

## The Fragmentation of Intellectual Identity in African Literature – A Study of Chinua Achebe’s No Longer at Ease

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### Abstract:

African intellectuals responded to these colonial remnants through literature, writing as an assertion of their awareness of colonial aftermath. Consequently, their works have come to be seen as “ticking time bombs,” bearing narratives aimed at reconstructing post-colonial ruins while pursuing political and social transformation. However, these aspirations often dissolved amid a prevailing sense of alienation and detachment from indigenous frameworks. In light of this schism, our study will examine the foundational elements of modern African literature as an ideological act of resistance against colonialism. We will analyze the instruments of colonial discourse and their role in establishing ideologies of superiority and inferiority.

Our analysis will center on Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease*, a paradigmatic work of modern African fiction. Achebe meticulously captures the chaotic and disoriented realities faced by African societies since the intrusion of colonial power, underscoring the fragmentation and internal conflicts experienced by individuals both before and after the formal end of colonial rule. Achebe’s work highlights the particular challenge faced by African intellectuals in their quest to reclaim cultural identity, emphasizing the profound dislocation and cultural erosion that persist in the post-colonial era.

**Keywords:** Intellectual, Identity, African, Literature ,Chinua Achebe.

ملخص:

لقد كتب المثقفون الأفارقة في سبيل الردّ بالكتابة وإثبات وعيهم بمخلفات المشروع الاستيطاني، لهذا اعتبر أديهم بمثابة قنبلة موقوتة حاملة لخطاب عرقي يهدف لترميم ركام ما بعد

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الكولونيالية ساعين لتغيير الأوضاع السياسية والاجتماعية، لكن أحلامهم تبخّرت بسبب شعورهم الدائم بالاغتراب والانفصال عن المنظومة المحلية، وفي ظلّ هذا التمرّق سنحاول في مقالنا التطرق لمقوّمات الأدب الإفريقي الحديث كشكل من أشكال التمرّد الأيديولوجي على الاستعمار معرجين على أدوات الخطاب الكولونيالي ودوره في تأسيس فكرة التفوّق والدونية، وقد اخترنا نموذج الرواية الإفريقية الحديثة "مضى عهد الراحة" لتشنوا أتشيبي الذي اهتم كاتبها فيها بتصوير الواقع المحلي الإفريقي وما يكتنفه من فوضى وضياح منذ ولوج القوة الاستعمارية مع إبراز حالة التشظي والانشطار الذي يعانيه الأفراد قبل وبعد مرحلة الاستقلال مركزين على عجز المثقفين على استرجاع الهوية الثقافية.

كلمات مفتاحية: الهوية، الأدب، إفريقي، المثقف، تشنوا أتشيبي، التشظي.

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#### **1. Introduction**

In recent decades, the global intellectual landscape has increasingly confronted the fractures left by entrenched ideological binaries, particularly those that centralize Europe while marginalizing and erasing colonized cultures. An analysis of identity fragmentation in African societies must account for the profound legacy of colonialism, which systematically dismantled local cultures, resulting not only in widespread physical destruction but also in deeply rooted psychological turmoil among colonized populations. This identity crisis was exacerbated by ideological mechanisms that reinforced European supremacy across Africa and other colonized territories.

As a form of intellectual resistance, African writers emerged with a literary mission to document and critique the remnants of the colonial project. Their literature became a vehicle of defiance, embodying a “time bomb” of ethnic and cultural narratives aimed at reconstructing post-colonial identities and seeking political and social reform. However, the dreams of these intellectuals were frequently hindered by an enduring sense of estrangement and detachment from indigenous societal frameworks. Against this backdrop, our study seeks to examine the elements of modern African literature as a structured ideological counter-narrative to colonial influence. Specifically,

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we will analyze colonial discourse and its role in embedding hierarchies of superiority and inferiority, focusing on Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe and his seminal novel, *No Longer at Ease*. Achebe, as a leading figure in modern African literature, vividly portrays the disorder and existential displacement afflicting African societies since the advent of colonial forces. His work underscores the inner conflict and sense of rupture that individuals experience both before and after formal independence, drawing attention to the challenges faced by African intellectuals in their efforts to reclaim cultural identity.

