Ars Artium: An International Refereed Research Journal of English Studies and Culture
ISSNs: 2319-7889 (P); 2395-2423 (E)
Vol. 11, January 2023, pp 81-96
Edited by Vijay Kumar Roy
https://www.arsartium.org

The Monarchy and British Colonial Past: A Postcolonial Reading of *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus*

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Abstract

The death of Queen Elizabeth II elicited diverse reactions from people across the world, especially in former British colonies in Africa and Asia where the monarchy, the symbol of British government, actively participated in slave trade and colonialism. Before the passage of the Queen, Dr. Uju Anya, a professor at Carnegie Mellon University in Pennsylvania, United States, had curiously wished the revered monarch "an excruciating death," probably because of Britain's role in Nigeria's genocidal civil war against Biafra. It is based on these criticisms that this study appraises the effects of colonialism on the Igbo society as portrayed in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. Some of the basic principles of postcolonial theory are deployed to analyze the experiences of characters in the two novels, which adequately represent the two epochs of the colonial experience. The study also draws strength from Paul Gilroy's views on postcolonial discourse, especially his conviviality concept as well as the use of library and internet sources. The study, which will deepen postcolonial discourses, holds that colonialism succeeded due largely to internal contradictions in the Igbo society and the good aspects of colonialism, such as education, freedom and trade, which the Igbo could not resist. It concludes that Britain should find new mutual ways of relating more productively with members of its former colonies in a world of conviviality.

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Keywords: Monarchy, Britain, Colonialism, Nigeria, Postcolonial discourse

Introduction

Some readers and critics of African literature as well as creative writers in most postcolonial literatures, more especially writers from colonized countries in Africa, have overtime traced the social and economic woes of pre-colonial Africa to the unwarranted intrusion of European powers and their subsequent occupation of these countries for many decades. Some of them have also blamed the colonialists for the political and economic underdevelopment of the continent many years after the dismantling of the colonial enterprise in these nations.

In *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Walter Rodney clearly stated that slave trade was a strong factor in Africa's underdevelopment (103). He also identified that Africa was a victim of colonization, which was enunciated with the notorious scramble for Africa (150). Similarly, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon admitted that "colonialism has not simply depersonalized the individual it has colonized; this depersonalization is equally felt in the collective sphere, on the level of social structures" (237). He further contended that "the colonized people find that they are reduced to a body of individuals who only find cohesion when in the presence of the colonizing nation" (237).

Nigeria's Chinua Achebe and Ngugi WaThiong'o of Kenya have consistently maintained that the imperial invasion of Africa was the main reason things literally fell apart in the Igbo or Nigerian society of that era as well as other African societies. This assertion is readily implied in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* and Ngugi's *Weep Not, Child, A Grain of Wheat* and in some of their other works. In what appears to be Achebe's artistic vision and as captured in 'The Novelist as a Teacher,' he wrote: "I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them" (Achebe, *Hopes*, 45). In *There was A Country, A Personal History of Biafra,* Achebe was pointed in alluding that *Things Fall Apart*-the history of colonization was also the story of dispossession in Africa (39). In that work also, he blamed Nigeria's post-independence trauma on this 'discovery' of Africa by Europe through the transatlantic slave trade to the Berlin Conference of 1885.

In the memoir too, Achebe also believed that the scramble for Africa by the world's leading European powers created new boundaries that did violence to Africa's

ancient societies and resulted in the tension-prone modern states (1). Apart from the scramble for Africa which sealed Nigeria's fate, Achebe contended that the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates inextricably complicated Nigeria's destiny. He further postulated that under the colonial arrangement, diverse people, including Animists, Muslims, Christians alike were held together delicately by an artificial lattice (2). The drawing of the colonial maps without due consultations with the people concerned has been a major source of friction in these countries, including the many civil wars in Africa and Asia. In the case of Nigeria, to which the Igbo society is an integral part, I have argued elsewhere that "the tragedy of Nigeria can also be located in its failed leadership as some commentators have adumbrated" (Obioha, 7). The same argument still holds true of many independent countries in Africa and Asia still suffering from the yoke of colonialism.

