

Tribhuvan University

Awareness of Injustice in Achebe's *No Longer At Ease*

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Rajib Niraula has completed his thesis, entitled “Awareness of Injustice in Achebe's *No Longer At Ease*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from September 2018 to July 2019. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

Sarbagya Raj Kafle

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Letter of Approval

This thesis, entitled “Awareness of Injustice in Achebe’s *No Longer At Ease*”
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Niraula has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Awareness of Injustice in Achebe's *No Longer At Ease*

Abstract

This research analyzes Chinua Achebe's No Longer At Ease from the point of view of post-colonialism. In this novel, the colonel acts violently which describes the Igbo society - its culture, religion and mythology which influences the everyday lives of the Igbos. He aptly shows not only the positive sides of Igbo culture and religion, but also the negative sides. For instance, he describes cruel rituals and killing of newborns or twins and so on. All of these rituals were later considered inappropriate by British colonizers and they were slowly pushed away by new religion and the Western way of life. When describing the Igbo society, Achebe uses his own experience and true facts which helped him offer his readers an in-depth insight into the main characters like Obi Okonkwo and his grandson Obi. The easy massacre of an unsuspecting enemy evoked no feelings but those of gladness, pride, and admiration.

Key Words: Post-colonial, Nigeria, Western domination, Ibo culture, hegemony, superiority, cultural studies

Introduction

The present research explores the postcolonial views in the work of Achebe's *No Longer At Ease*. It tries to capture the voice of the voiceless, which is post-colonial resistance in nature. Similarly, the novel expresses the voice of the colonized people and suppressed people of the Nigeria as well. Along with the exploration of the interrelations of language and culture, the development of authorial identity of Achebe is unearthed in this research. The native language, culture and myth in the novel challenge the so-called superiority complex of the Westerners. Achebe mainly raises the issue of the language.

The inclusion of African setting, western African dialect, belief in fate, use of myth, issue of independence, unification, indigenous people, cultural chaos represent Achebe's desire to portray non-Western thematic balancing the mimicry and rejection of the Western domination. Achebe on the one hand raises the voice against the Western mainstream culture and on the other hand he raises the issues about the marginalized Ibo culture of Nigerian people. Born in eastern Nigeria on November 16, 1930, Chinua Achebe was deeply influenced by the Ibo culture and by the British colonial and post-colonial elements of contemporary African society.

Ibo people are native of the Nigeria having own culture, religion, language and other social activities. Today Ibo people are living in different part of the Nigeria like, Asaba, Agbar, Kwale and some major cities of the country. They believe on god Chineke or Chukwu who is known as the creator of the world. According to their religion, Chineke literally means the creator of god while Chukwa means 'the great god'. In the Onitsha areas, Chineke is regarded as a supreme being. Similarly Chukwu is also called Chukwu-Okike to imply the same idea of creation. It means the central association therefore in the concept of the

principle of god is belief in a supreme source of beneficent creation.

The great gods Chiukwu is believed to be the author of heaven and earth that makes animal and plant life grow. As the source of human life, he gives to each man at the time of his birth that man's particular portion of the divine being called Chi. In Ibo culture there are many other religious god like Anyanwu, known as sun god companion of the king of the heaven. Igwe is the sky god husband of Ala who sends rain to moisten Ala to be productive. Ala is the earth god or god of morality, economy, and controller of the minor god of the earth. She gives the corn to the human being. They also believe on reincarnation of human soul.

Chinua Achebe's *No Longer At Ease* remains a brilliant statement of the challenges facing African today. His message is well presented with the use of local settings of major events and a lot of local dialect. *No Longer At Ease* is a moral teaching novel and a book meant to criticize the sudden rush for foreign culture especially religion to the detriment of African tradition and culture. It places emphasis on how foreign religion has affected our African norms, beliefs, values and customs. If not all but most Africans have placed everything of the European as more superior than that of themselves. For instance, the protagonist in novel, Obi Okonkwo insisted marrying a woman in the name of Christianity despise being advised from parents and members of the Umuofia Progression Union that it is against custom and tradition.

Achebe uses language, which he sees as a writer's best resource, to expose and combat the propaganda generated being African politicians to manipulate their own people. Faced with his people's growing inferiority complex and his leader's disregard for the truth, the African writer cannot turn his back on his culture, Achebe believes, "A writer has a responsibility to try and stop because unless our culture begins to take itself seriously it will never . . . get off the ground" (23). He states his mission in his

essay "The Novelist as Teacher":

Here is an adequate revolution for me to espouse -- to help my society regain belief in itself and to put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement. And it is essentially a question of education, in the best sense of that word. Here, I think my aims and the deepest aspirations of society meet. (9)

The formation of the colony through various mechanisms of control and the various stages in the development of anti-colonial nationalism interest many scholars in the field. By extension, sometimes temporal considerations give way to spatial ones in that the cultural productions and social formations of the colony long before colonization are used to better understand the experience of colonization.

