GOMBE SAVANNAH

JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES (GOSAJOLLCOS)

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
GOMBE STATE UNIVERSITY
NIGERIA

Volume 3 No. 1
October, 2022

LITERATURE

Dislodging Patriarchal Hierarchy in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

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Abstract

Patriarchy has been a recurring motif in African, black diaspora, and postcolonial literature. It has always been taken as a central point in most discourses of Nigerian feminist fiction. This paper examines how Adichie upends the patriarchal hierarchy in ***Purple Hibiscus*** (2003) *through M. M. Bakhtin's literary theoretical framework of the carnivalesque. The paper argues that Adichie dislodges patriarchy through profanation and Menippean Satire, as narrative features of the carnivalesque, in the family and religious spheres from the Igbo cultural perspective in the novel. The paper concludes that her adoption of the carnivalesque framework challenges the oppression and exclusion of the Igbo woman but with the spirit of 'negotiation' that acknowledges gender roles and positions in the culture.*

Keywords: Patriarchy, the Carnivalesque, Oppression, Exclusion, Feminist fiction

Introduction

Efforts have been made by many African female writers to challenge the socio-cultural factors that foster oppression, subjugation, dominance, and manhandling of women by men in their literary spaces. Patriarchy as a model of male dominance in most African cultures has been depicted as employing brute force to establish the authority and power of the male over the female. This has largely been portrayed in the early postcolonial African male-authored literature. Okonkwo in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Joshua in Ngugi's *The River Between* (1965) share the same characteristics: they beat their wives, both are easily irritable and violent persons who inflict pain on their family members in their fury, all in an attempt to be courageous and manly.

As Rhonda Cobham observes, patriarchal authority through Okonkwo and imperial authority through the British colonial District Commissioner in Achebe's *Things Falls Apart*, 'share the same worldview that, ultimately,

physical strength and the ability to inflict one's will on another human being – a wife, a son, or a native – are the only significant forms of social differentiation in establishing a masculine identity' (Cobham, 1991, p. 94). Adichie's debut novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), set within the same Igbo cultural milieu as Achebe's, also recounts how Igbo woman suffers brutal male subjugation and manhandling as well as physical and psychological torments. The excessive male power demonstrated by Papa Eugene in beating Mama Beatrice during the Eucharist Fast in the novel is reminiscent of Okonkwo beating his third wife Ojiugo in *Things Fall Apart* during the sacred Peace Week of Ani the earth deity, committing a transgression known as *nso-ani*.

This paper focuses on patriarchal authority, as one form of female domination and subjugation of the cultural agency of the Igbo woman, in *Purple Hibiscus.* The paper explores the manner in which Adichie addresses the excessive male power through the carnivalesque framework within the family space and colonial Christian religion in the novel.

The Carnivalesque and *Purple Hibiscus*

As Bakhtin explains, the carnivalesque is the manifestation, in literary space, of these elements and features of carnival identified in ancient, medieval, and Renaissance periods, especially in folk humour, where the 'laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary, that is non-carnival, life are suspended' (Bakhtin, 1984, pp. 122-123 *Italics from the original text*).

There are available critical reviews and examinations of patriarchy in *Purple Hibiscus* but none focuses solely on its carnivalesque framework. *A study by J.N. Ifechelobi* explored the way the Igbo culture exposes the suffering of women in *Purple Hibiscus,* which presents a one-sided argument. The examination concludes that the patriarchal cultural construction in the novel space renders women voiceless and makes them lose their identity and so forces them into solitude (Ifechelobi, 2014). This assertion misses the manner in which the female characters exert their voices through acts of carnivalesque and other means of dialogical interactions in the novel.

Heather Hewett further discusses how Adichie, as part of the 'third generation' writers from Nigeria, opts to write about the modern world rather than the desire to show the world the traditional ways of African people

(Hewett, 2005)**.** Hewett argues that Adichie focuses on contemporary political, social, and global realities she finds herself rather than being a cultural ambassador who showcases the cultural heritage of Igbo people to the world in the manner Achebe and his contemporaries did. Adichie's novels, no doubt, are concerned with the issues confronting the Igbo woman of today, but she juxtaposes the traditional with the modern through different perspectives, which is better captured through an examination of the carnivalesque in the novels.

