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The dialectics of ‘filiation’ and ‘affiliation’ in Achebe’s *Things fall apart* and Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*

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ABSTRACT

The task of critics in interpreting texts have been premised on several theories and concepts across literary traditions. The two concepts by Edward Said termed ‘filiation’ and ‘affiliation’, and which he theorized in *The World, the Text, the Critic* (1983), are part of postcolonial responses to Eurocentric criticism. The methodology adopted for this literary exegesis is the interrogation of Said’s concepts in relation to Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* (2004). The filiative features of the two worldly novels are highlighted through exposition of the bonds and the familiar forms between the two Igbo/Nigerian writers, of different generations. Colonialism and its effects on post-colonial subjects are some affiliative traits of the novels. Adichie not only shares filiative and affiliative connections with Achebe, but takes on the bigger challenge of representing not only the experiences of her people, but that of her gender. While her literary progenitor propagates masculinity in his works, Adichie foregrounds female experiences in her novels, leading to the tag of a radical feminist.

Keywords: *filiation, affiliation, colonialism, post-colonial, feminist*

INTRODUCTION

‘Filiation’ and ‘Affiliation’ are two concepts by Edward Said, which are part of the larger discourse of post-colonialism, and which expose varying influences in literary works. Most literary texts, emanating from postcolonial societies, are often critiqued from the notion of affiliation. There is, however, no gainsaying the importance of both filiation and affiliation, in promoting a better understanding of worldly texts. By worldly texts, Said (1983) implies that, because texts are situated in contexts, time and place in the society, then, “they are in the world, and hence worldly” (p. 35). Critical reading of texts, demands looking at the complex interconnectedness between both concepts. Meanwhile, the two texts that are the focus of this literary explication, are

highly proliferated and bear imprints of both filiation and affiliation mixes.

A notable simplification of the two concepts, is the interpretation by Machatova (2007), who avers that, filiation refers to lines of descent in nature, and affiliation to processes of identification in culture. Filiation in Said's estimation is, what enables a text to maintain itself as a text; it is covered by a range of circumstances such as: status of the author, historical moment, conditions of publication, values drawn upon, values and ideas assumed among some other factors. Meanwhile, studying affiliation, is to recreate bonds between texts and the world. Creating the affiliative bond, is to make visible, to give materiality back to the strands, holding the text to society, author and culture. In his seminal work on the two concepts, Said (1983) emphasises, that the process of affiliation, releases a text, from its isolation or filial origins, and places it in homological, dialogical, or antithetical relationships with other texts. Mathur (2015) puts the concepts in more basic expression by stating: "filiation" implies the norm in patrilineal societies - one's own inheritance whereas 'affiliation' connotes the 'radical creation of one's own world, context and version of tradition" (p. 24).

This explorative and qualitative study of two texts, by Igbo/Nigerian writers, utilises Said's concept of 'filiation' and 'affiliation,' as analytical concepts. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, both worldly novels, that have received critical acclaim, are compared, with the objective, of identifying their filiative and affiliative connections. The filiative features, cover a range of circumstances, one of which is, the status of both writers as postcolonial subjects, who are engaged in the process of representation. There is thus, the mapping of some common filiative and affiliative features, of the selected texts. This is to promote, a better understanding of the texts, their connectedness and the circumstances of their creations.

About Achebe and Adichie

Achebe's place in African literary canon is central and pivotal, such that, he is considered as one of the most important writers of the twentieth century (Boehmer, 2014). He was a Nigerian novelist, poet, essayist and critic of Igbo extraction, whose first novel, his magnum opus, *Things Fall Apart*, has been widely read, studied and translated into several languages of the world. This debut novel, is one, that attempts a reclamation of the dignity of his race, denigrated in Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. His motivation to write, according to him, was based on the representation of Nigerian characters in Cary's novel as savages and buffoons. Meanwhile, Achebe could recognise the cultural ignorance of the white men, who present African stories and experiences early on. The success of *TFA*, has

