

## Areas of Convergence in the Narratives of Chimamanda Adichie and Helon Habila

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### Abstract

The paper examines the areas of convergence in the narratives of Helon Habila and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It explores the underlying psychological factors that influence the thoughts, feelings and behavioural patterns of the characters in the chosen literary productions. The texts were purposively selected because of their thematic thrust and qualitatively analysed. They are Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel and Measuring Time*, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Thing Around Your Neck*. The study adopted the Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theoretical approach that focuses on motivating factors that are responsible for the negative thoughts, emotions and actions of characters in the narratives. The areas of convergence in the narratives are thematically examined while attention is also focused on the actions of principal and other significant characters.

**Keywords:** Narratives, themes, actions, repression, psychic.

### Introduction

The imaginative works that are produced by writers, oral performers, painters, sculptors, and other creative artists are channels for expression of their thoughts, emotions and perceptions about certain phenomena. These artistic products often emanate from the human psyche which Sigmund Freud refers to as the unconscious. In every human endeavour, people encounter both pleasant and traumatic experiences that affect or influence their thinking faculties, emotions and behavioural patterns in society. Such experiences are repressed into their unconscious mind and activated when similar incidents occur. According to Tyson, "the unconscious is the storehouse of those painful experiences and emotions, those wounds, fears, guilty desires, and resolved conflicts we do not want to know about because we feel we will be overwhelmed by them" (Tyson, 2006:12). Apart from unhelpful memories and events that are stored in the unconscious layer, this aspect of the human mind also contains positive experiences. Retrospections into the past have psychological effects, by shaping the lives of individuals, hence literary writers who live in diaspora recreate both primordial and post-independence experiences in their works. The research of Kuliah revealed that "the literary texts are used by authors for telling what they feel and see and what they face in the social life involving human activities" (Kuliah, 2020:6). Such texts contain thematic preoccupations, images and symbols that convey messages that can transform the society they currently reside or where they migrated from

and such literary productions deserve critical appraisal. The texts must be analyzed like a dream; a literary work is the external expression of the author's unconscious mind or the characters of the text" (Hamidreza, 2012:49). Apart from the topographical structure of the human mind which is attributed to Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis, there are also the personality components which are worthy of note in this study. The Austrian physician and psychologist in his theory identified three different elements of the personality to include the id, the ego and the superego.

In corroborating the foregoing, Stishin stated that, "the psyche can be divided into three psychic zones as Id, Ego, and Superego. Id constitutes the libidinal or instinctual part of the human psyche. Superego stands for the moral concept of life which was developed against the background of social taboos and religious beliefs. Ego stands for reason and reality" (Stishin, 2018:156). Similarly, Hidayat, *et al.* asserted that the id is psychic and instinctual energy that emphasizes humans to fulfil their basic needs. The id can be said as a genuine personality system, born from birth. At birth, the ID contains all the psychological aspects that are derived, such as instincts, impulses, and drives. There is an unconscious mind based on our physiology" (Hidayat, *et. al.*, 2019:180). In advancing the discourse of the personality elements, the scholars emphasized that, "the Ego is a psychological aspect of personality that arises because of the individual's need to relate well to the real world. Ego operates following the principle of reality by arranging a plan and then carrying out actions according to what has been thought" (181). On the aspect of the Superego, the scholars refer to it as the "moral force and personality ethic that operates using idealistic principles as opposed to the principle of satisfaction and the realistic principle of the ego...Superego refers to morality in personality. The superego is like a conscience that knows good or religious values" (182). By implication, every individual has these personality elements that shape their behaviours and thinking processes in society. In literary productions, characters display certain instinctual drives that contrast with societal norms and standards while others demonstrate actions that conform to moral principles and values. The foregoing therefore informed the adoption of the Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theoretical approach which would foreground the discourse in the various narratives.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Chimamanda Adichie and Helon Habila belong to the new generation of Nigerian writers who cannot abandon their root. In most of their narratives, they chronicle individual and collective experiences of Nigerians particularly historical events that create tension and under-development in the homeland. They are also among Nigerian writers who are determined to promote African culture and chronicle the postcolonial experiences retrogressively affecting Nigeria. This study therefore investigates the areas of convergence in Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* (2002) and *Measuring Time* (2007), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus* (2007) and *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009). It will specifically examine the conditions of diasporic characters; the predominant themes

in the selected narratives; and, the underlying factors that trigger dysfunctional thoughts, negative emotions and actions of the characters in the chosen literary works. Though there are areas where both writers presented themes that are completely divergent, these are not the main thrust of this study.

### **Adichie and Habila as Diasporic Writers**

Chimamanda Adichie and Helon Habila are contemporary Nigerian writers who reside in the Diaspora. Their literary productions reflect both past and present postcolonial disillusionment that characterized their nation, Nigeria. Both writers look back to their homeland and recreate the socio-economic and political developments that informed the displacement or migration of Nigerians especially the literary writers to Asian and European countries. Several Nigerian authors have tremendously contributed towards the growth and development of Diasporic literature and they include Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ben Okri, Tanure Ojaide, Buchi Emecheta, and so on. These are the frontline diasporic writers whose impact have been felt in the literary world. Apart from the foregoing, there are a handful of new generation writers who are equally projecting this peculiar literary genre globally and they include Chris Abani, Helen Oyeyemi, Sefi Atta, Chimamanda Adichie, Helon Habila, and a host of others.

