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Chinua Achebe's no Longer at ease : a social satire

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UNIVERSITE DU BURUNDI

FACULTE DES LETTRES ET SCIENCES HUMAINES

DEPARTEMENT DE LANGUE ET LITTERATURE ANGLAISES

CHINUA ACHEBE'S No Longer AT EASE :

A SOCIAL SATIRE

Supervisor : Henry BOYI

A Thesis Submitted by Marceline NIYONZIMA in partial Fulfilment for the Requirements for the degree " Licence en Langue et Littérature Anglaises ".

To

My

Family.

With love.

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This work would not have been what it is if it had not benefited from the help of some people, to whom I would like to express warm thanks.

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Marceline NIYONZIMA.

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INTRODUCTION.

Many African writers have been concerned with their own societies and very few of them have found their subjects outside Africa. They have been interested in the history of their countries and are eager to show the effects of some great events such as colonization on African societies. They describe their traditional societies and stress the changes that have been operated during and after colonization. In fact colonized countries have been seriously affected by this event. They witnessed the deterioration of their traditional beliefs and customs which were replaced by another way of living introduced by the white man. The colonizer brought with him his culture, education and religion to a people known as "cultureless" and "uncivilized". In other words he brought civilization to a population which was savage. However, the situation in which African countries were during colonization and on the eve of their independence was far from being better than before. Many vices arose with colonization and invade Africans , preventing them from progress. The unhappy footprint colonization left on the African ground is felt in the satirical literature produced by African writers in the early years of independence of their countries. The satire was directed to the colonizer as well as to the colonized. The colonizer was satirized for his purpose of exploiting Africa and Africans as much as possible. The colonized was subject to satire, on one hand because he adopted the white man's manners and in his turn he exploited his brothers. On the other hand he was satirized for his lack of personality which made him despise his culture and tradition and embrace the white man's mentality.

No Longer at Ease illustrates the kind of society Nigeria had become just before its independence when native leaders had already acquired some responsibilities in their hands. Chinua Achebe exposes the problems Modern Nigeria faced in its

way towards democracy. He is denouncing the new leaders who are eager to make themselves as wealthy as possible whatever can be the means. Particular attention is put on young educated men who are unable to assume any kind of commitment in order to achieve Nigerian independence. The story is centered on Obi, the hero of the novel who is one of the elite and does not represent any hope for the future of his community.

The style Achebe uses in No Longer at Ease is especially satirical. He is a satiric writer who criticizes his society by using some individuals who represent almost all social classes. He condemns his society for its vices and claims for change like all satirists. In whatever he says, he refers to an ideal but this ideal is not easy to achieve as it is noticed by Patrick Murray to be the case of any social satire when he states that,

> Social satire implies the condemnation of society by reference to an ideal, but this ideal is not one that can easily be realized, if it can be realized at all. [1]

Like in any satire, Chinua Achebe has the intention of denouncing the evils and vices of his society and this denounciation implies a want for better conditions. He finds in the use of satire a means to correct the abuses of his society. Like all satirists, Achebe is a realistic critic. He talks about sad realities in a real world. His subject matter is found in the everyday realities he observes around him and in the history of his country. He responds to the characteristics of many satirists because,

> The great majority of satirists concentrate their attention to vices and follies for which men are morally responsible and that can be corrected. [2]

In our first chapter, we are concerned with satire about corruption. In fact on the eve of Nigerian independence corruption had become a part of everyday life. This evil brought about a vicious society where nothing worked well. People were not estimated according to their merit and talents but according to the personal point of view and own interest of the judge. In such a country, there could not be democracy. Power belonged to the minority who tried to exploit their subordinated. We have a government characterized by fear in which the masses had to accept the government that was imposed. Other evils that walk with corruption such as bribery, nepotism, tribalism , incompetence and injustice will hold our attention.

The second chapter intends to study the hero as a tragic figure. In this part, we will focus our attention on what the factors of the hero's downfall were and we will explain why we consider him tragic. We will see that the hero had ideals he could not realize because circumstances did not allow him to act as he would like. He is a man torn between two sets of values. The result is his spiritual desintegration. The hero's fall is the result of a practical dissociation between the intellectual insight and his lack of moral strength to sustain it. With his good principles, seeking to please everyone, Obi pleases no one and no one understands for a moment the source and motive of his actions. He is seen as a passive sufferer of his fate and according to some critics, like Gerald MOORE, the emotion Obi inspires is not pity but antipathy.

Our third and last chapter will analyze the language used in the novel. It is of course a language that characterizes the satirical style. It carries literary and rhetorical devices proper to satire. Irony, the technique of opposition and the use of proverbs reflect the satire involved in the novel under study.

Irony is found in the evolution of the hero who, having chosen principles to follow, defends them but ends in succumbing. The supreme irony is that Obi is going to be like the Land Officer and will take bribes like the old men he is denouncing. Irony is the characteristic mode of the novel. A criticism about the novel, found in The Growth of the African Novel says that,

> No Longer at Ease is characterized by scintillanting comedy, sophisticated wit and subtlety of irony. [3]

In our work we are going to exploit passages that involve irony and show that it is this irony that renders the novel its satirical aspect.

The technique of opposition is another important device used in the novel to satirize characters, and through them, the whole Nigerian society. Every time the author presents two positions on a point, a negative position beside a positive one. The use of both of the two sides shows the writer's desire for change in the society he is describing. No Longer at Ease is full of oppositions. Obi, the hero of the novel has a conception of life that opposes him to his parents and friends. Obi stands for modernity while others are traditionalists. The author opposes modernists to traditional people, vicious persons to virtuous ones and spirited men to irresponsible people. By those oppositions, he wants the reader to despise what is bad and admire what is good. The technique of opposition has been one of the best means to satirize all evils and thereby to show the ideal the writer has in his mind.

Proverbs have an important role in the art of satire. Very often they are used to criticize, to advertise or to prevent people from falling in bad doings. In No Longer at Ease proverbs have for purpose to criticize the protagonist's downfall and to teach the population to be careful in what they do.

Proverbs are the designated means in satirizing something because the indirect message they carry is sharper than it is in a direct language.

The end of our work will be a conclusion related to what will have been developed in the three chapters, and we will analyze the writer's purpose in using a satirical style in his work.

References.

1. Murray, Patrick. " A Glossary of Major Terms ", Literary Criticism Longman, United States, 1978. p.143

2. ibid., p.138.

3. Palmer, Eustace. The Growth of the African Novel Heinemann, London, 1979. p.121.

CHAP. I. SATIRE ABOUT CORRUPTION.

Corruption is a good subject for a satire since the latter deals with something very critical. It always suggests a change because what is satirized is contemptible and negative. Since corruption is a negative practice, it is understandable that works dealing with it are often satires.

Corruption is a common theme and an interesting one since it is universal and is far from disappearing. It is a reality that exists nowadays and which causes many problems. It has been delt with by many African writers, for instance, Chinua Achebe in No Longer at Ease and A Man of the People, Gabriel Okara in The Voice, Ayi Kwei Armah in The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born; Cyprian Ekwensi in Jagua Nana and People of the City and Ngugi in The Black Hermit and Devil on the Cross, to name but few.

The theme of corruption in African writings has been widely talked about. Nevertheless what will attract our interest is the kind of corruption that took roots in colonization and absorbed Africans on their turn.

In No Longer at Ease Chinua Achebe tackles the problem caused by corruption in Nigeria just on the eve of its independence. He shows that the situation in which the society lived was not a promising one since corruption went on growing, contrary to what one would expect. The situation was critical because all people without any exception were involved in this vicious practice with all the evils it embodied.

Mr,Green, a European and Obi's boss remarks that "The African is corrupt through and through" 1

Furthermore he adds that "They are all corrupt". [2]
His observations are made with reference to Obi, the hero of the novel No Longer at Ease. Obi is an Ibo man who, on his return from his studies in England, had for principles to fight against all forms of corruption, incompetance and nepotism. However, he ended by renouncing to his ideals because the force of corruption was strongly felt. Green's affirmations show how deep corruption is in Nigeria. The problem is much serious for a developing country considering that corruption affects the whole society and in particular leaders who are at the top of government. The conversation between Obi and Christopher reveals that:

> The Civil Service is corrupt because of these so-called experienced men at the top, said Obi.
> You don't believe in experience? You think that a chap straight from University should be made a permanent secretary?
> I didn't say straight from the University, but even that would be better than filling our top posts with old men who have no intellectual foundations to support their experiences. [3]

Those people designated to lead others are the most mistaken since they mislead the population in bad practices instead of showing them good examples. They do not fulfil their task because they lead the country not to its development but to its collapsing. In fact corruption is a great obstacle for a country which wants to achieve its full independance and its democracy. Corruption is not proper to under-developed countries, but is found rather in under-developed countries as well as in those which are said to be fully developed, in big societies as well as in very rich ones. The Umuofia

Progressive Union affirms that not only the African is corrupt but the European, too. When the members of the Union asked Obi if he has not yet got a job, the conversation reveals what follows:

> Not yet. I'm attending an interview on Monday.
> "Of course those of you who know book will not have any difficulty, said the vice-President on Obi's left. Otherwise I would have suggested seeing some of the men before hand".
> It would not be necessary said the President, "since they would be mostly white men".
> "You think white men don't eat bribe? Come to our departément. They eat more than black men nowadays". 4

The quotation shows that corruption is universal. White people take bribes as well as black men. Corruption does not concern only Africa but even outside Africa, one can observe corrupt countries.

> People are scared of the word nowadays. But what kind of democracy can exist side by side with so much corruption and ignorance? Perhaps a half-way house - a sort of compromise!
> When Obi's reasoning reached this point he reminded himself that England had been as corrupt not so very long ago. He was not really in the mood for consecutive reasoning. His mind was impatient to roam in a more pleasant landscape. 5

Corruption has become a common practice to the point that nowadays it sounds less dangerous than it should be in reality. It is even accepted. In the novel under study it is affirmed that taking bribes does not present any harm if you do the thing for which it is given.

> ... The trouble was not in receiving bribes, but in failing to do the thing for which the bribe was given. [6]

The masses are used to being exploited to the point that they do not complain anymore about corruption. They accept the state of things as it is. Killam, G. D. comments in The Writings of Chinua Achebe, what follows:

> The people themselves, as we have seen, had become even more cynical than their leaders and were apathetic into the bargain. "Let them eat", was the people's opinion, "after all when white men used to do all the eating did we commit suicide?" Of course not. And where is the all powerful white man today? He came, he ate and he went. But we are still around. The important thing then is to stay alive; If you do you will outlive your present annoyance. The great thing, as the old people have told us, is reminiscence, and only those who survive can have it. Besides, if you survive, who knows? It may be your turn to eat tomorrow. Your son may bring home your share. [7]

The masses are obliged to submit because they cannot do otherwise. They only hope that it may be their turn to eat tomorrow.