Onyemaechi Udumukwu, in addition, discusses Adichie's employment of voice of narration as a strategy to 'negotiate the tension between the two aspects of the voice of that who *sees* and that of who *narrates*' through multi perspectives (Udumukwu, 2011, p. 184). He examines how Adichie presents issues of ideology, especially that of the 'subject and interpellation', to create 'self-knowledge and self-expression' for the female characters (ibid). Udumukwu's idea of interpellation is a reflection of Louis Althusser's discourse about the relationship between individuals who function as subjects. Althusser depicts interpellation as a misrecognition where an externalised image is perceived both as a 'self' and an 'Other' (Althusser, 2001). Thus, the interpellation in *Purple Hibiscus* is the creation of the image of the female as subordinate to the male. Udumukwu concludes that Adichie is able to present 'a dialectical situation between characters that are understood as subjects' (Udumukwu, 2011, p. 203). Although Udumukwu identifies dialectics in the interaction between the male and female characters in the novel, he does not discuss their dialogical interactions, which are different from dialectics. Bakhtin differentiates dialogic from dialectic when he says dialectic is a process of interaction between ideologues that brings about one reached solution between multiple ideologemes while dialogic is a state in which different points of view coexist in relative position to each other, with no one dominating other. So, while dialectic leads to closure and resolution, dialogic remains unresolved and open. As Richard Sennett explains, dialectic is concerned with 'the explicit meaning of statements and tends to lead to closure and resolution' while dialogic is a 'type of listening that attends to the implicit intentions behind the speaker's actual words' (Sennet, 2012, 18:30' - 25.00').

This paper explores the different points of view on Igbo female cultural exclusion wrought in patriarchy that Adichie presents through the dialogic

carnivalesque framework in *Purple Hibiscus,* which make even her authorial intention unresolved and open.

The Carnivalisation of Patriarchal Authority in *Purple Hibiscus*

Bakhtin states that during the Medieval carnival festivals, such as the Festival of Fools performed during the Middle Ages, 'priests, bishops or popes, depending on the rank of the church, were chosen in place of a king' and mocked through making a slave, a jester or a common man assume their roles and enjoy their authority for a while before being ridiculed, beaten and eventually 'decrowned' (1984, p. 124). The 'primary carnivalistic act' during these carnival festivals was '*mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king'* (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 124 *emphasis in the original text*). This process of "decrowning", also known as "the façade of the king", rendered in a literary space of the novel, is known as "carnivalisation", which according to Michael Holquist, is a term Bakhtin derived from the noun "carnival" and used it as 'a verb that has modishly become transitive due to his work on Rabelais' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. xvii)**.**

A noticeable feature of the carnivalesque in *Purple Hibiscus* is the Menippean Satire that Bakhtin identifies as having influenced the carnivalisation of literature through the novel genre. The family and religion are the two major "carnival spaces" within which Adichie "carnivalises" patriarchal authority through the Menippean satire and profanation in the novel.

The Family as a Carnival Space

Male-child preference, domestic violence, and marriage are the carnival family cultural spaces within which Adichie explores to interrogate patriarchal authority in *Purple Hibiscus.*

Male-child preference is a significant motif for the cultural exclusion of the Igbo female. The Igbo culture, arguably, favours a male child because he is expected to assume the responsibility of taking care of his parents in old age and taking over as the head of the family. Papa Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus* is expected to take care of Papa Nnukwu and perform his funeral rites after his death. However, in a reversal of gender roles as a form of carnivalisation, Aunty Ifeoma assumes that responsibility. Reversal is a significant aspect of the carnivalesque that creates the '*pathos of shifts and changes'* (Bakhtin,

