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**Cultural Clash, Alienation, Identity and Sociopolitical
unrest in Chinua Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and
Rachid Mimouni’s *Le Fleuve détourné* (1982).**

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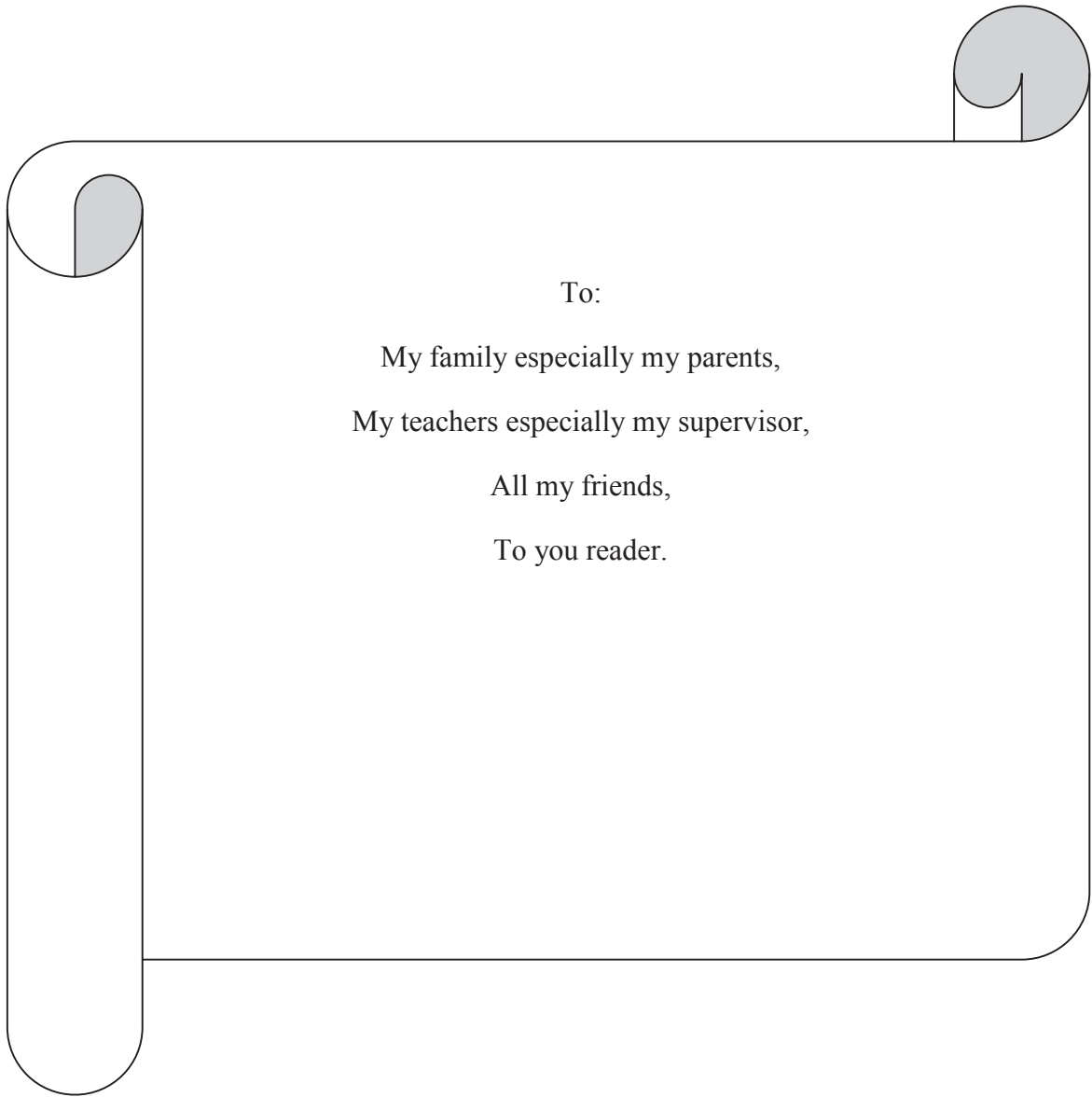
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To:
My family especially my parents,
My teachers especially my supervisor,
All my friends,
To you reader.

Abstract

This dissertation has dealt with the themes of Cultural Clash and Alienation, Identity and Sociopolitical unrest in the post independent African literary works more exactly in Chinua Achebe's No Longer at Ease (1960) and Rachid Mimouni's Le fleuve détourné (1982). Both Achebe and Mimouni are post independent writers who portray the state of disorder and confusion into which the African societies were immersed. Using the Fanonian theory, we have tried to pick out some of the affinities that lie between the two texts. Le fleuve détourné is written twenty two years after No Longer at Ease. Yet both novels have salient points in common. Both Achebe's and Mimouni's novels are lucid portraits of the African societies in the two periods before and after decolonization. They portray the African as an alienated individual whose life is completely altered and whose culture is at the verge of disappearance. Day after day, the life of the African exacerbates. The hopes upon which the independence was built evaporated. By an intensive reading of the two novels and by making reference to the Fanonian theory, we have tried to show that though they are written in two distinct periods and by two different writers, No Longer at Ease and Le fleuve détourné share many themes in common. This makes allusion to the fact that although many years have elapsed after Africa's independence, she still suffers from nearly the same problems as those she underwent during the colonial period.

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Introduction

Africa suffered for many years from the yokes of colonialism. This traumatic historical event which was succeeded by violent wars of independence was not without negative effects since it led to great disarray that shook the roots of this continent. Behind the pretended flag of “the civilizing mission” and “the white man’s burden”, Europe succeeded to metamorphose the life of so many countries to a real hell, a nightmare of which they can never get rid. In fact, the “civilizing mission” and “the white man’s burden” were myths constructed by the Europeans to delude the “inferior races” and to make them believe that the West wanted to help them enlighten their minds as well as their countries. This ideology was fostered by many western generals and travel writers who portrayed Africa as an exotic space. Indeed, in many books such as those of Guy de Maupassant, Isabelle Iberhardt, Eugene Fromentin and Josef Conrad, to mention just few, the non-Europeans were seen through the lenses of inferiority and backwardness. Africans were othered as savages, shadows and objects, an excuse used to justify the colonial practices and to legitimate Europeans’ presence in Africa.

During their long presence in Africa, the Europeans resorted to many ways to reduce, set apart, degrade and ostracize utterly their *other* on the basis of race and colour. They terrorized and tortured him and when he reacted they accused him of savagery and ingratitude, “Terror and exploitation dehumanize, and the exploiter uses this dehumanization to justify further exploitation.”¹ The colonized was put in an infernal cycle of injustices from which there was no way to escape. He was not only deprived of liberty and his possessions, but accused of being mentally ill, savage, and unconscious of his being at all. Indeed, as Fanon says “the arrival of the white man in Madagascar shattered not only its horizons but its psychological mechanisms [...]. The landing of the white man in Madagascar inflicted injury without measure.”² And Madagascar is just one sample of the so many African countries whose dignity and self confidence had been stolen. This led to a cultural clash, a feeling of

alienation and the dispersion of many vices including arbitrariness in exercising power, corruption, perversion of justice and violence in the third world countries which lasted even after independence. This is not fortuitous; the fact that he has been for so many years hold off power, deprived of ruling himself, put the colonized in a state of a great turmoil incapable to govern himself. Worse still, the state in which the colonizer has let his former colonies was so disastrous that their reconstruction seemed impossible forever. After decolonization, these Africans began to look for a way to reconstruct and rebuild their countries. But a very puzzling question concerning the reality of their identity still haunts their minds: “Who are they?” Are they Africans or Europeans? Or rather Black skins wearing white masks.

Chinua Achebe and Rachid Mimouni are just two among many African writers who choose to use their pen to engrave in history their voices as well as the painful cries of their ancestors to make it heard each time it seems necessary to. They tried to give vivid images of the way of life, the customs and the traditions of their societies. They consider that it is their duty to report faithfully the life of their societies to save their images from destruction. Among the numerous novels that these two writers have produced, we have chosen to deal with *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and *Le Fleuve détourné* (1982). As products of the time, the two works reveal the harrowing situation that the third world countries underwent after their independence.

Though they deal with the same themes and portray the upheavals of post colonialism in a quite similar way, Achebe and Mimouni are neither from the same country, culture or language nor the product of the same colonizer. This analogy between their writings then, can be traced back to the same historical event that took place in what is called today “the third world countries” or the countries of the “backward races”. In fact, Achebe and Mimouni use quite the same method of writing to unveil, correct and raise awareness in the minds of many Africans whose life become intolerable because of the daily conflicts in which they live.

Both Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Mimouni's *Le Fleuve détourné* have received a large bulk of criticism. As far as *No Longer at Ease* is concerned, Moanungsang in "Death of Native Cultures in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*" asserts,

Obi is born into this society where the old values no longer proves [sic] useful and is therefore dead. He finds himself at the "cross-roads of culture". Achebe has brought in the picture of death to symbolize the death of a society that has been caught up in the dynamic world of change. The old order has certainly died making way for a new and transitional society, which is full of pitfalls, which the average man finds very difficult if not impossible to escape from [...] *No Longer at Ease* studies the deeply personal dilemma that modern tribal societies face as a result of rapid westernization and the central character epitomizes the death of native cultures.³

From this quotation, one understands that Achebe uses the central character Obi to account for the state of confusion and alienation in which the modern societies are drowned. The old traditional way of life is died clearing the path for a new foreign one. Dr. Sakshi in his "Colonial Conflicts leads to Alienation and Rootlessness in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*" says

The protagonist, Obi Okonkwo, grand-son of Okonkwo the tragic hero of *Things Fall Apart* is also a product of alienation from his own community, society and culture. It was due to his Western education and new ideas and way of life developed by his education. He tries to negotiate between his communal living and new way of thinking but never succeeds.⁴

Being the product of the old tradition and the new foreign Western culture together, Obi strives in vain to come to terms with both, but never succeeds to do so because the two cultures are not only different but they are completely in opposition to each other. Another critic who made reference to Achebe's novel is Raman Singh. In his *No Longer at Ease: Traditional and Western Values in the Fiction of Chinua Achebe*, Singh says

The destruction and corruption of Ibo life that is recorded in *Things Fall Apart* is continued in *No Longer at Ease*. But this time there is a difference. Whereas the former novel is about the unfortunate demise of an old native tradition, the latter is about the incapacity of the foreign tradition to cope with the problems an individual must inevitably face when his heritage is neither one nor another; or, perhaps, when his inheritance is a mixture of opposing traditions⁵

No Longer at Ease is a novel about the adverse effects of the long confrontation between the old and the new culture and which led both to a political and social unrest in Nigeria. The individual is caught between the two sides and this led to his alienation and corruption.

Other studies have been conducted on Mimouni's *Le Fleuve détourné*. For instance, Fouzia Bendjelid in her "L'écriture de la rupture dans l'œuvre romanesque de Rachid Mimouni" says,

Ses personnages endossent des contre-discours par rapport à ceux déjà établis, déjà construits et normalisés dans la société décolonisée; ces procédés narratifs et ces contre-discours ont tendance à se rejoindre intimement et à entrer en corrélation dans un mécanisme de la cassure et de la dispersion; ils se fondent dans des fractures formelles et discursives assumées par des protagonistes au destin fictionnel tragique (un personnage qui n'arrive pas à se retrouver et retrouver son identité dans la société décolonisée est acculé au meurtre dans *le fleuve détourné*,...⁶

All the characters used in Mimouni's novels are real human beings fighting against the injustices that took place after the Algerian independence. They denounce the abuses of the government's actions inciting the reader to act.

