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## **MEMOIRE DE MASTER**

**A Psychological Study of Trauma and its  
Aftermaths in *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua  
Achebe and *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda  
Ngozi Adichie.**

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to

My lovely parents: my father Adama and my mother Aminata BA

My maternal grandparents: Samba Thierno BA and Fatimata Bohum BA.

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## INTRODUCTION

The human beings are born to live in society. They are vulnerable to society because they are surrounded by culture and customs which are societal forces. Indeed, despite the fact that individuals always need society to live in harmony, the latter can sometimes affect people's lives. Therefore, with its established norms, society can be harmful to the well-being of individuals. In *The Social Contract*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau depicts how society influences the human being. For Rousseau, society is a human sphere in which people live and are governed by its norms, rules or institutions.

In the introduction, Rousseau asserts "Humans are good by nature, it is society that corrupts them" (1947, 1). In these words, Rousseau tries to show that at all levels, man is always dominated by his society. It restricts human physical power such a way he becomes completely transformed. That transformation can sometimes be negative. However, as society prescribes norms, the individual is in any case due to logically respect them. Therefore, to abide by those norms can sometimes affect the individual psychologically as well as physically. Societal forces most of the time hinder the individual's freedom because they imprison him. In this, Rousseau argues respectively in *The Social Contract* that "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains" (1947, 1). Indeed, the individual appears sometimes to be in conflicts with his environment as he cannot at any time act in his own will. However, with his/her daily problems, the individual feels sometimes traumatized, depressed, and anxious.

Literature, one of the main human interests, is a mode of expression and representation of human life experiences. It is used by writers to express causes that haunt their minds. Considering that fact, Relita Moputi and Dahila Husain write: "Literature is the imaginative work that pictures human life in society

which can be enjoyed, understandable, and used by the society also” (2018, 1). In the same wavelength, Simon Gikandi asserts that

Literature is one of the independent parts of the surrounding ideological reality, occupying a special place in it in the form of definite, organized philosophical words which have their own specific structures? The literary structure, like every ideological structure refracts the generating socioeconomic-reality and does so in its own way. But at the same time in its ‘content’-literature reflects and refracts the reflections and refractions of other ideological spheres (ethics, epistemology, political doctrines, religion etc.) that is in its ‘content’. Literature reflects the whole of the ideological horizon of which it is itself a part (1991, 23).

Following these words by Gikandi, one can note that literature and life are intrinsically connected. Thus, it should be derived from human experiences and social realities where lies its essence.

Literature is also a representation of psychological trauma of society. Carthy Caruth in order to emphasize that relationship between social trauma and literature, states:

If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is, indeed at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet (1996, 3).

Caruth notes that literature and psychology are intrinsically connected. They show that literature is a field that is interested in traumatic experiences people suffer in society.

In this work we intend to study *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus* from psychoanalytical perspective. Indeed, the aim of this paper is to study



psychological trauma in *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus*. We will show how trauma and its causes are present in the two novels.

Moreover, many people associate trauma with horrible events like natural disasters, accident, airplane crash or wars, so we aim at showing that trauma that trauma can be also the result of extreme emotional abuse, banishment from society, rape, battering, incest, torture, humiliation, religious sin.

Through this work, we will show out how trauma affect people through the behaviours of the characters in *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus*. We will also decipher how the characters in the novel manage to survive from post-traumatic stress disorder.

The term ‘trauma’ originates from the Greek “trauma”, or “wound,” originally referring to an injury inflicted on a body” (Caruth, 1996, 3). The term can be interpreted in the context of both physical and mental wounding. The purpose of this study is to discuss on the psychological trauma and not on the physical one. According to the *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary*, trauma is defined as “a mental condition caused by sever shock, stress or fear, especially when the harmful effects last for a long time”<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, the *Dictionary of Psychology* defines trauma as “a significant upsetting experience or event that may participate or aggravate a social disorder”<sup>2</sup>. On the same wavelength, Raymond J. Corsini defines trauma as

the result of a painful event, physical or mental, causing immediate damage to the body or shock to the mind. Psychological traumas include emotional shocks that have an enduring effect on the personality, such as rejection, divorce, combat experiences, civilian catastrophes, and racial or religious discrimination (2002, 1019).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/trauma?q=Trauma>

<sup>2</sup> <https://psychologydictionary.org>

In fact, Corsirin has aptly insisted on psychological trauma by highlighting its main factors which are the scope of our work. In the same way, Peter Levine (1997) argues that the factor that determines whether an event could be classified as traumatic to the person is whether its impact remains unresolved. In this way, trauma can be seen as the result of an everlasting event that haunts a person's psyche. According to Judith Herman, the study of psychological trauma has its roots in the later part of the nineteenth century with the work of the French neurologist Jean Martin Charcot. Charcot was the first person to attempt to define a disease known as "hysteria". Before Charcot's researches, Herman considers hysteria as a disease with incoherent and incomprehensible symptoms (1992, 10). Furthermore, Sefa Bulut quotes Sigmund Freud who describes trauma as

any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the perspective shield there is no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus which have broken in and binding of them (2019, 1).

In addition, Caruth, paraphrasing Freud's definition of trauma, writes: "In its later usage, particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature, and most centrally in Freud's text, the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (1996, 3).

In this way, Herman points that psychological trauma becomes an affliction that renders a victim powerless and helpless because of the experienced event domination (1992, 33). The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), an American mental health organisation, writes:

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being (2014, 7).

This position of the SAMHSA is valuable for it clearly shows the different aspects that surround trauma by detailing the different levels of a person that trauma may affect.

In the light of these definitions, we can affirm that trauma can be any experienced event that impacts an individual's life by affecting his body, emotions, or psyche. Indeed, experiencing traumatic event may change the way an individual feels, acts, things, reacts and experiences life on a daily basis. However, the best way to understand trauma effects is how an individual can experience with traumatic events and not about how he was traumatized. The SAMHSA in its study on trauma concludes:

A particular event may be experienced as traumatic for one individual and not for another (e.g., a child removed from an abusive home experience this differently than their sibling; one refugee may experience fleeing one's country differently from another refugee; one military veteran may experience deployment to a war zone as traumatic while another veteran is not similarly affected) (8).

These lines by the SAMHSA point out that trauma is a relative experience. People may not have the same way of experiencing or remembering an event. They may also have different ways of feeling or handling their emotions.

After trying to define the notion of trauma, we will study how people are psychologically affected after experiencing traumatic situations. As for the work under study, we have found it more relevant to focus on *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie to study psychological trauma and its effects.

In this work we have decided to study psychological trauma in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie for two main reasons. The first reason is the representation of trauma and its

manifestations in literary novels and the second reason is the importance of the two selected novels.

In *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus*, Achebe and Adichie similarly deal with the same subject matters and they belong to a same country, to the same society, as well as to a same ethnic group. Both *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus* mirror the Nigerian society in three periods of its history: the precolonial period, the colonial one and the postcolonial one. The novels are also written in the same language which is English. *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus* have thematically many similarities in such a way that Achebe is seen as Adichie's reference.

However, despite their similarities, *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus* are set in different periods of the Nigerian history. *Things Fall Apart* is set in precolonial and colonial periods whereas *Purple Hibiscus* is set in postcolonial Nigeria mainly after its independence. These works are highlighted because they are among the greatest works dealing with the Igbo society which is the main target of our study, they will be analyzed so as to psychologically study the Nigerian people's situations *vis-a-vis* their cultural traditions, their religion and contact with colonialism.

Chinua Achebe is a writer who has published poetry, short stories, essays, novels, children's books, and journals, etc. In fact, novel remains the major tool Achebe uses to come to his ambitions as a writer. In *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, Achebe argues that novel is the fundamental medium through which he can achieve his goals in restoring the African history and culture. He writes:

I would be quite satisfied if my novels (specifically the one I set in the past) did no more than teach my reader 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 (1975, 4).

*Things Fall Apart* is about a man named Okonkwo. He is depicted as a brave and courageous hero. He was born in a rigid and demanding society. Okonkwo's society is a well organised society that settles various norms for its people. Men are expected to be courageous, hard workers and combatants, etc. A man is also expected to marry two or more wives, to have many children and win titles. Nevertheless, throughout the narrative, Okonkwo has met so many problems from his own society and later on from the arrival of the Europeans. Many of these problems are due to his father's failure and the norms of his society.

When analysing the attitude of Okonkwo around whom the whole story revolves, we come to understand that the theme of trauma is evidently exposed in the novel. Okonkwo has experienced many events through his whole life. He is at first eager to face the failure of his father so as to make himself a respected man among the Igbo men. He struggles to show features of a real man by embodying manliness and avoiding any kind of laziness and gentleness. Okonkwo becomes later obsessed by the white man who comes with the ambition to change the Igbo culture to the profit of his own culture. He becomes more and more anxious by that position of the colonisers because he does not want to lose his hierarchy in society. These experiences become the main causes of Okonkwo's mental problems that lead him to use different defence mechanisms to free himself.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a prolific Nigerian female writer. She is today known all around the world thanks to *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). Adichie is well read thanks the pertinence of her themes. In fact, Khadidiatou Diallo writes:

The thematic and aesthetic weight of her literary works testifies of her genius as an author and her commitment as a social and political activist. Adichie's works are now a considerable part of African literati: they explore crucial issues as politico-religious violence, the social condition of women, the

questions of immigration and racism, and other postmodern contradictions that she and the young Africans have to face (2017, 80).

In her writing style in *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie is seen as a writer inspired by the American female writer Alice Walker. Therefore, comparing *Purple Hibiscus* by Adichie to Alice Walker's *Color Purple*, Khadidiatou Diallo writes: "The colour purple of the flower, is reminiscent of the seminal work of American womanist writer, Alice Walker, *Color Purple*, who greatly influenced the Nigerian writer" (2017, 29). The novel exposes many themes such as change, religion, domestic violence, etc.

*Purple Hibiscus* is a bildungsroman about a teenage-girl named Kambili Achike, the central character of the novel. However, to better deal with our study, we will put the stress on the character of Beatrice affectionately called Mama by her two children Kambili and Jaja even though Kambili is selected by Adichie as main protagonist. Mama is presented in the story as mother and wife in the Achike family. She is a passive, submissive, and caring mother. In the book, the reader can notice that Mama is the representation of typical African woman in general, and Nigerian wife particularly. The Achike family household is patriarchal. Therefore, in the light of the aforementioned themes, the setting, and the patriarchal Nigerian society portrayed by Adichie, the novel *Purple Hibiscus* cannot be contemporary studied without mentioning the theme of trauma.

Moreover, *Purple Hibiscus* explores the lives of Nigerian women dominated by patriarchal society, by Christianity and the government. Like Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, Beatrice, is absolutely affected by her environment. With the Igbo traditional tribal values and customs, Beatrice is obliged to accept the notions of "woman", "submissive wife" and "mother". In addition, one of the Igbo traditional values explained in the novel is the necessity for a woman to be productive, when she is married to a well-off man like Eugene. Moreover, despite the fact of highlighting Mama's complex life, the paper will

highlight the other characters such as Auntie Ifeoma and Kambili to better study the traumatic life of the Nigerian women as a whole. In fact, similarly to Beatrice, Auntie Ifeoma, a widow, begets some Nigerian traditions over women that can have traumatic effects on them.

In the light of the above-mentioned background of the study, we have found in the selected novels two questions which are worth studying:

1. What are the different causes of the trauma of the protagonists in our novels under review?
2. What are the manifestations of post-traumatic stress disorders in *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus*?

Basing on the questions of the study, we will put stress on two objectives which aim at answering the questions. The first objective of this study is to examine the factors leading to psychological trauma of the main characters in our novels under study. Then the second objective aims at examining the different effects of trauma on the protagonists in the referenced novels and the ways these protagonists take to survive from their traumatic experiences.

To analyse trauma in these two novels we will divide our work into four chapters.

The first chapter entitled “Literary Review and Theoretical Framework” is about the different works and theories we have used to back our analysis up. In this part, we will show all articles, essays, journals and books we have added to our two selected novels to better handle our paper. This part presents also some literary theories such psychoanalytical theory, postcolonial theory, and the feminist approach to better understand the protagonists’ behaviours.

In the second point entitled “The Historical Background of the Igbo Society” we will expose the Igbo culture, tradition, and customs. The part deals also with the

Igbo contact with colonialism. As society is significant this part aims at showing the context in which the books were set. Moreover, in this part we intend to detail the way social and religious rules and norms are the causes of trauma.

In the third part entitled “Trauma in *Things Fall Apart*,” we will show how Okonkwo is affected by his surroundings and by his own pride. We will also analyse Okonkwo's conflicts with the white man when the latter tries to overthrow the Igbo culture. Additionally, we will deal in this part with the aftermaths of traumatic troubles the characters experience in the whole stories of the novels as well as the defence mechanisms the affected characters resort to free themselves. In other words, this part is about the psychological conflicts of Okonkwo throughout the narrative.

Then, the fourth chapter titled “Trauma in *Purple Hibiscus*” deals the traumatic life a woman and her children experienced in their household. It shows how women and children are imprisoned by social norms and religious principles. This part exposes the life of Beatrice, Mama, and her children under the patriarchal traits of Papa who is the leader of the household. Moreover, we will deal with the aftereffects of trauma and the different types of defence mechanisms applied by the characters to survive from anxiety.



# CHAPTER I. LITERARY REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## I.1. Literary Review

This part examines the works of some writers dealing with my theme and books of focus.

In “Culture in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*”, Diana Akers Rhoads states:

what is remarkable in his [Achebe] Igbo is the degree to which they have enriched the foundations of what most people seek today-democratic institutions, tolerance of other cultures, a balance of male and female principles, capacity to change for the better or to meet new circumstances, a means of distributing wealth, a viable system of morality, support for industriousness, an effective system of justice, striking and memorable poetry and art (1993, 62).

Through these words, Rhoads details how Achebe tries to expose to the world the organization of the Igbo society. For Rhoads, Achebe retraces the cultural roots of the Igbo society, its belief and principles.

Moreover, in “A Cultural Note on Okonkwo's Suicide”, Kalu Ogbaa write:

Throughout the novel Achebe explains that personal achievements and piety are the basic qualifications that anyone who calls himself a man in Umuofia must possess. Piety as it is used in Umuofia does not just mean "reverence for God or devout fulfilment of religious obligations"; its meaning includes "dutiful respect or regard for parents, homeland, and elders who represent the deceased ancestors (1981, 126).

He considers Okonkwo's suicide as a solution to his problems by depict the real origins of Okonkwo's suicide. For him, the main origin of Okonkwo's difficult ending is due to his cultural principles.

In “Women in Achebe's Novel *Things Fall Apart*”, Mundi Rahayu depicts the influence of the Igbo social obligations on its people. She argues that in the Igbo society,

When a man is not powerful enough, not respected, he is not considered as a man. This happens to Unoka, Okonkwo's father. The coco-yam with smaller size and consequently has lesser value than other yams, is regarded as female (2016, 45).

In these words, Rahayu details how women are treated by men according to the social norms. Through Okonkwo, Rahayu shows the way men are dictated by society. So, Okonkwo is psychologically affected by the social norms and expectations that always push him to act violently even with his own family.