Writers from different countries of the world have treated the theme of corruption with great care, showing its negative aspects and the desire for change. African writers in particular have found a great interest in corruption which is widespread in the colonial and post-independent period in which Africans manage to occupy high positions in their services. The so-called educated Africans are governed by the principle of making themselves as rich as possible whatever can be the means.

Having observed the white man's life in Africa, which is the best since he controls power and wealth, the African wants to resemble him. Not only does he want wealth, but he is corrupt from all different points of view since he is convinced that whatever comes from the white is right and good. We can talk about mental corruption which is the source of all other forms of corruption.

With the settlement of the white man who introduces the European way of life among Africans and who tries to undervalue all the aspects of African life, he succeeds in making the black man believe that his culture, his administration, his education etc... are not the good ones and deserve changes. Therefore we see the modern African who tries to adopt the European way which is inadequate to Africa which had its structure. However, it is not without pain that European values were integrated in Africa. In some cases we assist to a conflict between the old which is maintained by elders and the new which young generations long for. Old people, with strong beliefs in tradition fight for its survival and would condamn anything that should contribute to its desapearance. The opposition between tradition and modernity is reflected in the children's attitude towards their parents with their ideals that parents cannot tolerate and find

inappropriate and odd. The traditional society still conservative and would oppose anything new. The tentative for dislocation with tradition is a subject which has been delt with by many African writers who witnessed the course of colonization. The coming of the white man in Africa brought a serious alteration on the African's mentality. Before the arrival of the colonizer, Africa was composed of different communities in which tribal life was of a great importance. There was unity based on kinship ties in which each member had a determined role and his value depended upon the way he accomplished his duty. Every man in his community knew that he had to perform such and such duty in order to achieve his fame. The theory of equality was easily applied because people had more or less the same lines of life. They depended on land and one's greatness resulted in his ability to exploit it. Since we are concerned with Achebe, let's see how his traditional society valued a great man. Things Fall Apart gives us all the criteria that were considered for naming a man great. Considering the character of Okonkwo, one knows that a brave man in the Ibo society should be a courageous man who never failed in any undertaking. It is this man who has made himself very wealthy thanks to his efforts. It is this man who has many barns of yam, who has killed many people during wars, who has many wives and children. Those are the common criteria under consideration in affirming the value of a man who deserves respect, in traditional Ibo society. On the contrary, there are cowards who are frightened by war, who do not want to work hard and therefore who do not have many barns in their compound. With the coming of the white man the course of things changed. Under the pretext that he wanted to give the best education to the African, the colonizer began to question everything in African society. He brought his education to the young Africans, sending them to school where they learned the colonizer's language and tried to adopt his way of thinking.

This mental corruption begins with the fact that the learning is conducted in the colonizer's language. By these studies, the young African adopts the European way of thinking. He thinks his way of reasoning is not correct and therefore tries to take the white man's manners. The mental corruption consists in the fact that young Africans learn especially about Europe instead of centering his interest on his country. The young black man is concerned with Europe before all other things. He has to study the geography about different countries of Europe, their economy, their history and their political organization. He has to know different famous universities of Europe and ignores what Africa and its history are. Albert Memmi stresses this irrelevancy of European education in Africa in the following terms:

> The memory which is assigned him is certainly not that of his people. The history which is taught him is not his own. He knows who Colbert or Cromwell was, but he learns nothing about Khadnazar, he knows about Joan of Arc but not about El Kahena. Everything seems to have taken place out of his country. 8

This learning is not well adapted at all since it places the learner in an unknown country. It is abstract and is especially based on memorization. In No Longer at Ease, the case of Obi who decides to learn English is an illustrative example of mental corruption of which Obi is ashamed,

> Four years in England had filled Obi with a longing to be back in Umuofia. This feeling was sometimes so strong that he found himself feeling ashamed of studying English for his degree. He spoke Ibo whenever he had the least opportunity

> of doing so. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than to find another Ibo-speaking student in a London bus. But 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. 9

The author is satirizing one's lack of pride in his own language. Obi is ashamed of studying English and of addressing his countrymen in a foreign language.

Young Nigerians who have been exposed to western education have a new conception of life. They negate traditional customs and question traditional beliefs. Obi, because of the influence of western education does not believe in separation of races. That is why he thinks that his marriage with an Osu girl is possible. He knows quite well that it will be Clara and nobody else. His mind is free from all superstitions. Mr.Green, Obi's boss, expresses the origin of corruption in Africa in the following terms:

> Over countless centuries the African has been the victim of the worst climate in the world and of every imaginable disease. Hardly his fault. But he has been sapped mentally and physically. We have brought him western education. 10

By this statement we see that corruption has been the consequence of colonization. By introducing western education in Africa, the white man managed tc distroy the African's dignity and personality. The educated African ends by undervaluing his way of living, i.e., his education, culture and beliefs. Therefore, he tries to adopt the white man's manners which are judged to be unquestionable. There will be a strong opposition between old and young generations, the former wanting to keep tradition and the latter wanting to break with it. It is the case observed in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart in which Okonkwo fights for tradition while Isaac, his son decides to join the white community through religion. The latter acts against his father's will.

The period of colonization and the post-irdependence period witnessed a corrupt Africa from different points of view. Under the pretext that the white man was searching for the civilization of African countries which were still ignorart until the coming of the Europeans, some evils arose with the period. Then we observe countries governed by negative practices such as corruption, bribery, nepotism and incompetence. Leaders are seeking their own interest and try to lift themselves to a social position as high as possible. To reach the places they aspire to, they use dishonest means of corruption.

In No Longer at Ease we are presented with different kinds of people who are involved in the practice of corruption. The problem which is exposed here is that this corruption involves particularly natives of all different social classes, including the new elite who was expected to be the hope of the nation. We are especially told about the case of people in administration, in civil services, the case of policemen and the case of Obi, the representative of the new generation which is the elite of the country. All those people profit from

their position and power to abuse of their influence in the society they live. We notice the place of bribery and the importance of social relationships among people. We are described a country in which one's competence does not stand for an important thing. The success in any affair depends upon who you know. If you estimate that you have not any acquaintances who can be helpful, you should find means to create those relationships and the only way which is used is to proceed by giving bribes. In the novel, everybody is corrupt and is ready to gather the bribe which is offered him. This practice has become so popular that to refuse bribe is a non-understandable behaviour. Its influence is so strong that even those who pretend to be idealistic finish by renouncing to their ideals.

One can notice that the driving force behind corruption is the eagerness of acquiring more and more things in Modern Nigeria. Obi, who has for principles to fight all forms of corruption finishes by renouncing to his ideals and he is seen taking bribes like all others he was criticizing before. Inspite of his principles he could not resist temptation which had won all other members of his society. Confronted with difficulties of different forms, such as financial and emotional problems, Obi was forced to compromise his principles. He abandons his girlfriend, indulges in bribery and other bad practices that led him to his decline. In fact his contact with reality starts him on a proce ss of disillusionment.

Obi is opposed to the protagonist of Ayi Kwei Armah's novel, The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born and to the hero of Gabriel Okara's The Voice."The man", as he is called in Ayi Kwei Armah's novel and Okolo in Gabriel Okara's work are the only honest men who refused categorically to be involved in corruption.

They are isolated in their respective societies because they have refused to play the common game. All tentatives to persuade and corrupt them failed. They are even considered as cowards for having been honest. Their isolation did not cause them any trouble. They had preferred it themselves in order to avoid to be affected by corruption. Okolo's isolation allowed him not only to be virtuous but it was also an occasion for challanging his society. Obi's isolation, if it could last, was expected to be of the same nature as that of Okolo. Unfortunately, he was unable to sustain his effort and found that it was impossible to escape the realities prevailing in his community. Being himself a member of a society in which corruption was a general rule, he did not find enough strength to stand for personal position. At the beginning he believed in his victory but at the end things turned another way. He succumbed to corruption and was no more different from the rest of his society. Towards the end of the novel, his attitude towards money and appearances had completely changed from what it was when he first arrived back from England when, though the Umuofia Progressive Union had booked a room for him in an expensive hotel, he refused to use it and stayed with an old friend, a clerk in Lagos.

Bribery is one of the important forms of corruption. In this case interest of the corrupt people is centered on material things. They try to get as much as they can whatever can be the means. With this system which begins to widespread in the early years of the post-colonial period, Africa loses more and more its sense of solidarity and therefore the sense of collective interest. Everybody is won by selfishness, seeking his own interest, trying to make himself as wealthy as possible and fighting for the highest position. In Achebe's novels, bribery has sufficiently talked about. A comment on the novel in <u>The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa</u>

says that,

> In the world of No Longer at Ease the acquisitive and competitive values of society have been given free rein and have made man lose his sense of justice and self-sacrifice. Ministers admit publicaly that they take bribes, taxi-drivers overload their cars and drive at dangerous speeds while they howl insults at each other across the streets and traffic officers take advantage of the situation to extract further bribes. Young girls offer their sex for favours and even doctors grant sick leave for a small fee. In this social imbroglio the individual who seeks to assert his own moral sense finds himself overwhelmed. 11

At the very beginning of the novel No Longer at Ease, we are presented with a case of corruption. On Obi's trial, civil servants who were not allowed to be absent at service, managed to attempt the trial thanks to the influence of bribery. It is said that, "some civil Servants paid as much as ten shillings and sixpence to obtain a doctor's certificate of illness for the day". 12 Bribery is rampant everywhere. No one can ask for help without providing something else in exchange. Everywhere they are offering and taking bribes. Obi observed such a behaviour even on his boat from England to Nigeria.

> A young man, almost a boy in fact, was dealing with Obi's cabin. He told him that the duty on his radiogram would be five pounds. 'Right, said Obi, feeling his hip-pockets. Write a receipt for me!

> The boy did not write.
> He looked at Obi for a few
> seconds, and than said:
> I can be able to reduce it
> to two pounds for you.
> How? asked Obi.
> I fit do it, but you no
> get Government receipt". 13

In addition to the fact that people are used to asking for bribes, the conversation shows how they are convinced that asking for them is a bad practice even if they do not have the strength to give it up.

In the corrupt world money has a great importance. one cannot get a job if he is poor and therefore unable to give a certain amount of money. Even if he manages to get it by any chance, he is soon chased for having missed to the conditions. The case of Joshua Volo illustrates well this injustice.

> Joshua Volo a messenger in
> the Post Office, had been sacked
> for sleeping while on duty.
> According to him he had not
> been sleeping but thinking.
> But the chief clerk had been
> looking for a way to deal
> with him since he had not
> completed the payment of ten
> pounds bribe which he had
> promised when he was employed.
> Joshua was now asking his
> countrymen to borrow him ten
> pounds to look for another job. 14

The statement shows the degree to which people are corrupt and it stresses at the same time the importance of money. People have a desire to acquire money at all costs and through it, influence and power. With money one can do everything he wants. In many cases bribery consists of money. People are irresistant towards money. They can do whatever they can to get it.

