FABRICATING UNEASE: INTERTEXTUALITY, THE NATION AND INTELLECTUAL LEADERSHIP CRISIS IN ACHEBE’S No Longer at Ease

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ABSTRACT:
The subject matter of the nation is a usual staple on the menu of postcolonial Nigerian fiction. In this sense, the repertoire of Chinua Achebe’s art echoes an incurable preoccupation with Nigeria’s postcolonial condition as a nation. Also, this paper explores the centrality of intertextuality in the production of Achebe’s fiction, primarily his political novel about crisis plaguing intellectual leadership, No Longer at Ease (1960). Intellectual leadership deals with championing the espousal of intellectual development for societal alchemy; it also deals with mental or intellectual engagement capable of raising awareness as well as educating people about societal issues for change. Intertextuality focuses on the relations among texts: no text is an island. The departure from author-centred theory of literary criticism to unhindered, fluid mode of criticism, following the pressures of poststructuralist contention, precipitated intertextuality. The significance of intertextuality to the creation of postcolonial Nigerian fiction establishes the fact that social facts that are being refracted are real societal issues. These artistic productions are “truthful chronicle”; they are relational in textual make-up. Thus, layers of artistic works after the Boehmerian “after Achebe” thesis orchestrate the body of texts that sing from the same songbook as No Longer at Ease. This paper therefore attempts to demonstrate that Achebe’s No Longer at Ease is a derivative of the corpus of “verifiable”, realistic literature on intellectual leadership crisis in Nigeria.
Introduction: Intellectuals, Leadership, and the Nation

The greatest threat to freedom
is the absence of criticism.”

As history illustrates, at least since Plato, intellectuals have made manifest their place in society as oracles, critics, educators, illuminators, historians, sages and conscience of age and epoch. In making their role manifest, intellectuals have taken issues that plague humanity upon themselves as the representatives of the people (in the Saidian argot), spokesmen for the powerless, guardians of truth and conscience of the community. This has been the tradition intellectuals have ensconced since the history of organised state. In his acclaimed work, Orientalism (1978), Edward Said, the ace literary theorist and cultural critic of the left, surmised the place of intellectuals in the society:

we are of the connections, not outside and beyond them. And it behooves us as intellectuals and humanists and secular critics to understand … the world of nations and powers from within the actuality, as participants in it, not detached outside observers who, like Oliver Goldsmith, in Yeats’ perfect phrase, deliberately sip at the honey pots of our mind. (xxiii)

Noam Chomsky shares similar view about intellectuals as he admitted in his 1967 fiery essay in The New York Review of Books titled “The Responsibility of Intellectuals”. In the essay, Chomsky admonished the American intellectuals to oppose the war that America was fighting in Vietnam or be accused of “hypocritical moralism” (Asprey, 1994). He sees the role of intellectuals as more of engagement to upturn equitable social order as well as directing
society towards the right direction it should go rather than passivity or complicity. This is also true of Jean-Paul Sartre’s position; in his Dirty Hands (1948), he adumbrated that intellectuals’ position and duty in society should amount to counter-hegemony against the excesses of the state. This could be done by intellectuals being politically engaged with their works as public intellectuals for the humanising of society.

Nevertheless, the term intellectual as a lexicon did not actually appear on the radar of public knowledge until the controversial Dreyfus Affair in France in late 1890s; before this period, different words such as the intelligentsia, scholars and other terms were essentially used to describe intellectuals. The French naturalist and writer, Emile Zola, was the person that popularised the term intellectuals in contemporary time. Zola’s criticism of the Dreyfus Affair, which basically deals with the treason conviction of Alfred Dreyfus by the French authorities, who alleged that he had communicated French military secret to the German embassy in Paris, was instrumental to the rise of intellectuals in recent history. Through the acerbic criticism of the powers that be by the French intellectuals, Dreyfus, was re-instated into the army and promoted to major in French Army. In his 1993 Reith Lecture titled “Representations of the Intellectuals”, Edward Said brought alive again the notion of intellectuals and what they represent in society. Said sees the role of intellectuals as public critics; this perception dovetails with Achebe’s:

In Chinua Achebe’s view, the African writer of our time must be accountable to his society; if he fails to respond to the social and political issues of his age, to espouse the ‘right and just causes’ of his people, he is no better than the absurd man in the proverb who deserts his burning house to pursue a rat fleeing from the flame. (Rogers 1976: 1)
Strong words though, the import of the above resonates with the social functions of intellectuals (writers) in society.

