

A Critical Examination of Cultural Displacement and Epistemic Violence in Chinua Achebe's Trilogy

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ABSTRACT

The research examines how colonialism affected indigenous people in two of Chinua Achebe's most important works his novel *Things Fall Apart* and his later stories *No Longer at Ease* and *Anthills of the Savannah*. The study investigates Affective Dissonance which describes the emotional state of colonized people who experience a break from their ancestral beliefs through the introduction of colonial rule. The research study claims that Okonkwo practices Hyper masculinity as his main personality feature while it functions as his main method to prevent the British authorities from inflicting Epistemic Violence upon him. The research study uses various secondary texts to track how different historical periods influence the development of trauma. The novel *Things Fall Apart* shows how cultural erasure begins to operate while the stories in *Anthills of the Savannah* and *No Longer at Ease* demonstrate its progression into political unrest and bureaucratic separation during the time after independence. The research demonstrates that African nations face difficulties in restoring their traditional narratives from European colonial perspectives which are referred to as the "Colonial Gaze" through its examination of South African post-colonial frameworks.

Keywords: Affective Dissonance Cultural Displacement Hyper Masculinity Epistemic Violence Chinua Achebe Post-Colonialism.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Colonial powers impose their systems onto native populations which leads to the total destruction of indigenous identity throughout native communities. Chinua Achebe's work provides a critical lens into this phenomenon, specifically through the lived experience of the Igbo people. The research study Affective Dissonance describes the way Indigenous emotional systems lose their native connections because colonizers impose foreign cultural elements on their communities. The research study uses three fundamental conceptual foundations which serve as its main elements.

The concept of Cultural Displacement refers to the complete emotional loss of Emotional Compatibility which functions as the essential social bond that unites people with their community's traditional customs and legal codes and social conventions beyond its geographical impact. Hyper masculinity represents a male response to colonial trauma which men use to demonstrate their masculinity through menial work. The characters Okonkwo and others use their ancestral strength to fight against colonial powers which seek to strip away their masculinity.

The colonial system uses a systematic process to eliminate all native knowledge systems which Western colonizers need to decrease indigenous civilizations to minor entries in their historical accounts. The research study establishes a complete historical timeline of African displacement by examining how this experience developed throughout different periods of African history. The research study shows how resistance evolved from the physical struggle in *Things Fall Apart* to the intellectual distance demonstrated in *No Longer at Ease* to the political turmoil which happened during the post-independence period in *Anthills of the Savannah*.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chinua Achebe's evaluation in academics changed from evaluating his work as exotic colonialism to recognizing his work as essential for post-colonial territorial recovery. The initial academic researchers who studied Achebe's work established him as a groundbreaking writer who introduced African literature to international audiences. Modern critics who analyze Achebe's literature including Simon Gikandi observe that colonial encounters serve as periods when characters experience severe mental and emotional distress.

2.1 The Multi-Generational Nature of Displacement

Abiola Irele states that Achebe's trilogy shows how people experience cultural displacement when they lose their home through physical means. The story of *Things Fall Apart* begins with the immediate and violent displacement because shrines are destroyed. The character Obi Okonkwo from *No Longer at Ease* demonstrates cultural "homelessness" because his Western education creates a bridge between his ancestral values. Homi K. Bhabha developed the theory of "Hybridity" through his concept of "in-betweenness." The post-colonial state in *Anthills of the Savannah* creates alienation for African subjects because it uses displacement as a political tool.

2.1.1 Primary Stage: Physical and Violent Rupture

The *Things Fall Apart* story begins its displacement process through its visible and immediate effects. Traditional Igbo justice gets violated through the physical destruction of shrines and the creation of foreign legal system which disrespects Igbo social hierarchies and native judicial practices.

2.1.2 Secondary Stage: Intellectual Displacement

No Longer at Ease shifts from physical loss to what critics' call "Intellectual Displacement" as its core transition. Obi Okonkwo experiences cultural "homelessness" while he remains in his homeland. Western education which the academic system brought to him became the reason he lost his traditional values. Homi K. Bhabha defines the state of "in-betweenness" as existing between two cultural identities which people experience through their cognitive distance from their heritage and their emotional separation from the colonial environment.

