The Dilemma of Belonging and the Burden of Englishness in Chinua Achebe's No Longer at Ease

مأزق الانتماء وعبء الإنجْليزَوِيةِ في رو اية «لم يعُد مطمئنا» (1960) "تشينوا آتشيبي"

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- **Abstract :** The present article examines the issue of cultural identity in Chinua Achebe's No Longer at Ease (1960). The novel dramatizes Obi Okonkwo's cultural displacement and identity (de)formation on the eve of Nigerian independence. Throughout the novel, Obi is described as being torn between the two worlds of African tradition and European modernity. Hence, the paper aims at highlighting Obi's struggle to function properly within the emerging cultural forces of the 1950s in Nigeria. It scrutinises the anxiety of belonging in postcolonial African literature stressing ideas of displacement, alienation, and identity (de)formation. It endeavours to investigate Obi's alienation and quest for identity in the light of Frantz Fanon's ideas on identity and national culture as well as Homi Bhabha's theories of hybridity. With a special focus on the work of Frantz Fanon, namely alienation and cultural stereotyping, as well as Homi Bhabha's notion of Third Space, the article analyses the impact of the colonial culture on the protagonist. It maintains that Obi's traditional Umuofian beliefs and his English education, combined with the aspects of life in the modern city of Lagos, create his cultural and linguistic ambivalence.

- **Keywords:** cultural displacement; cultural ambivalence; identity (de)formation; the dilemma of belonging; Third Space

- **الملخص:** تبحث هذه الدراسةُ معضلة الهُويَّة الثَّقافيَّة في رواية «لم يعُد مطمئنا» (1960) للكاتب النيجيريّ ذائعِ الصيت "تشينوا آتشيبي"، إذْ يقدّمُ العمل صورةً فنيّة عن تجربةِ الاستلابِ الثقافيّ وما تلاها من مآزق تشكيل الهويَّة أو تشويهها لدى الشخصيَّة البطلة "أوبي أوكنكو" في نيجيريا غداة الاستقلال. حيث عالجت الرواية عبر مسارها السرديّ التشظّي الهويّاتيّ الذي طبع شخصيّة "أوبي" مبرزة افتقادها لمعالم الانتماء، ما يضع القارئ وجها لوجه أمام أزمة التمزّق بين عالميّ الأصالة الأفريقيَّة والحداثة الأوروبيَّة، وبالتَّالي، فإنّ الدراسة في هذا، تَرومُ استجلاءَ مكامن قضيّة اغتراب البطل وبحثه المضني عن الهوية في ضوء أفكار "فرانز فانون" حول الهويّة والثقافة القوميّة، ومفهوم "الفضاء الثالث" ونظرية "التهجين" لـ"هومي بحابحا"، في سبيل محاولة فهم تأثير الثَّقافة الاستعماريَّة على الشخصية الأفريقيّة. وفي الأخير تخلص الدراسة إلى أن تقاطع مفاهيم 'أوبي' التقليديّة المتوارثة من قبيلة 'يومافيا' بِخصوصيّات التمدّن والحداثة بـ'لايغوس'، يعكس تناقضا ثقافيّا ولسانيّا صارخا، وهو ما يميّز عموما أزمة الانتماء

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التي اصطبغ بها فعل الكتابة ولا يزال في أدب ما بعد الكولونياليَّة.

- **الكلمات المفتاحية:** مأزق الانتماء؛ الاستلاب الثقافي؛ ازدواجيّة الثقافة؛ تشكّل الهويّة؛ الفضاء الثَّالث.

Introduction:

Chinua Achebe's novel, No Longer at Ease (1963), set in the 1950s in the Nigerian city of Lagos and in the village of Umuofia, recounts the challenges facing young educated Nigerian man who is troubled with his social and financial duties following his return to his mother country from England. The novel, a sequel to Things Fall Apart (1958), epitomises the conflict between two value systems within a society undergoing change on the eve of Nigerian independence. It represents the detrimental effects of the colonizer's culture on African identity. Obi Okonkwo represents the plight of the Nigerian elite amidst this cultural abyss.

Moreover, the novel dramatizes the theme of cultural displacement. It narrates Obi's inability to function in the confluence of cultures. He is described as being torn between his European education and his traditional values. Obi was sent by the Umuofia Progressive Union (UPU) to study law so as to represent his people in land disputes. He, nonetheless, ends up with a degree in English, facing the cultural forces that bring about his fall. Simon Gikandi (2008) stated that what is unique about the novel is its "evocation of an emerging postcolonial culture and the crisis of a young African trying to find a bearing in the chasm between a dying colonialism and stillborn independence" (p. i).