Achebe's *No Longer At Ease* has received many critical appraisals since the time of its publication. Many critics have analyzed the novel using multiple perspectives. A critic William Lescaze interprets the novel using political criticism. In this connection he says that "Mr. Achebe's falling has been the post-independent floundering of Nigeria and other west African nations and he tells a dark, story of a corrupt and incompetent government whose abuses, from petty tyranny to state-ordered muffler, are unhappily familiar in modern west Africa" (1). Lescaze has tried to analyze how the novel explores the political scenario of the contemporary time.

Chinua Achebe's novel, *No Longer At Ease*, is about history and its many models; and especially about national histories and their realization. It asks how history is to be understood and consummated especially for people without a canonical narrative. The experience of colonialism dissolves all identities, erases nationalities, makes destiny irrelevant and even problematical. It is not simply that we cannot understand that all identities, speaking exactly as an intellectual proposition,

are always in the process of constitution. Similarly, Byd Tokin comes with the interpretation of how *No Longer At Ease* is full of story of crime. He comments:

One of Chinua Achebe's main socio-political criticisms in *No Longer At Ease* is that of corruption in Nigeria. In the state of justice, a martyred writer weighs no more or less than martyred farmer or truck driver. But despite whom can kill a poster knows abroad will inflict any atrocity an observer victims. It's fair to treat the writer's plight as litmus-test of tyranny, without pretending that intellectuals matter than anyone else. (1)

Here, the novel also explores the issues of violence, which is unveiled. Post-colonial history thus becomes the story of the end of old history, of old identities, of nativism. It marks the period of rabid hybridity of cultures and identities, or else of nothing but unmediated self-representation and self-narration. In such a regime, national identity is a mere fabrication, defined by passports and legal instruments of domination, violence, and barbarism. In such a situation, history is the account of the post-colonial encounter because there are no longer nations and peoples, and there is nothing to remember or recall.

In addition, David Carroll provides us with the interpretation of how power networks operate in the society. The power location controls and tames the individuals in the society hagemonically. In this respect, he puts:

In asserting the primacy of what is called the earth and earth's people, the privileged triumvirate of the characters is destroyed, but their death is interpreted as rite a of passage to be a better world in which the true dialectical of life of rulers and peoples of male and female, of modernity and tradition will be re-established, with the key role to be played by the women. After the darkness of the civil war, there is in this novel a new kind of

confidence in both the storyteller and storyteller's audience. (190)

The operation of the power networks in the society is analyzed by David Carroll.

'The Almighty', however, is not the term Achebe uses God in his other novels; and there may well be reason to suppose that this use of the term in *No Longer At Ease* is intended to raise the discussion of the idea of a supreme godhead to a higher plane than hitherto.

Likewise, another critic, Mercedes Mackay, has talked about the consciousness in the novel. Marcus further explains, "Achebe's treatment of the other target of raised consciousness of the people. He gives them voices by turning again and again to the sprung rhythms of the local Platoes" (54). Here, Mackay describes how the force of local language and culture help to raise consciousness. Likewise, in his *Fiction of Chinua Achebe* (2007), Jago Morrison sees this commitment in Achebe to use his art as a consistent continuation of his vision, craft, and ideal a part of his writing:

Achbe is also known to recast the notion of commitment so often associated with his writing... a writer's willingness to Hold firm to the personal and the aesthetic – a writer's willingness To hold firm to the truth of his vision, the authenticity of his Language and to his own artistic integrity. *No Longer At Ease* were conceived by Achebe as a saga is spanning three generations of an Igbo family and their struggles to survive successive waves of Nigerian nation building. (137)

It is evident that Achebe is perfect in the handling the lucid expression with the coherent language which ultimately presents the truth associated to the condition of the African people. In the context of writers' willingness, Onyemaechi Udumukwu's statement here corroborates the intertextual preview of Achebe's fiction.

The novel is claimed to be one of the truest stories of the world, many critics like Sondra Dave have given skeptic eyes on its trustworthiness. For Dave the novel has the greater degree of efficiency to present the notion of the truth and reality in relation of the society. He says “throughout the book and the author describes how courageous protagonist is and how much she works for the rights of colonized. In fact she comes across as a selfish and not very pleasant person” (94). Thus, the novel is rich in mirroring the real feature of the social and political reality. The intact representation of the social and political reality in the novel adds the effort of social realism.

Another critic Mernissi Putush makes the feminist reading of the novel. For her the novel is the exact representation of the feminine subjugation. The exploitation of the females in the novel tempts the feminist critics. As claiming for the feminist tone Putush makes a point:

It does not matter whether you are a feminist or not, if there is a crime committed against humanity then as a human being you have to seal the fate of the oppressor and feel and try to assuage the pain of the oppressed. But while many victims can be rescued, reinstated or taken care of, for the woman. It's a whole different ball-game whatsoever. (101)

Thus the novel is rich in the preservation of the feminist tone. *No Longer At Ease* has touched multiple facets of the history and culture. It is basically the novel of multiculturalism, multilingualism and multidimensional.