Under the influence of thirty pounds, a doctor kills Clara's child without pity. Drivers who are not in order with their papers are set free after giving a certain amount of money to the police. Money dictates the owner what to do. Doctors deliver certificates for illness to civil servants who are very well but who want to be absent to their services in order to assist Obi's trial. Money becomes the leader of people. They do not follow the truth any more. For them, only the way that leads to money should be followed. Because of it one can indulge in different kinds of vices such as crime, prostitution, banditry etc... Money is powerful in any domain and who has it can have everything. It can even buy a human being. The fact of killing someone is a case that engages the life of the murderer but people do not feel any fear when they are earning money.

In the world governed by money, love does not exist. If one wants to marry, he cannot get a wife if he has not money. On the opposit, one who is wealthy can marry whoever he wants. Therefore, what should be natural love is reduced to love price. The following dialogue between Joseph and Obi gives an idea about the place of money. Joseph states:

> When you have paid a hundred
> and thirty pounds bride-price
> and you are only a second-class
> clerk, you find you haven't got
> any more to spare on other women.
> "You mean you paid a hundred and
> thirty? What about the bride-price
> law?"
> "It pushed up the price, that's all".
> "It is a pity my three elder sisters
> got married too early for us to
> make up on the others."
> "It is no laughing matter, said
> Joseph. Wait until you want
> to marry. They will probably ask
> you to pay five hundred, seeing
> that you are in the senior service. [15]

This quotation shows that marriage is a matter of money and the amount one should pay depends upon his status. The bride-price is obligatory. Its missing implies the impossibility of getting married.

People are fond of money. Everywhere man is searching for it. It is even said that the people of Umuofia do not like to work for work but are fond of money. They can move long distances pretending to go to look for work but in reality their main purpose is to earn money. That is what is revealed by one of the messengers in Lagos from Umuofia when the President was accusing Joshua of sleeping while on duty.

> Then by way of light relief
> someone took up the President
> on his statement that it was
> work that brought them four
> hundred miles to Lagos.
> "It is money, not work, said
> the man. We left plenty of work
> at home... Anyone who likes
> work can return home, take up
> his matchet and go into that
> bad bush between Umuofia and
> Mbaino. It will keep him
> occupied to his last days."
> The meeting agreed that it
> was money, not work, that brought
> them to Lagos. [16]

Money is purchased with zeal wherever it can be. It should be obtained at any cost whatever can be the means. Everybody is busy with affairs that can provide him with money. Some are travelling long distances to seek it, others are exploiting their fellows, by asking them bribes. Doctors commit murders under the force of money. The one who agreed to perform an abortion for Clara, Obi's girlfriend, was influenced by thirty pounds. He acted against human sensibility and human

dignity because of money. The child in Clara's womb was victim of money, victim of corruption.

Furthermore, tribalism is one factor of corruption. It is expected to play a role in arranging someone's problems. People , when addressing their tribesmates, feel more at ease than when addressing foreigners. For having Obi in the Senior Service as a Scholarship Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Education, Umuofians expect many things from him. He is going to arrange students who need scholarships to go to study abroad. Mr.Mark thinks that it is necessary to find Obi in order to arrange Elsie's affair. He thinks that Obi will help her easily because she is an Ibo like himself. Unfortunately, this time tribalism will not work favorably. Obi is still resistant to the situation. Umuofians will go on asking him to find a job for such and such person because according to them, he must deal with problems of his tribe.

Another example that illustrates to what extent tribalism and nepotism are common games in Modern Nigeria is the case of the policeman who was very severe with Obi and Clara when he caught them on the beach and became kind with them when he heared that Obi spoke Ibo. Then he learned that Obi was Ibo like himself. Tribalism and nepotism are widely talked about in Chinua Achebe's novel, A Man of the People. Chief Nanga who holds an important position in politics is addressing Odili in the following terms:

> By the way, Odili, I think you are wasting your talent here. I want you to come to the capital and take up a strategic post in the civil service. We should not leave everything to the high land tribes... Our people must press for their own share of the national cake. 17

This statement shows to which degree nepotism was pronounced in the system. People use their position to enrich themselves, their relatives and friends. It is of course a duty to the well placed people to deal primarily with their tribes. On this point a critic, A.Y. Andoh, affirms that a successful politician is an investment by his tribal group:

> The wide extension of kinship bonds means that a chief (or any other official) is frequently put into the position of having to choose between his obligations to favour particular kinsmen and his official duty to act disinterestedly. This type of conflict of obligation is quite real for the politician, civil servant, policeman or even judge. For a successful political candidate is regarded by many of his constituents (frequently his kinsmen) as an investment and will be asked for jobs or scholarship, or for help in local disputes. [18]

In No Longer at Ease, Umuofian people believed that Obi, one of their sons in the senior service, should be able to help Joshua Volo to get another job when he was dismissed from his first work. Although the Umuofian Union decided to give ten pounds to Joshua in order to try to apply for a job, they noticed that money was not a sufficient condition for getting a job. It was necessary to have someone to talk for him. When dealing with the problem, the president said:

> Joshua is now without a job.
> We have given him ten pounds.
> But ten pounds does not talk.
> If you stand a hundred pounds
> here where I stand now, it will
> not talk. That is why we say that
> he who has people is richer than
> he who has money. [19]

Affairs are arranged between people. It is Obi's duty to solve his countrymen's problems. He goes on saying:

> We now have one of our sons in the senior service. We are not going to ask him to bring his salary to share among us. It is in little things like this that he can help us. It is our fault if we do not approach him. Shall we kill a snake and carry it in our hand when we have a bag for putting long things in? 20

Corruption has its causes as well as consequences. The most important cause of corruption in the pre-independence and post-independence eras in African countries was colonization. Achebe is satirizing the colonized man who, after having lived with the white man for a while, was seriously affected by his way of life in Africa. Because of the white man's high social position, he proceeded by exploiting the colonized at a degree as high as possible. The black man used to follow orders blindly, because he was convinced that what the white man does must be correct. The white man was the leader and the chief at the top. With his system of making himself a very good social place, inequalities among social classes began to be felt. Under the pretext that the white man wanted to review the black man's education in order to bring him to a full development, he created schools and the so-called educated people were socially detached from the masses. Therefore, we have the white man who holds the highest position. After him comes the educated black man and at the bottom are the poor and miserable masses. The white man built urban centers where he introduced a mode of life which was very different from traditional manners. The following simple incident shows that urban life has complexities of which traditional society has

no comprehension.

> Mr.Ikedi had come to Umuofia from a township, and was able to tell the gathering how wedding feasts had been steadily declining in the towns since the invention of invitation cards. Many of his hearers whistled in unbelief. When he told them that a man could not go to his neighbour's wedding unless he was given one of those papers on which they wrote R.S.V.P.- Rice and Stew Very Plenty- which was invariably an over-statement. 21

This small event illuminates what urban life looks like. Everything is calculated. It is a life that lacks a sense of hospitality and solidarity. In towns, neighbourhood has not any influence on people. While friendship is automatic for neighbours in traditional societies, people in towns can live together ignoring each other. This is the consequence of the establishment of towns which are the white man's creation in colonized countries.

In the post-independence period, the black man is strongly marked by the white man's manners. The black man lives a life quite different from what he was before colonization. He begins to exploit his fellows, exactly like in the way the white man did. He goes on practicing oppression, with the intention of getting as much as possible. He becomes subject to corruption, exploing any means that could help him to be wealthy. He becomes materialistic and self-seeking. People holding power are the most indicated to inherit the idea of material comfort which was born with colonization since the driving forces of the colonizers were especially economic and political purposes. The colonizer was so harsh with the colonized that he even denied him his right to his own wealth.

In William Conton's The African, we are revealed to what degree Songhai had been exploited by Britain. All the diamond became the private property of the colonizer. A native caught with diamond should be punished because, "The possession without a licence of uncut diamond was at that time illegal in Songhai." [22] The case of exploitation is observed in many colonized countries. Emmanuel Ntwari, for instance, talks of the case of Congo.

> In the Congo, the exploitation was carried out by some trading companies. The Belgian King Leopold monopolized the entreprise which is International Association (The Congo Free State) for Exploitation and civilization of the Congo. Within this company, people worked for the king and collected all the money for him. [23]

This quotation shows that the colonizer was rather preoccupied by his own profit than by the civilizing mission of the country he was governing. They managed to hold the entire wealth of the country in their own hands.

African leaders on their turn, are eager to resemble the former leaders and therefore they use the same strategies as colonizers, exploiting their brothers without any shame. Gabriel Okara in his novel entitled The Voice, describes the kind of leaders Africa has got just after independence. This is done through the character of Izongo who is an outstanding figure in which corruption is reflected. Chief Izongo is a demagogic ruler of a fictional country, who tries to maintain his personal privileges. We are presented with a so corrupt society that people are totally discouraged. Izongo is a materialistic leader who only cares about his interest.

Ayi Kwei Armah on his side, in his novel, The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born, has given an important contribution in satirizing corruption, which had become a part of everyday life in Ghana. The representative of the awful practice is Joseph Hoomson. He is an incompetent leader who does not know anything about politics and who has reached his position illegally. Those who are aware of his incompetence claim:

> Oh, you know, the ideological thing, Winneba. Men who know nothing about politics have grown hot with ideology, thinking of money that will come. Everybody who wants speed goes there and the only thing demanded of them is that they be good at fawning. [24]

The consequences of corruption are not good. Because the practice causes many troubles, once one is caught taking bribes, he should be punished. It is the case of Obi who is put on trial because of having accepted twenty pounds. In order to avoid getting into trouble with bribery, people try to be careful with the practice. They avoid as much as possible to be seen taking bribes. Moreover, Obi is condamned by everybody not because he takes a bribe but because he is caught. Otherwise bribery is not condamnable in itself. It is harmless for people who know to deal with it. In No Longer at Ease it is said that people do not gather bribes themselves. They engage other persons to do it for them. In many cases, stewards play the role of intermediairies between the bribe giver and the receiver. What was wrong with Obi was that he gathered the bribe with his own hands. Everywhere they are taking bribes but once they suspect that someone in the environment can be an obstacle to their entertainment, they change the attitude. On Obi's trip to Umuofia, a policeman hesitates to take something from the driver

and try to escape it. The society is no longer at ease because of his leaders who apply injustice in all the domains.

Miss.Elsie Mark would not have encountered so many difficulties if the society she lived was impartial. She fulfilled the conditions for getting a scholarship. With what her country is, she must run different corners, offering whatever she can to people who can come in her help.

Injustice is real in the country and will bring other vices such as prostitution as it is observed in the character of Elsie Mark. She will use any means at her disposition to try to get what was of her right to get. First of all her brother tries to meet Obi in order to talk of her case but the meeting was fruitless. Neither the fact of being tribemates nor the proposition of a bribe did carry a solution. Till that moment Obi was still faithful to his principles of opposing all kinds of bribery. Then Miss.Elsie decides to meet herself Obi. She promised him to do whatever he would ask for. The whatever she was talking about was nothing else than to offer her body. All other means had been tried in vain by Mr.Mark her brother. This time Obi accepted the proposition. Conditions made Miss.Elsie a prostitute and she offers her body to Obi as well as to the board members. She slee ps with people she does not know, only because she expects a certain help from them whatever can be its importance. It was the way of becoming a professional prostitute.