In this study, the concepts of *Migration* and *Diaspora* shall be critically examined for proper understanding of our discourse. According to Dinesh, "Migration is a process of going from one country, region or place of residence to settle in another. People migrate both legally and illegally, for better educational and employment opportunities, to escape persecution, to relocate after catastrophic events, including terrorism, disasters and wars, and/or to join relatives who migrated at an earlier time" (Dinesh, 2005). Dinesh further noted that, "Migration can be classified as immigrants or sojourners when the change in their location results in contact voluntarily, whereas refugees are deemed to change their location involuntarily." Migration, in the view of Kahanec, is a dynamic phenomenon involving many twists and turns. Driven by a multitude of possible reasons, migrants may move temporarily or permanently, transnationally and nationally, individually or in groups, return to their countries of origin or migrate to another country, or move between two or more countries in a circular way (Kahanec, 2008:2).

Migration as Dinesh perceived it is a social change where an individual, alone or accompanied by others, because of one or more reasons of economic betterment, political upheaval or other purposes leaves one geographical area for a prolonged stay or permanent settlement in another geographical area (Dinesh, 2013:137). People migrate to improve their economic prospects, ensure a more secure living environment, re-unite with their family members, or avoid persecution in their country of origin (Kahanec, 2008:2). These people experience not only economic and social consequences of their move, but also psychological ones. Migration may involve a new job with higher pay, losing old and establishing new social ties, as well as psychological costs of missing the homeland. Also,

Ingeborg acknowledged Lopez who found out that a migrant is “an individual or minority group of immigrants, overseas-born-citizens, and covers recent arrivals and long-term residents” (Lopez, 2000 cited in Ingeborg, 2011). This implies that migrant writers include literary scholars who were born and brought up in foreign countries as well as those that moved from their homeland recently or long time ago to settle there. Miller noted that migrants are attracted to many features of the developed world, such as the opportunities for jobs, the social welfare systems, etc. Yet, on another level, they may be simultaneously repulsed by the materialism and absence of “traditional” values (Miller, 2006).

Migrants are no longer forced to ‘forget’ about home. Indeed, they do communicate with people at home on a daily basis with the greatest ease. When people migrate from one nation or culture to another they carry along their knowledge or expressions and distress. On settling down in the new culture, their cultural identity is likely to change and that encourages a degree of belonging; they also attempt to settle down by either simulation or biculturalism (Dinesh, 2013:129). In the same vein, most of the migrant writers still speak their mother tongue and also write in their indigenous languages. Eytayo acknowledged Ngugi Wa Thiongo as a foremost African writer that chose to write in his native tongue as a way of identifying with his people and with the people of the geographic location he lives. However, as the modern world continues to change, the social identity begins to take on a hybrid nature (Eytayo, 2012). Eytayo further noted that migration has encouraged writers to inter-marry with people of other race, eat other food and embrace other culture. This hybridity of social identity does not make them any less African or Nigerian, but expands their horizon and places their writing in a wider context.

Though migrant writers live in foreign countries, they are still conscious of the major economic and political developments in their homeland. Migrants are mainly attracted to areas with significant developments as indicator of economic prosperity (Willis cited in Ajadi, 2011). They contribute immensely towards socio-economic and political transformation in their various countries. As postcolonial writers, they portray the societal ills of their homeland in their literary works and express their commitment to national resistance politics (Negash, 1999). Migrated writers of Nigerian origin through their style, form and contents, affirm their anti-neocolonial and actively humanist positions. They portray naturalistic settings to refract Nigerian realities. In most of their works, tales of cruelty, abuse of power and corruption are strung together to build parables on the moral and political questions of truth and falsity, idealism and freedom (Negash, 1999).

*Diaspora* also depicts relocation or movement of people from their homeland to foreign countries for reasons best known to them. Sheffer noted that “the difference between migrants and diaspora- although highly variable- is the difference between transient individuals and groups before settling in host countries and permanent formations, sometimes even second, third, fourth generation citizens” (Sheffer, 2003:99). Although the term, “Migrant” is perceived to be derogatory or degrading to diasporic writers, it will continue to resonate in writings of citizens who have relocated overseas to seek greener

pastures or refuge. According to Ember, *et al*, *Diaspora* refers to “a people dispersed by whatever cause to more than one location. The people dispersed to different lands may harbor thoughts of return, may not fully assimilate to their host countries, and may maintain relationships with other communities in the diaspora” (Ember, *et al*, 2005: xxvi). Similarly, Cohen asserted that the concept, “Diaspora” is found in the Greek translation of the Bible and originates in the words ‘to sow widely’. For the Greeks, the expression was used to describe the colonization of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean in the Archaic period (Cohen, 1996:1).

The foregoing is corroborated by Prayer who states that “diaspora is an encompassing term that denotes people who are displaced from their native place through migration, immigration or exile. Diaspora as a movement can be explicated as an annexe from a discrete geographic locale that is inevitably linked to the homeland of the diaspora subjects” (Prayer, 2014:86). In the same vein, Butler states that the word, diaspora refers to “the dispersal of a people from its original homeland” (Butler, 2001:189). The author further observes that “Even as diasporan populations proliferated, communities that scholars had once labeled as immigrant, nomadic, or exile also began to be called diasporas” (190). Butler acknowledged Safran who identified defining characteristics of diasporas to include; (i) dispersal to two or more locations, (ii) collective mythology of homeland, (iii) alienation from homeland, (iv) idealization of return to homeland, and (v) ongoing relationship with homeland (Safran, 1991 cited in Butler, 2001:191).