### **2. Discourse as an Instrument of Colonial Complicity**

European scholars and thinkers advanced a project of global domination by invoking the authority of empirical and human sciences, which were employed as tools of ideological expansion. This mission was only possible after the systematic suppression of spiritual and cultural beliefs that had, for centuries, provided structure and meaning within European societies. With this intellectual freedom, European thinkers developed an ideological framework grounded in an asserted ability to possess, analyze, and control both nature and humanity. Armed with these ideas, they engaged in efforts to subjugate and “civilize” other societies, constructing theories of racial and cultural superiority that justified their colonial pursuits and were deeply embedded within the human sciences.

Europe underwent a process of profound cultural transformation, leading its individuals to inhabit an existentially disenchanted world that had lost its values and sense of authentic connection with others. Colonial institutions then collaborated with European writers to produce fictional narratives depicting an imagined "Orient" as a means to entice Europeans to journey eastward, in search of the meaning they felt was lost in Europe. One such example is Gustave Flaubert's *Kuchuk Hanem*, which portrays the Arab woman as a mere instrument for fulfilling primal desires. The colonial enterprise thus leveraged allure and exoticism to encourage Europeans to venture abroad in hopes of reclaiming their suppressed humanity.

The colonial agenda extended beyond mere enticement, aiming to strip the native (colonized) people of their civilization and culture, thereby

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rationalizing the European's desire for power. It went so far as to portray the colonized as naive beings, in need of European care, with the colonial narrative presenting the European as intellectually and culturally superior, the true "human" in this paradigm, since "whiteness" was associated with beauty and virtue, as opposed to "blackness," which was cast as a mere immersion in base nature (Fanon, 2004, p. 42) .

The complicity of intellectuals<sup>1</sup> in supporting colonial power further entrenched this view; through their works, they often represented the colonies from a purely colonial perspective, depicting these territories as distant lands inhabited by people in need of the European's wisdom and intellect. This dynamic is evident in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which casts the colonized as passive figures, only animated by the presence of the Western self. In this way, the European justified his own brutality, indulging in an imperialistic vision that constructed false ideological dichotomies such as East/West, colonizer/colonized, white/black, master/slave, and self/other<sup>2</sup>.

Even more insidiously, colonial powers persuaded the colonized that the arrival of Europeans was a unique blessing, one reserved only for those "deserving" of such "civilizing" influence, as they were told that "not all peoples are worthy of colonization only those who need it" (Fanon, 2004, p. 104) .

This led the colonized to internalize the values, language, and worldview of the colonizer, adopting an identity defined through the lens of the foreign.

One may then question why the colonized—particularly black<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Palestinian intellectual Edward Said exposed the complicit intellectual who aligns with authority, advocating instead for the organic intellectual who identifies as a member of the society reflecting its pain and aspirations

<sup>2</sup> The concept of the 'other' assumed the meaning of 'value' (valeurs) during the Enlightenment as a result of the openness of the European self towards the Eastern world, highlighting the civilizational disparities; the former evolved into an industrially advanced entity in dire need of economic resources, while the latter succumbed to underdevelopment and barbarism.

<sup>3</sup> The black individual was the most exploited among the colonized, as the color of their skin relegated them to an utterly dehumanized status.

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populations—were often receptive to the arrival of the European stranger, despite the exploitative intentions behind this incursion.

The answer lies in the colonial strategy of sowing myths and fantasies that framed the colonizer as a savior arriving to lift curses and provide salvation. Exploiting the colonized populations spiritual connections to mythological and sacrificial traditions, colonial powers leveraged these connections to foster acceptance of colonial presence and values <sup>4</sup>.

In truth, literature was not the sole vehicle for distorting the image of non-European societies; several disciplines within the humanities were similarly implicated. Anthropology, for instance, advanced views that framed colonized peoples as inherently primitive, even savage, asserting that these societies were “backward, primitive, and strange” by nature (Lumba, 2007, p. 59) .

This pseudo-scientific positioning of non-European societies as fundamentally inferior reinforced colonial narratives that presented them as uncivilized "others," unable to meet European standards of progress and rationality. Furthermore, historical studies of the time compounded these biases by portraying non-European societies through a selective and uncritical lens that often lacked the objectivity essential to historical analysis. This blending of fact and fiction served not only to distort but also to delegitimize these societies’ cultural and intellectual contributions.