Mehanna Amrani, for his part in *Algérie: Nouvelles écritures* claims,

Le Fleuve détourné est un titre allégorique qui suggère l'idée de la destruction de toute une société sur le plan des mentalités, des comportements quotidiens et même de la topographie des lieux. *Le Fleuve détourné* peut être relié au titre de '*Une Paix à vivre*'. Car le fleuve est le lieu où coule l'eau. Or, l'eau est source de toute vie. Et c'est tout le sens de la vie qui se trouve justement ébranlé dans ce roman.⁷

The novel's title *Le Fleuve détourné* is very significant and allegorical. It carries in itself the whole meaning of the novel; a society at large is deconstructed, put into disorder and its history is distorted by the holders of power. Another illustrative critic to Mimouni's novel is Radjah Abdelouhab. In *Réalités et Fiction Dans Le fleuve détourné* de Rachid Mimouni, Radjah asserts " Sur le plan thématique le roman traite plusieurs thèmes, l'anarchie, l'incompétence, l'arbitraire, le viol, le trafic...et la corruption qui ronge la société jusqu'à nos

jours”⁸. Mimouni’s novel deals with the corruption that is spread in the society and that still gnaws it till today.

Accordingly, the review of the literature above makes it obvious that both writers deal with the cultural clash and the problem of identity that haunt the lives of many Africans. Though they are from two distinct countries, Achebe and Mimouni reflect the cruel reality of their societies in a quite similar way. Thus, our aim through this work is to complete the views mentioned above by identifying the outcome generated by the confrontation of the old traditional values with the new alien culture brought by the European intruders. Indeed, even after many years of the withdrawal of the colonial forces from the African countries, the latter remained in a state of disorder, clash of cultures and identities which alienated them from their environment.

It is really disheartening to know that after so many years of independence, the third world countries are still immersed in gloom. Many families are still silently swallowing drops of injustices daily committed against them. Thus, the interest of this work is to remind the reader that it is always useful to go back to the past to remind oneself of the sayings of the many writers whose words are meant to raise consciousness in every one’s mind, to give voice to the voiceless souls and to unite the world under the roof of brotherhood. In effect, both writers want the African to cease to consider himself worthless and inferior. And both of them seem to say that no one has the right to deprive the others of their life, their liberty or their property be him a colonizer or a corrupted country man. The two authors are looking forward to see their people regaining their peaceful life and to live in a peaceful world full of happiness, love and brotherhood.

To reach our aim, we have opted for the Fanonian theory for its relevance to our study. In fact, in his book *Black Skin White Masks* (1952), Fanon speaks of the alienation of the

black man when he is confronted with the western culture, whereas in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon deals with the pitfalls of national consciousness and how the bourgeois class tries to hold power and discard the people from governance. Accordingly, the outline of our study will be divided into two sections. The first includes a general introduction, a short summary of each novel, the theory that will be deployed as well as short definitions of two recurrent words that are used throughout all the discussion namely alienation and identity. The second section is the result and discussion section wherein we have tried to make an analysis of the three chosen themes; cultural clash and alienation, identity along with the sociopolitical unrest in the two novels in the light of the chosen theory.

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Method and Materials

A-Theoretical Considerations

The theory chosen to sustain our analysis is Franz Fanon's. In all his works, among which *Black Skin White Masks* (1952), *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), the Martiniquais writer and psychiatrist Franz Fanon focuses on the struggle against colonialism, and its destructive aftermaths; alienation, marginalization and dehumanization of many people. In cross cultural encounters like the one between whites and blacks, Fanon synthesizes that the colonized loses his personality and identity by emulating the westerner. He starts therefore, a process of alienation, acculturation and self hatred. As a result, a violent revolution is the only way to get rid of this dehumanization and imposed repression from which the colonized countries are suffering and which had tremendous and devastating effects on the colonized man's culture and origin.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon analyses the alienation of the black man; his inferiority complex, his emulation and dependence on the whites as direct results of colonialism. The reason for this alienation is that the latter promotes the White's culture and civilization at the expense of the Black's. Fanon denies all the negative vices assigned to the colonized trying to convince him that these are only myths constructed to justify the Europeans' presence in Africa "In my case I knew that these statements were false. There was a myth of a Negro that had to be destroyed at all costs."¹, he declares. Fanon urges the colonized to get rid of the burden that haunts him and to free himself from his inferiority complex and alienation "This book, it is hoped, will be a mirror with a progressive infrastructure, in which it will be possible to discern the Negro on the road to disalienation."²

In the *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon is not only concerned with the indictment of colonialism but also with the criticism of the intelligentsia who fall prey to the lure of independence and betray the masses of the peasants who have staged on armed struggles so that this so-called elite might hold the strings of power. In this book, Fanon focuses mainly on the identity of the blacks, national consciousness and its pitfalls as well as the role of the intellectual in the construction of the new nation. The onus of effecting decolonization falls on the educated elite be them politicians or writers. For him, the leaders must take part in the armed struggle and commit themselves to the cause of the restoration of nationhood both politically and culturally. Beyond its being a provocative attack against colonialism, *the Wretched of the Earth*, serves as a warning against the evils awaiting after independence. He harshly criticizes and unveils the mean deeds of the national bourgeoisie and the postcolonial leaders who instead of getting up with their people to reconstruct their nations, they continue repressing them and usurping their possessions and encourage the dependency of their nations on European countries. In this respect, Fanon says

Because of its bereft of ideas, because it lives to itself and cuts itself off from the people, undermined by its hereditary incapacity to think in terms of all the problems of the nation as seen from the point of view of the whole of that nation, the national middle class will have nothing better to do than to take on the role of manager for Western enterprise, and it will in practice set up its country as the brothel of Europe.³

Though decolonization could have opened doors to the third world countries to develop and thrive, these were shut again by the political leaders. In the chapter entitled “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness”, Fanon includes the national bourgeoisie in his analysis of power relations. He argues that the colonizer uses the national bourgeoisie as a tool to retain his power over the independent countries. Since independence, this social class took the place of the colonizer that is why it grew tremendously without being able to be at its nations’

disposition. Unable to steer their nations towards development and autonomy, the national bourgeoisie reproduces the colonizer's way of governance.

Though Fanon's ideas were shaped before decolonization, they describe the situation of the decolonized nations as if he is living among them today. His works are still useful for us today. As Ziauddin Sardar claims in his forward to *Black Skin White Masks*, "Fanon's anger has strong contemporary echo. It is the silent scream of all those who toil in abject poverty simply to exist in the hinterlands and vast conurbations of Africa"⁴. In other words, by his understanding of the basis of the colonial system, Fanon foresaw the future of the colonized countries. In fact, he analyses both the immediacies and the upcoming of independence. He not only advocates the use of violence to liberate oneself from the shackles of colonialism, but he also makes the colonized aware by cautioning him against the national elites' thirst to replace the departed colonizer bringing a new form of "Manichaeism" to the fore, a "Manichaeism" based this time on the difference or rather the superiority of those in power and the inferiority of the people.

The sum total of Fanon's writings and works are purely revolutionary and devoted to expressing the move to a direct action against any kind of exploitation be it direct or indirect, by foreigners or countrymen. He preaches the use of violence and encourages the literature of protest. He is against any kind of assimilation "let us decide not to imitate Europe; let us combine our muscles and our brains in a new direction"⁵ he says. Fanon gives a great importance to the essence and the identity of the human being "Mankind, I believe in you..."⁶. He pleads for a new humanity, for the unity of all former colonized nations which should be autonomous to be able to build their future.

After accounting for the theory, we shall give short definitions of two recurrent words that appear throughout our discussion i.e. alienation and identity. According to The World Book Encyclopedia

Alienation is the feeling of being isolated from certain aspects of one's environment. Alienation may occur when a person's emotional ties with another person, group, institution, or belief are disrupted. Sometimes, entire groups become alienated. [...] Alienated persons may become disoriented or hostile, feel helpless, withdraw within themselves, or reject established values. Many social scientists see a relationship between alienation and such behaviour as crime, mental illness.⁷

Another definition given by the Hutchinson Encyclopedia is

Alienation [is a] sense of isolation, powerlessness and therefore, frustration; a feeling of loss of control over one's life; a sense of estrangement from society or even from oneself. As a concept it was developed by German philosophers G W F Hegel and Karl Marx [...] The term has also been used by non-Marxist writers and sociologists (in particular Emile Durkheim in his work *Suicide* 1897) to explain unrest in factories and to describe the sense of powerlessness felt by groups such young people, black people, and women in Western industrial society.⁸

These two definitions agree on the fact that alienation is a feeling of isolation and estrangement of the individual or the group from the rest of the world or even from themselves. A person becomes alienated when all the ties between him and the society are disrupted. He rejects the values established among his people. Therefore, he feels as a foreigner in his own society.

Onwuanibe in his *The Critique of Revolutionary Humanism: Frantz Fanon* asserts that Fanon "speaks about the alienation of the Negro in terms of cultural imposition, and of the exploitation of the native by the colonists, just as Marx sees the alienation of the proletariat as their exploitation by the bourgeoisie."⁹

David Cate, on the other hand, In his book *Franz Fanon* (1970) assumes that "Just as the later Marx roots alienation firmly in the division of labor and in class struggle, the later

Fanon locates it equally firmly in the imperialist division of the world into poor countries and rich, exploiters and exploited, rulers and ruled”¹⁰. From these two quotations, one understands that Fanon links alienation to the exploitation, the deprivation of any person of his rights and the imposition of one’s culture upon others since it is these factors that deny his being and isolate him from the society.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word identity can be defined as “Who or what somebody or something is”. Maalouf on the other hand, in his essay *Les identités meurtrières* (1998), tries to give a precise definition to the word identity “Mon identité c’est ce qui fait que je ne suis identique à aucune autre personne” [...] “C’est ce qui fait que toute personne est singulier et potentiellement irremplaçable”¹¹. From this quotation, we understand that each person is unique and different from the others and never two persons can share all their belongings without any difference. Maalouf explains that identity is not given once for all. It is rather acquired through time. Thus, it is the sum total of all the elements that form the individual, “Il y a bien sure; pour la grande majorité des gens, l’appartenance à une tradition religieuse; à une nationalité, [...]; à un groupe ethnique ou linguistique; à une famille [...]”¹² Maalouf adds.

With colonization and after it Mondialization, this term began to become a source of crisis and problems. Europe is imposing her culture on the world and this threatens the other cultures of disappearance. Many individuals are not able to assimilate what they consider to be good in the culture of the other without losing their own. Maalouf speaks of the ‘identité plurielle’ by which he means that the identity is one unbreakable unit made of all the elements that constitute the whole. As long as the individual does not understand this notion, he will suffer from identity crisis. “It was [Erik] Erikson who coined the phrase ‘identity crisis’ in the 1940’s. At first, the term referred to a person who had lost a sense of ‘personal sameness and

historical continuity' (Erikson 1968: 22). As such, the individual is separated from the culture that can give coherence to his or her sense of self.”¹³

B- Summaries of the Two Novels

1- *No Longer at Ease*

No Longer at Ease (1960) is Achebe's second novel and the sequel of *Things Fall Apart* (1985). It is about the state of embarrassment in which Nigerian young generation found themselves in the period just before, during and after independence. Its events are put in a kind of a circular plot i.e. the story opens with the main character on trial then, it backtracks in time to account for the reason of this tragic end.

Obi Okonkwo, the main character in the novel is a Nigerian young man who is sent to England to continue his studies. After his coming back, he is allotted a European post and a car. Umuofia at large becomes happy planning to use Obi's position to secure its place within the government. But for Obi becoming a corrupt civil servant, is the last idea that may come to his head which is till now full of reformist thoughts.

Soon however, he finds himself overwhelmed by debts; he sends money to his father to pay for his brother's school fees, his mother is ill in hospital and the bill is waiting for him to be paid, the corrupted government made a skillful plan to usurp his money by making the electricity bill higher. In addition, a thief steals the money Clara lends him. Knowing that he is paid fifty pounds a year, the Umoufia Progressive Union, is expecting him to be a good payer.

Clara is Obi's girl friend. She is a beautiful girl but an *Osu* (an outcast dedicated to the gods). Thinking that his Christian parents have literally renounced on their culture, Obi takes a firm decision to be engaged with Clara. His expectations turn out to be false. His parents

firmly refuse his decision. His mother even threatens him to commit suicide if such a thing happens.

