wisdom with modern insights, and advocates for a more inclusive and evolved cultural framework. This framework not only protects indigenous culture from the encroachment of Western modernity but also effaces the residual elements of Western modernity that shade indigenous culture, thereby fostering the decolonization of indigenous culture.

I use qualitative and interpretive methods as the research design. This involves an in-depth qualitative analysis, focusing on the textual interpretation of the primary text *No Longer at Ease* to uncover nuanced meanings and provide subjective insights into Obi's experiences with both Igbo traditions and Western values. To enhance objectivity, the study evaluates Achebe's life and other works, providing a broader context for interpreting the primary text and identifying recurring themes. Additionally, the research incorporates critical perspectives from other scholars on *No Longer at Ease*, drawing on academic articles, books, and essays to contextualize and validate the findings. It employs trans-modernism as the theoretical underpinning of the research. Critical reviews and analyses from online databases and academic journals are also rigorously selected to align with the research focus. Qualitative research is particularly suited to exploring the reasons behind Obi's actions and the broader implications of his actions as it enables a deeper understanding of the text's meaning beyond surface-level observations.

I apply Trans-modern Studies as a theoretical methodology for this thesis, drawing on the insights of Enrique Dussel's transmodernity and Ziauddin Sardar's

concept of tradition. Additionally, I incorporate Frantz Fanon's idea on decolonization from *The Wretched of the Earth* and Paul Gilroy's exploration of tradition from a transnational approach in *The Black Atlantic*. As trans-modernity celebrates tradition and projects its relevance in the contemporary world, unlike other philosophies and studies that consider tradition obsolete and endorse certain homogenizing tendencies, it is relevant to this work. This approach not only provides fresh perspective on tradition and culture but also contributes to achieving a nuanced understanding of the novel, ensuring its timeless and enduring themes remain relevant in the present.

In the research article entitled "Transmodernity and Interculturality: An Interpretation from the Perspective of Philosophy of Liberation", Enrique Dussel proposes the future-oriented project "trans-modern" as "a new theoretical proposition . . . which constitutes an explicit overcoming of the concept —post-modernity (since the latter still represents a final moment of Modernity)" (41). Transmodern concepts emerge from entirely new perspectives rooted in indigenous traditions and cultures. It overrides the notions of modernity and postmodernity.

He further explores the historical development of "the modernity (Capitalism, Colonialism, the first World – system is not contemporary with European hegemony, which functioned as the "center" for market with respect to rest of culture . . . modern Europe becomes the "center" after it was already modern" (41). It means that Europe becomes the center of the world market long after it was already modern; Europe as the center of both the market and modernity did not occur at the same time. The modern is attached to western values. Dussel proposes intercultural dialogue as a solution to existing problem of approaching culture (39). He advocates for appreciation of one's own values, critiques with proximate values, maturity and engagement of scholars and work for liberation as key to intercultural growth. It encourages critique of one's values by comparing them with values that are close to one's own. Regular inspection of

values enriches the positive aspects and removes the negative ones. Studying values scholarly helps to identify weaknesses and work towards a meaningful and happy life.

In the similar line of thought, Ziauddin Sardar extols tradition for endowing power to transform non-western societies into culture of resistance. He proposes returning to tradition to surviving postmodernism. He defines tradition as “the summation of the absolute frame of reference provided by the values and axioms of a civilization that remains enduringly relevant and the convention that have been developed in history into its own distinctive “gaze”: patterns of organization, ideas, life ways, techniques and products” (273). It means tradition refers to a set of practices, customs, values, and principles passed down through generations. Thus, tradition acts as a bridge between ancient civilizations and contemporary life.

Sardar urges non-Western culture to distinguish tradition and traditionalism. Traditionalism “reifies formalist aspects of tradition as it operated in a defined past to be the guarantor of the survival of a community, while holding tenaciously to those practices and ideas of autonomous tradition that have continued in an embattled present” (274). It means traditionalism romanticises the rigidity fixed in a specific space and time. Nostalgia for a static tradition, which fundamentalists use to promote their ideology, contradicts the fundamental nature of tradition. Traditionalism has maintained some aspects of non-Western world and acts as response to external pressure like a reflex- action (274). Traditionalism can be short term reflex against Western hegemony, but tradition is long term solution against Western hegemony.

Sardar disdains the attempts of postmodernist multiculturalism to “appropriate its own romanticised and unbalanced conception of the ‘soul’ of the Other, the psychic/spiritual power which is one way of describing aspects of non-western worldviews” (279). Postmodernist multiculturalism distorts the fundamental reality about tradition and spiritual practices, core elements of non-Western life and

worldviews, through a Western lens, oversimplifying, and misrepresenting. Instead of engaging with the complexity and depth of diverse, dynamic systems of thought, it imposes a Western framework that justifies the perceived supremacy of the West and reinforces its cultural hegemony.

In the chapter “Concerning Violence” of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon argues that the phenomenon of decolonization is “always a violent” (35). It reinforces that the name to the process of decolonization can vary, but violence is the force that replaces the certain species. Decolonization aiming to change the order of the world is “a program of complete disorder” and “a historical process” (36). It emphasizes that decolonization is not merely the replacing of certain species but a complete overhaul of structures, values, and order created by that species. It also replaces the sense of inferiority created psychologically by colonizers. It is neither peaceful talk nor a rational approach. Decolonization urges an examination of the interplay of historical movements, social dynamics, and geopolitical contexts that give it meaning and shape its outcomes.

