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JOURNEYING OUT OF SILENCED FAMILIAL SPACES IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS.*

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Johannesburg 2007

ABSTRACT

This study explores the silencing of familial spaces in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. It probes into how the familial space is invested with religiosity: how ritual and norm structure and silence familial spaces and how transcendence from these spaces can be achieved through elements of laughter, music and sexuality. The study uses post-colonial theories, concepts of familial ideology and familial theory to read the text. The introductory chapter provides a politico-historical background of the text, then a literary historiography of how the familial trope has been used in African literature with special focus on Achebe. The chapter also outlines the theoretical framework of the study while anticipating the issues to be dealt with. Chapter two focuses on how the familial space is invested with religious rituals and how these silence the familial space. Chapter three examines how augmentation out of the silenced familial spaces works through elements of laughter, sexuality and music. Chapter four investigates the family as a portrait of the state and most significantly how these two institutions are portrayed to be in a complex relationship. The study's conclusion is that the family can be used as an alternative site for discourses of marginality and can give a nuanced critique of the post-colony.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____ Signature _____

(Name of candidate)

___ day of _____, 2007.

To my mother Judith Osore Ouma
and father Edwin Ouma,
wherever you are,
for bringing
me into
this
world.

Acknowledgements

A year and two weeks have passed since I set foot in Johannesburg. Many are the kind ones who held my hand as I floundered to find my footing. Numerous they are but providence allows me little space to mention them.

My supervisor Professor James Ogude, I acknowledge your patience, kindness, understanding and immense support in the provision of insights towards this research. Your kindness on and off research schedule cannot be quantified in these few lines. Thank you. Dr. Joyce Nyairo, you sowed these seeds and prompted this daemon. Dr. Dan Ojwang' and Professor Bheki Peterson, those seminars, brain teasing as they were, opened up greater planes of thought.

Dina, your presence when I set foot here was vital. Grace and Flo you made feel at home. Terah you were like a brother to me. JP you shared in my joys and sorrows and the 'strong!' in the gym!

My colleagues and friends Kwezi, Moshidi, Aremue, Nomsa and Ndee, together we engaged our minds in and out of those seminars, most of the time with zest, yet sometimes with potential diversion. Suffice it to say we waded through.

My sister Atieno and brother Odhiambo, we started together, just the three of us. Uncle Ominde and my brother in law Ashilaka, you made it possible for me to set foot here.

Ultimately I would like to thank the University of the Witwatersrand which awarded me a Postgraduate Merit Scholarship for 2006. Thanks as well to Tothill and Bequest committee for granting me a bursary. This support enabled me to meet part of my financial needs.

Immense is the support I found from many good people but the responsibility of any shortfalls in this study lies squarely with me.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Political and literary contextualisation of *Purple Hibiscus*

Purple Hibiscus is temporally set between the late 1980s and the early, mid and late 90s. This is condensed within the memory of the narrator, fifteen year old Kambili. I say this because the text alludes to this through certain events and characters as I shall outline soon. When Ibrahim Babangida took over the reigns of power from General Muhammadu Buhari through a coup on 27th August 1985, it appeared like any of the other military regimes of Ironsi, Gowon, Murtala, Obasanjo and his predecessor Buhari. However, like a song that had droned over Nigerian ears for over two decades since the deposition of the only ceremonial Nigerian president Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1966, Babangida promised to bring to an end the human rights abuses perpetuated by the military regimes preceding him and bring back a civilian government.

Yet the onset of Babangida's reign marked the beginning of the climax of military dictatorship in Nigeria and the acceleration of economic instability. Due to his economic policies following the introduction of structural adjustment programmes by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), his reign was marked by an increase in the rates of inflation and quite significantly the demise of the middle class.[1]

The most explicit character in *Purple Hibiscus* who alludes to major political events in Nigeria is Ade Cocker. Ade Cocker is the editor of the fictional newspaper the *Standard*. The *Standard* belongs to Kambili's father Papa Eugene Achike. Ade Cocker is modelled after Dele Giwa.[2] Dele Giwa was a prominent journalist who died after a letter bomb bearing a government seal was delivered to his house. He is a character who represents the political climate in Nigeria under the rule of General

[1] Speaking of the demise of the middle class anticipates the plight Kambili's Aunty Ifeoma, a lecturer who struggles to fulfil the basic needs of her family. She arguably occupies the space of a *Pseudo*-middle class because of the economic conditions obtaining from military dictatorship. Kambili is the girl narrator in *Purple Hibiscus.*

[2] Adichie acknowledges this in an interview with Wale Adebanwi, pointing out that she 'loosely' models Ade Cocker after Dele Giwa whose death moved her. Dele Giwa was a prominent Nigerian Journalist and founder of *Newsmatch* magazine. He died on 19th October 1986 after a letter bomb bearing a government seal was delivered to his house- see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dele_Giwa

Ibrahim Babangida. His death also resounds with the other politically motivated killing of Ken Saro Wiwa.[3]

Ade Cocker is a fearless critic of the military regime and his relations with the narrator's family stems from his role as the editor of a paper owned by Papa Eugene. Cocker plays the role of locating *Purple Hibiscus* within the background of turbulent military regimes in Nigeria. While the text's spatial setting is within the family, the undertones of the military regimes are found in the multiple arrests of Ade Cocker and his eventual death. At the level of Kambili's family Papa Eugene plays another significant role. As the owner of the *Standard*, he has strong opinions about issues of democracy and the state. He earns accolades for his human rights crusade against the military regimes by virtue of him owning a paper that fearlessly criticises the military regime. His role is complex because of his other firm belief in religion as a key to the political crisis in the country. His strong belief in religion also throws up significant conditions that came along with the persistence of military regimes in Nigeria. Religion is a major thematic concern because it becomes an overdetermination[4], due to the persistence of military regimes and the conditions that followed. Religion occupies a troubling space in the Nigerian political and social fronts. The entrenching of religious tensions can be traced from political activities like Babangida's decision to involve Nigeria fully into Organization of the Islamic Conference, an intergovernmental grouping of fifty states which is involved in the economic well being of its predominantly Muslim member states. This was a decision that Babangida made despite the fact that Nigeria was a multi-religious society with probably only half its population as Muslim believers.[5]

The rise of religious intolerance comes after the fall of what Toyin Falola (1985) calls the second republic of Shehu Shagari. Chinua Achebe's (1984) blatant critique of the civil government, corruption and his opinions on the 'trouble with Nigeria' supports

[3] Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa was a Nigerian author, television producer and environmental activist who was executed by hanging by the Nigerian military government on November 10th 1995. His death put Nigeria on the spotlight sparking an international outrage that led it to be suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations- see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ken_Saro-wiwa

[4] I contend that religion is an overdetermination in Nigeria because while the military regimes were fueled by the ethnic determinants that led to the Biafran war in the late 60s and 70s, the coming in of religion overdetermines this situation.

[5] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibrahim_Babangida

the view that military dictatorship acted as a plan to curb increasing economic and political turbulence. Babangida's decision to involve Nigeria into the Organisation of the Islamic conference (OIC) came as a decision that instead abetted forms of military dictatorship: the heightening of religious tension after Nigeria's involvement with the OIC meant the continuation of military rule with the pretext that it was the only way to curb the religious intolerance that was rife then.

The podium of religion has therefore been politically motivated and its troubling nature lies in its coexistence with corruption, economic failure and military dictatorship. Falola's (1998) incisive study portrays the way politics has been made religious and that this brand of politics is pitted against what he calls secular ideologies that end up creating violence. To this extent, fundamentalism is the most appropriate word that best captures a history that reflects violence, religion and politics as feeding off each other.

Purple Hibiscus also alludes to other events in the history of Nigeria, like the death of Sani Abacha 'atop a prostitute'[6]. While the text uses popular beliefs about the alleged death of Abacha, it does an interesting thing by overlapping his death with that of Papa Eugene. Papa Eugene is crafted as a very religious individual, with a passion for Catholic rituals, customs, beliefs and practices. He also has very strong opinions about notions of democracy in the country and he owns a newspaper that is critical of the government. Papa Eugene is also a violent man in the house. He thinks and acts Catholic in his house and practises all Catholic rituals to the letter. He is the personification of a religious tyrant who preaches democracy but acts a monologue. As Adichie points out in an interview with Wale Adebanwi,[7] the religiosity of Papa Eugene overstated or not, represents the rhetoric of a 'self-indulgent, self-absorbed and self-congratulatory' brand of religion in Nigeria at the time of military dictatorship.

[6] The texts says 'The head of state died a few months ago-they say he died atop a prostitute' (p.297). I make direct reference to Abacha because it was as the text alludes, at this time that he died and he is the only Nigerian head of state rumoured, as the text says 'they say' to have died in this manner.- refer also to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sani_Abacha

[7] See http://www.nigeriavillagesquare1.com/articles/wale_adebanwi/2004/05/nigerian-identity-is-burdensome.html Adichie discusses the springing up of churches alongside corruption. Religion according to her is used for selfish needs.

Papa Eugene's relations with his family are informed by the story of the military regime. He speaks a monologue in his house, represented by the church rituals he presides over in the familial space. The silence that strangles his household is interwoven by the government's successful attempts at silencing Ade Cocker. The shutting down of the *Standard* greatly affects Papa Eugene's family. Ironically the successful attempt of the government that led to Ade Cocker's death creates spaces of dialogue in Papa Eugene's family. While Ade Cocker's death leads to Papa Eugene's heightened schizophrenia, he also becomes increasingly violent to his wife and children, as he is desperate to restore his own sense of power on the familial space. Events however seem to surpass his hold onto power as his own daughter, who was erstwhile obedient, becomes resistant and finds more legitimacy in actions which Papa Eugene considers sinful.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is categorical in many interviews about her concerns in *Purple Hibiscus* which she classifies as the family, religion and politics. She points out that they are issues that she draws from real life and which she observed as she was growing up during the political upheavals in Nigeria. She grew up in a moderately Catholic family, in a university town in Nsukka where *Purple Hibiscus* is partly set and where significant moments in Kambili's life are hinged. Her treatment of issues of the family, religion and politics are sensitive and polemic, something Adichie realises. She therefore chooses to present these issues through the platform of the family and most significantly through a younger narrator, who would present issues in a detached manner that is not cynical or jaded.

Yet the author's own background reveals interesting issues that locate her in the corpus of African literature. She migrated to the United States of America at the age of nineteen to pursue a degree in communication and political science at Eastern University, Connecticut. This is after a short period of studying medicine at University of Nigeria. *Purple Hibiscus* was published in 2003 when she was 26. While at Nsukka, she stayed in the same house as Chinua Achebe had. Like Achebe, she studied medicine briefly and of critical concern *Purple Hibiscus* invokes Achebe's influence right from its first statement 'Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the étagère' (p.1).

While this study aims at locating *Purple Hibiscus* from the influence of Achebe, it aims at establishing silence as a concern that sets the text's departure from Achebe's influences. It seeks to establish how the family is a major site of silence. Silence works in providing an alternative familial discourse. Silence establishes the family as an alternative site of discourse on politics and religion, apart from the state. The study will give these perspectives on the premise that: fifteen year old girl Kambili is an appropriate stylistic instrument. Stylistic because the perspective of the family that she gives highlights the absurdities of religion and politics without being disparaging or jaded. She reappropriates the marginalised[8] voices in Okonkwo's homestead. In establishing silenced familial spaces this study works with the premise that the family, one of the most enduring forms of organisation in the society has been stereotyped, in terms of how it has been represented. Stereotype here can be interpreted in two perspectives. Firstly, in terms of its position within society, the family has been considered a private domain. This study's examination of the silenced spaces of the family seeks to propose that the categories of private and public within the family are in fact 'ideological stereotypes' (Sapsford 1995) that ultimately cover up the power structures that maintain silence in the space of the family. Secondly, feminist literary criticism contends that the representation of the family and the state have been influenced by gender stereotypes. The representation of issues of nationalism and the state have been a male affair while those of the family a female affair (Tri Minh Ha 1989). The implication here is that there is a clear cut line between the state and the family and how they are represented in literature.