In his article “Fifty Years on: Problematizing the Heroic Ideal in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*”, Christopher Anyokwu details the values of a man in the Igbo environment. He examines the positions of Okonkwo, his father Unoka and his son Nwoye in the society. Putting the stress on Okonkwo, he describes him as hero according to the Igbo norms. Anyokwu shows that Okonkwo is mentally affected by the fear of failure and weakness. He details how Okonkwo is eager to challenge any behaviour his father had. In fact, Christopher Anyokwu advances: “As part of his desire to erase the embarrassing memories of his father, Okonkwo abhors any open display of affection, gentleness and warmth” (2009, 40).

In “*Things Fall Apart Across Cultures: The universal Significance of Chinua Achebe's 1958 Reconstruction of the African Heritage*”, Francis Ibe Mogu sees *Things Fall Apart* as a novel with the purpose to counter the negative description of Africa and the Africans by European colonisers. He sees Achebe's first novel as the typical representation of the African people through their culture, history and traditions. He asserts that the purpose of his essay is to “celebrate *Things Fall Apart* as a beacon of the light at the end of the tunnel of colonialism” (2009, 182). Therefore, this article is revisited because it is important to the analysis of our

work. In fact, it will help us grasp numerous elements that show Achebe's purpose in *Things Fall Apart*.

In her article “Reading as a Woman: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Feminist Criticism,” Linda Strong-Leek examines the situation of women in the Igbo patriarchal society. She invites Achebe's readers to pay attention to the depiction of women instead of following blindly the male character around whom everything is articulated. In this work, Strong-Leek analyses the plight of women in the Igbo society. In fact, this article of Strong-Leek is relevant to our study when it incites us to pay a close attention to the representation of female gender in the narrative. As a matter of fact, we come to understand that the destiny of the Igbo women is worth revisiting to revisit so as to better know about gender balance in society.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie explains how Nigerians think and feel, and the Nigerians’ devotion to Catholicism as well as their traditions and customs. She exposes the impacts of colonialism in the Nigerian society and deals also with gender and political significance in Nigeria. James Copnall, in ““Steak Knife.” Review of *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie”, sees Adichie as the most prominent “in a process of critical acclaimed young Anglophone authors [who] is succeeding in attracting a new generation of readers to African literature” (2017, 118). Through these words by Copnall, Adichie can be seen as a prominent Nigerian female writer.

In “Resurgent Spirits, Catholic Echoes of Igbo and Petals of Purple: The Syncretized World of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*”, Brenda Cooper argues that in *Purple Hibiscus* Adichie

strives for a holistic vision in her novel *Purple Hibiscus*, one that integrates Igbo customs and language with Catholic rituals and which incorporates men into her gender politics and embraces the literary traditions of her elders - Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’O and Alice Walker (2013, 1).

The article shows how Adichie exposes to the world the Igbo society's relationship with Catholicism. The article details also the eagerness of Adichie to write about her society basing on her elders' productions and methods.

Furthermore, J. Reger Kurtz, in "The Intertextual Imagination in *Purple Hibiscus*", shows that Adichie's novel is

[...]an excellent representative text for [the] "third generation" of Nigerian literature—but even more one that is well aware of its historical antecedents and thus characterized to remarkable degree by an intergenerational textuality. The novel is not worthy both for the way that connects backwards in time to the literary generations that precede it and for the way that those very connections open up fresh perspectives and reveal a rich and complex panoply of intertextual possibilities that were not available in earlier generations, thus manifesting a new stage in the ongoing elaboration of Africa's literary generations (2012, 25-26).

In this article, Kurtz regards the style of Adichie as the embodiment of that of "the great Igbo novelist, Chinua Achebe". The article is relevant to our study in the sense that it details Adichie's link to her elder writer Chinua Achebe. The article helps also grasp the way Adichie represents the Igbo society in *Purple Hibiscus*.

Onukaogu and Onyerionwu, in their "Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The Aesthetic of Commitment and Narrative", focus on Adichie's feminist perspective, observing that Adichie's proclamation of herself as "A happy Feminist" is

very strategic in the criticism of her work, on which her feminist temperament reflects in its fullness [for,] Adichie's purpose reveals that she is a synthesis of virtually eve feminist tenet; even though the element of subtlety is strong in her narrative"<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Nutsukpo Margaret Fafa. "Domestic Violence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*". International Journal of Arts and Humanities (IJAH) Ethiopia Vol. 6(3), S/No 22, (July, 2017), p. 119.

This observation is valid for *Purple Hibiscus* is an interesting blend of feminist perspective. This article is so useful in our work in the sense that it exposes the way Adichie presents herself as feminist. Indeed, in *Purple Hibiscus*, Beatrice and Auntie Ifeoma, through their struggles embody the characters of womanism and feminism.

In the same wavelength, in “A Reformist Feminist Approach to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*”, Gloria Ada Fwangyil deals with the trauma that widowed women are affected by. She shows that in Nigeria, a woman who loses her spouse is actually at the weakest moment of her life. Widows are treated with harshness and cruelty in some parts they are forced to drink the water used in bathing the corpse. However, Gloria states “the belongings of the family are confiscated by members of the dead husband's extended family and the bereaved family is dispossessed of their inheritance” (2011, 266). This work by Gloria is useful to our analysis as it shows that Adichie aptly portrays the plight of such women through Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus*.

In “An Igbo Patriarch: Review of *Purple Hibiscus* Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie”, Ranti Williams praises the novel *Purple Hibiscus* for painting a realistic picture of the contemporary Nigerian middle class laden with potential, and a society of fiercely patriotic citizens fully aware of their nation's flaws. She goes further to sum up that

Adichie builds a complex picture of a man struggling with his demons, taking out his straggles on those he loves: his wife, Beatrice, his son, Jaja, and Kambili herself. It should be hard to sympathize with a man who beats his pregnant wife and who, after deploring the soldiers’ torture of his editor with lighted cigarettes, pours boiling water over the bare feet of his adored daughter as a punishment for coming second in class. (2004, 1)

This article by Ranti Williams is useful to our text in the sense that it deals with domestic violence in *Purple Hibiscus*. It shows that domestic violence is one of

the dominant themes of the novel that deserves much attention. This article of Williams shows also that the text is contextually set in postcolonial Nigeria.

Nutsukpo Margaret Fafa, in “Domestic Violence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*” deals with domestic violence in *Purple Hibiscus* and how Adichie writes to fight against that. Fafa deals also with the domination of women by men in African societies. This journal of Margaret reveals important to our analysis in the extent that it directly deals with domestic violence in *Purple Hibiscus*. However, this journal needs to be ameliorated as it puts highly stress on the character of Kambeli who is neither a mother nor wife. It does not also highlight the different strategies women resorts to get rid of their problems. However, in our study we will put the stress on Mama's character who is a “mother”, a “wife”, and a “woman”. We will also analyse the psychological effects of domestic violence but also the different methods the traumatized characters in the novel resort to be free.

In her article entitled “Dethroning the Infallible Father: Religion, Patriarchy and Politics in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*”, Stobie thinks that the best way for Mama to get rid of her husband's problems is to use violence. She states that “Excluded from access to forms of power that will protect herself and her children, Beatrice resorts to violence herself” (2010, 424). This journal of Stobie is relevant to our work because it deals with the consequences of religion over people. This work analyses also the aftereffects of trauma over women main the characters in *Purple Hibiscus* by showing that traumatized people most of the time resort to violence to free themselves which is the case of Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus*.

In “Son Reference - A violation of Women's Human Rights: A Case Study of Igbo Custom in Nigeria,” Ine Nnadi studies the prevalence of male children over female ones. She exposes in her article that sons are more privileged

than daughters. As a matter of fact, this results in a pressure on married women. Those women are victims of social norms and expectations which exalt preference for boys over girls as well as women who reproduce male children over those who give birth to female children. In fact, this work of Nnadi is helpful to our study as it helps us better know about the situation Igbo women are living through when they are married. However, this article needs to be completed because it does not expose the reactions of these women victim of that alarming situation.

## **I.2. Theoretical Framework**

This part of our study deals with the different approaches that are relevant to the understanding of trauma and the main protagonists' actions throughout the respective narratives. Therefore, psychoanalytical theory will be applied to shape our study. Moreover, the postcolonial theory as well as the feminist approach we will consult to analyse the works historical background and context; to see the role of gender in the two novels' social background.

### **I.2.1. Trauma and Psychoanalytical Approaches**

To analyse social and religious problems and the impacts of their traumas on Okonkwo and Beatrice's, we resort to trauma studies such as psychoanalytical and literary studies as theoretical background. The psychoanalytical approach, theorised by Sigmund Freud, is a critical study that has as concern the study of mind. It is a theory that views works through the lens of psychology by looking either at the psychological motivations of the characters or of the authors themselves. Therefore, this theory will be applied to study the trauma of the characters in the two novels.

What is complex in traumatic experience is that it may change the way an individual apprehends or interprets things. It may directly affect one's security,

emotions, and moods. A traumatized individual is always living in higher alerts. He will be in hyper-awareness which means the individual becomes more than ever sensitive to his family, parents, or surroundings. Nonetheless, this complexity in well understanding trauma has raised an interest of scholars in such a way to theorise it. Even though the origins of trauma can be traced back to medicine, it becomes a relevant task for great scholars from the late 19th century. Among those scholars are Sigmund Freud, Josef Brewer and Janet who have a lot participated in theorising the notion of trauma.

Before becoming the focus of literature, political and cultural studies, the study of trauma was firstly a task of medicine and psychology. In the late 19th and early 20th century, psychologists as Sigmund Freud, Pierre Janet and Joseph Brewer oriented all their interests toward that field. As they witnessed the striking horrors of the wars and other human conflicts, they decided to make efforts to analyse the multiple problems and hysteria of the war survivors. Paraphrasing Herman, Khadidiatou Diallo writes that after meeting the survivors and analysing their hysteria they came to conclude that

Hysteria was caused by psychological trauma. They agreed that unbearable reactions to traumatic experiences produced an altered state of consciousness that Janet called "dissociation" or "double think", according to George Orwell, the consequence of which is, "... the protean, dramatic, and often bizarre symptoms of hysteria which Freud recognised a century ago as disguised communications and sexual abuse in childhood (2020, 28).

According to Barry Peter, psychoanalytical criticism "is a form of literary criticism which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature"<sup>4</sup>. The theory of psychoanalysis is obviously related to

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<sup>4</sup> Barry Peter quoted by Justin Cowlin. "Why do Things Fall Apart? A Psychological Analysis of Okonkwo's Personality and his Ultimate Demise in Chinua Achebe's Novel Things Fall Apart". Jan 2011, p.3.



Freudian studies on mind, sexuality and individual's instinct based upon the fact that human behaviour is driven by an unconscious process.

Moreover, Freud's studies have shown that it is difficult to forget a traumatic event. A victim of traumatic experience cannot easily get rid of that event by only trying to avoid or deny his/her terrible past. That is what Caruth tried to show when dealing with Freudian works. She said:

the ability to recover the past is thus closely and paradoxically tied up, in trauma, with the inability to have access to it. (...) This strange connection-between the elision of memory and the precision of recall - was already central to Freud's work<sup>5</sup>.

Indeed, Caruth concluded that the trauma may result in different negative behaviours of the individual. So, she said that the trauma then becomes “an overwhelming experience of the sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the events occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (1996, 11).

In *The Studies on Hysteria*, Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer argue:

We may reverse the dictum “cessante causa cessat effectus” (when the cause ceases the effect ceases) and conclude from these observations that the determining process (that is, the recollection of it) continues to operate for years — not indirectly, through a chain of intermediate causal links, but as a directly releasing cause — just as psychical pain that is remembered in waking consciousness still provokes a lachrymal secretion long after the event. Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences” (1955, 7). COMMENT

In these words, Freud and Josef Breuer show that it is only after a contemporary event that calls forth the previous repressed event that the past one can become

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<sup>5</sup> Caruth quoted by Khadidiatou Diallo. “Unspeakable Things Spoken: The Narration of Incest in Yvonne Vera’s *Under the Tongue*” in *Langues et littératures*. (Saint-Louis : Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis, décembre 2020, boundary pages), p. 28

known in process of remembering. Moreover, Freud and Breuer point out that a patient who tries to remember his traumatic experience automatically meets pains. For them, it becomes harder for the patient to remember in details his/her traumatic events. In addition, Freud and Breuer cited the work of Janet based on dissociation by writing:

the splitting of consciousness which is so striking in the well-known classical cases under the form of 'double conscience' is present to a rudimentary degree in every hysteria, and that a tendency to such dissociation, and with it the emergence of abnormal states of consciousness... is the basic phenomenon of this neurosis (1955, 9).

In the words below, they point out that trauma is always in relation to the process of remembering.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud studies the causes of trauma on the psyche and how the pathological effects of a traumatic event wreak the psyche and leads to its dissociation. Through his life, the most important of Freud's ideas is that the psychology of human being has many aspects. In 1923, Freud theorised that the human psyche is structured into three parts: the id, the ego, and the superego. These parts, according to Freud, develop at different levels and stages in person's lives. However, he gives each of them a meaningful definition so as to show their different stages.

The *id*, according to the Freudian psychoanalytic theory, is defined as the primitive and instinctual part of the mind that contain sexual and aggressive impulses and hidden memories. The *id* includes any inherited components of an individual from his birth, to his life and death. According to Freud, the *id* is the unconscious part of our mind which directly and immediately responds to our desires and needs. When a child is born, he comes with nothing but the *id*, and later on he develops an ego and a superego. As it operates within the unconscious of the psyche, the *id* is not affected by reality but remains infantile in its function.

As shown in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the *id* always operates on the pleasure principle. This shows that every impulse has to be immediately satisfied in spite of the possible drastic consequences.

The ego is presented as the realistic part that mediates between the desires of the *id* and the superego. The ego is mostly in contact with the external world contrary to the *id*. As cited by Saul McLeod in his article “*Id, Ego and Superego*,” Sigmund Freud argues that the ego is “the part of the *id* which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world” (2019, 3).

The *ego* works out to avoid any psychological tensions and negative social consequences. The ego is therefore, in contrast with the *id*, the embodiment of good behaviours. As an operator between the *id* and the external world, the ego also seeks pleasure like the *id*. It fights hardly against psychological tension and conflict. The ego takes also into account harmful consequences on society. According to Freud the *id* is stronger than the ego. However, the main task of the ego is to orient the *id* in the right direction to avoid any psychological conflicts and harmful consequences. According to Saul McLeod, Freud advances that the ego is “like a man on horseback, who has hold in check the superior strength of the horse” (2019, 4). Whenever the *ego* fails in operating to use the reality principle, the individual experiences anxiety, fear, or tensions and unpleasant feelings.

For *superego*, the theory means the moral conscience of an individual. The superego includes the social values, norms and morals taken from the environment. The *superego*, most of the time, operates whenever the individual is overwhelmed by feelings such as pride and satisfaction or shame and guilt. For the Freudian theory, the *superego*’s task is to control the *id*’s direct impulses such as aggression or sexual assault which are highly rejected by society. The *superego* operates also in helping the *ego* take into consideration the moralistic element

rather than the realistic one. The *superego* is related to the conscience contrary to the *id* that acts unconsciously and the ego that operates in giving the *id* its demands. The *superego* is the corrector of the individual's *id* and ego operations. However, the *superego* may help the person realise his bad behaviour and error by making him feel bad and guilty.