In an interview he granted in 1978, Ngugi acknowledged that "black people have been victims of double exploitation. They have been exploited on the level of class because they constitute the majority of the working class and the laboring masses. They have also been exploited on the dimension of race because of the white colonial context in which Black and White people met" (Killam, 7).

According to David I. Ker, it is this meeting between Africa and Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, which led to slavery, evangelism and political domination of Africa by European powers, that was instrumental to the production of what critics have termed protest literature on the continent (20). There is indeed, no doubt that the tensions created by this unfortunate and unwarranted meeting of two unequal partners, master/servant, dislocated the African social and economic equilibrium. And since the African traditional societies could not withstand the wind of change represented by the white man's slavery, religion, education, power, commerce and technology, the pre-literate tribal societies, which were in rudimentary stages of development disintegrated in the face of these untoward but pervasive invasion of Africa by alien culture and power. The oppressive colonial encounter has been succinctly and imaginatively dramatized in Achebe's all time classic, *Things Fall Apart*, thus:

> 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 as one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart (124-125).

Most of the readings and criticisms of the colonialist intervention in the anti-colonialist novels of Achebe, Ngugi and others, have blamed African peoples' misfortune on the single but overwhelming incident, the so-called vital missionary and civilizing intervention to save the colonized. However, events have since proved that even in the pre-colonial era, things were not as perfect as the writers of these fictions would have us believe. Beyond their presumed orderliness, there was chaos, violence and maltreatment of some groups in the society who later found freedom in the colonial religion and education. To these groups, the colonial epoch was liberating and redemptive, and even seen as an advantageous necessary 'evil.' In spite of the alleged evils of colonial experience, it has some obvious advantages. At least, it opened the eyes of the Igbo people, as portrayed in Achebe's magnum opus, to other cultures, modern medicine, western education and technology, which African society needed to forge ahead in a rapidly changing world. The only snag or drawback is that such relationship was not negotiated on equal terms. It was forcefully imposed with great arrogance and denigration of the colonized societies, the 'other.' Colonialism was a misconstrued cultural revolution that started from the perceived centre to the margins of the so-called universal cultural ethos and Eurocentric views of life in total disregard to African values. Tyson has observed that the colonizers believed that only their own Anglo-European culture was civilized, sophisticated, or as post-colonial critics put it metropolitan (Tyson 366).

In their ignorance, the colonizers defined the natives as savage, backward and underdeveloped. And because their technology was more highly advanced, they believed that their whole culture was more highly advanced, and they ignored or swept aside the religions, customs and codes of behavior of the peoples they subjugated. Under this atmosphere, the colonizers saw themselves as the centre of the world while the colonized were adjudged to be at the margins.

The colonizers saw themselves as the embodiment of what a human being should be. To them a human being should be the proper 'self' while the native peoples were regarded as the 'others' who were therefore different and inferior. But it has also become obvious that events shortly after the dismantling of the colonial structures, have demonstrated that the Igbo society far from being peaceful as portrayed in some of the literary works that are meant to regain the past glory of Africa, has before the advent of the white man exhibited some cracks in its walls that would have inevitably made its disintegration and adapting to the wind of change possible even if the white man did not intervene, and supposedly put a knife in these ethos and fabrics that held the society intact.

We say this bearing in mind of the dynamism of human nature that would have made the Igbo people to adapt to change in spite of colonialism. Some critics, especially those from the Feminist camp in the emerging literary canons have stridently argued that the neglect of the female principle (factor) in the Igbo society's balance and the segregation encouraged in the society as represented by the 'Osus' (the outcasts), the infirm and the poor which the new administration with its churches and schools recognized, polarized the society and made new converts and adherents to the invading foreign power in quick succession. While this is true to some extent, we hold that it should not be exaggerated because in *Things Fall Apart*, certain female principles were upheld. For instance, the priestess of Agbala was a female. The earth goddess was a female deity. Even the marginalization of the 'Osus' was for a religious purpose, which was in consonance with the belief system of the traditional Igbo religious life. It was a practice meant to appease their gods so that the society would maintain its cosmic balance.