This research aims at establishing the family as a continually silenced space. Not only has it been assumed to be the most stable institution that is immune from the larger issues of the state, and therefore of gendered critical concern, but also that its treatment in literary works has been critically stereotyped. This research aims at examining *Purple Hibiscus* as a text that deliberately foregrounds the familial space over the state, even if the familial space remains in certain ways an echo of state affairs. The familial text created here deals with religion and politics against the

[8] I use the term marginalised with specific comparison to the works of Achebe. Kambili can be a voice that represents the wives and daughters of Okonkwo for instance because like them Kambili occupies a space of silence in a family where the father speaks a monologue which he expects the rest of the family to obey.

background of the family and ends up exposing the family as the ground for suppression and silence, while at the same time in a complex embrace with the state.

This study also seeks to deal with how a fifteen year old girl journeys out of silenced familial spaces. *Purple Hibiscus* is a story of the family. It revolves within the space of the family throughout. The story is set in Enugu, Nigeria, and then it shifts to Nsukka, a small university town. In between, the rural town of Abba also comes into the picture. However within these specific places the story largely revolves around the family. Involved in it are two major families, one being the narrator, fifteen year old Kambili's immediate family and the other her Aunty Ifeoma's family. While the latter family is set in the small university town of Nsukka, the former is set in Enugu. *Purple Hibiscus* uses these two families as parallels and the narrator's physical and psychological journeys between these two families reveal the major concerns for this study.

The family has been a central trope in many works of African literature. While *Purple Hibiscus* uses the familial space, it is preceded by other works of art that also use the family as a central trope of representation. Buchi Emecheta for instance, in almost her entire oeuvre uses the family unit as the central locus for her stories. Emecheta's *The Bride Price*, *The Joys of Motherhood, The Slave Girl*, *In the Ditch* and *Second Class Citizen* are good examples where the family trope is used to explore domestic slavery. Flora Nwapa's pioneer text *Efuru* also works through a central familial unit. The difference in temporalities separates Adichie from her 'foremothers'. The perspective from which Emecheta's stories are told is different from that of *Purple Hibiscus*. Emecheta reveals the silenced spaces of the women but the time of her writing and the perspective of it does not, unlike Adichie, give her works a chance to grapple with this silence, from a position of silence. Although Emecheta exposes the familial space with a special bias to the position of the woman, her creation of the female characters fits into Strattons (1988) critique of the 'Shallow grave' of female experience in African fiction. The 'Shallow grave' for Stratton (1988) is an archetype of women in African fiction and a major critique of the representation of stereotypic female figures in African fiction.

If we move closer to Adichie's contemporaries, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* also works through the central unit of the family. There is an interesting parallel between Dangarembga's portrayal of Tambudzai and Nyasha and Adichie's portrayal of Kambili and Amaka in *Purple Hibiscus*. In both texts there is a patriarch who draws power from church norms. Babamukuru and Papa Eugene are both Anglicised patriarchs with strong opinions on church ethos and how these ethos play at the level of the family. The latter Babamukuru in *Nervous Conditions'* sequel *The Book of Not*, like Papa Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus* engages in political activity rather belatedly much to his near demise.

In recent post-colonial writing, one comes across thematic similarities between Adichie and Yvonne Vera. Both Vera and Adichie deal with the space of the family in turbulent post-colonial times when the state is rocked by violence. Yet the most striking similarity between the two is their focus on the space of the family, violence, and general taboo subjects. Like Kambili, Vera's female characters are victims of violence and taboo from their male counterparts. Zhazi in *Under the Tongue* struggles, like Kambili with the violence her father visits upon her and their incestuous relationship. Mazvita in *Without a Name* struggles to come to terms with the presence of a baby in the middle of a difficult relationship which forces her to commit infanticide. The most interesting is *Stone Virgins* where Vera tries to engage with the mind of the rapist and murderer Sibaso; this is similar to Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* because she also struggles to understand the mind of her violent father, mostly in moments when he metes out violence and cries alongside her or hugs her after a beating.

Jonathan Highfield (2005) presents an interesting eco-feministic discussion on the similarities of the hibiscus flowers in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Stone Virgins* in what he describes as 'blood and Blossom' where the hibiscus flowers presents a discourse of transcendence for both Kambili and Noncebe in times of bloodshed and violence. Highfield (2005) is however keen at observing that the level of the family is crucial in

developing an analysis of the violence in both cases because it is where all the action is set and it is a space of familiarity for the plight of women.[9]

Kambili's hushed uninterrupted telling of the familial space remains different from all of Adichie's predecessors. However as Heather Hewett (2005) observes Adichie's work dispels any claims of an avante-gardism because of the way it acknowledges influences. As Worton and Still (1990:1) observe, the writer is a reader of texts before s/he creates. Kristeva (1980) also coins the term 'intertextuality' which refers to the vertical axis that connects texts to other texts.[10] The most profound parallel is that of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. *Purple Hibiscus'* opening statement 'Things started falling apart at home' points to Achebe as a major antecedent for Adichie. In many interviews Adichie categorically says she pays tribute to Achebe in the statement above.[11] The creation of her characters is an immediate point to consider in drawing parallels between the two.

Okonkwo and Papa Eugene are strong patriarchs, both rule their families with an iron hand, both visit violence on their families, both despise their fathers. Okonkwo despises his father Unoka for being poor and feminine in his approach to life while Papa Eugene despises his father Papa Nnukwu for not only being poor, but also a heathen. Yet both Unoka and Papa Nnukwu are very warm characters who wish well for their sons despite the spite they receive from them. Papa Nnukwu receives slim wads of cash from a son who contributes heavily to the causes of the church and is more generous to beggars and rural country folk.

Papa Eugene can be considered a modern day Okonkwo. Both are in fact burdened by something in their lives. The presence of their blissful but unsuccessful fathers seems to haunt their present lives. It is more like a struggle for identity. Papa Nnukwu can be

[9] Highfield in 'Blood and Blossom: Violence and restoration in Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and Vera's The Stone Virgins.' P.161-168.

[10] Kristeva (1980:15) warns however that the term intertextuality has been misunderstood to mean an influence of writers on others. Part of my rationale refers to the influence of Achebe on Adichie as the whole project of intertextuality. My argument contrary to Kristeva's initial conception is that her rendition of the concept is informed by Bakhtin's formalistic arguments on the text as a basic 'structural unit', yet text could as well be taken to mean an entire work such as a novel. With this larger picture in mind, our renditions of the 'texts', as in entire works allows us to examine the meanings in relation to other writers' works.

[11] See Author Q and A- www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display , also interviews with Laila Lami, Wale Adebanwi, Azuka Ogujuiba and others.

considered the cultural unconscious[12] of Papa Eugene. What burdens Papa Eugene, his hatred for his father, his double identity as violent in the familial space and a democrat in the public image is something of concern. What functions behind his psychological inconsistencies can be attributed to a history that influences his mental structures. Margaret Wetherell (1995:272) argues that:

> The claim is that to understand identity and interaction in families it is not enough to look at what society expects of its members; it is necessary to delve deep inside people's mental structures and psychological organization to look at both conscious and unconscious motives.

The cracks of these motives that Wetherell (1995) talks about can be understood in particular moments in both Okonkwo and Papa Eugene: in Okonkwo's emotional moments over the killing of Ikemefuna and for Papa Eugene, those moments when he cries while battering his wife or the narrator Kambili as reflected in this incident:

> Papa crushed Jaja and me to his body. "Did the belt hurt you? Did it break your skin?" he asked, examining our faces. I felt a throbbing on my back, but I said no, that I was not hurt. It was the way Papa shook his head when he talked about liking sin, as if something weighed him down, something he could not throw off. (p.102)

One reads, as implicated in Kambili's observation, the baggage that Papa Eugene is carrying: 'something weighed him down, something he could not throw off'(p.102). The baggage of history, colonialism? The remnants of the empire's convictions on religion? Or simply a father's oblique concept of modernity which his family seems not to share with him?

Papa Eugene's and Okonkwo's controversial moments are within the backdrop of familial history personified in their fathers. One familial theorist Robert Connell

[12] The term 'cultural unconscious' rose from Jungian discourse and Joseph L Hernderson (1990) locates the cultural unconscious between the collective and the individual unconscious. Unoka and Nnukwu are carrying with them that collective unconscious that consistently reminds their sons of a troubling history, something their sons want to distance themselves from, not because it is necessarily bad but they are in fact struggling with their own identity problems.

(1987:12) in a discussion of familial history and emotions in the interiority of familial space is quite apt in underscoring the complex layers of internal family history extended in time and contact, he says:

> Far from being the basis of society, the family is one of its most complex products. There is nothing simple about it. The interior of the family is a scene of multi-layered relationships folded over each other like geological strata. In no other institution are relationships so extended in time, so intense in contact, so dense in the interweaving economic, emotion, power and resistance.

The assumption is that both the familial units in Okonkwo's and Papa Eugene's household are represented as stratified and generally complex. The presence of familial history is crucial in both cases. It is possible though that privileging of history robs the present actors within the family space of any agency in the formation of their own psychic states. As Wetherell (1995:288) says, such an approach neglects 'interpersonal dimensions, or the micro-politics of family interaction'. It would present Papa Eugene and Okonkwo as simply puppets in the unfolding events.

Papa Eugene and Okonkwo both struggle with certain demands that the society requires of them. Okonkwo struggles with the thought of going to kill Ikemefuna but he suppresses his inner feelings because his ultimate concern is with how the society will view him. As Amy Stock (1979:88) says, Okonkwo 'gloried in trampling on his private feelings in the name of public virtue'.[13] As Achebe also says, there is a fear inside him, a fear of weakness. Whereas Okonkwo's character is shaped by a world where communal values reign supreme over the individual, Papa Eugene's post-colonial world leaves more space for agency in the individual.

Kambili can be said to speak from the position of not only Okonkwo's wives but also from the position of Nwoye, who has been feminised in *Things Fall Apart*. If things fell apart in the traditional Igbo kingdom, Adichie seems to imply, they still fall apart decades later in post-colonial Nigeria. Adichie's focus is narrower, at the level of the family. Although things fall apart in Okonkwo's household, Achebe's focus is on the

[13] Stock (1979) in 'Yeats and Achebe' pp. 86-91

Igbo community. Adichie's statement however functions as a warning for post-colonial Nigeria. There is a reflection of the different temporalities involved here. Achebe's text is written at a moment when certain homogeneous groupings could be easily singled out. Social organisations like the family worked within community ethos. Adichie's work is written at a time when the institution of the family is the remaining institution that can be characterised by higher levels of homogeneity, in terms of familial beliefs, practices and norms. Hence the focus on the family definitely reveals a more nuanced perspective of the post-colonial social, economic, political and cultural fabric. In his study of the family in Africa, Aderanti Adepoju (1997) points out that the family in the post-colony is increasingly being burdened by roles. It is increasingly becoming exposed due to the disintegration of rigid structures of communal cultures.

While Adichie and Achebe write from different temporalities, the statement 'things fall apart' rings across their texts significantly. The statement, for both writers comes from a different social, economic and political background. Achebe appropriates it from Yeats' poem 'The Second coming' which as Stock (1979) discusses deals with Yeats' prophetic philosophy on the ultimate fall of Christian civilisation. Talking of Yeats' philosophy, Stock writes, civilisation is built on 'a cumulative mind that is in tradition, by defining a hierarchy of values and imposing it on experience' (1979:86). Hence the statement 'things fall apart' is prophetic for Yeats, as Stock (1979) says because in every civilisation is inhered chaos always 'beating up on the walls' but held back by the hierarchy. However forces from without use these cracks or fissures to undermine the civilisation from within and overwhelm it from without.