Therefore, to ward off unpleasant feelings, mental conflicts and anxieties, Sigmund Freud introduces the theory of defence mechanisms. Defence mechanisms, according to Saul McLeod, are psychological strategies that are unconsciously used to protect a person from anxiety arising from unaccepting thoughts and feelings. He further adds that defence mechanisms are used to protect people from feelings of anxiety or guilt, which arise because they feel threatened, or because their *id* or *superego* becomes too demanding. Indeed, there are many defence mechanisms positioned by Ana Freud to fight against traumatic experiences or events. Among them are denial, repression, displacement, projection, regression, etc.

In addition to the studies Freud and Breuer lead on trauma, other medical associations have also shown their commitments in knowing the causes and the effects of trauma. Indeed, similarly to Freud and Breuer, the SAMHSA writes: “Unaddressed trauma significantly increases the risk of mental and substance use disorders and chronic physical diseases” (2014, 2). Moreover, in studying trauma, the SAMHSA deals with what they called the “The three 'E'S' of Trauma: Event(s), Experience of the event(s), and Effect”. To better explain their three “E’S”, they argue:

Events and circumstances may include the actual or extreme treat of physical or psychological harm (I e. natural disasters, violence, etc.) or severe, life-threatening neglect for a child that imperils health development. /.../ the individual’s experience of these events or circumstances helps to determine whether it is a traumatic event. /.../ The long-lasting adverse effects of the

event are critical component of trauma. These adverse effects may occur immediately or may have a delayed onset. The duration of the effects can be can be sort to long term. In some situations, the individual may not recognise the connection between the traumatic events and the effects... (8).

SAMHSA notes that trauma mostly manifests itself when it is “unaddressed”. The organisation advances that traumatic effects may prevents the victim from the capacity to have normal behaviours, to control the expression of emotions and benefit from relationships.

### **I.2.2. Postcolonial Studies**

Postcolonialism is an academic discipline that attempts to analyse, explain, and respond to the cultural legacies of colonialism and imperialism. It is also a set of theories regarding art and culture dealing with colonialism problems. Indeed, it can be seen as a theoretical approach in various disciplines that is concerned with the lasting impact of colonisation on former colonies. In the 1980s, postcolonial studies developed in the world. They are studies in reaction to the cultural, socioeconomic and political heritage left to the colonised by colonisation.

Critics such as Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Mask* and *The Wretch of the Earth*, and Albert Memmi in his *Portrait du colonisé* are viewed as the pioneers of postcolonialism. Thanks to his book entitled *Orientalism*, a critical book against the negative view of the Western towards the East or the Orient, Edward Said is also viewed as one of the leading figures of post colonialism. According to Lutfi Hamadi, “Said is considered the one who laid the cornerstone of this theory, despite the importance of other leading figures such as Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha in this respect” (2014, 39). In *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues that “The Orient was a European invention, and had been since

antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (2001, 1). He further states that

The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also a place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring image of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative (2).

Said tries to fustigate the European view of the former colonies they consider as wild, emotional, powerless, and uncivilised in contrast to the West described with rational thought, civilisation and powerfulness. That book of Said is commonly presented as the first step to the postcolonial studies.

As a literary theory, post colonialism is an analysis of the literary productions of authors from the ancient colonies in reaction to colonialism. These ancient colonies include chiefly African countries, India, Eastern Asia, and The Caribbeans under French, British and Portuguese controls. Dimitri DELLA FAILLE argues:

Postcolonial studies are not a school, nor a paradigm nor even a discipline. [...] They proceed to a social criticism, cultural, political and economic influences exercised by social groups over physical territories, corps, over imaginary and social practices. [...] They are in particular a work by former British colonies or their influential universe (India, Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle-East). [...] Tree writers are the key leaders of postcolonial studies. They are the writings of the Palestinian philologist Edward Said, the Indian philosopher Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and the Persian-Indian theorist Homi Bhabha who form the core of the contemporary postcolonial studies. [...] Literary critics and African writers such as the Ghanaian Kwame Anthony Appiah, the Cameroonian Achilles Mbembe, and the Kenyan and Nigerian writers respectively Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and Chinua Achebe are

often associated with the approaches of Said, Spivak and Bhabha.<sup>6</sup> (*My translation*)

Basing on these words by Della Faille, it becomes crucial to revisit postcolonial studies when deal with African novels. Indeed, postcolonial theory is therefore a prominent theory that helps in studying the two novels of our focus: *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus*.

*Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus* are both postcolonial novels. One of the main themes of these books is colonialism. They expose at first the impacts of colonialism on African societies in general and the Nigerian society particularly. In the view of Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, colonialism is the main reason for the Nigerian breakdown. In *Things Fall Apart*, it is shown that colonisation is responsible for the Igbo cultural tear apart and socio-political dislocation. Whereas in *Purple Hibiscus*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie shows that colonialism is the origin of Nigeria's bad governance, and the main reason for the burst of the Biafran War she deals highly in her *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Things Around Your Neck* which focuses mainly on the Nigerian women lives and experiences within religious and political violence that lead to displacement, disappointment and loneliness in their lives and households.

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<sup>6</sup> Les études postcoloniales ne sont pas une école, ni un paradigme, ni même une discipline. [...] Elles procèdent à une critique de l'influence sociale, culturelle, politique et économique, exercée par des groupes sociaux sur des territoires physiques, sur les corps, sur l'imaginaire et les pratiques sociales. [...] Elles sont en particulier le fait d'auteurs qui proviennent des anciennes colonies britanniques ou de leurs univers d'influence (sous-continent indien, Afrique, Caraïbes et Moyen-Orient). [...] Trois auteurs en études postcoloniales s'illustrent particulièrement. Les écrits du philologue palestinien Edward Saïd, de la philosophe indienne Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak et du théoricien perso-indien Homi Bhabha forment à eux trois le noyau dur des études postcoloniales contemporaines. [...] sont souvent associés aux approches de Saïd, Spivak et Bhabha des critiques littéraires et des écrivains africains tels l'angloghanéen Kwame Anthony Appiah, le camerounais Achille Mbembe, les écrivains kenyan Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o et nigérian Chinua Achebe (2012, 15)

### **I.2.3. Feminist approach**

The feminist theory is among the theories used in this work to better understand the situation of women in our novels under review. The theory, if well used, helps apprehend the psychological problems of women in *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus*.

According to Lois Tyson, feminist literary criticism “examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural products) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women” (2015, 83). As for Tiffany Astrick, it “is also concerned with various forms of marginalization towards women. It reminds us that women and men write differently and analyse at how the gender of the author affects how literature is written” (2018, 47).

One of the main cultural aspects in the feminist theory is the phenomenon of traditional gender roles within patriarchy, which Tyson defines as “any culture that privileges men by promoting traditional gender roles”, consequently promoting men as rational, strong, protective and decisive, while simultaneously promoting women as “emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive” (2015, 85). Moreover, Tyson states:

Because traditional gender roles dictate that men are supposed to be strong (physically powerful and emotionally stoic), they are not supposed to cry because crying is considered as sign of weakness, a sign that one has been overpowered by one's emotions. For similar reasons it is considered unmanly for men to show fear or pain or to express sympathy for other men [...] In addition, men are not permitted to fail at anything they try because failure in any domain implies failure in one's manhood (2015, 87).

Generally, in patriarchal societies, women are excluded from privilege of decision-making, academic, and political positions, so as to grant men the



privilege of maintaining political, economic and social power. However, Women activists always use their pens to fustigate that discrimination. Tifanny Astrick writes:

In order to free themselves from the oppression and dominance of the patriarchy, women have tended to organize themselves into groups. Through this process, they aim towards emancipating themselves and gain the equal social status as well as access to opportunities with the men (2018, 46).

These words by Astrick prove the commitments of women to free themselves social stigmatization. They aim at uniting their forces to emancipate themselves from discrimination and male domination.

In her essay entitled *We Should All Be Feminists*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie clearly analyses the idea about what it means to be a feminist. She tries to teach the community to give equal respect, consideration and honour to men and women so as to create a successful and peaceful environment. Therefore, the aim of this book is to encourage people put a side social discrimination and stigmatisation over women so as to let the genders be whatever they want to be without restrictions. She asserts:

Gender matters everywhere in the world. And I would like today to ask that we begin to dream about and plan for a different world. A fairer world. A world of happier men and happier women who are truer to themselves. And this is how to start: We must raise our daughters differently. We must also raise our sons differently (2015, 5).

Therefore, the aim of this book is to encourage people to put a side social discrimination and stigmatisation over women so as to let the genders be whatever they want to be without restrictions.

Basing on these analyses on feminism, this paper cannot deal with *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus* in a traumatic angle without mentioning women living conditions. In *Things Fall Apart*, the story is written to valorise the Igbo society

and Okonkwo's manly features but in a feminist study it deals with the importance of women in the Igbo culture. Similarly, in *Purple Hibiscus* the Achike family household is dominated by Papa. Nevertheless, it is also a novel that deals with women living conditions. Therefore, in a feminist view, both *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus* are novels on which the living conditions of Nigerian women are meaningfully exposed.

## **CHAPTER II. IGBO TADITIONAL SOCIETY AND ITS CONTACT WITH COLONIALISM**

The Igbo is one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria alongside with the Hausa, Fulani and the Yoruba. The Igbo people occupy the South-Eastern, and some parts of Delta and River states in the South of Nigeria. The Igbo society is one of the oldest and richest African societies. Igbo people form a great community that speak Igbo language with many different dialects. Formerly, the Igbo have been living in separate villages and towns. Each village or town is distinct to the others and had its own dialect and social life. However, it is during colonial times that these people unit and live together. They realise that they are same people who have same socio-political organisation. The Igbo people are godly people and believe in a Supreme God named Chukwu who they believe is the creator of people, animals and all things in life (Ohadike, 1978, xxi).

### **II.1. Igbo Religion and Customs**

According to Raymond J. Corsirin in *The Dictionary of Psychology* published in 2002, religion is

An organized system of values and beliefs that serve as moral and social guides. Many religions have "leaders" (teachers, priests, etc.) to instruct others and conduct rituals. Many cultures have developed their own unique religious systems. Most religions may have developed concepts dealing with the origins of life, moral right and wrong behavior, and assumptions about afterlife (227).

The Igbo people have always been religious. In fact, Ohadike asserts that “The line that separated the religious life from the secular in the Igbo culture was as thin as air” (1978, xxxii). In addition to Chukwu, the Igbo have other small gods but they are all under Chukwu. Chukwu is believed to have been living far away

in the sky, and is the protector of everything he creates. The Igbo have never seen Chukwu. They do not even have his symbol but they felt him since he is everywhere. Chukwu is well worshiped. This is clarified in *Things Fall Apart* through the discussion between Akunna and M. Brown: “You say that there is one supreme God who made heaven and earth,” said Akunna on one of Mr. Brown’s visit. “We also believe in Him and call Him Chukwu. He made all the world and other gods” (pp. 142-144). No one had the right to transgress the established religious principles. Any offense against Chukwu was punished.

They are always praying salvation and forgiveness for the sins they may committed unarbitrarily. The Igbo strongly believe in Chukwu than his name sometimes appears in the names the Igbo gave to their babies. That is the reason why most of the Igbo names bear the word “Chukwu” in relation to their Supreme God. For instance, according to Ohadike, an Igbo family might name a baby Amaogechukwu, meaning “God's time is the best”, Chukwukelu (“God is the creator”), or Chukwunyelu (“God gave me this wonderful gift”) (xxxii). The Igbo belief in Chukwu is sometimes expressed in their proverbs. There are proverbs and songs designed with health, misfortune or illness so as to have God’s mercy. These proverbs are used to “heal” some social problems. The proverbs according to Ohadike, prove the Igbo strong belief in the existence of God. Moreover, the Igbo people have great respect toward their ancestors and spirits. Ohadike states:

They also believed that one must live in peace with one's ancestors to be rewarded with good health, good luck and many children. Misfortune and untimely death were consequences of living in disharmony with the higher beings (xxxii-xxxiii).

The Igbo ancestors are not seen as dead. They play an important role in maintaining the wellbeing of society and act as intermediaries between God and people. For example, in *Things Fall Apart*, it is the egwugwus who represent the ancestors and are important to the social living of people.

As faithful people who extremely believe the existence of God, the Igbo believe also in the existence of Ekwensu (satan). Ekwensu is the greatest enemy of God in the Igbo religion. According to Ohadike, similarly to God who is served by the ancestors and oracles, Ekwensu has many servants who assure his needs and who help him carry his evil thought: “One of them was death itself, the malicious being who would visit a man on the day he enjoyed life the most” (xxxiii). Moreover, the Igbo people believe that Ekwensu had as first aim leading people to misfortune and hell. Still according to Ohadike, the Igbo thought that “Ekwensu used people to commit crimes against other people and would then turn around and punish the same people who served him” (xxxiii).

Igbo people also believe that whenever an individual transgresses the established religious principles, he is working for Ekwensu. Additionally, the Igbo had many rites to perform and sacrifices to offer. They make rites and sacrifices for their God and ancestors. These offerings are made so as to get help, salvation and favour. Even in their ceremonies, sacrifices are offered. This is clarified by Ohadike when he writes:

When a person felt disturbed by certain inexplicable misfortunes, he would approach a divine, who might recommend that the unseen forces be propitiated. Fear of unconsciously offending the higher being was responsible for the large number of propitiated rites.

The Igbo also approached the higher forces when they wanted special favours. Should a family want to have many children, it would approach a divine who might recommend some sacrificial offerings. Sacrifice was an important element in Igbo religious ceremony (xxxiii).

Moreover, the Igbo strong belief in their religion can be seen through their deities and small gods. It can be also seen in the way their religion is well organised and the principles they have established in order to live in harmony between themselves. For Ohadike, many of their spirits are symbols that took the form of

natural phenomena: rivers, earth, iron, lakes, rain, the farm, hills fertility, etc. (xxxiv).

Among the Igbo deities is Ani or Ala. Ani is considered as earth deity, spirit of fertility and the great mother goddess. Ani is well respected and is seen as the basis of each person's success. The Feast of the New Yam is an event celebrated throughout the Igboland to pay tribute to Ani for the role she plays in the society. This feast, according to Achebe

...was an occasion for giving thanks to Ani, the earth goddess and the source of all fertility." (...) "Ani played a greater part in the life of the people than any other deity. She was the ultimate judge of morality and conduct. And what was more, she was in close communion with the departed fathers of the clan whose bodies had been committed to earth (*TFA*, 36).

Ani had her special servants, priestesses who are controlling some of the Igbo social aspects. This can be seen when Okonkwo beats her wife during the Week of Peace. Ezeani the priest of Ani meets Okonkwo to tell him the seriousness of the sin he has committed:

"Listen to me", said Ezeani when Okonkwo had spoken. "You are not a strange in Umuofia. You know as well as I do that our forefathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbour. We live in peace with our fellows to honour our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops will not grow. You have committed a great evil" (*TFA*, 27).

