



Research Paper

The Inherence of Otherness in the Self: from Fiction to High Artistic Truth in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*

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ABSTRACT:- Seeing that art interprets all human experiences, the novelist debatably assumes the role of an artist, a teacher, a philosopher, a psychologist, and a concerned cognoscente who propagates and reproduces the values of his time. This is the role that Chinua Achebe played for Africans with his writings.

Thus, the novel presents to us a social discourse that creates awareness on our human condition. This condition is that the fevered effort by Africans to exorcise the racist tendency of the imperialists is also inherent in the Africans themselves. This cultural role of the novel now projects a palpable alternative thought pattern that reflectively re-engages the novel in a different light, quite contrary to the existing musings and analytic models in which such novels have been analyzed.

Here, we will look at *No Longer at Ease*, showing the interiority of otherness exhibited by the characters whenever they are confronted with decision-making. This otherness manifests both as contradictions and segregative potentiality in these characters' psyche. This becomes for us a critique on the sanctimoniousness that characterizes the fight to diminish the dehumanizing otherness of imperialism in Africa. The paper also argues that Africans are equally culpable of the same act.

Keywords:- Contradiction, Corruption, Otherness, Reality, Self.

I. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between fiction and truth is that of antagonism since the two are not in complementary disposition. And so if veracity can be associated with fiction, it has to be on the basis of 'probability' and 'necessity' (Aristotle). But beyond the fecundity of the writer's imagination; beyond the fertility of his inventiveness, the writer sometimes unconsciously transcends fictionality to some candour (Plato). And this said truism (high artistic truth) presents in the work a pseudo-social discourse with a functional message for the psychological, historical and instinctive dimensions of our empirical existence in this world of reality.

While trying to interpret all human experiences, art—especially the novel—strides between the 'impenetrable darkness' of man's origin and the 'deep obscurity' of man's future (Achebe)[1] to tell nothing but stories; however, the interest of the man in the street in his reading of a novel is usually the intrigue and new experiences presented in the novel(s). But as initiates, we first look at what is told as well as how the story works. By so doing, we unravel the human instinctive and intuitive attitudes interlocked in the work. As such, the perception of ideas in a work of art is subject to the interpretation of the critic, hence 'art is dumb' while 'criticism speaks' (Frye). This presages our already hinted intent in this essay: identifying, naming, describing, discussing, evaluating and examining the assumptions initially taken for granted on the above novel. This stance is to prove that the self is an embodiment of inherent otherness (contradictions and opposites). This is not so obvious to the self, hence it (the self) perpetually fights to keep such otherness at a bay as Obi and Isaac Okonkwo respectively, as well as other characters epitomize.

II. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Edger Roberts [2] has maintained that great works of literature make new meaning(s) for each succeeding generation (35). This can only be guaranteed in *No Longer at Ease* when our logical autopsy persistently questions the 'prevailing assumptions and branches of existing thought (McDonalds 29)[3] on this very novel. After so many decades of the publication and the study of Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, Akwanya[4] insists that:

Apart from the fact that Chinua Achebe's [texts] are among the foundation texts in the African literary tradition and as such are assured unceasing critical visitations, there seems to be a need to rethink some of the conclusions reached early in our literary history concerning these very important works which are used in critical discussions almost as axioms ('Ambiguous Signs' 60).

In rethinking the internal logic in this novel, we first identify it as an African literary text. As a miniature in African literature, *No Longer at Ease* and the entire African literary canon that moors it, mean many things to many scholars. The likes of Per Wastberg sees it (African literature) as an appendage to Western literature, others see it as a kind of writing with distinct message(s), while some others yet see it as a 'political document' characterized by the protest against the denigrating legacies of colonialism against the African colonial subjects (Wastberg,[5] *Slavery, Colonialism and Racism*: 135). Thus Lyay Kimoni defines African Literature as:

[The] literary manifestation of Blacks in European or other languages which fought colonialism violently, expressed its anger over the dislocation of the African society, and which painfully strives to rebuild the equilibrium of African personality on new foundations (qtd in Ohaegbu 15)[6].