Obi whose mother has just died and whose engagement with Clara has just been broken up can no longer find a meaning to the world he is living in. He ultimately ends in desolation and despair; he is caught taking bribe and is taken to trial. By this, the story comes back to its first scene.

2- Le fleuve détourné

Le fleuve détourné (1982) is Rachid Mimouni's third novel. The plot of the story is interwoven in a meticulous way in the sense that when we finish reading it we get two whole stories with full meaning; one unfolds in the past and tells the story of the narrator's childhood till his coming back to the village, whereas the other is in the present time told about his companions in the camp.

The nameless narrator is an Algerian young man, a shoe-repairer who loses his memory after being hurt in a bombardment in the maquis. After a long absence, this fighter comes back to find his name inscribed in a monument with the other names of the heroes of the war. Henceforth, he becomes a man without a name and a place in the society. He searches for his father and finds him in despair when he turns his attention to his wife and son, another desolation faces him.

His wife Houria, after his going to the maquis, abandons the village and goes to the town where she lives under the mercy of the corrupt men of the state. She abandons the traditional cloth and with it her culture and origin. His son is withdrawn from school and is left to wander in the roads without protection; no hope no future. Unable to find any meaning

for his life, the desolate narrator takes revenge by killing the traitors who exploited his wife and is taken to prison.

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Results and Discussion

This dissertation is a binary study of Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Rachid Mimouni's *Le fleuve détourné*. Its aim is to draw a comparison or to study the affinities between the two chosen works. To reach our aim, we have chosen to make reference to Fanon's theory developed in his two most outstanding works *Black Skin White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).

Our study opens with an introduction wherein a review of literature about the topic is included, followed by the raising of the issue and a general plan. In method and materials, we have tried to account for the Fanonien theory developed in his two outstanding books *Black Skin White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. Then, we have tried to give short definitions for the two recurrent words that appear throughout our discussion namely alienation and identity as well as short summaries of the two novels. In the result and discussion section, we have tried to expose the results we have reached and to discuss the common themes that unite the two novels. In fact, at first glance the two novels seem to be literally different from each other. They are written in two different periods and by two authors from two different countries that is to say two different backgrounds. But, a profound analysis of the two works has permitted us to discover that both Achebe and Mimouni deal with the themes of Cultural Clash and Alienation, Identity as well as Sociopolitical unrest.

Indeed, both authors deal with the state of disorder and confusion from which many Africans suffered during and after colonization because of the involuntary juxtaposition of the two completely opposing cultures namely the African and the European cultures. Many Africans, if not all, are not able to find a balance between the two inherited backgrounds. This led to their alienation from their societies and a creation of an identity crisis. This fact is

exacerbated by the application of foreign political systems in Africa and which are adopted by the men of the state even after independence. These corrupted political systems in turn, lead to enormous social ills which have negative impacts on the lives of many Africans. From all that has been said, we come to the conclusion that Achebe and Mimouni's novels share certain similarities and can be compared in the light of the theory of Franz Fanon.

As it is said above, in the discussion section of our work, we are going to deal with the common themes between the two novels i.e. *No Longer at Ease* and *Le fleuve détourné*. The themes that we are going to discuss are: cultural clash and alienation, identity in addition to the sociopolitical unrest that took place in the third world countries during and after independence.

At first glance, the two novels seem to be different from each other; *No Longer at Ease* was published in 1960 whereas *Le Fleuve détourné* in 1982, twenty two years after Algeria's independence. This long period that separates the two novels however, does not prevent the two authors from dealing with similar themes. Said differently, both authors deal with the problems the African faces as regards his culture, traditions and identity and the way he loses them. As Achebe, Mimouni is a post colonial writer who witnessed the changes that affected the Algerian society after its independence. He is someone who believes in the author's mission as a messenger to the society, to raise awareness and concern in the people and to denounce all the ills from which his society suffers aiming for a change. Anyone who reads the two novels; *No Longer at Ease (1960)* and *Le fleuve détourné (1982)* cannot deny the fact that they are thematically rich. Therefore, this humble work is limited to the discussion of only three themes; cultural clash and alienation, identity and sociopolitical unrest within the two novels.

Cultural Clash and Alienation

One of the pivotal themes in the two works is that of cultural clash and alienation. Throughout the novels, we see the characters struggling with themselves and torn between two different worlds. The use of a protagonist who is torn between the remains of an old forgotten culture and a new not yet really assimilated one is not fortuitous in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*. A piercing look into the life of the protagonist as depicted in the novel will permit us to discover Nigeria's upheaval during the 1960s. Indeed, Obi Okonkwo epitomizes the turmoil of the Nigerian elites in the period just before independence. His life is no more than a nightmare to which Achebe makes allusion right from the very beginning of the story. Obi is a Nigerian young man to whom the members of the Umoufian Progressive Union have paid eight hundred pounds as a loan to be sent to Britain to continue his studies. The encounter between the native culture and the newly acquired one leads to a cultural clash and a problem of identity in the life of this character. Indeed, it is through Obi that Achebe portrays the state of confusion and instability in which the people of the ex-colonized countries found themselves. As Zouiche puts it, "in "No Longer at Ease" [...], he explores the aftermath of this experience or the long-lasting consequences of the breakdown of the traditional African societies. He also analyses the conflicting political, cultural and social forces which determine contemporary Nigerian societies."¹

Throughout the novel, we see Obi in a continuous struggle being incapable of finding a way in the in-between. On the one hand, he "thought: 'what would happen if I stood up and said to him: "Father, I no longer believe in your God"?'"², he does not want to be Christian anymore because he is not convinced of the superiority of the Europeans over his ancestors. As Fanon says, "If Negroes are impervious to the teachings of Christ, this is not at all because they are incapable of assimilating them. To understand something new requires that we make

ourselves ready for it, that we prepare ourselves for it”³. His hatred of the Europeans reaches the extent where he thought to rise and shout to the smooth M.P., who was lecturing to African students and say “Go away, you are all bloody hypocrites”⁴. But on the other hand when Isaac refuses his marriage with an *osu*, he says “I don’t think it matters. We are Christians.”⁵

Indeed, at the dawn of the story Obi was very proud of his origin, his culture and language “Let them come to Umuofia now and listen to the talk of men who made a great art of conversation. Let them come and see men and women and children who knew how to live, whose joy of life had not yet been killed by those who claimed to teach other nations how to live”⁶ he says. But, at the end he tries to change the very traditions, of which he was proud at first saying that they are obsolete “What is *this thing*? Our fathers in their darkness and ignorance called an innocent man *osu*, a thing given to idols, and thereafter he became an outcast, and his children, and children’s children for ever. But have we not seen the light of the Gospel?”⁷. From this, we deduce that Obi’s attitude towards the African culture is quite ambiguous “The black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man [...]. That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question.”⁸

Consequently, Obi becomes alienated from his own society. This is better evidenced through Joseph’s words “Obi’s mission-house upbringing and European education had made him a stranger in his country”⁹. He is no longer in a stable moral state because the world becomes alien to him “He was amazed at the irrelevant thoughts that passed through his mind at this the greatest crisis in his life [...] His mind troubled not only by what had happened but also by the discovery that there was nothing in him with which to challenge it honestly”¹⁰. His life has no longer any meaning; only confusion and despair reign over it. His alienation is so

great that “He had discovered he could beat his father”¹¹, a thing that no person, in a normal state of mind can do.

Just as Obi, the life of the narrator in *Le fleuve détourné* is a genuine image of that of the Algerian society. He is used by the author to typify the suffering of the Algerians after twenty years of independence. But, contrary to *No Longer at Ease*, in *Le fleuve détourné*, the problem does not lay in the narrator but in the society itself. He is a shoe-repairer who is taken to the maquis during the War of Independence because the Algerian soldiers need him in repairing their shoes. The narrator’s alienation starts from the day of his coming back to his village. After many years spent in a distant hospital in the frontiers suffering from memory loss, he comes back to find that a great alteration has swept the country. The latter became independent, and a new way of life to which he never gets used took hold of it “Depuis mon arrivée au pays, j’ai vu bien des choses étranges [...] Que se passe-il au pays? Que s’est-il passé?”¹² he asks his cousin.

New objects were introduced to the nation which become later on the source of all the social ills and confusion. This is clearly expressed in the words of the narrator’s son “Tour à tour, en une ronde infinie, ils viennent devant nous ouvrir leur ventre et déverser sur nos quais des montagnes de marchandises [...] comme si notre peuple [...] les bras atrophiés, incapable de travailler, se contentant d’échanger son pétrole”¹³. The third world countries become tremendous markets for European products, a cunning plan made by the west to keep his former colonies dependent or submissive “L’Occident ne veut pas qu’on lui ressemble, il veut qu’on lui obéisse”¹⁴ says Maalouf. The west makes advertisements and uses the new technologies to seduce the third world countries to spread his culture at the expense of that of the Orient.

The traditional clothes which were tokens of the Algerian identity and culture are thrown away and replaced by European ones. The virtues and qualities which gave the Algerian woman and man their value in the world and differentiated them from other nations are lost. The lands that were formerly the source of the riches of many people are abandoned in favour of the towns where only corruption and illnesses are to be found “La terre restait en friche et je me demandai pour quelle obscure raison les paysans refusaient désormais de la cultiver”¹⁵. These alterations, it is admitted have not occurred because of the fact that people have no longer faith in the traditional way of life but because the foreign lifestyle has imposed itself “Notre peuple est un peuple sain, affirme l’Administrateur. Les maladies qui sévissent actuellement dans ce pays ont été importées de l’étranger. Avec les frigos, l’inflation, la télévision en couleurs, l’habitude de consommer du gruyère et de porter des mini-jupes.”¹⁶

This shift in the society’s way of life prevents the narrator from establishing any relationship with his countrymen who become materialistic. Their sole interest is to fill their pockets. This somewhat emphasized his alienation. Like Obi, he feels embarrassed by this change, he tells his cousin “[...] Les hommes que j’ai croisés marchaient tous la tête basse. Que se passe-t-il au pays?”¹⁷. The hope of the country to regain back the honour on which the colonizer has stepped has vanished. The very existence of this hero whose merit should be recognized is denied. He jeopardized his life for the sake of his country to come back and find that another colonizer took hold of it. No one accepts to give him a work because he was disabled during the war. Even the mayor, his relative refuses to help him get back his means of identification. This situation is tremendously painful and difficult for him to endure, he has nowhere to go after being rejected by his own society. So, “Where am I to be classified? Or, if you prefer, tucked away?”¹⁸. Being everywhere rejected, he keeps wandering from a place to another searching or rather striving to rebuild what is left from the old broken life to

reestablish peace and harmony away from this turmoil in which the society has been immersed. His alienation is expressed in his son's words "Tu es un rescapé du passé. Tu ne peux pas comprendre. A quoi bon en parler?"¹⁹.

He is obliged to face the indifference of the administration whose role is to continue the colonial mission. The sole thing that consoles him is the fact of recalling his days in the maquis "j'ai connu pire au maquis"²⁰. It is this quest of his identity that gives sense to his life throughout the whole novel. He begins his trip by a great desire to see the whole village, when this one rejects him, he goes to the town to search for his wife. The latter's indifference pushes him to despair, but he immediately remembers his son and a slight hope then keeps him alive. But upon the latter's rejection, his gloom reaches its summit saying,

Je sais désormais qu'à mon tour il me faut choisir. Faire comme Vingt-Cinq, qui considère qu'il a fini de vivre [...] faire comme l'Ecrivain, qui n'a pas fini de se colleter avec lui-même dans une impérative quête intérieure [...] A moins de suivre Rachid, qui décida son départ un beau matin [...] A moins d'imiter Omar, qui quitta subrepticement la scène.²¹

After his society's rejection he falls into a total despair. His end is similar to that of Obi in the sense that both end in desolation and loneliness. Henceforth, nothing has any importance in his eyes. Life has no more any meaning "Comment lui expliquer que je me sentais dominé par une immense lassitude, que rien n'avait plus d'importance à mes yeux? [...] que je n'avais plus à l'esprit qu'une terrible envie de dormir"²². His paralysis is akin to that of many Algerians who are faced with individuals who are unconcerned with enhancing their intellectual capacities but are satisfied to resort to illegal means to reach whatever they want.