1984, p. 124). Being a daughter, Aunty Ifeoma should be subordinate to Papa Eugene, the son, in familial issues but she deposes and dislodges that patriarchal authority by taking care of Papa Nnukwu alive and after he died. A daughter or a female child in Igbo culture is always subordinated to the male as a husband or sibling (Uchem, 2001**,** p. 111). The patriarchal thinking suggests that males are naturally superior to females, thereby establishing the foundation of patriarchy as a symbol of authority and power over the females (Amadiume, 2015, p. 60). Male-child preference over a female child, therefore, creates a binary opposition. Edward Said identifies this binary relationship between the subject and the object or the dominant Occident and the inferior Orient to be the factor that creates the cultural perceptions of "the Other" (Said, 1979). Adichie recreates this 'othering' of the female between Papa Eugene and Aunty Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus*.

Papa-Nnukwu prefers a son to a daughter so as to maintain the link between the dead ancestors and the living progeny. Papa Eugene, however, excommunicates his father, 'never greeted' him, 'never visited him' (p. 62), dashing the hopes and aspirations that the latter repose so much on him as a male child. When Aunty Ifeoma reminds Papa Nnukwu that she is there as a daughter for him, he replies, 'But you are a woman. You do not count' (p. 83). As this suggests, having a son is considered more respectful in the Igbo culture than having a daughter.

The reversal takes place through what Florence Stratton espouses as 'inversion', a strategy that feminists adopt in fiction to reverse gender roles that patriarchal cultures reserve for males, and make the females do them (Stratton, 1994, pp. 175-176). It is Aunty Ifeoma that eventually takes over the funeral rites of Papa Nnukwu after his death. Papa Eugene maintains the status of providing the expenses for the funeral but he misses the significant part of performing the rituals.

The wish is always for a male child. Female children are not even in the line of inheritance of their father's or husband's properties according to the Igbo cultural provisions. The women of the *Umunna*, the extended family at Abba, suggest this when they coo over Jaja as the next in line of Papa's wealth, and one of them says, '*Nekene*, see the boy that will inherit his father's riches!' (p. 91). The women of the *Umunna* also gossip and suggest Papa Eugene should 'take a second wife' and have 'more sons with another woman' (p. 20). Some of the women advise Mama to consult a native doctor because some

women might have tied her womb with a Juju and must have stopped her from having more sons (p. 20).

The 'dethroning' of this glorified position of the male child is however revealed when Papa Nnukwu eventually says, "Where would I be today if my *chi* had not given me a daughter?" (p. 83). As Janet Ndula observes, Adichie supports individual female characters' effort of creating agency in *Purple Hibiscus* rather than acting out gender roles, which shows that being female does not mean being subordinate (Ndula, 2017). Ndula based her argument on Aunty Ifeoma's character as an individual rather than the cultural provisions for all females in Igbo society by making such a statement. But, Ndula may be right because empowering Aunty Ifeoma is one of Adichie's authorial intents of supporting female cultural emancipation from patriarchal gender roles, albeit without taking a radical approach of calling for the eradication of gender roles other female characters have observed.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is not something new in Igbo literary spaces. The earlier Igbo writers have all depicted such Igbo male aggression and violence on their wives for no just cause in their novels. Nevertheless, none shows a reversal in which the female fights back. In Achebe's *Things Fall apart,* Okonkwo's reason for beating his wife is her failure to provide his meal on time (Achebe, 1958, pp. 29-30). In Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966) also, Ekwueme assaults Ahurole for just daring to ask him why he is not eating the food she has cooked for him. He sees nothing in assaulting her because 'many men beat their wives' (Amadi, 1966, p. 140)**.** In *Purple Hibiscus,* Adichie succeeds in creating another Igbo male aggressor in the character of Papa Eugene to suggest that beating wives in Igbo culture is a commonplace and significant form of female oppression. Where Adichie differs from Achebe and Amadi is that she mocks or carnivalises the whole patriarchal violence and makes the female victim subverts the patriarchal oppressive authority through the Menippean Satire. As Bakhtin explains, the Menippean satire has a feature of inclusion of 'eccentric behaviour' (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 117). The characters of both Papa Eugene and Mama Beatrice, who kills him, demonstrate these eccentric features. First, Mama Beatrice "crowned" the authority of Papa Eugene and takes all his brutality in silence and accepts the cultural provisions that allow them to do so in tears but then suddenly

"decrowned" that position by cutting off the patriarch string through death. The removal of Papa Eugene from the oppressive position he occupies is an act of total deposing of the patriarchal symbol.