With this, the interest of African literature becomes so much in what the work talks about (content and theme) as opposed to the form and structure of most modern literary ideals. This also aligns African literature with the didactic and instructive nature of Horace's artistic facsimile of 'teaching and delighting' as the purpose of art. This is not exclusive to literature. It assumes a parallel illumination of all other related disciplines that are interested in the European-African cultural activity in Africa. Hence, following the colonial encounter and their jaundiced presentation of Africa by the Europeans;

The [African] historian works to unmask the barbarism of colonial conquest and resurrect the chiefs who resisted it. The ethnographer polemicizes against those who doubt Africa's ability to bring about a civilization. The theologian discovers intricate metaphysical phenomena in the various forms of animism, and sees how these are often closely related to Christianity (Wastberg 136).

For Wastberg, writers and scholars are divided in their attitude towards this issue—the idea of what constitutes African literature (38). Some of the traditionalists and cultural nationalists feel a very strong need to return to the indigenous values, showing disinterestedness to the politically-inspired art-making. For them, a desire to build a new form of writing on the foundation of oral tradition is what would aptly qualify as African Literature (138). The works of Amos Tutuola or Elechi Amadi belong here. However, the alternative literary attitude preaches the writer's responsibility to work for the liberation of the individual against the toxic colonial effects and legacies in Africa; this is where Achebe belongs (139). The logic is that the writer has to be a prophet, a visioner, 'a builder of the future' seeing more than the common man (139). The psychological and emotional conflict of the characters are out of this investigative model since the subject matter revolves around the glory of the pristine past of the pre-colonial Africa and the tensions that follow the colonial imposition of 'Western rationalism' (139). In view of all these, our study tries to look al fresco by focusing on not just the themes but also the characters and their psychological dispositions.

III. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

That we tell stories and our stories tell whom we are (Bennette and Royle) is apt in describing how Achebe's novels provide a leeway through which the Africans can understand themselves better and also shows the realities of African existence. And so, Achebe sums up his artistic career in the following light:

[My] major objective was to challenge stereotypes, myths, and the image of ourselves, to recast them through stories –prose, poetry, essay (2012:53)[7].

It is apparent that such pedantic obsession to refute the imperialistic principles is normally channeled against these four observable colonial agents and their residue which constitute strong otherness for the African 'self'—the colonial administrator/administration, the Christian missionary, the European merchants and the European explorers. It is the colonial racism, unhealthy definition, segregation, exploitation, hypocrisy and inhumanity that African writers set out to correct. In his 'Colonial Criticism', Achebe maintains that the African intellectual awareness is to challenge Europe's 'presence and position' in Africa with the intellectual weapon of Europe itself –education (3-5). And that those writers who are indifferent to it perhaps have accomplished enough changes that can guarantee their comfort (14). He joins Adrian Roscoe to bemoan Tutuola's insensitivity to the incompatibility of the African and the European ethos when he (Tutuola) writes in his *The Palm Wine Drinkard* that both white and black dead live together in the Dead Town where the drunk (the king of the gods) sojourns (qtd in 'Colonial Criticism' 15). This social expectation on the writer is what Achebe [8] amplifies in his 'The Novelist as a Teacher':

[My aim is] to help my society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self abasement ... for no thinking African can escape the pain of the wound in our soul [which is] to teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first European acting on God's behalf delivered them (45-6).

Achebe [9] concludes that white's racism against Africans is a normal European way of thinking whose manifestations go unremarked ('Racism in Conrad' 1452). In fact, he situates tragedy where and when anything leaves its original place, especially when Europeans left their comfortable homes to assist the barbarians in the heart of darkness ('Racism in Conrad' 1449). All these project the image of Africa as 'the other', the antithesis of Europe. This is what strengthened the African writers to respond to the white man also positioning him in the light of otherness as well.