Obi in fact, is not the only character who suffers from the clash of cultures and alienation in *No Longer at Ease*, Issac Okonkwo himself is torn between the two cultures. Unlike his father, Isaac "was not really a man of action but of thought [...] When faced with a problem under normal circumstances, he was apt to weigh it and measure it and look it up and

down, postponing action”²³. In addition, he is not the kind of a person who changes his mind easily. Though he was not happy when his wife gave birth to his fourth daughter, he could neither marry a second wife nor did he want to “let the heathen know that he was unhappy. He had called his fourth daughter Nwanyidinma –‘a girl is also good’. But his voice did not carry conviction.”²⁴

The negative consequences that stem from the fact that Isaac is exposed to two different cultures cannot be denied. Despite his adherence to Christianity, his ardent belief in the Christian God and his love for the written word, there are parts of his cultural heritage that he cannot easily forswear because to these he owes great respect. When he was a child, Isaac or rather Nwoyi, leaves the house of his father because of his rejection of some old ethics he considers unjust towards the human being “I went through fire to become a Christian”²⁵ he tells Obi. But it is the same person now that tells his son “I know him [Josiah Okeke, Clara’s father] and I know his wife. He is a good man and a great Christian. But he is *Osui* [...] I beg of you, my son, not to bring the mark of shame and of leprosy into your family.”²⁶

It is important to recall that Isaac spends nearly all his childhood with the white missionaries, a fact which alienates him from his society for a very long time. We can say that he is almost a white construction. At the end of the novel, Isaac is confronted with a difficult choice. As Maalouf says “En tout homme se rencontrent des appartenances multiples qui s’opposent parfois entre elles et le contraignent à des choix déchirants”²⁷. Though it is difficult for him to make a choice, Isaac chooses his society of origin because what attracted him to Christianity in fact, was not its logicality but a superficial feeling towards it. As Achebe explains it “It was not the mad logic of the trinity that captivated him [Nwoye]. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the morrow”²⁸.

Thus, using his patriarchal authority, he simply tells Obi that he cannot marry Clara “We are Christians, but that is no reason to marry an *osu*.”²⁹

Isaac depends heavily on Hannah, his wife. In fact, throughout the novel we discover the role of Hannah, this kind and very affectionate Nigerian woman in maintaining the unity of the Okonkwo family thanks to her loyalty to her husband. She joined the people of the church with her family after her father’s death. In spite of this however, she still enjoys the African music and stories, a heritage she stops transmitting to her children in the presence of her husband. In addition to this, though “she was a very devote woman” Hannah has “never taken part in the family reading”³⁰ of the bible.

When Obi tells her about Clara, she threatens him: “I have nothing to tell you in this matter except one thing. If you want to marry this girl, you must wait until I am no more. If God hears my prayers, you will not wait long [...]. But if you do the thing while I am alive, you will have my blood on your head, because I shall kill myself”³¹. So, it is clear from this quotation that Hannah is Christian since she is praying to the Christian God and thus she knows well that “The Bible says that in Christ there is no bond or free”³², yet she is still tied to the ancient traditions and forbids Obi’s marriage with an *osu*. From all what has been said, one can infer that Obi’s parents are not really attached to the Christian religion, they practise it only because something superficial in it has attracted their attention “To understand something new requires that we make ourselves ready for it, that we prepare ourselves for it”³³. Therefore, the reaction of Obi’s parents is a lucid proof that they are torn between the two cultures. This reinforces Obi’s alienation for it is his parents who first initiate him to Christianity and now they are themselves opposing the values in which they educated him.

Similarly, in *Le fleuve détourné*, the narrator is not the sole victim of the clash of the two cultures. Before his going to the maquis, the narrator has married the most beautiful girl in his douar, Houria. In fact, Houria was for him like a dream “[Elle] se mettait à baisser les yeux et à rougir lors de nos rencontres”³⁴. He feared not to be able to marry her. She was the symbol of the simple, shy Kabyle woman. When her husband goes with the maquisards, he leaves her without protection to face the hardships of life in the douar which has become unbearable. Being worried about her son’s future, she goes to the town seeking the help of the administrators who should give her a pension as a widow of a shahid. There, she falls an easy prey in the hands of these betrayers, she submits to their cruelty and at the end she finds herself a prostitute.

Houria’s calamity begins from the day when she leaves the douar to settle in her new villa. Unlike the douar, the town is the place which is influenced most by the culture of the West. This is because it is there that the colonizer settled during his long presence in Algeria. The many alterations that took place in it, among which the change of the way of life from a vertical to a horizontal one made the life in the town extremely difficult. Another change in the life of Houria is her withdrawal of the traditional cloth in favour of a European one “Elle portait les cheveux coupés, et avait abandonné l’habit traditionnel au profit d’une jupe et d’un chemisier, ses lèvres étaient enduites de rouge”³⁵. This reminds us of Clara and the other girls with whom Joseph has the habit to spend good moments.

One cannot speak of cultural clash and alienation in Mimouni’s novel without speaking of l’Ecrivain. This character’s alienation is expressed in his own words

Dans la drôle d’école où j’ai fait mes premières classes, les instituteurs français s’amusaient parfois à taquiner les petits Arabes. Ils nous demandaient si nous aimions la France [...] J’ai dit oui, fièrement, en relevant le front, et la vigueur de mon affirmation choqua mon propre instituteur, sans doute effaré devant le gouffre entrevu

des sombres sentiments qui me poussaient ainsi à proclamer ce reniement de ma patrie.³⁶

The *Ecrivain* suffers from a profound feeling of regret and sadness. For him, he has betrayed the country by submitting to the teachings of the colonizer and denying his own culture and motherland. This is why he remains all the time silent without saying any word. For him, the world is no more than an absurd entity

Le bien et le mal sont restés pour moi des notions d'une parfaite abstraction [...] J'étais impitoyable avec moi-même et je traquais mes sentiments jusque dans leurs derniers retranchements. Comment alors répondre à vos appels, sinon à assumer une nouvelle imposture ?³⁷ he tells Omar.

This character stands for the African elites who are the product of the western culture. They are in fact, very influenced by the western ideas and values. How can they speak for their people if themselves are torn between the two opposing sides? Are they going to praise the past of their countries, a past about which they ignore many facts? Or about the foreign History; the history of 'nos ancêtres les Gaulois' that the French had inscribed in their minds?. The tragedy of the African elite is that he is in between just like Obi whose life ended in disorder. According to Radjah Abdelouhab, *The Ecrivain* is used to denounce the silence of the elites considering it as a betrayal to the country "Pour dénoncer le silence des intellectuels et la trahison qui vient de leur part, Mimouni a créé dans son roman un personnage dont le nom renvoie directement au représentant de tous les cultivés dans le pays 'l'Ecrivain'"³⁸. That is why Omar always blames him of keeping silence before all the injustices that are taking place, he whose voice can reach all the corners of the world. Omar knows that "what matters is not to know the world but to change it."³⁹

Omar's role in the novel is very pivotal. This student is the only character who asks many questions. Omar, as a student stands for the ideas that should be used to make reforms

“Nous parlions d’apprendre au peuple à ne plus se laisser piéger, à descendre dans la rue pour un oui pour un non”⁴⁰. He is humanist because he refuses to be silent and to turn deaf ears to the cries of the people. He urges the latter to use violence and not accept humiliation anymore because as Fanon claims, “What is important is not to educate them, but to teach the Negro not to be the slave of their archetypes”⁴¹. That is why he is always in conflict with the silent *Ecrivain*. Omar intervenes before the administration to help the narrator regularize his civil status. He is a very naïve person and he is not prepared to live in the midst of this jungle “Omar n’était pas préparé à passer sa vie à griffer et à mordre. Il aimait sourire”⁴². Omar speaks of being betrayed by all these men who took hold of the governance of the country and let the people marginalized “Nous avons crié aussi. Et nul écho n’a répercuté nos cris”⁴³. The death of Omar at the end of the novel represents the death of all the creative ideas.

The misfortune of the world is expressed in the words of *Vingt-Cinq* “Tout est jaune. Pas un seul vert [...] Là- bas, au loin, sur la route, des étrangers qui passent. Ils ne s’arrêtent jamais dans notre région”⁴⁴. No one wants their company anymore. They are isolated from the outside world. This world where they are living is a wretched one; nothing attractive in it. Only suffering and calamities follow one another. With no culture, no identity, Algeria is nowhere in the world of the livings. Actually, it is from the dawning of the novel that *Vingt-Cinq* begins to reveal to the reader the reality of the country. In this respect, *Radjah* says “Dès le début du roman, il commence à mettre à nu des réalités qui expliquent la dictature qu’a vécue l’Algérie : la stagnation, l’immobilisation et le manque d’initiative”⁴⁵. *Rachid*, on the other hand always asks questions about the difference between the rich and the poor “Ces hommes vivent-ils dans le même monde que nous? D’où leur vient cette assurance?”⁴⁶. The sole thing about which *Rachid* speaks is suicide.

The only way left for them is the one chosen by Ali. This wise man uses madness as a refuge to escape all the disorder that overwhelms Algeria. He is the voice of wisdom; he is the only one who tries to advise the narrator when he is in the douar “Ton cousin ne fera rien pour toi. Il a trop peur de perdre son post [...] Va voir ton oncle Mokhtar [...] C’est le seul qui puisse faire quelque chose pour toi, s’il le veut bien”⁴⁷. He knows all what happens in the douar and informs the narrator about it warning him that if he continues his search, he will certainly suffer “Tu ne dois pas retourner au village, parce que les gendarmes te cherchent [...] Rappelle-toi, les hyènes n’aiment que les cadavres”⁴⁸. To be let alone, one has never to interfere in the matters of the administration in Algeria, otherwise the Policemen will chase him wherever he goes. All these characters in fact, stand for the lowest class in the society, the simple and naïf citizens who are the victims of the injustices that emanate from the shock between the two cultures. This is why they are all alienated from the world.

The African countries at large are affected by the European culture in all domains and Nigeria is not an exception. The Nigerian food is no longer served in the restaurants “No descent restaurant served Nigerian food. ‘Do you want Nigerian food?’”⁴⁹ Joseph asks Obi. This change led to the alienation of all Nigerian people who feel themselves foreign in their own country. When Obi asks Joseph who owns the restaurant where the two go once to dine, the latter replies “I think a Syrian. They own everything in Lagos.”⁵⁰

“In the past, in Nigeria it was unthinkable for a person to carry out a big project alone without the assistance of either the entire village or at least a section of it”⁵¹, but now “a man could not go to his neighbour’s wedding unless he was given one of these papers [an invitation card]”⁵². Indeed, the new culture and religion caused confusion among the Umoufians and broke their unity. We see for instance, the old man who asks Isaac to bring Kola to break for Obi’s return “hisses in disgust, takes up his goat skin and goes to sit

outside” far from the group when Mr. Okonkwo replies ‘Kola nut is eaten here, but not sacrificed to idols’⁵³. Some of the old traditions were kept, but with the interference of the European culture they are done in a novel way “I shall bring a Kola nut [...]. And we shall break it in the Christian way,’⁵⁴ said an old man. “Bless this Kola nut so that when we eat it it will be good in our body in the name of Jesu Kristi”⁵⁵. By the interference of the European culture in the native one, the latter goes through a sharp break down “The truth is that the Negro race has been scattered, that it can no longer claim unity” says Fanon⁵⁶. This fact was alluded to by the song Obi heard from the mouth of the traders

“An in- law went to see his in-law

Oyiemu — O

His in-law seized him and killed him

Oyiemu — O

Bring a canoe, bring a paddle

Oyiemu — O

The paddle speaks English

Oyeimu —O

On the face of it there was no kind of logic or meaning in the song. But as Obi turned it round and round in his mind, he was struck by the wealth of association that even such a mediocre song could have [...]. In short then, thought Obi, the burden of the song was ‘the world turned upside down.’⁵⁷

By the long juxtaposition of the two distinct and completely opposing cultures, the African world comes to a tragic end. The African cultures are wiped out and the new ones are not really welcomed among all the Africans. “The white man’s country must be very distant indeed,” suggested one of the men. Everyone knew it was very distant, but they wanted to hear it again from the mouth of their young kinsman”⁵⁸. From this Quotation one understands that the elders want to tell the young generation that they cannot reach the white man’s country not only because it is distant but also because of its difference from theirs. The end is

summarized in Christopher's words "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. You may talk about education and so on, but I am not going to marry an *osui*,"⁵⁹ Christopher is aware that their culture is not wholly changed but also it has not remained intact.