Decolonization delivers “a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity” (Fanon 36). It creates a new man, endowing him with a new language and a new humanity which is natural, not forced. Thus, the man created through the process of decolonization is a real and free man who once has been colonized (37). It means decolonization creates a new man, who does not inherit any quality of the colonizer.

Being a black intellectual in Europe, Paul Gilroy argues for “striving to be both European and black requires some specific form of double consciousness” (1). It means the black embodies both identities-- one does not substitute other as these are unfinished or incomplete. But racist, nationalist, or ethnically absolute discourses negate each other. He proposes the black Atlantic world heuristically for addressing one

small area in the grand consequences of the historical conjunction, “but no longer the exclusive property of, blacks dispersed within the structure of feeling, producing, communicating and remembering” (3). This means the Black Atlantic is a helpful tool. It focuses on specific types of cultural expressions that blend African and diasporic elements (American, Caribbean, European).

In brief, Dussel’s intercultural dialogue with respect to transmodernity, Sardar’s differentiation of traditionalism and tradition, Fanon’s approach to decolonisation, Gilroy’s proposition on Black Atlantic are incorporated as the major elements of theoretical framework. As a boon for non-Western cultures to create and preserve their identities, this theoretical framework provides a systematic approach.

My thesis entitled “Echoes of Ancestral Drum: Critique of Mainstream Modernity in *No Longer at Ease*”, is structured into three sections: introduction, textual analysis, and conclusion. The introduction examines the tension between tradition and modernity in post-independence Nigeria, with a focus on Achebe’s role as a critic and advocate for decolonization. It introduces transmodern ideas from Dussel, Sardar, Fanon, and Gilroy, setting the context for the analysis. The textual analysis explores Obi’s navigation between Igbo traditions and Western ideals, using transmodern theories to critique the blending of these forces, which leads to disillusionment rather than resolution. The conclusion synthesizes these ideas, emphasizing that true cultural coherence comes from evolving traditions independently, rather than through forced hybridity, and warns against the dominance of Western modernity.

Modernity has a long historical continuum. Pointing to its initiation in the West through Spain’s invasion of America in 1492, Dussel asserts, “modernity, colonialism, the world-system, and capitalism were all simultaneous and mutually constitutive aspects of the same reality” (38). A thorough understanding of modernity requires scrutiny on these aspects. The notion of modernity is closely tied to “Eurocentrism” and

lately to “Americanism” (41).

To homogenise the diversity prevailing in a colony, colonizers like Britain disseminate the strong sense of nation state along with propagation of their Western values as ideal values. Sardar argues that “it is mere accident that the European definition of nationalism and hence the nation state should emphasize one unique and dominating cultural identity” (284). It suggests that a nation must have one dominant cultural identity is not necessarily a characteristic for the nation-state. European nationalism is constructed by sidelining diverse cultural identities within the state, so European societies witness similar cultural and religious values, homogeneity. The enforcement of such nationalism in the non-Western societies causes internal marginalization and disparities. Dussel critiques the strong sense of national culture as, “National culture is still wrong despite its importance” (35). National culture seeks to unify diversity and create national identity but frequently promotes a singular cultural narrative as the sole national culture, engendering the marginalization of indigenous people, their culture, arts, attires, language and their way of life.

In order to expand their colonial authority and extract more resources, the colonizer Britain engaged in mere geographical consolidation, as evident in *No Longer at Ease*, without addressing the internal diversity of the people and country. In the guise of maintaining national unity informed by European nationalism, the Britishers adopt different strategies:

It happened that the Chairman of the Commission, a fat jolly Englishman, was very keen on modern poetry and the modern novel, and enjoyed talking about them. The other four members---one European and three Africans---not knowing anything about that side of life, were duly impressed. Or perhaps we should say in strict accuracy that three of them were duly impressed because the fourth was asleep throughout the interview; which on the surface might

appear to be quite unimportant had not this gentleman been the sole representative of one of the three regions of Nigeria (In the interests of Nigerian unity the region shall remain nameless). (39)

It shows only English chairman conducts interview to Obi. The subject of interview is modern literature. Other three African members are unaware about the subject of interview. The involvement of natives in administration is only representative and superficial, intended to legitimize the decisions of colonizers, creating a false impression of native participation in decision-making, as evidenced above, rather than active and meaningful. The personal as well as regional identity of these three Africans is masked for the forced unification. It neglects diversity of people, perpetuates regional, and ethnic tensions after independence since people of one region or ethnic background considers other as competitor, not people of the same nation, as it lacks sharing and interacting among diverse natives.

During the colonial rule, Britain disrupted the existing distinct political and economic systems in a colony. Dussel argues that “the economic and political system [of minorities] has been dominated in order to exert colonial power and to accumulate massive riches...” (42). Distinct economic and political system of indigenous people is superseded by colonizers own economic and political system which serves colonizers. In the novel, the chairman of Umuofia Progressive Union questions Obi as; “have they given you a job yet?” In Nigeria, the government was ‘they’. It had nothing to do with you or me. It was an alien institution and people business was to get as much from it as they could without getting into trouble” (33). It demonstrates that the government and its institution are controlled by non-native people, where native participation is symbolic, and they do not feel any sense of ownership or responsibility towards government. Native people are primarily concerned with receiving benefits from the government without encountering difficulties.