The 'miniature civilisation' of Umuofia, as Stock (1979) indicates, collapses in a similar fashion. The fissures that existed but were covered or silenced come to the surface and eventually lead to the collapse of a civilisation. These fissures are for Stock (1979), found in discriminatory practices embedded in the Igbo patriarchal system and spiritual beliefs. For Adichie the statement 'things fall apart' also resounds in similar fashion. The silenced individual in Papa Eugene Achike's household who is his wife becomes the cause for his death. The irony is that the loudest voice of dissent in this household, Jaja who is Kambili's brother is not involved in the final act of poisoning Papa Eugene. However the fissures, the cracks,

the chaos banging on the walls in Papa Eugene Achike's household manifest themselves in literal terms:

> I was in my room after lunch, reading James chapter five
> …when I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parents'
> hand-carved door. I imagined the door had gotten stuck
> and Papa was trying to open it. If I imagined it hard enough
> then it would be true. (p.32-33)

This banging manifested in wife battery waters the seeds of internal destruction. From these bangs was hatched the deadly plan that led to Papa Eugene's death. In Papa Eugene's household is inhered an uncomfortable silence that suppresses voices that have been marginalised by ritual, norm and familial violence. One would therefore argue that Achebe in fact presents a situation where forces from without overwhelm the Igbo civilisation. Achebe's representation makes explicit these forces from without. The coming of the white people into Umuofia is made explicit through the norms and values that they come with.[14]

Adichie differs from Achebe on account of: firstly limiting her focus to familial spaces. The action in the text is set within familial spaces. As for Achebe, the market place, the wrestling field, the spiritual stage during festivals are spaces alongside that of the family. One could argue, however, that this perspective was appropriate for Achebe because the homogeneity of institutions and the community psyche allowed for the perspective to glide from one space to the other. Also a third person point of view definitely gives a much wider gaze.

Secondly and of significant importance is that Adichie gives her story from the perspective of a younger narrator whose speech is arguably uninterrupted and whose perspective of issues is not cynical or adult centred. This is where she symbolically appropriates the perspective of the Okonkwo household. Her treatment of the family therefore comes from a worm's eye view. Kambili's position in this household is something of concern for the study. She is not only a girl, but also the roles associated

[14] While the cracks, fissures and chaos in Achebe's *Things fall apart* are made explicit by Achebe's portrayal of the processes involved in the inculcation of alien values to Igboland, Adichie's text historicises these through the person of Papa Eugene.

with her suppress her sense of agency as compared to her brother Jaja. Jaja can afford to be resistant to his father because he is a male figure and also because he is older than Kambili.[15] While Jaja can show open defiance to his father, Kambili sits back and observes precociously. She therefore becomes the best person to tell this story. Hers is a story from the perspective of the silenced space she occupies. With Okonkwo's household the voices of his wives, daughters and sons are consumed within Okonkwo's monologue. Okonkwo himself speaks the monologue of communal ethos. Therefore the language that Okonkwo's household speaks comes mediated through Okonkwo who is an icon of communal ethos. Papa Eugene Achike's family on the other hand speaks a language whose experience is historicised in the story of colonialism. Papa Eugene speaks the language of the church. While Okonkwo embraces Igbo tradition and subsumes any other concerns beneath it, Papa Eugene embraces Catholicism and buries any other concerns beneath it.

Concerns with power also mark parallels between Achebe and Adichie. I am referring to Achebe's *Arrow of God*. Ezeulu represents a deity in Umuaro. He bridges the gap between the people of Umuaro and the god Ulu. This position helps him to practise power and create his own internal sense of agency. He makes decisions at the end without considering the origins of his power, the people who installed him as the priest of Ulu. Papa Eugene also occupies an important spiritual space in *Purple Hibiscus* as demonstrated in this instance in church:

> During his sermons, Father Benedict usually referred to the Pope
> Papa and Jesus- in that order. He used Papa to illustrate his gospels (p.4)

Papa Eugene's power is felt heavily in his household. He is an omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent person in the eyes of Kambili. Papa Eugene's power is expressed in the silence that permeates the household at all times. This power, from the outset, is seemingly derived from his use of religion as a reference to everything

[15] The name Jaja is also a historical allegory of the historical Jaja of Opobo (1821-1891) a Nigerian merchant and founder of Opobo state. Born in Igbo land and sold as a slave in Bonny, Jaja who was originally called Jubo changed his name to Jaja in dealing with the British, whom he resisted, breaking away to form his own Opobo state. He was a king with rebellious instincts, something we see in Jaja. Speaking of allegorical names, the author's name Chimamanda , fairly unusual, in Igbo literally means 'My God will never fall' and metaphorically 'unbreakable spirit'. Source- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaja and Joyce Nyairo, March 2006 'context: Mission and Masculinity'.

he does or thinks about. He appropriates Catholic norms, rituals, practices and customs into the space of the family and uses this to rationalise domestic violence. Chapter two will deal exclusively with familial ritual. In fact, the structural references to 'Breaking the gods' 'palm Sunday', 'Before palm Sunday', 'After palm Sunday' in *Purple Hibiscus* ring with the familiarity of the seasons in *Arrow of God*. But who really is the arrow of God? Is it Papa Eugene? Is it Mama the one who finally poisons her excessively violent husband Papa Eugene? Or is it Jaja the son, who decides to sacrifice himself and gets sent to jail for his mother's sake, like Ezeulu's son Obika, who decides to do a fatal last minute ritual for the sake of the family's pride?

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework is grounded from the point of view of the family because Adichie sets her text from a purely familial perspective. The family is a basic unit of organisation in any given social framework. A family in any part of the world mostly includes affine and blood relationships. The family space is mostly made peculiar by virtue of the private nature in which it mostly operates. *Purple Hibiscus* has its spatial setting within the space of Papa Eugene Achike's family, a nuclear and autocratic family in Enugu. Even when the spatial setting changes, it moves to another familial setting in Nsukka where Kambili's aunt teaches. Therefore the proposed theoretical framework rises from the point of view of familial theories.

Purple Hibiscus narrows down to the very private sphere of Papa Eugene Achike's family. Private here refers to the subterranean and intimate relationships between Papa Eugene and Kambili, Mama, Jaja, Sisi (the house help) and basically, the interelations and intrarelations[16] cutting across the family. The interrelationships and intrarelationships help to delve into the silences of our narrator Kambili and read other texts that these silences demand from us.

The theoretical framework distinguishes between the examination of the family as a universal and well known unit in the organisation of society, and the family as a

[16] The distinction of inter and intra is from the superficial (inter) that the family members engage with especially at table. Intra is used to explain the telepathic way in which Kambili and Jaja relate most of the time. It (intra) may also be taken to imply the muted interactions behind the closed doors, like the banging on the parents bedroom that Kambili tries to decode.

private space with secrets, taboos that create ambiguities. These two strands will funnel this study in moving from the general familial theories (family in public sphere) into a deeper psychoanalytical examination of the private sphere of the family with regard to the intrarelationships between the narrator and the rest of the family members.

As Klein and White (1996:27) point out, a microscopic examination of the family involves dealing with an individual member, personal relationships within families, a single society or culture or a combination of the mentioned aspects. This microscopic examination means the examination of the family as a private sphere. In *Purple Hibiscus* the private sphere of Papa Eugene Achike's family has one major taboo, physical abuse. Violence from the overly religious patriarch is a characteristic of the private sphere of his family. Something in the public sphere of a family, like religion in *Purple Hibiscus,* gains dualistic values. It does this by a violent manifestation in the private sphere, through its perpetuator Papa Eugene. It also manifests a fiercely democratic and magnanimous man of the people in the public sphere through the same Papa Eugene.

Klein and White (1996:27) also propose that a macroscopic examination of the family involves the linkage between families and other groups, comparisons between families, histories or a combination of the aspects mentioned. The macroscopic examination of the family with other groups means, in the case of *Purple Hibiscus'*, linking Papa Eugene Achike's family to the Nigerian state, as a portrait of the state. The link alludes to the specific application of post-colonial discourses on the family and the state. A macroscopic examination of the family means, looking at it as a miniature society, an entity that presents an echo for the larger socio-economic and political structures within the society and hence has to relate to these structures.

Therefore, a macroscopic examination of the family with regards to *Purple Hibiscus* should entail examining literary theorisation of ideology and the family, especially considering the strong presence of religion, the school and the family, aspects which the narrator tries to rationalise throughout her struggle to understand her father. Louis Althusser (1976) points out that ideology belongs to the private domain in the form of ideological state apparatuses. However, in *Purple Hibiscus*, the idea of ideology as

belonging to the private domain is complicated. This is because aspects of religion that are perpetuated by Papa Eugene manifest themselves both in the private and the public domain, in equally significant ways that warrant critical examination. The use of familial ritual for example calls for the ideas of George Sapsford (1995) on how the private and the public are ideological stereotypes and how these affect familial ritual and how ideology manifests itself in both the supposedly private family and the public space. This research proposes to appropriate Althusser's ideas on the operation of the educational, religious and most importantly family state apparatuses. Althusser's (1976) discussion of the church-family and the school-family ideologies are relevant in examining Papa Eugene Achike's family as a model that builds itself around the church and the school within its private and public familial spaces.

The ideas of Althusser (1976) strongly relate to the study's concern with familial ritual and norm and how ritual and norm create subjectivities within the household. Althusser's (1976) idea of religion as an ideological state apparatus will be important in examining how subjectivities are produced and reproduced within the household. The word reproduction is crucial for this study in not only examining the attitudes that the actors within Papa Eugene Achike's family have towards things that are considered taboo, but also in proposing the way that ideology works in the space of the family. While feminist scholars look at the family as more of a strategic ideological construct, religion in Papa Eugene Achike's familial space functions to reproduce certain attitudes. Through Kambili's silenced yet precocious telling of the beatings that Mama receives behind the closed doors, the banging sounds that she hears from her parents bedroom and her interpretation of them, the ideology behind religion in the space of the family is unmasked. Hence the term reproduction is crucial in the context of this study as not only a term that means the instilling of familial members with society building norms, values and practices (Talcott Parsons 1955, Leonard and Williams 1992), but also as a term that acts as an ideological apparatus in the space of the family (Althusser 1976).

The relevance of Althusser (1976) is two-fold in this study: Firstly while the family according to him is an ideological apparatus, the practise of religion in Papa Eugene Achike's familial space presents a double working apparatus. Secondly the imperious presence of religious chastity which Papa Eugene preaches, works to reproduce the

family members as sorts of **s**ubjects to the **S**ubject (God/Papa Eugene). The gaze which Adichie gives *Purple Hibiscus,* a hushed telling from a fifteen year old girl, is much pronounced in exposing the subtlety of familial ideology. In the discussion of ritual and norms and the general thematic concerns that arise out of religion, the ideas of Althusser (1976) will be useful in understanding familial ideology in Papa Eugene Achike's family

Familial ritual and norm therefore become the expression of ideological state apparatuses. The norm in *Purple Hibiscus* is perpetuated by Catholicism. Catholicism in *Purple Hibiscus* is not only about the church and religion but also about identity and power. When we talk about power, we are moving back to both a microscopic and macroscopic examination of the family. Power and practice manifest themselves at public and private spaces in related ways. The aspect of the norm in *Purple Hibiscus* is the practice of power. Papa Eugene for instance, does not only gain spiritual actualisation in maintaining Catholic norms to the letter. More than the spiritual satisfaction, he has built his identity in the Catholic norm. This means that any challenge to this identity can create conflicting relationships as it happens in the text.

In establishing the silence in this familial space the attitudes that come out of familial ritual and norm concern themselves with the study of Kambili's relationship with her father who perpetuates the norms and helps to reproduce the members of this family. Coupled with the presence of norm is also violence. How the narrator responds to it is of interest for the study which seeks to use psychoanalytical theory to examine the issue. The study seeks to use the ideas of Ronald Fairbain (1952) on 'The moral defence against bad objects' to establish that Kambili's silence to this violence and how she rationalises it comes from her internalisation of negative behaviour like her father's physical abuse. Kambili suppresses her inner security for the sake of outer security. Martin and Letitia's (1978) views on violence in the family will inform my ideas on the dual nature of the family that is found in the interspace between the private and public. They posit that the family is a stratified institution particularly with regards to gender and point out the marginalised spaces that women and children occupy that increase their vulnerability to acts of domestic violence.