The priests and priestesses attend ceremonies and intervene in matters related to birth, death, incest, and burials. The Igbo strong belief in deities can be justified when an Igbo old man asked the missionaries in Umuofia:

"Which is this god of yours", he asked, "the goddess of the earth, the god of the sky, Amadiora of the thunderbolt or what?" Another man pursued "If we

leave our gods and follow your god, [...], “who will protect us from the anger of our neglected gods and ancestors?” (TFA, 117).

Each spirit has its own priest or priestess the Igbo consult and each spirit has something it represented. For example, rivers, rain, streams and lakes symbolize coolness, fertility, purity, freshness. Fire symbolized death, dryness, burnings, bad harvest, high fever, etc. According to Ohadike, whenever they need something, they offer sacrifices to the priest or priestess of that spirit (xxxiv). Furthermore, the Igbo people believe in what they call the ‘chi’ that can be seen as a guardian of his owner. Each person has his/her own ‘chi’. As shown by Ohadike, a ‘chi’ can be compared to the Christian concept of a guardian angel. The ‘chi’ always follows his proprietor throughout life. According to Ohadike a ‘chi’ can be either benevolent or malignant. A person with a good ‘chi’ is always successful in his endeavours; while a person with a bad ‘chi’ is an unfortunate person who would labour without reaping. But for the Igbo, the success of a man does not only depend on his ‘chi’. They do not believe that a person's ‘chi’ could control his or her destiny. The Igbo always believed in hard work.

In *Things Fall Apart* for example, Okonkwo’s personality is used by Achebe to describe the ‘chi’ and its role in the individual’s life. He writes:

At the early age he had achieved fame as the greatest wrestler in all the land. That was not luck. At the most one could say that his chi or personal god was good. But the Igbo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his chi says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so his chi agreed. And not only his chi but his clan too, because it judged a man by the work of his hand (TFA, 21).

That is to say that the agreement of a ‘chi’ depends on its person's hard work. The ‘chi’ responds only to personal acts. Okonkwo's chi agreed because he worked harder to become well rewarded by his clan. The Igbo people encouraged their families in to work hard. For them there is no paid without hard work.

Likewise, like many African societies (the San people, the Ashanti), the Igbo society has a false vision of twins. For them, twins are abomination. They brought about bad luck and were against the Igbo success wellbeing. Therefore, the Igbo throw away twin-babies when they are born. The twins or triplets are abandoned in the bushes or forests to die. That is the example of Nneka in *Things Fall Apart*, whose babies had always been abandoned in the forest.

In the Igbo society there is traditionally a group of people named outcasts or osu. The osu form the group of offenders who were victim of great abominations. The osu caste system has been meant to offer people to the deities to clean the land from an abomination. Historical perspective of the osu puts them as defiant people who refuse to head to the orders of a king or the decisions of the community. They are regarded as inferior people and are separated from the free-born (Nwadiala or Diala). The osu community is lowered in every socio-political and religious aspect, and have never been well considered. They are seen as unclean beings indeed, they cannot attend the assembly of the free-borns. They do not take part in any decision making and do not even participate in certain ceremonies. As a matter of fact, they cannot bear titles and have good reputation and honour. This can be justified in *Things Fall Apart* and in *No Longer at Ease* where almost all the Igbo traditions and ways of life are clearly exposed. In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe describes what an osu is. He states:

He was a person dedicated to a god, a thing set apart- a taboo forever, and his children after him. He could neither marry nor married by the free born. He was in fact an outcast, living in a special area of the village, close the Great Shrine (113-114).

These lines show that the osu are isolated and subjected to abuse and discrimination. They are made to live in shrines or marketplaces so as to be separated from the free-born. An outcast cannot marry a free-born. As a matter of fact, many investigations are always made to inquire about the social status of



the family when marriage is announced. This can be seen in *No Longer at Ease* through the love relationship between Obi Okonkwo and Clara. Obi is a free-born whereas Clara is an outcast. They decide to marry but unfortunately their castes are not compatible, so they cannot be united. This can be seen through the discussion between Obi and his friend Joseph:

Joseph says to Obi, “Look at me, Obi. What you are going to concern not only yourself and future generations. If one finger brings oil, it soils the other. In future, when we are all civilized, anybody may marry anybody. But that time has not come. We of this generation are only pioneers.”

Obi’s replay, “What is a pioneer? Someone who shows the way. That is what I am doing. Anyway, it is too late to change now.”

It's not. What is an engagement ring? Our fathers did not marry with rings. It is not too late to change. Remember you are the one and only Umuofia son to be educated overseas. We do not want to be like the unfortunate child who grows his first tooth and grows a decayed one. What sort of encouragement will your action give to the poor men and women who collected the money? (54).

The existence of osu caste system among the Igbo is also seen when Obi’s dying mother tells him, “If you want to marry this girl, you must wait until I’m no more. If God hears my prayers, you will not wait along. But if you do the thing while I’m alive, you will have my blood on your head, because I shall kill myself” (103).

Consequently, this form of maltreatment has prompted the outcasts to flee to other countries for survival. Additionally, with the advent of colonialism, many of them decide to abandon their indigenous traditions and beliefs to embrace Christianity. This transition is meant to get rid of the maltreatment and stigmatization they are physically and psychologically victim of.

## II.2. Igbo Socio-political Structure

The Igbo society is a well organised society even though there were lack of centralised political structure. According to Ikpechukwuka E. Ibenekwu who quotes Coleman in “Igbo Traditional Political System and the Crisis of Governance in Nigeria”, the Igbo society, contrary to the other Nigerian ethnic groups, has a decentralised political structure than any other major group (2015, 4). The Igbo live in autonomous villages and towns. They have good relationships and live in peace and harmony. Henderson describes the Igbo as king in every man (1972). In other words, the Igbo society does not have a king or a chief. The political system depends on social rank status, positions, and honour as asserted by Chikendu quoted by Ibenekwu:

The basic unit was the family, the most operative unit being the kindred, then the village and the town. The village groups were not organised in kingdoms. The function of government was carried on by a council of elders who shared power in various levels of intensity with various other groups — age grades, titled men and women, ritual priests, etc. (2015, 4).

This position of Chikendu shows that the Igbo political system was based on egalitarianism and achievement. The Igbo people were politically democratic despite their lack of centralised governments<sup>7</sup>. The Igbo political system was not only democratic but also egalitarian. According to Onyemaechi quoted by Ibenekwu,

An egalitarian society is characterized by the adjustment of the number of valued statuses to the number of persons, or fixing or limiting of persons capable of exerting power as many persons as can wield power, whether through personal strength, influence or authority, can do (2015, 4).

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<sup>7</sup> Chikendu quoted by Ikpechukwuka E. Ibenekwu. “Igbo Traditional Political System and the Crisis of Governance in Nigeria.” *Ikoru Journal of the Institute of African Studies UNN* Vol. 9 Nos 1&2. 2015. p. 1.

The Igbo are stateless. The Igbo achieve democracy by setting institutions and what Ohadike calls “Cross-cutting Ties”. This refers to the five groups of people they formed so as to ensure security and integrity in the communities. For Ohadike, these five cross-cutting institutions are “the councils of elders, age-groups, and councils of chiefs, women's association, and secret societies” (xxiii).

The councils of elders are the leader of the societies. Igbo elders are well respected and, yet, they are guides of the societies. The Igbo follow well their elders and gave them much consideration. It is the elders who managed the socio-political rules and customs. They are the leaders of everything in the communities and responsible for the punishment of those who transgressed the established rules. Besides, elders are honoured because they are regarded as wise people. They are judges and decision makers of every aspect of the Igbo social life.

The age-group association called “ogbo” or “out” in Igbo is a gathering of men or women of the same age. That is clarified by Ohadike who writes: “All residents of a town born within a few years of each other belonged to the same age-group, with separate sections for men and women” (xxv). Age-group associations are due to help people remember about past events as there are no written records. People in a same age-group are sometimes named after the period they were born. For example, there are the Second World War age-group, the influenza age-group, etc. The aim of that association is to go on wars and to protect the communities from any external attack. They form the fighting forces. They are the famers and are active in everyday works. Those groups fight against disintegration because the members of each group act together, and cultivate a friendship that remained solid from childhood to the end of life.

Moreover, in the Igbo society, women are sometimes well considered and have important role they play in the wellbeing of society. Similarly, to men, women have organizations and they participated in some decisions making. As men have

control of some aspects of life women also control some others. They are at the head of some traditional aspects such as cults and shrines. For instance, in the Igbo society many of the oracles are served by women such as the priestesses (*TFA*). Igbo women are also influential in wars even though they did not attend battle fields. According to Ohadike, they could sometimes urge male warriors to start wars (xxviii).

Nonetheless, even though Igbo women have some status in society, they have always been under male domination. According to Ine Nnadi, in the Igbo traditional society, “[...] a girl or woman is only seen and not heard. Her domain is the domestic chores about the house cooking, scrubbing, child rearing, care giver of the entire family” (2013, 140). As a matter of fact, Igbo women are due to stay obedient to their husband and stay at home looking after their children. They are traditionally relegated to the ‘second class.’ They are even beaten and ill-treated. That is the case of Okonkwo’s wives in *Things Fall Apart*. Okonkwo frequently beats his wives, showing them his manliness and his hatred towards weakness and tenderness. This situation of the Igbo women justifies, for instance, what Gloria Ada Fwangyil says: “Women in Africa, to a large extent, are virtually regarded as ‘second class’ human beings who are meant to be seen and not heard” (2011, 262).

Furthermore, the subjection of the Igbo women to men can be seen in their activities. As they are possessed by their husbands, everything they get belongs to them. Consequently, their incomes in trading and farming are mostly given to their husbands and are spent in their husbands own will. That can be exemplified by the case of Nnu Ego in Buchi Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood*. Nnu Ego struggles in markets with her daughter to survive. But unfortunately, the money is spent by her husband Naife in his own will.

Socio-politically, the Igbo give much importance to honour and reputation. These two notions are gained through titles and wealth. They are also obtained by marrying two or more wives and having many children, etc. Titles are significant in the Igbo society. Gaining titles gives a person much respect. The greatest men are known through titles they win. That can be seen in *Things Fall Apart* through the characters of Okonkwo, the main protagonist and Ogbuefi Ezeudu one of the most important clan elders and leaders who had been a great warrior in his time (57). In the Igbo society, a man without title is not well respected or honoured. That man cannot be part of what they called the “council of titles”. Ohadike states “Throughout Igboland, a man who failed to progress beyond the most junior titles was a man without status in the eyes of his people” (1978, xxvi).

Precolonial Igbo clans were polygamous and agrarian. Formerly, the more wives a man has the worthier he was. According to the standards of the Igbo society a good and successful man should marry more than one wife and have many children. Many of the Igbo men marry many wives because that is source of richness and manliness.

Alongside with marrying more than one wife, winning titles and heroic accomplishments, good harvest of yams is part of the sources of success and power among the Igbo. In qualifying Okonkwo, Achebe writes: “He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars” (*TFA*, 8). That portrayal on Okonkwo shows that in Igbo traditional society honor depends on success and courage. Indeed, the Igbo traditional society, in its history, has been in contact with missionaries from Europe which has been a turning point in their sociopolitical life.

### II.3. The Igbo contact with Colonialism

In the nineteenth century, the African continent witnessed the arrival of the Westerners. Nigeria, a country situated in the west of Africa was part the Great Britain Empire. Mainly, it was in the 1830s and 1900s that the Europeans started penetrating the Igbo lands. The Europeans' first purpose is exploitation. The main reason for colonization is to acquire raw materials for their industries in Europe. But, as they have found on place the Igbo traditions, beliefs, and practices they think savage, the Europeans extended to civilise the communities. Indeed, they would change the Igbo social traditions and beliefs. They introduce Christianity and schools to the indigenous for the purpose of destroying the Igbo customs and beliefs. Their main intention is to tear apart the social life of the Igbo. The white-man dislocate the whole Igbo way of life, affecting the Igbo traditions, their customs, social integration and norms. The British missionaries divide the Igbo societies into two parts; those who accept to follow the white religion and the others who decide to stay loyal to their traditions. This leads to a loss of sovereignty and leadership in the Igbo clans that existed before. The Igbo lose their social justice and their right to control their own destiny. The local societies are formerly stable with their own system of governance and well-structured cultural norms and institutions. However, the change the colonisers bring affects psychologically and physically the Igbo who are seeking a way to fight against that injustice.

Furthermore, after the independence, colonialism still affects the Nigerian societies as shown in *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Half of Yellow Sun*. Even though the colonialists leave Nigerians to lead themselves after their independence, the impacts of colonialism are still visible at all levels. Politically, the same leadership based on capitalism left by the British continues to be cherished by the new Nigerian leaders just after the independence. The leaders take over leadership and acquire a lot of wealth for themselves. This has led to local

communities feeling that their new leaders are perpetrating the same interest of the colonialists. Indeed, problems of ethnicity rise up leading to political civil war that has touched the Igbo social lives as mentioned in *The Half of Yellow Sun*.

Religiously, colonialism still has impacts on the religious domain in Nigeria. Christian religion has some consequences on the Nigerian lives. There still exist religious problems between the indigenous beliefs and Christianity. That is exemplified by the religious battle of Eugene and his father Papa-Nnukwu in *Purple Hibiscus*. Eugene is a “product” of colonialism. He has a strong belief in Christianity and is a modernised man who exalts western ways of life whereas father Nnukwu, an indigenous Igbo man still keeps his ancestor’s religion despite the modernity in his country.

## CHAPTER III. TRAUMA IN *THINGS FALL APART*

This part of our work examines the psychological effects of trauma on the characters, particularly on Okonkwo. It explores Okonkwo's trauma and the ways he takes to survive from his anxiety.

### III.1. Okonkwo's Fear of Failure and Weakness

In Nigeria, the traditional norms remain more powerful than anything else. Yet, in Igboland every individual's daily actions are allowed under the dictate of the adamant society. The Igbo traditions and customs are responsible for the people's behaviours, their existence as well as their social interactions. As a matter of fact, every individual is due to fulfil the social demands such as success, courage, devotion, etc.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe depicts the life of a man who is deeply rooted in his traditional culture. Okonkwo has been overwhelmed by the fear of "failure" and "weakness" throughout the whole story. The notions of failure and weakness are among the main causes of the mental problems that govern Okonkwo's mind. Ifeoma Onyemelukwe writes:

[...] Okonkwo is transformed into a monomaniac of male dominance. He develops a split personality: the fearless warrior who has brought home skull, is dominated by fear, "failure and weakness," (9), fear of taking after his father. This psychological phobia leads him to hate everything that his father, Unoka had loved" (10), such as gentleness and idleness. If Okonkwo treats his wives and children tyrannically [...] it is linked to this psychological phobia. The same explanation goes for his inclination of wife-battery and other excesses of his in the novel, like killing Ikemefuna who called him "father" or firing a shot at Ekwefi, his beloved second wife (2004, 39).



Consequently, we have on the one hand an individual struggling to fulfil his social demands; on the other hand, we have a man who is struggling to prevent the entrance of colonialism in his community.