Echoing T.S. Eliot's idea of fragmentation and spiritual death in his poem "Journey of the Magi", No Longer epitomizes Obi's doubt and identity (de)formation on his return home from the Metropolitan city of London (Babalola, 1986, p. 142). Achebe's allusion to Eliot's poem reflects his preoccupation with the postcolonial dilemma in Obi's character.

We return to our places, these Kingdoms,

But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,

With an alien people clutching their gods,

I should be glad of another death (Eliot, 1963a, p. 100).

Thus, Obi is put under pressure between the claims of tradition and the pull of modernity. After his homecoming, he fails in his attempt to reconcile his personal desires with the demands of his community. His story can be read in relation to his concern with western culture to denote the cultural disintegration of an individual and his nation during a unique transitional period in history.

Fanon considers the fact that European colonialism is reinforced by cultural imposition through the denigration and distortion of indigenous cultures and the promotion of the dominant alien culture. In his article entitled "Rethinking African culture and identity: the Afropolitan model," Chielozona Eze (2014) maintained that the western theories about Africa objectified black people everywhere. He stated that "It is a fact that the West has inflicted enormous violence on the rest of the non-white world. The worst kind of violence is epistemic" (p. 238). Hence, European colonialism in Africa has a lasting impact on African culture and African identity.

In Black Skin, White Masks, Fanon (1967a) considered the imposition of the colonizer's language on the colonized as the starting point of cultural alienation, "to speak means to … assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (pp. 17-18). In the Wretched of the Earth, Fanon (2004) argued that the culture of the nation has been irreversibly transformed by contact with the colonizing power.

We cannot go resolutely forward unless we first realize our alienation. We have taken everything from the other side. Yet the other side has given us nothing except to sway us in its direction. […] To take also means on several levels being taken. It is not enough to try and disengage ourselves by accumulating proclamations and denials. It is not enough to reunite with the people in a past where they no longer exist. We must rather reunite with them in their recent counter move which will suddenly call everything into question (p. 163).

Hence, identity (de)formation leads to a state of alienation with the colonized internalising new cultural values. Fanon thinks that the only way to free the colonized from estrangement is to question their present unstable situation.

Fanon (2004) drew his insights on the colonizer-colonized encounter from his work in Algerian psychiatric hospitals, where he found that the colonial situation turned the French into torturers and the Algerians into dehumanised sufferers. He views the colonial world as divided into two worlds, "This compartmentalized world, this world divided in two, is inhabited by different species" (p. 5).

In his work, Toward the African Revolution, Fanon (1967b) asserted that the native culture endures a state of cultural mummification that will undoubtedly generate a mummification of individual thinking,

The setting up of the colonial system does not itself bring about the death of the native culture. Historic observation reveals on the contrary, that the aim sought is rather a continued agony [emphasis added] than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture. This culture, once living and open to the future, becomes closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression. Both present and mummified, it testifies against its members. It defines them in fact without appeal. The cultural mummification leads to a mummification of individual thinking. The apathy so universally noted among colonial peoples is but the logical consequence of this operation (p. 34).

Hence, cultural hegemony becomes an important instrument of colonial domination. The colonizer creates images of European superiority to succeed in enslaving the colonized's body and spirit. This is only possible through the spread of Christianity and western education which Achebe underlined in his works. Admiration of European practices and beliefs will undoubtedly alienate the native from his culture and community. Therefore, cultural alienation leads to the creation of the concept of the estranged "black European" or "black Whiteman".

Englishness and Cultural Alienation in Obi's Character

In No Longer, Achebe pictures how Obi is alienated from his community because of his Englishness. His community's support is met with ingratitude and indifference. Obi, just like the African elite prior to a dying colonialism, fails to

establish good rapport with his people and his nation. In his famous essay, "Morning Yet on a Creation Day", Achebe (1975) asserted that "expensive university education only alienates an African from his rich and ancient culture and puts him above his people" (p. 144). Indeed, the novel projects the failure of European education to provide the African elite with the necessary tools and cultural ingredients to function properly within a society undergoing political and cultural transformation.