In other words, colonialism inadvertently opened the eyes of the marginalized (Osus) and slaves to see the shortcomings of the Igbo society, and hence they strive for freedom by joining forces with the white man to undermine the discriminating traditional institutions that the Igbo society represents. To these groups, the 'alienation' which colonialism brought about is something to be lauded simply because it gave them the freedom the Igbo society had denied them through religious practices that accommodate human sacrifice, killing of twins and using somebody as a ransom for an offence he knew nothing about. We recall the case of Ikemefuna and unnamed virgin who were used to pay for murder in *Things Fall Apart*. The killing of Ikemefuna by Okonkwo, who supposed to protect him from attackers, represents the bad aspect of the Igbo society before colonialism. The fact remains that many years after the exit of the white man, the Igbo society (Nigeria) has not found its feet among the comity of nations, an issue poignantly addressed in *Purple Hibiscus* by Chiamanda Ngozi Adichie, who took off where Achebe stopped. Similarly most of the independent African states, including Nigeria, to which Igbo society is a part of, have been engulfed in unprecedented corruption, marginalization, dehumanization, abuse of due process and dictatorship that almost made the white man's encroachment to wear the garb of sainthood.

Why has things continued to fall apart in Igbo society many years after regaining our independence? In the face of the criticisms from citizens of former British colonies following the death of the longest reigning British monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, this study examines the colonial and post-colonial experiences of Africans, using

the Igbo society, portrayed in these novels as a representative example of the colonized. Some of the principles of postcolonial theory such as alienation, difference, dispossession, and disillusionment are deployed to analyze the experiences of characters in the two novels, which adequately represent two epochs of the colonial experience. According to Lois Tyson, postcolonial criticism is concerned with the analysis of literature produced by cultures that developed in response to colonial domination (365). It also seeks to understand the political, social, cultural, and psychological operations of colonist and anti-colonist ideologies in these texts (365). This study uses postcolonial criticism to analyze why the Igbo people accepted colonialism and the effects of colonialism on the characters portrayed in the texts. The study draws strength from Paul Gilroy's views on post-colonialism as espoused in his work: *After Empire, Melancholia or Convivial Culture*? Gilroy's 'conviviality' concept, which he refers to as: "the process of cohabitation and interaction that have made multi-culture an ordinary feature of social life in Britain's urban areas and in postcolonial cities elsewhere," (xi) will make for a more peaceful world in a time of globalization. His position that "human beings are ordinarily far more alike than they are unlike" (4) will positively deepen the postcolonial discourse and fashion out how the former colonized people can relate and live in harmony with the citizens of the former colonizer in Africa and in diaspora and how the ethnic groups lumped together by imperial powers can coexist instead of seeking to redraw the colonial maps of these countries, which is often attended by untoward violence and bloodshed.

If people of all races are treated equally and seen as human beings instead of the 'other' and being always judged by the black, white or coloured dichotomies, the world will be better. Conviviality can also be used to address the tensions in gender relations and make for a world that privileges gender equality and inclusion. Although colonialism was based on racial superiority and other assumptions of enlightenment, the differences in race, colour, language and even religion and others should work for global harmony and conviviality and not sources of tensions and wars. It is the contention of the study that internal contradictions within the Igbo society contributed so much to its disintegration in the colonial and post-colonial epochs. This study shows that some of the elements of that contradictions and warped sense of values have also trailed the post-independent Igbo society with debilitating consequences.

While the study recognized the evils of the colonial encounter on the colonized, it was not blind to some of the redeeming features of that unwarranted meeting of Britain and its colonial territories in terms of modern education, health, trade and others. It recommends that postcolonial people and their former colonizer, Britain,

must find ways of addressing the ills of slavery and colonialism through mutual relations and cooperation instead of the current blame game, antagonism and occasional emotional outbursts, which trailed the passage of the revered monarch. If people can adopt conviviality in their relationships with others, the postcolonial alienation, melancholy and tensions will be effectively tackled.

The Igbo society in *Things Fall Apart*

Things Fall Apart, which was set in Igboland at the beginning of the 19th century, portrayed a vision of what life was like in Igboland between 1850 and 1900. The Igbo society portrayed in the novel is an agrarian one in which the people depend so much on the land for their sustenance. In the novel, Achebe captures realistically the strains and tensions of the experiences of Igbo people during colonialism. He also portrays the interactions between the individuals and their gods in the society, showing a deep awareness and understanding of the structural complexity in Igbo society. In his study of *Things Fall Apart*, G. D. Killam notes as quoted in Umelo Ojinmah (12) that:

> *Things Fall Apart* is a vision of what life was like in Iboland (Igboland) between 1850 and 1900. Achebe makes a serious attempt to capture realistically the strains and tensions of the experiences of Ibo (Igbo) people under the impact of colonialism. What ultimately gives this novel its strength is Achebe's feelings for the plight and the problems of these peoples (14).