### **III.1.1. Fear of Failure**

In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's whole behaviour throughout the novel is due to his society and father. As already mentioned above in the second chapter, the Igbo society dictates each individual's thoughts, actions, and feelings. Society is very demanding and absolutely strict over men. Men have a specific role to fulfil in order to be well-respected and honoured. In this point, a real man should at least be polygamous, have many children, and win titles (Ohadike, 1978). Nonetheless, that is not the case of Unoka, Okonkwo's father. Unoka is portrayed as a weak and failed man. He is an idle and poor father. He is described as a gentleman, and a man interested in music and conversations:

He was very good on his flute, and his happiest moments were the two or three moons after the harvest when the village musicians brought down their instruments, hung above the fireplace. Unoka would play with them, his face beaming with blessedness and peace (*TFA*, 4).

Unoka is not even a courageous man because he hates bloodshed and combats: “Unoka was never happy when it came to wars. He was in fact a coward and could not bear the sight of a blood” (*TFA*, 2). Indeed, he never wins even a single title. Consequently, as Unoka is negatively considered in the society due to his disappointing behaviour towards his family and society, Okonkwo is completely ashamed of him. Therefore, that plants the seeds of Okonkwo's trauma. He decides to be a different man who entirely rejects his father's behaviour and manners. In effect, he is described as a courageous man who “was not afraid of war. He was a man of action, a man of war. Unlike his father he could stand the look of blood. In Umuofia's latest war he was the first man to bring home a human

head” (*TFA*, 4). Okonkwo is a successful man. Okonkwo thought to become a famous man who would be known throughout the nine villages of Umuofia. He is presented as a self-made man:

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 (*TFA*, 4).

Moreover, Unoka’s lack of responsibilities affects Okonkwo. He is an alcoholic and debtor:

If money came his way, and it seldom did, he immediately bought gourds of palm-wine, called round neighbors and made merry. /.../ Unoka was, of course, a debtor, and he owed every neighbor some money, from a few cowries to quit substantial amounts (*TFA*, 4).

During his childhood, Okonkwo was unable to note any kind of success in his father. When Unoka died, he went with heavy debts and had won no title: “When Unoka died he had taken no title at all and he was heavily debt” (*TFA*, 8). Okonkwo does not inherit anything from his father. However, Okonkwo shows himself by combating any kind of social failure so as to be rewarded.

Okonkwo was clearly cut out of for great things. He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler of the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars (*TFA*, 8).

Furthermore, Okonkwo is psychologically overwhelmed by a bunch of bad memories from Unoka’s bad reputation leading him to work harder until he wins his community’s consideration. With his achievements, Okonkwo becomes one of the greatest men in Umuofia. Okonkwo is not respected for his age, but for his success.

And so although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. As the elders said, if a child washed his hand he could eat with kings. Okonkwo had clearly washed his hands and so he ate with kings and elders (*TFA*, 8).

Okonkwo's daily actions and thoughts are governed by the eagerness to avoid failure. Unlike his father, Okonkwo is a man who always seeks honour and reputation. He is not only respected in his community but also beyond. He is respectfully seen as a man of honour everywhere he goes throughout the nine villages. This can be seen when he goes to Mbaino to bring the lad and the verge who are due to be given to his clan. On this Achebe asserts:

And so when Okonkwo of Umuofia arrived at Mbaino as the proud and imperious emissary of war, he was treated with great honour and respect, and two days later he returned home with a lad of fifteen and a young verge. The lad's name was Ikemefuna, whose sad story is still told in Umuofia unto this day (*TFA*, 12).

Okonkwo is also affected by his society's expectations which focuses on titles achievements and status. A man who does not win any title or earn reputation in the Igbo society is viewed as "agbala", a term that refers to a woman and used for a failed man. It is also a name given to men with lower social status. That is the example of Unoka.

...Even as 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. That was how Okonkwo first come to know that agbala was not only another name for woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title (*TFA*, 13).

These lines show that Okonkwo has been victim of his father's failure. Unoka's unsuccessfulness results in a long-lasting anxiety on Okonkwo. In addition to his

fear of failure, Okonkwo has always been haunted by fear of weakness and laziness.

### **III.1.2. Fear of Weakness and Laziness**

In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's fear of weakness and laziness is due to his father's qualities. In "Fifty Years on: Problematizing the Heroic Ideal in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*", Cristopher Anyokwu details the Igbo values towards a man. He examines the positions of Okonkwo, his father Unoka and his son, Nwoye in the society. Laying the stress on Okonkwo, he describes him as 'hero' according to the Igbo social standards. Besides, Anyokwu in his text describes how Okonkwo has been affected by the fear of failure and weakness. He projects the way Okonkwo is eager to challenge any behaviour his father had. Christopher Anyokwu states: "As part of his desire to erase the embarrassing memories of his father, Okonkwo abhors any open display of affection, gentleness and warmth" (2009, 14). However, this shame of Unoka has psychologically affected Okonkwo throughout his life time. He decides to oppose any quality his father had. As a matter of fact, Okonkwo spends all his life showing manliness and avoiding any kind of weak character as the narrator states:

In his heart Okonkwo was not a cruel man. But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, and of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo's fear was greater than these. It was not external, but lay deep within himself. It was the fear of himself, lest he should be found to resemble his father... And so Okonkwo was ruled by one passion – to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. One of those things was gentleness and another was idleness (*TFA*, 13).

In the same way, Okonkwo's fear of weakness is due to his traditional standards. Society has given men duties to fulfil so as to be well rewarded. In the Igbo

cultural standards, a man should be hard and impatient. This is exemplified by the personality of Okonkwo in these following lines:

When he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough; he would use his fists. He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had had no patience with his father (*TFA*, 3-4).

Okonkwo meets several hurtful moments due to the unrelenting memories he bears from his shameful father. Even in his own house he shows anger, toughness towards his beloved women and children. For him, showing too much love may bring about lack of respect. “Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it be emotion of anger. To show affection was a sign of weakness, the only thing worth demonstrating was strength” (*TFA*, 10). Okonkwo beats his wives and children, terrorises them so as to avoid any kind of weakness before them. He thinks that is the only way to exhibit strength and to avoid weakness. This can be seen when he beats his youngest wife who has gone to plait her hair at her friend's house during the Week of Peace:

Okonkwo knew she was not speaking the truth. He walked back to his obi to await Ojugo's return. And when she returned he beats her very heavily. In his anger he had forgotten that it was the Week of Peace (*TFA*, 10-11).

Besides, Okonkwo thinks that tenderness can be source of weakness. He has never shown any kind of softness in his household. He thinks that being too soft may bring about disrespect vis-a-vis his family. However, Okonkwo is always in anger and is in search for someone to terrorise as he sometimes walks aimlessly in the household. This is thoroughly expressed in the novel:

And then the storm burst. Okonkwo, who had been walking about aimlessly in his compound in suppressed anger, suddenly found an outlet.

“Who killed this banana tree?” He asked.

A hush fell on the compound immediately.

“Who killed this tree? Or are you all deaf and dumb?”

As a matter of fact the tree was very much alive. Okonkwo’s second wife had merely cut a few leaves off it to wrap some food, and she say so. Without further argument Okonkwo gave a sound beating and left her and her only daughter weeping. Neither of the other wives dared to interfere beyond an occasional and tentative, “It is enough, Okonkwo”, pleaded from a reasonable distance (*TFA*, 14).

Okonkwo’s fear of weakness is exalted through his bad relationships with his son, Nwoye. He always shouts at Nwoye to avoid him displaying any kind of effeminate behaviours. He restlessly threatened him to death in order to make of him a real man. Sometimes he prevents him from causing with women. Okonkwo thinks that that can be source of weakness and laziness. He thinks that for a boy to grow a man he should be among boys and not among women. As Nwoye is a shy boy unlike Ikemefuna, Okonkwo fears he may be like his grandfather, Unoka. Nwoye does not like hard work but he enjoys listening stories from his mother. That attitude affects Okonkwo who fears that Nwoye may become a coward. This is expressed in the following lines:

Okonkwo's first son, Nwoye, was then twelve years old but was already causing his father great anxiety for his incipient laziness. At any rate, that was how it looked to his father, and he sought to correct him by constant nagging and beating. And so Nwoye was developing into a sad-faced youth (*TFA*, 5).

Additionally, even in meetings, Okonkwo has never been tendered towards men who have not won titles. He sees those men as weak, as women. For Okonkwo, a man without titles or status is a coward who should not have any

word in male meetings. He is overwhelmed by the eagerness to prove his male power.

But he was struck, as most people were, by Okonkwo's brusqueness in dealing with less successful men. Only a week ago a man had contradicted him at a kindred meeting which they held to discuss the next ancestral feast. Without looking at the man Okonkwo had said: "This meeting is for men." The man who had contradicted him had no titles. That was why he called him a woman Okonkwo knew how to kill a man's spirit (*TFA*, 26).

Furthermore, one of the things that show Okonkwo's fear of weakness is his unwanted and abnormal participation in the sacrifice of Ikemefuna. Okonkwo was asked to take care of Ikemefuna who was given to the village as a lad to sacrifice. When he arrives, he is kept in Okonkwo's household. Indeed, Okonkwo develops good relationships with Ikemefuna who he eventually loves as his own son. When the day of Ikemefuna's sacrifice arrives, Okonkwo kills him though it is not his duty.

As the man who had cleared his throat drew up and raised his machete, Okonkwo looked away. He heard the blow. The pot fell and broke in the sand. He heard Ikemefuna cry, "My father, they have killed me!" as he run towards him. Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his machete and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak (*TFA*, 61).

Okonkwo murders Ikemefuna to avoid weakness. Okonkwo's automatic reaction is due his life experiences he has gone through. As a matter of fact, this act can be seen as a way for Okonkwo to exalt his manliness and to prove his courage and impatience.

Nwoye in return becomes anxious of his father's ill-treatment, hardness and rigidity. Nwoye finds his father too hard towards him and his family. Christa Scondfelder quoted by Khadidiatou Diallo writes: "the history of trauma is a history of repeated gaps and ruptures, with cyclical periods of attention and

neglect, of fascination and rejection” (2020, 27). However, Nwoye suffers a lot from Okonkwo’s beatings and oppressive attitudes. Okonkwo appears absolutely aggressive so as to fulfil his duties in society. He is neither tolerant nor patient. Therefore, Okonkwo’s fury and harshness appear very uncomfortable to Nwoye who does not hesitate to react indifferently. He starts to fight against his father even though he does not do it openly. Nwoye chooses to keep silent to any demand and reproach of his father. Thus, silence becomes a way to freedom to soothe his anxieties. Nwoye finds peace and tranquility in silence. For instance, when Okonkwo asks Nwoye to tell him where he had gone, he refuses to let his father know that he had been at the Christian church (*TFA*, 151-152).

However, silence appears to be a strong form of revolt that Nwoye can use to stay safe. That silence is undoubtedly the result of his negative memories and traumatic experiences from his draconian father. In addition, Nwoye has been psychologically affected by his society’s tradition of throwing twins. He felt deeply troubled about his religion’s custom of abandoning twin babies in the evil forest. As a matter of fact, Nwoye does not share his trouble with anyone in his family conscious that they will not listen to him. As for his father, he may punish him. Nwoye decides yet to keep his emotions and anxiety within himself and stay silent to avoid any eventual problem.

Nwoye also decides to embrace Christianity which is a relief for oppressed people. Christianity is a religion that puts all people in same position. Contrary to the Igbo religion, Christianity doesn't recognize titles, status, outcasts, poor, twins or human sacrifice. It is against any human discrimination, violence and social distinction. Accordingly, oppressed and isolated people become fascinated in the new religion to find freedom. In fact, Nwoye starts to secretly frequent the Christians until his father becomes aware of that. Nwoye finds the white man more tolerant and softer than his father and his society. He is well considered and acknowledged by the whites then as a result he decides to cope



with them for good. Indeed, Christianity becomes a weapon he can use to defend himself. In a metaphorical way Christianity is a therapy for Nwoye's mental wounds.

### **III.2. Okonkwo and Colonialism**

Okonkwo is more traumatised when the missionaries enter Umuofia. The arrival of the missionaries in the Igbo society seems too disadvantageous to the whole society generally and to Okonkwo particularly. The missionaries' entrance in Umuofia is meant to change the indigenous people ways of live, their customs, history and traditions. They have the intention to convert the Igbo into Christianity by inculcating their culture upon them. However, as the indigenous people are attached to their traditions and religious beliefs, they refuse and combat the missionaries. But the missionaries eventually succeed in dominating the indigenous Igbo through school.

Nevertheless, as soon as they succeed, Okonkwo categorically refuses to be alienated. He hates the Whiteman because they have changed the Igbo society in profit to their own. They have taken away his only son and his whole community. Moreover, Okonkwo finds the missionaries to be extremely menacing to and privilege within the society. He believes that the Igbo social life will be overthrown if only they let colonialism lasting long. The presence of the missionaries disturbs the Igbo culture and religion.

Colonialism also dissociates the collective responsibility and parental bonding of the society which is the case of Okonkwo and his son Nwoye. In the light of these catastrophes, Okonkwo realises that under the whites' hegemony, the Igbo society will be demolished and torn apart for good. The missionaries' domination will at all level destroy the Igbo traditions which have been transmitted over centuries from one generation to another by their ancestors. And these traditions are the basis of their culture. Among the traditions and customs,

the white man is going to drop down are the Igbo ceremonies, rites, funerals, manners and even social activities. These customs are the means used to bring the clans, families and tribes closer. He fears the society would also lose its unity and identity which may lead to failure.

The missionaries' hegemony becomes too worrying and brings anxiety upon Okonkwo's mind. Okonkwo finds it unsupportable to see his community, clan and even family and religion fragmented. The thing that frustrated Okonkwo is the way his son, Nwoye embraces the Christian religion and his departure from the household. Another painful thing which affects him is the way the Igbo masculine society loses its values in front of the missionaries. Okonkwo becomes more and more traumatized when the clan refuses to join him in fighting against the missionaries. He becomes ashamed of his people. Okonkwo loses his pride when he sees his peers showing coward features in refusing to involve into war against the colonialists. This can be seen in his following words

"Worthy men are no more", Okonkwo sighed as he remembered those days. "Isike will never forget how we slaughtered them in that war. We killed twelve of their men and they killed only two of ours. Before the end of the fourth market week they were suing for peace. Those were days when men where men" (*TFA*, 200).

These words by Okonkwo show that there is a great change in the Igbo clan. Okonkwo becomes hopeless and deeply ashamed of that tragic change. The latter affects him in such a way he recalls of his past glories in wars against enemies. These words describe the ancient powerful Umuofia. The fact of saying "Those were the days when men were men" shows that today the Umuofian men are no longer brave nor courageous but weak and coward. This shows that the weakness of his father Unoka which grants him the name 'agbala' is overwhelming the whole community. Okonkwo supports war because in his mind war is the only thing that can show manliness. In the Igbo culture war has always been one of

the most prestigious events in which men could be differentiated. In Okonkwo's mind it's because of that that his father is stigmatized and rejected. And it's also thanks to war that Okonkwo himself has been one of the well-respected men in Umuofia. This view upon war is described in these lines about Unoka. "Unoka was never happy when it came to wars. He was in fact a coward and could not bear the sight of blood" (*TFA*, 6). However, this painful attitude of his father, Unoka that affects Okonkwo since his childhood until adulthood comes once again into his mind when the Umuofian men refuse to fight against the missionaries. Okonkwo feels more ashamed of his clan's irresponsibly. Face to this alarming situation in which Okonkwo and his community are living, he becomes pathetic by the weakness and failure his father shows and his clan is now exalting in front of the colonisers. On this Achebe says,

"The greatest obstacle in Umuofia", Okonkwo thought bitterly, 'is that cowardice, Egonwanne. His sweet tongue can change fire into cooled ash. Whenever he speaks he loves our men to impotence. If they had ignored womanish wisdom five years ago, we would have come to this.' He ground his teeth. "Tomorrow he will tell them that our fathers never fought a 'war of blame'. If they listen to him I will live them and plan my own revenge (*TFA*, 200).