Joseph Okeke, a clerk in the Survey Department, who has been class-mate to Obi at the Umuofia C.M.S. Central School, participates in the discussion among Umuofians regarding whether it is needed to bribe the Whites for securing Obi's job in civil service. He responds as, "You think White men do not eat bribe? Come to our department. They eat more than black men nowadays" (33). It shows that the perception of White men as the ones who do not take bribe is false. They are hungrier for earning. Bribery is not inscribed to single race. All are equally suspicious for bribery. After hearing the whole story of Obi's interview, Joseph opines as, "a man in need of a job couldn't afford to be angry" (41). Obi responds as "nonsense! That's what I call colonial mentality" (41). As Obi is accused of joining civil services for earning through bribery that contradicts with his ideals of joining for serving Nigeria, he cannot stay calm throughout interview. Obi rejects the idea of tolerance during bullying in order to secure job. It shows Obi does not want to be a 'yes-man' rather he wants to behave according to his own principles and ideals. It reflects the difference of attitude among two Igbo men concerning interview and the nature of response to the questions.

Similarly, after hearing the electricity bill of five pounds seven and three, Obi reacts as "it's sheer robbery what they charge for electricity here. In England, you would pay less than that for a whole quarter" (100). Despite ruling both England and Nigeria, Britishers charge high electricity bill in Nigeria, demonstrating lack of concern for the native Nigerians. The electricity department itself is meant for looting than for service. The institutions are established to maintain colonial control and are modelled like those found in Britain.

While ruling, the colonizers manipulate the truth and rhetorically create false narratives, labelling them as facts. In *No Longer at Ease*, the local agent of the colonizer, Mr. Green, speaks to the British Council official: "They [Africans] are all corrupt'. I am all for equality and all that. I for one would hate to live in South Africa.

But equality won't alter facts" (4). Mr. Green labels all Africans as corrupt through stereotypical representation and bringing Obi's bribery case. To rationalize colonial rule and justify the civilizing mission in Nigeria, he describes Africa, "the fact that over countless centuries the African has been the victim of the worst climate in the world and of every imaginable disease . . ." (4). Green attempts to justify his statement that all Africans are corrupt by referring to other issues like natural disasters and diseases, which are entirely distinct phenomena. He speaks as if he has arrived to eradicate diseases and resolve natural disasters. This is how Western societies deploy rationalism as a vehicle for self justifications.

Similarly, Obi and Miss Tomlinson, secretary of Mr. Green, talk about the behaviour of Mr. Green as, "he [Green] is quite different at home. Do you know he pays school fees for his steward's sons? But he says the most outrageous things about educated Africans" (105). This shows the double standard of Mr. Green who compares educated Africans as his competitors while poor natives as persons to be sympathised. This is what Sardar refers to the celebration of egoism and demonization of the other in Postmodernism. 'I' of Western individualism is the root of "selfishness, greed, perpetual desire and cynicism" (274). This 'I' of Western individualism is often mistaken with individual fame and progress. As the cunning master, Green loves and sympathises those people who serves him and obeys his order, whereas denigrates those who argues and disagrees with him. In reality, this Western 'I' disregards the communal values inherent in non-Western cultures and alienates individuals from the communal responsibilities that are integral to these societies, resulting to disruption within non-Western communities.

In the later phase of direct colonial rule in Nigeria, promising young like Obi study in England, resulting to multiple identities. Criticising Obi's involvement in bribery, Mr. Green eulogizes western education: "[W]e have brought him Western

education. But what use is it to him?” (4). Green refers to Western education as inherently beneficial, which is not true. Instead, it does harm to Obi by imparting Western values hegemonically. In this regard, in the preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre discloses:

European elite undertook to manufacture a native elite. They picked out promising adolescents; they branded them, as with a red-hot iron, with the principles of Western culture; they stuffed their mouths full with high-sounding phrases, grand glutinous words that stuck to the teeth. After a short stay in the mother country they were sent home, whitewashed. (7)

It reveals how Western education is a tool to create native elite. Obi attempts to prioritize individual progress and success in life, key characteristic of Western individualism, ignoring communal responsibilities prevailing in his Igbo community. Igbo community possesses high expectations on Obi as he is an outstanding student since childhood days: “[T]he selection of the first candidate had not presented any difficulty to the Union. Obi was an obvious choice. At the age of twelve or thirteen he had passed his Standard Six examination at the top of the whole province” (8). But, in reality, the expectation of the Igbo community towards Obi does not meet due to his exposure to Western world and Western values ingrained in Western education, making him indifferent towards his own community. Obi changes after going to England. He internalises Western ideals. After studying there, Igbo people anticipate that he will serve them better, but it shatters. This disappoints his kinships and alienates him from his ancestors. However, he has not rotten completely like Western individualist. This Western education system undervalues an alternative means of epistemology in knowledge production, thereby describing oneself as sole owner of knowledge production.

Storytelling is an integral part of Igbo tradition. This serves as a flow of

ancestral knowledge through oral means in Igbo heritage. Western European culture termed as “core culture” has been partly colonizing the culture of minorities, indigenous or tribal communities referred to as “periphery” culture. “These values of minorities have been excluded- disdained, negated and ignored rather than annihilated” (Dussel 42). The Whites bring Christianity to a colony, accompanied by Christian missionary. Many convert natives follow Christianity dogmatically. Obi’s father Issac is the prime example who talks to his wife as “‘We are not heathens’, Stories like that are not for the people of the Church” (59). It reflects how much Christianity has affected native people. It is not only the question of following different religion but the negative connotation to story-telling which before religious conversion is a traditional and natural act. Instead of attempting to eradicate storytelling completely, the religious convert negates it, not for them [not for the people of Church], as Dussel argues. The Christian missionary is purported to homogenize values of the native people, thereby creating false sense of cohesion based on Western and Christian values in the society and eventually eroding the indigenous values and local truths over a time.