Obi represents Fanon's idea of cultural alienation of the African educated man who travels to Europe to endure cultural displacement and identity crisis. His friend Joseph affirms this contending that Obi's "mission house upbringing and European education had made him stranger in his country" (p. 77). He is the son of Isaac Okonkwo (called Nwoye before his conversion), who is the symbol of Christian conversion and betrayal of native values in Things Fall Apart.

In his seminal essay, "A Reconsideration of Achebe's No Longer at Ease," Babalola (1986) maintained that the image of the "black European" or "black Whiteman" is apparent in Achebe's narrative discourse in No Longer (p. 146). He explains that the African colonial experience had affected the African society and the African culture. The latter suffered defeat with African individuals renouncing their cultural values to an alien metropolitan culture. Nevertheless, cultural duality does not enable these Africans to be neither black nor white. It opens a stairwell of cultural ambivalence (p. 147).

Furthermore, Achebe employs the character of Mr Green as a symbol of the futility of the imperial project and its civilizing mission. Mr Green believes in the white man's burden to enlighten the dark places in Africa. He subscribes to the stereotype of inferiority and corruption of the African postcolonial subject, "'The African is corrupt through and through'"; "'[he]... has been sapped mentally and physically. We have brought him Western education. But what use is it to him?'" (p. 3). Hence, Mr Green feels the need for humanistic self-sacrifice to accomplish such a noble idea. However,

Mr Green ultimately discovers that these are false ideals; he feels a sense of betrayal and disillusionment.

It was clear he loved Africa, but only Africa of a kind: the Africa of Charles, the messenger, the Africa of his garden- boy and steward-boy. He must have come originally with an ideal---to bring light to the heart of darkness, to tribal head-hunters performing weird ceremonies and unspeakable rites. But when he arrived, Africa played him false. Where was his beloved bush full of human sacrifice? (p. 96).

Achebe here is alluding to Conrad's Heart of Darkness and the theme of the hypocrisy of western civilisation and British cultural jingoism. The character of Mr Green echoes Conrad's hollow man, Mr Kurtz. Both antiheroes symbolise the falsehood of the ideals of European civilisation (Rogers, 1983, p. 174).

Nonetheless, Mr Green is not the novel's only character bearing racist stereotypes about the Africans. In chapter nine, Obi recalls his sexual encounter with a woman in England who later said that, "she thought she had been attacked by a tiger" (p. 100). The narrator does not mention any further development of this relationship nor any psychological or emotional passion that ensues from it. Hence, this incident implies the concealed and ideologically constructed cultural and racial stereotypes about African sexuality (Lynn, 2017, p. 120).

Bhabha's ideas on identity are relevant to Fanon; they both stress its conflicting nature. Indeed, Bhabha's work The Location of Culture (1994) puts forward his controversial theory on cultural hybridity. Hybridity as a term in postcolonial discourse is used to refer to a process of transculturation in colonial contact zones covering a variety of cultural exchanges. It results from the confluence of heterogeneous cultures and traditions. The image of the hybrid individual, text, or cultural expression is linked to ideas of metaphorical exile from the native culture and language, and the experience of self-division, dislocation or alienation experienced by the colonized (Bohata, 2004, p. 129). Bhabha pointed out that postcolonial identities are always fluctuating, and never perfectly achieved. He goes further to state that,

'the black skin white masks' is not 'a neat division'; it is a doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once. [...] It is not the Colonialist Self or the Colonised Other, but the disturbing distance in between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness – the White man's artifice inscribed on the Black man's body. It is in relation to this impossible object that there emerges the liminal problem of colonial identity and its vicissitudes (p. 44).

Hence, cultural hybridity is a mixture of two or more identities within one individual. It constructs a liminal space between overlapping cultures, "without an assumed or imposed hierarchy"; this liminal ambivalent third space, "is the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (pp. 4, 38). Therefore, identity is subject to change and transformation; it is never absolute and pure. Loomba (1998) argued that this understanding of cultural identity undermines both colonialist and nationalist assertions to a stable and fixed identity. The latter is rendered agonistic, hybrid, and ambivalent (pp. 91-92). Besides, in his influential essay, "Homi Bhabha's Third Space and African identity," Fetson Kalua (2009) sees postcolonial African identity as fluid, relational and always in flux. He explained that this fluidity allows for a liminal view of the whole continent whose identities keep shifting (p. 30).