The novel becomes the melting pot of different cultures that proves the relevance of the multiculturalism. For this Peter Sect claims:

The biography leads us from Hero's childhood to adulthood, and with that we witness the horrors experienced by dominated through their words, and the

terror develops as we realized that despite being in the royal family... so think about the society. We get a real insight of what the dominated saw, and this book does teach you a great deal. There isn't really a plot? As such for the novel, for it is a biography, so of course it just records her life. (75)

In *No Longer At Ease* westerners seem to have been bent on seeing propaganda or scheming behind every event. Achebe is profoundly shocked by this sort of abject and inhuman trend. He distances himself from this general trend. Achebe shows an extraordinary fairness and insight in portraying the western plunderers.

Although all these critics and reviewers examined this novel, from different points of view and arrived at several findings, none of them notice the issue of the critique of colonial exploitation as the major focus of their analysis. Since the topic of colonial exploitation is not properly explored, the researcher tries to fill this critical gap. The hegemonic mentality to exploit the colonized found abundantly in the white characters of *No Longer At Ease*. The altruistic and philanthropic activities of westerners are suspicious because they are not what they appear to be. They rob the resources and wealth of the natives of Nigeria. The unwillingness of Europeans to cultivate an empathetic attitude towards different and the other is a mark of colonial psyche. By using the postcolonial theory, the researcher probes into this topic.

This research deals with a man named Obi, who is not a competitor in a power struggle, but rather is a victim of the struggle caused by colonialism. Ezeulu's power struggle highlights the dangers of asserting authority where it has not been completely merited, and his selfishness to impose his will on his people ultimately leads to their demise. While the power struggle creates an unstable environment that leaves Ezeulu and the Ibo people more susceptible to external influences, Obi succumbs to the pressures of colonialism ultimately leading to *his* demise. Both characters find

themselves torn between tradition and change, but essentially, Achebe uses the power struggle to illustrate different perspectives of the negative impact colonialism brought to the Igbo people.

Summarily, what Achebe is attempting to portray through the use of a power struggle is the driving force of alienation that colonialism brought to Igboland. Both Obi and Ezeulu find themselves torn between two cultures unable to fully be a part of one or the other. While Ezeulu attempts to lead his people into using Western colonization for the good, his lust for power blinds him and leads him to a tragic end. Obi, on the other hand, has brought back to his homeland Western education. He is quickly alienated from his people through his attempts to live “correctly” according to Western ideals and adhere to the traditions of his people. His willingness to be open to the positive aspects of colonialism makes him an outsider to his homeland.

Essentially, the feeling of being alienated leads Obi to accept the bribe that is his demise. Both characters are so uneasy with the impending Westernization that they fall into isolation, making it easier, so to speak, to succumb to colonialism. Through the struggle for power, Achebe successfully demonstrates how colonialism has negatively impacted traditional villages in Nigeria without entirely blaming Westernization. Achebe is also recognizing that the Igbo people are also partly to blame by not using the education they were given in a positive regard to the preservation of their people.

The postcolonial refers to the passage of societies recovering from the experience of colonialism. Rather than indicating contemporary social circumstances, does it signify a state of mind preoccupied with effecting a disengagement from the previous condition. And since, despite formal decolonization... “this experience, Bhabha says, remains a potent factor in the formation of its practitioners, North and

South, East and West, does the gesture to an existentially beyond intimate a therapeutic discourse composed by critics, scholars, and writers in pursuit of intellectual self-fashioning”(*Location of the Cultures* 156).

Post-colonialism is subversion. It aims at countering some of the claims and assumptions mentioned about the colonial culture and people in the dominant colonial discourses. In this regard, Bill Ashcroft argues:

Post-colonial studies developed as a way of addressing the cultural production of those societies affected by the historical phenomenon of colonialism. In this respect, it was never conceived of as a grand theory but as a methodology: first, for analyzing the many strategies by which colonized societies have engaged imperial discourse; and second, for studying the ways in which many of those strategies are shared by colonized societies, re-emerging in very different political and cultural circumstances. (14)

There has hardly been a more hotly contested term in contemporary theoretical discourse. Postcolonial in this perspective represents an attempt to regroup intellectuals of uncertain location under the banner of postcolonial discourse.

In *No Longer At Ease*, English colonizers reflect their superiority and Eurocentric racism in their overall behavior towards Obi and his people. Obi and his people, being native black Nigerians, are stereotyped by the White English colonizers. Rather, the English colonizers not only hate and stereotype the colonized Nigerian people, but they hate and stereotype each and every aspect of the colonized land. By contrast, however, they consider themselves as cultured and civilized.

The high point at which the celebration ends is the brief recounting of the history Umuofia, especially the village of Iguedo, in heroic terms by Ogbuefi Odogwu. The historian has sensed that a new epoch of that heroic history is in the

offing, and that Obi, with all his attributes and qualifications, is the man of the moment, an excellent candidate for a spear point and principal mover in this history. Odogwu's narrative is prefaced by the symbolic investiture of Obi with the mantle of Umuofia's heroes:

'I am happy that you returned home safe,' said Matthew to Obi.