Like the migrant characters, diasporic writers relocated to their present residents because of certain factors. For instance, Cohen reports that “there was some displacement of the ancient Greeks to Asia Minor as a result of poverty, over-population and inter-state war” (Cohen, 1996:1). The scholar further revealed that, “expansion through plunder, military conquest, colonization and migration were the predominant features of the Greek diaspora.” The migration of writers to other countries is not due to conquest, plunder and colonization per se. However, this is due to the availability of favourable conditions in such places. This assertion is corroborated by Harutyunyan who reveals that, “the Diasporic condition is a combination of being uprooted and placed in a contemporary setting. Diaspora is in constant search for a place where it will reconstruct its pasts, imaginary future, identities, roles, rituals and beliefs. This kind of place becomes a concrete community space” (Harutyunyan, 2012:8). The Diasporic writers often have dual identities over time: their homeland and the foreign land or regions which host them. While they reside in the diaspora, they reflect on both past and present collective memories of the homeland where they actually migrated from. This view is corroborated by Akporherhe and Udi who affirmed that, “diasporic literature is a distinct postcolonial literary genre that interrogates aching issues and experiences of migrants including the Africans in foreign land” (Akporherhe & Udi, 2022:80). The scholars further observed that, “there has been a shift from writings against the colonizers to the internal colonialists, the present African corrupt leaders and oppressors whose actions have aggravated the impoverishment of the

citizens after political independence" (83). The foregoing studies will illuminate the current research which is designed to examine the areas of convergence between the selected literary works of Chimamanda Adichie and Helon Habila.

### Methodology

The study is library-based research since the data were not gathered from the natural environment for analysis. The literary texts were purposively selected based on their thematic preoccupations. Scholarly materials from the Internet were consulted and utilized by the writers to substantiate the discourse in this paper. The chosen texts include Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* (2002) and *Measuring Time* (2007) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2007) and *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009). They are analyzed using the qualitative and descriptive methods.

### Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the psychoanalytic approach which is traceable to Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis. According to Loncar-Vujnovic, "the Freudian 'psychoanalysis' begins its literary life with the appearance of psychological novels, initially expressing superficially, then going deeper into the psyche of characters with new achievements in literary prose" (Loncar-Vujnovic, 2013:69). Psychoanalytic theory and criticism focuses on how underlying repressive memories trigger certain actions and emotional feelings of characters in literary productions such as the novels, poetry and dramatic works. In corroborating the foregoing, Hamidreza states that "the work of literature must then be dealt as a dream; that is, the critic needs to apply psychoanalytic theories to the text to comprehend the hidden motivation, repressed desires, and wishes of either the author or the characters that the text presents" (Hamidreza, 2012:49). Apart from the author and the fictional characters in the literary texts which can be studied through the psychoanalytic approach, scholars have also affirmed that it focuses on creative processes of the author and the effects of the work on reader.

The research carried out by Kumari indicated that psychoanalytic reading helps us to understand human behaviour on the basis of theories given by Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalytic criticism and theories are applied to literature to understand human relationship at conscious, subconscious and unconscious level" (Kumari, 2016:34-35). In advancing the foregoing, the scholar asserts that the theoretical framework, "helps us to decipher the hidden motif in the text. The psychoanalytic approach helps us to understand the psychological development of a character and the author's personality." Diasporic writers present the latent contents which have been repressed into their unconscious mind right from their childhood to adulthood and from their experiences in their country to where they currently reside. This affirms the view that literature is the true reflection of individual life and society, either foreign or homeland. In expressing the relationship between literature and psychology, Stishin states that "psychology comprises all the mental activity of human beings, whether conscious or unconscious. Literature is also a mental activity of

the author who puts forward his views and visions about the persons, events or world with the great power of imagination" (Stishin, 2018:155). While some of the narratives are the true reflections events and characters in their homeland, there are literary texts that focus primarily on family issues and how they affect individuals psychologically.

The application of Freudian psychoanalytic theory to the study of literature is insightful to the reader in various ways. According to Anugrah, this theoretical approach entails the "study of human psychological functions and behaviours. Freud's understanding of the mind is based on methods of interpretation, introspection, and clinical observation, and is focused on resolving subconscious conflicts, mental tensions, and other psychic disorders" (Anugrah, 2021:11). The psychological problems raised in the above study are also portrayed in literary works that could be fictional or symbolic. The conflicts in such texts can be categorized into mental, physical or reported. The physical actions are what the reader can visualize as he reads through the text. They are dramatic in nature and they include movements, gestures, combats, dispute settlements, quarrels, arguments, facial expressions and so on. Reported actions are often reported by a character or a group of characters. Mental actions are those actions that take place within the minds of characters which the reader is expected to imagine. They are caused by either internal or external factors. Internal or intra-psychic conflicts make characters think irrationally, behave abnormally and exhibit mood disorders in society. Anugrah described internal conflict as "an interpersonal battle that takes place within an individual, triggered by their feelings, fears, contradictory impulses, or mental disorder" (Anugrah, 2021:14). Based on this submission, one can deduce that certain intra-psychic factors could trigger the migration of citizens of a country to foreign land and some of these are worthy of note in this study.

First and foremost, Kómoláfe posited that the migration of Nigerians to different parts of the world is not new and as he clearly stated in his research, "Nigerian migrants move predominantly to the countries where they are more likely to adjust rapidly in terms of being able to understand the host country's language, to secure gainful employment, and to reunite with members of their family, friends or associate with other people from their country of origin" (Kómoláfe, 2001:1). The scholar clearly stated that the foregoing are some of the basic reasons, "the United Kingdom, United States and Canada are some of the most popular destinations for Nigerian migrants." In this regard, Dinesh and Jones acknowledged Rack who gave the reasons for migration to foreign countries include "both 'push' and 'pull' factors. According to Rack, settlers, as well as political exiles, asylum seekers and refugees, may well have to deal with very stringent legal procedures, which will test their psychological stamina. If there are conditions akin to war, refugees may even face rougher times" (Rack, 1982 cited in Dinesh & Jones, 2001:217). In advancing his submission, the scholar found out that "Factors like language, communication and social networks will play a role in the processes of dealing with initial adversity, settling down and assimilation." While some people in the diaspora focus on the economic aspect and emphasize the global

economic outlook, others concern themselves with the global cultural aspect, or how it has affected their socio-cultural patterns (Owolabi & Owoeye, 2013:28).