Writings that talk about corruption show the role of the town in the matter. The town has been the driving center of all bad doings which walk hand in hand with corruption. Writers who treated the case of Nigeria show that all the vices are centered in Lagos city. In fact towns are the places that shelter the so-called civilized and educated men. Therefore, they have a great influence on the young Nigerians who come to live places that

are quite different from their villages. The youth exposed to this life behave in a different way from their brothers upcountry. In Cyprian Ekwensi's Jagua Nana, for instance, Lagos is a representation of a corrupt city with different kinds of vices such as injustice, crime, prostitution etc... The influence of money urges people to do whatever they want.

In No Longer at Ease we see what the city represents for Umuofians. When Obi lost his mother, he did not attend the funerals because of the financial problems he had. Neither did he send much money for her funerals. Therefore, he was seriously criticized by his tribemen who were in Lagos on a meeting they held at the occasion. Nobody could understand Obi's such a behaviour and they ignored his problems. One of the Union gives such a thought:

> That is what Lagos can do to a young man. He runs after sweet things, dances breast to breast with women and forgets his home and his people. 26

This statement is a satire about life in town. It illustrates vices that people in the city are exposed to. The contact with what they call beautyful things push them to forget their people. The town is the driving center of corruption. In Nigeria corruption has for setting, Lagos city.

In No Longer at Ease, corruption seems to have no solution. Chinua Achebe is aware of the enormity of the problem and thinks that it is the new elite's duty to bring the reform if it is to come at all. He presents Obi, one of the members of the new elite posing the first step on the matter. He is proposing alternatives to the solution:

> Where does one begin? With
> the masses? Educate the masses?
> He shook his head. Not a chance
> there. It would take centuries.
> A handful of men at the top.
> Or even one man with vision-
> an enlightened dictator. People
> are scared of the word nowadays..
> But what kind of democracy can
> exist side by side with so much
> corruption and ignorance?
> Perhaps a half-way house - a sort
> of compromise. When Obi's
> reasoning reached this point
> he reminded himself that England
> had been as corrupt not so
> very long ago. He was not
> really in the mood for consecutive
> reasoning. His mind was impatient
> to roam in a more pleasant landscape. [27]

The important thing to note here is that the solution is not easy to find. Obi notices that after all corruption is universal. Therefore, he thinks he should not care very much about it. Then we see that the problem is going to remain an obstacle to the development of the country since the new generation is not morally strong enough for fighting corruption. Obi does not want to be absorbed by the affair. He wants to get rid of this trouble. Through Obi, the weaknesses of the young educated people are stressed. On their turn they do like their elders, accepting bribes without shame. Democracy is far from being achieved in the so-called independent countries.

Nazareth Peter is criticizing the new leaders who are far from being better than the colonizers. To do that, he uses the following terms:

> Then came the shattering
> discovery that given the
> circumstances, the problems,
> and the opportunities, their
> leaders could be no better,
> no more humanist than imperialists
> they had replaced and sometimes
> even worse. And with this discovery
> over and over again, we find
> disillusionment and despair,
> an inability to any break in
> the vicious circle. [28]

Today the system of corruption is still operating in many countries, more pronounced in some than in others. Anyway, although it is not easy to put an end to the practice, it should be faught with vigor. Some optimistic people such as Nazareth Peter even believe in its end. He says:

> Corruption is still at work
> in Africa and until it comes
> to an end, most of the important
> African writers will continue
> to struggle against its forms
> and weapons. They will try
> to reflect the reality of
> exploitation and take steps
> towards ending it so that
> people can have a home coming.
> The struggle continues. [29]

In the novel No Longer at Ease Achebe has satirized the Nigerian society which is collapsing and whose failure is caused by his own people. The white man is no longer the main cause of problems in Africa. He shows that after colonization, life is not simple. It is even more complex than during colonization. Therefore, he is inviting young Nigerians to be aware that reform must come from them.

Achebe does not write for the sake of writing. He is a committed writer. He has the mission of educating. He is the

teacher whose pupils are young Nigerians. On this point he makes an appeal to the young Africans to be aware of the problems that African writers raise in their novels. He advertises them to open their ears to what they are writing and act favourably because they are the audience the writers are addressing.
In an article entitled "The Novelist as Teacher" in African Writers On African Writing, Chinua Achebe writes what follows:

> I am assuming of course, that our writer and his society live in the same place. I realize that a lot has been made of the allegation that African writers have to write for European and American readers because African readers where they exist at all are only interested in reading text books. I don't know if African writers always have a foreign audience in mind. What I do know is that they don't have to. At least I know that I don't have to. [30]

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CHAP. II. THE HERO AS A TRAGIC FIGURE.

We call a tragic hero in a literary work a hero whose actions lead him inevitably to failure. His life seems to be a fatal one in which the individual is seen as unable to do otherwise. He cannot stop the course of events that overtake him and he is led irresistibly to his decline. Someone says:

> For tragedy implies the working out in men's lives of a rigorous fatality that transcends the individual's ability to comprehend or to arrest its pre-ordained course of events. [1]

The events seem to have been organized in such a way that the outcome of the situation must be terrible. Very often a tragic hero ends in death, either physical or moral. In many cases he inspires pity and fear to the audience. Pity is felt for the human sufferer since he is one like ourselves and fear is experienced at his fate.

No Longer at Ease presents Obi, the hero of the novel as an individual whose principles are of a great value but whose destiny is that of failure. Obi is a modern man and his story comprises a modern tragedy. The main action of the novel begins with Obi's return from England where he recently completed his B.A. degree. Filled with idealism, Obi is determined to rid his country of corruption and create a new and better nation. At the very beginning we are presented with the tragic situation that had attracted the whole population because the event was a particular one. Obi is presented on trial. The novel begins in the following terms:

> For three or four weeks
> Obi Okonkwo had been steeling
> himself against this moment.

> And when he walked into
> the dock that morning he
> thought he was fully prepared.
> He wore a smart palm-beach
> suit and appeared unruffled
> and indifferent. The proceeding
> seemed to be of little interest
> to him. [2]

The author places the reader towards an accomplished situation which is a tragic one. The protagonist has been arrested for a wrong thing he has done. Now he is on trial. We assist to the consequences that must follow any tragic error. Obi's error earns him imprisonment. Like in many tragic situations, the hero of No Longer at Ease inspires pity for his suffering.

When analyzing the reasons for Obi's failure one finds that he failed because he did not respond to his people's expectations. Obi was a man in whom his people had great expectations. They paid him an expensive education because they thought his education would give a successful output. He is a social property and therefore his value depends upon the perspectives in which his society judge him. It is why it was not easy to live apart from what his community was. We see him trying to be different from it but anyway he is obliged to fall on the steps he despised before. He lacks strength to sustain his ideals and to live on his own expectations. Instead of living his life as an individual, he realizes that he lives in a society and that he should act according to it. However, even if he ends by joining the common life of his people, he is rather no longer at ease. He is full of regret, he is in an impasse situation, in the indecisiveness, irresoluteness and whatever he does does not please him. He is in a desperate situation, a tragic one.

Furthermore, no one can understand him. He even lacks self-understanding. That is why he is remorseful. On his trial, Obi betrays himself by his attitude. When the judge says,

> I cannot comprehend how a young man of your education and brilliant promise could have done this."... Treacherous tears came into Obi's eyes. He brought out a white handkerchief and rubbed his face. But he did it as people do when they wipe sweat. He even tried to smile and belie the tears. A smile would have been quite logical. All that stuff about education and promise and betrayal had not taken him anaware. He had expected it and rehearsed this very scene a hundred times until it had become as familiar as a friend. [3]

This quotation shows Obi as a betrayal. He betrays his society and himself. He knows well what his people expect from him but he acts unfavorably. The fact of smiling and weeping at the same time shows us his indecisiveness and regret. On one hand he knows that he has been wrong with his society but on the other hand he considers that he was obliged to behave in the manner he did it. He is in an ambiguous situation and he does not know what to do. He goes on taking bribes until he is caught and it is when this supreme moment comes that he is aware of the seriousness of his wrong doings. He seems to condamn himself. Obi's affairs lead him to failure and we are presented him in conflict with his fiancée, his family, his tribe and the law as well as with his own ideals. His end is a tragic one of modern tragedy. It is a modern tragedy because it happens in a modern world, among modern young men with their ideals opposed to the elders'conception of life.

In order to analyze systematically how Obi's issue is a tragic one, let's begin with what he was expected to be for his people. Because Umuofians see their future in Obi, they manage to give him what they judge to be the best education. They pay him studies though they are expensive, provided that their objectives

should be achieved. Obi's success is observed very early. We can even say that it begins with his birth. Obi's birth gives satisfaction to his parents who had given birth only to girls before him. We are told that when his father saw that he had already four daughters and no boy he was becoming a little anxious. Unfortunately, being a Christian convert, he could not marry a second wife. He was not happy but he did not let sorrow appear on his face. Nobody could see his pain. After the four daughters, Obi was born. It is said that his full name is Obiajulu which meant that "the mind at last is at rest." This mind talked about is his father's. Those are circumstances that show Obi as an individual of great hope for his parents. Then he recorded many successes during his childhood. He was a clever pupil at school. It is said that,

> At the age of twelve he had passed his Standard Six Examination at the top of the whole province. Therefore he had won a scholarship to one of the best secondary schools in Eastern Nigeria. At the end of five years he passed the Cambridge School Certificate with distinction in all eight subjects. He was in fact a village celebrity and his name was regularly invoked at the Mission School where he had once been a pupil. 4

In this statement one can see Obi's increasing success. He becomes a "village celebrity" and this implies that he is a promising figure for his community whose principle is to act for collective interest. Individualism in Umuofian society did not work and to act against the community's wish is to fail.

Nigerian society like all other colonized countries were convinced that Western education was the best one which could provide students with all the necessary material to solve problems of their native countries. That is why Umuofia does what it is able to do in order to send Obi to study in England. It is not easy for them to get a scholarship for Obi but they manage.

> Six or seven years ago Umuofians abroad had formed their Union with the aim of collecting money to send some of their brighter young men to study in England. They taxed themselves mercilessly. The first scholarship under this scheme was awarded to Obi Onkwonko five years ago, almost to the day. 5

The quotation makes us be aware of the difficulties Umuofians got to have Obi's scholarship. They sacrificed themselves to raise funds to send Obi to England for University training. For them, to send a member of the Union is a great joy because they expect to get a lot from him on his return. They are convinced that after his learnings Obi will be a great personality who will help the community to solve problems. Here, one can notice Umuofians' weaknesses with regard to education. When they give Obi the scholarship, they have an eye on their own interests: they ask him to study law in order to help them settle their land cases. They are blind to the real purpose of education, seeing it not as a means of developing the individual in accordance with his own aptitudes, but as a tool to help consolidate the clan and its interest against the claims of others. Their point of view about modernity is inconsistent. They fail to realize that by educating Obi, they form

an elite who will need to live up to his status. He will see more clearly and will get the opportunity to acquire his own ideals.