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Achebe and other African intellectuals are not wrong in their vigorous and aggressive crusade against the white otherness but our effort here is in line with the Igbo proverb that *mgbe i na aru mmadu otu mkpisi aka, mkpisi aka ato ndi ozo na aru gi onwe gi: when you point an accusing finger on a person, the other three fingers are also pointed towards you*. Our interest in the self is not a justification for the moral statues of the imperialists –whether they are guilty or otherwise is immaterial to this study. Rather, in looking at ourselves, we discover otherness in the same measure that we consider unbearable in the out group members (white man in African case). It is in this sense that Edwin Thumbo[10] observes that 'we are both self and other depending on who controls or manages the equation, who does the inspecting and who is inspected (qtd in Mohr xi). It presupposes, as Jane Clifford has it, that identity and difference are both fundamental in dissolving the original boundary between the self and the other (in Mohr xvi).

Edwin Thumbo pursues further that a contact is naturally established once a group of people engages another. For him, whether these two extreme groups are equal or unequal, the 'contact is shaped, managed and steadily negotiated on various levels according to the contending interest and power of each side' (cited in Mohr 11).

The above frame is quite accurate if the otherness we are to discuss in *No Longer at Ease* is cross-cultural. This is because that has a fundamental 'alterity' (difference) that defines the self as content; relating it to a collective identity which justifies or sustains the 'us' and 'we' dispositions as distinct from 'them' and 'they' (Thumbo cited in Mohr 12). However, the novel before us presents just one group which ideally ought to constitute a self but secretes otherness within the self. Here, it becomes a question of the atavistic attitude because difference or 'alterity' ought to be a divide between the other and the self. But here it is attributed to the self alone.

V. DECENTERING THE SELF IN *NO LONGER AT EASE*

Literature according to Nicholas Andrew and Bennette Royle[11] is concerned with exploring and reflecting on the nature of personal identity (129). Put differently, it is a space in which 'questions about the nature of personal identity are most provocatively articulated' (125). Going through *No Longer at Ease*, we find Judith Jell's assertion that the mind set is responsible for a long term legacy of 'institutionalized racism' in different forms, making the segregative tendency we are to explore in the novel a universal human condition as well as a more central than marginal focus (43).

Martin Heidegger [12] explains that the principle of identity is the highest principle of thought (*Identity and Difference* 23). The normal formation of identity for him is 'A=A', hence the equality of 'A to A'. But the thought principle of identity need not be reduced to a mere equation (23) for the etymology of identity is in the Latin word *idem* translated in Greek to mean 'the same' which is 'A is A' (every A is itself the same); and so sameness implies the relationship of 'with' (unity, connection and holisms) (25). Heidegger tries to show that the identity of every being is in unity, so that something or some people is/are the same implies that it/they is/are together (28). This theory is the ideal notion of the composite I or self which should make a person (Obi Okonkwo/ Isaac Okonkwo) or a people one. But the inner contradictions and otherness in Heidegger's theory above is what Jaques Derrida addresses in his 'decentering process' of deconstruction (Carter 109). This is what Hans Bertens[13] explains that the post structuralism sees language as unstable and unreliable medium of communication; hence the claim of a genuine knowledge of ourselves and identity is subject to the 'indeterminacy of language' (Bertens 113).

Achebe's novels, according to Ian Watt, achieve their success in their 'preeminent sociality' and 'exceptional historic representativeness' (453). Beyond the social discourse dimension, the truth of Achebe's fiction is in the psychological conflict of the characters that reveals internal contradictions and heterodoxy (otherness) that characterize the supposed coherent self. Ordinarily, otherness towards outsiders constructs the identity of the insiders as it shapes their idea of who they think they are and the group(s) to which they belong. In Achebe's [14] *Things Fall Apart*, colonialism and all its allies constitute otherness which Okonkwo considers outside of him/his people and so needs to be exorcised. To him, death is a preferable relief from the ugly reality that bedevils them.