2.1.3 Tertiary Stage: Political Displacement

The final stage of "Political Displacement" reaches its conclusion inside *Anthills of the Savannah*. The African subject becomes displaced by his own government during post-independence times because his government now controls his African subjugation instead of foreign powers. The "Colonial Gaze" creates an indigenous elite which transforms the post-colonial state into a system of structural corruption that alienates the general public. The analysis of intergenerational relations shows that the Igbo centre created two distinct pathways of trauma which continue into future generations. The original "fall" of the Igbo centre created an ongoing pattern of traumatic events which transformed the Igbo worldview for generations to come. The early characters like Okonkwo first experienced external worldview loss through physical ruptures while later generations faced internal processes that led to the same loss.

2.2 Masculinity as Defensive Performance

According to feminist and post-colonial critics Florence Stratton and Elleke Boehmer Okonkwo's hyper masculinity directly results from British colonialists "feminization" of Igbo culture. He built a shield to protect himself from the "softening" influence of the new religion by following a hyper-masculine ideal. Everything he possesses disappears from him because he thinks that any sign of weakness will make him "unmanly" thus he progresses toward his ultimate demise.

Defensive shields function as barriers which protect against threats but they contain design flaws that weaken their capabilities. Okonkwo derives his strength from his extreme fear of weakness because he judges his father Unoka to be "unsuccessful" and he follows the Igbo standard which includes storytelling and diplomatic skills and the ability to show mercy to others. Colonial authority systems force him to endure public disgrace because he must shave elders and undergo imprisonment. His hyper masculinity throughout this process creates a mental trap which leads him to commit suicide. He would rather die than submit to the "feminine" submission which colonial law requires because he believes it would violate his masculine shield which cannot survive this

epistemic shift. The analysis established that "Big Man" syndrome evolved from reactive masculinity systems to become the defining feature of African political systems after independence. The character Sam (His Excellency) in *Anthills of the Savannah* adopts a new version of Okonkwo's aggressive behavior through his command of the military. Sam uses military power to create a false perception of control because his behavior follows the dictatorial methods that his old colonial masters utilized. The process of colonial leadership required leaders to achieve power by dealing with "other" groups through their entire period of dominance. The research shows that the "Feminine Principle" possesses nurturing and listening and transformative qualities which cure hyper-masculinity and political instability in post-colonial states.

2.3 Comparative Continental Resistance

Achebe's work shows a strong connection to South African resistance literature. The two regions experience the "psychic wound" of cultural erasure which Frantz Fanon describes. The "Bantu Education" system in South Africa and the missionary schools in *Things Fall Apart* function as instruments of epistemic violence which displace indigenous knowledge because they treat indigenous knowledge as inferior to European ways of knowing.

The research uses Frantz Fanon's theories about colonization as a framework to study regional conflicts that arise in these specific areas. Achebe's characters experience "Affective Dissonance" because they face obstacles which prevent them from maintaining their cultural traditions while they must behave like colonial subjects. The colonized individual must learn to handle their natural emotional ties with others when colonial rulers impose their control over them. The dissertation shows that Achebe's work demonstrates how all colonized cultures undergo a process which results in their traditional cultural centers facing destruction. The research analysis shows that decolonization requires territorial "Epistemic Rejuvenation" which allows communities to reclaim their self-definition rights after they complete research-based emotional and intellectual oppression which they experienced throughout their historical timeline.

CHAPTER III

AFFECTIVE DISSONANCE AND EMOTIONAL COMPATIBILITY

The study investigates Affective Dissonance which describes the psychological turmoil that occurs when a person experiences emotional conflict with the cultural standards that their society demands. Emotional Compatibility enables individuals from stable societies to participate in communal rituals because they are fully willing to show their emotions. Colonial authorities establish an emotional disruption which prevents people in society from maintaining their necessary emotional balance to stay prepared for upcoming challenges. Okonkwo experiences dissonance because he cannot adapt to the foreign legal system which produces his emotional detachment from the new social requirements of his changing community. The District Commissioner reaches his deepest moment of insight when he thinks about Okonkwo's tragic suicide in the concluding part of *Things Fall Apart*. The Commissioner views Okonkwo's intricate life story with its monumental background as nothing more than material for a dehumanizing paragraph which he will use in his upcoming historical account *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. The explicit demonstration of epistemic violence dehumanizes Okonkwo while it turns his battle against British imperialism into a minor element of the overall British imperial expansion.