One of the greatest intellectuals of black race, Frantz Fanon, in his piece “Towards the African Revolution” averred that the major role of African intellectuals is that of revolution in order to counter the West’s supremacist ideology and leadership. Fanon takes a swipe at African intellectuals who do nothing to change the status quo; he urged them to help galvanise support for the transformation of Africa – liberating the continent from colonial domination and imperial pillage – in order for African nations and their people to be independent as well as economically self-sufficient. Similarly, in Chidi Maduka’s view, African intellectuals should be contributors to the debate to change the continent for better leadership and continental bliss (1986: 11). In Achebe’s own words, the duties of intellectuals are assayed here: “the writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact he should march right in front” (1976: 45). Although Achebe is talking of writers, he is also referring to the body of intellectuals called the intelligentsia, who should be the conscience of their age and society.

The type of intellectuals, who possess what Hegel (1977: 243) called “unhappy consciousness”, that is being disgruntled because of inept social order are at the opposite pole from the powers that be; they speak truth to power. Gramsci in his Selections from the Prison Notes (1971) called this group “traditional intellectuals”; he differentiated them from another group he called the “organic intellectuals”, who rather assist the elite political groups in furthering inept leadership as well as perpetuation of injustice in society through their exalted position and knowledge. Michel Foucault’s terms for these types of intellectuals are “universal intellectuals” and “specific intellectuals” respectively. The traditional intellectuals, which Foucault considers as specific intellectuals, have cultural, political and
social roles to play in society as purveyors of what Chongyi (2005: 3) identified as “cultural capital” that has the potency to change societal values and mores for the betterment of humanity. This conception of intellectuals is in sync with Alvin Gouldner’s take on intellectuals: the purveyors of “culture of critical discourse”, which has the quality (in Julien Brenda’s verbiage) of “romanticism of harshness and contempt”.

However, the inability of intellectuals to use their intellectual prowess to leverage modes of power relations between the state and the people as a consequence of inhibitions posed by the ruling elite as well as pressures of mainstream power blocs restrict their role as change agents. This is the situation Achebe’s Obi Okonkwo in No Longer at Ease finds himself. Said’s indication that intellectuals are “morally endowed philosopher-kings” (1993: 5) does not apply to Obi Okonkwo, as he allows himself to be consumed by the quicksand of societal pressures. In Obi Okonkwo’s discussion with his friend, Joseph, concerning his engagement plans with Clara that he thinks is a moral thing to do: to marry someone he truly loves and cares for, Joseph vehemently opposed it. Obi Okonkwo’s response calibrates clash of civilization as well as his listless disposition as he cannot change the way people think in society as an educated person, who has imbibed Western values as well as “a pioneer” (68) – an intellectual – that ought to show people the way to do things right and morally. Joseph’s abrasive remark here is worth noting:

Remember you are the one and only Umuofia son to be educated Overseas. We do not want to be 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 ...? (68)
Obi’s disposition following Joseph’s statement shows he is an embattled man, whose mission to change the social landscape is running aground: “Obi was getting a little angry” (68). The above altercation between Obi Okonkwo and his bosom friend, Joseph, shows that Obi is in leadership catastrophe; his position to lead as an intellectual, who has better insights into how society should function is rather in doubt, as seen from the exchange above. Joseph’s statement and abject disapproval of Obi’s intended engagement to his fiancée, Clara, shows that the new way that Obi is championing, which should replace the old order, is elusive.

In extending the contours of the above, before Obi Okonkwo eventually made up his mind to marry Clara, whom he knows full well his parents would not approve of because she is an “osu”, an outcast, who is being treated as a pariah as custom and folklore allows, he poured out his mind about this state of things:

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 tuning his descendants into a forbidden caste to the end of Time. Quite unbelievable. And here was an educated man telling Obi he did not understand. ‘Not even my mother can stop me’. (65)

Obi’s bewilderment that Joseph, his friend, who is also educated and lives in the city, Lagos, which is a metropolis, could think so retrogressively, made him think the society might not be changed.
Thus, not even the corporeality of what Tejumola Olaniyan (2011: 46) called “the vexed origins of a new kind of elite and its ‘strange’ tongue, the emergence of a new spatial hierarchy in the rural-urban divide” could bring the ideals of intellectual leadership to fruition, as Obi contends. Eustace Palmer’s statement below supports the idea that Obi is really in leadership dilemma:

First, the hero is weak and insufficiently realized... for a central consciousness he is too uninteresting and vaguely portrayed rather than determining the course of events, Obi allows events to overtake him, and is merely, borne along by the fore of circumstances. Since Obi Okonkwo merely succumbs to the forces against him, he falls short ... he is crushed for betraying his principles, not for championing them. (72: 68)

The epochal “falling apart”, Achebe’s overriding contention in his tour de force, Things Fall Apart (1958), finds continuation in the foregoing.