Obi's going to England caused a big stir in Umuofia. People gathered for praying for him and giving him some advice in order to warn him not to fall in bad practices and act against his community's will. The advice which is given him is seen in Mr.Ikedi's speech:

> "In times past," he told him,
> "Umuofia would have required
> of you to fight in her wars
> and bring home human heads.
> But these were days of darkness
> from which we have been delivered
> by the blood of the Lamb of God.
> Today we send you to bring
> knowledge. Remember that the
> fear of the Lord is the beginning
> of wisdom. I have heard of young
> men from other towns who went
> to the white man's country,
> but instead of facing their studies
> they went after the sweet things
> of the flesh. Some of them even
> married white women." The crowd
> murmured its strong disapproval
> of such behaviour. A man who does
> that is lost to his people. He is
> like rain wasted in the forest.
> I would have suggested getting
> you a wife before you leave.
> But the time is too short now.
> Anyway, I know that we have no
> fear where you are concerned.
> We are sending you to learn book.
> Enjoyment can wait. Do not be in
> a hurry to rush into the pleasures
> of the world like the young antelope
> who danced herself lame when the
> main dance was yet to come. 6

When saying their farewells to Obi, many of the guests repeated all the advice that he had already been given. Everyone offered what he could get, to buy a pencil with, or an exercise book or a loaf of bread for the journey, a shilling there or a penny there. Some of them even gave substantial presents because money in that village was rare. Obi was the first to receive a scholarship. Through the society's behaviour towards Obi, one can notice the characteristic features of the traditional society.

Umuofian community was characterized by solidarity. They like to help each other seeking collective interest. Everybody brings his share to Obi in order to ease his life abroad. The solidarity observed in Obi's case is not of mere kind but it is a demanding solidarity. Obi is helped as much as possible but on his return he has obligations to fulfil in the profit of his society.

> "Remember you are the one and only Umuofia son to be educated overseas. We don't want to be like the unfortunate child who grows his first tooth and grows a decayed one. What sort of encouragement will your action give to the poor men and women who collected the money?" 7

Another characteristic of Umuofian traditional society that we can record is the strength of beliefs in tradition. In the advice that Obi's people give him, they insisted that he should not break with his customs and beliefs. He should not be involved in pleasures outside his country because they would carry him away from tradition. More than all other things, he was forbidden to marry outside. All those pillars that the society is based on contributed to Obi's isolation and tragedy.

The isolation of tragic hero is of course one of the elements that characterize tragic situations. In all his doings Obi has been isolated by other members of his society. Nobody could welcome him in his actions. That is why we see him in conflict with all the classes of his community. He walks alone in his ideals as well as in his sufferings. When he is caught involved in corruption, it is stressed that nobody understands the motives behind his behaviour.

> Everybody wondered why. The learned judge, as we have seen, could not comprehend how an educated young man and so on and so forth. The British council man, even the men of Umuofia, did not know. And we must presume that, inspite of his certitude, Mr.Green did not know either. [8]

Because of the influence of foreign education Obi moves progressively away from the nature of his society. He gets ideals that go against his tradition. He even pretends a marriage with a girl from an outcast tribe. This behaviour is going to be seriously opposed by his parents as well as the whole community. On his return from England Obi is full of good principles for his country which were important steps for a country fighting for its independence and democracy. He is determined to oppose the practice of corruption which constitutes a handicap to a country which claims for justice, dignity and equality.
In addition to his principles taken towards his nation, he has personal ideals. After having acquired a Western education he thinks he is free to choose his wife. He knows that the system which makes Clara unsuitable as a wife is irrational. He is determined to marry her whatever would be his society's position and even his parents'opposition. Thus, one can say that his isolation did not take him anaware. He knew quite well that his ideals were going to be opposed seriously. Then Obi is morally

separated from his parents and his society.

When Obi's father learns that his son is going to marry an Osu, he cannot admit it. Even his Christian beliefs cannot allow him to bear in his mind such a thing. There is inconsistency between Christian belief and Osu taboo held by Obi's father. His beliefs in tradition are stronger than his Christian beliefs. When Obi realizes that they are Christians and they should not worry about the outcast, his father replies:

> We are Christians, he said. But that is no reason to marry an Osu. My son, said Okonkwo, I understand what you say. But this thing is deeper than you think. 9

Talking about Clara's father he says:

> I know him and I know his wife. He is a good man and a great Christian. But he is Osu. 10

In Obi's father mind the fact of being Osu destroys every other good thing. He gives the following analogy so that Obi should feel the dreadful weight of the case.

> Naaman, Captain of the host of Syria, was a great man and honourable, he was also a mighty man of valour, but he was a leper. 11

He goes on saying:

> Osu is like leprosy in the minds of our people. I beg of you, my son, not to bring

> the mark of shame and leprosy
> into your family. If you do,
> your children and your children's
> children unto the third and
> fourth generations will curse
> your memory. It is not for
> myself I speak; my days are
> few. You will bring sorrow
> on your head and on the heads
> of your children. Who will
> marry your daughters? Whose
> daughters will your sons marry?
> Think of that my son. We are
> Christians, but we cannot
> marry our own daughters. [12]

Isaac tries to make his son understand the seriousness of the problem. Not only Obi's doing is going to be an individual's matter but it also involves his parents as well as the coming generations. It is a matter that is going to separate him and his offspring from the rest of the society. That is why his daughters and sons will not find who to marry. In fact, Obi's father point of view is shared by any Ibo man. It is an element of tradition that everybody cares about. Then, he recorded the opposition of his mother, of Umuofian Progressive Union, of his friends and even the opposition of Clara. His mother says she will kill herself if he marries an Osu. The members of Umuofian Progressive Union are proud of Obi's success in winning a European education and are prepared to excuse him on the occasion when his behaviour does not conform to their opinion of how a "been-to" Nigerian ought to conduct himself. Yet, while they aspire to see Obi a modern man, they also expect him to honour customs and tradition. They are shocked by his relations with Clara an Osu. At the exception of Obi, all other people, traditional as well as modern were conscious of the place tradition fills in their society and were still faithful to it. Therefore, Obi was alone in his fightings. Clara herself who is an educated girl and who returns back from her studies from England at the same time as Obi, does not believe in her marriage to a free man.

> I can't marry you, she said
> suddenly as Obi tried to kiss
> her under the tall mango tree
> at the edge of the swimming-
> pool and exploded into tears. 13

Obi could not understand her behaviour as a modern girl but she argues:

> I am an Osu, she wept...
> So you see we cannot get
> married. 14

She shows that it is not possible not to take into account what one's society is when acting. Joseph, who is a townman like Obi himself, does not understand his friend's behaviour and his dealings with Obi's affair reveals the ambiguous position in which Obi's Western education has placed him.

> 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."I know
> more about it than yourself,"
> he said, "and I'm going to
> marry the girl. I wasn't
> actually seeking your approval." 15

Joseph realizes that a country's beliefs are not something one can change as he understands it. It is something deeper than that and it cannot be read in books. Obi on his behalf cannot understand

an educated man like Joseph who is still with such superstitutions. That is why he is convinced to act personally and independently. "Not even my mother can stop me," [16] he said. He thinks that,

> 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 descendents into a forbidden caste to the end of time. Quite unbelievable. [17]

Having adopted Western values, Obi believes that an individual has the right to choose his own wife. It is this that brings him into conflict with his parents and kinsmen. Obi's Western education has made him an individual but his people still adhere to communal values. It is this individualism that brings his isolation. His people attach great importance to kinship ties. This is reflected in their attitude when Obi was going to be judged on his error. The Union decided to pay for the services of a lawyer from their funds. "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."[18] Obi's individualistic attitude is summed up in the saying "Ours is ours but mine is mine"[19] to mean that he does not want any interference in his private affairs. At the end Obi's dilemma lies in having to make choice between the old values and the new, between "ours" and "mine!" He was worked by this problem and any issue he proposed himself could not bring his happiness. He had a tragic end and he is morally deteriorated. With his great principles at the beginning, Obi, who thought to please everyone, did not please anybody after all, and he is rather criticized by everybody. His principles led him to his professional, social and moral

declines. His ideal position which was unsound in the context of the society he lived could do nothing else than to destroy him and isolate him.

We can also say that Obi's tragedy takes roots in the fact that his so-called patriotism is only a sentimental indulgence cultivated in moments of loneliness while he was living abroad. His principal call is to rid his country's public service of corruption. He likes to think that he has a consistent theory of how to cure the country of this evil.

Blindness that characterizes any tragic case is stressed in Obi's theory. He attributes the moral and social ills of his country to backwardness. The author describes the naivety of his theory as follows:

> Obi's theory that the public service of Nigeria would remain corrupt until the old Africans at the top were replaced by young men from the universities was first formulated in a paper read to the Nigerian Student's Union in London. But unlike most theories formed by students in London, this one survived the first impact of home coming. 20

Obi's attitude is only superficial. He objects to corruption only as long as he has enough to live on.

Like in any tragedy, Obi's false step which sets the tragic process is consciously undertaken but without any intention on the hero's part of bringing about the evil result which followed. Obi turns to be a tragic stature because he did not forsee his failure.

We can assume that his tragic end is more the result of human failing than the working of fate and we can identify ourselves with the hero for he reminds us of our humanity. His failure is not a particular one, it can be considered as universal. Moreover, dealing with the universality of tragedy, Muller asserts that,

> Tragedy is a universal literary form simply because of the permanence of the inescapable tragic fact of human life: the eternal gap between aspiration and achievement. 21

Obi represents a human being who fails under his weaknesses. In his doings Obi's weaknesses are stressed. He is a man who cannot sustain any sort of effort. Even minor problems, instead of strengthening him carry him irresistibly to a point of dissolution. He turns out to be a man with a narrow sense of values. His weakness of character is reflected in his inept handling of his human relationships and of his material problems; he is an individual with no sense of order, whose incapacity is contrasted with the strength of character of his fellow Umuofians who managed to make sacrifices for a man who turns out to be weaker than them. Obi's downfall was mainly the result of his attempt to live a half-hatred life in a society where he might have been heroically committed to reform, or have survived by accepting to be part of the social corruption. Obi failed to take a fixed position. His principles should sound well in a modern world but he lacks courage to sustain them. Because of financial and emotional problems Obi is forced to compromise his ideals. He abandons his girlfriend, descends into bribery and is imprisoned. His submission on the issue of Clara and his subsequent betrayal of her opened the wide road to his moral decline. He knows what is right, but is unable to stand up

for it. When his financial troubles begin he lacks initiative. He can do nothing else than allowing events to overtake him and compromise his principles. In No Longer at Ease, Achebe is satirizing the ideals of the elites who do not stand their ground when they are faced with real life situations. That is what carries their failure. He stresses the inability of the new generation of educated Africans to resist temptation and abide by their principles. Obi is a man torn between two sets of values and the result is a tragic one, which shows his spiritual disintegration. He represents an inadequate stature of the hero. He is a pathetic figure without any grain of nobility. He is a passive sufferer of his fate.