Further, Christianity aligns with colonial project and fortifies Eurocentric notion of Modernity. Similarly, Obi’s mother Hannah teaches “her children not to accept food in neighbours’ houses because she said they offered their food to idols” (58). It shows that Obi’s family strictly follows Christianity which distances Obi especially from children of neighbours:

That fact alone set her children apart from all others for, among the Ibo, children were free to eat where they liked. One day a neighbour offered a piece of yam to Obi who was then four years old. He shook his head like his older and wiser sisters, and then said: ‘We don’t eat heathen food.’ His sister Janet tried too late to cover his mouth with her hand. (59)

From an early age, Obi follows what his father says. He grows up with Christian

upbringing that lowers his interaction among the Igbo children. In this regard, Frantz Fanon argues that “the church in the colonies is the white people’s church, the foreigner church. She doesn’t calm the native to God’s ways but to the ways of the white man, of the matter of oppressor” (42). It states that Christianity is dispersed in colony for supporting colonial project rather than for genuine propagation of spiritual messages, divinity and peace. It is a form of investment to create the colonized in the image of the colonizer. In fact, Christianity breaks the close friendship between Obi and other Igbo children.

Obi feels embarrassed when his teacher asks him to share oral folktales in a classroom. Unlike her strict convert husband Isaac, Obi’s mother is the defender of Igbo tradition who shares ancestral stories to her son when the husband is not at home, “as soon as he [Obi] got home he told his mother about it. She told him to be patient until his father went to the evening prayer meeting” (60). It proves that though Hannah follows Christianity, she is not a staunch like her husband.

Obi’s mother upgrades her responsibilities along with works and demands of husband: “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” (58). It reflects Hannah’s commitment to the order of husband and flexibilities of changing responsibilities. Isaac gets monthly pension from the church after serving for twenty-five years, which works as a pragmatic benefit of religion. But it is still a representative position for natives in the Church, intending to more native conversion.

Being educated in England, both Obi and Clara share Western ideals. But their love relation does not convert to marriage as Clara is Osu, an outcaste for Igbo tradition. Obi’s parents do not allow him to marry Clara. When Obi shares about his relationship with her to his father: “‘We are Christians,’. ‘But that is no reason to marry

an Osu.’ ‘The Bible says that in Christ there are no bond or free.’ ‘My son,’ said Okonkwo, ‘I understand what you say. But this thing is deeper than you think’ (134). It asserts that there exists something greater than religion that shapes Igbo community. It is tradition.

Despite Clara and Obi’s sharing the same religion, their marriage is blocked by the tradition as there are many narratives associated with marrying her. So, Issac tries to convince his son by various approaches like bringing the history of Osu, begging son and anticipating the future of off springs:

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. It is not for myself I speak; my days are few. 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. (134-35)

The instance of Obi’s father, Issac regarding tradition is dualistic since he rejects propagation of oral stories and myths in the family but, being engulfed with fear, he accepts the tradition of not marrying of Osu girl. He considers ancient stories and myths as foil to Christianity and attempts to restrict in house, but does not possess power to subvert tradition that stops his son to marry the girl. He knowingly, or, unknowingly tries to create homogeneous and pure form of Christian life in family. However, he fails to initiate the discussion about the caste issue, which is not in Christianity but present in Igbo tradition. This selective tradition suggests limitations of individual agency, pessimism and struggle of finding middle approach.

Obi’s mother pressurizes her son not to marry an Osu, “I have nothing to tell you in this matter except one thing. If you want to marry this girl, you must wait until I

am no more. If God hears my prayers, you will not wait long” (136). It demonstrates that Obi’s mother strictly adheres to tradition, which seems like a form of traditionalism. As she is uneducated, she spends her life doing household works and dedicates herself to family; it is natural to act like that. She further threatens her son, “but if you do the thing while I am alive, you will have my blood on your head, because I shall kill myself” (137). It shows her commitment to the words. But, it is not her fault alone; it is her son and husband’s fault too. The educated son fails to convince his uneducated mother. Obi cannot persuade his catholic father Isaac Okonkwo who refers himself Christian and progressive. It reveals the difficulties of changing traditional norms. It is the duty of younger generations to act according to evolving and dynamic tradition rather than being submissive to outdated values. Adherence to outdated values turns younger generations away from tradition. It divides the people of two generations, breaking historical continuity and flow of ancestral wisdom.

Obi, English graduate and Christopher, an economist from London School of Economics, discuss about corruption in Nigeria. Referring to presence of old men without intellectuality and the absence of educated person at the top of Civil Service, Obi pours frustration: “[T]he Civil Service is corrupt because of these so-called experienced men at the top” (21). It represents the passion of younger generations to mitigate corruption and a solution to existing corruption in Civil Service. Obi’s understanding about corruption in Public service as an individual choice is limited one. Without realising the complexities of corruption, visiting real office and actions, Obi has drawn conclusion as, “the public service of Nigeria would remain corrupt until the old Africans at the top were replaced by young men from the universities was first formulated in a paper read to the Nigerian Students’ Union in London” (39). It shows Obi’s understanding about corruption is obtained through one angle which is reading papers. In real life, this highly determined Obi does corruption. It shows severity of life

and various factors driving to do corruption.