Since Nigeria’s political independence in 1960, it has been beleaguered with tormented history that is being precipitated by shadow of inept leadership. The issue of leadership in the nation – be it political or intellectual has come under intense criticism as the people are discontent with what has become of the nation. Echoing similar perspective, in his foreword to Richard Dowden’s recent book on Africa titled Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles (2008), Chinua Achebe says:

Africa, as most people are aware, has endured a tortured history, and continues to persevere under the burden of political instability... Many chroniclers of the African condition often find Africa overwhelming. (Dowden, 2008: xv)
The above quote offers a new perspective to Achebe’s observation about Africa’s burden, which he foreshadowed in his chapbook, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1983), rests largely on the scaffold of failed (intellectual) leadership precipitated by “a tortured history”, a synecdoche for the negative corollaries of colonialism, slavery and postcolonial disenchantment project.

The failure of Nigerian leaders to bring to fruition the hope and aspiration of the people at Nigeria’s political independence in 1960 spawned the emergence of literary creativity as well as aesthetic commitment that refracts remarkable shift from the dreams people had during the anti-colonial struggle, which culminated to political independence in 1960. The literary tradition that responds to this spirit of time is what Emmanuel Obiechina described as “literature of disillusionment” (197: 56). This is the type of literature that responds to the texture of leadership in society. The repertoire of Achebe’s fiction is an aesthetic response to Nigeria’s mode of governance and leadership. Apart from Achebe’s historical novels, which are his fiction primer, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) as well as *Arrow of God* (1962), all his fiction is an aesthetic response to the actualities in Nigeria on the heels of bungling political leadership. Beginning with *No Longer at Ease* (1960), Achebe’s preoccupation has been a commitment to unearthing the diverse twists and turns in Nigeria’s political leadership. This artistic consciousness permeates the texture of other political novels by Achebe: *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987).

African leaders have been blamed for the colour of leadership on the continent; this is also the case in Nigeria, where politics has been reduced to mere zero-sum game, the winner-takes-it-all kind of enterprise. Achebe’s contemplation of how to navigate out of the murky waters of Nigeria’s political leadership finds resonance in creating Obi Okonkwo to serve as a foil to the nation’s breed of brute,
uncultured leaders, whose stock in trade is to use the instrument of politics to further undemocratic, elite-salving governance. Thus, following people’s disillusionment at what politics has made of governance and leadership, Achebe created the protagonist of *No Longer at Ease*, Obi Okonkwo, who is seemingly a purveyor of wholesome cultural and intellectual capital, to effect change. But unfortunately, Obi Okonkwo’s ideals run into a deadlock with the mainstream views in the nation. From the account in *No Longer at Ease*, Obi Okonkwo, Okonkwo’s grandson (Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart*, the father of Nwoye), could not bring this to fruition owing to the pressures on him by mainstream ideological ethos precipitated by warped social values and morbid traditional caste system. The production of a representational relation of coincidence between *No Longer* and *Ease* and the structure of the narrative of disempowered, dysfunctional intellectuals can be extended to the life of Chinua Achebe himself. Achebe has often caught the personality of an embattled man or writer, who is in unease – this is also true of the nation he writes about. This unease is redoubled by Achebe’s vexed commitment to confront the material and the discursive in advocating alternative order in Nigeria.

The process of using literature to interrogate the zeitgeist is what Onyemaechi Udumukwu in the introduction to his edited volume, *Nigerian Literature in English: Emerging Critical Perspectives* sees as ability of “… the narrative of the nation to [to] engage[s] itself in a conscious interrogation of the forces of alienation” (2007: 16). In continuing this debate, in another book by Udumukwu, he asserted that the subject matter of the nation in Nigerian literature is a function of re/imagining a “panoply of voices and ideological interests” (2006: 146) at the cusp of contestation for power as well as hegemony. Similarly, Andre Brink’s writing bears much in common with other politically committed writers such as Achebe. Brink (1983) considers the role of a writer in a state of siege to be tantamount to condemning
leaders’ dereliction by using art as a conduit to fire his darts of criticism. J. M Coetzee’s statement in *Doubling the Point* (1992), urges writers to transcend social malaise as well as leadership ineptitude in this manner:

For the writer the deeper problem is not to allow himself to be impaled on the dilemma proposed by the state, namely, either to ignore its obscenities or else to produce representations of them. The true change is: how not to play the game by the rules of the state, how to establish one’s own authority. (Attwell 1992: 364)

Ngugi’s opinion in *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams* (1998) is subsumed in what he dubbed “absolute art”, that is committed literature, which brings about “absolute motion” (Rodrigus 2004: 165) that is capable of moving the centre – the energies to change mainstream views of the society.