The initial break creates a continuing cycle of exclusion which extends through subsequent generations according to the dissertation that uses *Anthills of the Savannah* novel to demonstrate this phenomenon. The Kangan post-colonial elite maintains colonial gaze through their actions while military dictatorship uses press censorship and historical narrative control to preserve its authority. The foreign oppressor uses epistemic violence as a societal control measure which develops a system that generates an "intellectual crisis" for those who attempt to reconcile Western academic requirements with their indigenous cultural practices. The research establishes a connection between South African Apartheid regime's "Bantu Education" system and purposeful epistemic violence which targeted the mental limits that the system enforced on colonized populations. The analytical framework shows how Achebe's mission to "write back" to the empire empowers him to reclaim his right to shape his identity. The Ibo perspective of the narrative uses storytelling as a colonial tool that restores the legitimacy and complexity of the African experience while it opposes the dehumanizing colonial gaze.

3.1 The Violence of the Colonial Gaze

The cognitive displacement resulting from epistemic violence remains in the mind instead of transferring to another physical location. The "Colonial Gaze" reduces the intricate Igbo hierarchical structures to a primitive state which lacks complexity. The District Commissioner in *Things Fall Apart* exemplifies this reductionism through his process of condensing Okonkwo's entire tragic story down to one paragraph for his book *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. The reductionism process strips all humanity from the subject while it remains active in post-colonial military dictatorships. The performance emerges from a pathological "fear of failure and weakness" which Okonkwo displays through his deep need to prove himself as strong and powerful because of his father Unoka's reputation as weak and unaccomplished. Extreme colonial expansion stress transforms personal insecurity into collective trauma because it overwhelms people. Okonkwo sees the new Christian religion and British administrative laws as a direct threat to his masculine identity because he views them as a cultural invasion which undermines his perception of manhood. The research demonstrates that Affective Dissonance leads to the development of hypermasculinity within Okonkwo because he resorts to violent methods in order to regain his lost masculine authority. The individual uses this tool to show their personal understanding of strength to the world which increasingly regards them as unimportant.

Military leaders in the *Anthills of the Savannah* demonstrate a destructive cycle which begins with "His Excellency" who uses his militarized and hypermasculine behavior to hide the deep insecurity of his new post-colonial government. The trajectory shows that colonial-era trauma initiates a cycle which leads to colonized societies experiencing "oppressor violence" because their leaders practice authoritative methods instead of open dialogue. The characters use rigid masculine performances which stop them from developing the "Emotional Compatibility" needed to function in a contemporary diverse society which causes both personal and political destruction. The dissertation shows how resistance leaders in South Africa used hyper masculine archetypes to keep their authority during the "War of Narratives" while showing that hyper masculinity exists as a global symptom resulting from colonial displacement. The mask serves as an unsustainable defense which seeks to demonstrate power yet makes the subject vulnerable to the major epistemic transformations of his time.

3.2 Hyper masculinity as Trauma Response

Hyper masculinity functions as a gender performance which people display in reaction to their surrounding environment. Colonial systems use "un-man" techniques to remove agency from subjects who then choose to adopt extreme forms of masculinity to make up for their lost power. The colonial officials took away Okonkwo's social rights which caused him to lose his social position. His aggressive behavior serves as an unsustainable defense mechanism which makes him unable to adapt to epistemic changes.

The second stage of this trajectory shows dissonance which moves from the village square to the colonial office in *No Longer at Ease*. Obi Okonkwo represents the "Intellectual Displacement" of the mid-20th century. The direct product of a system which created African intermediaries from the Western-educated Western education system educated him in the West with the colonial education system. The traditional Umuofia Progressive Union values create emotional distance between him and his British civil service duties which he cannot fulfill because of the British racial hierarchy.