been attributed, to the presentation, of an authentic tribal story from within. In undertaking the task of representation, Achebe relied on the tradition/culture of his native Igbo of South Eastern Nigeria. There is also devotion, to exposition of the onslaught of Christianity, as the precursor of colonialism and how the foreign religion, has engendered a clash with the local culture. His success with *TFA*, opened doors of publishing opportunities, to several other African writers. His literary texts, polemics and works by other African writers, counterpoise the colonial perspective, that hitherto plagued African literature. Achebe was not only a writer, he was a teacher and a scholar, who plied his trade both home and abroad.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, on the other hand, is considered, as the heiress, to the literary throne of Achebe (Tunca, 2018). Not only are both writers of Igbo extraction from South East Nigeria; they both lived in the same house, though at different times, at the Nsukka Campus of the University of Nigeria. Adichie was once questioned, on whether living in a house previously occupied by Achebe, exposed her to his muse. Her response was that, her family moved in, when the Achebes moved out. A fitting homage to Achebe by Adichie, is in the opening lines of her novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, where she writes: "Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion..." (p. 11). Adichie's stellar literary career, started, while studying in the United States of America. Just like her chief inspirators, Achebe and Buchi Emecheta, Adichie's writings rely largely on the rich Igbo cultural repository and the Nigerian socio-historical realities as subject matter. *Purple Hibiscus* picks up the theme of religion from where Achebe stops in *TFA*. Adichie's motivation for writing was expressed in her 2009 TED talk titled, "The Danger of a Single Story". In the talk, she expressed her concern, for the under-representation of various cultures and the danger inherent in a people's story being told by others.

Previous Studies

Achebe's and Adichie's writings have been subject of several scholastic interrogations and comparisons. What can be adduced to many comparative studies, on the two writers, are their seeming interconnectedness in terms of context, content and use of language. Tunca (2018) brands Adichie as Achebe's 'unruly' daughter, for clear literary affinities between the two writers. Wenske (2016) considers Adichie to be in dialogue with Achebe in her second novel. Adichie is seen, to have engaged with her older writer, through the concept of complementary dualism. Wenske study compares Achebe's rural novels with Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* through the following sets of dualities: individualism and collectivism; natural and supernatural; traditional and

change; and African and Western. Some other studies have examined the use of proverbs, metaphor and language by the two writers. Urujzian (2023) sees the deliberate use of language by Achebe and Adichie as a discourse strategy. The study asserts that, language is at the heart of literature; it is the material by which literature is created and expressed. It is thus not surprising the compelling ways, that the two writers have expressed their sociocultural realities, by conveying Igbo aesthetics in English. Lare (2023) also explores the peculiar use of language by the two writers using the Jungian psycho-analytical theory.

There are studies, that have juxtaposed the treatment of women, in the fiction of the two writers. One of such is that by Lawal (2020), which focuses on gender and power discourses as ideological concessions, by both Achebe and Adichie. Efforts by Akpome (2017) and Ngwaba (2023) look at intertextuality and the use of history by the two writers, but their studies are considered as reappraisals of many works done in that regard. However, this study, embraces the challenge by Tunca (2018), that encourages further lines of investigation beyond previous efforts, that focus on particular topics and where similar methods have been utilised. In contrast to previous comparative studies by critics on Achebe's and Adichie's novels, this effort looks at the connections and divergencies between the two novelists based on Said's dialectics of filiation and affiliation, which are pointers to intertextuality among writers. Kurtz (2012) argues that all common elements situated in oral literature are considered African writers' most allusive materials. And while some studies, especially the one by Tunca (2018), have offered a more nuanced and comprehensive picture of the connections and divergencies between the two literary giants and their works, this study focuses on only their debut novels.

Filiative Features of *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus*

As earlier observed of African writers, much of the commonalities between Achebe's and Adichie's fiction are culture-hinged. Tunca's 2018 study delves into how the older novelist seems to have defined the younger's literary identity. Adichie has received flaks from critics, for her affiliative choices, by presenting an altered variant of the same folktale used by Achebe in *TFA*. Meanwhile, most of the intertextual materials, common to the two writers, are actually situated in the culture and no individual can stake a claim to them.

Both Achebe and Adichie, through their novels, *TFA* and *Purple Hibiscus*, are deeply indebted to Igbo oral and cultural aesthetics. The novels are a mélange of the following: Igbo oral forms and cultural resources; the

socio-political experiences of the people; all woven together with Western literary resources, to present what can be termed, a veritable African world-view. Some of the cultural materials utilised by the novelists are – proverbs, folktales and Igbo lexicon. The texts, are attempts at representing the experiences of Africans at different points in history – one portraying the pre-colonial and colonial experience, and the other - a depiction of post-colonial society. In terms of historical contexts, a continuum exists between the two texts. Achebe and Adichie, just like many other African writers of different generations, have reflected and engaged the socio-historical realities of their time, some of which are: colonialism, military dictatorship and failure of political leaders, that emerged following the departure of the imperialists.