While the study establishes how the familial space is silenced through religiosity and violence, the telling of it all is hushed and precocious. Familial ritual and norm speak a master narrative, a monologue from Papa Eugene. The hushed telling indicates a marginalised narrator. Yet this telling continuously debunks Papa Eugene's master narrative. Homi K Bhabha's (1990) ideas on marginalised immigrants and their discourses which erase the boundaries of the nation can be relevant here. Kambili occupies a marginalised space and is exiled from her own family because of the violence visited on her and also because of the monologue of Papa Eugene. In Papa Eugene Achike's familial space, silence can be read as an exilic condition created by the totalising vision of Papa Eugene. Adichie locates silence in the space of the family. The narrative that Kambili provides works in the same way. She is able to observe the small things within the processes of interaction in this household. Her perception is obviously quite different from that of a third person narrator speaking with an adult consciousness. Kambili details the rituals at table, the meals they prepare, comments made at table and the silence that accompanies their eating. Most interesting are the telepathic conversations she has with Jaja at table or when they are silently shuffling into their rooms to follow Papa Eugene's perpetual schedules. Between them exists a silence that is so subtle but full of knowledge which the reader needs to constantly decode to fully understand the critique beneath them. This study's examination of ritual and how Kambili rises out of the space of her family seeks to relate silence as a weapon which Kambili uses to transcend the violence and the tension. It is this silence that Kambili appropriates to speak out otherwise she would become a complicit agent in the whole drama.[17] The general assumption made by the study is that this is the silence which Adichie uses to make a statement: about where she departs from the familial narration in the works of her predecessors in other novels I have touched on earlier in the chapter. In this way, she not only clears her own path in terms of exposing the intermediary spaces that her predecessors have ventured little into but also benefits by grounding her critique in their works in order to extend and to revise them.

[17] I use this term 'drama' with the ideas of Joe De Graft (1976) about ritual drama in mind. De Graft in his study of roots in African drama and theatre discusses impersonation as a key element in ritual drama. His ideas on how ritual comes basically out of man's compulsive need to deal with 'fear and insanity' is helpful in dealing with Papa Eugene's state of mind which I argue in the study as 'schizophrenic'.

In dealing with norms and ritual in the family, the study realises that because they are perpetuated by Papa Eugene, they are in fact the expression of his presence. For Kambili, her father is omnipresent and yet she perpetually struggles to understand his complex psyche. Papa Eugene moves through different identities for his own selfish needs. As he exercises power on his household, Kambili struggles to understand why he is a man of the people outside the home when he is violent within the home.

Papa Eugene orders the activities of the family members through the schedules he draws for them. Apart from timetabling for reading and for socialising, he also determines when they should pray, who should pray and even when he feels they have sinned and when they should go for confession. Underneath this omnipresence is of course a history of colonial missionary education. Post Freudian psychoanalyst Stephen Frosh (1987) examines such behaviour as relating to how the society rates levels of socialisation and how matter is 'repressed' for the individual to fit into the society. What is interesting here is that the space of the family for Papa Eugene is in fact where the repressed content matter is actually 'expressed'. He is not only struggling with an image that he has to maintain for the sake of the church and the political arena, but he is also struggling with a childhood that was disturbed by colonial missionary education. The present moment for Papa Eugene presents a different dispensation, it is post- colonial.

In Papa Eugene, is an embodiment of a historical narrative of colonial encounters with African domesticities. One can argue that the family in Africa evolved in ways that reflected the gender spaces within the family, at work and in the post colonial period this history is reflected in the ambivalence of Papa Eugene. In her study of domesticities in Africa with regards to colonial domination, Karen Tranberg (1992) gives an important connection between the history of domestic encounters in Africa and the post-colonial era. Tranberg (1992:5) says:

> As a prop in the politics of colonial domination, the conceptual construction of domesticity was at the forefront of change, as were those who gave it institutional efficacy. Thus ideas of domesticity constitute a central dimension of this encounter and offer startling insights not only into the development of the empire and the colonial

experience, but also into the everyday world of the postcolonial era.

Tranberg (1992) links the development of the colonial empire and the domestication of hegemony with notions of metropolitan class practice and the missionary community. She looks at the domestic space in the post-colony as a reflection of the history of missionary activity and the way that the family in particular reflected colonial history. The history of colonialism, particularly on missionary activity informs Papa Eugene's concepts on punishment, Catholicism and democracy within the space of the family. His family is a class above many other families in Enugu and Abba and the struggle for perfection and excellence becomes a class thing for Papa Eugene. He not only wants his family to maintain high standards of chastity but he is also concerned with its status as seen by the church and the community. His children get the best education through very high cost missionary schools and go to a church that is puritanical and abhors heathens like his own father.

This study is also concerned with elements of growth out of silenced familial spaces. This is a crucial part in examining how the hushed space of the family can be debunked by elements of growth. The study concerns itself with the elements of laughter and music used in the text to illuminate the space of the family. The study will examine these elements as crucial tropes for Kambili's growth out of silenced familial spaces. Mikhail Bakhtin's (1968, 1981) discussion of the Carnivalesque and on dialogism will be useful in my discussion of the elements of music and laughter. These elements work in the text by drawing parallels between the two families that the narrator is related to, her own and Aunty Ifeoma's.

In these two spaces where the entire text is set there obtains fundamental differences in terms of channels for dialogue. While Kambili's immediate family is suppressed through the silence of church rituals, schedules and familial violence, the other family is used as a counterfoil, an alternative to Kambili's own. The narrative of the other family is an alternative space for dialogue which Adichie invests with the metaphors of laughter and music:

> Laughter floated over my head. Words spurted from
> everyone, often not seeking and not getting any response.

> We always spoke with purpose back home, especially at the table, but my cousins seem to simply speak and speak and speak. (p.120)

or:

> Laughter always rang out in Aunty Ifeoma's house, and no matter where the laughter came from, it bounced around all the walls, all the rooms. (p.140)

Bakhtin's (1968) ideas on laughter and the carnivalesque will be used in laying foundation for the relevance of the metaphor of laughter in the creation of dialogue. Bakhtin's (1968) very key aspects of the monologic grammar of church discourse resound strongly with the atmosphere in Papa Eugene Achike's household. His exploration of medieval Europe and the church monologue is important in understanding how Papa Eugene's convictions about church ritual work. Embedded in Bakhtin's (1968) discussion are his views on how fundamentalism is important in fostering a monologic grammar. These ideas on fundamentalism are corroborated by the particular ideas on religious violence by Toyin Falola (1998).

Yet Bakhtin's (1981) discussion on the form of the novel in his seminal essay 'discourse in the novel' is also relevant in discussing spaces for dialogue in the family. In a way *Purple Hibiscus* as a novel provides the space for dialogue through familial texts, something which is absent in the works of Adichie's predecessors. The first person narrator that one finds in *Purple Hibiscus* opens up the possibility of a sustained examination of the missing link in the Okonkwo household. The silence in Papa Eugene Achike's household is finally ruptured by the laughter and music in aunty Ifeoma's household which interestingly is in a university setting in Nsukka where the writer grew up. The novel, for Adichie, fulfils its functions as a space for dialogue, for different voices within the space of long fiction. As Bakhtin (1981) discusses, a novel is variform in speech because it collects the voices of different strata: generations, gender, languages and many other different strata.

The novel for Adichie is an apposite space for discourse, for dialogue precisely because it gives room for the languages of generations stratified in specific times,

gender, occupations and ages. Adichie accompanies this advantage with the use of laughter, music and sexuality in the life of a fifteen year old teenager, in a gesture that revises the reading of Achebe's fictional Okonkwo and Ezeulu's families.

Ultimately there are generative discourses[18] that cannot be avoided. Heather Hewett's (2005) article on the 'voice of a third generation'[19] premises itself on locating *Purple Hibiscus* as having transcontinental qualities. This of course could lead to a lapse into those universalistic discourses that Achebe (1975) refers to as 'colonialist criticism'. Hewett's (2005) location of *Purple Hibiscus* into a third generation of African writers is laid on a debatable premise. Hewett's (2005) proposition of a 'third generation' brings in a whole debate on feminist discourses and their discomfiture with the way that the canon has been structured through a male perspective. Categories that define the canon have insisted on a linear pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial movement (see Fanon 1967, Grisworld 2000, Griffiths 2002). This is something that McClintock (1995) sets out to debunk when she writes on how canonical categories subsume gender. This leads us to the study's concern in locating where the family and the state intersect.

The study locates the initial feminist arguments on how narration of the state is made very brazenly a male affair (Tri Minh Ha 1989). This corroborates McClintock's (1995) views on categories of the canon. The study is however concerned with where to locate Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* in these arguments. What one realises when reading *Purple Hibiscus* is that the state and the family are in a much more complex dialogue, so that the relationship between the two is not just a mechanical one in which the family allegorises the nation. Adichie does not openly privilege one over the other. This is the hybridised nature of *Purple Hibiscus* to the extent that it blurs the lines between private and public concerns.

The child narrator is an apposite way to give a detached telling of the events happening at both the levels of the state and the family. The child narrator's perspective gives the absurdities that occupy the space in which the family and the state intersect. Looked at alongside her contemporaries such as Helen Oyeyemi and

[18] Generative discourses here is taken to imply canonical discourses that try to plot the shift in literary works. In a sense they try to map out generations of African writing

[19] See Heather Hewett 'Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the voice of a 'Third Generation' , perhaps the pioneer sustained canonical examination of *Purple hibiscus*.

Chris Abani one notices that they not only write from a diasporic space but also use child narrators. Helen Oyeyemi's *The Icarus Girl* (2005) is from the perspective of Jess, a little girl, Chris Abani's *Graceland* (2004) is from the perspective of an adolescent named Elvis. The telling of these stories from the child narrator's perspective is a reflection of the way these writers seek to appropriate a useable past in (re)explaining the post-colony. These writers were born years removed from the moment of independence and their experiences as children can be used to understand the post-colony at this point in time. Probing into a past of childhood is a way which they are grappling with where they think the home started 'falling apart'.

Decades removed from independence, the moment Achebe (1975) calls collusive swindle when these writers come of age, their narratives give a different gaze: firstly because they lived through the events as children, secondly because they have a host of literary predecessors, who tried to set before them, African literary aesthetics. In keeping with their predecessors these writers grapple with trying to bring in not only new perspectives to issues that have been dealt with before, but also new ways of expressing the persistent concerns from a contemporary perspective.

Despite these writers' benefit of hindsight, unlike their literary predecessors, writers like Adichie need to tell their own stories, and if not improve on an existing tradition, curve their own literary spaces. The task of literary criticism is to critically navigate through these works and if not augment on existing tools of the still developing African literary criticism, then point out new tools of dealing with these nascent writing. Abiola Irele (1981) discusses the growth of African literature and underscores the need for flexibility in African literary critical functions.[20]

By establishing that the space of the family is silenced through the overdetermination of religion using its elements of ritual and norm, chapter two lays a background for chapter three to map out the growth of the narrator out of these silenced spaces. Chapter three then singles out laughter, music and sexuality as tropes of growth for the narrator. Bakhtin's (1968, 1981) works form the foundation for the examination of

[20] Irele in 'The Criticism of Modern African Literature' envisages an increase in African writing insisting that coupled with this is the need for criticism to be in tandem with emergent works and to allow for flexibility and more berth.

the ‘dialogic spaces’ in the family. The narrator’s journey to Nsukka, a university town in Nigeria, opens grounds for locating the novel as one of growth and discovery.

Chapter four moves away from the familial space into the larger post-colonial state of Nigeria. It identifies a connection between the actual happenings at the level of the family and that of the state. This chapter is also a meta - critique of African literary tradition in terms of its examination of feminist discourses on how the state and the family have been made binary by issues of gender. This chapter establishes that Adichie (re)appropriates traditions that precede her and uses them to comment on both the state and the family in equally significant ways. Adichie’s perception of the state is made novel by blurring the lines between the family and the state and using a style that is a hybrid of both male and female strands in African literature.

Journeying out of silenced familial spaces therefore establishes the space of the family as something invested with many complications: age, gender, class, education and the histories of all these in relation to the larger societal space. The family is a potential ground for the marginalisation of certain discourses. The romance associated with the family, its values, intimacy, customs, practices, norms and rituals are elements that aid in silencing this space and distorting its ascribed role of socialisation.