Moving from *Things Fall Apart* to *No Longer at Ease* (Achebe)[15] we see segregation depicted as a fundamental dimension of human thought so that 'identities are set up as dichotomies' (Zygmunt). By

embracing the white man, Nwoye (later Isaac) makes his old self the other. In the face of the flux, Obi Okonkwo is confronted with creating order in the face of the fast changing world and African values (Irele 15)[16]. We see Obi's hollowness in terms the moral strength that can sustain his corporate self that titanically fights otherness of different facets. Obi proves unsophisticated in handling his human relationship, a testament of the degraded conducts which Mr. Green, Obi's superior in the civil service disparages when he concludes that all Africans are corrupt (*NLE* 3). As a white man, Mr. Green expresses otherness towards the Africans in lamenting that Africans should ask for leave, a design for the top Europeans to cool off from the inclemency of the African weather (*NLE* 139). He also believes that Africans cannot make sacrifice for their home land (*NLE* 139) as he ensures that Obi observes the bureaucratic hierarchy of subordination in answering 'sir' when he is called by his superior (*NLE* 60). His cynicism is further manifested in his putting Obi in the same office as Marie, his secretary to spy on Obi (*NLE* 77).

The reciprocity of otherness in *No Longer at Ease* subsists in Obi's curt response to his boss that the extravagance that he (Green) complains of is a colonial design because the structure is created when no African serves in the senior civil service, but as few Africans join that world apart, the whites become uneasy (*NLE* 139). Similarly, the Commissioner, Hon. Sam Okoli brazenly expresses his craving for the white man to leave Nigeria. He gloats in the fact that his AS (assistant secretary) is a white and takes orders from him (*NLE* 62).

The two extremes of dichotomized identities of the whites and blacks in this work are understood as binary opposites. But as we focus on one end of the pole, Obi Okonkwo will be spotted with his earlier rational ideals grafted to the collectivity of Umuofia as a same self. This justifies the selfless gesture of the eight hundred pounds loan-scholarship support that the Umuofia Progressive Union grants him for his oversea studies. The unity and strength of this centripetal self is thought in the fact that no isolated individual could have pooled that amount of money; a reading which the narrator underscores in his account of the old man's opening prayer at the UPU's meeting:

The old man who broke the kola nuts in Lagos and called Obi Okonkwo an only palm-fruit was not thinking of Okonkwo's family. He was thinking of the ancient and war-like village of Umuofia (*NLE* 6).

The selfless monetary support of the union is not the only indicator to prove Obi's attachment to the collective Umuofia selfhood. His farewell party at his father's house demonstrates his absolute integration, but even more conspicuous is the welcome party which in Obi's assessment is a bit flamboyant though the members of his community see it as having been under executed. In the speech of the secretary of the union, he maintains that: 'Ours is ours, but mine is mine.... We are happy that today we have our illustrious son and guest of honour [there]' (*NLE* 29).

For the hero himself, if there is any otherness, it should be in their relationship with the opposing race (the whites) as he makes a loutish joke about having been fed up of eating 'boiled potatoes' during his dinner with Joseph at the Palm Groove' to assault the Europeans present (*NLE* 31). Obi so much believes in the inseparability of the Umuofia selfhood that he regrets the linguistic disparity that often occurs whenever he meets Nigerian students from other tribes during his studies in England (*NLE* 45). He so much wishes that those people had been present as he is returning to Umuofia to see the propriety in human social relationship;

...to see [] and listen to the talk of men who made a great art of conversation. Let them come and see men and women and children who knew how to live, whose joy of life had not yet been killed by those who claim to teach other nations how to live (*NLE* 45).