Algeria's way of life too is turned upside down. People have forgotten the flavour of peace since it is from a long period that the Algeria they are living in has become the place where we find "Toute l'injustice du monde"⁶⁰. Birds have disappeared from the country, bridges are constructed in dry rivers, peasants have been metamorphosed on statues of stone and the dead refuse to witness. Huge mountains of merchandises and many theories are brought from foreign countries to be applied in Algeria. This is confessed in the words of the governor himself "Le pays devenu un vaste champ d'expériences pour des théories venues de l'étranger ... ridiculisaient nos coutumes et notre religion [...] et la télévision convia le peuple à crier au miracle et à s'extasier devant le génie de ses dirigeants..."⁶¹. The traditional cloth has no more any value because the European one has been introduced and is seen as a token of modernity and development.

The Algerian society which was founded on the basis of the religion of Islam which preaches respect and brotherhood among the individuals of the society has therefore begun to lose its culture and values. These began to be seen as old fashioned and obsolete. People are no more living for the interest of the society, but for the individual; the rich do never care for the poor. Here again one remembers the words of Mr. Green to Obi remarking that the elites get as much money as they can letting millions of their countrymen miring in poverty and death "Mais baissait la tête, le peuple qui crevait devant les portes des hôpitaux, manque de médicaments, manque de place [...] baissait la tête, le petit fellah réduit au chômage [...] y a plus qu'à abandonner ses outils et sa terre, aller vers la ville,"⁶² the governor continues.

All these changes in fact, are never for the benefit of Algeria. The fellah has abandoned his lands, his source of richness and has gone to the corrupted town. New modern implements are brought like television and these were used by the West to diffuse his culture all over the world to replace and perhaps intentionally to annihilate the other cultures. The Algerians then, become very influenced by and imitate blindly the European culture.

Both Achebe and Mimouni bring the image of death to emphasize the idea of the death of the mother culture. The former by the death of Obi's mother Hannah and the latter by the use of the character of Houria who at the beginning was the epitome of the native culture but, after going to the town she completely changes her way of life. She adopts a European lifestyle; she cuts her hair and wears European clothes. In a word, Houria changes to the extent that even her husband says "ainsi devenue, la rencontrant dans la rue, je ne l'aurais pas reconue"⁶³. Houria does no longer stand for the shy Kabyle women. Thus, we can say that she dies the same day she leaves her tribe and goes to live in the village

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- ³³ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 70.
- ³⁴ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 19.
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- ⁴⁰ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 123.
- ⁴¹ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 22.
- ⁴² Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 217.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 183
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 204.
- ⁴⁵ Rajah, Réalités et Fiction Dans *le Fleuve détourné* de Rachid Mimouni, 26.
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- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 84.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁹ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 31.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵¹ Oladele, Taiwo, *An Introduction to West African Literature* (Michigan: Nelson, 1967), 143-144.

⁵² Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 133.

⁵⁷ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 42.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁶⁰ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 210.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 167.

Identity

The writings of Achebe take us back to the glorious past of Africa; its religion, culture and identity. In fact, his novels give us an image of the ancestral organization and the way of life of the Nigerian tribes before colonization. In this respect, Taiwo claims,

ONE OUTSTANDING characteristic of West African writing is a return to the past- a past which was almost wiped out by two important historical events, the slave trade and colonialism. The writers attempt to recreate the simplicity and romantic attraction of the traditional way of life of the African disrupted by his contact with the Western world; they show the devastating effect of this contact on his culture, which has led to his present dilemma.¹

Ibo tribes were ruled by the elders and men of titles who gave great importance to religion, tradition, and customs. They set rules, which no one dared disrespect, to govern the tribes. Thus, everything was organized and well ordered. Religion and the decisions of the elders were of a pivotal role in the organization of the life of the people because they knew the punishment reserved to those who did not respect them. After the coming of the colonizer, this system is no longer respected. It is rather faked or utterly changed. A new system is then introduced or better say imposed, for it is applied not to organize but to disarrange the life of the autochthones. This is said in the words of one of the elders

‘Iguedo breeds great men’ said Odogwu changing the subject. ‘When I was young I knew of them – Okonkwo, Ezeudu, Obierika, [...]. These men were great in their day. Today greatness has changed its tune. Titles are no longer great, neither are barns or large numbers of wives and children. Greatness is now in the things of the white man. And so we too have changed our tune. We are the first in all the nine villages to send our son to the white man’s land. Greatness has belonged to Iguedo from ancient times.’²

When the Europeans first came to Africa, she was neither a no man’s land nor a tabula rasa. She was rather rich by her traditions, culture and religion by which her people identified themselves. This can be inferred by the use of Ibo proverbs and some Ibo words and songs in Achebe’s writings. These were not left intact during the colonial presence in Africa. After

decolonization, the new generation finds itself lost. A fact which no colonized man can escape. Here again one recalls Fanon “The Negro learns that one is not black without problems”³. All the old values are replaced by worthless ones; in the ancient times titles and courage during the war were the most praised virile virtues “Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat”⁴. But, “Dancing is very important nowadays. No girl will look at you if you can’t dance”⁵. Thus, the new generation lives aimlessly, lost in this foreign pitiless world where materialism outweighs all values.

Just like Achebe, Mimouni recalls his reader of the glorious past of the Algerian history. From the very first pages of the novel in fact, the distant memories of the times of yore are evoked when the tribes were united and living in brotherhood everything was shared no matter small its quantity was

*Autrefois, nous vivions unis et prospères sur de vastes terres exploitées dans l’indivision. Mais un colon du voisinage, qui projetait d’étendre ses champs de vigne, soudoya un membre de la tribu qui alla demander le partage des terres. La loi française disait qu’il suffit qu’un seul ayant droit demande le partage pour que celui-ci soit réalisé d’autorité. C’était le meilleur moyen de semer la discorde parmi les membres de la tribu.*⁶

The aim of this quotation is to come to the point that the past of Algeria, as that of Nigeria is a very glorious one wherein unity and brotherhood reigned among the people. It illustrates how the white man succeeds in disrupting the tribesmen’s thinking and attitudes as regards their ancestral way of life. Immediately after the interference of the colonizer in the affairs of the country, everything is turned upside down. The conventional customs are questioned, identities and cultures broken. The old traditional system that was from time immemorial well inscribed in the people’s minds and which kept them in unison and agreement is now threatened by an external menace which is this new system that the foreigner has established.

This new order is based on novel institutions brought by the new comer and are applied without any adjustment to fit the new milieu in which they are applied “The notion of the party is a notion imported from the mother country. This instrument of modern political warfare is thrown down just as it is, without the slightest modification”⁷. The confrontation between the traditional and modern systems creates a conflict between the two. This leads to a rip in the society between those who respect and still represent the old values epitomized in the narrator and his father and the followers of the new system embodied in the men of the State. In the middle of this chaos, one has no other issue but to isolate himself from the utterly strange world. This is in fact what happens to the protagonists of the two novels. Both of them suffer from identity loss; Obi because he is not able to settle the conflict between his Nigerian origin and European acquisition and the narrator because the society to which he comes back after a long absence is literally altered.

Obi is a Nigerian young man; he is from Umoufia which “is an Ibo village in Eastern Nigeria and the home town of Obi Okonkwo. It is not a particularly big village but its inhabitants call it a town. They are very proud of its past when it was the terror of their neighbours, before the white man came and levelled everybody down”⁸. He grows up in the lap of a Christian family and is sent to continue his studies in England. This creates in him a state of instability throughout all his life. In *No Longer at Ease*, Obi is in a constant search for his identity. His name is Michael Obiajulu Okonkwo, a combination of a European and an African name. Thus, contrary to the meaning of his Ibo name ‘the mind at last is at rest’, Obi’s mind is never at rest. Its state is rather better expressed by the very title of the novel ‘*No Longer at Ease*’. Obi is ill at ease in both cultures. He remains in the middle occupying a maddening place.

At the dawn of the novel, we see him as someone who owes great respect to his Ibo culture and language “He could say any English word, no matter how dirty, but some Ibo words simply would not proceed from his mouth”⁹. In England, he is proud of his Ibo culture to the extent that he felt ashamed of studying English. Through him, Achebe explains that the perpetuation of the ancestral heritage mainly the stories told to children awakens the latter and encourages their imagination. It is with great pride that Obi tells his classmates the story his mother narrated to him. He even adds to the story from his own imagination. But when he comes back from England, he becomes “fascinated by what he was learning of this strange and sinful new world”¹⁰. A great change has taken place in Nigeria and this instead of pushing him to attach himself more to his origin, it disturbs him and alienates him from his society. He is not able to defend any of the two sides that constitute his whole; he is no more a Nigerian nor a European. He is somewhere in-between the two sides that he is not able to join together. In this respect, Innes and Lindfors in *Critical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe* say

Achebe is concerned not only to show that Ibo society has lost its wholeness, both moral and spiritual, both political and social but also that Obi Okonkwo ... the young protagonist fails to bring back any fresh imaginative synthesis from his western education, any new vision to take the place of the old.¹¹

When he was in England, Obi was in a hurry to be back home. After coming back however, Obi loses nearly all meaning of the traditional values. He forgets his wish for change and begins to be addicted to spending money and going out with girls. Obi’s failure in his mission however, is not only because of his own weakness, but also because he is not helped by the environment. Instead of helping him, his family, the Progressive Union and the government put pressure on him. They do not give him “time to look round first and know what is what”¹².

As far as the narrator of *Le fleuve détourné* is concerned, his search for his identity starts from the recovery of his memory. Its recuperation appears to be very difficult and problematic because in the civil state he has been considered dead for a long time. When he went to the maquis, an enormous hope for a peaceful and better morrow overwhelmed him. He was ready to sacrifice soul and money for the freedom of the country “A notre retour, nous proclamerons la fête et la fin des combats. Nous serons héroïques et simples. Nous ne parlerons pas du passé, ni de nos souffrances, ni de nos doutes”¹³. The suffering of the Algerian people in the hands of the French colonizer had killed in him all desire for life. Knowing that he was dead at any rate, he chose one way; to fight the oppressor by all the means. And when finally, the foreign oppressor departs, oppression has not ended. Instead of forgetting their sufferings and agonies to start a new life, it is the heroes who are forgotten, their families dishonored and their children left to wander without any safe refuge. Except their names which figure in the monuments, they have gained nothing in return for their heroic deeds. This is lucidly expressed in the Governor’s words

Naïf, nous l’étions tous. Nous sommes descendus de nos montagnes la tête emplie de rêves... Nous rêvions d’inscrire la liberté dans tous les actes, la démocratie dans tous les cœurs, la justice et la fraternité entre tous les hommes... Mais tandis que le peuple en liesse fêtait ses retrouvailles avec la liberté, d’autres hommes, tapis dans l’ombre, tiraient des plans sur l’avenir ...Et un beau matin nous nous sommes réveillés avec un goût d’amertume dans la bouche.¹⁴

While the heroes and the naïf people were unflinchingly fighting in the maquis letting their wives and children in wretchedness, the mischievous and greedy ones were hiding themselves planning for a way to be the only ones to gain without losing anything. The state of the narrator is a very illustrative example. When he went to help the warriors, he let Houria and his not yet born son without any protection to come back and find that they fell easy preys in the hands of the traitors.