The family is not only considered a miniature society but the intimacy in it grants it a private nature. This creates the ambivalence that comes out of the societal expectations of the family, the internal familial expectations, the internal strata within the family and its expectations with regards to the actual happenings. It means therefore that there are both centrifugal and centripetal forces acting internally within the familial space and at the same time acting outside of the family but directly related to it.

This presents some of the major concerns that the study engages with. How are internal relationships within the family dealt with in the light of all these complexities? How is the familial space invested with cultures, values, norms, practices and customs when all these forces act within and without it? These and others are some of the questions that this study seeks to answer in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

FAMILIAL RELIGIOSITY, RITUAL AND VIOLENCE OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC REPRESENTATION.

Having given a conceptual overview of the family in African literature and having drawn attention to some of the theoretical perspectives I intend to use in this report, I wish to turn to one of the recurring themes in *Purple Hibiscus*: religion. In chapter one, my examination of the theoretical conceptualisation of the familial space made reference to the religion as an overdetermining condition in *Purple Hibiscus.* The place of religion in the family space cannot be discussed outside the African family's encounter with colonial experience. The state of the family progressively changed with the localisation of religion in the familial sphere. To understand how religion overdetermines Papa Eugene Achike's family one needs to grasp the nature of Catholic rituals and norms and how these are regularly lived/performed in Papa Eugene Achike's family. The multiple prayers at table, in the church, whenever travelling and the constant norm of confessions for the family members straddles across the context of the public and the private.[21]

In many ways therefore rituals and norms of prayer and confession become strong familial culture and therefore aid in the construction of identities. What is interesting though is that the construction of identities in this cultural space is also complicated by the existence of violence. Violence here refers to wife battery and physical abuse of children. In *Purple Hibiscus*, there is repetitive violence from Papa Eugene, visited on Kambili the protagonist, her mother and brother Jaja. What we therefore have in this scenario is the existence of religion and violence which makes complex[22] how the characters represent themselves in the public and the private spheres.

This chapter aims at mapping out the rituals and norms of religion within familial space, how they coexist with violence, how identities are formed, others repressed and how others are ruptured. Religion is the focal point around which the family members

[21] I use the terms private and public here as basically definitive terms because as I shall discuss later the publicity of such places as the school can be debatable. I also pointed out in the introduction that a scholar like Sapsford (1995) considers the private and public domains that are always ascribed of the family as 'ideological stereotypes'.

[22] The complexity of the representation of these familial characters is the concern of this chapter.

unite and collide, and it is in many ways the key definitive for behavioural patterns in Papa Eugene Achike's family. The mood of meditation and the silence in this familial space are a condition of the religiosity of the household. In many ways therefore religion, because it overdetermines family behaviour, becomes a key factor in silencing the familial space and this it does through the way Papa Eugene rationalises violence using religion. Religion manifests itself as an identity paradigm and also as a rupture of the same structures of identity.

When we start reading the text, the first statement that we come across, immediately throws us into the religiosity of this household and we can quite clearly see that breaking religious norms is considered taboo:

> Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines in the étagère. (p.3)

What we are introduced to is not merely a moment of tension that demonstrates the existence of violence in this family but in fact the turning point of familial relations in Papa Eugene Achike's family. Adichie aptly uses the intertexts from Achebe (1958) to echo the disintegration of this family. From the same page are scattered liturgical words: 'palm fronds, church, holy water, Ash Wednesday, dust to dust you shall return' in a section that is conveniently titled 'Breaking gods'. The church, usually considered publicly as an institution that unifies, comes to impose itself heavily on familial relations to the point of familial disintegration and violence. By Papa Eugene flinging the heavy missal,[23] he expresses his violent side which would lead one to see the irony that exists between Christian values and human actions. Papa Eugene symbolically uses a church artefact to express violence. There is the underlying reason of household authority and established norms that Jaja the son has transgressed.

The reader is shocked further with the extraordinary image Kambili paints of her father:

[23] The Missal is a liturgical book usually containing all instructions and texts necessary for the celebration of masses throughout the year in the Catholic Church.

> During his sermons, Father Benedict usually referred to the Pope, Papa and Jesus - in that order. He used Papa to illustrate the gospels. (p.4)

What Kambili does is to feed the reader with the picture of her father in the initial chapter of her story. What we have is the larger than life image of Papa Eugene, a man who commands respect in the church and is treated like a deity. Papa Eugene is therefore an image of awe and holiness when we meet him but also a violent man. The communion that Jaja misses that causes the house to start falling apart is something that we indeed see is Papa Eugene's great concern even with the people in the church:

> After Papa took communion, he sat back and watched the congregation walk to the altar and , after Mass, reported to Father Benedict, with concern when a person missed communion on two successive Sundays. He always encouraged Father Benedict to call and win that person into the fold; nothing but mortal sin would keep a person away from communion two Sundays in a row. (p.5-6)

Therefore Papa Eugene's reaction to Jaja missing the communion does not come as a surprise to Kambili. What surprises her is how the whole situation turns the course of relations in the family. Religiosity on the part of Papa Eugene is a key determinant of relations in the household. What we come across at the beginning of the text is palpable tension arising out of Jaja's defiance to Papa Eugene. Jaja refuses to go to communion and strains relations within the family. On her part Kambili is shocked at Jaja's response, she cannot imagine how her brother can challenge Papa Eugene.

Out of that church ritual, Kambili paints for us the atmosphere in this household. She describes a silence that is not only physical but also psychological:

> The silence was broken only by the whir of the ceiling fan as it sliced through the still air. Although our spacious dining room gave way to an even wider living room, I felt suffocated. The off-white walls with the framed photos of Grandfather were narrowing, bearing down on me. Even the glass dining table was moving towards me. (p.7)

In a sense what is public church ritual permeates Papa Eugene Achike's household thanks to the religiosity of Papa Eugene. He makes a meal out of Jaja missing the communion because part of what he believes is familial identity arises out of the family's commitment to church activities, rituals, beliefs and customs. In examining the family, Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1984:128) propose that through rituals, practices, norms and customs, the father is always the normative head of the household. The father's position in the household, one that he draws power out of comes from the norms that he helps to socialise the family members into. The norms give him part of his identity as the breadwinner and chief agent of socialisation in the family. Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1984:27) say:

> In general family theory, family power processes include both power and authority. Whereas power refers to ones ability to change or exploit the behaviour of others, authority is one type of power which is based on norms which clearly legitimize a person's position and requires that deference and respect be accorded to that person.

But Papa Eugene's fundamentalist attitude which is the visibility of his religiosity borders on Fukuyama Yoshio's (1960) discussion of 'cultic Dimension' as one of the categories of church membership. Yoshio's (1960) proposition is that the cultic dimension is usually visible in the rituals that church members stress on as part of what constitutes their strong belief in what they practice.[24]

I introduce the idea of fundamentalism in this chapter because it not only forms part of the conceptualisation of religiosity but also because when I localise it to Nigeria, particularly with reference to the time that the novel deals with, it reveals interesting aspects of the socio-cultural and political context of religiosity in Nigeria.

The history of religion in the Nigerian post-colonial space is interesting. While Nigeria has clear ethnic differences that contribute to a turbulent past, the presence of religion has come to be recognised as a major determinant alongside tribal identities. Falola Toyin (1998) considers religion as a major part of the formation of identity

[24] Fukuyama Yoshio in 'The major dimensions of Church membership' p 154-161.

within the Nigerian post-colonial arena. His study on how the secularity of the state is threatened by the overdetermination of religion reveals interesting insights into the concept of religious fundamentalism in Nigeria. In his introduction he maps out how religious fundamentalism has developed since the independence of Nigeria in the 1960s.

What I draw from Falola's (1998) discussion is the view that religion has historically permeated the Nigerian socio-cultural and political fabric to the extent that it plays a major role in shaping some of the individual attitudes represented in characters like Papa Eugene in the text. While Falola (1998) situates religious overdetermination within the macro-spaces of state machinery and politics, such influence trickles down to the space of the family. *Purple Hibiscus* is temporally spaced in the Juntas of Babangida and Abacha in the late 80s and early 90s which were significant years of military rule in Nigerian history. As I pointed out in the introduction, Babangida's unilateral decision to let Nigeria participate fully in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is part of what forms a climax of the intermingling of religion, politics and violence. The religious fundamentalism that escalated into violence in the history of Nigeria necessitates its localisation into the familial space. Hence Papa Eugene's time was one that was rife with these tensions. There is a sense in which religion becomes a key marker of identity, forming a major part of the world view of people leading to widespread violence.

The socio-political and economic conditions that appertained in Nigeria then fuelled the existence of religious fundamentalism. Widespread deaths caused by general political instability ignited religious fundamentalism, another tangent away from what Wole Soyinka (1988) describes as *Season of Anomy*. This fundamentalism according to Falola (1998:11) is found in the commitment to seek answers in religion, religious revivalism and rigorous worship and aggressive militancy as a form that religion was taking to reorder society, combat ills, reform itself and fight opposition.

What we see in *Purple Hibiscus* is not only the manifestation of fundamentalism through Papa Eugene but also its impact in the familial space. What makes it even more interesting is Papa Eugene's public image: he owns *The Standard* a newspaper that criticises the military governments through its editor Ade Cocker, fighting for

freedom in terms of championing for dialogue. Yet Papa Eugene's intentions are according to Father Benedict captured in the following words:

> "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?" (p.5)

Papa Eugene is indeed in the public sphere a champion of the freedom and space for dialogue within the public political spaces. The biggest irony of course is that this fundamentalism that manifests itself in the public space as a seeker of truth and 'triumphant entries' manifests itself within the familial space as a silencer. While the Nigerian military government does all it can to gag the press, Papa Eugene gags dialogic spaces in his own household. The ambivalence of religious fundamentalism exists in the individual's anxieties in his struggle with identity formation which is further compounded by the fragmentation around him or her. In Papa Eugene's case his embrace of religion can be attributed to his personal insecurities which are a product of his missionary and colonial encounter as well as the political, social and economic insecurity of the post-colonial state of Nigeria. As Falola (1998:12) says:

> While this trend (*rise of fundamentalism*) can be documented, explanations for it are controversial. Its rise has been attributed variously to individual insecurity in a changing world, to economic crises, to the global spread of religious doctrines, to the failure of the state, and to adjustments necessitated by the spread of capitalism. (Emphasis mine).

Falola's (1998) study of the history of Nigeria in terms of political dimensions throws good light into the socio-cultural and political context of the processes of religiosity in Nigeria. Falola (1998) (de)links religiosity from the much talked about ethnicity in the Nigerian space. Falola (1998) then finds continuities between the processes of religious fundamentalism and the deterioration of governance pointing out how

leadership was significantly affected by religious identities. Falola (1998) also points out some of the inconsistencies that intrinsically existed within Christian denominations and also within Muslim denominations. What we see in *Purple Hibiscus* as Papa Eugene's hard-line stance towards certain practices within 'other' Catholic churches is in fact a culmination of this religious fundamentalism.

For Papa Eugene, Catholicism has got to be embraced whole; exactly the way it was brought into Africa. St. Agnes, the church which his family attends is served by Father Benedict, a British who considers Igbo songs as 'native songs' (p.4) and only allows those songs during the offering sessions. It is this wholesome embrace of Catholic principles, norms, values, practices and customs that Papa Eugene stands for which translate into the atmosphere at home. In chapter three I will discuss this as a form of monologue that faces other competing voices from within and without the family. When all these translates into the familial space, one of the things that make this discourse visible within Papa Eugene Achike's familial space is the presence of familial ritual.