In the field of psychology, colonial discourse went even further. Mannoni’s *Psychology of Colonization*, for example, provided frameworks that rationalized colonial violence. Mannoni theorized that the colonizer’s use of violence against the colonized was a response to an underlying desire to overcome an imagined inferiority complex attributed to Black individuals. This approach rendered the violent acts of the colonizer as natural responses to supposed psychological needs rather than as expressions of coercive

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<sup>4</sup> Unlike the Islamic world, the myths did not exert as profound an influence on its societies compared to the pagans, as they were imbued with spiritual values moreover, their knowledge of Christian societies contributed to their resistance against subjugation.

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domination<sup>5</sup>, thus attempting to legitimize and normalize these power imbalances within the colonial paradigm.

Such intellectual constructions had a profound effect on non-European identities, deeply fracturing their sense of self and fostering a worldview split into binary oppositions, with Europe positioned as the center of knowledge and authority. This division was upheld by what Edward Said would later describe in *Orientalism* as a cultural discourse that constructed the "Orient" as an inferior, exotic counterpart to the European "self." According to Said, these discourses were not mere observations but were laden with ideological motives that served to reinforce European supremacy. The knowledge produced about the East, rather than being objective, was shaped by preconceived notions that elevated Europe's position of dominance and reduced Eastern societies to objects of European analysis, thereby framing European identity in contrast to this "otherness."

The intellectual collision between European colonial knowledge and the identity of colonized societies ultimately catalyzed a profound cultural and intellectual response. A national intellectual elite, imbued with the colonizer's culture yet profoundly aware of its oppressive underpinnings, began to articulate various forms of resistance. This generation sought to transcend the imposed colonial narrative by fostering an intellectual movement grounded in advocacy for human rights and justice. This movement emphasized reclaiming the humanity of those marginalized and oppressed by colonial discourses, thereby creating a philosophical and cultural project aimed at dismantling the structures that had long dehumanized them. Through this, they endeavored to redefine their identities, reclaiming autonomy over their histories and advocating for a recognition of their cultural worth beyond colonial stereotypes.

These intellectuals found themselves divided into two main factions, each with a distinct approach to addressing the consequences of colonialism. The first group consisted of writers and artists who depicted the lived realities

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<sup>5</sup> Knowledge produces power however, it is simultaneously a product of power. This notion was articulated by the French critic Michel Foucault, who posited that knowledge is a form of authority.

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under colonial rule, often portraying the daily struggles and complex socio-political dynamics faced by the colonized. These writers rooted themselves in the pre-colonial heritage of their cultures, meticulously studying and reviving traditional practices, languages, and narratives that had been suppressed or diminished by colonial powers. Their work aimed to affirm their cultural identity, which had been systematically devalued by the colonizers who sought to erase their national and ethnic uniqueness. By reconnecting with and showcasing their cultural heritage, these authors directly challenged the colonial narratives that had attempted to portray their societies as inferior or lacking in civilization. Their literature served not only as a means of cultural revival but also as an intellectual resistance against the ideological erasure perpetuated by colonialism.

The second group, composed mainly of critics and theorists, took a more analytical approach. They engaged in a deep, often radical critique of imperialism, employing rigorous theoretical frameworks to dismantle the ideological foundations of colonial dominance. These critics highlighted the inherent contradictions and exploitative underpinnings of colonial discourse, revealing how it operated as a tool of power, oppression, and self-justification for the colonizers. Figures like Frantz Fanon argued that colonial discourse was central to constructing European identity itself, famously asserting that “Europe is the creation of the Third World.” (Lumba, 2007, p. 57)

This statement underscored how European self-perception and cultural narratives were built upon and sustained by the subjugation and exploitation of colonized societies. For these critics, colonial writing about non-European cultures was less an objective study and more a project of “othering” that served to affirm European superiority and justify imperial control. By deconstructing these narratives, they exposed the colonial project’s self-serving nature and its role in maintaining global hierarchies of power.

Beyond critiquing the structures of colonial dominance, these intellectuals recognized that the impact of colonialism extended far beyond the physical presence of foreign troops or the administrative machinery of imperial rule. Even after the formal end of colonial occupation, they argued, colonialism’s psychological and cultural residues remained deeply embedded within the

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societies that had been colonized. This “residual colonialism” perpetuated a sense of dependency and inferiority, shaping the self-perception of the formerly colonized and embedding a persistent belief in the supremacy of Western culture and values. These intellectuals posited that colonialism's legacy endured as a profound psychological complex, wherein the colonized internalized the perceived superiority of the colonizer. This subtle yet pervasive influence continued to govern the cultural, intellectual, and social landscapes of post-colonial societies, long after the direct political control had ceased. Thus, they argued, the process of decolonization was incomplete so long as these mental and cultural legacies remained unchallenged, keeping the post-colonial subject symbolically subjugated to colonial powers even in the absence of their physical presence.