'He is a son of Iguedo,' said old Odogwu. There are nine villages in Umuofia, but Iguedo is Iguedo. We have our faults, but we are not empty men who become white when they see white, and black when they see black'

'Obi's heart glowed with pride within him.

'He is the grandson of Ogbuefi Okonkwo who faced the white man single-handed and died in the fight. Stand up! (42-3)

For Obi's part, his heart glows to be invested with the mantle of his grandfather, the great Okonkwo. But it does not come to his head whether this involves a mode of being or a manner of action. As a matter of fact, he is taking all this in the spirit in which he is taking the rejoicing going on around him; that is, as a spectator. In this, he differs from Prufrock, who is afraid that he may betray his insubstantiality. Prufrock talks endlessly to sustain a fiction, that he is someone. He is keeping the gaze upon himself, and thereby asserting a substantiality he does not feel. His very talking is itself a mode of action. By contrast, Obi looks on, taking all in, but above all, looking on.

The processes of meaning production are signifying practices. In order to understand culture, we need to explore how meaning is produced. Meaning is produced symbolically in language as a signifying system. Stuart Hall, one of the prominent cultural critics, makes the following observation regarding cultural study:

There is a difference between the study of culture and institutionally located

cultural studies. The study of culture has taken place in a variety of academic disciplines – sociology, anthropology, English literature. However, this is not to be understood as cultural studies. The study of culture has no origins, and to locate one is to exclude other possible starting points. Nevertheless this does not mean that cultural studies cannot be named and its key concepts identified.

(56)

Cultural studies are a discursive formation. It is a cluster of ideas, images and practices. It provides ways of talking about forms of knowledge and conduct. It is associated with a particular topic. It deals with the social activity or institutional site in society. Cultural studies are determined by a regulated way of speaking about objects.

Full of offence at what he sees as unwarrantable interference in his own affairs, Obi flies into an uncontrollable temper, and has shot up unbidden:

‘Please sit down, Mr Okonkwo’ said the President calmly.

‘Sit down my foot!’ Obi shouted in English.’

This is preposterous ! I could take you to court for that ... for that...’

‘You may take me to court when I have finished.’

‘I am not going to listen to you any more...’

He made for the door. A number of people tried to intercept him. ‘Please sit down.’ Cool down, There is no quarrel. Everybody was talking at once. Obi pushed his way through and made blindly for the car.(63)

Obi is so flustered and upset that he is obliged to make an undignified exit. The President makes no concession whatever, remains absolutely cool and dignified.

Cultural representations and meanings have a certain materiality. They are embedded in sounds, inscriptions, objects, images, books, magazines and television

program. They are produced, enacted, used and understood in specific social contexts.

Regarding cultural studies, Raymond Williams makes the additional view in the following citation:

Cultural studies have, for the most part, been concerned with modern industrialized economies and media cultures organized along capitalist lines. Here representations are produced by corporations who are driven by the profit motive. In this context, cultural studies have developed a form of cultural materialism that is concerned with exploring how and why meanings are inscribed at the moment of production. (65)

Culture is seen as having its own specific meanings, rules and practices which are not reducible to, or explainable solely in terms of, another category or level of a social formation. In particular, cultural studies have waged a battle against economic reductionism. It is the attempt to explain what a cultural text means by reference to its place in the production process.

Obi is certainly the most important character in *No Longer At Ease*.

But if we use other parameters, Obi may turn out to be much less substantial than someone like Christopher. For instance, if the former's situation of unease is owing to his Western education, according to Wilson and Killam, by what rule are we to explain the latter's situation of ease with himself and the world around him? Though he has a university degree in economics, he seems never to have troubled himself to work out a mode of behavior that would suit his situation. That is an issue entirely subject to his practical sense in the concrete situation, and never arises as a problem confronting thought. We see an instance of his self-assuredness in the following, where the narrator ends by drawing attention to his adaptability. He has proposed that they all go somewhere for a dance:

Obi tried to make excuses, but Clara cut him short. They would go, she said.

'Na film I wan' go,' said Bisi.

'Look here, Bisi, we are not interested in what you want to do. It's for Obi and me to decide. This na Africa, you know.'

Whether Christopher spoke good or 'broken' English depended on what he was saying, where he was saying it, to whom and how he wanted to say it. Of course that was to some extent true of most educated people, especially on Saturday nights. But Christopher was rather outstanding in thus coming to terms with a double heritage. (84)

Obi follows having already been silenced by Clara. Obi's resentments at being always told what to do are mostly against the white men, particularly his boss, Mr Green. This resentment may in fact be of long-standing, and reflect vague feelings of hostility toward the colonizers of his country. An early indication of this is the letter he had written to Hitler during the World War, which had been intercepted, and was to earn him public disgrace and caning in his school.