At the beginning of the text Kambili narrates how Jaja's absence in the communion sets the pace for things to start 'falling apart' in this family. The communion is part of church ritual and can be considered quintessence custom. However Kambili is also keen at detailing part of other secularised forms of ritual in the same household. One significant one which she introduces to us early in the text is the ritual of 'love sips' from Papa Eugene:

> A love sip, he called it, because you shared the little things
> you loved with the people you loved. Have a love sip, he would
> say, and Jaja would go first. Then I would hold the cup with both
> hands and raise it to my lips. One sip. The tea was always too hot,
> always burned my tongue, and if lunch was something peppery,
> my raw tongue suffered. But it didn't matter, because I knew that
> when the tea burned my tongue, it burned Papa's love into me. (p.8)

From this, it is clear that rituals are familial and social relation processes. We see the way Papa Eugene localises the concepts of religion into his own created rituals. What

is although interesting at this particular point in time is the way Kambili uses this ritual to signify the disintegration of the family. When the narrative opens, after Papa Eugene throws the heavy missal in a moment of rage, this particular ritual does not occur and for Kambili, it is a signifier of familial disintegration: 'But Papa didn't say, "Have a love sip"; he didn't say anything as I watched him raise the cup to his lips' (p.8). Ritual for Kambili is the way to interpret familial mood, character, culture and most significantly to string her narrative for the reader.

The same ritual of love sips is significant in the turn of events in the text because it is the cause of Papa Eugene's death. It becomes, at the end of the text, a ritual of his death. One of the things that rituals as Bossard and Boll (1950) discuss is that rituals, usually loaded with religious connotations, are in fact robbed of the secular nature in which they have evolved over time. A strong argument that Bossard and Boll (1950) pursue is that ritual, because it has evolved over time, and specifically within the family space, has been secularised and therefore in fact has elements of the arbitrary in its formation. In this case for instance what is the relevance of burning Kambili and Jaja's tongues with hot tea in the name of religion? Bossard and Boll (1950:9) give a comprehensive definition of ritual paying attention to how it develops as a process:

> We shall speak of ritual here as meaning a pattern of prescribed formal behaviour, pertaining to some specific event, occasion or situation, which tends to be repeated over and over again. As it develops, it tends to demand relatively punctilious observance, admitting of no, or at least few, exceptions or deviations. As time goes on it often becomes ceremonious, and sometimes solemn. Ritual is something to be done, not something to be thought out.

Papa Eugene's obsession with ritual is something that Kambili pays attention to. Kambili describes the prayers Papa Eugene makes before meal times and is precocious at pointing out the lengthy prayers for food and how Papa Eugene in fact localises his own invented rituals even within prayer:

> For twenty minutes he asked God to bless the food. Afterward, he intoned the Blessed Virgin in several different titles while we responded, "Pray for us." His favourite title was Our Lady, Shield

> of the Nigerian people. He made it up for himself. If only people would use it everyday, he told us, Nigeria would not totter like a Big Man with the spindly legs of a child. (p.11)

What is interesting here of course is the way familial ritual is linked with the macro-conditions appertaining within the state at that point in time. What we see in Papa Eugene's little invention for Nigerian people is therefore nothing mysterious or popular; it is his sense of authority that makes this invention a sacred promulgation in the prayer ritual of the family. What one in fact realises is that familial ritual is not always about something generational, religious, or from an extraneous intervention, but that it can exist as something secularised and formed within certain auspices of authority within the household, who normalise it and make it seem the right thing to do as in Papa Eugene's case. In another sense, familial ritual is another way in which intrinsic senses of agency are created within the familial space. In their redefinition of the concept of ritual with regards to its changing perspectives particularly within the family, Bossard and Boll (1950: 16) say:

> When one ignores the traditional uses of the term and looks at its basic meaning, there is nothing awesome or mysterious or religious about it. What ritual really is is a system of procedure, a form of pattern of social interaction, which has three unvarying characteristics. First it is definitely prescribed. This is the way a thing is to be done. Ritual means exactness and precision in procedure. Second, there is the element of rigidity. The longer the prescribed procedure continues, the more binding its precision becomes. And finally, there is a sense of rightness which emerges from the past history of the process, i.e the oftener the repetition of the prescribed procedure occurs, the more it comes to be approved. This distinguishes it from mere habit. To deviate from the procedure is wrong, not wholly on utilitarian grounds, but also because it breaks the rhythm and the rapport.

What we experience in Papa Eugene Achike's family during those moments at table is precisely the existence of certain formal ways in which things are done, and a violation of the way these things are done is considered taboo. Most of these moments occur at table where the entire family congregates. Kambili has been cultured to know

these things by heart and she is keen at observing violations of the rituals especially by Jaja most of which shock her to the point of silent disbelief:

> I turned to stare at him. At least he was saying thanks the right way, the way we always did after a meal. But he was also doing what we never did: he was leaving the table before Papa had said the prayer after meals. (p.14)

The rigid nature of these rituals and the way in which they have manacled her, the way they have made her believe in them and in their rightness, as impressed upon her by Papa Eugene, expose how the familial space has been silenced. Kambili's reaction for instance, to Jaja's audacity to be defiant to Papa Eugene sheds light on the silenced nature of this familial space. She is short of words and cannot express her horror at her brother's height of insolence. Her body has been silenced as we see in this instance:

> I reached for my glass and stared at the juice, watery yellow, like urine. I poured all of it down my throat, in one gulp. I didn't know what else to do. This had never happened before in my entire life, never. The compound walls would crumble, I was sure, and squash the frangipani trees. The sky would cave in. the Persian rugs on the stretches of gleaming marble floor would shrink. Something would happen. But the only thing that happened was my choking. My body shook from the coughing. Papa and Mama rushed over. Papa thumbed my back while Mama rubbed my shoulders… (p.14)

What familial ritual does to Kambili is to silence her. Familial ritual cages her mind and body and as it happens in most cases when she wishes to say something, words fail to come out. Chapter three will be concerned with Kambili's journey out of the silenced spaces of the family and will deal with both the mind and body silences and how she conquers them after her visit to another familial space, that of her aunty Ifeoma. I will argue as Hewett (2004) does that *Purple Hibiscus* is also a story concerned with the voicing of the body.

While ritual works to silence or pigeon-hole Kambili into certain ways of thinking and hence shapes her world view, it eventually works as a form of social control, just as rituals within general public spaces. Because children, though belonging to the

private parts of the family, in the sense of them being part of the intimacy of familial relations, they also belong to the public in the sense that they are products for the public's contact with the family. In a sense then and as Andrew Cherlin (1996) says families exist as public because they socialise children who end up being public products and they exist as private because of the intimate spaces they share only within familial spaces.

In a sense then ritual, as a form of social control, works within the larger structures of social control in the sites of publicity. What ritual actually does to Kambili's family is to reproduce itself in more violent forms through Papa Eugene's beatings of Kambili and her mother on several occasions. This implies therefore that ritual can be looked at as a symbolic form of interaction, one that reflects itself within the larger spaces of society. How ritual manifests itself in the familial space is determined also by the extraneous conditions. Eugene D'aquili (1979) takes up this argument in his examination of ritual as a spectrum. D'aquili (1979:1) is actually opposed to the notion that ritual contains elements of the arbitrary as Bossard and Boll (1950) argue. He points out that ritual is something highly organised and does not contain any elements of arbitrariness:

> Ritual is never random behaviour but is highly organized, encompassing myriad discrete and symbolic elements intertwined in a complex behavioural matrix. Like the spectrum, ritual is structured by a set of organisational principles that are only partially, if ever, comprehended by participants and includes both observed and unobserved elements. Furthermore there are certain preconditions for ritual, just as there are conditions prerequisite to the appearance of the spectrum.

What D'aquili (1979) stresses in his argument is the view that ritual falls within general structuralism and that in fact despite it being a system of social control, social solidarity, it is also a system of social stratification. When we examine the sociology of Papa Eugene Achike's family unit for instance, ritual serves as a reservoir for patriarchal power. In most cases, and as D'aquili (1979) and Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1984) discuss, those people who are custodians of ritual, exercise a form of power over the rest. Papa Eugene is not only the chief agent of socialisation in his

family he is also the custodian of ritualistic practices in his family and therefore placed in a higher pedestal, almost like a familial high priest. What is interesting in this regard is his deity-like image in the imaginary of Kambili. Ritual makes him, in the eyes of Kambili always right. In moments when Kambili does actions that she feels her father will not approve of, she always feels that her father will find out. To Kambili her father is omnipresent and omniscient.

However, what we see is that ritual has reproduced in Kambili, systems that are self-evaluative, of self-control, but unfortunately, out of fear of her father. Ritual moulds the individual to certain ends that benefit the custodians of the same rituals. However, there exists a banality in ritual because if the individual goes against ritual, there is a way in which the same ritual has ways of dealing with the individual. In the case of *Purple Hibiscus* for instance, confessions are things that are anticipated and they are used by Kambili sometimes to show the banality of ritual:

> I wonder if I would have to confess that I had shared a room with a heathen. I paused then, in meditation, to pray that Papa would never find out that Papa Nnukwu had visited and that I had shared a room with him. (p.149)

Confessions are made even more banal in *Purple Hibiscus* because of the way that they are stage-managed by Papa Eugene and the priest Father Benedict. In some cases, Papa Eugene, out of his quest for perfection has to have his children confess after they have been away from him for a while. Ritual in *Purple Hibiscus* has also been the source of violence. I mentioned Papa Eugene's expressions of violence after Jaja misses communion. One of the other instances of violence arises when Kambili is caught eating just before the Eucharist Mass. Despite the cramps she has from her menstrual cycle she is flogged together with her mother and brother Jaja.

Papa Eugene does not listen to the fact that Kambili's sexuality is a unique condition even in the presence of church ritual (the Eucharist Mass). Church ritual is deemed above bodily demands like Kambili's sexuality. What is interesting though for the reader is Papa's reaction which though at first violent, becomes ambivalent and confusing for Kambili. After he has flogged them:

> Papa crushed Jaja and me to his body. “Did the belt hurt you? Did it break your skin?” he asked, examining our faces. I felt a throbbing on my back, but I said no, that I was not hurt. It was the way Papa shook his head when he talked about liking sin, as if something weighed him down, something he could not throw off. (p.102)

What we see here is the capacities for ritual to not only expose the violence within private familial spaces but also to reveal ritual’s insufficiencies in terms of its inability to be flexible. More importantly, it reveals its capacity to abet forms of silence and monologue within familial spaces. Ritual in *Purple Hibiscus* is therefore a key symbol of silence in the household. It manifests itself in the rigour of church norms, values and beliefs. Kambili is detailed in narrating moments such as this:

> We went upstairs to change, Jaja and Mama and I. Our steps on the stairs were as measured and as silent as our Sundays: the silence of the waiting until Papa was done with his siesta so we could have lunch; the silence of reflection time, when Papa gave us a scripture passage or a book by one of the early church fathers to read and meditate on; the silence of evening rosary; the silence of driving to the church for benediction afterward. Even our family time on Sunday was quiet, without Chess games or newspaper discussions, more in tune with the Day of Rest. (p.31)

Kambili can easily detail the entire week because of the structures of ritual in her life. Ritual in *Purple Hibiscus* exists and generally rotates, for Kambili within the spaces of the home, her school and the church. Her father draws for her schedules to follow everyday, keys in times of rest, eating, reading, praying and even time with her brother Jaja. The timetable is strictly followed within the family, even meals have been timetabled. The presence of religion is felt through constant prayers which have also been timetabled. The general prayers, the Apostles Creed, the grace, are all constant elements of prayer in this household.

As in church the presence of prayers occasions the silence of meditation that is always in church. The demeanour of Kambili is therefore shaped by prayers and the perpetual

silence of meditation always within the house. She is misconstrued as a 'backyard snob' (p.51) in school, as someone who always quickly runs away after school and refuses to socialise with her friends. Yet this is because of her father's strict schedule for her in and after school hours. When in Nsukka, Amaka her cousin cannot understand why Kambili speaks in whispers:

> Amaka picked up a comb and ran it through the ends of her short hair. Then she turned to me and asked, "Why do you lower your voice?"
> "You lower your voice when you speak. You talk in whispers. (p.117)

What we see in Kambili is a girl whose external self is shaped by the silence in her household. Her real self is suppressed during those moments when she stutters in her speech, the moments when she coughs instead of speaking, the moments when she lowers her voice instead of speaking normally, the moments when she telepathically communicates with her brother Jaja through their spirits. Her mind is clouded with the daily rituals which carry the choking presence of her father. She becomes in her external self more of a machine created out of the daily presence of ritual in the household. The structures of ritual shape her demeanour, in the external, but the narrative in her first person helps the reader to forage through her real self.