**Part of a Whole: No Longer at Ease as Epiphenomenon of Social Facts, Culture Conflict and Intertextuality**

Intertextuality is a movement in response to poststructuralist conceptualization to envision the demise of author-centered criticism, which limited the gamut of apprehending wide-ranging, different meanings and multidimensionality of textual readings. Intertextuality as a literary movement is committed to widening the space of meaning as well as de-centering the origin of meaning thereby providing a scaffold for inclusivity and heterogeneity of textual relations and meanings for diachronic textual interpretation. This process is antithetical to Ferdinand de Saussure’s notion of synchronising textual meanings – which limits the historical dimensions to understanding texts and interpretation. In moving
against the structuralist conception of ascertaining meaning, the Derridian deconstructionist movement brought the structuralist, unilateral and monolithic idea of giving meaning and essence to words or texts to a cul-de-sac.

Roland Barthes’ seminal piece, “The Death of the Author” (1967), is one of the pioneering works in this regard to engender multiplicities of meanings to texts and words as opposed to unilateral, constraining method that structuralism made possible. As Barthes coherently puts it:

a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (1967: 146)

The concept of intertextuality does bring to the fore that every text is a continuum of older texts; no text is an island. Thus, in the poststructuralist model, older texts can be filtered through to later texts – thereby foregrounding the endless stream of interconnectivity of textual tissues, cultures, values, ideologies and worldview, among others. In challenging interpretive tyranny through enlarging textual meanings gained from semantic influence of antecedent texts, the tyranny of author-centered approach to textual meanings was brought to a halt.

In addition, intertextuality is a literary criticism movement championed by the French philosopher Julia Kristeva. The Derridian philosophy as well as neo-Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis suffuse Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality. Besides, Kristeva’s radical critical tool had a prehistoric indebtedness to Ferdinand de Saussure’s
structuralist semiotics and Bakhtin’s idea of dialogism. In Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism or dialogicity, a word (in text or language) is no longer a construal of determined meaning, rather a concourse of textual networks and surfaces (Kristeva 1969: 144). Thus, “any text is a new tissue of past citations” (Barthes 1981: 39). According to Kristeva, every text is constituted “by a mosaic of citations, every text is absorption and transformation of another text” (Kristeva 1986: 37). Terry Eagleton sees this process as texts being essentially “re-written” (1983: 192) in literature.

In the process of re-writing literary works as Eagleton points out, each text directly or indirectly makes reference to other texts. In a similar mode of thought, Peter Barry sees this literary pattern as “a major degree of reference between one text and another” (1995: 91). This is actually in sync with Barthes’ contention here:

any text is an intertext; other texts are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognizable forms: the text of the previous and surrounding culture. Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of codes, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc. pass into the text and are redistributed within it. […] Epistemologically, the concept of intertext is what brings to the theory of the text the volume of sociality. (Young 1981: 39)

The relationship amongst texts and the dialogue such texts address brings to the fore the ideological coloration of a particular epoch. In fleshing this out, every of Achebe’s fiction has a trace of earlier ones (at least indirectly). This literary motif pervades his political novels: No Longer at Ease addresses in a slightly disparate way the issues and concerns in the nation of Nigeria that other political fiction of his deals with. Simply put, No Longer at Ease is a continuation of Achebe’s aesthetic preoccupation with the Nigerian
nation – later novels by other writers that are cast in the mold of political engagement feed from this.

In demonstrating how Achebe’s works draw from one another as well as influence other artistic works on the African continent, it is pertinent to quote at length here Elleke Boehmer’s remarks about what she describes as the intertextual make-up of Achebe’s fiction as well as his influence in other works – personal and impersonal:

... the subject of Achebe’s influence, ... posits ... number of connections and contiguities, at local, regional and international levels. The transmission of his influence reminds us, as Partha Mitter has commented, of how diffuse as well as direct, heterogeneous and uneven as well as smooth, cross-fertilised as well as copied, the transmission of influence can be... Standing at the height of a tradition or genealogy of writing as Achebe does, he has become a dominant point of origin, a hyper-precursor one might say, in whose aftermath virtually every African author self-consciously writes. (Boehmer 2011: 142)

Deductively, a tradition of “complicated clusters of motifs”, which Achebe’s works establish paint in a bold relief the intertextual nature of his works – a “replication of narrative voice in Achebe’s literary ‘followers’” (Boehmer 2011: 143).