Regarding to the possibility of the emergence of cultural clash due to the intermingling of people belonging to various racial origin and background, Paul Gilroy makes the following observation:

For the longest time racial/ethnic minorities, the physically disabled, and women have not been given the same recognition as others. The one-sided approach to history and education has been a testimony to that fact. Respect is the process whereby the other is treated with deference, courtesy and compassion in an endeavor to safeguard the integrity, dignity, value and social worth of the individual. It means treating people the way they want to be treated. (74)

Nation has a long history of not respecting the rights of the powerless. Cultural study also entails acknowledging the validity of the cultural expressions and contributions of the various groups. This is not to imply that all cultural contributions are of equal value and social worth. Some cultural practices are better than others for the overall betterment of society.

Cultural expressions and contributions differ from those of the dominant group in society. These practices are usually only acknowledged when there is an economic market for them. But in most other cases the entertainment media simply caricatures minority stereotypes, such as women usually in supportive roles. Concerning this fact of multicultural experiences, Gilroy adds “Cultural studies thus means valuing what people have to offer, and not rejecting or belittling it simply because it differs from what the majority, or those in power, regard as important and of value” (87). Cultural studies will also encourage and enable the contribution of the various groups to society or an organization.

In the story, the main character Obi Okonkwo from Umofia is accused of corruption and bribery. Then the story goes back to explain what led Obi to this situation. Obi got a scholarship and a great opportunity to study in England, learn English language perfectly and mainly to get education which would guarantee him to get a very high position in a state administration. On his way back home, he met Clara and fell in love with her and later on decides to marry her. When Obi comes back to his village, everybody has big expectations. Obi is the first person from Umofia village who gets education and is expected to represent well his village in Nigerian Civil Service in Lagos and later find some jobs for other people from Umofia.

According to an academic Carl Brucker, immediately after Obi's coming back to the village, he finds himself being crushed by two sides. The first side is the village

– the great expectations of the villagers put big pressure on him and he has many obligations to them. He must pay a large amount of money every month to the Umofia Progressive Union which gave him a scholarship for studying and wants him to repay everything back. There is also his family which expects him to get a well-paid job and pay for his brother's studies and help financially to his family in general. The other side of the struggle is his new life in Lagos where he gets job. He has high standards of living and wants to get marry his girlfriend and need lots of money for the wedding and to cover his expenses.

The project of postcolonialism is not only applicable to the students of literature alone; indeed, it seeks to emancipate the oppressed, the deprived and the down-trodden all over the world. Bill Ashcroft puts forward his view regarding to what postcolonial theory:

Postcolonialism is an enterprise which seeks emancipation from all types of subjugation defined in terms of gender, race and class. Postcolonialism thus does not introduce a new world which is free from ills of colonialism; it rather suggests both continuity and change. Postcolonialism marks the end of colonialism by giving the indigenous people the necessary authority and political and cultural freedom to take their place and gain independence by overcoming political and cultural imperialism. (22)

Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement. Culture is translational because such spatial histories of displacement. It becomes crucial to distinguish between the semblance and similitude of the symbols across diverse cultural experiences. The transnational dimension of cultural transformation migration, diaspora, displacement, and

relocation jointly makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification.

Throughout the whole book, Obi fights with his feeling of identity, where he belongs to. Before he left Nigeria, he had been a true Nigerian and had known only his village. But his father, Nwoye – the son of Okonkwo who converted to Christianity and rejected his father – strictly condemned the old religion and brought up his children as Christians. Obi has his own opinion of religion but is afraid of telling his parents. The line shows:

Obi thought: 'What would happen if I stood up and said to him: "Father, I no longer believe in your God"?' He knew it was impossible for him to do it, but he just wondered what would happen if he did. He often wondered like that. A few weeks ago in London he had wondered what would have happened if he had stood up and shouted to the smooth M.P. lecturing to African students on the Central African Federation: 'Go away, you are all bloody hypocrites!' It was not quite the same thing, though. His father believed fervently in God; the smooth M.P. was just a bloody hypocrite (44).

There can be seen a parallel with Okonkwo when he came back to Umofia and also did not find the way how to deal with the system and mainly with the reality which was so different from the country he dreamt of. The British colonial system and its influences changed the village and the people there so much during the years when Obi was abroad, that Obi does not recognize it anymore after his return. He realizes that the Nigeria he came back to after four years of being in England is not the same country of his dreams.

Ella Shohat observes if the postcolonial denotes the closure of a previous condition. The postcolonial critique celebrates globalism for the volatility of the

cultural flows it brings about. The problem can be located even further, in the failure to engage with the prior terms, colonialism and imperialism. Shohat makes the following observations:

The postcolonial is said to displace or supersede. Associated with a casual approach to historical specificities is an indifference to overseas empire's capitalist trajectory. It is because imperialism lives on in new forms and perpetuates the exploitation of the Third World. The addition of postcolonial to the critical vocabulary remains controversial. The formal independence won by colonial populations does not automatically imply decolonization and independence, since an active colonialism continues to operate in the form of transnational corporatism. (19)

Shohat laments that postcolonial preoccupation is with the representational systems of colonialism and imperialism. Those pursuing a postcolonial critique are able to hail the vigorous contestation of ideologically contrived knowledge. This knowledge is tantamount to sounding the death-knell of the West's continuing power. It also marks the end of the need to examine the political economy and international social relationships of neo-colonialism.