Okonkwo fears that the womanish speeches of Egowanne lead his people to become like his father Unoka. The entire Egowanne's speech reminds him of his bad memories from his failed father. Okonkwo also thinks that all of Egowanne is womanish specially his wisdom and influence.

### **III.3. The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in *Things Fall Apart***

This part is about the striking effects of psychological trauma on the main character in *Things Fall Apart* and some of the others. To better study the aftereffects of trauma upon Okonkwo, this paper will undoubtedly use the

defence mechanisms theorized by Sigmund Freud and later on by his daughter, Ana Freud.

According to Saul McLeod defence mechanisms “are psychological strategies that are unconsciously used to protect a person from anxiety arising from unacceptable thoughts or feelings” (2019, 1). In that point, we can conclude that defence mechanisms are used to free ourselves from feelings of guilt, trauma, anxiety, and bad memories that haunt our mind. They have as role appeasing individual's mental problems. Also called ego mechanisms, defence mechanisms are often used by people in their lives to avoid dealing with hurting feelings.

In accordance with her father, Ana Freud has put forward that there are many different ways people may apply to get rid of their anxieties and traumatic emotions. Among them are regression, projection, displacement, reaction formation, etc. In this paper only these defence mechanisms will be highlighted so as to analyse Okonkwo and some other characters' reactions towards their daily problems in society.

Chronologically, Okonkwo has been affected from his childhood until his adulthood. He has been at first affected by his father's failure and weakness. Secondly, he is traumatised by his social expectations, by his son, Nwoye and by his own pride. And finally, he is troubled by the advent of colonialism in Umuofia which unfortunately leads to his ultimate demise.

*Things Fall Apart* is a novel about the change and its effects on the Igbo society. With the arrival of the colonisers in the Igbo clan, everything had changed. That change was openly visible in all domains; agricultural, social, religious, and political. However, the contact between the Igbo and the missionaries lead to many tensions among which is violence.

As mentioned above, Okonkwo the main character of the novel is overwhelmingly traumatized by many reasons. Indeed, the main reason of his

trauma is the failure of his father he witnessed openly since his childhood. Unoka is described in the novel as a shameful and tender man. He is a failed man who has achieved nothing during his entire life. As a matter of fact, he becomes rejected, isolated and even banished by his strict community. Unoka has won zero title nor privilege except the name 'agbala'. This affects his son Okonkwo who decides later to abhor anything his father liked, and epitomised. He decides to make himself a successful person who will never be compared to his miserable father. He is portrayed as a hardworking and brave man by his whole community hence the words "Okonkwo relayed in solid achievements." However, despite the fulfilment of his desire to make a success contrary to his father, Okonkwo does not limit himself there. He changes day and night because he is greatly dominated by two features; the fear of failure, and the fear of weakness. In fact, he avoids everything banished by his society so as to acquire privilege and to always maintain his social hierarchy.

Furthermore, the weakness of Okonkwo is his own pride. He thinks that everything he undertakes is good and worthy. Contrary to his best friend Obierika a kind and attentive man, Okonkwo always sees things blindly. He always follows his id which makes him miserable in front of his people. Instead of using his superego he lets his ego serving his id. As a result, this weakness of Okonkwo leads him to act violently and involuntary.

In the same way, Okonkwo is too affected by the advent of colonialism in his clan. He sees the white culture as weak. Very tied to his culture, he categorically opposes the missionaries' hegemony in Umuofia. He sees the white culture very tolerant and tender contrary to the Igbo one. Conscious of the white man's way of giving people much liberty and same social positions, Okonkwo becomes highly suspicious to his hierarchy in the society. To maintain his privilege, Okonkwo refuses the missionaries' deeper entrance into his society. But unfortunately, Okonkwo does not achieve his main objective to destitute the

missionaries. His first failure is his son Nwoye who decides to join the new religion. Nwoye quits the Igbo traditions to the white's traditions for good. He frequents them every time and as a result they convert him. This event greatly marks Okonkwo's first disappointment. Additionally, Okonkwo appears to be betrayed by his peers. When he comes back from Mbanta, Okonkwo finds his community falling in the hands of the missionaries. He decides to prevent that striking event from lasting but he fails to. The Umuofian people refuse to help him in fighting against the missionaries' hegemony. They leave him alone with his ideas and dreams. In that Okonkwo is psychologically wounded. He sees his peers sinking in weakness and laziness. He finds them too much coward. As a matter of fact, he understands that all has changed. Umuofia has lost his prestige and glory. His brave and courageous children have all fallen apart and sink into an opened failure. Consequently, these above anxious experiences that haunt Okonkwo's mind urge him to apply some defence mechanisms so as to free himself.

#### ► Repression

According to *The Dictionary of Psychology*, repression is “an unconscious defence mechanism in which unacceptable mental contents are banished or kept out of consciousness.” It is generally considered as a defence mechanism used by our ego to prevent painful or disturbing thoughts to become conscious. Repression has as aim forcing troubling ideas, bad memories and feelings into the consciousness in which they would disturb the individual. This defence mechanism has been used by Okonkwo so as to completely forget his father. Unoka, the father of Okonkwo has been through his life a useless and unworthy person among his peers. Aware of that Okonkwo decides to do whatever he was able to do in order to become a successful and glorious man in his clan. This quest of success and fame has been made so as to be unlike Unoka. Fortunately, Okonkwo succeeds in all his plans. As a matter of fact, by his worth

he can forget his father's failure. Indeed, his success becomes a way to repress his bad memories from Unoka.

Okonkwo further uses repression to get rid of his mental sickness from his son, Nwoye who betrayed him by embracing Christianity. He feels disappointed when he realises that his only son has abandoned his father and society for another one. Okonkwo did his best to change Nwoye but he couldn't and eventually he felt ashamed and failed. Therefore, he decides to take him out of his thoughts and plans. Okonkwo feels it abnormal to have a son like Nwoye because he is seen as a generous, successful man in his community. Okonkwo wonders how a great and brave man like him come to have a son, such that disgraceful Nwoye. When he thinks about his achievements he doubts if Nwoye is really his son because his real biological son wouldn't be like that Nwoye. Okonkwo becomes aware that Nwoye is the typical representation of his grandfather, Unoka. However, he decides to banish Nwoye from the family and renounce of ever being Nwoye's father. As a matter of fact, he kicks him out of the household by stating, "You have all seen the great abomination of your brother. Now he is no longer my son or your brother. I will only have a son who is a man, who will hold his head up among my people" (*TFA*, 172).

These words show that Okonkwo no longer believes in his son. He no longer loves him nor considers him as his family member. Okonkwo takes him as the family's shame and dishonour. This fact of banishing Nwoye is a kind of repression of pains and shame he feels within himself. Repression appears now to be a defence against weakness and failure.

#### ► Projection

For *The Dictionary of Psychology*, projection is "an unconscious defence mechanism in which a person attributes to another those general unconscious ideas, thoughts, feelings, and impulses that are in himself undesirable or

unacceptable.” However, those projected feelings or ideas onto another would commonly cause anxieties, bad memories, trauma or guilt. Okonkwo applies this defence mechanism to prevent his son Nwoye from growing like Unoka. As projection is an ego mechanism in which the individual believes that inner feelings are from other people. Okonkwo’s bad memories from his childhood urges him to do his best to keep his son courageous and masculine. He fears Nwoye may resemble his grandfather. Okonkwo thinks that Nwoye may become weak if he cannot make achievements. He shows anger and aggressiveness towards his son to help him gain, one day, respect and consideration from the clan.

Okonkwo’s first son, Nwoye was then twelve years old but already causing his father great anxiety for his incipient laziness. At any rate, that was how it looked to his father, and he sought to correct him by constant nagging and beating (*TFA*, 13-14).

Okonkwo wants Nwoye to be seen in the future as an inflexible man contrary to his grandfather. Like Okonkwo himself, he wants Nwoye to be rewarded and accepted by elders as an important and useful person in the community. “And so although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered...” (*TFA*, 8).

Moreover, Okonkwo applies projection when he comes back home after his exile and finds automatically that all has changed during his absence. He has found that everything is going to fall apart as the Igbo start to adhere to the Whiteman’s ways of life. Therefore, he becomes aware that the Igbo people will become especially coward like Unoka. He feels that the prestige and privilege of the Igbo society disrupt. Okonkwo becomes desperate when seeing his people exhibiting weakness and failure which he has always hated through his life. Consequently, Okonkwo kills one of the missionaries. This act appears to him as



a way of freeing himself from the pains he deeply feels. This assault can be characterised as a fact of taking revenge over the disruption of his people which he thought to be caused by weakness.

#### ► Regression

The *Dictionary of Psychology* defines regression as “an unconscious defence mechanism in which a person undergoes a partial or total return to early patterns of adaption.” It is commonly seen as an ego mechanism whereby the conscience ego uses earlier stages of development so as to hinder stressful events. It occurs when we act in a childish way to response to frightening situations.

Okonkwo sometimes uses regression whenever he is anxious or in bad temper. He acts like a child of six years old to fulfil his desire or nourish his id. Sometimes he unconsciously sins or acts wrongfully. For example, he broke the Week of Peace by beating his wife. It is clear that Okonkwo did that in an unconscious way because it's his wives who remembered him that it was a sacred week. A week in which abnormal things are prevented and banished (*TFA*, 31). This shows that Okonkwo becomes a miserable child whenever he gets angry. He cannot control his id and lets his ego faithfully serving the id.

#### ► Reaction formation

Reaction formation is literally known as an ego mechanism in which a person behaves in the opposite direction to which he thinks or feels. It has as main purpose satisfying the id by keeping the ego ignorant. This defence mechanism means replacing unacceptable feeling with its opposite. Reaction formation is undoubtedly used by Nwoye and many of the other oppressed figures in the novel. Nwoye decides to embrace Christianity because he was troubled by his father's ill-treatment upon him. He flees his household to find protection and freedom in the new revealed religion then starts attending church teachings. He converts to Christianity and abandons his indigenous religion. Consequently, Nwoye leaves

his father's house for good when Okonkwo beats him and banished him for the abominable act he has done. Okonkwo feels deeply ashamed and sorry for the sin his son has committed.

Similarly, the out casted people did as Nwoye. As they found Christianity highly tender towards every individual, they decided to abandon the Igbo religion. They seek protection from their social and religious Igbo customs they have suffered many years. Consequently, the whole community and Okonkwo particularly views Christianity as a religion that takes away their people and sons. However, the new religion appears as an opposite to the Igbo religion.

#### ► Displacement

According to the Dictionary of Psychology displacement is “a defence mechanism of channelling undesired or inexpedient impulses to alternative outlets.” Literally, displacement is conceived as an ego mechanism which occurs when there is a contradiction between the id and superego. There is displacement mechanism whenever the id wants something the superego does not permit. However, displacement occurs when Okonkwo feels ashamed of his son Nwoye whom he thinks would have the bad features of his late father. Okonkwo replaces Nwoye by Ikemefuna and Ezinma, her loyal and comprehensive daughter. Unconsciously, Okonkwo turns his love to Ikemefuna the lad he is asked to keep in his household. He unintentionally loves him thanks to the young boy's behaviour and masculine features. As a matter of fact, he sometimes cries upon Nwoye to behave or act like Ikemefuna.

Besides, Ezinma the confident of Okonkwo appears to be a relief for Okonkwo as she is a kind and loyal child to her father. Okonkwo sees in her his own representation. He sees in her masculine features and promising good reputation. Eventually he sometimes wishes her being a boy. In that he sadly argues “I wish she were a boy, Okonkwo thought within himself. She understood things so

perfectly. Who else among his children could have read his thoughts so well?”  
(*TFA*, 173).

## CHAPTER IV. TRAUMA IN *PURPLE HIBISCUS*

This chapter foregrounds the psychological effects of trauma on the characters in *Purple Hibiscus*, particularly Beatrice. We explore in this part Beatrice's trauma and the ways she takes to survive from his anxiety.

### IV.1. Women and Socio-political Trauma in *Purple Hibiscus*

#### IV.1.1. The trauma of Society

The Igbo society is an inflexible patriarchal society when it comes to women. It has culturally settled several norms for men as well as women. Women are first of all asked to be married and bear children. They are expected to be obedient and voiceless in their fathers' houses as well as at their husbands' houses. According to Sadiya Abubakar "In a patriarch dominated society like Nigeria, the social status of a woman is conceived as not only inferior to that of man, but also dependent on him clinging their rationale to cultural and religious reasons" (2016, 603). Thus, in the Igbo society, "a woman cannot, is unable, hasn't the power. Not to mention "speaking": it's exactly this that she's forever deprived of. Unable to speak of pleasure: no pleasure, no desire: power, desire, speaking, pleasure, none of these is for woman" (Cixious, 1981, 44).

In addition, in the Igbo society, a good woman should stay at home to take care of children and stay loyal to her husband despite her marital situation. However, a woman that transgresses these social expectations is excommunicated from the society because she is seen as deviant. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the author depicts the plight of a typical Nigerian woman named Beatrice. Beatrice is described in the novel as passive, submissive and loyal woman. She is a lovely mother who loves and well treats her children. Beatrice is portrayed as a good and respectful woman who is always obedient to her husband, Eugene, despite his harshness towards her and because of the social norms and expectations she

accepts to suffer within herself rather than transgress the cultural principles. According to Tiffany, “Beatrice is the type of wife that African calls as “good” women because she obeys her husband all the time” (2018, 48). Accordingly, she is also under the obligations of her society.

Furthermore, Beatrice suffers traumatic experiences from society because she is unable to give Eugene many children. She is stigmatized by society because for them a good wife should be able to give many children to her husband. Consequently, the Umunna<sup>8</sup> of her husband repeatedly asks him to marry another woman to have many children because he is a wealthy man. For the Igbo society it is unworthy for a man with Eugene's privilege to have only two children. As a matter fact the ‘Umunna’ of Eugene forces him to take another wife without considering the situation in which that may put Beatrice. That social attitude affects her because the Umunna's behaviour seems to be extremely cruel. Eugene's relatives and society continuously threaten Mama just because of her inability to give birth to other children.