Arising from Killam's observation above, *Things Fall Apart* is the story of Okonkwo, the hero of the novel, and his rise to societal prominence on account of hard work and his eventual tragic end, through suicide, because of his refusal to accept change in a period of great transition. It is also Achebe's response to the colonial epoch and its effects on the colonized. It will, therefore, not be out of place to say that the opening paragraph of *Things Fall Apart* clearly depicts of what life was like in Igboland of Achebe's fictional universe: "Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat" (3). The story of the rise and fall of Okonkwo, the hero of *Things Fall Apart*, is like the story of the whole clan and the effect of change on it.

It is the contention of this study to state that Achebe used the disintegration of Okonkwo's family to represent the disintegration of the Igbo society or the African society in the face of unwarranted incursion and imposition of alien socio-political

systems all in the name of colonialism. The Igbo society of Achebe's fictional world is basically agrarian and at its rudimentary stages of development. Achebe writes that "during the planting season Okonkwo worked daily on his farms from cock-crow until the chickens went to roost. He was a very strong man and rarely felt fatigue"(10). Okonkwo's religious life, which is akin to the religious life of the society, is portrayed thus:

> Near the barn was a small house, the 'medicine house' or shrine where Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of his personal god and of his ancestral spirits. He worshipped them with sacrifices of kola nut, food and palm-wine, and offered prayers to them on behalf of himself, his three wives and eighteen children (10).

The people are deeply religious and superstitious and are very much attached to their gods, customs and their land, the source of food and materials for societal sustenance. That is why the people venerate the land and even regard it as a goddess. And therefore any offence against the earth goddess must be propitiated to avoid the wrath of the gods and famine. The Igbo society of Achebe's fictional universe is communal, individualistic and materialistic at the same time. The people celebrate personal achievements including bravery and wealth. The possession of large yam barns, many wives and children, especially male ones, readily qualifies one as a successful person in the society as well as the taking of Ozo title. The Igbo society of *Things Fall Apart* is one in which "if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings" (6). Having washed his hands, Okonkwo must dine with the kings in the society.

Achebe writes that "Okonkwo was clearly cut out for great things. He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife" (6). Besides, Okonkwo "had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. Although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of greatest men of his time" (6). With these accomplishments, one can become one of the elders of the society and also part of the highest decision-making body of titled elders, which Okonkwo belonged. It is a highly patriarchal society where maleness is worshipped and femaleness relegated to the margins of the society. This accounted for the success of colonial rule because women enjoyed some measure of liberation under colonialism, which the traditional Igbo society denied them.

Even Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, found liberation in the white man's education and church. In this society too, a man's strength is determined by his participation in local wars or inter-tribal wars of attrition and how many human heads he brought home. As already stated, Okonkwo came into societal reckoning when he threw down Amalinze the cat in a wrestling duel at a very young age. Okonkwo's life is governed by fear, the fear of failure. According to the narrator, "Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wives especially the youngest lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his children" (9). He does not want to be like his father, Unoka, who the society sees as a failure and a loafer, a chronic debtor and efulefu, who delights in playing his flute and loathes farm work. Okonkwo's greatest fear "was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father. Even as a little boy he had resented his father's failure and weakness, and even now he still remembered how he had suffered when a playmate had told him that his father was agbala"(10). Agbala, as explained in the novel, is another name for a woman and a man who had taken no title (10). The Igbo society is also divided along the lines of the strong and the weak, the free born and the caste or Osu people. Here too, being strong is associated with maleness and being weak is associated with femaleness. Men who are weak are considered effeminate, including those who are unable to impregnate their wives. The Osus and Ohus are consigned to the margins of the society and a free born cannot marry an Osu or an Ohu, an issue Achebe treated in *No Longer at Ease.* In *Things Fall Apart*, an Osu is "a person dedicated to a god, a thing set apart- a taboo forever and his children after him. He could neither marry nor be married to the free-born. He was in fact an outcast, living in a special area of the village, close to the Great Shrine…An Osu could not attend an assembly of the free-born…(111).