The spurious nature of Obi's presupposition of his indivisible selfhood with his people is in the fact that the subsequent otherness (contradictions) he manifests is innate and not quite obvious to him. This inherent contradiction starts from his defiance in studying English and Literature as against Law which his sponsors originally planned for him. Their intention is for him to be in the gape for them in the event of a need for any litigation, but he flouts that. Similarly, he punctuates this disappointment with his appearance in shirtsleeves instead of a suit during his reception party as though he is not a 'been-to' (*NLE* 28). At this point, his people still think they can manage such 'misdemeanor' in him.

As Obi's manifestation of his innate otherness gathers momentum, his tragedy is gradually being orchestrated. His insistence on marrying Clara, an *Osui*, severs him from his initial selfhood with Umuofia as the question that Joseph, his friend asks him clearly implies: 'Do you know what an *Osui* is? And how can you know?' Joseph could not have been in doubt as to whether Obi knows what an *Osui* is (a social outcast). He purports to say that there are already some inherent contradictions radiating within his friend that make certain facts no longer obvious to him, and that these 'alterity' have the potentiality for otherness as it concerns the hero's selfhood in and within his community. The narrator consummates this with the assertion that:

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 (*NLE* 64-5).

Even in the above astuteness, both the narrator and Joseph missed out the point for they attribute Obi's exhibition of heterodox attitude to his newly-acquired hybrid intellectual culture that alienates him from his original self. The truth is that Obi is just being human, that it takes otherness to be human. To prove this point is

not just to chronicle Obi Okonkwo's shocking and unexpected dispositions among which are his insensitivity to the perilous implication of marrying Clara on his posterity (*NLE* 67-8). Or his inexplicable absence during his mother's death and burial, despite being the first son of the family, and his mother's favourite child; though he justifies his act by claiming that the money he sent is of more value than his presence. His friend, Christopher sees this as outrageous: 'You may say that I am not broad minded but I don't think we have reached the stage where we can ignore all our customs' (*NLE* 130). The fight now is no longer against the imperialistic principles with the 'we' and 'them' dialectics but against the self, 'I' against 'me'. This starts first with making Joseph his bosom friend the *pharmakos* (scapegoat) for his (Joseph's) role in informing the UPU of Obi's intended sacrilege. In the long run, Obi comes to the realization that order than fighting an enemy; he is fighting himself as the narrator intones:

Obi admitted that his people had a sizeable point. What they did not know was that, having labored in sweat and tears to enroll their kinsman among the shinning elite, they had to keep him there (*NLE* 90). The fact that Obi's manifestation of otherness is a disclosure of the interiority of his psyche does not mean that he is exempted from the tragic implications that follow such actions. The danger that follows the disintegration of the self is what Joseph, his friend, UPU, and his parents warn against. Even the off-the-cuff song by the Umuofia women returning from a funeral, who call in to greet the just-retuned Obi bears the same caveat against otherness:

'The letter said
That money cannot buy a kinsman,
That he who has brothers
Has more than riches can buy' (*NLE* 117).

That Obi did not heed this warning is in the fact that what he is manifesting is skin deep, hence he lies to his father that he seldom finds time to attend the Umuofia meeting in Lagos where as the all-knowing narrator accounts that he has not attended the meeting since November (*NLE* 119).

Even more convoluted is the idea of Obi supporting Clara's abortion of his baby that almost claimed her life. From Obi's action, one may suspect that he is trying to save the unborn baby from a fate worse than death (*Osu*), just like that doting mother in Tony Morrison's *Beloved* who kills her little baby instead of allowing her face American slavery. But how true can this reading be? Initially we see Obi preen himself as a path blazer in the crusade against a ferocious custom:

I can handle them.... In future, when we are all civilized, anybody may marry anybody.... We of this generation are only pioneers. What is a pioneer? Someone who shows the way. That is what I am doing. Anyway, it is too late to change now (*NLE* 67-8).