Standing in the Stairwell of Cultures: Cultural Hybridity and Third Space

Gikandi (2008) viewed No Longer as a pioneering work of postcolonial criticism owing to its reflection on the hybridity of postcolonial communities and the identity crisis (p ii-iii). In No Longer, the issue of cultural identity comes to the surface when Obi expresses his wish to marry Clara. Okonkwo refuses this marriage on the grounds that Clara is an osu (an outcast). Obi is not satisfied with his father's reaction to his marriage. He ponders over his father's words, and questions his reaction.

Okonkwo explains the fact that tradition does not allow for such marriage to take place and that these matters are beyond Obi's understanding, "'[b]ut why, Father?' 'My son,' said Okonkwo, 'I understand what you say. But this thing is deeper

than you think'" (p. 120). Hence, as Obi questions the idea of his father's opposition to his marriage, he voices his disillusionment with the tradition. His friend, Joseph, contends that he has knowledge about English literature, but not about African tradition,

'Look at me,' said Joseph, getting up and tying his coverlet as a loincloth. He now spoke in English. 'You know book, but this is no matter for book. Do you know what an osu is? But how can you know?' In that short question he said in effect that Obi's mission-house upbringing and European education had made him a stranger in his country---the most painful thing one could say to Obi (pp. 64-65).

Just like No Longer, Achebe's short stories "Marriage Is a Private affair" (1952) and "Chike's School Days" (1972) dramatize this cultural conflict between the Igbo traditional beliefs and European modern concepts of marriage. Whereas European concepts of marriage assume the right to individual choice and marriage for love, in the Igbo tradition, marriage is an institution based on communal norms and family expectations (Innes, 2011, pp. 10-11).

Obi is a great admirer of English literary modernism, and he visualizes his world and his experiences predominantly in the light of his literary studies. It is quite ironic that Achebe's literary allusions in English literature are employed to create a commentary on Obi's behaviour. Indeed, Obi undergoes a similar struggle and quest encountered by various English modernist antiheroes the story alludes to, namely Evelyn Waugh's Tony Last (A Handful of Dust), Joseph Conrad's Mr. Kurtz (Heart of Darkness), Graham Greene's Scobie (The Heart of the Matter), W. H. Auden's Icarus ("Musee des Beaux Arts"), and T. S. Eliot's personae from "The Waste Land," "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," and, of course, "The Journey of the Magi," which provides Achebe's title. All of these characters represent modern antiheroes in search of identity. Gikandi (2008) postulated that Obi's life is a mosaic of cultural fragments, ranging from half-remembered oral stories to the works of modern literature and urban popular culture (p. vii).

Besides, Obi is the son of a Christian convert, Isaac Okonkwo, whose values are shaped by his father's religion and more importantly by his interest in the white man's power of the word, "Mr. Okonkwo believed utterly and completely in the things of the white man. And the symbol of the white man's power was the written word, or better still, the printed word" (p. 115). Achebe's use of the written word here alludes to Conrad's famous passage in the Preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus (1963), "my task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you see" (pp. xi-ii). This suggests that Obi is highly affected by his western education and English culture.

According to Obi's description of his parents' rooms, which are full of old books and mundane things, he appears to descend from a family of peasants living in a rural area (Babalola, 1986, p. 147). The description projects Okonkwo's devotion to the written word suggesting western culture, as well as Hannah's incarnation of African tradition,

The result of Okonkwo's mystic regard for the written word was that his room was full of old books and papers [...] Okonkwo never destroyed a piece of paper. [...] Mother's room, on the other hand, was full of mundane things. She had her box full of clothes on a stool. On the other side of the room were pots of solid palm-oil with which she made black soap (p. 115).

Hence, the strain exerted on the African elite, who are educated in England, in what Geertz (1963) terms "a tradition of exogenous inspiration," (p. 2) stems from the difficulty to co-exist with the African masses in a changing community (Okechukwu, 2001, p. 144).

The clash between Obi's traditional knowledge and his English culture becomes very apparent as young Obi fails to tell a folk tale in class.

'Olulu ofu oge,' he began in the tradition of folk-tales, but that was all he knew. His lips quivered but no other sounds came out. The class burst into derisive laughter, and tears filled his eyes and rolled down his cheeks as he went back to his place (p. 53).