Obi's tragedy arises in the fact that he lacks a moral courage to support his intellectual assesment of the situation. At the beginning he resists the sayings about his affair with Clara but later when his mother says she will kill herself if he marries an Osu girl, sheer terror replaces moral resolve and the rationalization process which is to prove his undoing begins. The core of the novel is the moral dilemma in which Obi finds himself and it is this dilemma that will produce his tragedy. His ideals, though naive they may be and even if they did not take into full account the practical realities of the public, political situation, it should be at least personally viable and could prevail if his moral strength were sufficient. In fact his ideal about the conduct he should adopt in his society is morally sound and it was wise to sustain it if it was possible.

During his first days when he arrives in Lagos, coming from England, Obi shows a certain conviction in what he is fighting for. He is against corruption and everywhere he sees such a behaviour he criticizes it severely. On his boat from England he already reproches a young man for asking taxes on travelling baggages without giving any government receipt.

Later, on his first trip to Umuofia the driver of the lorry "dashes" a policeman as a means of having his certificate of "road wordiness" accepted. Obi, appealled at the complicity of the police in the affair, is scorned by the driver and his fellow passengers:

> The driver's mate was approaching the other policeman. But just as he was about to hand something over to him Obi looked in their direction. The policeman was not prepared to take a risk; for all he knew Obi might be a C.I.D. man. [22]

Obi's look is suspected because it is a critical look and a re proaching one. It condamns the policeman's attitude of being interested in taking bribes and let wrong things pass.

On his turn, Obi records different temptations in bribery and resists some of them. First, Mr.Mark tries to bribe him when asking him to arrenge his sister's affair about her scholarship. After considering that tribalism could not carry any help in the situation, Mr.Mark tries with bribery but even this time it is in vain. Till that moment Obi is still faithful to his objectives. His first weakness in the matter of corruption is observed on his meeting with Elsie Mark when he accepts to sleep with her in order to allow her appear towards the members of the board which deal with offering scholarships. Then comes his affair with Clara, which is followed by material problems of different kinds. Therefore, he succumbs to corruption. He goes on taking bribes here and there until he is caught and imprisoned.

Yet, even if we consider that human weaknesses operate at high degree in Obi's case, we can confirm that destiny has its role, too, in the matter. Fate, which seems to work in any tragic situation, is present in our hero's life. In No Longer at Eas

it is difficult to escape the impression that fatal circumstances are working against the hero from the beginning , and that whatever he may do he is in some sense a doomed man. The course of events in Obi's life seems to have been organized in such a way that he is inevitably prepared to failure. One can think that destiny is working with him, preventing him from success. The fact of succumbing to corruption and being caught at the same time, and on the other hand the break with his fiancée, followed by the death of his mother, seem to have been arranged by a prevailing force that Obi ignored in his life. The force of fate is not only talked about in one novel by Chinua Achebe, but it is strongly felt in Things Fall Apart, too. Okonkwo, the hero of the novel, is a man whose achievement has been heroic. He almost reaches the summit of his ambition to become one of the lords of the clan, but his destiny is otherwise and he can have no other end than a tragic one which culminates in suicide.

Like in all tragedies, both in Obi's case as well as in Okonkwo's one, the protagonist's actions are found to have consequences the direct opposite to what he meant or expected. Obi expected to have a successful end. He thought that with his actions he was going to show that it was possible to bring a better change in his country. He wanted to appear a determined man with strong personality who was able to stand for his principles, on one hand in fighting corruption, on the other hand in marrying a girl of his choice. The result was just the opposite of what he expected. He was corrupt and did not marry the girl he loved. In Things Fall Apart, what Okonkwo achieved was not what he expected. All his life long Okonkwo's dream was to be a great man, courageous and honourable but he ends in cowardice and dishonour. In hanging himself, an abominated form of death, he earned for himself a dishonourable burial like his father Unoka, the thing he had sought all his life to avoid.

Suffering is inevitable in any tragedy. Obi's case is not the least to involve suffering. In his life he has recorded many events that make him suffer. The circumstance which illustrates the most his suffering is the death of his mother. It is said that "Obi had been utterly prostrated by the shock of his mother's death."23 A little before this event, it was not with ease that he had decided to break with Clara, his fiancée. Thus, his mother's death deepened the sorrow he had felt when losing his girlfriend. His sufferings are both moral and physical.

He suffers morally because he is in conflict with all social classes but particularly with his mother. When she says that he will have her blood on him if he marries an Osu, Obi loses all his strength. It is the beginning of his real and greatest crisis in his life. He feels he cannot go against his mother's words though he knew quite well that she would not behave otherwise on such a matter. The following citation illustrates well his moral suffering.

> His mind was troubled not only by what had happened but also by the discovery that there was nothing in him with which to challange it honestly. All day he had striven to rouse his anger and his conviction, but he was honest enough with himself to realize that the response he got, no matter how violent it sometimes appeared, was not genuine. It came from the periphery and not the centre, like the jerk in the leg of a dead frog when a current is applied to it. 24

Obi does not want to hurt his mother's heart. He suffers morally because he does not know what to do. He does not want neither to abandon Clara nor to lose his mother. Anyway, he had to choose either his mother or his fiancée. Finally he preferred his mother to his girlfriend, but it was not without sorrow that he abandoned the latter who was then in a critical situation since she was pregnant. Thus, the only solution was to find a doctor who would perform an abortion. On her way with the doctor to the place where the operation was going to happen, Obi suffered very much. "He wanted to rush out of his car and shout: "Stop, let's go and get married now," but he couldn't and didn't".[25] The supreme emotional suffering he undergoes comes with his mother's death. His suffering on this event was so much that he became dispirited and inert.

Obi's moral sufferings were not only the result of the loss of persons he loved, but his financial problems troubled his consciousness very much. We have already seen that Obi's affair with Clara put him into conflict with Umuofian Progressive Union which had paid him a scholarship. After his studies, Obi got a job very soon. He was a Senior Civil Servant and received a car advance. In addition, he received sixty pounds outfit allowance. Yet, all those things were not presents, he was going to repay them a little later. Beside those debts, he had to pay back the loan he received for his scholarship. At the beginning, on Obi's request, the U.P.U. agreed to give him four months before he started to pay it. As soon as the president began to ask Obi about his project with an Osu girl, Obi got very angry and refused to listen to him. he even broke his negotiations.

> I am not going to listen
> to you any more. I take back
> my request. I shall start
> paying you back at the end
> of this month. Now, this
> minute! But don't you dare

> interfere in my affairs again. And if this is what you meet about, he said in Ibo, you may cut off my two legs if you ever find them here again. He made for the door. [26]

The break with U.P.U. caused him some moral sufferings. To start to pay back his loan as soon as he was engaged could not be done easily. One might ask himself how Obi would manage to do it considering that beside this, he had many other obligations. On one hand, Obi had to pay twenty pounds every month to the Union. With the amount that remained, it was impossible to him to pay his insurance, his electricity bill, his income tax and the instalments on his car. On the other hand, considering that he was an educated man and a townman, he was convinced that he should represent what he was. Just when Obi arrived in Lagos from England, he seemed to be less interested in luxury. U.P.U. was agreed that he should have a place at a hotel but Obi did not stay there longer. He preferred to join his friend Joseph in a dirty corner where they shared only one room. When he got a job and a car, he conceived life in a different way. The idea of material comfort grew in his mind. He was convinced he should be able to pay whatever was necessary for a good life in town. Confronted with financial problems, he began to negociate loans from the bank to regularize some situations. Then he tried to reduce what he used at home. For instance, in order to keep low his electricity bill, he recommanded his steward that instead of lighting every switch in the flat lit two bulbs, the rule in future was going to be one switch, one bulb Having delt with lamps, he came to the water-heater and told his steward that the water-heater must not be turned on anymore. He decided to have cold baths. He ever reduced money for his ration. Inspite all those measures he took, Obi was still suffering morally. Even

his visits to his family were still rare for financial reasons, because he must give something to his people if he decided to go home.

> To home people, leave meant
> the return of the village boy
> who had made good in the town,
> and everyone expected to share
> in his good fortune. [28]

When his affair with Clara failed, he was obliged to provide money for making an abortion. He had not any other means than to borrow it from someone. Events that required money overwhelmed him and he was unable to overcome all of them. On the top of it all came his mother's death. He sent all he could find for her funeral but it was said that she deserved a better funeral than she got. Nobody could understand that Obi could lack money to do that. He was severely criticized. Finally, demoralized and unable to take any other convinient attitude when facing the circumstances, Obi is seen taking bribes. He will repeat the scene many times in order to resolve some of his problems. For instance, he took fifty pounds from a man who wanted his son's scholarship and with that amount he was able to pay off his bank overdraft and the debt he borrowed when paying the doctor. Then one day he was caught taking twenty pounds and his tragedy was real. He was imprisoned. In prison his sufferings are both physical and moral.

The sufferings of characters in tragedies are followed by the recognition of the error. At the end, Obi recognized his error. His theories were more idealistic than realistic. He found that the society he lived could not allow him to win in his principles. In fact, his error was that his ideals demanded a moral strength that Obi was unable to provide. Obi is this kind of idealist who says: "Give me a place to stand and I shall move the earth." [28]

His downfall results in the fact that he did not realize early that such a place does not exist. It is only after his sufferings that he finds out that, "we all have to stand on the earth itself and go with her at her pace."[29]

Tragic situations leave the audience not depressed, but relieved, even exalted. They inspire him some emotions. Some critics say that the emotion Obi inspires is not pity but antipathy. In my point of view, I join Achebe who invites pity on Obi's failure. Obi presents some strong points in his personality. He is able to articulate the ambiguities of his position and determine his conduct, both personal and professional. He is conscious that his society needs the intervention of young educated men to achieve its democracy and he is conscious that he is appealled to give his contribution. He knows that the walk he is going to operate is not easy, but he has the courage to try and see where it can take him to. He differs from those around him who either do not recognize inconsistencies in their behaviour or if they do, are not concerned to evaluate these inconsistencies nor relate to their personal behaviour. In No Longer at Ease, we are presented with different people who are used to taking bribes but among all of them, noone except Obi recognizes that what he is doing is wrong and regrettable. They rather try to always justify their behaviour. On their contrary, Obi knows his weaknesses. That is why we see that he is remorseful in his doings. We cannot deny that Obi is a failure but we can at least congratulate him on the choice of good principles and the steps he has reached. We feel pity for his failure because Obi's weaknesses have a character of universality. He has been victim among many guilty people. Pity is felt for the human sufferer, since he is one like ourselves. Obi's acts are not as cruel as those of Okonkwo his grandfather, the hero of Things Fall Apart . Although Okonkwo has been a character of intense individuality, whose fame rested on solid personal achievements, his tragic end inspires

antipathy. The end in suicide is a sign of the greatest form of cowardice that can exist. After death nothing remains. There cannot be anymore hope. His killing himself rubs all good things he had done when he was alive, and nobody can tolerate such an end. They say it is an abomination for a man to take his own life. The emotion we feel towards such a coward man is more antipathy than pity.