Unlike Obi who has two names; one Ibo and another European, the narrator in *Le fleuve détourné* is nameless. Yet the signification of their situation is very similar in the sense that Obi is not able to find a place and to identify himself neither with his Nigerian origin nor with his western education; he is nowhere. Similarly, the narrator is nowhere because his very existence is denied. He is considered dead and his name is inscribed in the monument of the village. He comes back with a hope to live a good life and to help in the building of his country, a fact that can be inferred from his job as a shoe-repairer, as Fanon says “All I wanted was to be a man among other men. I wanted to come lithe and young into a world that was ours and to help to build it together”¹⁵. But, after his coming back, he is left to wander from the city hall to the town trying to reconstitute the remaining fragments of his broken identity. The fact of being a nameless character is very significant. This character in fact, stands for the many marginalized Algerians who fought for their independence only to find themselves immersed in another kind of humiliation and anonymity. They can no longer recognize anything in this new life imposed on them. It is true they have gained independence, but they have never restored their dignity and place. Radjah Abdelouhab explains this clearly when he states that

Le personnage-narrateur est un marginal qui peut être n’importe quel Algérien. Depuis les premières années de l’indépendance, le peuple algérien est plongé dans l’anonymat et l’humiliation, le rêve de la liberté s’est réalisé mais très loin de ses aspirations premières: la vie dans une Algérie démocratique où règne l’égalité et la fraternité n’était qu’un leurre.¹⁷

Similar to Obi, the narrator is at first eager to come back to his village, but after being back he becomes disheartened by the situation in which he finds the douar. The absurdity of his situation and the despair into which he falls leads him to dig the grave of his leader in the war ‘Si Cherif’ asking him to witness for his participation in the war. Realizing that his father

has lost all faith in the promises of progress, he turns to the town in search for his wife and son. These two, for his astonishment are leading a nightmarish life.

It is from his very childhood that Obi is deprived of knowing his real identity. His father Nwoyi was baptized Isaac early in his life. This isolates him from his kinsmen and sets him apart. They consider him as an empty man who loses his senses after a drop of palm wine “He is not the only Christian we have seen. But it is like the palm-wine we drink. Some people can drink it and remain wise. Others lose all their senses”¹⁸. During all his life, Isaac was regarded as a climber who forgot his origin “In every country of the world, there are climbers ‘the ones who forget who they are’”¹⁹. Isaac gives all his children two names; one Ibo and another Christian. He prevents his wife from telling her children African stories which are part of the African identity saying that these are heathen stories and should not be told in a Christian house. Hanna too, prevents her children from eating their neighbour’s food and stops bequeathing her children the African heritage and identity.

Contrary to Issac, the narrator’s father in *Le fleuve détourné* is the character who is attached most to his origin. He is the epitome of Kabylia identity and the marginalized peasant group. He is ready to take his responsibilities in spite of his age. When his son goes to the maquis and asks him to take care of Houria and her baby, he responds “Tu peux compter sur moi”²⁰. He is very attached to his land which is the heritage of the ancestors “La terre”, says Nadjma Ben Achour, “est un bien légué par les ancêtres, elle est le cordon qui rattache le paysan à l’identité millénaire. Elle est le passé, le présent pour lequel les paysans ont lutté et luttent encore. Elle est enfin, leur avenir”²¹. Unfortunately, the administrators do no more encourage agriculture. They are occupied by their own affaires letting the simple peasants tiring themselves by working in the exhausted soil “no modernization of agriculture, no planning for development, and no initiative; for initiative throws these people into a panic

since it implies a minimum of risk, and completely upsets the hesitant, prudent, landed bourgeoisie”²². Like Issac, this character uses his patriarchal authority to decide on the future of his son “Je suis ton père, tu ne doit pas discuter mes ordres”²³. Knowing that his son’s future will not be prosperous in working in the land, he never lets him work in it. Instead, he sends him to learn another craft; shoe-repairing. With all the alterations that took place in the country, he begins to lose his authority. He feels helpless before the astonishing changes of the world. When his daughter-in-law tells him that she is going to the town, he merely shakes his head for a long time.

Clara is an *Osu*, she is unwelcomed among the Ibo free people because in Ibo tradition the latter are forbidden to marry an outcast. She is identified with one of her ancestors who was given as slave to one of the gods, “Some identified me with ancestors of mine who had been enslaved or lynched: I decided to accept this”²⁴ says Fanon. Throughout the entire novel, we discover Clara’s nonconformist behaviour with the African culture. She is rather very influenced by the European way of life. Her Ibo name is never mentioned in the novel; she is identified only with her European one. She becomes materialistic; she is very happy when Obi got the car, the European post and the allowance of sixty pounds to the extent that she “screamed with delight”²⁵. She is fond of films and considers herself superior; whenever she finds a chance to show that she is a been-to, she did it without thinking twice about it. She is very exigent “she would reject an aluminium pot in one shop, and walk the whole length of Broad Street to another to buy the very same thing at the very same price”²⁶

Like Clara, Houria the narrator’s wife plays an important role in the novel. She renounces to the life in the village because of its hardships. After many days of hesitation, she takes a firm decision to let her parents- in-law and settle in the town “J’ai longtemps hésité. Je ne voulais pas quitter tes parents, qui m’avaient toujours traitée [...] comme leur fille [...] je

n'osais m'aventurer seule hors de l'air tribale"²⁷. The tribe represents a lot of things in the Kabylarian life. Inside a tribe, one is never humiliated because he is among his brothers. Houria does not want to live far from the protection and the security of the tribal life but on the other hand she can no more endure the poverty and the harshness of life in it "Mais j'ai pensé à notre fils, à la misérable vie qui serait la sienne: d'abord berger, et puis, plus tard, remplacer son grand-père pour tenir les manches de la charrue. Est-ce une existence?"²⁸

When one reads this passage, the first scene which comes to his mind is Younes, the protagonist of Khadra's *Ce que le jour doit à la nuit*. After the disaster that sweeps his family, Younes is taken by his Uncle and his European aunt to live with. There, the child's identity is put on a sharp blade. He adopts a European way of life and lives far from his own people, a fact which nearly estranges him from them. Once in the town, Houria loses all ties with her identity; she wears European clothes and lives in a European way. When her husband sees her, he says that she is wearing a masque behind which she hides her real identity "j'eus soudain envie de me lever [...] de la saisir, elle, par ses cheveux coupés, lui [...] arracher son masque colorié pour découvrir enfin le vrai visage de Houria, celui baigné de larmes du jour de mon départ,"²⁹ he says. She is no more the symbol of the national heritage "The latter [the townsman] dresses like a European; he speaks the European language [...] so he is considered by the peasants as a turncoat who has betrayed everything that goes to make up the national heritage"³⁰.

Confronted with the foreign culture, Houria changes a lot. She even refuses to help her husband out of fear of losing her pension. Like Clara, she becomes materialistic "Sinon, je perdrais ma pension"³¹. She easily falls prey in the hands of the dirty men "C'était horrible! Je n'aurais jamais cru l'esprit humain capable de tant d'inventions pervers. Il y avait pire [...]"³². So, this naïf young woman who is promised protection and a better life witnesses a

tragic end. It is important to note that the name of this character is not chosen at random. Contrary to the name of Clara which is European, Houria is an Arabic name and a very significant one. In effect, 'Houria' means 'freedom and liberty'. This character stands for Algeria, the narrator's mother country who is betrayed and whose dignity was stolen by the greedy men of the State. Thus, like Algeria and contrary to her name, Houria is never free.

Her son also, epitomizes the lost generation of the Algerian young men who are still suffering from the atrocities and the hardships of life "Tous les désespérés ont mes yeux. [...]. Nous sommes ainsi des milliers à traîner dans les rues, orphelins sans passé et sans mémoire, confrontés au plus total désarroi"³³. He is left to savour all the calamities of the world. The hardships he undergoes make him aware of the truth in spite of his age. He tells his father

As-tu déjà vu la terre s'entrouvrir? [...] Une fraction de seconde pour transformer un relief familier: [...], d'anciennes sources tarissent, jaillissent de nouvelles sources, en pleine montagne, qui projettent d'un jet furieux leur eau fumante vers le ciel, le fleuve, détourné de son lit initial, s'égaré parmi de nouveaux vallonnements. Il a perdu la direction de la mer. Où ira-t-il? ³⁴.

This young boy loses all hope. His life is no more than a bad dream from which it is difficult to wake. He asks questions for which he never gets satisfactory responses "I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects"³⁵. He accuses his father for letting the corrupt men take hold of the country.

Joseph who one thinks will encourage Obi in going forward in his decision to marry Clara, is the first to try to stop him. Though he is not really attached to his Ibo culture in the sense that he permits himself to go around with girls and spend good time, he says to his friend "What you are going to do concerns not only yourself but your whole family and future generations. If one finger brings oil it soils the others"³⁶. Joseph knows that with the introduction of the European values to Africa, it is the African identity which is threatened.

Thus, he tries to make Obi think of the consequences of his action. As Achebe himself says “we are in a period so different from anything else that has happened that everything that is presented to us has to be looked at twice”³⁷. Joseph attracts the attention of Obi to the fact that his people will not accept to attend a wedding which goes against their sacred tradition and identity “Are you going to marry the English way or are you going to ask your people to approach her people according to the custom?”³⁸. Though Joseph submits to the pleasures of the modern life, he does not dare do anything which will affect badly the African identity.

The old men as well want to preserve the identity and the unity of their people. Before going to study abroad, they warned Obi off marrying a white woman knowing that it is her own culture that she will transmit to her children. Thus, she will turn them away from their own people “It is not her going away that matters. It is her turning the man’s face away from his kinsmen while she stays”³⁹. The presence of a stranger among a united people creates disorder among them. As long as he stays there are always conflicts. In fact, their identity and feeling of confidence in themselves was shaken from the first day they encountered the white man who imposed himself on them. The latter marginalized and denigrated them to the extent that they feel themselves worthless. We notice Mr. Green’s behaviour with Mr. Omo and Obi ““You say *sir* to your superior officers, Mr. Okonkwo’ and the telephone was dropped with a deafening bang”⁴⁰.

References

- ¹ Taiwo, *An Introduction to West African Literature*, 29.
- ² Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 49.
- ³ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 118, see the note.
- ⁴ Chinua, Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1986), 3.
- ⁵ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 12.
- ⁶ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 13.
- ⁷ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 108
- ⁸ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 4.
- ⁹ Ibid., 41.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., 13.
- ¹¹ Quoted in Zouiche, *The novels of Chinua Achebe*, 8-9.
- ¹² Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 73.
- ¹³ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 23.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., 196.
- ¹⁵ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 85.
- ¹⁶ Rajah, Réalités et Fiction Dans *le Fleuve détourné* de Rachid Mimouni, 55.
- ¹⁷ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 44.
- ¹⁸ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 24.
- ¹⁹ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 22.
- ²⁰ Quoted in Radjah, Réalités et Fiction Dans *le Fleuve détourné* de Rachid Mimouni, 70
- ²¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 155.
- ²² Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 18.
- ²³ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 85.
- ²⁴ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 60.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 66.

²⁶ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 174

²⁷ Ibid., 174- 175.

²⁸ Ibid., 168.

²⁹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 112.

³⁰ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 169.

³¹ Ibid., 177.

³² Ibid., 210.

³³ Ibid., 211- 212.

³⁴ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 82.

³⁵ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 68.

³⁶ Quoted in Simon, Gikandi, *Reading Chinua Achebe*. (London: Heinemann, 1991), 1.

³⁷ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 67.

³⁸ Ibid., 48.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 60.