Mama Beatrice ends all these domestic violence and brutalities by poisoning Papa Eugene's tea through the kitchen space. Here also, Adichie has not created a new gender relation within the Igbo female fictional spaces. The act of poisoning husbands is acknowledged in Igbo culture by writers and critics. Ifi Amadiume, for instance, recounts the life of the *obi* of Eze Okigbo who 'only eats food cooked by his favourite wife or daughter' but not by any of his other twelve wives for fear of poisoning (Amadiume, 2015, p. 45). George Thomas Basden had also shared this view when he stated that not eating from anybody or all wives 'is a common practice' among the Igbo men for fear of being poisoned (Basden, 2014/1966, p. 157).

Although the action of Mama Beatrice is not something new that Adichie invents, it is the kitchen space she adopts to negotiate Mama's oppression that becomes a carnival space in the novel. The confinement of women to the kitchen may be considered a cultural exclusion and gender inequality which Adichie's voice did not explicitly oppose. Making the Igbo wives and daughters do all domestic chores such as cooking may be a culturally oppressive act of pushing them to a marginal position. Although an Igbo male is culturally dependent on the female for his meals and subsistence, often, the efforts of the female in the kitchen go unacknowledged and unappreciated for just not preparing the food on time. This has also been demonstrated by the actions of Okonkwo's wives in *Things Fall Apart* and Ahurole in *The Concubine* as we noticed above. The exclusionary practice of confining women to the kitchen is, however, inverted by giving Mama her freedom there. Adichie's voice reveals Nnaemeka's nego-feminist perspective of accepting the status of the women in the kitchen. Much more than accepting the status quo, cooking becomes empowerment in *Purple Hibiscus* because the female controls the existence and sustenance of the male for survival in that domestic space. Taking charge of the kitchen becomes the most powerful weapon that Mama Beatrice uses to subdue the patriarchal authority. It is this power that gives her the chance to poison Papa Eugene's tea and end his patriarchal oppression. It is symbolic of tearing down patriarchal authority and its destructive disposition on the female for good. Ini Uko rightly sees this as a way of showing a victory for the African woman that has been suppressed

under the yoke of patriarchy for good. She argues that killing Papa Eugene is a feminist victory for reconstructing motherhood and becoming the future African woman that is envisaged (Uko, 2017). However, this may not be the case seen through the carnivalesque lens. The action of Mama is not Adichie's intention of calling for the removal of the menfolk totally from the public sphere, but rather admonishing for dislodging the oppressive patriarchal structures that Papa Eugene represents through reversal. Although Mama eliminates Papa Eugene as a male, she still looks forward to the release of Jaja from jail as it is only the male that can rightly be the head of the house. Ending *Purple Hibiscus* with the hope of Jaja's release is a hope for the continuity of accepted patriarchy, which is similar to the role and expectation Adichie placed on Ugwu on holding the power to tell the nation's story in her subsequent novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006).

Marriage

Just as Adichie describes marriage in Igbo culture as 'ownership' (Adichie, 2012, np), Mama Beatrice was literarily owned by Papa Eugene before her final assault on him. She has always taken a marginal position in the family as requested of a dutiful and virtuous wife by tradition and by the Catholic faith and finds it very difficult to oppose his decision even to the detriment of her health. The Igbo tradition requires that after the death of a husband, the wife must observe the *mgbalu,* the mourning rites (Basden, 1938). Mama in *Purple Hibiscus* is required by this tradition to wear 'all black or all white" (p. 298) but in another form of carnivalesque reversal, she upends this cultural code by further opposing and resisting to comply with the cultural rites she has to observe as a widow during the mourning of Papa Eugene's death. In traditional Igbo culture, the wife of a deceased is usually requested to either spend the night at a crossroads, shave her hair, sleep with the corpse of her deceased husband all night or drink the water that the corpse is washed to prove her innocence about his death (Basden, 2014). So, after the death of Papa Eugene, not only does Mama Beatrice refuse to do all that culture required, Kambili says she ensures that 'the compound gates were locked [and she tells] Adamu not to open the gates to all the people who wanted to throng in for *mgbalu*, to commiserate with us' (p. 287). When Adamu says it was unheard of to turn sympathisers away, Mama tells him that they wish 'to mourn privately' (p. 288). This refusal and shutting off everyone and