Consequently, Mama is deeply obliged to accept and endure any abusive and ill-treatment from Eugene. She automatically becomes voiceless and submissive in front of any abuse she may receive. Eugene in that way refuses to follow his Umunna's proposal and decides to stay with Beatrice for good. But this leads Mama to suffer more and more because she is compelled to stay obedient to her husband who has come to done to her a great favour despite his wealth. In a conversation with Aunty Ifeoma Beatrice says:

Umunna will always say hurtful things. Did our own ‘Umunna’ not tell Eugene to take another wife because a man of his stature cannot have just two children? If people like you had not been on my side then ... (*PH*, 75).

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<sup>8</sup> Umunna are form of patrilineage maintained by the Igbo. Law starts with the Umunna which is a male line of descent from a founding ancestor (who the line is sometimes named after) with groups of compounds containing closely related families headed by the eldest male member.

In this way, the Igbo society supports male hegemony over women. Men are well considered unlike women who are asked to be “possessed”. Eugene is given the privilege to marry other wives without considering Mama's feelings. Gloria Ada Fwangyil states,

The phallocentric notion that a woman must have male sons in order to be valued culturally makes Beatrice to feel insecure. The villagers believe that a man with Eugene's wealth and position in the society should not have just two children. This belief contributes to Beatrice's trauma after the second miscarriages (2011, 268).

Mama is therefore traumatized by the role society plays in her couple. She has been victim of several miscarriages in her marital life because of her husband's abuse. Society never talks about Eugene's behaviour towards Mama but all they do is to talk about her inability to give to her wealthy husband many children. However, Mama becomes more and more traumatized as society repeatedly stigmatizes her.

In addition to Mama's trauma from various incidents, other women in the novel such as Aunty Ifeoma and Yuwande have been victim of traumatic situations. Because of the cultural norms of the Igbo society, women are not only suffering from domestic violence but also from some cultural aspects. The notion of widowhood is highly important in the Igbo society. In fact, contrary to two other ethnic cultures such as the Indians where widows are buried with their husbands, in Nigerian Igbo, they have a different treatment but very strange too.

In Igbo culture widows suffer physical, social and psychological torture because of the various heartless practices they go through. This is clarified by Fwangyil when she writes: “The widow is made to go through certain traditional mourning rituals, which in most cases are injurious to her health” (2011, 268). Among the practices Igbo widows face are the “Oath ritual”; the widow is forced to drink the water used in bathing her dead husband's corpse. There is also the

“shaving of hair practice”. This means that the hair of the widow is shaved so as to make the woman feel less important or complete since her duties as a wife are no longer useful because she is no longer in couple.

Another common practice over widows in Igbo society is inheritance and disinheritance from her husband’s properties. She is assured to get a part of her husband’s properties if she is remarried to a brother of her dead husband. She can also benefit from the properties of her husband if she has male child or children with him. However, if none of these demands is fulfilled, she will not inherit. This is proved by Gloria Ada Fwangyil when she asserts “The belongings of the family are confiscated by members of the dead husband’s extended family and the bereaved family is dispossessed of their inheritance” (266). That can be seen in the case of Aunty Ifeoma, the sister of Eugene. She inherits nothing from her husband despite the boy she has with Ifediora.

Aunty Ifeoma is portrayed in the novel as an inflexible woman, mother of three children. She is renowned by her hard work and the care she bears for her children. She is not a woman who seeks favours even though she has a wealthy brother, Eugene who can support her whenever she is in need of any support. She opts to remain courageous instead of begging anything from Eugene. She is a self-reliant woman who chooses to stay independent. This is shown in her discussion with Beatrice when she says:

Have you forgotten that Eugene offered to buy me a car, even before Ifediora died? But first he wanted us to join the Knights of St. John. He wanted us to send Amaka to convent school. He even wanted me to stop wearing make up! I want a new car, nwunye<sup>9</sup>, and I want to use my gas cooker again and I want a new freezer and I want money so that I will not have to unravel the seams of Chima’s trousers when he outgrows them. But I will not ask my

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<sup>9</sup> wife

brother to bend over so that I can lick his buttocks to get these things (*PH*, 95).

Besides, the widow “is at times accused of killing her husband...” (Fwangyil, 266). This can be justified by the case of Ifeoma, a brave lady who loses her husband after a car accident but unfortunately, she is blamed by the Umunna of her dead husband which thinks that she is his murderer. Ifeoma sadly says:

Last Christmas one of the women from their compound even told me I had killed him I wanted to stuff sand in her mouth. Then I thought that I should sit her down, eh, and explain that you do not kill a husband you love, that you do not orchestrate a car accident in which a trailer rams into your husband’s car, but again, why waste my time? They all have the brains of guinea fowls (*PH*, 74).

In spite of the tireless efforts Ifeoma makes to bring alone her children up she is still victim of her society which accuses her of hiding some of her husband’s property. Ifeoma is the breadwinner of her family. Therefore, society would pay tribute to her through her patience as she doesn’t find another man to replace his dead husband. As a woman, that position of society and his dead husband’s Umunna have inflicted traumatic feelings upon her. She mourns “Perhaps today, although I don’t have the strength for Ifediora’s family right now. They eat more and more shit every year. The people of his ‘Umunna’ said he left money somewhere and I have been hiding it” (*PH*, 74). In these words, Ifeoma shows his disappointment of the incriminations of her environment which stigmatizes her.

#### **IV.1.2. Trauma of the Politics**

In *Purple Hibiscus* the political face of Nigeria after the independences is highly portrayed by Adichie. After gaining independence, Nigerian political leaders plunged the country into several military coups. Between the 1966 and



1999 the army held power in Nigeria without interruption apart from a short-lived return to democracy between 1979 and 1983. The consequences of these military coups not only led to economic, socio-political and religious turmoil but also to psychological troubles over the citizens mainly women. The effects of the political bigotry in Nigeria led also to several loss of human lives resulting in trauma on the victim of these disasters. As exemplified in *Purple Hibiscus*, the ruling military government murders Ade Coker after blowing up a bomb on him in front of her wife Yuwande. This event left his wife traumatized for good. Beatrice is also victim of the tyrannical government that plunged Eugene into loss. Because of the military regime Eugene loses his factories and prolific reporter, Ade Coker. In that Mama says, “Eugene has not been well. He has having migraines and fever... He is carrying more than any man should carry. Do you know what Ade’s death caused him? It is too much for one person” (*PH*, 250). As a result, he gets always frustrated and repeatedly attacks Beatrice whenever he gets lost. He beats her, tortures her and ultimately throws her in a diabolical trauma. On page 213, it is said, “Her face was puffy from crying and her lips were cracked, with bits discolored skin peeling off”.

In contrast, Ifeoma’s mental breakdown is unlike that of Mama and Yewande. She is victim of several threats from the military and government dictatorial regime. As a matter of fact, she gets eroded and loses her integrity and job at Nsukka and flees to US for eventual release. Generally, the above-mentioned incidents are what women in Nigeria experience under military anarchical leadership and political bigotry.

#### **IV.2. Domestic Violence in *Purple Hibiscus***

Domestic violence in Nigeria is mostly encouraged by society that privileges men over women. In Nigeria, women are always victim of male dominance in all levels mainly at home. In *Purple Hibiscus*, domestic violence

that prevails in the Igbo society is projected through Eugene and his wife Beatrice because the whole story of the novel is centered on the family of that couple. Papa is characterized as an openhearted man who helps people in need. He is a wealthy and religious man. He is seen as a caregiver and protector of his children to have a leading role in society but with his bad temper, he fails in. It is true that in any patriarchal society like Nigeria, fathers have an atmosphere of fear and hardness but in *Purple Hibiscus* Adichie depicts a specific father characterized by his hardship control. He is openly known as a good man but at home he is a cruel and hard father. In fact, his attitude in his household results in an on-going abuse that spurs trauma that entirely affect all the members of the family. As a matter of fact, that behaviour of Eugene is mostly due to the new religion he worships. He rules his family with heavy hands according to the principles of the Catholic faith. Papa is carried by the dilemma of the existence of two different religions: the indigenous Igbo religion of his biological father and that of the white man.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Eugene is portrayed as an abusive and hard man. As his sister Ifeoma says, he is, a “colonial product” (*PH*, 11). This shows clearly that Eugene is a transformed man because of colonialism. He is converted to Christianity and behave like the Whites. He hates any aspect of the indigenous religion and raises his children to grow White. He is deeply devoted to the Catholic Church and does not tolerate any transgression of its principles. This can be seen in the opening section of the novel entitled “Breaking Gods” when Kambeli begins by: “Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy mussel across the room and broke the figurines on the étagère” (*PH*, 3). This violent reaction of Eugene illustrate what Cheryl Stobie said of him, “the emblematic colonised masculine subject” (2010, 424). After all, he is a wealthy and devoted man who is even respected in the religious sphere. He is respected by Father Benedict, the white priest of the Catholic Church. Even when Father Benedict prepares his sermons,

he always mentioned Eugene's name as reference. During his sermons, Father Benedict usually referred to the Pope, Papa, and Jesus- in that order He used Papa to illustrate the gospels:

When we let our light shine before men, we are reflecting Christ's Triumphant Entry... "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, to make sure the government did not threaten his businesses. But no, he used the Standard to speak the truth even though it meant the paper lost advertising. Brother Eugene spoke out for freedom. How many of us have stood up for the truth? How many of us have reflected the Triumphant Entry?" The congregation said "Yes" or "God bless him" (*PH*, 4).

Nevertheless, despite his devotion to his people, Eugene has abandoned his indigenous culture and takes that of the colonisers. This is what the revolutionary anti-colonialist Frantz Fanon attempts to describe in *The Wretched of the Earth*. He states:

The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces (1961, 32).

The behaviour of Eugene *vis-a-vis* his indigenous customs and beliefs is truly illustrated by these words by Fanon. Eugene hates his indigenous religion and ways of life accusing them of being superstitious.

*Purple Hibiscus* shows the great influence of the colonisers in Nigeria through the character of Eugene. Eugene is an enemy of his Igbo culture and religion as he thinks his biological father, Papa-Nnukwu is "evil" because they

have different religious beliefs and cultural values. Eugene sees the gods in the indigenous religion as idolatrous to which he refers as “gods of wood and stone” (*PH*, 47). He is in favour of English religion and language over Igbo and the European influence over his Igbo racial heritage which he abandoned. That transformation of Eugene justify what Frantz Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Masks*: “To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture” (1967, 29).

In the other hand Beatrice referred as Mama by her children is described as a good and submissive woman. She is strongly loyal to her husband. She is a caring woman who looks for the wellbeing of her household. She is according to the standards of the Igbo society the typical representation of a real Igbo woman. Nevertheless, despite these characteristics Mama and Papa bear their household is always in tensions. Mama is victim of domestic violence because of her husband’s maltreatment. Like many Nigerian women Mama experiences trauma as a result of the beatings Eugene inflicts upon her. He beats his wife severely in such a way she loses a pregnancy. This can be seen through these words by Kambeli:

I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thus on my parents' hand-carved bedroom door...I sat down, closed my eyes and started to count... I stepped out of my room just as Jaja come out of his. We stood at the landing and watched Papa descend. Mama was slung over his shoulder... “There's blood on the floor”, Jaja said. “I'll get the brush from the bathroom”. We cleaned up the trickle of blood. We cleaned up the trickle of blood, which trailed away as if someone had carried a leaking jar of red watercolor all the way downstairs. Jaja scrubbed while I wiped (*PH*, 33).

Mama continuously suffers from Eugene’s violence in a point she loses another pregnancy. One day she beats her heavily and breaks a table on her belly. This shows that that many Nigerian women suffers maltreatment in their household mainly those who are married to hot tempered husbands like Eugene. The hardness of Eugene towards his family causes stress and fear on the whole family

mainly on Mama who is a mother and wife. In her conversation with Kambeli and Mama reports:

You know that small table we keep the Bible, nne<sup>10</sup>? Your father broke it on my belly...My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it. (*PH*, 248)

Moreover, Eugene unjustly inflicts beatings upon Mama when she allows Kambeli to eat on the day of Eucharistic fast. Papa could not understand Mama's position towards her daughter because generally men are not as understanding as mothers. The love mothers carry for their children are far beyond that of fathers. Mama gives Kambeli some cornflakes because she is seriously ill and cannot fast in that day. Instead of enquiring to know why Mama has given Kambeli eat Papa attacks them and beats Mama. He beats her for he thinks that they have broken the religious rules. Eugene beats Mama thinking she is responsible for that disobedience to God's rule. This is shown in the following words by Kambeli:

He unbuckled his belt slowly. It was a heavy belt made of layers of brown leather with a sedate leather-covered buckle. It landed on Jaja first across his shoulder. Then Mama raised her hands as it landed on her upper arm /.../ he swung the belt on Mama, Jaja and me (*PH*, 103).

Furthermore, Mama suffers from various inexpressive emotions. She is not allowed to express herself. She is deprived of the right of choice and taking decisions even when she have something important to say. Mama has always been muted by the domineering voice of Papa. Like men, women also wish to have the right to fulfil their wishes. But, as has been seen from the above, in a patriarchal society like Nigeria women are only reduced to the second class and are in some extent regarded as slaves. This can be illustrated by these words from Cixious quoted by Khadidiatou Diallo:

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<sup>10</sup> The term “nne” often sound as mere term to denote motherhood in Igbo society but it goes beyond the term. It is a one-word sentence that is a name.

[Their] silence is the mark of hysteria. The great hysterics have lost speech, they are aphonic, and at times have lost more than speech: they are pushed to the point of choking, nothing gets through. They are decapitated, their tongues are cut off and what talks isn't heard because it's the body that talks, and man doesn't hear the body. In the end, the woman pushed to hysteria is the woman who disturbs and is nothing but disturbance (2020, 34).

Even when Mama falls ill, Papa does not recognize her illness. She is not permitted to express her feelings even if they are hurting because "...She lives in a world that is controlled by her husband and she does not have any choice or feeling of her own"<sup>11</sup>. This can be seen when Eugene asked her to join him in visiting Father Benedict. Beatrice decides to remain in the car and not to follow Eugene because she does not feel well. When they go back home later, he beats her for deciding to stay in the car before following him. He beats her because she has expressed her choice and feelings of sickness before obeying him. Moreover, Eugene's draconian behaviour towards her family is seen when he beats Kambeli until she faints. In fact, it is Mama who stays with her in the hospital. She is disappointed by her husband who left her alone with their suffering daughter. Mama stayed alone with Kambeli until she recovers from her fainting. Instead of helping Mama or staying with them, Eugene abandons her in spite of being the real cause of Kambeli's illness. Beatrice suffers also from Eugene's refusal to help her when she stays in the hospital with Kambeli.

Mama and her children have undergone several moments of emotional crisis because of Eugene's demoniac attitude in the household. The love a mother carries for her child is unlimited. When a child is hurt her mother is automatically hurt. There is an attachment between mother and child as a result the mother always shares the pain of her children. Papa repeatedly beats the children even

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<sup>11</sup> Tiffany Astrick. Patriarchal Oppression and Women Empowerment in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. *Vivid: Journal of Language and Literature* - Vol. 7 No. 2 (2018), p. 48.

when they commit a lesser mistake. Eugene even uses boiled water to punish them because they have gone against his rule. And their crime is that they didn't tell over the phone that his father Nnukwu is living with them under the same roof. This is clear when Kambeli reports:

He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it toward my feet. He poured the hot water on my feet, slowly as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen.... I saw the moist steam before I saw the water. I watched the water leave the kettle, flowing almost in slow motion in an arc to my feet. The pain of the contact was so pure, so scalding, I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed...