However, with the coming of the white man and his education, health and church and trade, the Osus and other marginalized groups accepted it and become their clerks, interpreters and catechists, the disintegration of the Igbo traditional society becomes inevitable. This can explain why Chinyere Nwahunanya has argued that "the existing social institutions and cultural practices in the Igbo society before the advent of European colonizer provided a foundation for the tragedy which was exacerbated by the colonial presence" (225). Similarly, J.O.J. Nwachukwu-Agbada avers that "the emergence of a class of malcontents leads to a situational irony, for the disgruntled members of the society-the osu, the efulefu, the mothers of twins, etc,- form the prop of the new religion," (84). The killing of Ikemefuna by Okonkwo for offence the lad did not know anything about was the most inhuman aspect of the

Igbo culture: "He heard Ikemefuna cry, 'My father, they have killed me!' as he ran towards him. Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his matchet and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak" (43). Okonkwo killed the lad in defiance of wise advice from such circumspective elders of the clan like Ogbuefi Ezeudu and Obierika. "That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death. Yes, Umuofia has decided to kill him…But I want you to have nothing to do with it. He calls you father" (40). It was the aggregate of these evil religious practices that made Nwoye, Okonkwo's son and his likes to join the Christian faith.

They saw in the Christian ethos, the much sought relief from the overbearing intolerance in the Igbo traditional religious practices, especially in its disregard for the sanctity of human life. "But there was a young lad who had been captivated. His name was Nwonye, Okonkwo's first son. It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. …It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow" (104). The beauty of the songs in the church made Nwonye to remember the haunting death of Ikemefuna and the killed twins crying in the bush, who were killed because the traditional religion made the people believe they were evil and as such must be killed (104). Besides, the colonial power offered to the people what the traditional Igbo society could not. When Okonkwo went in exile, his people embraced the church and education and when he came back he saw a changed society. According to the narrator in *Things Fall Apart*,

> when nearly two years later Obierika paid another visit to his friend in exile the circumstances were less happy. The missionaries had come to Umuofia. They had built their church there, won a handful of converts and were already sending evangelists to the surrounding towns and villages (101).

Towards the end of the novel, Okonkwo could not stand the temerity of the white man's messenger to announce that "the white man whose power you know too well has ordered this meeting to stop" (144) and killed him. Achebe dramatized the scene thus: "In a flash Okonkwo drew his matchet. The messenger crouched to avoid the blow. It was useless. Okonkwo's matchet descended twice and the man's head lay beside his uniformed body" (144). When he killed the emissary of the white man, his people retreated instead of fighting back and Okonkwo was left alone and he hanged himself because he could not withstand imperial rule. He killed himself because his people abandoned him. The postcolonial tensions that affected the new nations that emerged from colonialism in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* will be treated in the next sub-heading, The Igbo society in *Purple Hibiscus*.

The Igbo society in *Purple Hibiscus*

On the other hand, *Purple Hibiscus* written by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and set in postcolonial Igboland (Nigeria) portrays the family breakdown in a country that is equally doing the same. The disintegration of the family and the Nigerian nation are succinctly portrayed in the novel. *Purple Hibiscus* was set in the 20th century Igboland. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie explores the tensions between Christianity and the traditional African spirituality through the eyes of the 15-year-old girl, Kambili. The author, through the eyes of the narrator, depicts how the faith or the new religion that came with colonialism produced a lot of confusion between the colonists and the colonized. Such manifestation of extreme confusion is personified by Eugene Achike, the father of Kambili. The story of *Purple Hibiscus* can be summed up to be that of Kambili and her father, the zealously religious businessman. Though Eugene is highly respected in the community for his generosity and philanthropy as well as his brave support for those who stand up against the dictators that rule Nigeria, at the same time he manifests traces of tyranny and despotism at home. Therefore, events in the novel is seen through the eyes of Kambili, the obedient daughter of a harsh Roman Catholic patriarch, Eugene Achike, a big man and wealthy local manufacturer in Enugu, who resented his father, Papa-Nnukwu on account of his traditional religious beliefs. Eugene's management of his family betrays his avowed commitment to freedom and defence of human rights.