Published in 1960, Chinua Achebe’s No Longer at Ease adroitly refracts postcolonial Nigerian state buckling under the pressures and inanities of the new-fangled administrative class (the elite). This class cannot chart the course of history in order to showcase the strength of their intellectual leadership, which is capable of rescuing the nation from prebendal pillage as well as corruption. Obi Okonkwo, the
protagonist of the novel, *No Longer at Ease*, epitomises this class, whose major task should have been to “‘systematise popularly-produced notions and ideas into the language of contemporary revolutionary thought and politics’” (Obi 1997: 9). In the novel, the nature of inability that the educated elite orchestrate resonates with personal failure, loss of ideals and possible crash of dreams in pursuit of change as well as societal renaissance. The protagonist of the novel Obi Okonkwo is in crisis. The wellspring of his crisis is that he is in a society whose societal values and mores are completely out of sync with his personal values and aspiration. This situation in Obi’s world pushes him to the margin and cultural transition thereby constituting psychological violence as well as emotional trauma, which in the final analysis threatens his wellbeing and survival. Thus, “Whilst Obi is an alienated, confused protagonist, the world he inhabits is shown as threateningly empty” (Morrison 2007: 90).

Representation of intellectuals in fiction is an established motif in African (Nigerian) literature. From Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* to *A Man of the People* (1966); from Wole Soyinka’s *The Interpreters* (1965) to Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and *Fragments* (1970); and from Robert Serumuga’s *Return to the Shadows* (1969) to Kofi Awoonor’s *This Earth, My Brother* (1971), there is an aesthetic consciousness to portray African intellectuals in contest with the society to effect change. Accordingly,

the conflict between African intellectuals and political leaders, and the inadequacy of the latter to exert power in a democratic way is the subject of an increasing corpus of fiction and scholarly criticism [in Africa] (my parenthesis, Zapata 1993: 220).

Intertextually, the craft of *No Longer at Ease* finds continuation in similar works of fiction that calibrate crises that beleaguer African
(Nigerian) intellectuals in their efforts to change the society. Achebe is broadly known for his deft appropriation of precursory imaginative elements in his art. Thus “Achebe is able to retrieve fascinating antecedent works to espouse his philosophical outlook, i.e., his belief in the cyclical theory of history” (Kehinde 2003: 377). This major feature of African literature has been underscored by Ruth Finnegan in her landmark study on African oratory. In the study, *Oral Literature in Africa* (1970), Ruth Finnegan exemplified the communality of African oratory, which mediates a sense of artistic investigation into common identity and way of thinking. Charles Bodunde’s observation on the intertextuality of Nigerian literature, shows that “each literature or text has the capacity to influence and extend the meaning of the other” (1994: 72) in a manner reflective of previous social facts and happenings that the present essentially refurbishes. Therefore, African (Nigerian) literature is *prima facie* intertextual in composition.

In his *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (1992: 241), Martin Gray acknowledged that the realist tradition is a literary and aesthetic method utilised by writers “who show clear commitment and concern to convey an authentic portraiture of actualities in the nation through their narrative style, method of characterization, creation of locale, manner of handling language and the nature of the subject matter presented. This method of refracting social facts is equated with “literary aesthetic of truth-telling” (Lodge 1986: 4), which according to Dwivedi is the trademark of Achebe’s literary engagement:

Chinua Achebe has been particularly successful in creating a realistic representation of an African environment. He is one of the major writers from the African subcontinent who have given a new direction to English-language African literature by representing, realistically, an African environment and giving expression to a sense of increasing disgust and unrest within its population. (2008: 2)
Political leadership is one of the sources of the “disgust”, “unrest” and contradictions on the African continent that should be transcended for better society and for the overall good of the populace.

In transcending Nigeria’s political leadership malaise, Obi Okonkwo was created to serve this purpose, but his story in the novel smacks of failure on his part to engender change of gear in the polity. Obi Okonkwo has been portrayed as not being heroic; he is basically ignoble and a failure in bringing the needed change that his foreign education as well as estimable values could have afforded; he is a man caught in between two different civilisations, which he fails to reconcile. Despite Achebe’s background to the state of things in postcolonial Nigeria, which could serve as an alibi for Obi’s destiny in the novel, there is no gainsaying the fact that Obi’s characterisation mediates a lapse in Achebe’s original intention to build a character that could lead the way for national transformation as well as “collective mobilisation” (Kurzman & Leahey, 2004: 938) of the masses that might animate social alchemy (Ola, 1986).