If Obi is truly a trail-blazer, even if he cannot marry Clara, he should have at least allowed the baby to be born, to express his faith that by and by, such obnoxiousness could be redressed; but instead, he makes that whim for change in him an Other by borrowing thirty pounds for such ignoble undertaking –digging a new pit to cover an old hole. In truth, the president of the UPU summarizes his perception and judgment of Obi in the analogy of a bird that flies off the earth and lands on an anthill. According to him, such a bird is still on the ground (*NLE* 146).

Does Obi's manifestation of Otherness really translate to flying off the earth and landing on an anthill? That could be possible only in Lisa Onbelet's[17] delineation of Otherness as anything or anyone that is not me'. Obi's action therefore amount to, 'flying off the earth' in his vanguard 'struggle' against corruption and bribery. Corruption initially constitutes other in as much as Obi sees it as not being part of him or even having the propensity of ever becoming attributed to him. Obi has the vision of a new Nigeria where meritocracy will reign supreme. And so he wishes to start from the scholarship board where he works. His sense of propriety will not be bugged even if the civil servants' Leave for Africans is stamped out (*NLE* 139). Obi spends his leisure theorizing about the debilitating effect of corruption for their young nation each time he is with his friend, Christopher (*NLE* 17). In as much as corruption seems to be the order of the day, Obi tries his best to ensure that he keeps off from this thing which he considers not part of him as he demonstrates upon his arrival at the Lagos Warf during the event of his return from England; where he wouldn't pay two pounds without the government receipt for his cabin to be cleared. He rather pays five pounds for the job provided that he is issued with a receipt to avoid corruption (*NLE* 27). This is also the attitude he displays during the little drama that occurs between the lorry guard and the police officer who wants to take money from the poor and uninformed motorist on Obi's transit from Lagos to Umuofia (*NLE* 39); to say the least of his rejection of Mr. Mark's offer of a bribe to assist his sister secure a scholarship (*NLE* 78) as well as his resistance of Miss Mark's offer of her body for the same purpose. In fact, Obi's response to the question on bribery and his conservative readiness to forfeit that job from the point of interview provided he proves his point to all thereby shows his fervor to prove that corruption is neither part of him nor can be associated with him. At every point of his overcoming a temptation of taking a

bribe, he feels like Christ felt after defeating the devil, as though the heavens would open and a voice announces: 'this is my beloved son, in whom there is no corruption, listen to him'.

However, his internal otherness proves all that as mere hypocritical as Clara points out that the offer of Mr. Mark and that of his sister are of equal import but Obi treats the man with pervasive grimness and the lady with modest civility:

I think you were too severe on the man.... After all, offering money is not as bad as offering one's body. And yet you gave her a drink and a lift back to town (*NLE 86*).

As Obi denies his 'self' all the while identified with piety and saintliness, everybody seems confused that a person of his standing can fall for just twenty pounds. The presiding judge's bewilderment stands out as he thinks aloud: 'I cannot comprehend how a young man of your education and brilliant promise could have done this' (*NLE 2*), just as the British council man asserts, 'I cannot explain why he did it (*NLE2*).

While the fact eludes all the characters, just one man exhibits laudable perspicacity. That man is Mr. Green. His judgmental analysis constitutes the writer's artistic truth that:

The African is corrupt through and through... they are all corrupt... they have been sapped mentally and physically. We have brought him western education. But what use is it to him? (*NLE3*).

The veracity of Green's assertion is not in its bluntness or curtness. It is in the fact that he alone is able to look beyond the appearances into the realm of reality. To prove the certitude of the above analysis that the otherness is inside of both Obi, his kinsmen, as well the white man himself, we look at the reaction of the members of the Umuofia Progressive Union. The president of the union first starts with his distaste for a man who tries to reap where he has not sown. But a diagnostic view at his speech, that it is a shame for a man in the senior civil service to go to prison because of twenty pounds, hence: '... if you want to eat a toad, you should look for a fat and juicy one' (*NLE 5*) shows that he considers Obi's undoing as collecting such an infinitesimal sum. This reading comes from the completion of his proverb (though implied) that eating a fat toad will make you proudly answer to the name of a toad eater. To another man in the group, Obi has no finesse in corruption,

It is all lack of experience... he should not have accepted the money himself. What others do is tell you to and hand it to their houseboy. Obi tries to do what everyone does without finding out how it was done (*NLE 5*).