Instead of ensuring the respect of individual freedoms and rights, Eugene at home is a tyrant and no lapse in religious observance will ever go unpunished. He has dogmatic and fanatical grasp of Christianity that at times made him to treat people of other faith especially the African traditional religion with scorn and disdain. According to Eugene, "I didn't have a father who sent me to the best schools. My father spent his time worshipping gods of wood and stone" (47). Adichie used Eugene to depict what the colonial Christianity and its ally, western education can do to the colonized. The values contained in the new faith can make a man turn against his roots, his cultures including religion and language. It is not funny that Eugene, a product of western education and Christianity has come to despise those who speak the Igbo language as well as followers and worshippers of the traditional gods. The religion and education that came with colonialism came with disparaging ideas and norms and values that were contrary to the existing beliefs and value system of the colonized. It came with a lot of brain washing and views that will make the African see himself as an inferior being that must accept the white man's way of life before he can be admitted to the famed club of the civilized and enlightened.

Although Eugene is the proprietor of a newspaper, the *Standard*, through which he champions freedom of speech in the face of military dictatorship, paradoxically, he rules his household with the most tyrannical of iron grips. Father Benedict eulogized Eugene in his sermon thus:

> Look at Brother Eugene. He could have chosen to be like other Big Men in this country, he could have decided to sit at home and do nothing after the coup, ... But no, he used the Standard to speak the truth even though it meant the paper lost advertising. Brother Eugene spoke out for freedom (5).

Even *Amnesty World* has given Eugene a human rights award (5). Despite the praise by the priest, Eugene's family life is devoid of freedom for his family members. Like Okonkwo of *Things Fall Apart*, Eugene rules his household with iron hand. He also treats his Igbo culture with utter disdain as well as Igbo traditional religion. He does not permit so much the speaking of the Igbo language and does not tolerate his children to visit his father, Papa-Nnukwu because he worships traditional gods while his son, Eugene, worships the Christian God. And when he did, he fortified them with prayers to ensure that they did not derail from his instructions: "I don't like to send you to the home of a heathen, but God will protect you…He put the Bible in a drawer and then pulled Jaja and me to his side, gently rubbed the sides of our arms" (62). However, the children could not see any signs of difference, of Godlessness between Papa-Nnukwu's religious practice and that of the Christian converts. The objects of worship look alike as can be gleaned from Papa's "shrine" and the "grotto at St Agnes" (65).

According to Adichie, "He spoke English with an Igbo accent so strong it decorated even the shortest words with extra vowels. Papa liked it when the villagers made an effort to speak English around him. He said it showed they had good sense" (60). It is sad that Eugene despised his father first for not sending him to the best schools and secondly for spending his time "worshipping gods of wood and stone" (47). For Eugene and his brand of Catholicism, there should be no relationship between the traditional worshippers and the followers of the foreign god, the god introduced by the colonizers through the Christian missionaries. The conflict between the adherents of the two religions was dramatized by Adichie in the novel as well as the disintegration of Eugene's family, which unfortunately led to his tragic death. Due to Eugene's religious overzealousness or even fanaticism, he could not spare a thought and visit his dying father: "our father is dying, do you hear me? He is an old

man, how much longer does he have, *gbo*? Yet Eugene will not let him into his house, will not even greet him. *O joka*! Eugene has to stop doing God's job. God is big enough to do his own job" (95). Adichie uses her novel to critique the preference of a foreign religion brought by the colonial masters in repudiation of the traditional religion. By portraying both religions, Adichie is perhaps underscoring the need to accommodate religious differences. Both religions represent two approaches to worshipping God.

However, there are similarities in both religions just as there are similarities between people. "Papa-Nnukwu's god, where Papa said Jaja and I were never to go near. The shrine was a low open shed, its mud roof and walls covered with dried palm fronds. It looked like the grotto behind St. Agnes, the one dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes" (65). Like most African converts to the new faith, Eugene overdid some of these things most times. For instance, his relationship with his father is one bad manifestation of religious hypocrisy because the Christian faith does not preach the hatred of other human beings based on religious difference. The second aspect is the intolerance of what Eugene termed sin in his house. In his own model of Christianity, Eugene wants every member of his household to abhor sin and be perfect even though he is not. He told Kambili, "You should not see sin and walk right into it" (192). Eugene rules his household with iron grips and subjects his wife and children to fear always, fear of sin and possibly fear of eternal damnation in hell.