The national politics in *Anthills of the Savannah* reach their final stage of displacement through their expansion into large political conflicts. The dissertation shows that unresolved hypermasculinity and affective dissonance from the colonial era evolved into the "Post-Colonial Crisis." The study shows that post-independence Nigeria faces the same "Post-Apartheid Blues" which J.M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer write about in their works. The "falling apart" of their central authority results from historical patterns which exist in both regions. The analysis shows that the colonial process developed into a permanent erasure which affects the contemporary African subject.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE IGBO WORLDVIEW

Things Fall Apart The arrival of colonial administration causes a complete breakdown of all knowledge systems. Okonkwo's participation in the killing of Ikemefuna is a primary example of hyper masculinity as a destructive trauma response; he violates his own emotional bonds for fear of appearing "weak." Affective Dissonance develops through this initial stage. His suicide which Igbo tradition considers an "abomination" serves as his

final defiance against a world he now rejects. *No Longer at Ease* The third generation of trauma develops into "Intellectual Displacement." Obi Okonkwo is a "stranger" in both his village and the urban centers of Lagos. His Affective Dissonance manifests in his inability to reconcile Western humanist ideals with traditional social obligations. The analysis of his bribery arrest and moral collapse shows that these events stem from the fact that he has lost all connections to his cultural roots.

Anthills of the Savannah Sam establishes an institutional framework in *Anthills of the Savannah* through his military leadership role which makes hyper masculinity the standard behavior requirement for his organization. He uses the "Colonial Gaze" to develop his domestic "Dictatorial Gaze" because he has absorbed the colonial model of authoritarianism. Chris Ikem and Sam demonstrate how militarized suspicion has taken the place of emotional compatibility which democracy needs in order to function. Beatrice Nwanyibuife provides a solution to the problem; by reclaiming the "feminine principle" and indigenous myth, she provides a model for bridging the gap between the traditional past and the political future.

The chapter applied three theoretical frameworks which included Affective Dissonance and Hypermasculinity and Epistemic Violence to analyze Chinua Achebe's primary and secondary works. The analysis of *Things Fall Apart* demonstrated that the protagonist's strict hypermasculine behavior arose from the physical and spiritual rupture which occurred during the first colonial contact. The Ibo centre "fell" when this event occurred which subsequently triggered the displacement of later generations who will be studied in this research.

The two works demonstrate how trauma develops through their change from one narrative to another in their stories. The "Trajectory of Displacement" forms a self-reinforcing cycle which begins with Okonkwo's physical resistance. It continues through Obi's intellectual alienation and concludes with Kangan's political tyranny. Scientists have identified epistemic violence as a present-day ongoing process because the District Commissioner and military dictator both use their power to suppress real African expression.

The chapter's conclusion explains how dissonance spreads across the continent by showing its links to South African parallels. The study demonstrates that colonized individuals experience emotional dissonance because the Nigerian resistance against the Colonial Gaze connects to South African efforts which fought against all forms of systematic cultural destruction. The indigenous narratives restore Emotional Compatibility through their process of radical reclamation. The theoretical framework of the study establishes complete theoretical foundations after it examines all textual evidence in the study. The final chapter presents its main findings through an examination of masculine performances which includes studies on dissonance and violence. The Chapter 4 research results will produce confirmed results about the impact of cultural displacement on African mental health through its detailed research findings.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The last chapter combines earlier analytical findings with its psychological and cultural assessment of colonial intervention to deliver complete understanding of colonial intervention. The research shows that the tragedy of Chinua Achebe's characters represents a larger systemic collapse of African identity which goes beyond a personal failure. The study investigates all three transitional phases between *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease* and *Anthills of the Savannah* to demonstrate a cyclical pattern of trauma that exists across different historical periods and geographical locations.

The "falling apart" of the centre functions as a historical pattern because it originates from systemic disruptions. Cultural displacement results in permanent psychological effects which establish Affective Dissonance as a long-term psychological condition. People who display hyper masculinity cannot establish protective boundaries which would separate their personal space from post-colonial surroundings. True resolution requires political independence together with "Epistemic Rejuvenation" which entails reclaiming indigenous emotional and intellectual compatibility. The "things" that fell apart in the 19th century remain fractured in the modern era, suggesting that post-colonial identity is a continuous journey of reconciling a displaced self with a fragmented history

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