This above assertion has absolutely influenced the nature of migration in the areas of social relations, good governance, safety and security as well as political stability. The international realm is not the same as it was even 20 years ago and has meant much has changed. As countries have become more interdependent new issues have arisen that previously did not exist (Miller, 2006). In consonance with the foregoing, Kahanec affirmed that immigrants may bring with them new cultures or preferences, compete for certain jobs and create others, or claim publicly financed social security benefits. More broadly, migrants contribute to a more efficient allocation of resources and often become a driving force of knowledge transfer and technological advancement (Kahanec, 2008:2). All these effects have repercussions for the native population who may react to migrant inflows not only with regards to their current action, but also to long-term investment plans such as those concerning education. Natives may view diasporic characters positively or negatively and form their attitudes accordingly. At this juncture, the researchers will examine thematically how the diasporic writers, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Helon Habila portray their homeland experiences in their selected narratives.

### **Convergent Thematic Discourse in the Narratives**

Adichie and Habila portray similar thematic preoccupations in their narratives adopted for this study. For instance, they examine the themes of religion extremism and culture, politics, sexuality, violence and change in their novels but their manner of portrayal makes the themes appealing and distinct in various ways.

### **Religion Extremism and Culture**

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explored the psyche of Eugene who takes Christian worships and practices to their extreme. With his wealth, he supports the growth of his church but exhibits irrational, rigid and dictatorial principles that his family perceives to be unacceptable even as Catholic. Eugene rules his family with strict principles and instructs the children to follow the doctrines of the Catholic faith. In the novel, Kambili psychologically reflected on a bitter experience she had in the hands of Eugene who clamours for their perfection in all their endeavours. He believes that for any sin committed on earth, there is a punishment and he demonstrates this with a practical example. According to the heroine, Eugene boiled water and invited her to the bathroom and right there; "He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it toward my feet, slowly as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen" (201). Kambili felt emotionally wounded initially but she had to repress this horrible experience. Eugene's cruel treatment of his daughter for sleeping in the same house with Papa-Nnukwu at Nsukka is a religious practice taken to the extreme. He perceived the act as an aberration



that should be corrected in society. His attitude towards Christianity depicts his passion for morality and spiritual growth.

Eugene's method of punishment reveals his insensitivity towards the feelings of mankind in general. The maltreatment he meted on Kambila is so severe that she could not withstand the physical and psychological pains as evident in her personal testimony; "The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding; I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed" (201). Punishment in our physical world should not be meant to deform sinners; rather, it should change the individuals' dysfunctional thoughts, orientation about life and modify their behavioural patterns. The Bible teaches forgiveness but Eugene's beliefs and practical demonstration of punishment contradicts the spirit of humanity. Eugene exhibited dictatorial character traits when he punished Kambili for living with a heathen. He upholds the biblical teaching that Christians should not relate with unbelievers and instructed Kambili in particular to live a perfect life; "You should strive for perfection. You should not see sin and walk right into it" (201). He saw Papa-Nnukwu as a heathen and so Kambili has committed sin for relating with him. In the narrative, Chimamanda Adichie presents a society that experiences a clash of cultures and religion extremism as portrayed through the family of Eugene Achike. The Christian religious doctrines have so much influenced the thinking faculty of Eugene that he becomes dictatorial unconsciously to his immediate family and his aged father.

The interpersonal conflict between Eugene and his own father was caused by the latter's refusal to quit African traditional religion and accept Christianity. It has created intrapsychic conflict to Eugene and so he offers prayers for his father often. According to the narrator; "for twenty minutes, Papa prayed for our protection from ungodly people and forces, for Nigeria and the Godless men ruling it, and for us to continue to grow in righteousness. Finally, he prayed for the conversion of our Papa-Nnukwu, so that Papa-Nnukwu would be saved from hell" (69). As a religion extremist and dictator, Eugene resolved to sanction his father by depriving him the privilege of knowing his grand-children. However, through the protagonist, we became aware of the moves taken by Eugene to convert Papa-Nnukwu to the new faith: "Papa-Nnukwu had told the Umunna how Papa had offered to build him a house, buy him a car, and hire him a driver, as long as he converted and threw away the chi in the thatch shrine in his yard" (69). Papa-Nnukwu's decision to remain a heathen also influenced Eugene's unwanted behaviour towards his own father. In the words of the heroine, "Papa himself never visited him, but he sent wads of naira through Kevin or through one of our Umunna members, slimmer wads than he gave Kevin as a Christmas bonus" (70). Unlike Eugene who perceives African culture and religion as barbaric and evil, in *Measuring Time*, the characters have different views about the worship of God. According to Uncle Iliya, though he is a Christian, he never subscribes to the school of thought that Jesus Christ is the only way to attain salvation. According to him, one "can equally be saved through other religions, Islam, Buddhism, et cetera" (84). Through this character, we are

made to understand that people can worship in any religion to attain spiritual fulfillment and rejuvenation.