Clara has not said anything about her background to Obi all the time they are courting, until he proposes marriage. It is in this context that Obi learns that by their cultural tradition, they are forbidden to each other as a marriage partner:

'I am an *osu*,' she wept. Silence. She stopped weeping and quietly disengaged herself from him. Still he said nothing.

'So you see we cannot get married,' she said, quite firmly, almost gaily---a terrible kind of gaiety. Only the tears showed she had wept.

'Nonsense!' said Obi. He shouted it almost, as if by shouting it now he could wipe away those seconds of silence, when everything had seemed to stop, waiting in vain for him to speak. (54)

Everything seems to have stopped for those several seconds because Obi has been brought up short, dismayed by a fact which he cannot then and there encompass by means of thought. Even when he shouts 'Nonsense,' he still does not encompass it: he turns away from it.

The westernization of Nigeria was a very quick process and his country had changed massively during his staying in England. The society in his country was no longer created by the old African traditions and culture, but a huge impact of colonial society was seen there:

It was in England that Nigeria first became more than just a name to him. That was the first great thing that England did for him. But the Nigeria he returned to was in many ways different from the picture he had carried in his mind during those four years. There were many things he could no longer recognize, and others-like the slums of Lagos-which he was seeing for the first time. (12)

Nigeria became a country where bribery and corruption has rooted deeply and where the clashes between old tradition and new western systems are still not finished. Obi feels he must change as well in order to acclimatize to the new system. But he does not want to be a criminal and betray himself and ideas he believes in. He wants to stay pure and honest, but under the circumstances and the big pressure from all sides, he eventually succumbs.

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cultural flows it brings about. The problem can be located even further, in the failure to engage with the prior terms, colonialism and imperialism. Leod says “the postcolonial is said to displace or supersede. Associated with a casual approach to historical specificities is an indifference to overseas empire's capitalist trajectory. It is because imperialism lives on in new forms and perpetuates the exploitation of the Third World”. The addition of postcolonial to the critical vocabulary remains controversial. The formal independence won by colonial populations does not automatically imply decolonization and independence, since an active colonialism continues to operate in the form of transnational corporatism.

Postcolonial preoccupation is with the representational systems of colonialism and imperialism. Those pursuing a postcolonial critique are able to hail the vigorous contestation of ideologically contrived knowledge. This knowledge is tantamount to sounding the death-knell of the West's continuing power. It also marks the end of the need to examine the political economy and international social relationships of neo-colonialism.

Anthony Brewer points out some of the important clues as to how representation of culture takes place in a discourse and how the process of interpreting culture turns out to be problematical. Brewer works out some sorts of plan to narrow down the gap between cultures as such and the textually represented culture. Brewer's ideas are reflected below:

As people who belong to same culture must share a broadly similar conceptual map, so they must also share the same way of interpreting the signs of a language. In order to interpret them, we must have access to the two systems of representation: to a conceptual map which correlates the sheep in the field with the concept of a sheep: and a language system which is visual language,

bear some resemblance to the real thing of looks like it in some way. The relationship in the system of representation between sign, the concept and the object to which they might be used to refer is entirely arbitrary. (72)

As claimed by Brewer, the meaning is constructed by the system of representation. It is constructed and fixed by the code, which sets up the correlation between our conceptual system and our language system. One way of thinking about culture is in terms of these shared conceptual maps, shared language systems and the codes which govern the relationships of translation between them. Not because such knowledge is imprinted in their genes, but because they learn its conventions and so gradually become culture persons. They unconsciously internalize the codes which allow them to express certain concepts and ideas through their systems of representation. But of our social, cultural and linguistic conventions, then meaning can never be finally fixed.

Contrary to James Booth who argues that it is Obi's European education which makes him so contemptuously reject the taboo against marrying the *osu* or outcast, Clara his deciding to go ahead and marry her rather seems to be something he arrives at out of a sense of honour – as if he has already gone too far to withdraw, as if he would lose face if he should withdraw. That night he discusses the matter with Joseph and finds that he is going to have strong opposition from his relatives. He then makes up his mind to stand up, not so much for Clara, but for himself:

Obi felt better and more confident in his decision now that there was an opponent, the first of hundreds to come no doubt. Perhaps it was not a decision really; for him there could be only one choice. It was scandalous that in the middle of the twentieth century a man could be barred from marrying a girl simply because her great-great-great-great-grandfather had been dedicated to

serve a god, thereby setting himself apart and turning his descendants into a forbidden caste to the end of Time. Quite unbelievable. And here was an educated man telling Obi he did not understand. 'Not even my mother can stop me,' he said as he lay down beside Joseph. (55)

Obi is not pleading his love, nor is he outraged by the injustice of tradition against Clara; he is only annoyed that he is being barred from achieving his aim. He is now going to assert himself to show that he can, and perhaps ought to be his own man. Not even his mother will be allowed to interfere.