His children, although had access to western education, they were not allowed the freedom that comes with such education. At the time Adichie wrote *Purple Hibiscus*, Nigerians were grappling with an era of military dictatorships where freedom of expression and basic human rights of the people are constantly abridged. The freedom of the press was not even tolerated and university teachers were on perpetual strike. It was at the same time that a frontline Nigerian journalist, Dele Giwa, was killed through a parcel bomb and when three drug traffickers were publicly executed through a retroactive military decree. The editor of the *Standard*, Ade Coker, was killed through a parcel-bomb probably to silence the vocal press and by extension the freedom of expression. "It rained heavily the day Ade Coker died, a strange, furious rain in the middle of the parched harmattan. Ade Coker was at breakfast with his family when a courier delivered a package to him…Ade Coker was blown up when he opened the package- a package everybody would have known was from the Head of State" (202). In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie is indirectly indicting the poor political leadership that has been a permanent feature of post-

independence Nigeria, a theme Achebe treated in *The Trouble with Nigeria*. In that slim work, Achebe wrote: "The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership" (1). Since 1983 when that book was published, Nigeria has not overcome its leadership challenges.

That is the irony of our independence and self-rule. The story of Nigeria after independence is a story of political alienation and disillusionment of the citizens by the emergent political elites, seen largely as the new colonizers. Nigeria has passed through coups and a brutal civil war and the worst type of military dictatorships. Yet the politicians have not learnt enough lessons. Independence has not meant much to the citizens due to poverty, unemployment and misery despite the oil wealth of the Nigerian nation. Therefore, it is not a surprise that towards the end of the novel, Eugene, Omelora, was killed through a rat poison by his wife, Mama, to overcome his tyranny at home: "they have found the poison in your father's body. I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka" (283). Although killing by poisoning cannot be justified as a way of redressing the evils of tyranny, it is a way some women react to seeking revenge. That is perhaps Adichie's strategy of portraying her gender politics and a useful lesson for tyrants. Brenda Cooper has observed that "Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie strives for a holistic vision in her novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, one that integrates Igbo customs and language with Catholic ritual and which incorporates men into her gender politics." Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is also a critique of postcolonial Nigeria and Africa and it is also a call for action against oppression at domestic and national levels. It calls for gender inclusion in keeping with her womanism but killing a spouse is not part of societal wellness of men, women and children advocated by womanists.

As in *Things Fall Apart*, the signs that things will not still be together for the people that came out of colonial rule started manifesting from the opening part of the story: "Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the etagere" (3). As Okonkwo died tragically in *Things Fall Apart* to pave the way for change brought about by colonialism, Eugene Achike suffered the same fate in *Purple Hibiscus* because he could not allow his family members to exercise their human rights For many of the countries that became free after colonialism, including the Igbo society of Nigeria that informed this study, things are not quite in order; it has been a story of coups, military rule, religious conflicts, and bad governance.

Conclusion

This study has examined the effects of colonialism on the colonized as well as the postcolonial tensions in independent Nigeria using the Igbo society as portrayed in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. The study was motivated by criticisms from some people of former British colonies following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. It holds that colonialism succeeded due largely to internal contradictions in the Igbo society and the good aspects of the colonial enterprise which the Igbo could not resist. In other words, things were not together for many of the people of Igbo society before the white man came. The ethnic groups that came together as nations must learn to live in peace and harmony and convivially build the new nations instead of wars and separatist agitations. It contends that although colonial rule was evil, it had some positive sides as well. It concludes that Britain should find new ways of relating more productively with members of the former British Empire under the umbrella body of the Commonwealth of Nations. Perhaps the emergence of Rishi Sunak of Asian descent as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK) will open the new dialogue between Britain and nations from its former colonies in Africa and Asia. This is perhaps the beginning of a new multicultural Britain where race or difference may not matter. Alternatively, some of the colonial maps may have to be redrawn by the ethnic nationalities that make up such nations without recourse to violence or bloodshed.

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