There is the domestication of English language, in the literary works of Achebe and Adichie, just like many of their African counterparts. The fallout of two cultures (African and Western) interacting always engenders hybridity of some sort, whether culturally or linguistically. English domestication has been achieved by the novelists “through an ingenious metalinguistic process of bending the English language and investing it with an indigenous flavor for their creative needs to articulate forcefully their literary intents” (Tsaaior, 2007, p. 2). The success of the mixes, shows the resourcefulness of both writers. The hybrid nature of the African novel, involves the utilisation of both African oral and Western literary traditions, a substantiation of Said's concept of textual affiliation. Both Achebe and Adichie, in their fiction, have demonstrated a seamless wedge between African cultural particularity and Western literary tradition. The seeming outcome of this, is Achebe's *TFA*, earning an ascendant status of African literary canon and Adichie, a global acclaim for her works. The dialectics of filiation and affiliation, become appurtenant in the instance of this study, as no literary work is devoid of cultural, environmental and other writers' influences. The two selected texts, speak back to their filial ties – Igbo culture; and have also become enmeshed in circumstances of their creations, time, place and society. What both writers have inherited from the past and tradition form their filiative features, while affiliative peculiarities are individual creation of each writer, that are radically different from tradition. Thus, the latter concept, connotes the determination, to invent self in condition of cultural freedom.

The resort to African orature elements is observed in almost all of the fiction of African writers. And just as Meher (2017) rightly notes, “Myths, legends and folk tales or in a single term oral literature are part of literature of all races” (p. 94). For both writers, orature provides material for writing. Drawing from cultural resources by writers generally could be for any of these: historical purpose; to provide or explain a phenomenon; for didactic

motive; or simply to serve entertainment effect. Notable among the filiated peculiarities of the novels is the use of a familiar folktale. Achebe and Adichie present the same tale, but with variations, an attestation to the likelihood of modification of some orature materials, as they are passed down orally, from generation to generation.

Trickster tales are present in most cultures and Africa is not an exception. The tales are always short and usually have animal characters, who are anthropomorphised. Such tales most times convey folk wisdom and knowledge systems; pass down history of the community and her legends; explain some phenomena; and impart moral lessons to the young ones. In many traditional environments in Africa, children are gathered together, under the moonlight, by mothers and adults in the family, and are narrated tales. This does not only entertain the younger ones; it fosters bonding and communalism. Some of the animals ascribed human attributes in African tales are: spider, mouse, hare and tortoise.

In *TFA*, Ekwefi gathers the children under the moonlight and tells them the story of how the tortoise has a cracked shell. A slight variation of the same tale is presented by Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus*. In Achebe's version, all birds were invited for a great feast in the sky, for which they were happy. Their bodies were decorated and beautified with red cam wood and patterns of 'uli'. The tortoise got wind of this and devised a means to be part of the feast despite his limitation of not possessing wings. He solicited to be part of the trip to the sky, but was rebuffed by the birds as they claimed: "You are full of cunning and you are ungrateful" (*TFA*, p. 77). The tortoise was however, able to convince them to take him, as he announced his changed ways. Eventually, the crafty tortoise persuaded the birds and they all decided, that each one should give him a feather. On the day of the feast, the tortoise was able to outwit the other animals, suggesting they all picked names for the occasion. In his own case, the name picked was 'All of you'. The hosts presented them with a meal, which they claimed, was meant for 'All of you'. Tortoise had the whole meal, and assured the birds, that theirs would be served soon. By the time it dawned on the birds, that the tortoise had played a fast one on them, they decided to take back their feathers. The process of returning home, without wings, led to tortoise's fall on hard objects and the subsequent crack of his shell.