Cultural practices could equally work to challenge, question, and critique and condemn colonialist ways of seeing; but the crucial point to grasp is that the act of representation itself is also securely hinged to the business of empire. Bart Moore Gilbert makes the following view in this regard:

In order to assess the justice of some of the charges brought against postcolonial theory, it is necessary to begin with a comparison between its critical focuses, practices and assumptions and those which were traditionally involved in the study of the relations between culture and imperialism in the Western academy. As will be demonstrated later, a number of earlier non-Western critics anticipated the argument of Said *Orientalism*, in asserting a direct and material relation between the political processes and structures of (neo-) colonialism on the one hand and, on the other, Western regimes of knowledge and modes of cultural representation. (27)

Within Europe and America, however, these interconnections were almost completely ignored throughout the period from 1945 to the early 1980s. This provides the first context, then, in which postcolonial theory must be placed in order to determine

whether it is indeed complicit with dominant ideologies in the more recent history of the post-war era.

However, the fact remains that he has not acted in a decisive manner at the scene with Clara. Apparently, this is not lost on the young lady herself as the narrator's comment on Obi's exclamation, that it is as if by shouting it now he could wipe away those seconds of silence seems to echo her point of view. When he speaks to Clara peremptorily the next day, it is not strictly to make up for the evening's lapses. It is the tone of a man with a fight in his hands, anxious to get it going, and determined to prevail:

At half-past two on the following day he called for Clara and told her they were going to Kingsway to buy an engagement ring.

'When?' was all she could ask.

'Now, now.'

'But I haven't said I ...'

'Oh don't waste my time. I have other things to do. I haven't got my steward yet, and I haven't bought my pots and pans.' (55)

Obi is ready for a fight; paradoxically, it is his friends he is going out against. First, we have this mock battle with Clara, where he tramples her woman's right to say yes to a marriage proposal. But the phase of the mock battle will swiftly pass, and reveal that it is the fight of his life that he is faced with. He carries it successfully through the early stages in Lagos, and through what he has promised himself is going to be the decisive encounter with his father. In the end, the decisive encounter is with his mother. In this engagement, he is unable to fire even one shot, before she forces him into submission. He gives up Clara and with her all sense of self-worth and self-respect.

The mixture of the fantastic and the normal is an important aspect of diasporic realism. The protagonist is a wonderful example of blending the cultural and the real elements. In a diasporic text, readers find the conflict between the world of fantasy and the reality, and each world works for creating a fictional world from the other. Concerning this sort of function of magic realism, Edward Said says:

Through the magical, the realistic creates its voice and makes it heard.

Rushdie has used magical realist elements by mixing the real and the fantastic, twisting time, and by including myth and folklore. His magic realism has its origin more in the inner and psychological worlds, inner conflicts, moment of uncertainty, the style of storytelling of the unreliable narrator, and less in the beliefs, rituals and illusions of people as a whole. (57)

Diasporic texts are written in reaction to the totalitarian regimes. These remarks hint to the fact that dislocated identity is an alternative way of saying more than what can be said in a direct manner. Through fragmented and coherent identity one can discuss reality without actually discussing it and what the author cannot say directly can be said by an unreliable narrator. The harshness of reality is questioned and challenged by the lightheartedness of magical and fantastic elements.

The fight that might have made a political sense is one with the colonial authorities. For instance, he would have liked Mr Green his boss, to know, what he thought of his type. In fact, the stratagem he proposes to Clara after his debacle with his mother:

Obi had done his best to make the whole thing sound unimportant. Just a temporary set-back and no more. Everything would work out nicely in the end. His mother's mind had been affected by her long illness but she would soon

get over it. As for his father, he was as good as won over. 'All we need do is lie quiet for a little while,' he said. (107)

As on the occasion already mentioned, Clara cuts him short. She knows that Obi has never had the stomach for a fight, and that this extraordinary attempt at self-assertion has been apparently comprehensively quelled. But there are other aspects of this self-assertion which Clara is not in a position to observe – nor Obi, for that matter.

It is a common perception that diasporic fictions are often set in rural areas but some politically motivated writers like Salman Rushdie have set their diasporic novels in big cities which are under political and social tension. Rushdie discloses the following viewpoint:

Diasporic identity is associated with non-western cultures which could not be approached with a typical western mentality because magic realist works are full of exotic magic, myth, and grotesque elements. This use of trope of fragmented identity has been considered a regional alternative and a protest to the Eurocentric categorization of the world. The direct allusions to history and the history of the margins have strengthened the postcolonial identity for magic realism. (87)

Rushdie has contributed largely to the connection between plural identity and post-colonialism by presenting magical realism as an instrument to undermine western concept of stability. He emphasizes the function of magic realism as the weapon of the silenced, marginalized, disposed voices in their fight against inherited notions of imperial history.