Obi Okonkwo’s dilemma reminds us intertextually of characters in some other African novels that cannot change the order. In Gabriel Okara’s The Voice (1970), Okolo, who is the protagonist is educated and supposedly has the façade of change agent; but he is seen tumbling down at the cusp of the whirlwind of naiveté that overshadows his intellectual disposition and leadership; in Ayi Kwei Armah’s Two Thousand Seasons (1972), we are presented with Isanusi, whose commitment to question venal social order as well as corrupt system rather brings him to a sad end; in Fragments (1971), Baako, the “been-to” as Armah describes him is consumed by his self-ideal to reform Ghana’s corrupt civil service; he eventually got retarded mentally as his ideals were stifled by choking presence of societal
norm; Modin, the protagonist of Armah’s *Why Are We So Blest* (1972), sees his “death” as the system makes him turn from a revolutionary to an insurrectionist as his ideals fade; in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), Armah’s nameless protagonist, “the man”, is consumed by guilt and frustration as he could not change a society that threatens his moral and intellectual leadership; and in Kofi Awoonor’s *This Earth, My Brother* (1971), which has been described as a bridge between poetry and novel, reads more like Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease*. As a threnodic versification with vignettes of fiction, the cosmos of this piece is centered on the central character, Amamu; and the atmosphere that the poetic evocation conjures up is sickening: sick society, Ewe dirge of death that loneliness brings and perverse society, which Amamu could not change until the system drove him mad – and dead eventually.

Obi Okonkwo’s portraiture by Achebe as a man with good education; a man who has a good job; and a man who should be on top of events do not materialise. As his personal life begins to spiral out of control given the hard times he has been having marrying Clara, so does his finances. His mother’s death and his eventual descent into taking bribery – “the use of improper influence” (110), which he forbade initially (70) as an intellectual who wanted to change the *status quo* as well as reform the civil service in Nigeria leave us with the futility of ideals, aspirations and conscience. Lumped together, the intertextual nature of Achebe’s craft finds resonance in being able to let antecedent works that have similar themes, timbre and texture to find expression in his work. In *A Man of the People* (1966), characters such as Odili and Chief Nanga are seen to be cast in this mold; this is also the case with Chris and Ikem in *Anthills of the Savannah*, whose portraiture in the novel orchestrates the failure of intellectuals to lead change in postcolonial Nigerian nation (Ojinmah 1991; Ola 1986; Nwagbara 2009). Beatrice’s role in *Anthills of the Savannah* to change the patriarchal ethos of women
domination in society, which she espoused via the logic of feminism, is commendable, but more needs to be done to radically change the values system as well as total leadership structure in postcolonial Nigeria.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is deducible that Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* is steeped in intellectual leadership malaise, which is archetypal of postcolonial Nigerian nation. From the mode of arguments framed in this paper and the textual insights made available as well as the intertextual debates offered, it is appreciable that the other pieces of political fiction that were written by Achebe as well as other Nigerian authors point towards the same message that *No Longer at Ease* espouses: the failure of Nigerian intellectuals, the new-fangled elite after Nigeria’s political independence, to bring change after the mantle of leadership was bequeathed to them by the colonial masters. As Umelo Ojimah contends in his oft-quoted work on Achebe titled: *Chinua Achebe: New Perspectives* (1991),

In *No Longer at Ease*, therefore, Achebe through Obi Okonkwo illustrates the lack of responsibility, among other things, exhibited by the inheritors of the new nations of Africa, whose primary functions should have been to lay the concrete foundations for postcolonial developments...

(60)

The above quote is crucial for the re-invention of postcolonial Nigerian nation that is at present embroiled in crisis of leadership failure and inept mode of governance. Thus, as Achebe’s original intention that did not materialize in the text suggests, intellectual leadership is one of the platforms to bring national transformation as
well as developmental bliss in Africa – particularly Nigeria – if this is sought by appropriating the insights and lessons gained from the perspectives offered in this paper as instantiated in the text, *No Longer at Ease*. Basically, in rising above the realm of fictiveness, the lessons gained in this novel could be appropriated in healing Nigeria’s leadership wounds.

**Works Cited**