In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, it is Papa Nnukwu, that is entreated by his grandchildren, to narrate the tale behind the tortoise's cracked back. Papa Nnukwu, in his narration, referred to the famine in animal kingdom, leading to the death of many of them. To mitigate further casualties, the male animals held a meeting. They then observed the robustness of the dog compared to other animals. The reason the dog adduced to his lustiness, was that he had

been feeding on faeces. This was not considered an option by other animals, and so rabbit suggested killing and eating their mothers, one after the other. The dog, rather than have his mother killed, found himself lying that she had died. The clever Tortoise eventually discovered the truth about the dog's mother. She had actually gone to live with her rich friends in the sky, from where she fed the dog regularly. Tortoise threatened to expose dog's lie to other animals; and knowing what that could portend, the dog succumbed to the blackmail, and took tortoise to feed in the sky, on his next trip. On singing a particular song, dog's mother would let down a rope to take her son to the sky. Tortoise eventually abused the privilege, and his attempt to go to the sky to feed without dog, led to his fall and the attendant crack of his shell.

The tortoise, in the two accounts by the novelists, is portrayed as crafty and ungrateful; a depiction considered a representation of some humans. The use of this indigenous material, portrays a deep understanding of the tradition by both novelists. In Adichie's version, there is the added use of a song to enrich the narrative, and to aid the internalisation of the moral lessons by the young and impressionable audience. Kurtz (2012), considers Achebe's use of the widely-known folktale from African oral tradition, as specific and counterhegemonic. He sees the use as a reminder "of his overall point, that Igbo society before the coming of Europeans was a healthy, complete, and self-sustaining society with a rich cultural heritage, and it also serves as a metaphor for the trickery of the Europeans and the need for a unified response" (p. 30). However, in Adichie's account, it is a case of the 'cunny tortoise' outsmarting another animal, the 'cunny dog'. Also distinct is the participation of listeners in her version, who participate in the song.

Proverbs and wise sayings are filiative attributes, shared by the two authors, and which are evidence of their deep connection to Igbo culture. In both *TFA* and *Purple Hibiscus* are profuse use of proverbs and wise sayings. There is hardly a chapter of Achebe's *TFA* without a proverb. Proverbs are short, condensed expressions or pieces of folk wisdom, that emerge from a particular culture; they are also part of the indigenous knowledge systems of a people that add a little colour to expressions/conversations. *Not only do* proverbs form part of Igbo folk knowledge and wisdom, they are timeless and offer general truth, thereby presenting the world-view of the people. In justifying colonialism, Africans were presented in Western discourse as savages and people whose nature was inimical to the act of thinking. By presenting Igbo proverbs and wise sayings, the two writers are viewed as engaging in the deconstruction of Western discourse, that denigrates Africans as unintelligent. To underscore the importance of proverbs in his culture, Achebe states clearly in the first chapter of *TFA*, that: "Among the Ibo the art

of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (p. 6).

Notable among Achebe's proverbs in *TFA* is attributed to the main character, Okonkwo, who declares, when he goes to borrow yam tendrils from Nwakibie that: "The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did" (*TFA*, p. 17). This proverb gives credence to self-validation or self-affirmation even when one's accomplishments are not praised by others. In a moment, when Okonkwo displays pride by calling a fellow clan man an 'agbala', which translates to a woman, an elder of the clan says to him: "those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble" (*TFA*, p. 21). Here Okonkwo is chided for his pride by an elder and reminded that even in his successes, he must remain humble. In another instance, Achebe writes: "A baby on its mother's back does not know that the way is long" (*TFA*, p. 81), this simply implies, that when one does not directly bear the pains of one's burden, one may not appreciate the weight of the sacrifice by others.

Unlike Achebe, whose fiction is saturated with proverbs, Adichie's has far fewer of them. On a hospital trip to see Kambili, while recuperating from her father's battery, Auntie Ifeoma expresses her thought to Beatrice, her sister-in-law, in the following proverb: "When a house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on your head" (*Purple Hibiscus*, p. 219). This is simply a foreboding statement warning someone to exit a situation, that may have dire consequences. On the invasion of the flying termites following a rain, the children in Auntie Ifeoma's block all rush out to catch the insects, which are later roasted and eaten. Father Amadi who happens to be visiting declares: "Our people say that after *aku* flies, it will still fall to the ground" (*Purple Hibiscus*, p. 226). This wise saying attests to two things: the law of universal gravitation, and the frailty of the flying termite. There appears to be a bit of caution in the saying; warning against engagement in an act that may jeopardize well-being. Another instance of the use of proverb in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is, when Eugene drives Anikwenwa away from his house, for being an idol worshipper. Anikwenwa chides Eugene by declaring: "You are like a fly blindly following a corpse into the grave" (*Purple Hibiscus*, p. 78). This proverb considers Eugene's dogmatic stance on anything Catholicism as dangerous; a stance that could lead to a disastrous end. Eugene's tragic end confirms Anikwenwa's premonition.