### **3 Modern African Literature: A Detailed Analysis**

The emergence of modern African literature, particularly in the post-independence period, represents a critical response to the colonial legacy and its enduring effects on African identity, culture, and intellectual life. This literature not only rejects the stereotypes and distortions perpetuated by colonial narratives but also reclaims and reconstructs African voices, identities, and histories. Postcolonial African writers have undertaken the significant task of dismantling colonial constructs that attempted to homogenize African cultures, challenging the imposed myth of cultural sameness between colonizers and the colonized. By crafting narratives that emphasize the diversity and richness of African heritage, they reclaim a historical and cultural space long suppressed under imperial rule.

Many of these authors—often expatriates or individuals educated in colonial or metropolitan centers—use their literary platforms to both express their unique experiences and assert their visions to a global audience (Al-Tahan, 2016, p. 42) . In their works, they negotiate the complexities of personal and cultural identity, often employing the linguistic and stylistic frameworks of the colonizers to subvert colonial authority from within (Saïd , 2004, p. 268). Their efforts align under the broader vision of modern African literature, a body of work that operates as a counter-discourse infused with uniquely

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African cultural elements. This literature asserts a return to national identities that had been marginalized by colonial hegemony, fostering a communal spirit and shared cultural pride that resonates deeply with postcolonial African societies.

### **4 Challenges of Postcolonial Reality and the Drive for Cultural Restoration**

The transition from colonial rule to independence presented African writers with new socio-political responsibilities. Tasked with healing fractured communities and reclaiming cultural memory, African literature of this period evolved into a form of resistance against colonial oppression. For post-independence authors, literature became a medium for revitalizing the national spirit, reaffirming cultural heritage, and restoring dignity and self-respect to societies long denied autonomy. This literature not only celebrates Africa’s past but also reinterprets it, transforming historical trauma into narratives of resilience and pride. African writers thus create a body of work that serves as a repository of shared memory, offering a path toward cultural renaissance and fostering unity across the continent.

**Emerging as a revolutionary art form, modern African literature embraces a dual mission :** it revisits historical and cultural themes to reinforce a collective African identity and at the same time (Taha, 2005, p. 145), serves as an instrument for fostering self-confidence and resilience in the face of residual colonial attitudes and racial discrimination. This mission was particularly pronounced after World War II, as African nationalist movements gained momentum, seeking independence and self-determination. However, African writers faced the significant challenge of expressing the complexity of their cultural experience within the confines of the colonial languages imposed on them. This linguistic dichotomy has been a subject of ongoing debate, as it raises questions about authenticity and self-representation. The decision to write in the colonizer’s language reflects a strategic choice for these writers, who leveraged the language as a tool to assert their identity, despite the compromises it entailed.

## **4.1 The Language Dilemma : Reclaiming Identity Through the “Language of the Other**

→ For African writers, the colonial languages in which they were compelled to write represented both a limitation and a means of empowerment. The imposition of European languages by colonial regimes was a deliberate act of psychological and social manipulation (Ashcroft, 2006, p. 25), aimed at dislocating individuals from their native cultural frameworks and reinforcing a sense of fragmentation. The colonial language was, therefore, more than a medium of communication ; it became an instrument of cultural subjugation and alienation. African writers found themselves addressing a narrow and bifurcated audience—a local ethnic community often excluded from formal education and an African intellectual elite. This dichotomy often generated a profound sense of dissonance and anxiety, as they had to navigate between reaching audiences with diverse linguistic and cultural needs. This tension was particularly acute in dramatic works, where reliance on European languages for intelligibility underscored an identity crisis (Shalash, 1993, p. 25), revealing the deep-seated struggle to produce authentic art within a colonial framework.

In response, African writers harnessed the collective memory of their societies to inspire a reawakening of intellectual and cultural identity. For many, the content and themes of their work took precedence over language, enabling them to address universal human issues while preserving the distinctiveness of African experiences. Although they may not have fully abandoned their native languages, they employed colonial languages pragmatically, a choice necessitated by their colonial education. The result was a literature steeped in both African values and resistance to imperial narratives, divided into two major linguistic categories.