The fact that his father tells him that these heathen tales are not meant for Christian believers, Obi eventually has recourse to the stories he heard secretly from his mother and succeeds to tell one. The scene is quite revelatory about Obi's estrangement and cultural distance. Therefore, this antihero undergoes a cultural dilemma as he is unable to position himself in the cultural zone (Rogers, 1983, p. 165).

Another important scene that conveys Obi's estrangement from his native culture is when his mother, washing his clothes in the river, gets her hand cut by a razor-blade he left in his pocket. Obi uses the razor to sharpen his pencils. Therefore, the pencil sharpening razor is symbolic about Obi's European education and his English culture. The act of causing his mother to bleed ironically represents his alienated relationship to his mother as well as to his traditional culture. She is depicted as his store for traditional knowledge. Hence, his mother's bleeding metaphorically represents his ambivalence about his cultural values (Rogers, 1983, p. 168).

Obi's favourite poem is "Easter Hymn" by English poet A. E. Housman. The poem discusses the image of Christ sleeping, unaware about people's suffering and pain in a fragmented and chaotic world. It relates to Obi's uneasiness and loss of faith. He is oblivious to his identity and culture. It also echoes his act of sleeping during his mother's funeral. Obi reads the poem when he fails to convince Clara that he loves her though she is an osu. He also reads it after he fails to stop her abortion. As a result, Obi's devotion to Housman's poem represents his ignorance of his cultural values as well as a betrayal of his mother's memory (Rogers, 1983, p. 168).

Moreover, Obi has an obsession with T.S. Eliot's poetry. He frequently expresses his dislike for Clara's taste in films. In one of their exchanges, he is fascinated by her resonance with T.S. Eliot in her answer to his request to meet one of his friends, "'I don't know why you should want me to meet people that I don't want to meet.' 'You know, you are a poet, Clara,' said Obi. 'To meet people, you don't want to meet, that's pure T. S. Eliot'" (p. 17). Hearing this phrase, Obi evokes Eliot's lines in his

famous poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", "There will be time, there will be time/To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet" (Eliot, 1963b, p. 4).

Achebe's fascination with T.S. Eliot is also apparent in his title. "No longer at ease" is a phrase from Eliot's famous poem "The Journey of the Magi". Many critics read this allusion as an account of Obi's cultural ambivalence as well as an expression of the predicament of the African educated elite (Wilson, 1971, pp. 215-223). The novel's title also reverberates through Obi's own name Obiajulu which means, "the mind at last is at rest" (p. 6). His father believes that, on Obi's birth, he would further his family's line. However, the dramatic framed opening of the story announces ironically Obi's as well as his father's failed idealism.

In his famous essay, "Cultural Norms and Modes of Perception in Achebe's Fiction," Brown (1972) argued that Achebe deploys English idiom in his literary productions to reflect upon the postcolonial condition. Language is employed to function not only as a means of communication but also to reveal a whole cultural experience. In his examination of Achebe's Things Fall Apart and No Longer at Ease, Brown stressed the dialogic relationship between these works and T.S. Eliot's "The Second Coming" and in "Journey of the Magi" respectively. Hence, he believed that Achebe's works project African cultural norms in conflict with the European ones (pp. 23-24).

In addition to literature, Obi also displays much enthusiasm and admiration for "high life" music, which is a strong assertion of the heterogeneity of the postcolonial situation in Lagos. Sometimes referred to as a form of African jazz, it is a type of West African popular music in the twentieth century, which blends Afro-Caribbean and European musical elements with traditional African ones. Obiechina (1980), in his book Culture, Tradition, and Society in the West African Novel, pointed out that,

The rhythm is largely traditional, but the instrumentation is largely Western (traditional drums with Western brass instruments). [...] "High life" is essentially a democratically oriented music. Urban West Africans are "high lifers" all (p. 79).

In No longer, Achebe refers to some scenes of high life dance. One of these scenes is in Chapter ten, when Obi recalls his days in England and his conversation with a woman before their sexual encounter, "'I'll teach you how to dance the high-life when you come,' he had said. 'That would be grand,' she replied eagerly, 'and perhaps a little low life too'" (p. 80). As such, highlife music is one way in which the traditions blended to create something new.