What we find with Kambili and the state of ritual in Papa Eugene Achike's household is that she struggles with her inner voices which have been suppressed by the externality of the rituals. In a sense Kambili is a character in the superficial sense of the word because ritual, as we have seen, structures her and is stage-managed by her father. Kambili becomes more of a character in the space of the family because of the overdetermination of ritual. Her inner voice is suppressed by what the ritual structures of the household demand of her and she struggles even in this process of being suppressed; she coughs, she stutters in her speech. Quite clearly this is expressed in instances such as this:

> I did not, could not, look at Papa's face when he spoke. The boiled yam and peppery greens refused to go down my throat: they clung to my mouth like children clinging to their mothers' hand at a nursery school entrance. I downed glass after glass of water to push them down, and by the time Papa

> started the grace, my stomach was swollen with water. (p.41)

In instances such as this, Kambili struggles with internal conflicts; the predictability of punishment from her father and the expectation that she excel in class even with her hearing the thumping in her parents' bedroom and her seeing the blood as Papa Eugene carries Mama 'like jute sacks of rice' (p.33). Kambili rationalises the use of ritual after instances of violence and this disturbs her for quite a while. After her father beats up her mother causing a miscarriage, her mother in an unbelievable statement calls it 'an accident' (p.34). The real shocker for Kambili comes that evening after Mama comes home and after dinner, the whole family is ordered to a ritual of prayer for the forgiveness of Kambili's mother. This is how Kambili perceives it:

> Later, at dinner, Papa said we would recite sixteen different novenas. For Mama's forgiveness. And on Sunday, the first Sunday of Trinity, we stayed back after Mass and started the novenas. Father Benedict sprinkled us with holy water. Some of the holy water landed on my lips, and I tasted the stale saltiness of it as we prayed. If Papa felt Jaja or me beginning to drift off at the thirteenth recitation of the plea to St. Jude, he suggested we start all over. We had to get it right. I did not think, I did not even think to think, what Mama needed to be forgiven for. (p.35-36)

What we see in this instance is the power of ritual to intervene in private familial space. It exposes the banality of ritual in justifying itself in instances that the custodians of the same ritual would obviously be considered wrong. In this case Kambili tries to rationalise what is happening. She is more of a character in this ritual drama than her true self. What Papa Eugene actually does is to appropriate his children into his own scheme of power but through the use of religion. He validates his actions through the use of religious ritual.

While I have obviously noted that Kambili's self exists not in the ritual drama that she participates in, the question one might want to ask is, how does this ritual define her identity? At a macro-level, she belongs to the Christian family; the presence of religion and Catholic ritual imparts in her qualities that are externally located in the Christian family; she goes to church, confessions, recites novenas, apostle creed et

cetera. From this level, I can also locate her as a member of Papa Eugene Achike's family. The family, even by its naming is identified through the person of Papa Eugene. Papa Eugene determines familial duties and conduct. Apart from being the breadwinner he intervenes between his family and the Christian family. What therefore is the space Kambili has left for her as an individual? Ritual and schedule guard her time jealously, thanks to Papa Eugene drawing them up. School, church, family meals and prayers occupy her schedule. In the space of her own room, time to siesta, to read the bible and to sleep is also drawn up for her. Her parents' bedroom is next to hers and she has no choice but to keep a careful ear on the banging sounds, when her mother is beaten up.

Kambili's self is clouded by routine. As a self, she no longer possesses her own properties, as an individual her rights as we quite clearly see are not inalienable. She evokes her presence through the ability to tell this story.[25] Told from her point of view the story imposes her presence on the reader rather than the reader having to find a representation of Kambili. I argue that the rituals and daily routine work to represent her as more of a character than an individual and self. The struggle against ritual and the silencing of the familial space is a struggle for identity and individuality. In a psychoanalytic sense Kambili is involved in an act of individuation. In line with the arguments of Carl Gustav Jung (1964) her ability to tell the story is an attempt at relating her unconscious to her conscious. As we have seen she struggles to retrospectively analyse the reason for reciting sixteen novenas for the forgiveness of her mother yet quite clearly it is her father who needs forgiveness for beating up her mother and triggering a miscarriage. Without digressing into an entire argument on individuation, it is worth mentioning that a metaphysical analysis of Kambili's struggles in the process of individuation definitely adds up to the whole argument on how ritual suppresses her self as she struggles to comprehend the banality of ritual; this proposition of banality is however contested by the argument that ritual is a practice of power.

Around the issue of ritual in *Purple Hibiscus* can arise a whole debate on how identities are formed, others suppressed and others ruptured. Identity - fluid, shifting,

[25] Amelie Rorty Oksenberg in 'A Literary Postscript: Characters, Persons, Selves, Individuals' argues for a distinction of all these terms as part of identity formation. (301-324)

concentric, stable, unstable, loose - can be made banal by the repetition and routine of ritual. The question of ritual can therefore be used to question the concept of identity. Key also in relating identity to ritual is the issue of the social structures that govern the formation of identity.

Ritual can be considered part of the creation of social structures that control and shape identities. The family presents within it systems that reproduce social control and religiosity and ritual are key factors in this reproduction as we witness of Papa Eugene Achike's family. But beyond just the issue of familial structures shaping identities is the whole issue of agency. How much do these social structures allow for individual agency in identity formation? As I have tried to demonstrate with the arguments from Amelie Oksenberg (1976), the components of identity involve the process of individuation, presence, selves, away from just character, all these involving senses of agency on the part of the individual.

Kath Woodward (2000) discusses the presence of structures in the formation of identity and proposes that identity for the individual involves an investment of agency which she calls 'an active engagement' on the part of the individual. Kambili's sense of the self, the 'I' is a key pointer to Woodward's (2000:8) notion that the 'I' involves some element of choice and therefore a sense of agency. Choice and agency can be important things to consider in Kambili's narrative. The choice of a first person in *Purple Hibiscus* is for instance, according to Hewett (2005), a stylistic reorientation of the works of Achebe by Adichie. However, the key thing that comes out of Hewett's (2005) discussion is the issue of choice and agency in the use of the first person. It is important that Kambili gives her story from the worm's eye view. However what she does is to shift the gaze within the familial sphere, away from what Deirdre Lashgiri (1995:3) refers to as the master narrative. A worm's eye view is definitely a position of marginalisation. In the case of Papa Eugene Achike's family, Kambili's experience of violence and the psychological torture are a foregrounding of issues usually considered silent and unspoken: taboo. This is a key factor for the identity formation of Kambili. Lashgiri (1995:3) aptly points out that:

> Shifting the vantage point of the subject allows us to see forms of violence that had been invisible, or to see in

> unfamiliar ways. When the gaze is redefined, what it encompasses changes, deconstructing the master narrative.

When Lashgiri (1995) speaks of the master narrative, I understand this to mean that the master narrative is reflected in the daily organisation of the contemporary African family mediated through male dominance and that the stylistic debunking of the master narrative found in generative discourses, tradition, and canonisation, is something that has bracketed the familial space as a stereotypic province for female writers[26]. *Purple Hibiscus'* profiling of a complex male figure, Papa Eugene, is a deliberate move away from the archetypal, stereotypical one dimensional profiling of characters in early writings.

Nonetheless, Kambili's narrative looks back at the events that happen in a span of probably a year, her fifteenth year, but in the larger context of Nigeria's history, a condensation of the junta's of Babangida and Abacha. The choice of Kambili for the author was a deliberate choice of a position that was going to give a detached telling. Detached as the author intended it to be it turns out as the story of a girl seeking to rebuild her shattered self. While she lives in an overly religious household, ritual and schedule, hold her down, suppresses her agency and basically silences her. The choice of her speaking as a first person restores that robbed sense of agency she is supposed to posses within the family. Therefore as Kambili provides a worm's eye view of events in Papa Eugene Achike's household she (re)evaluates her position in all the happenings; the violence, the psycho-physical trauma she goes through and deems her self the best person to (re)tell the story to heal her self. Woodward (2000:13) is keen to indicate that 'The ability to visualize ourselves and to represent ourselves gives us some degree of agency'. Woodward's (2000) approach focuses more on the control abilities the individual has rather than the constraints.

Ritual makes the individual more of an actor in the daily routine of things. This robs the individual of not only the sense of agency but also the original creativity intrinsic in the core of identity formation. Kambili participates in all the family ritual, applies

[26] See my discussion in chapter four about the narration of the state and the family as something that has been contested through gender categories. Chapter four locates *Purple Hibiscus'* treatment of the family and the state within canonical discourses of gender and tradition in African literature.

herself at memorising all the novenas, the apostle creed and all the rituals that permeate her home and church. Most of the time she struggles to impress her father:

> And I would sit with my knees pressed together, next to Jaja, trying hard to keep my face blank, to keep the pride from showing, because Papa said modesty was very important. (p.5)

Kambili struggles to fit into the structures that her father in conjunction with religion has set up for her. What is also interesting is the way ritual permeates the world view of Kambili to the extent that certain things are clearly inconceivable for her:

> I could not even think of her and Papa together, on the bed they shared, custom-made and wider than the conventional king-size. When I thought of affection between them, I thought of them exchanging the sign of peace at Mass, the way Papa would hold her tenderly in his arms after they had clasped hands. (p.21)

Kambili filters everything she thinks about through the eyes of religious ritual, everything for her has to be interpreted in terms of black and white, good and evil, right and wrong. This is the way ritual becomes shallow in terms of having to deal with certain complexities that are part of identity formation in the human being. Ritual in many ways in *Purple Hibiscus* aids in monologising familial space. Ritual abets a monolithic perception of the familial space. This ritual as one witnesses in *Purple Hibiscus* is underpinned by a patriarchal consciousness; the Subject and subject in the familial space of Papa Eugene Achike's family are both men; the trinity that Father Benedict uses in church - God, Papa and Jesus is that of men. Identity formation for Kambili is dictated by this trinity of men.

Kambili's perception of her world robs her perception of herself; she cannot see any sense of agency come from her; ritual has shaped her to always internalise what Ronald Fairbairn (1952) calls bad objects. In the creation of the personality of Kambili, the violence visited upon her by her father and her perceptions of it reveal interesting ideas about the creation of identity: Kambili internalises this violence and still manages to identify with Papa Eugene all the time. Aptly put by Fairbairn (1952:66-67):

> It is better to be a sinner in a world ruled by God than to live in a world ruled by the Devil. A sinner in a world ruled by God may be bad; but there is always a certain sense of security to be derived from the fact that the world around is good.

On his part Papa Eugene maintains the position of the **S**ubject in the household, he sets the rules and the entire familial space identifies with him as we see of Kambili's attempts at always making Papa Eugene happy. Papa Eugene's sense of the self is built from the affirmation he gets from the household. As the members of the household obey, respect and live by the Christian rituals he sets while interacting with them, he gets to not only stamp his authority but also to strengthen his sense of identity. I have already touched on the way he creates his own rituals within the household, rituals that strengthen his stranglehold in the familial space. Hence Papa Eugene's sense of identity is almost synonymous with his sense of power in the familial space.

What we see at the beginning when Jaja defies Papa Eugene and the reaction thereof sustains the view that Jaja in his rebellious act threatens his father's sense of identity and power. When we also examine Papa Eugene's hatred of his own father who he considers a heathen, it is another explanation of the creation of identities and how they structure relations of power and control. As Hewett (2005: 80) argues, there is a structure upon which Papa Eugene has built his identity. A structure that is visible through his concern with ritual and religion, a structure that is visible through the prayers, novenas, apostle creed, meditations and confessions that are enforced and practised through the intervention of Papa Eugene. Therefore Papa Eugene's hatred for his own father, something akin to the Okonkwo-like rejection of his father Unoka in *Things Fall Apart* according to Hewett (2005:80), is more of a case of structures of identity and power and attempts at threatening to rupture these structures. Hewett (2005:80) says:

> …and although we do not know the reasons for his religious conversion, we do see his father's traditional Igbo beliefs threaten the entire structure upon which he bases his identity and power.