### **4.1.1 French-Language African Literature :**

Francophone African authors from former French colonies effectively used the colonizer’s language to assert their African identities and challenge European stereotypes. They achieved significant acclaim within both African and European literary circles. Guinean writer René Maran's novel *Batouala*,

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which starkly critiques colonial oppression, marked an important milestone for Francophone African literature. Maran's work sparked a broader intellectual movement that celebrated African identity and history, ultimately giving rise to the *négritude* movement—a collective effort by Francophone writers to reclaim pride in Black identity. This movement, which included prominent writers like Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire, aimed to reconnect Africans with their heritage and reject colonial subjugation. Later writers, such as Mongo Beti, extended these themes by exploring the complexities of post-colonial identity and the sense of alienation that persisted even after independence.

### **4.1.2 English-Language African Literature :**

The use of English as a medium of African expression carried significant cultural and political weight. For Anglophone African writers, the adoption of English was not merely a pragmatic choice but also a powerful act of nationalism (Ashcroft, 2006, p. 17). English-language African literature, bolstered by the educational influence of missionary schools, gained considerable prominence and audience accessibility. The publication of *Black Orpheus*, a literary journal that featured Francophone works translated into English, expanded the reach of African literature across linguistic divides (Dawas, 2009, p. 35). Prominent Anglophone writers, including Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Alex La Guma, became prominent voices of post-colonial critique, advocating for cultural revival and social justice. These writers highlighted the failures of post-colonial governance and the enduring impact of colonial ideologies on African societies, using English both as a means of communication and a tool for cultural resistance.

### **4.2 Writing Back : Strategic Resistance Through Literature**

The post-colonial era allowed African writers to “write back” against the narratives and stereotypes imposed by colonial literature. Edward Said describes this act of “writing back” as a strategic response that challenges imperial cultural dominance by dismantling its myths and presenting alternative narratives that empower marginalized voices (Edward, 2004, p. 274). Said argues that this counter-discourse not only reclaims cultural space but also subverts the authority of colonial discourse, redefining Africa’s place in

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global culture. For many African writers, “writing back” represents a rejection of European cultural authority and an assertion of African identity through intellectual and artistic sovereignty.

In conclusion, modern African literature has become a complex and layered form of resistance, challenging the imposed narratives of colonial rule and asserting the diversity and vitality of African cultures. By subverting colonial narratives and reclaiming African identity, this literature has redefined Africa’s place within the post-colonial world, offering a voice for a continent reclaiming its heritage and autonomy in the face of historical subjugation. Through the strategic use of colonial languages and the reconstruction of African histories, post-colonial African writers continue to foster a sense of cultural pride and national unity, bridging past traumas with aspirations for a self-determined future

#### **5.Chinua Achebe : Between the Hammer of the Past and the Anvil of the Present in No Longer at Ease**

Chinua Achebe’s novel *No Longer at Ease* is not merely a story of individual struggle; it is a powerful critique of the socio-political landscape of post-colonial Nigeria. To fully appreciate this narrative, one must consider the historical and social contexts that shaped its creation, which significantly influence the text's meaning and the author's ideological stance (Ashour, 1980, p. 97). As a critical piece of African literature, Achebe's work embodies political engagement, exposing the corruption and disillusionment that pervaded newly independent African nations.

##### **5.1 Historical Context : Radical Leadership and National Consciousness**

Written in 1960, *No Longer at Ease* emerges during a pivotal moment in Nigerian history—just before the country achieved independence<sup>6</sup>. This era is characterized by the rising tide of nationalist movements advocating for self-determination, reflecting a significant shift in the power dynamics within the nation. Achebe portrays a Nigeria grappling with the challenges of

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<sup>6</sup> Western Nigeria and Eastern Nigeria gained self-governance in 1957, and Northern Nigeria in 1959.

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modernity, where traditional values are increasingly compromised in the face of social chaos and corruption. The narrative illustrates how these forces shape the identity of the educated elite, particularly as they confront the harsh realities of their communities.

The protagonist, Obi Okonkwo, exemplifies the educated African returning from abroad with high expectations of contributing to the development of his country. His scholarship in London is emblematic of his aspirations, yet upon his return, he is met with disillusionment. His attempts to integrate into his community are thwarted by cultural expectations and the alienation stemming from his Western education. Obi's experiences underscore the identity crises that many post-colonial Africans face as they navigate the remnants of colonial influence while striving for a sense of belonging in their traditional societies.