Obi appears to have been struck down by the white man himself well before the date of commencing of the writing he had promised himself, and secretly threatened Green with, the writing where the novel is to be used as a mode of

reflection on colonialism and for paying off the colonists. That Mr Green is ‘one of the Crown witnesses’ at the trial is probably procedural, since he is Obi’s boss, and the charge against him is accepting a bribe ostensibly to influence the decision of the scholarship board, where they both work. But it is another matter that he spends much of his evening on the day of the sentencing playing tennis:

It was most unusual. As a rule his work took up so much of his time that he rarely played. His normal exercise was a short walk in the evenings. But today he had played with a friend who worked for the British Council. After the game they retired to the club bar. Mr. Green had a light-yellow sweater over his white shirt, and a white towel hung from his neck. (5)

Has the bribery incident been set up to prove the point that the African is corrupt through and through, and that education has made no difference at all with him? Mr. Green has been convinced of these truths all along, but the other colonials are reluctant to accept it. If the proving of this point is Green’s interest, the latter’s expectation of Obi would have been the only one the protagonist has fully and squarely met.

The identity is associated with putting magical or supernatural events into realistic narrative without suspecting the improbability of these events. With respect to this view, Rushdie makes the following observation:

Although it will be quite unfair to say that plural identity is particularly Latin American, the fame of Latin American dual cultural realism has inspired its adaptation by many writers globally. Dual realism is the very opposite to what is called the absolutist and the traditional. Writers like Rushdie have used this technique to open up new opportunities and varieties. They focus on celebration of plurality, identity crisis, multiculturalism, and hope for a new

nation. Through magical events writers can find new viewpoints, can open new windows through which they can see the world differently. (105)

Diasporic events take place in a real world and through which the stories remain intimate, not unbelievable. Diasporic realist works are not mere fantasies that can be dismissed. They refuse to be tied by the restrictions of real life rather help readers see and think differently of the ordinary events or issues.

Obi himself is brought down pursuing his own aims. But he thereby forces his people to look upon him as a man, one like themselves. For instance, the reason why they decide to press on with his legal defence, despite that they know that there is very little hope of saving him, is because, and according to the president of their Union:

And now we are being called together again to find more money for him.

What does he do with his big salary? My own opinion is that we have already done too much for him. This view, although accepted as largely true, was not taken very seriously. For, as the President pointed out, a kinsman in trouble had to be saved, not blamed; anger against a brother was felt in the flesh, not in the bone. And so the Union decided to pay for the services of a lawyer from their funds. (7)

Obi's refusal of a role in the collectivity, and preference for a solitary existence, is already a form of self-incarceration, to be formalized by the prison sentence for taking a bribe.

The core finding of this research is to elucidate how colonial practices and aggressive activities take place in the colonial period. Colonialism is the projection of the mentality to conquer, subjugate and dehumanize those who belong to different kinds of socio-cultural category. In Achebe's *No Longer At Ease*, it is noticeably clear

how European traders and colonial agents practice harsh and dehumanizing practices. Obi self-righteously resists the corruption of government service, alienating himself from his fellow civil servants and the clansmen who funded his education, but when his proud need to maintain an expensive lifestyle leads him to accept a bribe, his amateurish attempt results in his arrest. Obi is the first from his village to receive a European education, and his expenses are paid by clansmen who hope to enhance the status of their village and to reap future economic dividends.

Obi's life, however, is complicated by idealistic romance and his failure to manage his finances. He falls in love with a woman who is *osu*, marked by a traditional, hereditary taboo. Obi rejects the taboo as primitive superstition, but his naive determination to be thoroughly modern places him in direct conflict with his family and his clan. Obi has been shaped by the traditional Igbo culture of Umuofia, the Christianity of his father, the idealism of English literature, and the corrupt sophistication of Lagos, but he is at ease nowhere. As a child in Umuofia, he dreams of the sparkling lights of Lagos. In England, he writes pastoral visions of an idealized Nigeria. Disillusioned by the corruption of Lagos, he returns to his home village only to witness a lorry driver attempting to bribe a policeman and to be greeted by his parents' rejection of his proposed marriage. Obi finds it impossible to mediate the conflicting duties that are thrust upon him, and his steady progress in the novel is toward despair and withdrawal.

This novel is set on the verge of Nigeria's independence in Lagos, an urban jungle which combines the worst of European and African cultures. Centralization has led to inefficiency and corruption; traditional Igbo communalism has devolved to the narrow pursuit of advantage. Having learned the western desire for material goods without having sufficient income to satisfy them, the nation, like Obi, must choose

between corruption and bankruptcy. It is therefore fitting that Achebe's title is drawn from Yeats 'Sailing to Byzantium,' for like the wise men in Eliot's poem, Obi and the nation are trapped between two eras.

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