Although, Achebe's and Adichie's fiction are presented in direct and simple narrative style, their choice of language has been deliberate, which bothers on the need for accessibility, by both local and global readers. In the novels are deliberate linguistic choices that reflect the Igbo speech patterns.

The texts are garnished with indigenous lexicon, which attest to their filial ties. Although, the novels are presented mainly in English, there is the infusion of some Igbo sentences, phrases and words, which are foregrounded through italicization, with some explained in English, while majority are not. Infusion of indigenous lexicon into their fiction, is considered imperative, for the following reasons: to bridge cultural divide; to extend the boundaries of what is considered English fiction; and because when translated, some of them may lose their meanings. Achebe in a 1966 essay, which has been reprinted in his book, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (1975), views his peculiar use of language in *TFA*, as his way of expressing African experience in a world-wide language. Also missing, at the end of the novels, is the glossary, that ought to have explained the Igbo expressions/phrases/words. The non-Igbo readers are then left, with interpreting such expressions based on the context of use, or relying on the services of google and other translation applications.

In Achebe's *TFA* are such expressions and words like 'egwugwu', 'udu', 'ekwe', 'ogene', 'Umuofia kwenu', 'agadi-nwanyi', 'ndichie', 'agbala', 'obi', 'Nna ayi', 'chi', 'eze-agadi-nwanyi' and 'ilo' to reference some of them. And as stated earlier, a few of the Igbo lexical items are translated. Adichie is also not short of use of Igbo words and phrases in *Purple Hibiscus*. In her novel are a plethora of Igbo lexicon such as: 'Ozugo', 'umunna', 'ogwu', 'ke kwanu', 'O di egwu', 'Nno nu! Nno nu!', 'Kedu nu?', 'Ogbunambala!', 'aghogho' and several others. All the listed Igbo words and phrases are seamlessly mixed with English in the texts and readers left to decipher their meanings through the context of use.

Affiliative Traits of the Novels

The process of affiliation according to Said (1983), entails the recreation of the bonds that exist between a text and the world, the creation of a writer's own world, context and version of tradition. Beyond the filiative ties of Achebe and Adichie to their culture, which are deliberate, are instances of identification with the craft of the older writer by the younger one. As stated, and quoted earlier in this study, the very first act of affiliation to Achebe by Adichie is the opening line of her debut novel. Whereas Achebe's *TFA* portrays the pre-colonial and colonial experiences in Nigeria, his literary progeny's (Adichie's), focuses on the post-colonial era and the maladministration characterising it. It can then be stated, that a continuum exists, in the literary themes and preoccupation of both writers. The total affirmation of Adichie's affiliation to Achebe is in the following quote credited to her: "I like to think of Achebe as the writer whose work gave me permission to write my own stories." (Kurtz, 2012, p. 23)

A central theme in African prose fiction is that of religion. Be it

traditional, Christianity or Islam, African writers of different generations, have made the issue of religion or the belief system of Africans, the subject matter of their literary creations. Achebe and others of his generation, present Christianity, as the precursor of colonialism/imperialism; it is also fingered, as the agency responsible for clash of cultures in colonised societies. Among contemporary African writers, the theme of religion still features prominently in their fiction. Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013), Yaa Gyasi's *Transcendent Kingdom* (2020) and Mohamed Mbougar Sarr's *Brotherhood* (2021) are a few of contemporary works with religious theme. Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* exposes the bigotry of the protagonist's father, Eugene, as well as the total abnegation of his culture. The other novels listed, lay bare the exploitation of the impoverished of the society by contemporary 'Pentecostal' pastors, and the hypocrisy of religious leaders generally. Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, engages with Achebe's *TFA* in an affiliative manner by focusing on both Christianity and polytheism of the Igbo people. The two writers have shown, how Christianity has impacted Igbo traditional values and culture. The continued focus on religion and belief system by writers, lends credence to the notion, that they are part of intrinsic African life; they are considered a significant part of African social and cultural life (Van Klinken, 2020). There is hardly any work of fiction by an African writer, centered on Africans and their experiences, without imprints of either Christianity or Islam, or simply put, the belief system of the people.