### **5.2 Cultural Fragmentation : The Clash of Beliefs and Values**

Obi's journey reflects the fragmentation of cultural beliefs within his community, which is divided between traditional Igbo practices and Christianity. Raised in a Christian household, Obi struggles to reconcile his Western education with the expectations of his heritage. This internal conflict is a central theme in the novel, highlighting the complexities of cultural identity in a rapidly changing socio-political landscape. His experiences in London foster a sense of detachment from his roots, yet they also ignite a desire to address the injustices plaguing his homeland.

Upon returning to Nigeria, Obi secures a government position that elevates him from poverty, yet he quickly learns that his status does not shield him from the entrenched societal norms that dictate personal relationships. His romance with Clara, a woman from a marginalized background, illustrates the clash between individual aspirations and collective traditions. Obi's determination to marry Clara, despite the stigma attached to her "untouchable"<sup>7</sup> status, challenges the prevailing tribal taboos and underscores

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<sup>7</sup> Untouchability is a social practice that ostracizes a minority social group or legal entity. Clara belongs to the Ozo community, which is ostracized and barred from intermarriage or social mingling because one of her ancestors worshipped another deity, resulting in a legacy cursed by all tribes, believed to bring misfortune and disgrace.

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the broader conflicts faced by many Africans in post-colonial societies.

#### **The Tragic Conclusion: The Cost of Cultural Dislocation**

Achebe's narrative reaches its tragic climax as Obi grapples with the consequences of his decisions. His acceptance of bribes, initially seen as a pragmatic solution to financial woes, leads to a cascade of disastrous events—Clara's miscarriage, their separation, and ultimately, his mother's death from grief. This series of tragedies encapsulates the emotional and moral disintegration that can arise from cultural dislocation, highlighting the personal costs of navigating the turbulent waters of post-colonial identity.

In *No Longer at Ease*, Achebe adeptly illustrates the broader disarray that individuals encounter while attempting to reconcile their colonial past with their present realities. Obi Okonkwo's struggles epitomize the tensions faced by many Africans as they confront the legacy of colonialism and the societal pressures of modernity. Through rich character development and incisive social critique, Achebe articulates the complexities of identity formation in a post-colonial context, emphasizing the necessity of reconciling the past with the present in the quest for a cohesive future.

The novel serves as a poignant reminder that the repercussions of colonialism extend beyond historical narratives ; they actively shape the identities and experiences of contemporary African societies. Achebe's work thus not only captures the essence of individual struggles but also reflects the collective challenges faced by nations striving to forge their paths in a world still marked by the shadows of colonial domination. Through his powerful storytelling, Achebe advocates for a nuanced understanding of African identity, urging readers to recognize the multifaceted influences that continue to define the continent's cultural landscape.

### **5.3 Fragmented Identity in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease***

Chinua Achebe's novel *No Longer at Ease* intricately examines the complexities of identity amid the socio-political upheaval of post-colonial Nigeria. Written during a time when the nation was grappling with the legacies of colonialism and the aspirations for independence, the novel serves as a poignant reflection on the dislocation of identity experienced by educated Nigerians. Achebe adeptly highlights the tensions faced by

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individuals caught between their indigenous heritage and the colonial influences that continue to shape their lives.

### **Ideological Shifts and the Emergence of Dual Consciousness**

The late 1950s, when Achebe penned *No Longer at Ease*, were marked by a burgeoning awareness of national identity among educated elites, who found themselves navigating the ideological terrain between a romanticized past and an uncertain future. The novel's backdrop of liberation movements seeking independence from colonial rule encapsulates the struggle for a cohesive national identity amidst the clamor for social reform. Achebe's use of European languages and literary forms embodies this dual consciousness, as it signifies both a departure from traditional narratives and a yearning for cultural reclamation.

This internal conflict is epitomized in the character of Obi Okonkwo, who grapples with the inability to fully align himself with either his indigenous roots or the Western ideals he has internalized during his education in London. Paul Ricoeur's concept of identity crisis resonates profoundly within Achebe's narrative, portraying a "hybrid" identity characterized by fragmentation and dislocation (Mhahneh, 2013, p. 71). The feeling of disorientation is palpable in Obi's experiences, where the quest for personal and collective identity becomes a source of profound anxiety.