Obi seeks a comfortable and standard life compared to that of ordinary Igbo natives, which looks natural as he has reached the level of civil servant through great efforts. But he hastens to accelerate individual progress without remaining patience and this internalisation of hurrying is an entrapment to western notion of progress. Without postponing the adoption of new lifestyle until repaying the loan, he indulges in insatiable desires of western lifestyles which he cannot identify by himself but behaves accordingly. Fanon notices the changing relationship of colonizers and colonies and the dynamic nature of capitalism:

The changing Capitalism, in its early days, saw in the colonies a source of raw materials which, once turned into manufactured goods, could be distributed on the European market. After a phase of accumulation of capital, capitalism has today come to modify its conception of the profit-earning capacity of a commercial enterprise. The colonies have become a market. (65)

Capitalism endows power to evolve itself to reap more benefits. The sweet promise of capitalism blurs the intellectuality of Obi who buys a car in an installation, without paying full price, knowing that he has refund to union, bears family responsibilities and other expenditures. It adds charges like vehicle license, tyres charges, and income tax. He falls in the trap of capitalism. The car is manufactured in colonizer's place but is easily available in a colonized place. The colonizer transports cars to the colonized place for their own purposes as well as to sell to local elites and earn more money. If the products like car which are produced outside country are unavailable in Nigeria, Obi will not obtain it. Obi tries to minimize expenditure but cannot balance earning and expenditure gap, resulting to take bribe for resolving financial crises.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the current notion of Eurocentric Modernity is disastrous to non-Western society. So, tradition should continue to

function as the shaping and easing force of life. Non- Western society has genuine heterogeneity of culture within community and system of governance which is an integral part of non-west. Recovery of tradition should focus on the rediscovery of the means of stable plurality within communities and states (Sardar 284). It suggests that the Western values brought from a historical context, cannot provide success, advancement and justice to non-Western world. Therefore, the priority should be on stable plurality within communities and states while recovering tradition.

In the novel, Obi Okonkwo charging with bribery drags Umuofia to hold meeting frequently, highlighting that this incident affects Umuofia union equally as “in recent weeks, the union had met several times over Obi Okonkwo’s case” (5). This incident divides kinsmen into two divides- save him or blame him. During the Civil work, Obi shows carelessness to fulfil the responsibilities towards Igbo community. But the Umuofia president showers strong support for Obi as, “a kinsman in trouble had to be saved, not blamed; anger against a brother was felt in flesh, not in the bone. And so, the Union decided to pay for the services of a lawyer from their funds” (6). It shows that Obi’s case is not only his case, but the case of whole Umuofia. Although Obi has diverted from communal responsibilities, the Igbo community provides him another opportunity to serve them by paying services of lawyer. Unlike other beliefs that decides stance on person by my person or other person, Igbo doesn’t. This is what Gilroy refers to tradition as a “means to assert close kinship of cultural forms and practices generated from the irrepressible diversity of black experiences” (118). The Umuofia President responds knowing that blaming Obi engenders more pain, making him unable to rise again. Supporting Obi during hard time helps him realise the ignorance he has demonstrated.

In non- Western communities and especially African community, communal values are embodied inherently as displayed by Clara: “I have got enough for all the

passengers that the advantage of having a nurse in board” (26). As a nurse, Clara has brought medicine with her. The medicine is enough for all. Sardar states that “it is only in their self that the other can find hope, sanity and fulfilment” (280). Clara is not only a nurse in hospital but also outside the hospital. Her nursing service is not confined to patients arriving at hospital, but to all people, she encounters on the daily life. This benevolent act is attributed deeply through traditional upbringing and family environment which are inseparable part of herself. Other people get benefit, comfort and satisfaction by her benevolence act. Sardar states that “tradition requires non-Western cultures to be true their Self. But this Self is not the ‘I’ of western individualism” (274). Clara does not carry medicine to prove herself as nurse, to get recognition or fame among groups, or to verify oneself as benevolent. Rather, it arises from her genuine heart which is selfless and without expectation, but full of humanity and humankind.

Obi is an individual as well as the representative of the community for Igbo people. Obi’s recruitment in the European post is an achievement for all Umuofians. The single post is shared among all. People are furious on seeing their few sons in European post, but are happy on getting Obi as their only one son, “many towns have four or five or even ten of their sons in European posts in this city. Umuofia has only one” (7). It shows Obi’s position in European post as pride moment for Igbo community. Sardar discloses that “the community and the individuals are not discrete categories, but inseparable elements that become fused through living tradition” (274). The individual and community are not exclusively different rather they are constituent elements, which are blended through tradition. Sense of individualism, marked by some degree of individual freedom and choice, is not compromised while bearing communal responsibilities. In fact, during embrace of tradition, a person is so intermingled in community that he bears communal responsibilities for larger benefits and forgets

individual as self. The individual who bears communal responsibilities and community that allows individual to flourish independently, benefit both community and individual.

During farewell for abroad studies, Umuofians showers great love to Obi as, “they [Umuofians] shook hands with him [Obi] as they did so they pressed their presents into his palm, to buy a pencil with, or an exercise book or a loaf of bread for the journey, a shilling there and a penny there” (13). Obi receives gifts from people, which might look small when measured separately, but no one attends empty hand. They give what they have and what they can give, an interface of love and responsibilities, which is huge total for Obi.