Chimamanda Adichie's "Imitation" in *The Thing Around Your Neck* presents the issue of cultural identity which chronicles Nigeria cultural heritage such as "the Benin mask, copper-colored" which were stolen and taken to foreign land (23). The writer expressed her thoughts and feelings towards the cultural artifacts through the character of Nkem to portray how Africans especially Nigerians cherish their cultural heritage. For instance, it is reported that, "the Benin people have been carving the original masks for hundred years ago" and they are used at "royal ceremonies, placing them on either side of the king to protect him, to ward off evil". Just as some animals are sacred in African traditional societies, certain artifacts including the Benin masks are distinct and sacred. The diasporic writer nostalgically reflected on historical events that happened in her homeland even before she relocated to foreign land.

It has been recounted through the narrator that, "Only specially chosen people could be custodians of the mask." Also chronicled in the narrative is "the Nok terra-cotta" which the colonialists collected from Africans, and "displayed in museums all over the world" (25). All these are thought processes that bother the writer and create emotional conflict to her. Like the Benin masks which have great significant use in Benin Kingdom and beyond, the Nok terra-cotta is also useful among Africans. For instance, in the narrative, the Obiora reveals that "the ancient Nok people had used the originals for ancestor worship, placing them in shrines, offering them food morsels." However, out of ignorance Africans do not value these ancient artefacts that form parts of their rich cultural heritage and so they carelessly allowed the "British carted" most of them away, while "telling the people" who were "newly Christianized and stupidly blinded" that the sculptures were heathen." During and after the colonial era, a large number of Africans cultivated the habit of selling out artifacts because they never knew their importance (25). These experiences with the symbolic objects are stored in the unconscious of the novelist, but she is able to activate the awareness of reader through this literary work. Even in recent time, youths from different communities and ancient kingdoms in Africa had stolen masks of deities or gods including their ancestral masks and sold them to foreigners who in turn kept them in museums for public exhibitions. Adichie, in this narrative describes the masks as mystical objects with certain supernatural powers hence they are kept in shrines for ancestral worship. In most African traditional communities, people believe that spirits dwell in such sacred artefacts which help to ward off evils and protect believers against spiritual attacks. Their presence in homes activates mixed psychological reactions to people.

In Helon Habila's *Measuring Time*, the theme of culture is juxtaposed with western education and civilization. Uncle Iliya advocates for co-existence between the African culture and western education. According to him people should not listen to hearsay rather they should follow tradition because they believe in it. However, he questioned the relevance of culture in our society especially where all aspects of tradition are inherited

without proper scrutiny. Oral traditions are repressed into the unconscious mind and transmitted verbally to successive generations in preliterate society, devoid of new technologies that can aid storage of cultural information and data. In the narrative, Iliya wonders why Africans promote culture instead of joining league of nations that are flourishing in areas of science and commerce. He asserted that "most cultures and traditions are devised by society to help it survive a particular threat at a certain time, and once that threat is over, that culture becomes anachrostatic as some traditions simply lose their relevance and they die off by themselves" (83). Habila as a diasporic writer appears more superstitious than Adichie in their narratives and this could be seen in *Waiting for an Angel* as Bola stares at a long column of black ants passing below the steps in his hostel (42). Every ethnic group has certain cultural practices and beliefs and whenever a tragic event occurs in the physical world, this manifest in a peculiar manner that those who understand what it signifies psychologically reflect on it. To Bola, the sudden appearance of the ants is an omen that something horrible has happened at home.

### **Instinctual Drives for Sexuality**

Chimamanda Adichie is very detailed and passionate in handling sexual issues compared to Helon Habila, her counterpart who also resides in diaspora. She presents characters that have excessive desires towards sexual activity. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie interrogates the instinctual sexual drives of Kambili for a handsome celibate, Father Amadi. She describes the effects of his sight, voice and body on her even though he is forbidden from indulging in sexual intercourse. She describes Rev Father Amadi's body and his car which "smelled like him," as a clean scent that made her think of a clear azure sky" while his shorts which usually "climbed up to expose a muscular thigh sprinkled with dark hair" arouse her sexual urge towards the young priest (181). In addition, Kambili observes that Father Amadi "had a singer's voice" which according to her "had the same effect on my ears that Mama working Pears baby oil into my hair had on my scalp" (143). The efficacy of the priest's voice on Kambili is compared to that that baby oil has on her scalp. His voice therefore has therapeutic effects on her which attracts her to the priest and develops her emotions and this is besides "the cloudlike warmth in Father Amadi's eyes" which also contributes to her emotional growth (144). Kambili expresses sexual anticipation towards the young priest knowing fully well that this is forbidden by his vocation. The morality principle in her actively regulates her emotional impulse.

On the aspect of emotional development, Kambili for the first time saw the nakedness of her cousin and that of Papa-Nnukwu which aroused her sense of sexuality. Her primitive urge for sexual gratification is activated. Again, in order to express her maturity and appear more sexually attractive to Father Amadi, she wears her cousin's makeup but she looks ridiculous in it and quickly "wiped the lipstick away" with the back of her hand before joining the already waiting priest (181). Kambili's sexual awareness improves in the novel when Father Amadi told her after juggling that she has "good legs for running" (183). With this

statement, she felt flattered and became more sexually awakened. According to her, "I had never heard anything like that before. It seemed too close, too intimate, to have his eyes on my legs, on any part of me." Adichie through the characters of Father Amadi and Kambili revealed the psychological manifestation of sexuality and the societal norms that prevents Catholic priests from engaging in sexual acts. Kambili's love developed steadily, she made everything possible to sexually attract the celibate priest but her erotic desire is never fulfilled in the novel.