...Mama had come inside the bathroom. Tears were running down her face. Her nose was running, too and, I wondered if she would wipe it before it got to her mouth, before she would have to taste it. She mixed salt with cold water and gently plastered the gritty mixture onto my feet. (*PH*, 194-195).

Beatrice not only suffers from the direct maltreatment of Eugene upon her but also the battering he inflicts upon Kambeli and Jaja. She suffers the pain and cruelty her lovely children are unjustly undergoing. Besides, through Kambeli, Adichie describes Mama's matrimonial situation as follows:

She cried for a long time she cried until my hand clasped in her felt stiff. She cried until Auntie Ifeoma finished cooking the rotting meat in a spicy stew. She cried until she fell asleep, her head against the seat of the chair. Jaja laid her on a mattress on the living room floor (*PH*, 249).

These words by Adichie summarize the striking plight of Mama after undergoing Papa's maltreatments. She had six years back of miscarriages after repeated beatings of Eugene. Mama has not only undergone direct ill-treatment from Papa but she deeply experiences maltreatment Papa inflicts upon their two children. She witnesses Papa beating Kambeli until she faints. She has also witnessed Papa mistreating Jaja and breaking his little finger for not answering properly two questions in test. He flings also a missile against Jaja when missing communion.

All these incidents psychologically affected Mama. These experienced events are responsible for Mama's further trauma and mental wrecks.

The plight of married women in Nigeria are highlighted by many other Nigerian female writers. For instance, in *Joys of Motherhood*, Buchi Emecheta, like Adichie depicts the problem of domestic violence experienced by many Nigerian women through the character Nnu Ego. Nnu Ego suffers from her first husband's battering because she is just incapable of reproducing.

#### **IV.3. The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in *Purple Hibiscus***

This part explores the aftermaths of trauma experienced by Nigerian women and how they react to their traumatic feelings and memories in *Purple Hibiscus*. *Purple Hibiscus* is a novel that depicts the plight of Nigerian women. The characters are allegorical to people in real life as a fictional story. Women in Nigeria suffer from physical and mental abuses because of the patriarchal society they belong to. The Igbo society is renowned for its patriarchal traits and the privilege it gives men over women. Women in the Igbo society suffer from abuse in various domains. They are victim of the societal and cultural established norms and religious turmoil. They suffer maltreatment in their households and are victim of cruelty from the government. As a result, they sink in desperate trauma and mental illness. That is the case of the women portrayed in *Purple Hibiscus*.

Mama, Auntie Ifeoma, and Yewande are victim of trauma caused by their social environment and governmental cruelty. They are affected by wounded emotions, oppression of social forces, domestic violence and the violence of their tyrannical government. In fact, Khadidiatou Diallo writes that “beyond individual suffering, the patriarchal society is entrapped by traumatic historical events and consequently they need all, especially women, to regurgitate the swallowed words of agony, to learn to speak sorrows and be heard” (2020, 33). However, society’s brutality progressively plants the seeds of the women’s rebellion against



the hardship they have to bear every day. The women in *Purple Hibiscus* employ various strategies to champion their trauma caused by their partners, their society and political leaders. The different strategies they adopted are defence mechanisms such as reaction formation, displacement and depression theorized by Sigmund Freud and letter on his daughter Anna Freud in her *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (1937).

#### ► Reaction formation

After many sufferings from Eugene abuses and conjugal violence Mama eventually poisoned her husband to death. This is a strategy she adopts to get rid of the traumatic experiences she undergoes from him. She applies reaction formation by killing his violent husband to terminate the oppression and cruelty he inflicts upon her. “They did an autopsy... They have found the poison in your father’s body ... I started putting poison in his tea before I come to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor” (*PH*, 290). Mama is, according to Stobie, “excluded from access to forms of power that will protect herself and her children, Beatrice resorts to violence herself. The murder is not portrayed as a triumph, but as a sad necessity...” (2010, 427). However, the poison she uses is a way to free the whole family from their fear and anxieties. Jesse Emery affirms that, “The neo-colonial, patriarchal oppression of Beatrice leads her to revolt, but violence is the only method of revolution she can use... She slowly poisons Eugene as a reaction to the physical and emotional abuse he has caused” (2012, 22).

In the same way reaction formation is applied by Kambeli, Jaja and their mother through silence. The novel explores characters living in a complex household that prevents them from self-expression and freedom of speech. However, they speak “with their spirits than with their lips” (*PH*, 16). Many of the novel's characters are dominated by silence. They use silence to challenge

their traumatic experiences and to react to their anxieties. Silence is adopted by the characters in two different angles. In one hand it is used as submission. Kambeli and her mother and brother Jaja always turn to silent whenever their father shows up as he makes them sense threatened. On that, Tifanny Astrick writes, “Eugene (Papa) is the symbol of patriarchy whose mere presence sparks off the fire of danger that keeps the females under fear, tension; so, they are silenced” (2018, 48).

That silence appears to be the result of the maltreatment he repeatedly inflicts upon them. Kambeli and Jaja struggle to express their emotions and feelings because of their bad memories from Papa (*PH*, 174). Their experiences with Papa sometimes drive them to silence. Therefore, silence appears to be the best way of submission to challenge their trauma. Kambeli and Jaja are very obedient to their father's decisions and decide to always stay silent because they think that saying something about Papa's behaviour may result into severe punishment. Therefore, remaining voiceless is according to them the safest way to avoid further violent attacks.

In the other hand silence is not only a way to show obedience to their father's decisions but it is applied by Jaja when he refuses to speak to their father when he phoned them during their last visit to Nsukka, at their aunt Ifeoma and Papa-Nnukwu, their idolatrous grandfather.

“Yes. Jaja refused to go to the phone, and I did not go, either.”

...And yet, I did not want to talk to him; I wanted to leave with Father Amadi, or with Aunty Ifeoma, and never come back. (*PH*, 268).

Jaja decides to keep silence to challenge the aggressiveness of their father. This a way of showing his tirelessness of their father's draconian behaviour.

#### ► Displacement

Displacement is applied when Auntie Ifeoma flees from the military regime that rule the country with heavy hands. She decides to exile to America to get rid of the dictatorship of the tyrannical government. In fact, she has been even unfairly dismissed from the University of Nsukka. Therefore, moving to America rather than staying in Nigeria becomes her only option to save herself from her trauma.

Besides, displacement is used in the novel when the characters decided to get out of their long silence to find protection out. Next to silence, speech seems to be a way of freedom and protection. In *Purple Hibiscus* speech as weapon is mostly applied by Jaja. He usually speaks to protect Mama and Kambeli from Eugene's menaces. For instance, when Kambeli had a painting of Papa-Nnukwu, their idolatrous grandfather, Jaja decided to take the blame from his sister to protect her from their father's aggression. That is shown through the following conversation between Papa and Jaja:

"What is that? Have you all converted to heathen ways? What are you doing with that painting? Where did you get it?" Papa asked.

"O nkem<sup>12</sup>. It's mine," Jaja said. He wrapped the painting around his chest with his arms.

"It's mine," I said...

"Who brought that painting into this house?"

"Me," I said.

"Me," Jaja said. If only Jaja would look at me, I would ask him not to blame himself. (HP, 209).

Jaja has openly spoken in order to counter Papa's aggression against Kambeli. Moreover, his speech as a way of protecting is shown when he decided to tell to the police that he is the murderer of his father.

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<sup>12</sup> May what is mine be mine. May I not lack what is mine?

The policemen came a few hours later. They said they wanted to ask some questions. Somebody at St. Agnes Hospital had contacted them, and they had a copy of the autopsy report with them. Jaja did not wait for their questions; he told them he had used rat poison, that he put it in Papa's tea. They allowed him to change his shirt before they took him away (*PH*, 291).

He does that to prevent his murdering mother from going to prison even though she has poison Eugene. Speech appears here as a means of defence and protection.

### ► Repression

In *Purple Hibiscus*, repression as defence mechanism has been applied when Jaja and Kambeli visited their aunt Ifeoma. Unlike their imprisoning house, the house of their aunt is a relaxing environment. Kambeli and her brother Jaja find enjoyment at their aunt to repress the feelings of loneliness they are suffering from in their father's house. They tried to forget everything from their house and throw away their traumatic feelings from Papa. In fact, enjoyment becomes a form of freedom. Kambeli and Jaja have been psychologically transformed when they had visited Aunty Ifeoma. At Aunty Ifeoma's they started to feel relaxed and free from their father's maltreatment. They hear Aunty Ifeoma and Father Amady speaking and laughing and Father Amady singing. As a result, sound and enjoyment appear to be a gift of distraction and freedom to Eugene's children. This can be seen in these words by Kambeli:

I nodded in time to the chorus. We really did not need the music, though, because his voice was melody enough. I felt that I was at home, that I was where I had been meant to be for a long time... I laughed. It sounded strange, as if I were listening to the recorded laughter of a stranger being played back. I was not sure I had ever heard myself laugh (*PH*, 179).

In *Purple Hibiscus*, speech and silence appear to be special to the lives of the characters living under traumatic experiences. They help them hinder the trauma they endure. Speech and silence in *Purple Hibiscus* help the characters recover

from the abuse and violence they have been victim of. They sooth their pain and restore peace in their complex lives.

## CONCLUSION

This work has been studying *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus* in a psychoanalytical perspective. Its mere intention has been to show that social and religious values can be sources of people's mental illness as it is the cases of Okonkwo the main protagonist in *Things Fall Apart*, and Beatrice the character of our focus in *Purple Hibiscus*.

*Things Fall Apart* as well as *Purple Hibiscus* are both Nigerian novels by Igbo authors. The novels are written in different periods but have much in common. In fact, they are both postcolonial books and share almost the same themes. Their authors Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are both Nigerian prolific and outstanding writers. In their texts they used to using their Igbo land as setting and its culture as basis. In fact, in their novels, Achebe and Adichie deal with numerous relevant themes among which colonialism, change, clash of religions and traditions, etc. Nevertheless, in this study we have chosen two read the books from another special angle: the psychological one.

The main protagonist in *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo and Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus* are the elements of the novels highlighted in this study. It is through their relationships with their environment that we are able to notice the boundaries between literature and trauma. The novels thus serve as a tool that helps us notice the relationships between psychology and literature. Therefore, the two novels show up as an attempt to understand the ongoing effects of society, religion and colonialism over the Nigerian people.

This study has dealt with psychological trauma in the narratives. Following the characters of the novels in general and the main characters particularly, this study comes to conclude that the theme of trauma and its effects are exposed in the stories. After the analysis, it can be noticed that Okonkwo, Beatrice and some other characters of the novel suffer from troubling emotions

in their entire life. This is achieved through the use of some literary theories mainly the psychoanalytical theory which is a critical study that has as concern the study of mind. This theory has been used as the background of the study.

Moreover, the study has revisited other literary theories such as postcolonialism to analyse the works' historical background and context; feminist studies has also been consulted to see the role of gender in the two novels' social backgrounds. In fact, this background of the novels has helped us better know about that of the authors which is very important according to the New Historicism. These theories have been applied to better know about the characters' behaviours. The study has also reviewed many books and articles, essays and journals to better analyse the theme of trauma.

Besides, through Okonkwo and Beatrice, the study has justified the exposition of trauma mainly the psychological one in the two novels. In fact, this work has meaningfully found that the traumas of these characters are due to three main reasons; society, religion, and the advent of colonialism. The main origin of Okonkwo's trauma is his father and society as well the advent of colonialism. Whereas in *Purple Hibiscus* the trauma of Beatrice is due to the society's patriarchal nature. Other causes of trauma such as politics and religious turmoil are also highlighted in this study through Beatrice, Ifeoma and Yewande.

The Igbo society as mentioned above in the second chapter, is a strict society which is responsible for every action of its individuals. Both Okonkwo and Beatrice are born in a cultural and religious milieu where they are dictated by the social rules which marks a serious anxiety in their lives.

Nevertheless, even though Okonkwo and Beatrice have devoted all their live to fulfil their social duties, they have been sometimes proscribed and humiliated. For example, Okonkwo has been chased from his father's land after murdering involuntarily a man which has led to his ultimate demise. As for

Beatrice, she has been victimized by the society which was asking Eugene her husband to take another wife because she is not a productive woman. Okonkwo's success and honour are no longer recognized. Beatrice and Ifeoma experience the same thing. Beatrice's devotion to her cultural norms and patriarchal demands is no longer valuable as she is unable to give birth to her husband other children. And aunty Ifeoma suffers from her husband's Umunna insults and the governmental cruelty despite her courage and inflexibility.

As for religion, the Igbo religion is a strict faith with various principles and rites to perform. In addition, the Igbo religion is superstitious with striking practices among which throwing twin babies, sacrificing human beings, and harmful punishments like exile, etc. Meanwhile, the advent of colonialism has led to psychological troubles over the indigenous people. The missionaries come with their culture, their schools and religion which champion the tranquility of the indigenous Igbo. In fact, colonialism and its influence led to the falling apart of the Igbo traditional society by disturbing its tranquility.

However, many Igbo find out different ways to free themselves from social anxiety. Some of them commit suicide; the case of Okonkwo, the other join the colonial religion and ways of life, the example of the osu (the outcasts). Nevertheless, the work has clarified that after embracing the colonial religion and the Igbo people still suffer from trauma. With its institutions, people psychologically suffer every day. This is the case of the Achike family in *Purple Hibiscus*. Papa, a radical Catholic, hinders the freedom of his family by imposing strict Catholic principles upon them. Therefore, this brings about anxieties and mental wound over them. Politically, colonialism has also disturbed the tranquility of the Nigerian people through military coups and dictatorships which haunts the citizen's mind. That is the case of Ifeoma, Beatrice, and Yewande whose lives have been ruined.



This research has finally shown that people do not have the same way to handle their anxieties. Feelings of anxiety and depression are caused by different factors. Through Okonkwo and Beatrice, the study has shown that people can suffer from anxiety if only they have experienced many problems in their life time. Okonkwo and Beatrice as well as the other characters suffer hurtful feelings because of their ongoing trauma. Moreover, the study has also shown that people do not have also the same ways to fight against their anxieties. However, to get rid of their trauma the characters use various defence mechanisms: repression, displacement, projection, reaction formation.

Many lessons can be drawn from this study but two of them are more important in our sight. The first one is that to live in peace one should be in good term with his/her environment. This is justified by Okonkwo and Eugene. Okonkwo wins his clan's respect thanks to his achievements. He has fulfilled his community's demands and expectations from a man. Like Okonkwo, Eugene also is cherished by his community thanks to his wealth. He is seen as an openhearted man who gives donations to people in need. The second one is that despite the devotion, respect and faithfulness one can give to his society, his religion and culture, he/she can be ruined by them in a single mistake. That are the cases of Okonkwo and Beatrice who have been suffering to please their societies but they have become more vulnerable than anyone else.

This work on *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus* has scrutinized that any novel can be studied from a psychological perspective. And this research paper can be a starting point to the analysis of any African novel from this perspective as African societies are represented in almost all African novels as responsible for their people's traumas.

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