We should not forget that it is this same group that some members, during the union's meeting, opted to go and bribe the interview board prior to Obi's interview to ensure he is selected for the job; as such, if anyone of them has the opportunity, a similar thing is still plausible to happen because what they are manifesting is innate. In view of all these, are we justified to label Mr. Green's supposition about Africa above as cynical?

Besides Obi Okonkwo, his supposed 'pious father' is another embodiment of Otherness and contradiction. Isaac Okonkwo, the catechist is famous in Umuofia for his unparalleled and renowned identity that defines itself both to him, his family and the entire Umuofia from the early days of his apostasy in *Things Fall Apart* when he uses to be Nwoye. He rejects his father, Okonkwo and all he stands for (culture and tradition) for the latter's role in the killing of his foster brother, Ikemefuna. Even a blind man in Umuofia can see Isaac uncompromising attitude to tradition in his forbiddance of his wife, Hannah from telling his children folk tales (*NLE 53*); his children eating in the house of his neighbor, to avoid food sacrificed to idols (*NLE 53*); his challenge of Ogbuefi Odogwu that Obi is neither the reincarnate of his father, Okonkwo nor do dead people come back to life (*NLE 49*); his refusal that kola ritual will be performed before the Umuofia assembly that gathers to celebrate Obi's return from oversea (*NLE 46*); his refusal to take a second wife after first four daughters (*NLE 6*); we can go on and on with scores of examples to prove that Isaac has a well-constituted self that is defined for and in itself.

To the consternation of all, Isaac takes sides against Christianity which he has spent his life and also lost his heritage propagating once the idea of Obi getting married to Clara, the daughter of Josiah Okeke of Mbaino, the *Osu* lineage is mentioned (*NLE 120*). He reminds his son that Christianity is deeper than he thinks, hence Naaman is a man of valour in the Assyrian army, yet he is a leper (*NLE 121*). By that, he has implied that there is deep and shallow Christianity. He suddenly realizes that Christianity does not mean that one should throw away his customs when his son claims that 'in Christ there no bond or free' (*NLE 120*). Isaac replies that:

Osu is like a leprosy in the minds of our people. I beg you my son do not bring the mark of shame and of leprosy into your family. If you do, your children and children's children unto the third and fourth generations will curse your memory.... Who will marry your daughters? Whose daughters will your sons marry? (*NLE 121*).

As wonderful as this seems, it is not short of otherness, for is marrying an *Osu* more sacrilegious than denying one's father and abandoning one's family to run after a new religion? Our argument has been that there is no monolithic and coherent self; so that every self is a synergy of 'same' and 'other'. Christianity as an institution is not left out as the narrator recounts of the protestant and the Catholic rivalry which the pupils innocently animate through songs:

Palm fruit eater, Roman Catholic teacher,
His missus a devourer of toads (*NLE122*)

Even Hannah who did not feature prominently in this work still displays her bit of the on-going heterodox in the pessimism of resolving to patronize the native doctors instead of the seeming inefficacious orthodox medicine.

VI. CONCLUSION

Roderick Wilson [18] believes that the study of African literature demands that one gives attention to the details of social life and the background rendered in the novel (162). However, beyond the social discourse dimension, the work should not be reduced to mere sociological or 'anthropological parables', rather the related patterns and levels of meaning in the work should be analyzed (Wilson 162). In this work, inherent otherness in the self constituted our identified related pattern and levels of meaning respectively.

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