Though the priest has an opportunity to have carnal knowledge of Kambili, the principles guiding his vocation as a Reverend Father never allowed him obey his continuous sexual impulses. According to the omniscient narrator; "Father Amadi ran his hand over the loosening braids, in gentle, smoothing motions. He was looking right into my eyes. He was too close" (232). The religious constraints may have probably prevented the priest from courageously romancing Kambili even though he has stimulated the teenager's sexual consciousness. As a girl who has an uncontrollable desire to have a romantic affair with the Reverend Father, she could not withstand her emotional tension. She recounts that, "his touch was so light" that she wanted to "push her head" towards him, in order "to feel the pressure of his hand." Her emotional desire in clear terms is to have the priest directly involved in sexual intercourse with her hence she states that, "I wanted to press his hand to my head, my belly, so he could feel the warmth that coursed through me" (232).

Apart from the emotional feelings which Kambili expressed towards Father Amadi, Eugene also became suspicious of his son, Jaja who he perceived has been corrupted by Papa-Nnukwu who refused to be converted from the African traditional religion to new order. According to the narrator and heroine, after dinner he asked for the key to his room to enable him have "some privacy" but Eugene reacts bitterly and regrettably, "See what has happened to my children? See how being with a heathen has changed them, has taught them evil?" (198) He believed that for his son to request for the key to his room is an avenue to commit sin, "What? What do you want privacy for? To commit a sin against your own body? Is that what you want to do, masturbate?" Eugene is conscious of his son's emotional development and his curiosity for sexual activity hence his decision to have some privacy. He accused Papa-Nnukwu who he regards as an unbeliever as the cause of his son's sexual behavioural disorder. This implies an ego defense mechanism known as projection. It is a psychological defense strategy that is employed by individuals to transfer their unwanted thoughts and underlying motivations to another person instead of accepting the guilt.

The issue of sexuality is also portrayed by Chimamanda Adichie in "The Arrangers of Marriage," a story in *The Thing Around Your Neck*. In the narrative, Chinaza, a new wife of Ofodile from Nigeria discovered that her husband is not only pretentious but also a sex maniac. Hardly had they arrived home in America that her husband pounced on her. Adichie presented a man that appears primitive with little or no regards for women feelings and views. This is evident in the manner he makes love to his wife without foreplay. He perceives sexual intercourse as an activity that is meant for pleasure without seeking the consent of

the partner. However, Helon Habila interrogates the issue of sexuality in a different manner from Adichie's narratives. In *Waiting for an Angel*, he decried security agents who were supposed to maintain law and order turned violent as they shoot at protesters, chasing students to their hostels and raping the females. The Anti-riot policemen as could be seen in Bola's testimony do not only comb hostels and rape students, they also looted valuable items they could lay their hands on. The security agents compromise their order of engagements and violate the rights of citizens they are deployed to protect during political unrest. Some of them demonstrated their sexual bestiality on innocent girls and go scot-free. It is this instinctual sexual urge that resulted in the masturbation which Lomba recounted during his detention by the military junta in *Waiting for an Angel*.

The primitive instinct of sexuality in *Measuring Time* is different from that discussed in *Waiting for an Angel* where sexual acts are forcefully carried out by law enforcement agents. In this narrative, the character of Lamang is perceived as a handsome ravisher, King of Women, Owner of ten women in every village from Kuti to the state capital (13). His sexual promiscuity has become so uncontrollable that the women of Keti village composed a song to express his shameful sexual act. In the narrative, the dreadfulness of Lamang has made parents to prevent their daughters from going out at night to avoid being ravished. The songs and avoidance strategies employed by the villagers were basically meant to activate the mental consciousness of the character over his excessive sexual desires in society. They shall inhibit Lamang's emotional arousal towards the opposite sex.

Another sexual discourse in the novel is Zara's love affair with Mamo which is not based on genuine motive but for pleasure. She used this to console herself of the heart break she suffered in the hands of Captain George. The diasporic writer captured Mamo and Zara as "lovers who only indulge in sexual intercourse without a marriage plan" (141). The omniscient narrator further reveals that:

The room was in semidarkness. They were both lying on their backs in her bed, staring at the ceiling...He reached down and picked up his trousers from the floor and slipped into them before standing up. Though they had been going out for over three months now, and had been sleeping together whenever they had a chance, he still found it hard to stand naked before it (141).

Habila's narratives present characters who appear to be driven by their emotions. Unlike the characters in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, these ones could not control their instinctual sexual force which appears to have overwhelmed their power morality principle. The female characters are more sexually promiscuous than their male counterparts as portrayed in this text. For instance, the narrator further describes Zara as a character who "loved to lounge naked around the house, with the curtains drawn; sometimes she'd cook a whole meal dressed only in panties, her full breasts swinging whenever she turned or bent down to open a drawer. He loved to stand behind her, with his palms on her neck, inhaling; she had a distinct smell: soapy, murky, and fresh, as if she were just stepping out of the shower" (141). She is responsive to the immediate sexual gratification of her id. The superego which is the

agency that should strive for perfection in terms of moral standards in society, has been overpowered by the primitive insatiable demands of the id. The superego which implies the conscience of the human personality but it could not resist the imperfections of the characters in the narrative

Also, in *Waiting for an Angel*, the writer described the University Road as "less squalid, but more notorious" compared to Olokun Road. According to him, it "was the flux point for all vices on the street: there were hostels for sex and alcohol, and there were doorways and alley-mouths for marijuana and cocaine. The sex workers were mostly young university girls from the neighbouring campus, hustling on the side to make ends meet" (92). Moreso, the writer through the eye of Lomba revealed a bar which prostitutes patronize. This observation is captured in the narrative: "She is a sex worker, and extravagantly dressed for the part. The bottoms of her tight, almost transparent blouse are open, exposing the top of her breasts. She is wearing no brassiere and her nipples are clearly visible through the dress. She smiles, and bends forward, cradling her bottle in both hands, rubbing it against her chest. She can't be more than twenty-one, and quite pretty in a vacuous, unmemorable way" (161). In response to the above submission, Alobo and Ndifon stated that, "prostitutes sell sexual flavours and their bodies to their customers who pay them huge amount of money in exchange" (Alobo and Ndifon, 2014:37). The findings of the scholars further revealed that, "this dirty and highly immoral profession is associated with social problems as marital instability, sexual harassment, divorce, overcrowding, environmental pollution, alcoholism, fighting, drug addiction, violence crime and delinquency, unwanted pregnancy" (37). It is against this background that the diasporic novelist laments over the sexual promiscuity among ladies who perceive sex as means of livelihood without being conscious of the adverse effects on their health. The id of the characters in the texts is so active and uncontrollable that even their morality principle cannot check their excessive sexual drives.