Achebe's *TFA* reveals the belief of the people of Umuofia in polytheism, the worship of more than one god. The gods are nature focused, as the society is largely agrarian. Some of the gods mentioned in *TFA* include: Chukwu, the supreme being; Agbala, the god of the future; Ani, the goddess of the earth and harvest; and chi, the personal god. The fears of the gods are instilled in the people, as they play huge roles in their lives and the harmony enjoyed in the society. The people do the biddings of the oracles even if it means taking a life. Feasts are thrown by the clan to appreciate the gods and deities of the land at certain periods of the year. Okonkwo, Achebe's protagonist in *TFA*, believes in the gods, culture and tradition of the clan. The incursion of Christianity into African spiritual space changes things, as the belief system and culture of the clan are condemned. The new religion transforms the society, impacts relationships, and eventually dismantles communal harmony. An attempt by Okonkwo to salvage whatever is left of his culture, after his return from exile, leads to his tragic end.

Adichie's treatment of religion, in *Purple Hibiscus*, may not be totally at variance with that of Achebe in *TFA*. Her main concern, however, transcends Catholicism and the resort to bigotry by Eugene. She examines social and

cultural issues like: the Igbo belief system, developmental challenges of the Nigerian state, and the subjugation of women in a patriarchal society. Eugene, the protagonist's father, and his sister, Auntie Ifeoma, are Catholics; while their father, Papa Nnukwu, sticks to traditional religion. While Eugene tilts towards bigotry in his faith, the younger sibling, Auntie Ifeoma, is liberal and accommodating of their father's traditional worship. Papa Nnukwu, who represents African beliefs and culture, rebuffs all attempts to convert him by his son. Eugene brands their father a heathen, who is not worthy of being associated with. Father and son are caught up in the divide, caused by the incursion of the foreign religion. The father, Papa Nnukwu, holds fast to Igbo tradition and the pantheistic religion of their ancestors, while Eugene, shows deference to colonialism and Eurocentric values represented by his religion – Catholicism.

In what can be viewed as, lending a voice to postcolonial discourse, both Achebe and Adichie use their debut novels to express conflict that results from importation of foreign religion/culture. Parallels are observed between Achebe and Adichie, on their portrayal of religion, as destructive of the relationship between fathers and sons in their novels. In *TFA*, there is the soured relationship between Okonkwo and his first son, Nwoye, while in *Purple Hibiscus*, it is between the protagonist's dad, Eugene, and his father, Papa Nnukwu. While the fathers stand for the old order, tradition and culture in both novels; the sons are assimilationist of the foreign values symbolised by Christianity. The analogous depiction of both religion and some characters in the novels are considered affiliative on the part of the younger novelist.

The destructive nature of the white man's religion manifests in both novels through the tearing down of societal framework. In *TFA*, Okonkwo's friend, Obierika declares: "The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (p. 141). The fall of Okonkwo is equated to the demise of his culture and tradition. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the society is a bit modern and has yielded to the onslaught of Western culture. Christianity has eroded much of the traditional and spiritual practices of the Igbos. Eugene is one of those, who have totally embraced the foreign culture, and have become bigoted. He considers his father, Papa Nnukwu, an idolater, for not yielding to entreaties to embrace the new religion. Eugene's bigotry eventually leads to his wife and children turning against him. He gets poisoned by his wife and dies; this further reinforces the devastating effect of Western religion over his family. However, there appears a silver lining in Adichie's novel as Jaja, Eugene's son,

strives for a balance between tradition and Christianity; between the old and the new.

Achebe has been criticised by feminists, for propagating masculinity in his fiction. In most of his fictional works, women are subjugated and bear the weight of patriarchy. However, Beh (2021), avers that: "Achebe presents us with a traditional society in which women are generally the subaltern group in the margin of society, docile and accepting the multiple levels of subjugation with utmost grace" (p. 19). Beh's study interrogates women's role in colonial space in Achebe's and Ferdinand Oyono's debut novels. There is the categorisation of women in the texts by Beh into three groups: people who are sadly oppressed by their male counterparts; people who contribute to their subjugation by accepting the norms placed on them; and the third group are referred to as powerful women. The third category is however contestable, as no female character in the novels interrogated by Beh, is seen to be wielding power. Whatever the views of feminists and critics about *TFA* female characters, Achebe is seen to have simply reflected the social conditions of the period his novel is set.