Moreover, the influence of European culture on Obi's character is also manifested in his embrace of certain utilitarian and pragmatic attitudes. On his return from England, Obi shows impatience with the traditional attitudes of hierarchy and ceremony. During his welcoming ceremony, he is depicted as indifferent and unconcerned. His dress and speech were not suitable for the occasion. After his mother's death, Obi prefers to send money to his family than to go and attend the funeral. He pragmatically thinks that the money spent on petrol ought to be spent on the funeral (Rogers, 1983, p. 178). Hence, Obi's European values of utilitarianism appear to influence his decision,

What was the point of going to Umuofia? She would have been buried by the time he got there, anyway. [...] Obi wondered whether he had done the right thing in not setting out for Umuofia yesterday. But what could have been the point in going? It was more useful to send all the money he could for the funeral instead of wasting it on petrol to get home (pp. 146-147).

Obi's absence from the funeral for such a materialistic reason can be read as a betrayal to mother's memory and to traditional values. Mr Green would consider such decision as practical (Rogers, 1983, p. 178). Like Obi, Clara also exhibits affinity to western materialism by having an abortion. This act of abortion represents the characters' liability to vice.

Dramatizing Cultural Ambivalence through Code-switching

Cultural hybridity can also be observed in Obi's attitude towards language. He evokes an agonizing experience he had in England concerning his Igbo language,

when he had to speak in English with a Nigerian student from another tribe, he lowered his voice. It was humiliating to have to speak to one's countryman in a foreign language, especially in the presence of the proud owners of that language. They would naturally assume that one had no language of one's own (p. 45).

Obi is quite aware that his African idiom of Umuofia is rich, diverse, and relevant to the lives of his fellow countrymen,

He wished they [the proud owners of English] were here today to see. Let them come to Umuofia now and listen to the talk of men who made a great art of conversation. Let them come and see men and women and children who knew how to live, whose joy of life had not yet been killed by those who claimed to teach other nations how to live (p. 45).

Obi is conscious of the disgrace of having his language judged by English foreigners. He later comes to sustain the value of his people's language and conversation in Umuofia. Achebe's works are meant to clean the hurt repeatedly caused to African languages. In his famous book, Chinua Achebe and the Politics of Narration, Lynn (2017) asserted that damage to the African languages ensues from the colonizer's attempt to force his concepts and priorities on colonized peoples (p. 29). Thus, No longer depicts the situation of linguistic ambivalence apparent in late colonial African speech and literature. Achebe blends forms of African linguistic elements derived from Igbo and Nigerian Pidgin with English forms.

The hybridity of the linguistic situation in the city of Lagos can be explained by the use of code-switching. Achebe makes a good use of this linguistic phenomenon as he employs multiple languages during the course of the same conversation. This is clear in the language of Obi's friend Christopher,

Whether Christopher spoke good or 'broken' English [Pidgin] 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 out-standing in coming to terms with a double heritage (p. 100).

The use of code-switching between Nigerian Pidgin, Igbo, and Standard English demonstrates the range of language verities used in the context of the modern city of Lagos. It also affirms the challenge posed to the hegemonic tendency of Standard English. Thus, English is tamed to voice the realities of the African city as well as to meet the aspirations of African writers (Lynn, 2017, p. 99).

An exchange between Obi and his Igbo friend Charles Ibe, who is one of the messengers in the department, exemplifies the complexity of the linguistic situation. Given his English degree, Obi occupies a higher and more prestigious position in the colonial civil service. He lends thirty shillings to Charles to take care of his family because his wife has just had their fifth child. Charles fails to repay the loan, and Obi is, too, undergoing financial difficulties which force him to confront Charles, "O.K., Charles. End of December. If you fail, I shall report the matter to Mr. Green." "Ah! I no go fail at all. If I fail my Oga, who I go go meet next time?" (p. 88).

Such code-switching exchanges deviate from the norms of Standard English, and mirror power/solidarity relations between the participants. Thus, the conversation starts in Standard English in order not to be noticed by the secretary, Miss Tomlinson. Charles responds in Igbo to maintain their usual Igbo greetings, and switches to Nigerian Pidgin to create a more subservient tone.

According to Zabus in The African Palimpsest (1991), Charles employs "the hypocoristic function of Pidgin as 'baby talk'". He adjusts his speech apologetically, hoping that Obi would extend the period of the loan (p. 73). Charles' sense of subservience in using Pidgin resonates with what Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002) stated in their famous book, The Empire Writes Back, as the function of Pidgin during the period of European colonization,

Pidgin was inevitably used in the context of master-servant relationships during the period of European colonization. So, the social and economic hierarchies

produced by colonialism have been retained in post-colonial society through the medium of language (p. 76).