everything is a deviation from the traditional norm of mourning and is an act of challenging patriarchal authority and tradition. It becomes the reversal of values in the domestic space which Adichie presents as a process of cultural renewal.

Religion as a Carnival Space

Christianity and traditional religion are the carnival features that Adichie interrogates to negotiate the position of the female under patriarchal authority through religion. Adichie deposes the Eurocentric patriarchal Christian Catholicism through profanation from Papa Nnukwu's traditional religious perspective.

As Peter Paul Ferry revealed, religious space could be added to other patriarchal hegemonic structures that oppress the Igbo woman as revealed in *Purple Hibiscus* (Ferry, 2016). Whatever brutality and pain he inflicts on his nuclear and extended family, Papa Eugene thinks within the Catholic Christian values that he feels they break. During Kambili's process of growth, Adichie places dialogical interactions of voices to differentiate between a male figure and a father figure through religion. Kambili shows different perspectives on what makes a male figure to become a father figure after suffering from her father's brutality. First, when she is hospitalised after her father 'kicked' her repeatedly until she gets a broken rib, internal bleeding and she 'slipped away into quiet' (p. 211) for just bringing the painting of Papa Nnukwu (p. 210), his father and her grandfather, into their home, she begins the process of resisting his authority by piecing together the painting of papa Nnukwu, which he shreds. Ogaga Okuyade says by piecing the portrait of Papa-Nnukwu torn by Papa Eugene, Kambili has 'traversed her limitations' (Okuyade, 2013) and is no longer a victim but an actor that has broken out of her silence. I see this as a process of carnivalising the power and authority of papa Eugene and the Christian values he stands for. Putting together the painting is like calling on the power and support of her ancestors through the image of Papa Nnukwu. In addition, after Papa Eugene pours hot water on Kambili's feet for staying with Papa-Nnukwu, which he refers to as 'walking into sin' because the former is a 'heathen' (p. 194), Kambili understands who is her father, and the reader relates his behaviour to childhood experiences he had. As Edgar Nabutanyi argues, the abuse of Kambili by pouring hot water on her feet is a 'ritualised abuse' (Nabutanyi, 2017) that Eugene re-enacts from the same abuse he

suffers in adolescence. The strict Priest that Eugene lived with tells him that physical pain could absolve "sin" such as masturbation, which he caught Eugene doing (pp. 196-197). The re-enactment of the same ritual for Kambili's 'own good' shows Papa Eugene's 'unquestioning obedience and repetitive performance' underscores the characteristics of the religious ritual he was brought up in (Nabutanyi, 2013). Kambili holds such a positive impression of her father until she begins to reverse the dynamics of this father figure when she meets Ade Coker and Father Amadi.

She first identifies those qualities she so yearned to have in Ade Cocker, the editor of *Standard*, her father's paper. She discovers her father lacks the spirit of 'laughter', which Ade Cocker possesses (p. 58). Laughter, according to Bakhtin, 'demolishes fear and piety before an object' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 23). His laughter makes Kambili respect rather than fear him. She admires Ade Cocker not only because he is the champion of freedom, as the editor of a newspaper that gets the attention of international organisations such as *amnesty* for defending the truth, but most importantly because he possesses the spirit of laughter.