Since affiliation refers to recreation of bonds between texts and the world, Adichie in a radical departure from culture and tradition, invests her female characters with power. She presents a list of female characters, who are able to break free, of patriarchal hold. Starting with Kambili, her protagonist in *Purple Hibiscus*, the readers initially see a docile and muted teenager. But upon her interactions with Auntie Ifeoma and the daughter, Amaka, she begins to express herself and eventually gains confidence. The list also includes Beatrice, the protagonist's mum, who initially subscribes to patriarchy, and bears the abuse and battery from her husband, Eugene, with grace. When she is faced with the possibility of her children dying or being maimed, owing to constant battery by their dad, she decides to take action to end the pains. She symbolically refuses replacing the figurines broken by her husband. Until they get broken by Eugene, the figurines are her catharsis, as after each episode of physical assault leading to loss of pregnancy, she begins to clean them up. She discloses to her children, that she decides to poison their dad's tea, so as to end his oppression and assault in their home. It is worthy of note the solidarity she gets from her domestic help, Sisi, who procures the poison used, from her uncle, a powerful witch doctor. Auntie Ifeoma demonstrates courage by always challenging the brother, Eugene, about his treatment of their father, Papa Nnukwu. She also confronts those at the helm of affairs at her place of work, the University. It is not surprising that her appointment is terminated, a situation that eventually paves the way for her relocation, to the United States of America. Amaka, Auntie Ifeoma's daughter, draws her

strength from her mother, whom she sees as her role model.

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, just like her other novels, is seen to be subverting patriarchy; the system that has denied women equal opportunities in many societies. Her female characters have relied on female solidarity in order to break out of the hold of cultural restrictions. Begum (2017) in "Women Empowerment in *Purple Hibiscus*", states that the break from male subversion and oppression has been achieved by women asserting "themselves in a world dominated by men through education and female solidarity" (p. 408). The title of the novel itself is considered an innovation, which although refers to a particular variant of a type of flower; but in essence emphasises the triumph of the innovative. The conclusion drawn from the title is that, the unusual is not necessarily bad; as the subversion aims to bring equality among the sexes, while promoting new awakening.

The novelist herself has not shied away from the politics of feminism. She readily affirms her belief in the ideology, in her book, *We Should all be Feminists* (2014). The monograph, a treatise on feminism, challenges long-held beliefs about gender stereotypes. In it, she affirms that "Feminism is, of course, part of human rights in general" (p. 41); she concludes that culture unfortunately, has been an enabler of the domination of women by men. Meanwhile, culture's main function is to ensure the preservation and continuity of a people according to the novelist. Adichie's biggest charge is that there must be a change as "Culture does not make people. People make culture" (Adichie, 2014, p. 46).

Conclusion

Based on Said's 1983 postulation in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, it is obvious that the two novels interrogated, are worldly, as they present events, which are located in historical moments of their people. The two texts speak back to their filial ties in terms of use of oral materials, which belong to the community and not an individual. Irele (2001) argues in *The African Imagination* that oral literature is an African writer's most significant material. To him "it represents the basic intertext of the African imagination" (p. 11). Achebe and Adichie are no exception as they have drawn from the rich Igbo oral and cultural repository to create their fiction. To many African writers, the dictum 'Art for Art's sake' may not suffice like we see in Western literary tradition. African fiction reflects and engages in the continent's socio-historical realities such as colonialism, neo-colonialism, leadership failures and the phenomenon of migration with the attendant brain drain.

The main essence of African literature can only be deciphered not by outright imposition of Eurocentric theories on interpretation of texts, but

by appreciating both their filiative and affiliative ties. There is the urgency to understand, that texts speak back to their filial origin, but also become enmeshed in circumstances, time, place, and society of their creation (Said, 1983). Undoubtedly, connections exist between Achebe and Adichie with regards to cultural elements, thematic preoccupation and portrayal of the erosion of African culture in their debut novels. As affiliation releases a text from its filial ties, Adichie has further moved beyond representation of the subalternity of people of her culture to the subjugation of those of her gender.

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