Sociopolitical unrest

After colonization, Africa witnesses a great disruption from the old traditional values by which a man was respected and given value by the work he did. In the ancient times, it was only through hard work that the elders got their titles of honour and their kinsmen's esteem. In the modern times however, everything has changed; people do no more understand any other language except that of money "That was what the world had come to. Children left their old parents at home and scattered in all directions in search of money"¹. Money now becomes the lot since it solves all kinds of problems. This is what pushes people to get it using all means no matter illegal they may be. Women and even little girls become prostitutes, men accept bribery and spend nearly all their times in bars. The first young man who approaches Obi after his coming back to Nigeria offers to reduce the duty on his radiogram to two pounds if he does not accept to receive a government receipt. Mr. Mark goes to see Obi in his office offering him a bribe to help his sister win a scholarship. Worse still, Miss Mark offers him her body.

Mr. Green speaks of the uselessness of the 'Western education' and 'promise' brought by the west to Africans. As Memmi says, "C'est vrai que les colonisés ne savent pas travailler. Mais où le leur a-t-on appris, qui leur a enseigné la technique modern? Où sont les écoles professionnelles et les centres d'apprentissage?"². Which education Mr. Green speaks of since the majority of the people are illiterate most of whom are deceived by their corrupt country men?. Here one may think of the seller of the 'Long Life Mixture' who distributes bills to the 'illiterate' crowd to permit them know about the wonderful virtues of this remedy that are impossible to innumerate. Only bars are to be found everywhere in Nigeria during and after its colonization. A strategy used by the colonizer to keep the colonized dormant; to

discard him from the government. All these illnesses are initiated during the colonial period and their effects are still effective till today.

The way of administration used during the colonial period was unfamiliar to the Africans and since it is used for many years, even after the departure of the colonizer, this system was not greatly altered. In this respect, Tordoff says

The colonial state was par excellence a bureaucratic state. This had its impact on the post-colonial state, which tended to adopt (with only slight modification) the inherent civil service structure, rules and procedures, as well as the preferential arrangement for civil servants in relation to salary, housing, and medical services.³

Before the 1960 s it was the white men who ruled Africa and we can say that it is they who initiated the political corruption which led to the social one. This can be proved through their very presence in Africa. One cannot deny nowadays that the civilizing mission was no more than an alibi used to hide their real intention; usurp Africa's wealth. As the vice-president of Umuofia's Progressive Union says "You think white men don't eat bribe? Come to our department. They eat more than black men nowadays."⁴

Obi's father for instance, worked for many years in the church and when he retired he was given only a meager pension

It was scandalous, he [Obi] thought, that after nearly thirty years' service in the church his father should retire on a salary of two pounds a month, a good slice of which went back to the same church by way of class fees and other contributions. And he had his two last children at school, each paying school fees and church fees.⁵

Achebe speaks also of the soldiers of whom Obi heard when he was a little boy "Some of them had been village ne'er-do-wells, but now they were heroes. They had bags and bags of money [...]. It was said that if you touched a soldier, government would deal with you."⁶

After independence, the men of the State copied the way of government that was used before. So, corruption reigned everywhere beginning from those who occupy high positions in

government till the lowest ones “to most of them bribery is no problem”⁷. This social disease becomes an integral part of the Nigerian society and it continues to have an adverse effect on the lives of the majority of the population. Hon. Sam Okoli who epitomizes the Ministers of the state, lives in a very luxurious house and when Obi makes a remark about it he replies “It’s not too bad,”⁸ which means that he is not yet satisfied by it. This character reminds us of Si Mokhtar in *Le fleuve détourné* who lives at the expense of his countrymen. In fact, all what Si Mokhtar gains is by illegal ways. It is by this that he succeeds to construct a big villa and make a great feast upon his coming back from his ‘Hadj’. The narrator is amazed by the hugeness of the house in which Si Mokhtar lives “Il y avait grande animation devant la magnifique villa posée sur une colline dominant le village”⁹. The wealth of these men creates another rip in the society which before independence was between colonizer and colonized. After independence it becomes between an African and his country man.

Achebe speaks of two different worlds. The first is the place wherein “there is no darkness,”¹⁰ it is the capital of Nigeria; Lagos. There is no darkness in it because it is there that the colonizer and the men of the state after him settled. The second is the world where only darkness reigns; the place of the poor people “Going from the Lagos mainland to Ikoyi on a Saturday night was like going from a bazaar to a funeral [...] Ikoyi was like a graveyard. It had no corporate life- at any rate for those Africans who lived there.”¹¹. This place occupied by the people is of a bad reputation, dirty and dark. Compared with the place where the colonizer lives, it is no more than a dark grave “The town belonging to the colonized people, [...] is a place of ill- fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how”¹². Mr. Green is somewhat right when he tells Obi that the educated Nigerians want to “get as much as they can for themselves and their family not the least bit interested in the millions of their countrymen who die every

day from hunger”¹³. What is wrong in his words however, is the fact of forgetting to mention the whole reality; this corrupted behaviour was not common among the Africans before colonization. It is the whites who introduced all these alterations among them. The scholarships which should be given to the children of poor people who cannot afford money to go to study abroad are taken by the rich whose greediness can never be satisfied “No man has money in this world”¹⁴ says the unanimous man who asks Obi to give his son a scholarship

This is also found in Algeria where the men of the state in sight steal the properties of the poor “N’attendez aucun bénéfice immédiat de vos efforts. Mais comme je sais que vous êtes de bons musulmans, vous trouverez au paradis la récompense des peines endurées ici-bas”¹⁵. This quotation in fact, is full of meanings. It accounts for the situation wherein the Algerian Muslims who are still in spite of everything, attached to their religion. These are denigrated, stolen everything, deceived by those who use the image of religion of Islam as a cover to their mean deeds. Here, one thinks certainly of ‘Hadj Mokhtar’ who in secret practises illegal trade of sheep which is the source of his wealth, but in public he deceives the villagers by an image of a ‘Hadj’. This is what makes the Manichean division of the African world continues after independence.

Thus, we notice that as in Achebe’s novel, in Mimouni’s too appears this stratification of the world. The first is dominated by those who took power after decolonization epitomized in the men of the state, the Messie and the family of Si Mokhtar who owns a tremendous and richly ornate house “je franchis à sa suite la grille d’entrée. Le jardin était très vaste, planté d’arbres fruitiers de toutes sortes. A travers les allées, mon guide me menait parmi un univers verdoyant”¹⁶. And the other is represented by the narrator, his father and the other villagers “Nos baraques ne sont meublées que de simples lits de camps en toile et d’armoires

métalliques brinquebalantes, rescapées par miracle du désastre général. Il n'y a pas de climatisation, malgré la rigueur du climat"¹⁷. This is exactly the way the colonial world was divided: the Europeans lived in luxury and comfort whereas the native lived in misery and wretchedness "This world divided into compartments, this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species"¹⁸.

Both Obi and the narrator fall victims of their corrupt countrymen albeit differently. The words of Fanon accounts for this "Society [...]" he says, "cannot escape human influences. Man is what brings society into being"¹⁹. Because a lot of people in the society are corrupt, one has either to follow their path or strive endlessly to change. While the narrator endures denigration till the end, Obi Okonkwo falls in the trap. Thus, this character who comes back with the desire to eliminate corruption and other social ills that were prevalent in his society and is supposed to help Umuofia "join the comity of other towns in their march towards political irredentism, social equality and economic emancipation,"²⁰ ultimately falls into the world of corruption. In a shortage of money and in a state of despair, surrounded by bad friends, only one way remains to him; to submit to the caprices of the new world where as Fanon says, "Privileges multiply and corruption triumphs, while morality declines"²¹.

It is worth noting that it is until he rejects his values that Obi falls down. He submits to the western education and tries to deny his own "The black man who wants to turn his race white is as miserable as he who preaches hatred for the whites"²². In other words, his western education has done nothing good for him since he goes with the desire to bring light to people who are sitting in darkness but his incapability to discern what to admit from what to reject in this new culture leads him to a tragic end. Ultimately, he is found to be as corrupt as the others. Everyone now speaks of him; he became a joke among his compatriots "There is no forgiveness when one who claims a superiority falls below the standard [...]" Only one choice

remains to him: throw off his “Parisianism” or die of ridicule”²³. Even the Progressive Union which is supposed to advise him, does not blame him for taking the bribe but for taking a risk for just a small one “If you want to eat a toad you have to look for a fat and juicy one”²⁴ they said.

Corruption thus, is the main reason why the African countries are still miring in poverty and misery after so many years of independent governance. This indeed, can be explained by the fact that the colonizer has discarded the people from the government for a very long time. As Memmi claims, “Comment s’intéresserait- il à ce dont il est si résolument exclu? Les colonisées ne sont pas riches en hommes de gouvernement. Comment une si longue vacance du pouvoir autonome susciterait-elle des compétences ? ”²⁵. After the departure of the colonizer, the vacant posts were occupied by people who had no experience. Their sole interest was to become rich and so they become. The hope of everyone is to become a “FUTURE MINISTER,”²⁶ to live a comfortable life by all means and as soon as possible even at the expense of their own people. Accordingly, government becomes a corrupt machine. Plans were cleverly made to exploit the people; we see for instance that every switch in Obi’s flat lit two bulbs “A typical government planning,”²⁷ so that the electricity bill will be high. The native governors have not yet understood that when they steal the State’s money, it is their own brothers that they are depriving of many chances and it is their dear country that they are preventing from development “In Nigeria the government was ‘they’. It had nothing to do with you or me. It was an alien institution and people’s business was to get as much from it as they could without getting into trouble”²⁸. In other words, the men of the State hurried to replace the departed colonizer and to accumulate wealth at the expense of the mass. Democracy, no doubt will not take place in these countries where everybody is corrupt. Obi himself says, “Not a chance there. It would take centuries. A handful of men at the top.

Or even one man with vision- an enlightened dictator [...].But what kind of democracy can exist side by side with so much corruption and ignorance?²⁹. So, at the end one comes to the painful conclusion “If one didn’t laugh, one would have to cry. It seemed that was the way Nigeria was build”³⁰.

After twenty years of independence, the African societies were still suffering from the same situation of deficiency, tribulations in all domains, no sign of development or any slight change. This is what Mimouni lucidly accounts for in his novel. To start with Ahmed, the narrator’s cousin who explains the origin of the conflicts both political and social

Autrefois, l’administrateur de la commune mixte, aidé de ses caïds, décidait de ce qui était bon pour nous et s’arrangeait pour entretenir en permanence la rivalité entre les deux principales tribus de la région [...] Mais les fils rivaux se sont retrouvés côte à côte au maquis et, le colonisateur parti, nous avons cru pouvoir tomber dans les bras l’un de l’autre. Las ! Nos vieilles querelles avaient pourri, et les Temps Modernes offrent tant d’occasion nouvelles à notre ancestrale concurrence.”³¹

This quotation sends us back to the seeds from which the conflict between countrymen stems. As Ahmed explains, it was the colonizer who first resorted to scatter hatred among the Algerians. Helped by some caïds or better say the traitors, the Europeans succeeded to tear the African unity for good. In fact, the caïds were seduced by the Europeans and used as tools to destruct the basis of the Algerian unity. As Fanon says “The truth is that the Negro race has been scattered that it can no longer claim unity”³². After independence, these quarrels have not stopped there, but persisted till today; a disheartening fact that no one can deny.