In Father Amadi also, it is laughter that Kambili identifies to qualify him to be a true man of God, which she could not get from her father or Father Benedict. She develops not only a father-daughter attraction to Father Amadi but starts to have a "crush" on him. She discovers her sexuality and gets fulfilment for the first time as a female through the laughter she shares with Father Amadi (p. 180). It is not only joy that Kambili describes as her experience with Father Amadi but also the ecstasy and libidinous feeling of a teenager. The laughter and the feeling of elation are symbolic of Kambili's release of suppressed sexual and emotional feelings. It is the same fulfilment she fails to get under her father's strict watch and religious morals that he imposed on her.

Eugene shows no remorse over the death of his father just because he has no Christian faith. Sophia Ogwude concludes that like Achebe and Ngugi, Adichie also tries to show that colonial religion and culture are not valid values for Africans as they become zealous in imbibing them (Ogwude, 2014). A dialogic interaction between the two faiths is first revealed through the ambivalent Christian religious belief. While Papa Eugene always mentions Mary Mother of God in his prayers, he ironically persecutes the females around him. Likewise, while Mama Beatrice always has faith in God with her

T-shirt screaming 'God is Love', she eventually maintains the tenet of salvation in trinity by death and sacrifice, and "crucifies" Papa Eugene.

The reversal of patriarchal authority of Papa Eugene through religion begins when everything begins to fall apart as Jaja stops attending Mass and stops obeying and following strict Christian moral values and fanatical instructions. Papa Eugene punishing the family based on the tenets of Christianity brings to the fore the Biblical account in John 2:15 when Jesus whips the money changers due to the discovery of a great sin of usury they engage in and chases them out of his Father's house in order to cleanse the Synagogue. But when Papa Eugene beats his "erring" family members, he is negatively re-enacting this use of the cane. The rebellion against Papa Eugene and the Christian faith by members of his family, starting with Jaja, is a major form of carnivalisation of the religious and patriarchal authority in *Purple Hibiscus*.

A further carnivalisation of Papa Eugene's type of Catholic Christian faith through reversal is revealed in the conversations between Obiora, Jaja, and Kambili. Obiora asserts that 'morality, as well as the sense of taste, is relative' (p. 156). He opines that 'religion and oppression' (p. 173) are relational. As Jaja also observes, 'Look at what [God] did to his faithful servant Job, even to His own son. But have you ever wondered why? Why did He have to murder his own son, so we would be saved? Why didn't He just go ahead and save us?' (p. 289). The Christian doctrine of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ seen through the Catholic faith that Papa Eugene guards, therefore, assumes an anti-patriarchal stance as Jaja observes. Coincidently, it foregrounds Mama Beatrice's killing of Eugene for the freedom of the family and the death of such Christian-patriarchy. The appearance of the apparition of the Virgin Mary at Aokpe eventually becomes a metonymic resurrection of the Mother figure. The beatification of the death of the Male Lord as salvation is, therefore, replaced by the glorification of Mary the Mother of God as a female.

Another important carnivalisation of patriarchal authority through religion is putting the traditional and Christian faiths in dialogical interaction. Papa Eugene places the Christian Catholic doctrine above the traditional Igbo religion on issues considered to be the exclusion of Igbo women. This is deposed by placing the traditional religious values above those of the Christian faith which he crowns. This is an essential feature of the Menippean satire that

Bakhtin identifies as 'full of sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations … abrupt transitions and shifts, ups and downs, rises and falls, unexpected comings together of distant and disunited things, mésalliances of all sorts' (1984, p. 118). Sexuality is one such issue put into dialogical interaction between these two religions. It is the assumed morality and values in the Christian Catholic faith that Papa Eugene applies to discourage Ifeoma and Kambili from putting on lipstick and wearing trousers. Aunty Ifeoma, however, opposes Papa on many occasions about these values, which she believes are not Christian. She challenges his patriarchal excesses and extremism and asks him to 'stop doing God's job" for "God is big enough to do his own job" (p. 95)