### **Instinctual Drives for Violence**

The instinctual desire for aggression and violence is socially unacceptable and morally bankrupt as evident in the narratives of Chimamanda Adichie and Helon Habila. Although the pleasure seeking instinct that triggers violence is biological and natural; it can be controlled because of its resultant effects to individuals, groups and society at large. In *The Thing Around Your Neck*, Adichie portrays a homeland where intimidations, killings and maiming have become the order of the day in every campus. This scenario is presented in the "Cell One" which is the first story in the short story collection. From the diasporic world, the writer condemns the deteriorating nature of Nigerian universities which are now places where evils are being perpetuated by youths who are supposed to engage in research and scholarly works for the development of mankind. Writing from the diaspora, Adichie activates the mental consciousness of the reader about the notorious activities of cultists which claimed lives in the former "serene Nsukka Campus" and the effort of government in

curbing the ugly situation. These cults, according to her, may once have been benign fraternities, but they had evolved and were now called "cults" (7) and they use guns, machets and axes on their victims while new members are often tortured during their initiation ceremony.

In relation to the deviant behaviours of the cultists in society, Gottesman affirmed the view shared by Sigmund Freud (1930) in his Psychoanalytic theory that, "each human is born with equally powerful instincts toward life (Eros) and death (Thanatos). When the death instinct is turned inward, it results in self-punishment (in the extreme, suicide). When directed outward, it results in hostility and anger, leading to destructive behaviour and even murder" (Gottesman, 1999:322). Though most cultists operate under the influence of alcoholism and hard drugs, their violence and aggression are traceable to their biological makeup or instinctual drives.

In the narrative, the novelist identified the most common cult groups as the Black Axe, the Buccaneers, and the Pirates and in order to check their nefarious activities, there are "signboards all over the university read, in bold letters, SAY NO TO CULTS." Terrorism on campuses is targeted at both students and lecturers who failed to heed their demands, as the narrator clearly recounted, 'the cult boys had modern guns' and so 'stabbed', 'hacking,' and 'shooting' have become so rampant that 'Girls stayed inside their hostels after lectures and lecturers quivered when a fly buzzed too loudly'(8). These characters have appetitive drives for aggression without a recourse to outcome of the latent violence. This assertion is acknowledged by Buss and Shackford who found out that, "all human behavior is a product of mechanisms internal to the person, in conjunction with inputs that trigger the activation of those mechanisms" (Buss & Shackford, 1997:607). The adoption of graphology in writing the signboards is meant to discourage students from joining any secret cult. The growth of cultism in tertiary institutions could be traced to parental irresponsibility because it has become obvious that lots of parents no longer monitor the movements of their children and the company they keep because of the quest for material wealth and fame in their respective careers. Adichie in this narrative revealed that children of lecturers and other university staff are also involved in the atrocities that characterized our tertiary institutions in recent time.

The violence chronicled by Helon Habila in *Waiting for an Angel* was triggered by the long-sufferings of the citizens of the country under the military juntas of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. The writer recounted a peaceful demonstration that became violent when the police shot teargas into air to disperse the protesting students. This is a struggle for justice and freedom while the one presented in Adichie's story above is that of tussle for supremacy of court groups and oppression of innocent people. In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, the violence occurred because of the desire of the family of Eugene Achike to obtain total freedom from their dictatorial father. The family lives in constant fear and anxieties and so their quest for freedom aggravated the built-up tension in Eugene's home which eventually led to his murder in the narrative. Kambili's stay in Nsukka actually gave

her and Jaja some respites as they got the freedom which they were denied at home by their father. They gain physical, psychological and emotional freedom which their cousins also enjoy. They have found their voices to express their minds and feelings, take decisions independently and condemn what they consider wrong in their family.

Chimamanda Adichie employed the family of Eugene Achike to depict Nigeria as a nation which even though it has attained political independence from their colonizer, it still struggles against military dictatorship and bad leadership. The violence chronicled in Adichie's narratives claim more lives and property than those in Habila's fictional works. This is evident in the assassination that dominated the political scenes in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and the religious crisis in *The Thing Around Your Neck*. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the writer nostalgically recollected the political turbulence thrown-up by the military regimes in Nigeria particularly those of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. The diasporic writer psychologically reflects on a nation where the military institutionalized injustice by unleashing its men on innocent citizens who they considered as threats to their government. There were unlawful arrests, torture and extermination of political opponents, human rights crusaders and journalist. The situation was so horrible that publishers have to go underground to ensure the safety of their staff. In order to seek divine intervention, Eugene led his family to pray to God to end dictatorial government. Military in Nigerian politics is characterized with coup and counter-coup, a process which Eugene describes as "a vicious cycle" (33). Though Eugene remained as an opposition to military dictatorship, he accused Nigerian politicians of being responsible for the tragedies that have befallen the nation since her independence. According to him the politicians are corrupt, and there are many stories about cabinet ministers who looted public funds and stashed money in foreign bank accounts. These monies were stolen to the detriments of the masses. The novel, thus, is meant to activate the mental consciousness of Nigerians about the traumatic experiences of the military administrations in the past.