The Western notion of individual choice in marriage has limitations but argued like absolute truth for all in western discourse. Sardar argues:

Western scholarship provides documentation of what ideal marriage rules are preferred, how kingship networks are ascribed social positions are ideally operated, but only belatedly did it consider that at any one time there may be more un-preferred marriages than those that fulfil the rule and that there may be multiple ways of operating and being innovative within or around the confines of ascription. (290)

It shows that the society does not run like the Western ideals. In the non-Western societies, there are multiple ways of marriage, which do not meet the Western ideals. For non-Western societies, marriage holds communal functions. It is something beyond family, mostly to kinship and community. A gathered group of Igbo community talks about marrying a White woman and its impact on Igbo community:

. . . They should all thank God that Obi had not brought home a white wife.

‘White wife?’ asked one of the men. To him it was rather far-fetched.

‘Yes. I have seen it with my two eyes,’ said Matthew.

‘Yes,’ said Obi. ‘Many black men who go to the white man’s country marry their women.’ ‘You hear?’ asked Matthew. (54)

Igbo people converse about a black man marrying White woman. The black man who studies abroad takes marriage as private affairs which contracts with the reality of their community. The black man does not well inform the White woman about the communal functions she has to do, being wife of the Black. So, she leaves due to cultural and values difference. In many cases, black man does accordance to suggestion of White woman or Western values, causing be him away from kinship. Mostly, White woman is referred as responsible for this like “it is her turning the man’s face away from his kinsman while she stays” (54). It is due to the lack of genuine cultural sharing and interaction between people of different cultures. Acknowledging White values, Black man should share his values to White woman who is going to live in the society embodying values of Black man. During conversation with Obi, Ogbuefi Odogwu, the old man, shares dissatisfaction about the ambivalent position of Black man as “we have our faults, but we are not empty men who become white when they see and black when they see black” (54). It shows the frustration of black man towards educated black man for not having their stand and position on their values or ideas but constantly oscillating their values to whom they are talking

Obi encounters three drummers and slows down his speed on going from Lagos mainland to Ikoyi (19). Drums are not confined to creating music; they carry deep cultural and spiritual significance. During special events or ceremonies, Igbo people celebrate, dance, and connect with their kinship through the sound of the drums. Unique sound of drums creates sense of belongingness among Igbo people and connects with their ancestors.

Igbo language serves as pragmatic functions in multiple occasion like he sent for Charles and asked him in Ibo, (so that Miss Tomlinson would not understand)...(97).

It suffices that language provide privacy on talking about issues that demands privacy. Similarly, Mr. Mark and Obi speaking native language when talking about scholarship (87). Here, language acts as strength that binds people sharing same language.

Considering this as strength, non-Westerners should preserve and incorporate their indigenous languages in daily life.

Non-Western cultures have their own form of treatment which are different from Western. These non-Western forms of medicine are not totally useless, but it can treat person miraculously when used properly. Cultural elements from non-Western history, traditions and lineages need to be identified in such areas as science, medicine, technologies, materials and agriculture and reprocesses and incorporated into modern systems of distribution and dissemination (Sardar 285). Hannah had not slept much on account of the pain in her stomach. She said she had now lost faith in the European medicine and would like to try a native doctor (135). It shows that it is not only medicine but faith that treats the person. Indigenous treatment practices and healing methods should be well researched and developed through modern means. It then, can be exported to world.

After short but deep mourning of mother's death, Obi revitalises his life, as death has been an acceptance for non-Western culture. His thought lingers around the death, "beyond death there are no ideals and no humbug, only reality. The impatient idealist says: 'Give me a place to stand and I shall move the earth.' But such a place does not exist..." (166). Through deep contemplation, Obi involves in process of accepting mother death as a reality. Critiquing western ideals which ascribe unwavering strength to human for their power of invention and progress, and referring those western philosophers who endorses these ideals as impatient idealist, Obi delivers a profound reality of life. Radiating the limitations of life that shortens everyday, Obi urges to pay attention to humanity, justice and nature while critiques the forgetting of

sojourned life and involving in unnecessary competitions.

While Obi looks prodigal, he is not the consumerist of western world. He internalises some expenditure as natural but continuously mediates on the expense and assures himself, “no one can say I have been extravagant. If I had not sent thirty-five pounds at the end of last month to pay for mother’s treatment in a private hospital, I would have been all right---or if not exactly all right, at least above water” (98). It is clear that Obi is conscious about increasing expenditure. Considering treatment of mother as responsibility, he takes her in the private hospital. He tries to minimise expenditure by various ways like ordering new steward Sebastian to buy little meat once a week, one switch and one bulb to reduce electricity consumption, and schedule to switch of water- heater (101). This shows that Obi has attempted to mitigate expenditure as much as he can.

Although Obi accepts bribe in order to resolve financial crises, he has not forgotten his all ideals. This is proved through couple of actions. When Mr. Mark approaches Obi to get Scholarship for his sister Mrs. Mark, their conversation goes wrong;

‘You want application forms?’ asked Obi. ‘No, no, no. I have got those. But it is like this. I was told that you are the secretary of the Scholarship Commission and I thought that I should see you. We are both Ibos and I cannot hide anything from you. It is all very well sending in forms, but you know what our country is. Unless you see people ...’