Obi employs Standard English to maintain his authority given his post, and in order not to be soothed by Charles' Pidgin. This is because he too is enduring very stressful financial pressures, and is in desperate need for cash. Obiechina (1980) asserted that,

in bureaucratic and domestic settings, low-income characters demonstrate their status of inferiority by speaking pidgin, while the middle-class characters generally emphasize their superior social position by speaking in standard English (p. 190).

Therefore, the powers of language and class operate to create such linguistic complexity and hierarchical class relations in the modern city of Lagos in the 1950s (Lynn, 2017, pp. 100-101).

One of the scenes where the hybrid language of Nigerian Pidgin takes place is when Obi intervenes with his elitist idealism to prevent the bus driver from bribing two police officers. The bus driver rebukes Obi,

'Na him make I no de want carry you book people,' he complained. 'Too too know na him de worry una. Why you put your nose for matter way no concern you? Now that policeman go charge me like ten shillings' (p. 39).

This scene reflects Bhabha's theory of "the Third Space of enunciations". The Third Space of enunciation results from the syncretism of two cultural structures: a first indigenous space and a second imposed postcolonial space. Bhabha (2004) called the ensuing hybrid manifestation, in this case Nigerian Pidgin, of these two cultures the Third Space or the In-between Space (pp. 37-39).

This state of disdain for Obi that Pidgin creates is repeated later in the novel as Obi jumps the queue in hospital. One of the men their reproaches Obi thinking that the source of his behaviour is his elite status.

'You tink because Government give your car you fit do what you like? You see all of we de wait here and you just go in. [...] Foolish man. He tink say because him get car so derefore he can do as he like. Beast of no nation!' [Emphasis added] (p. 137).

The criticism Obi receives impairs his idealistic belief in the role of the elite to enhance the progress of their nation. These two ironic scenes are typical of the "the Third Space of enunciations" created by Nigerian Pidgin to cope with the emerging situation. As a result, the hybrid language, Pidgin, represents the present and potential national identity of Nigeria. Obi symbolizes the nation's strife for a hybrid identity or a Third Space carved by the contesting cultural powers of Igbo tradition and English modernity (Lynn, 2017, p. 102).

Bhabha (1994) contended that the creation of a Third Space will enable postcolonial subjects to escape what he calls the politics of polarity, "[A]nd by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (p. 39). The aim behind Achebe's frequent use of Nigerian Pidgin is to challenge the Eurocentric representations of Africa by European writers and works, namely Joyce Cary's Mister Johnson and Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. Achebe (1997) pointed out that the story of Africa should be told from the inside by the Africans themselves in order to contest the western ideologies embodied in Europe's imperialist discourse of Eurocentrism (pp. 3-4, 7-8, 112, 183). Knortti et al. (2007) maintained that hybrid identities are used in a counter-discursive manner in order to provide an alternative to the once-dominant narratives praising white supremacy (p. 5).

Gikandi (1993), in his famous essay "Chinua Achebe and the Poetics of Location," emphasised the role of space in creating the conflict between indigenous culture and the colonizer's culture. The latter seeks to dominate the community's space. As a result, striving for space puts the postcolonial subject in a constant struggle for selfhood and identity. Indeed, Obi grapples with the authority of tradition in his

village of Umuofia as well as with relocated space in Lagos, which is predominantly influenced by the forces of colonialism (p. 4).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Obi feels a sense of betrayal of his countrymen and of his culture through his embrace of English language and culture. He is born in Umuofia, educated in England, and settles in Lagos. These cultural spheres contribute to Obi's uneasiness. He cherishes his native homeland of Umuofia and Igbo values, but he is, too, attracted by the socio-economic opportunities of Lagos. Obi is unable to escape the cultural weight of his village of Umuofia even as he lives in the city of Lagos. This is quite apparent in the constant interference of the Umuofia Progressive Union in his life, his Igbo office exchanges, as well as tense relationship with his parents (Lynn, 2017, p. 82).

Hence, No longer dramatizes the cultural and linguistic ambivalence created by British colonization in Nigeria. The novel stresses the idea of duality as opposed to absolute ideology or conception of the world. In the words of Achebe, this postcolonial world is a hybrid world where "[w]herever something stands, another thing stands beside it" (p. 145).

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