The newly free nation is henceforth ruled by rivaling people, each side haunted by a yearning desire to take the great share from the colonizer’s scraps

Regardez, regardez toutes ces belles villas des anciens colons, [...] prenez, bars, hôtels [...] empoechez [...] bousculez-vous, faites des affaires, entrez dans le commerce, créez des entreprises [...] Naïfs ...Car vous ignorez tout des dossiers méticuleux qui se constituaient sur votre compte et que, le jour venu, on ne manquera pas de brandir

sous votre nez, à la moindre tentative de votre part d'ouvrir votre bouche.³³

All what has been left in the country was shared among the ones who were waiting for the best moment to get out of their hideouts. These people were simply referred to as wolfs in the Governor's words "Les vrais loups avaient eu l'intelligence d'attendre que s'organise la vraie curée"³⁴. The coming back of the hero is unwelcomed. It is rather those who found in the maquis a refuge to flee the atrocities of the war that are welcomed. As Vingt-Cinq tells his friends,

Quand vint la guerre de libération, je me trouvais déjà au maquis, fuyant les autorités désormais plus sourcilleuses. J'y restai. Quand vint le moment de descendre vers les plaines, j'eus la surprise d'y être accueilli en héros. Mes anciens forfaits devinrent des faits d'armes. On m'offrit une villa et un bar.³⁵

The Algerian revolution is confiscated. Whereas the traitors are living comfortably in the villas and the houses left by the colonizers, the heroes are ignored, left without neither a name nor a family wandering from place to place. Ali and the narrator are the good instances for this. "La tournure que prend l'indépendance dès 1962 surprend plus d'un. Tous les idéaux révolutionnaires - pour lesquels sont battus des millions d'Algériens - sont relégué aux oubliettes. Les gouverneur s'avèrent terriblement mégalomanes et corrompus"³⁶. From then on, the needs of the people are neglected, their dreams evaporate day after day, and no hope remains in their hearts. The weak is stepped on, the disabled is denigrated, the women and the children are exploited "Héros disparus, si vous saviez le sort réservé à vos enfants et à vos veuves!"³⁷ Houria says.

As in *No Longer at Ease*, in *Le fleuve détourné* the administration is portrayed as a corrupt machine. Using irony, the author from the very beginning of the novel says that the administration is a difficult job and it requires many qualities "Il n'est pas facile, dans ce pays, d'être Administrateur. C'est un poste qui exige beaucoup de qualités"³⁸. Going deeper

in the novel, we discover that the Administration is the most corrupted place in the country. It does not encourage people to work. It rather neglects all that has relation with the people's comfort. The narrator tells us that the first thing he notices when he comes back to the douar is the huge land left unploughed. Everything is imported from foreign countries. Thus, the fellah has nothing else to do then to abandon his land and go to the town searching for work in the exploitative factories.

Ignoring the good way in which to steer the country, the government adopted the systems used in other countries without any change even though they did not fit their country “... commencèrent alors les pires folies ... Le pays devenu un vaste champ d'expériences pour des théories venues de l'étranger”³⁹. Fanon does not neglect this fact. He tries to attract the attention of the third world countries saying “The notion of the party is a notion imported from the mother country. This instrument of modern political warfare is thrown down just as it is, without the slightest modification, upon real life with all its infinite variations and lack of balance”⁴⁰. They completely discarded the people from the affairs of the administration to be able to rule the land as they wish. Fanon is literally against this idea “They [the political parties] do not go out to find the mass of the people. They do not put their theoretical knowledge to the service of the people.”⁴¹

Just like in Achebe, Mimouni speaks of the corrupt behaviour of the men of the state. They spend their time doing unnecessary things giving their work only a little time. When the garbage collectors go on strike, the narrator says of them: “les responsables communaux [...] arrivaient l'un après l'autre, en retard mais selon un ordre hiérarchique strict”⁴². Not only this, but also they sleep while on duty “Puis l'homme se retourna vers l'agent de service qui [...] essayait de continuer son sommeil”⁴³. This reminds us of Joshua Udo, in *No Longer at Ease*, who is dismissed from his office.

And finally to end with Omar's words, who says concerning the Administrator, who buys cement by the budget of the State only to resell it in higher prices for the emigrants who are ready to pay in Francs "Que pouvons nous faire contre des gens pareils? Ils jouissent déjà de tant d'avantages, de tant de privilèges, et trouvent encore le moyen de trafiquer pour accroître leurs profits. Tout compte fait, sa villa achevée, il va se retrouver avec un joli bénéfice"⁴⁴. It is actually inconceivable to try to imagine to which extent wealth and power can change the human heart to a real very harsh stone. Their very principles, if they had any are put aside the moment they achieve their goals "Il ne faut jamais croire au politiciens quand ils parlent de principes. Ces beaux principes ne sont que le moyen qui permet de confisquer le pouvoir. Ne les préoccupe que leur situation personnelle"⁴⁵. These quotations are used by the author to denounce the reality of the politicians who become aware of the presence of the people in only one period; in that of elections otherwise they turn him deaf ears. This is better expressed in the words of Omar "A chaque visite, on organise ainsi méticuleusement la mise en scène. Les yeux de nos grands dirigeants s'offusquent-ils à la vue de la crasse et de la misère ? [...] Sont-ils à ce point ignorants de la réalité pour se laisser leurrer par cette grande parade, avec ces pots de fleurs loués à grands frais."⁴⁶

And the naïf people are silently waiting for them to notice one day perhaps that "Il y avait un peuple couché par terre, sur lequel on marchait comme sur une pelouse. Il fallait un jour ou l'autre qu'il se remue"⁴⁷. The politicians have replaced the colonizer; they duped the people who blindly confided in them, confiscated power, distorted the reality to remain above the people forever. This can be seen in the behaviour of the policeman with Said and the narrator. The former kicks the table of the shoe-maker and throws away his tools. And when the narrator gathers them, "le policier, rouge de fureur, se précipita vers moi, son bâton haut levé"⁴⁸. The men of the state use violence with their countrymen as the colonizer did "the

young ruling class does not hesitate to assert that ‘they need the thick end of the stick if this country is to get out of the Middle Ages’⁴⁹ as Fanon asserts. They speak of the people as the colonizer speaks of the colonized. For them, the people are lazy. In fact, they want to exploit them exactly as the colonizer did before “en privé nous méprisent et nous traitent de fainéants”⁵⁰. Against these men, the people uses violence not only to enhance his situation but more importantly to be recognized just like he used it against the colonizer. We see this during the strike of the dustmen where Salah says “Je crois qu’au-delà de la solution de nos problèmes, quotidiens, les gens voulaient surtout affirmer leur existence.”⁵¹

In spite of all this there is a slight hope in change. This is expressed in the words of some characters as Rabah and Vingt-Cinq. When Salah tells Rabah “Vous êtes classés selon une grille que nul ne peut modifier,”⁵² the latter responds “Un jour, on te montrera qu’on peut la modifier”⁵³. And Vingt-Cinq says “Que tombe la pluie! [...] Alors ses forces enfin revenues, le fleuve détourné, rugissant d’une vieille colère, rompra ses digues, [...] et, prenant de court les calculs des sorciers, ira retrouver son lit orphelin pour reprendre son cours naturel”⁵⁴. Vingt-Cinq alludes to the fact that people if united will have the force to overthrow their enemy and to restore peace and harmony in their country. From this, we understand that these two characters still have a slight hope in a better future so that the hijacked river will be steered back to its real path.

By using these characters, Mimouni tries to give back hope to the people telling them that it is never too late for the confiscated revolution to be steered back towards its genuine goals which were to put an end to the injustices committed against them. This is found also in Achebe’s novel when Mr. Green tells Obi that it is up to the new generation to build the future of the country on strong bases. Albeit ironically, Achebe uses Mr. Green’s words to awaken the new generations.

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¹ Ibid., 122.

² Memmi, *Portrait du colonisé*. (Paris : Edition ANEP, 2006), 119.

³ Joel, Imbisi in Samuel, A., Nyancho, Francis, M. Muchoki and Paul, O.Ogula, *Governance in Africa: Historical and contemporary Perspectives*, (Nairobi: CUE Press, 2010), 118-119.

⁴ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 30.

⁵ Ibid., 50.

⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁷ Ibid., 18.

⁸ Ibid., 61.

⁹ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 85.

¹⁰ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 11.

¹¹ Ibid., 15.

¹² Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 39.

¹³ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 106.

¹⁴ Ibid., 152.

¹⁵ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 15.

¹⁶ Ibid., 88.

¹⁷ Ibid., 10.

¹⁸ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 39- 40.

¹⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 4.

²⁰ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 28.

²¹ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 171.

- ²² Ibid., 2.
- ²³ Ibid., 14.
- ²⁴ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 5.
- ²⁵ Memmi, *Portrait du colonisé*, 100.
- ²⁶ Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, 15.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 91.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 30.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 40.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 89.
- ³¹ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 61.
- ³² Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 133.
- ³³ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 196.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 197.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 157.
- ³⁶ Soukhel, *Le Roman Algérien: De langue Française (1950-1990)-Thématique*, 16.
- ³⁷ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 179.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 9.
- ³⁹ Ibid, 197.
- ⁴⁰ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 108.
- ⁴¹ Ibid, 113.
- ⁴² Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 133.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 73.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 106.

⁴⁷ Khadra, *Ce que le jour doit à la nuit*, (Paris: Ed. Julliard, 2008), 183.

⁴⁸ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 111.

⁴⁹ Fanon, *The wretched of the Earth*, 118.

⁵⁰ Mimouni, *Le fleuve détourné*, 136.

⁵¹ Ibid., 142.

⁵² Ibid., 127.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 143.

Conclusion

Throughout all this humble study, we have tried to provide the reader with a possibility to bring together two authors from two distinct countries, socially and culturally different backgrounds but who deal with nearly the same themes. By attentively examining the two chosen works namely *No Longer at Ease* and *Le fleuve détourné*, we can conclude that after twenty two years of decolonization the third world countries are still suffering from the same problems and difficulties faced during the colonial period

The work is opened by a general introduction wherein the review of literature about the topic is included. Then, we have tried to give a brief account for the theory deployed and short definitions for alienation and identity, two words that were recurrent throughout all the discussion section. Finally, by making reference to the chosen theory namely Fanon's, we have tried to analyze the themes of cultural clash and alienation, identity in addition to the sociopolitical unrest in the old world.

Chinua Achebe plays a pivotal role in the struggle against colonization. Throughout all his writings, his main concern is to fight against, and to correct the flawed image given to the Africans by the Europeans and to show that the African has his own culture and his own language that are distinct from those of the European. He himself speaks of the "Black man's burden" by which he alludes to the duty of the black writer to give the true image of Africa and the African cultures by revealing the genuine aim of the "civilizing mission". As we have seen, in *No Longer at Ease* Achebe's aim is to show the consequences that emanate from Europe's imposition of her own culture on the Africans. In fact, the juxtaposition of the two cultures is the seed of the clash of the traditional and the modern values. The inability of the African to find a balance to the two backgrounds he inherited through time and the identity crisis this conflict unavoidably causes in him lie bare in Achebe's work. Nonetheless Achebe

does not stop there, he continues to denounce the corrupted practices of the government; corruption, exploitation and theft.

Like Achebe, Mimouni is an important figure in the Algerian literature written in French. Throughout his novels in general and *Le Fleuve détourné* in particular, Rachid Mimouni criticizes bitterly the troubles which have taken place in Algeria after its independence. He is the Algerian writer who does not hesitate to fearlessly denounce the tyranny of the authoritarian centralism of a government he considers to have betrayed the ideals of the Algerian Revolution. He hints to the fact that the sovereign power of the country is nothing but an illusion and that the people, whose identity is ridiculed, are subjected to human and social oppression and injustice.

In the light of our study, we have reached the conclusion that though the two works are not written in the same period, they present salient similarities concerning the themes they deal with. In other words, Achebe and Mimouni typify the writer of the national literature about which Fanon speaks in the sense that these two authors deal with typically nationalist themes. In still other words, both Achebe and Mimouni deal with the problems their societies face in the period after their independence.

Achebe and Mimouni succeeded to give a very representative image of the chaos in which many African countries are wrapped up because the facts they dealt with are real and the events they described still exist in the African societies till today. Indeed, the Africans do not show any concern to enhance their life. They do not emulate Europe in her science and development but in her life style. This is what caused his trouble.

Many critics consider Achebe's and Mimouni's novels as excellent works aimed to raise consciousness and to awaken the individual by making him aware of the injustices

committed against the weak, the helpless and the poor people. Clearly these two writers did this with an aim to change, to enhance the situation of the Africans. Moreover, this work can be extended to further works by dealing for instance, with the fact of accepting a foreign language; that of a former colonizer who is obviously the cause of all these troubles from which the African suffers as an integral part of the writer's identity without causing him alienation or identity loss.

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