### **The Impact of Cultural Dislocation on Identity**

Obi Okonkwo's return to his hometown of Umuofia after his studies in London serves as a critical juncture in his identity crisis. He initially envisions his Western education as a means to enact social change; however, he quickly confronts the harsh realities of corruption and social decay that permeate his community. Achebe captures Obi's disappointment, illustrating that his education has not prepared him for the complexities of life in Nigeria. Instead, he perceives his community as stagnant, backward, and mired in the very exploitation he sought to escape.

The novel features characters such as Clara, Christoph, and Minister Sam, who collectively mirror Obi's struggle with identity. Each character seeks to carve out a place for themselves within a society fraught with the remnants of colonial violence and anxiety. This broader crisis of identity highlights the

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tensions faced by educated Nigerians, who navigate the expectations of their community while grappling with their aspirations.

#### **5.4 Elements of the Fragmented Self in No Longer at Ease**

Achebe elucidates several defining elements of the fragmented self in *No Longer at Ease* :

**1. Separation from the Community** : Obi's departure from Umuofia to London signifies a profound transformation in his identity. This journey is symbolic of a broader shift, marking a departure from collective traditions and cultural foundations. Upon returning, Obi is confronted with a community that feels alien to him, leading to feelings of loss and dislocation. “Obi had been away for less than four years, yet Nigeria had changed in many ways from the picture he had in his mind during those years. There were many things he could no longer recognize, and many others—like the filthy, poor slums of Lagos—he saw for the first time.” (Achebe, 1986, p. 18)

This disorientation underscores the profound impact of colonial education, which alters his perception of his homeland and his sense of belonging.

**2. Cultural Assimilation and Colonial Influence** : The narrative illustrates the ways in which educated Nigerians, including Obi, assimilate into British culture, which leads to a fractured sense of self. Despite their deep connections to their heritage, they often feel compelled to adopt the values and language of the colonizer. Obi's discomfort with speaking English to fellow Nigerians highlights this tension, as he grapples with his education's implications and his community's expectations.

“Obi found himself feeling ashamed of having studied English for his degree. He would speak Igbo whenever he had the chance, no matter how trivial the occasion. There was nothing more pleasurable than finding another student on a London bus who spoke Igbo, but when forced to speak English to a Nigerian from another tribe, he lowered his voice, feeling the shame of speaking to a compatriot in a foreign tongue.” (Achebe, 1986, p. 52)

This internal conflict reflects the pervasive dislocation experienced by African intellectuals, who are torn between their ethnic identities and the colonial legacies that privilege the English language.

**3. Alienation and Identity Crisis** : The culmination of Obi's struggle with

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identity results in profound alienation. The cultural dislocation he faces leaves him detached from both his roots and the ideals he aspired to embody. His attempts to forge a new identity, particularly in his relationship with Clara, ultimately lead to tragedy and further disintegration of his self-concept.

Achebe's nuanced exploration of identity in *No Longer at Ease* reveals the complexities and challenges faced by post-colonial individuals. Obi Okonkwo stands as a poignant reflection of the fragmented self, navigating the intersections of tradition, modernity, and colonial legacy. Through this exploration, Achebe invites readers to understand the broader implications of identity formation in a world marked by historical upheaval and cultural tension, ultimately underscoring the enduring impact of colonialism on contemporary African societies (Ashcroft, 2006, p. 21).

### **6. Conclusion :**

Chinua Achebe's novel "No Longer at Ease" encompasses a multitude of cultural dimensions, meticulously chronicling the historical encroachment of colonial powers upon the Igbo and elucidating the colonial capacity to obliterate a cohesive collective identity. Moreover, Achebe portrays the grim realities confronting Nigeria on the precipice of independence, serving as a poignant admonition to the elite regarding their failure to establish the foundational structures requisite for a viable state.

Within the narrative, fragmented identities persistently contest their entrenched positions, engaging with the 'other' in a bid to affirm their existence. Achebe adeptly employs a technique of polyphony, facilitating the presentation of divergent perspectives, while maintaining a continuous narrative presence throughout the majority of the scenes. This persistent presence underscores the impossibility of his detachment from the lived realities of Nigerian society. Furthermore, his text provides a platform for the 'other' to articulate dissenting viewpoints, thereby accentuating the complexity inherent in the dialogue.

Achebe's intentions are neither neutral nor innocuous ; rather, they represent

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a calculated endeavor to galvanize the African collective towards learning from its historical transgressions, as articulated through the voices of others. This underscores Achebe's conviction in the role of the writer as a pedagogical figure within society, highlighting the critical importance of literature in promoting awareness and facilitating reflective engagement with the collective experience.

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