‘In this case it is not necessary to see anybody. The only . . .’ (87)

The above conversation shows that Obi adheres to his ideals about scholarship. He stands to the idea that a person having qualifications only deserves a scholarship. He ends conversation reluctantly, “‘I don’t think there is any point in continuing this discussion,’ Obi said again in English. ‘If you don’t mind, I’m rather busy.’ (88) This

attitude of Obi continues in front of Mrs. Mark who herself offers a body. When Christopher teases Obi for not having physical relationship with Elise Mark, Obi responds in a philosophical way encapsulated with high dignity and morality as “perhaps she will remember that there was one man at least who did not take advantage of his position” (122). It reflects that Obi is the man of honesty and morality. When Obi attempts to create some preferences or some privileges for any person, he checks their some qualifications as “Obi stoutly refused to countenance anyone who did not possess the minimum educational and other requirements. On that he was unshakeable” (170). It renders that Obi is not a man who changes his ideals frequently, rather he is the man who attempts to stick with his ideals. The non-Western societies should continue honesty, morality, ethics, love and compassion as a key element in every decision of life.

Obi engages in an intercultural dialogue with respect to trans-modernity. Dussel lists “affirmation of scorned exteriority” (44), “critiquing one tradition with resources of one culture” (45), “strategy of resistance” (47), “intercultural dialogue between critics of their own culture” (48), and “strategy for trans-modern liberal growth” (49) as major components for dialogue. As critical ‘I,’ Obi embodies some flaws and is partially trans-modern. West disdains communitarian values of non-West and Africa and eulogizes their values like individualism, and also negates tradition of storytelling. Non-Western societies need affirmation of communitarian values, self-valorisation and negation of negated story telling for commencing cultural renewal. Although Obi becomes indifferent to Igbo community due to Western exposure, he has not forgotten his traditional foundation completely, as evidenced by, “Obi did not sleep for a long time after he had lain down. He thought about his responsibilities. It was clear that his parents could no longer stand on their own” (61). He gives ten shillings for Brother John’s school fees (136). It shows that he is tied to family obligations. Communitarian

values are circulated in his veins but are covered by the barks of Western ideals.

Umuofia's unwavering support during incarceration, without criticizing his irresponsibility towards the community, will exacerbate deepened consciousness about communitarian values and transform him into a new man and new identity.

Obi criticizes the Igbo outcast system by invoking Christian beliefs of his father who does not work to reform outcaste system that does not exist in the Christian values. Obi challenges the president after he questions Clara's ancestry (83). Studying abroad while still adhering to Igbo traditions, Obi positions himself as a critical intellectual. The outcast system in Igbo community should be re-evaluated through critical intellectuals like Obi and rejuvenated to create robust and vibrant Igbo tradition. Besides, it needs approaches like activism to efface discriminations, and the participation of persons like Obi's father, who knows it is wrong but fears to speak, accelerate discrimination eradicating process.

Obi's maturity gaining process is continuous, influenced by kinship and surrounding. Regular inspection of tradition and traditional elements filter outdated values and allow positive changes. Obi has not demonstrated any affinity for hegemonic culture. Currently, Obi is dominated by the ideals of Western culture, but his incarceration will prompt a re-evaluation of his position, serving to realign him with his original cultural identity.

Questioning unequal treatment on Osu, Obi acts as critical innovator who participates in some form of intercultural dialogue that addresses injustices and redefines cultural identity through a blend of traditional values and modern critical thought. This intercultural dialogue continues and becomes effective with the maturity of Obi. It aims to promote a deeper understanding of cultural dynamics and foster inclusivity. Obi fails to continue this advocacy till last, reflecting lack of determination in implementing these ideals and alternative approaches like doing activism.

As an educated Igbo man in the West and having understanding about Modernity, Obi offers valuable insights for revitalizing Igbo tradition. In order to shape trans-modern Igbo community free from Western cultural hegemony, his advocacy of revitalised tradition is crucial. From his childish act of “writing letter to Hitler” demanding equality and justice, he shows promise since childhood days (8). He is neither hardcore traditionalist like his grandfather Ogbuefi Okonkwo who killed a child Ikemefuna that called him father to show adherence to tradition and his community (104) nor dogmatic like father who accepts Christian values uncritically. Obi demonstrates a character of trans-modern individual and anchor for Igbo tradition. Fostering critical thought, he can serve as a bridge between traditional values and contemporary ideas, ensuring that the culture evolves without becoming rigid or discriminatory. This approach promotes an inclusive, emancipatory vision of Igbo identity, allowing for a decolonized understanding that respects heritage and reaps the benefits of modernity. Ultimately, this synthesis leads to a richer, more dynamic cultural expression in Nigeria

Fanon’s approach to decolonization and Enrique Dussel’s ideas of transmodernity and Ziauddin Sardar’s holistically theorised concept of tradition help to effectively decolonize the colonial legacies and residues present in post-colonial nations. But currently dominating phenomena termed as globalization is resulting mass movement from non-West to West, more preferably to America, while goods and products from West and America are imported to non-West. The mobility of non-Westerners across different parts of world, virtual connectedness among various people and dynamic relation between nations, blur the fixed singular identity. So, non-Westerner from any countries irrespective of social, economic and technological advancement has necessity to integrate their traditions and culture with Western culture to foster cohesion in the world they migrated, which looks pragmatic. But, non-Westerners witness the

defamation and denigration of their traditions and cultures in West and America, which needs an effective counteraction. This can be countered successively through Paul Gilroy's Black Atlantic approach.