An element of Menippean satire that Bakhtin identifies in the carnivalisation of literature is its representation of the moral-psychological state of man, a 'representation of the unusual, abnormal moral and psychic states of man - insanity of all sorts (the theme of the maniac), split personality, unrestrained daydreaming, unusual dreams, passions bordering on madness, suicides, and so forth' (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 116). Papa Nnukwu solely blames the Christian religion and its doctrine for Papa Eugene's degeneration into a state of psychological madness and rebellion against his fatherhood. He contemplates the idea of the Trinity and concludes that the reason why he does not reap the benefit of "having a son" in Papa Eugene is because of the Christian doctrine that says the son and the father are one: 'The father and the son are equal? *Tufia!* Do you not see? That is why Eugene can disregard me because he thinks we are equal' (p. 84).–The carnivalisation is in the gay laughter caused by Papa Nnukwu's outburst and show of disgust, '*Tufia!*, which makes his interlocutors laugh: 'My cousins chuckled. So did Aunty Ifeoma' (p. 92). Adichie makes the serious situation of a son neglecting his father comical through this act from a religious perspective. The effect is dualistic in the sense that first Papa Nnukwu blames the Christian religion and the 'Whiteman' for what Eugene did to him and second, he brings to the fore the profanation of making the son and the father the same as a doctrine of Christianity that he ranks below the traditional religion he practices. Colonial and Christianity hegemony is, therefore, carnivalised by Papa Nnukwu's statement.

Father Benedict says about Papa Eugene, 'Look at Brother Eugene. He could have chosen to be like other Big Men in the country [...] But no, he

used the *Standard* to speak the truth' (p. 5). Ironically, while Father Benedict praises Papa for championing the cause of truth, the latter is guilty of stifling his own family, all in the name of the religious standard that Father Benedict stands for. Father Benedict's praise for Papa Eugene may support what Anthony Chennell claims is the kind of Christianity that Eugene practices - a Eurocentric Catholicism. Papa Eugene's upbringing by the White missionaries is a further testimony of his Eurocentric behaviour (Chennell, 2009). He is trapped in what Heather Hewett, calls 'a cycle of abuse emanating from colonialism and Christianity' (2005, p. 84). In Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964), Oduche the son of the Chief Priest also does the same thing. His father, the Ezeulu sends him to the missionaries to get their secret in order to destroy them. But, Oduche becomes so fanatically involved in the Christian faith that he attempts to kill the royal python which is the symbol of the traditional religion that his father heads. Papa Eugene does the same thing. He becomes more Christian than the Christians themselves and thus turns against his own culture, religion, and family. Brenda Cooper calls this 'a sycophantic Anglophile slavishly aping white ways and narrow church doctrine' (p. 128). Papa Eugene becomes Frantz Fanon's black man with the white face in a carnival comic façade. The death of this situation is what Adichie supports not the death of the Christian values, *per se.* These dialogical interactions and reversals are essential features of the carnivalesque that deposed the patriarchal hierarchy through religion in *Purple Hibiscus*.

The carnivalesque framework is, therefore, a narrative device Adichie adopts to challenge the excessive patriarchal oppression and exclusion of the Igbo woman through family and religion but with the spirit of 'nego-feminism', which Nnaemeka calls 'feminism of negotiation; no ego feminism' (2004, pp. 360-361) that accepts the rightful gender roles and position of the male in the culture. In that way, she acknowledges the specified roles of males and females in the culture without closure and sees gender roles and positions in the culture as relational.

Conclusion

Adichie has constructed instances of the nuanced cultural production of patriarchal authority through the family and religious spaces but at the same time provides instances where the authoritative tendencies in these carnival spaces are challenged, opposed, reversed, removed, changed, and sustained in

Purple Hibiscus. Despite dislodging the patriarchal position of the male figure, however, Adichie still identifies the male's rightful cultural place in these spaces. This confirms the Africana womanist ideal that supports the position that an African female, as a wife, a mother, or a daughter, is not at war with the male figure as a husband, a father, or a son or seeking power and influence over him but living in harmonious relationships. Examining patriarchy in the novel through the lens of carnivalesque as a dialogical process, therefore, revealed it's a valid perspective for feminist dialogics.

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