In *Measuring Time*, Helon Habila presents political violence from a different perspective. Through the character of Lamang, politics is seen as a game that must be won at all cost. He felt being deprived of his right to be the flag bearer of his political party having worked tirelessly to build it. When he lost the Chairmanship ticket of his former party, the VP, he defected to another party, and because of his alleged involvement in an electoral fraud, he was arrested and remanded in police custody. Lamang who was once respected in the community suffers humiliation for being detained till after the elections and when he was released by the police, he "expected something of a hero's welcome" which he never got. Habila drew on electoral irregularities in the Nigerian polity to express his dissatisfaction over the inordinate ambitions of prominent politicians who use Nigerian youths to perpetuate electoral malpractice and violence. Their desires for power connoted their underlying psychopathic personality disorders which made them instigate the youths into fraud and violence. The narrator recounted young men who have sold off their conscience just to indulge in fraudulent acts. Habila vividly painted a picture of youths from poor



economic background depicted by the manner the 'three men seated on a mat on the hard mud floor. In the poor light of the room, worsened by the dense cigarette and weed smoke hanging in the air' (167). Their dysfunctional thoughts and actions are influenced by drugs/substance intakes. This scenario portrays a generation of people who stand against free, fair and credible elections that would usher in change.

The political struggle in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* was triggered by the press and human rights activities while those in Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and *Measuring Time* were caused by unpopular government of the military and impoverished condition of the masses. Though both writers portrayed political era that is marred with killings, illegal arrest and torture of citizens, Habila's approach to the enthronement of democratic governance seems to be more violent than that of Adichie. He presented characters that see revolution as the only medium towards addressing economic and political issues while Adichie through the character of Eugene seeks God's intervention besides the press.

### **Instinctual Struggle for Change**

The struggle for change in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is disastrous as it results in the death of Eugene in the end of the narrative. Eugene exercises absolute power over his wife and children which creates emotional conflict and tension that heightened to the point of adding poison to his meal. The wife saw Eugene's death as the escape route to freedom for the entire family of Achike which was in perpetual fears, and anxieties among other characters in the novel. The actions of Mama after the death of Eugene are suspicious. The heroine observes that:

The compound gates were locked. Mama had told Adamu not to open the gates to all the people who wanted to throng in for mgbalu, to commiserate with us. Even members of our Umunna who had come from Abba were turned away. Adamu said it was unheard of, to turn sympathisers away. But Mama told them him we wished to mourn privately, that they could go to offer Masses for the repose of Papa's soul. I had never heard Mama talk to Adamu that way; I had never even heard Mama talk to Adamu at all (293).

Eugene's wife has tactically avoided an avenue for the womenfolk to unravel the mystery behind the death of her husband. Her movements, however, suggest a character who is emotionally disturbed by her guilt. According to the narrator, "Mama tightened her wrapper, then went to the windows; she pushed the drapes aside, checking that the louvres were shut to keep the rain from splashing into the house. Her movements were calm and slow. When she spoke, her voice was just as calm and slow" (294). Eugene's wife could not conceal the crime she committed as he accepted the responsibility thus, "I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor" (294).

In Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, women are instrumental to positive change being clamoured for in post-independence society. They practically reacted to the untold economic hardship that emanated from the mismanagement and misrule of the

commonwealth of the Nigerian state during the military regimes. This ugly reaction was triggered by Lomba's articles and reports which were meant to sensitize the womenfolk. According to Lomba, "my eyes snapped open as the rickety Molue bus came to a sudden stop in the middle of the road. I leaned out of the window with the other passengers to see what was causing the block" (88). Women and children are mostly affected by policies and decisions made by unpopular administration in a society. The women in Lomba's story are so impoverished that their means of transportation also reflect their condition of living. They arrived the venue of their rally in a 'rickety Molue but' and as the narrator further describes the scenario; "There was a loud, angry murmur of voices in front. Women's voices. The women appeared, crossing the road. Housewives in a large body, some with infants strapped to their backs. They were all carrying hoes and axes and matchets" (88). The diasporic writer artistically and imaginatively recreated protesters who are not only women but also housewives with some who carry babies on the backs. During the military regime as chronicled by Habila, men were often arrested and detained whenever they staged any protest to fight for their fundamental human rights and since the women face more hardship, they with their infants have no other option than to express their miserable condition through public demonstrations.

It is worthy of note that apart from the women, girls from Mayfair Hotel also staged a solidarity rally to seek good condition of living for the masses who wallow in abject poverty. The novelist, through the narrator vividly recounts that; "The girls raised their placards and joined us; even the married women, who hated the girls like death, cheered and embraced them" (130). The women and the girls as revealed in above are enemies probably because the latter are 'commercial sex workers' who make their daily bread by exploiting married men. Though the women 'hated the girls like death,' since they all face a similar challenge that requires joint effort, the women have no choice that to cheer and embrace them. They have a common goal which they must achieve through cooperation.

### Conclusion

In the study, we examined various thematic preoccupations that are similar to the narratives of Adichie and Habila, and how they are distinctly portrayed to show their areas of convergence. Such central themes include religion extremism and culture, instinctual drives for sexuality, politics, instinct of violence and struggle for change. Though there are areas where both authors presented themes that are completely divergent, these are left out in this study. In the paper, certain peculiar themes are clearly captured by both diasporic writers to demonstrate their imaginative and creative skills in the portrayal of their experiences even though they are Nigerians who live in diaspora.

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