Despite the Black Atlantic approach is theoretically proposed with historical context of transatlantic slave treaty and forced transfer of Black and Caribbean from Africa and Caribbean island to Europe and America, it is equally reliable and appropriate in the present context of globalisation characterised by international migration induced through pull factors such as scholarship, international labour migration, different schemes like lottery and bilateral treaties among nations and push factors such as war, poverty, refugees and unemployment. In order to preserve own tradition and culture in West and America, non-Westerners must develop some forms of "double consciousness" as explained by Paul Gilroy. He states "Double consciousness" as an unhappy symbiosis of three modes: thinking racially, being nationalistic but the nation labels them as ex-slaves, not yet citizens, and seeing themselves as 'third' – diasporic, hemispheric, sometimes global, and occasionally universal (127). Amy Qin in *The New York Times* reports, the non- Westerners living or settling in America are frequently referred through "immigrants", "migrants" and phrases like "invasion of immigrants" and "migrants poisoning the blood of the country" (para. 10), intense derogatory denotation, not fully humanised individuals, who are later converted to permanent residents or voters through the long process. Their identity is fixed through race alone such as Asian or African and confined to that. They contribute and have aspirations to that nation but are continuously hated. As transnational individuals, the non-Westerners should organise their own larger community, transcending national boundaries, among those people who share similar heritage and similar culture to preserve their tradition and culture in West and America. Thus, formed larger cultural community counteracts with Western hegemonic Culture.

In *No Longer at Ease*, the larger community is visible where Obi and Clara meet. It is evidenced by, “They met at a dance organised by the London branch of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons at the St Pancras Town Hall” (23). These types of organisations should be effectively mobilized to address the problem of their concerned people. Similarly, abroad settler should prioritise to settle in the place where their communities or kinsmen reside, which Issac tells to his son Obi as, “. . . in a strange land one should always move near one’s kinsmen” (132). It reinforces to settle in the place that constitutes people sharing similar culture or similar heritage or near kinsmen, which helps to follow cultural and traditional practices regularly and foster cultural continuation. Since responsibilities and obligations generated through traditional and cultural norms are morally and unconsciously imparted in psyche of person, a person fulfils it as a compulsory duty, which itself is the two-way process, sometimes a person helps others, sometimes receives help from others. So, our lives flourish with the integration of tradition and traditional values.

The echoes of ancestral drums symbolize the enduring strength of African traditional identity amidst external pressures, Western influence. Despite seeming silence, ancestral drums continue to resonate, offering both a critique of Western norms and a source of hope. These drums, embodying the rhythm of tradition, persist beyond their physical sound, signifying a continuous resistance to cultural assimilation. More than relics of the past, these drums are living elements of the present. The “silence” of the drums does not signify their death; rather, it reflects their subtle presence, felt in moments of reflection, cultural resistance, and hope for future generations.

In this way, this study reveals that Western notion of Modernity as a very limited approach in measuring the development and evolvment of non-Western societies. As an instrument developed through Western episteme, it fails to describe societies of distinct historical context. Only indigenou knowledge and traditional way

of life and empower the life of native. Uncritical acceptance of Western hegemonic culture divides and fragments naturally cohesive non-Western societies based on mutual acknowledgement of diversity. So, non-Westerners should prioritize their ancestral knowledge, values and their own form of life. It gives them their own form of truth, power and success in life.

This thesis concludes that tradition is a defining characteristic of non-Western societies and should be espoused unconditionally. Like Obi, who speaks against discriminatory practices, non-Western societies must guide their culture to evolve through critical engagement and activism if necessary. Ziauddin Sardar's differentiation between tradition and traditionalism underscores the practice of dynamic traditions, not traditionalism. Educating parents about this evolving nature is crucial to revitalise tradition and reap benefits of ancestral practice and wisdom. It is challenging, but not impossible.

Drawing on Enrique Dussel's concept of "transmodernity," this study rejects alternative approaches to Modernity that position it as sole standard reference or evolved within its own framework. Such perspectives reinforce modernity's homogenizing tendencies. Characters like Obi and Isaac internalize Western values, often perceiving their own cultural practices as inferior. This distorted psyche is shaped by colonialism and its legacies that requires decolonization in post-colonial context to claim own cultural identity. Frantz Fanon's theories of decolonization and Dussel's affirmation of "scorned exteriority" stress the importance of reclaiming marginalized identities and validating cultural diversity. Obi's imprisonment does not mark the end of his potential. I adopts an optimistic stance regarding his life, his capacity for transformation through introspection and life experiences. After incarceration, Obi has the opportunity to realign with Igbo traditions and balance personal aspirations with communal responsibilities. This realignment fosters effective intercultural dialogue and

strengthens his connection to the evolving needs of his community.

Paul Gilroy's notion of transnational cultural communities, formed by non-Westerners in the context of globalization, highlights the importance of resisting cultural homogenization and Western hegemony. These communities promote the mode of "acculturation," and practice cultural exchange with other and preserve non-Western traditions. By safeguarding the core principles of their traditions, African and Asian societies can resist the pressures of assimilation and sustain cultural diversity. Through education, advocacy, activism, and intercultural dialogue, non-Western societies can resist colonial legacies, preserve their cultural heritage, and adapt to global challenges. This dynamic approach ensures that tradition remains a source of identity and strength in an interconnected world.

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