Fear is another emotion experienced at Obi's fate. It is in human nature that we are all afraid of death. A human being with human feelings cannot be inert to the death of Obi's mother that took place just after having abandoned his girlfriend. Everybody is afraid of the circumstances and identifies himself with the sufferer. Later, we feel fear too, when Obi is imprisoned. Prison is something everybody fears. This fear is proved by the fact that some people try to escape from prison when they have been caught. Life there is painful.

All his life long, the protagonist has been governed by fear of failure. Every time he declines in evil, he is not quiet. While taking bribes, he shows a certain hesitation. When he accepts a bribe from a man who wants his son's back-door entry to scholarship awards, his fear in doing such a thing is stressed in the following words:

> The wad of notes lay where
> he had placed it for the rest
> of the day and all night.
> Obi placed a newspaper over
> it and secured the door.
> "This is terrible!" he muttered.
> "Terrible!" he said aloud.
> He woke up with a start in
> the middle of the night and
> he did not go to sleep again
> for a long time afterwards." 30

Obi is afraid of being caught and his consciousness is still working him after his act. Even if he repeats the scene many times, he does not manage to be accustomed to these things. Though he thinks he is determined to take bribes, he is never happy and his irresoluteness remains until he is caught. His attitude towards the sum which brings his condamnation involves temptation.

> The money lay on the table. He would have preferred not to look in its direction, but he seemed to have no choice. He just sat looking at it, paralysed by his thoughts. [31]

Obi feels fear for the consequences of his act. The scene which describes his arrest illustrates well this atmosphere of fear in which Obi appears.

> There was a knock at the door. He sprang to his feet, grabbed the money and ran towards his bedroom. A second knock caught him almost at the door of the bedroom and transfixed him there. Then he saw on the floor for the first time the hat which his visitor had forgotten, and he breathed a sigh of relief. He thrust the money into his pocket and went to the door and opened it. Two people entered - One was his recent visitor, the other a complete stranger. "Are you Mr.Okonkwo?" asked the stranger. Obi said yes in a voice he could hardly have recognized. The room began to swim round and round. The stranger was saying something, but it sounded distant - as things sound to a man in a fever. He then searched Obi and found the marked

> notes. He began to say some more things, invoking the name of the Queen, like a District Officer in the bush reading the Riot Act to an uncomprehending and delirious mob. Meanwhile the other man used the telephone outside Obi's door to summon a police van. 32

Fear is evident in this quotation. We can even say that Obi is terrified. He does not know which attitude to take. He seems to be out of self-control. Fear dominates Obi's personality and all his hesitations are its manifestations.

Obi is a tragic hero whose tragedy proceeds from modernity. He is an educated man and an elite who, under the influence of Western education wants to clean in his mind all old superstitions and to fight all evils that characterized his traditional society. His downfall is rooted on one hand, in the radicality of his ideals which want an abrupt break with tradition, and on the other hand, in his naivety in choosing principles which do not agree with realities prevailing in the community. He fails to realize that he wanted to make meet two opposed ends and therefore, should be careful in doing that. It would have been wise for him to walk both in the two worlds. He should find the medium which could keep him with tradition without neglecting to go forward in modernity.

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CHAP. III. LANGUAGE.

Language is known as a means of communication. It is through it that people get into contact and create relationships among them. It can unite or separate people.

In No Longer at Ease, the sense of brotherliness takes an external form in the sharing of a common language, as Obi realizes at an early stage in his relationship with Clara:

> But then she had spoken
> in Ibo, for the first time,
> as if to say we belong to
> together; we speak the
> same language. [1]

In attempting to bribe Obi, Mr.Mark addresses him in Ibo, too, to establish the same point.

Language creates, maintains or ends relationships among people. Thus, we can say that the positive kind of language is the one that brings people close together while the negative kind aims at separating them.

In No Longer at Ease, the writer's aim is not to separate himself from his audience, even if he is criticizing and commenting on his society's way of living, under a satirical tone. He chooses the satire because he considers it as the strongest weapon to denounce all evils in the society.

Irony, which is one of the major tones of satire is the characteristic mode of the novel. Through the whole work, the author uses irony to ridiculize some manners, behaviours, customs or beliefs. It is used in particular on the protagonist's character. Obi is an individual, but through him, the author presents a whole generation,

which is one of young educated Nigerians who grow in modern Nigeria. Chinua Achebe exposes the problems of a developing country whose people are unable to assume any commitment towards their country. Almost the whole scene is played by Obi the main character.

No Longer at Ease gives an account of the quality of contemporary Nigerian life. It gives an explicit comment on the inheritance that both the writer and his society received from the colonial period. To do that, the language it uses is half traditional, half modern.

The common expedient of the ironist is to juxtapose two or more contradictory or incompatible objects, statements, ideas or scenes. No Longer at Ease if full of contradictory ideas and scenes. Obi's thoughts involve contradictions. What he believes is opposed to what he does. The whole irony on him can be summed up in the fact that he chooses principles, then defends them but ends by succumbing.

The technique of opposition is the most ironical and a relevant form of a satirical style. The fact of presenting two opposed characters, suggests a positive aspect beside a negative one. It is the reader's or audience's duty to detect what is wrong and what is right. In No Longer at Ease, the technique of opposition is frequently used. Obi's ideas are opposed to the ideas of his interlocutors. For instance, when he is discussing with his friend Christopher about the nature of bribery, they take opposed positions. The author comments that,

> Whichever line Obi took, Christopher had to take the opposite. Christopher was an economist from the London School of Economics and he always pointed out that Obi's arguments were not based on factual or scientific analysis which was not surprising since he had taken a degree in English. [2]

Obi is not only opposed to Christopher, but he is almost opposed to all the people he deals with. Every time the author opposes two characters, he wants to show what is good and what is bad. Sometimes his characters are chosen from different generations or if they are from the same generation, one stands for his time and the other for his elders. Although Christopher, Joseph, Clara are modern young people, they stand sometimes for tradition. When discussing Obi's marriage, none of those young men sustain him in his doings and when he was caught taking bribes, nobody understands the motives behind his act.

Through characters, the author shows what should be faught and what should prevail. Moreover, we have seen that Achebe is a committed writer who has the role of teaching. As a writer, he seeks solutions to all problems of his society in imaginative forms. He wants his people to identify themselves with the characters he presents , and be ashamed of their irresponsibility in a country they should be committed. He is satirizing the viciousness of young generations who are eager of getting as much as possible like their elders, and compromise their good principles. To deal with this, irony is a sharp weapon the author uses. Obi's weaknesses are ironized from the beginning to the end of the novel. His principles are presented under an ironic tone. The author puts it in the following terms:

> Obi's theory that the public service of Nigeria would remain corrupt until the old Africans at the top were replaced by young men from the universities was first formulated in a newspaper read to the Nigerian Students' Union in London. But unlike most theories formed by students in London, this one survived the first impact of homecoming. 3

Here is an ironic exposure of Obi's naivety and ignorance of the real situation. His theory is a mere idealization formulated when he was still abroad. When he arrived at the field the match was going to take place, things turned another way and prevented him from doing what he had intended to do.

The author is ironic, too, when he presents Obi, defending his principles. Obi attributes evils to backwardness and believes in the success of the new generation because, according to him,

> To most of them bribery is no problem. They come straight to the top without bribing anyone. It's not that they're necessarily better than others, it's simply that they can afford to be virtuous. But even that kind of virtue can become a habit. 4

Christopher, his interlocutor, objects: "Very well put." and he does not say more. One can have the impression that Christopher approves of what Obi says, but in reality the answer involves a great irony. It is as if he wanted to stop Obi who was going far in his naivety. In fact, it will not take him a long time to be involved in bribery.

On his return from England, Obi seems to fight corruption. Already on his way home, he gives the following remark to a boy who is asking for money on travelling baggages without giving government receipt.

> If there was a policeman here I would hand you over to him. 5

Here, irony arises in the fact that the police Obi was wishing to others, were called on his part.

At the root of all irony is a contrast between what is being said, implied or suggested and what is actually the case. Obi's life is full of contradictions. On his affair with an Osu girl, one time we hear him saying that even his mother cannot stop him, but later he prefers to break with Clara. When he decides to go and ask some advice to his friend Christopher, the latter tells Obi:

> You know, Obi, I had wanted to discuss that matter with you. But I have learnt not to interfere in a matter between a man and a woman, especially with chaps like you who have wonderful ideas about love. 6

Irony is clear here, too. Obi is judged to have "wonderful ideas" he is unable to realize. A little far he adds:

> You may say I am not broad-minded but I don't think we have reached the stage where we can ignore all our customs. 7

This statement is not the least to involve irony. Christopher is humble in self-judgement and this is a means used to criticize Obi.

Another case of contradiction one can notice is the fact that Obi, who was intended to get a high salary, was corrupt because of financial problems. When he was engaged in the Civil Service, people were convinced that he would no more encounter financial difficulties.

> Obi even heard someone ask what he was going to do with the big money which Government would give him. 8

It is contradictory to realize that Obi suffers from financial troubles, whereas his people believe that what Government pays him is more than enough.

The author uses a double irony to present Obi's contradiction in defining what bribery is. When he accepts to be offered Miss.Elsie's body for her scholarship, he defends himself arguing that it is not an act of bribery. He turns to affirm that bribery concerns only money. He says:

> You see, the difference is this. "He paused." Let's put it this way. No man wants to part with his money. If you accept money from a man you make him poorer. But if you go to bed with a girl who asks for it, I don't see that you have done any harm. 9

There is a double irony on Obi, who, on one hand succumbs to bribery, and on the other hand, does not want to recognize his failure. He tries to put things in his favour. By giving a wrong definition of bribery he is seeking to justify his act.

Irony is produced on Obi's behaviour but sometimes he is himself ironic in his speech; for instance, when he says that, "The civil service is corrupt because of these so-called experienced men at the top."10 We have a double irony here, too. First, Obi is questioning the competence of old leaders and this is done under an ironic tone. Furthermore, he is himself subject to irony, because his statement is not true. It is going to be proved that old people are not the only persons to be corrupt, but young Nigerians and the elite show the same weaknesses.

It is under an ironic tone that Mr.Green, Obi's colonial boss, criticizes Africans, particularly the educated ones, who are

according to him, useless and irresponsible. This is observed in the following remark he gives to Obi.

> It is people like you who ought to make the government decide. That is what I have always said. There is no single Nigerian who is prepared to forgo a little privilege in the interest of his country. From your ministers down to your most junior clerk. And you tell me you want to govern yourselves. [11]

As an art of satire, the technique of opposition has been frequently used to criticize different social classes. Every time the author opposes two characters or two scenes, he wants the reader to admire what is right and despise what is wrong. It is not a fact of haphazard that the two doctors Obi consults, are opposed, one being virtuous and the other vicious. The first doctor that Obi visits is the ideal person the author has in his mind. When Obi tells him about the problem, he says:

> I am sorry, my dear young man, but I cannot help you. What you are asking me to do is a criminal offence for which I could go to jail and lose my licence. But apart from that I have my reputation to safeguard - Twenty years' practice without a single blot."[12]

By this quotation we notice that the first doctor's fear is not only rooted in the fact that he can be jailed, but more than that, he cares very much about his dignity and honour. It is not the case of the second doctor Obi comes to, who is a young and very business-like.

> He said he had no taste for the job they were asking him to do. It is not medicine, he said. I did not spend seven years in England to study that. However, I shall do it for you if you are prepared to pay my fee. Thirty pounds. To be paid before I do anything. No cheques. Raw cash. What say you? [13]

This quotation does not lack irony. The doctor says he is not prepared for such thing; however, he does it. It is contradictory. He is a slave of money which is more powerful than his personality.

The technique of opposition has been used to show the contrast that exists between black people and white men when facing their respective duties. While white people show great devotion in their duties, black people are described as lazy people who do not like working. This is seen through the character of Joshua, a messenger from Umuofia, who works at Lagos. The president of U.P.U. gives him the following remark:

> You did not leave Umuofia four hundred miles away to come and sleep in Lagos; there are enough beds in Umuofia. If you don't want to work, you should return there. You messengers are all like that. [14]

The author is opposing black people in general and Ibos in particular to white men who are always busy. Mr.Green is a white man who works very much in a country which is not his own. Here, the author is satirizing the naivety of Africans who think that their independence is to come from the colonizer's hands. Obi believes that Mr.Green is working for Nigeria's independence. When he observed that Mr.Green worked so hard,

> It reminded him of what he had once read about Mohamed Ali of Egypt, who in his old age worked in frenzy to modernize his country before his death. In the case of Green it was difficult to see what his deadline was unless it was Nigeria's independence. 15

By this quotation Chinua Achebe is satirizing the young Nigerians who are irresponsible in the development of their country. He is re proaching them to claim independence they do not deserve.

The whole evolution of the protagonist is described with irony. The way Obi's departure, reception and trial are presented involves a great irony. Each of these events was an occasion to alert the population. It is said that, "Obi's going to England caused a big stir in Umuofia."16 When he came back,

> There were hundreds of people at Obi's reception. There were not enough chairs for all of them to sit on, so that many sat on their goat-skins spread on the floor. 17

Here, irony arises in the fact that Obi is considered as a very important man for his community , but that he will not represent what he was expected to be. The author is very ironic by the way he presents Obi presenting his thanks to his people. He says that when Obi was given the opportunity to talk to his people,

> He thanked them for the sacrifices they had made to send him to England. He would try his best to justify their confidence. 18

Obi's trial does not lack irony, either. People gather more for curiosity than for love. The author states that,

> The case had been the talk of Lagos for a number of weeks and on this last day anyone who could possibly leave his job was there to hear the judgement. Some Civil Servants paid as much as ten shillings and sixpence to obtain a doctor's certificate of illness for the day. 19

The use of proverbs in Achebe's works holds an important place. We have seen that Chinua Achebe deals especially with his society and writes especially for it. Therefore, he uses a language which is familiar to his people; and for him and his society, "proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten." Proverbs are full of meaning and through one proverb, a whole scene can be presented. Those proverbs are usually used to warn people not to fall in bad things or to make them be aware that what they have done is bad. Their aim is to educate or to correct. The president uses proverbs to criticize Obi's actions. For instance, when he learns that Obi has been caught for twenty pounds he has accepted as a bribe, he says:

> If you want to eat a toad you should look for a fat and juicy one. 20

When he was criticizing the procedure Obi used to gather the bribe, he did it by accounting "The proverb of the house rat who went swimming with his friend the lizard and died from cold, for while the lizard's scales kept him dry, the rat's hairy body remained wet."[21] This proverb is a satire which involves an ironic tone.

When Obi gets financial problems, some ironic proverbs are used to describe the situation. Because of the problems that overwhelm him, the author satirizes him saying that Ibo people have devised a proverb which says that, "It is not right to ask a man with elephantiasis of the scrotum to take on smallpox as well when thousands of other people have not had even their share of small diseases."22 Obi is seen suffering very much from problems that a man of his rank would not suffer.

Generally, to detect what is ironic in a literary work, requires to be aware of the realities on the state of things in the world you are analyzing. In No Longer at Ease, this analysis is rendered possible because the novel opens by what is the issue of the story. It begins with the failure of the protagonist. Therefore, evolving in the reading, one is aware that all objectives and ambitions of the hero are predicted to failure. That is why we can easily find instances that are ironic in the work. For instance, just from the beginning one knows that Obi has been caught for having accepted a bribe. Therefore, later, when he pretends to be against bribery and tries to resist Mr.Mark's temptation, one can notice the irony with which the author presents the scene. When Clara asks him about his attitude towards Mr.Mark who wanted to offer him a bribe, he says:

> You think I should have
> encouraged him to talk
> about bribing me? 23

Irony is real here. Obi who does not like to hear people talking about bribing him, will take a bribe without any insistance of the giver. What he says is proved to be just the opposite of what he does some time later.

The language used in No Longer at Ease is a language of satire which is different from the direct language . When the author describes scenes, he means more than the literary sense that is produced on the written paper. He is criticizing, commenting, satirizing what is satirical in his society. He does it by using irony, oppositions, proverbs which involve a satirical tone.
To understand what is satirical and ironical in his work, the clever reader should not concentrate only on the word form and its literary meaning, but he has to read between lines.

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2. Ibid., p.17.

3. Ibid., p.45.

4. Ibid., p.18.

5. Ibid., p.27.

6. Ibid., p.130.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., p.74.

9. Ibid., p.111.

10. Ibid., p.2.

11. Ibid., p.139.

12. Ibid., p.132.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., p.72.

15. Ibid., p.96.

16. Ibid., p.7.

17. Ibid., p.46.

18. Ibid., p.74.

19. Ibid., p.1.

20. Ibid., p.5.

21. Ibid., p.6.

22. Ibid., p.90.

23. Ibid., p.86.

CONCLUSION.

Modern African writing has been concerned almost exclusively with the reality of African life and few African writers of English expression have sought their thematic material outside Africa. Unlike writers in some countries with similar colonial pasts, African writers have not turned their back on their own cultures; rather they faced the problems, and sought solutions for them in imaginative form.

In No Longer at Ease as well as in his other novels, Chinua Achebe has been concerned not only with the impact of colonization on African values but also he assigns the task of re-education of his society. We have already said that Achebe is not a simple writer who writes in order to entertain his audience or readers, but his role is more than that. He is a committed writer whose commitment is to try to help his people reconstruct their country by making them aware of the problems that jeopardize and progress. Thus, the audience he is addressing is especially his people and not the foreign reader. Achebe recognizes that he is a teacher whose pupils are young Nigerians in particular and Africans in general. His assertions of the educative role of the writer are summed up in the following quotation:

> The writer cannot be excused from the task of re-education and re-generation that must be done. In fact he should march right in front. For he is after all - as Ezekiel Mphalele says in his African Image - the sensitive point in his community... Perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure. But who cares? Art is important but so is education of the kind I have in mind. [1]

The writer is especially equipped to know in a sensitive way what is prominent in the minds, what are the most pressing concerns of the people about and for whom he writes.

Part of Achebe's concern has been reconciling the individual with his cultural heritage on the one hand, and his culture in a time of crisis on the other. In No Longer at Ease Achebe presents an evolving society whose problems are rooted in modernity. Therefore, his task has been not only to show what was his society before the coming of the white man but also to assert the rights and obligations which are conferred on the generality of people in contemporary society. He remarks that, for the past informs the present, the writer, according to this, helps to establish values and often assists a generality of people in making a single choice from many choices open to them. Ultimately in this respect, Achebe's quest has been to find in the aspirations of his contemporary society new ways of re aching understanding in the light of traditional values as they are confronted with the impact of modern ideas. In No Longer at Ease he is concerned with individuals whose passions and hopes and fears are permanent in mankind.

Achebe's writing has a claim to universality because it offers a vision of life which is essentially tragic, compounded of success and failure, imbued with an awareness of human suffering and the human capacity to endure. Sometimes his characters meet with success more often with defeat and despair. His themes are generally taken from the realities he observes in his society. They constitute the tragedy of everyday life and represent the human condition. The characters he describes are human beings with possible human weaknesses which are seen as the characteristics of humankind. Yet, even if those weaknesses are a natural fact, in human condition, they are associated with the effect of the presence of Europe in Africa. He writes not only about the black man's weaknesses, but also about the fate of black people in a world progressively recreated by white men.

Achebe is essentially a moralist, concerned with considerations of right and wrong as they are revealed by the individual's responses to the circumstances which surround him. The art of satire has served him as a weapon to criticize his society by showing that change is possible and must be operated. By this technique he shows that the black man should not submit and say that corruption cannot find any other solution than to wait passively for one's turn to eat. He rather invites young Nigerians to be conscious of the role they are assigned in their country and then work hard to achieve democracy and modernity. They are appealled to use their own hands to build a new and better nation because as he stresses it,

> It is through the actions of the new elite that reform will have to come if it is to come at all. [2]

Achebe acts like a teacher addressing his pupils. He raises a problem for which they should find solution. In No Longer at Ease, the problem he deals with is that of corruption which is observed in old leaders as well as in young Nigerians. In addition to this, he presents the problem of conflict between tradition and modernity, as reflected in the young educated men. He sticks to the inability of young Nigerians to stand up and fight for better conditions; since they cannot avoid temptation and that tradition overweighs on their conviction in modernity. Unlike in Things Fall Apart where Achebe is concerned especially with his traditional society, No Longer at Ease deals with a contemporary Nigeria and its problems which are in fact the problems of contemporary Africa in general. Therefore, if he deals with Nigeria, he would like that other writers deal with other corners of Africa. He suggests what follows:

> It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flames. 3

Though the writer exposes the problems facing contemporary Africa, he does not suggest any solution and leaves the task to the reader. As readers, we are invited to bring our contribution in suggesting some solutions. Therefore, our suggestion is like this: education of all social classes is the most powerful means that can bring better conditions. Writers should go on satirizing the unhappy realities they observe in their countries, for instance, the practice of corruption as it fills an important place in the novel under study, and claim always for change. By this way we can hope that, leaders will be ashamed of wrong things they do and will adopt a more or less honest way of living. Furthermore, the masses should not remain passive towards those evils. They must act and denounce loudly what is vicious in their country. For instance, with regard to corruption, if all the masses were able to refuse to offer any bribe, the practice would be obliged to disappear. Young educated people on their side should bring their contribution since they are the most enlightened in the way that leads to progress. They should be conscious of the part they have in the building of their country.

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