The cracks in these structures for Kambili are found in her father's worried looks whenever he speaks about sin:

> it was the way Papa shook his head when he talked about liking sin, as if something weighed him down, something he could not throw off. (p.102)

Papa Eugene's solid looking structures of identity certainly have grey spaces between them, spaces that he struggles to deal with. While Papa Eugene presents an image of blackness and whiteness, while he represents a monologue within familial space even he cannot run away from those intermediary spaces he struggles with: the banality of ritual, the crisis of his post-colonial self with a history of colonialism, his perceptions about morality, governance and the realities of the internal and micro-space of the family; a space that is, as I discussed in chapter one, stratified with many different actors in terms of gender, age and statuses.

The grey spaces that Kambili notices when her father talks about sin can be best explained in Joe De Graft's (1976) seminal essay on ritual Drama. Exposed in Papa Eugene's grey spaces is the insanity and fear that ritual helps to assuage through the acts of impersonation that de Graft (1976) discusses. Papa Eugene in fact impersonates God through his little inventions of ritual for the Nigerian people and his godly demeanour in the auspices of the church.

Papa Eugene however reaches a point where the monologue he insists on maintaining is thrown off balance when his children finally journey out of the silenced spaces of the family into another familial space where they come face to face with dialogue and the larger society. My examination of this journeying out into a space of dialogue will be in chapter three. It is important to note here that subjectivities and identities are created out of an order of discourse and in a monologic atmosphere such as what we have in Papa Eugene Achike's household, identity becomes problematic for the actors on the ground.

All in all the formation of identities and subjectivities in *Purple Hibiscus* apart from being governed and directed or structured by ritual are made more complex by their

manifestation in the private spaces of the family and the public spaces of the church, school, the media and the state. Papa Eugene Achike's family, in the words of Althusser (1976) is a school-church family but it dons a public face through Papa Eugene, the owner of the *Standard*, a paper that fearlessly criticises the military state. Added to this is of course all that this chapter is focusing on, religion and its visibility in familial ritual.

I have also dealt with the presence of violence in the family albeit connecting it to the ritual processes. Kambili's narration of the violence visited upon her by her father is related to the ritual processes that have become a character in this family. What is really interesting in this particular familial space is the capacity for religion, ritual, and call for piety and confession to co-exist with violence. Within this perpetual mood of meditation within Papa Eugene Achike's family is not only the psychological tension that Kambili faces and struggles with but also the muted physical violence. An example of this unnatural state of affairs is in the following incident:

> I was in my room after lunch, reading James chapter five because I would talk about the biblical roots of the anointing of the sick during family time, when I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parents' hand-curved bedroom door. I imagined the door had gotten stuck and Papa was trying to open it. If I imagined hard enough, then it would be true. I sat down, closed my eyes and started to count. Counting made it seem not that long, made it seem not that bad. Sometimes it was over before I even got to twenty. I was at nineteen when the sounds stopped. I heard the door open. Papa's gait on the stairs sounded heavier, more awkward, than usual. (p.32-33)

An instance such as this one is preceded by Kambili's description of how her mother's reluctance to visit Father Benedict (as is the family ritual) after mass. Apparently Kambili's mother is pregnant and her reluctance is genuine because feelings of nausea accompany her condition. What is interesting though is Papa Eugene's interpretation of the pregnancy and Mama's reluctance to visit Father Benedict after the Mass:

> When Papa started the prayer, his voice quavered more than usual. He prayed for the food first, then asked God to forgive those who had tried to thwart His Will, who had put selfish desires first and had not wanted to visit His servant after Mass. Mama's "Amen!" resounded throughout the room. (p.32)

The case above, in the words of Joyce Nyairo (2006:4) presents a crucial issue: 'tormented sexuality'. Religion, particularly Catholicism and sexuality are major concerns in *Purple Hibiscus*. Quite lucidly Nyairo (2006:4) points out that:

> But also, in his tormented sexuality we realise that Catholicism may also be responsible for sexual inhibition, a tendency to regard sex as unclean and debasing which results in Eugene reacting so violently to the sight of his pregnant wife.

Beyond my examination of ritual identities and the crises that follow them is another interesting perspective which I suppose is worth investigating in the character of Papa Eugene. Papa Eugene's public image subverts his familial image. Papa Eugene's philanthropy throws off balance even Kambili's perceptions of the violence he inflicts upon the family. He uses the church pedestal to donate huge sums of money for charitable causes, yet he gives as Kambili says, 'slim wards' of money to his own father Papa Nnukwu simply because Papa Nnukwu is not a Christian. What we see in the public spheres out of Papa Eugene is a magnanimous man of the people:

> Papa wrote a check and handed it to the usher telling her he did not want to make a speech. When the M C announced the amount, the priest got up and started to dance, jerking his behind this way and that, and the crowd rose up and cheered so loudly it was like the rumbling of thunder at the end of rainy season. (p.90)

and later:

> He led the way out of the hall, smiling and waving at the many hands that reached out to grasp his white tunic as if touching him would heal them of an illness (p.90-91)

Papa's magnanimity extends beyond the church to the beggars in the streets:

> He slowed down on Ogui Road to fling some crisp Naira notes at a

> beggar sprawled by the road side (p.44)

and even to the road side hawkers:

> Although Papa bought only bread and Okpa wrapped in hot banana leaves, he gave a twenty-Naira note to each of the hawkers and their "Thank sir, God bless you" chants echoed in my ear as we drove off and approached Abba (p.54)

At the home town in Abba Papa was 'A man of the people':

> As we drove past, people waved and called out Papa's title "Omelora"

and he extended his generosity to even the little boys in the village:

> ' "Omelora! Good afun sah!" they chorused. They wore only shorts… "Kedu nu?" Papa gave them each ten Naira from a wad of notes he pulled out of his hold-all. "Greet your parents make sure you show them this money." (p.55)

The above incidents present a public identity for Papa Eugene Achike's family. But this public representation for Kambili the narrator, who knows the violence that exists in the private sphere is the biggest dramatic irony in the story. What we see is a complicated struggle of identities within the spheres of the private and the public, the macro and micro-spaces, creating a complex web of psycho-physical struggles for the narrator and her entire family. Representation in the public sphere for all the actors in this family becomes more of a religious, pious ritual of modesty, magnanimity and in more redundant terms pretentious, considering the private spaces riddled with violence in physical and psychological terms.

However one would want to borrow the ideas of de Graft (1976) in his examination of ritual and perhaps point out that fear and insanity become daemons for the inventions of ritual both in secular and holy spaces. Still, Papa Eugene cocoons himself through the use of religious ritual. The macro and micro spaces he straddles through present a somewhat schizophrenic character, with a deep seated fear. There is therefore something psychological in Papa Eugene's impersonation of a godly character. De Graft (1976:3) premises his examination of ritual drama on insecurity, fear and insanity. In conclusion I will quote him:

> On the surface these ends (*for ritual drama*) are many and varied; but at the deepest psychological level they are closely related

to man’s compulsive need, and therefore search, for sanity and security in a world that threatens annihilation from all directions. (Emphasis mine)

CHAPTER THREE

GROWTH AND EXPOSURE: JOURNEYING OUT OF SILENCE

In chapters one and two I tried to build up on familial theory and localised it to the fictive Papa Eugene Achike family. I also tried to introduce religiosity as a major concern in *Purple Hibiscus* through the use of ritual, linking it with identity formation in private and public spheres. What has come out of the early chapters is the proposition that religiosity manifests itself through ritual and it structures familial relations. There is also the proposition that religiosity is itself overdetermined by ritual[27] within this household and that this overdetermination creates a silenced familial space. Our narrator Kambili details for us how rituals, imposed and enforced by Papa Eugene within the familial space determine her relations with her entire world. What Kambili eventually seems to be pointing out is that her familial space is one of entrapment, where **s**ubjectivities and **S**ubjectivities are created through the auspices of religious belief.[28]

The physical and psychological violence that Kambili endures explains even better the visibility of the family space as a silenced one. It is worth mentioning though that Adichie's choice of a fifteen year-old girl is stylistically deliberate if considered within larger canonical discourses. The use of familial space is an apposite context to foreground it as a necessary symbol, sufficient enough to be more than a portrait of the larger politics of the state. Nigeria in the juntas of Babangida and Abacha was a silenced state; military regimes speak a monologue; the press is gagged, as we witness with Papa Eugene's *Standard*.

Familial space is affected by the larger happenings of the state: When Kambili for instance fails to lead her class the night when her father reads through her report and

[27] I consider ritual here as an element of religion and that it is a single element whose effect is enough to explain religiosity in this household. One would however also explain that the basis for Eugene's obsession with this specific element is not only, as I argued in the pervious chapter, out of schizophrenic tendencies but also that Christianity stresses on the practice and habit of ritual for perfection, to reach the 'image and likeness'. This could also explain Eugene' s passion for perfection.
[28] Subject and subject with small and capital 's' here implies a certain hierarchy of subjectivity in the religiosity. Here I borrow Althusser's (1976) discussion of religion as an ideological State apparatus and how it works through the creation of subjects from the Subject (God). Althusser considers God as the subject with a capital 's' and Christians as subjects with small 's'. in our case Eugene is like the subject with a capital 'S' by virtue of his fundamentalist attitude. His profile in church and in public gives the stature of the **S**ubject while his family remains his subjects.

takes her to his room upstairs for punishment somebody calls to inform him of Ade Cocker's arrest. He ends up not punishing her. For Kambili this is a major intervention that prevents her father from punishing her:

> The phone rang then; it had been ringing more often since Ade Cocker was arrested. Papa answered it and spoke in low tones. I sat waiting for him until he looked up and waved me away. He did not call me the next or the day after, to talk about my report card, to decide how I would be punished. I wondered if he was too preoccupied with Ade Cocker's case, but even after he got him out of jail a week later, he did not talk about my report card. (p.42)

This is an interesting conflation of the happenings of the larger state and the happenings of the familial space occupied by our fifteen year old narrator. Punishment, a ritual of correction in Papa Eugene Achike's familial space is a major occasioning of silence within the same familial space. Punishment which eventually turns to child abuse and wife battery is the visibility of a monologic familial space, rife with the silence of choking meditation, speech in whispers, banal confessions all in the name of Catholic piety.

Surrounded by an oppressive silence and mood in the house Kambili precociously describes to us:

> The silence was broken only by the whir of the ceiling fan as it sliced through the still air. Although our spacious dining room gave way to an even wider living room, I felt suffocated. The off-white walls with the framed photos of grandfather were narrowing, bearing down on me. Even the glass dining table was moving toward me. (p.7)

And:

> The compound walls, topped by coiled electric wires, were so high I could not see the cars driving by on our street. (p.9)

Or:

> Lunch was Jollof rice, fist-size chunks of Azu fried until the bones were crisp, and ngwo-ngwo. Papa ate most of the ngwo-ngwo, his spoon swooping through the spicy broth in the glass bowl. Silence hung over the table like the blue-black clouds in the middle of the rainy season. Only the chirping of the Ochiri birds outside interrupted it. (p.32)

This silenced familial space not only manifests itself in the mood and violence as I have tried to point out, it also manifests itself in Kambili's body. In chapter two I hinted that examination of bodily silence will be dealt with in this chapter and that for Kambili to journey out of the silence she is entrapped in, both her mind and body have to journey out. It is for this reason that I have argued that *Purple Hibiscus* is a story of Kambili's journey out of the silences of her body and mind (Hewett 2005).

Whenever Kambili tries to fathom things out of the ritual imaginary that she is entrapped in, words fail her and she develops fits of coughing. For instance when Jaja defies familial ritual at the beginning of the text, Kambili's attempt at deciphering Jaja's actions and the consequences reverberate within her own body system:

> I reached for my glass and stared at the juice, watery yellow, like urine. I poured all of it down my throat, in one gulp. I didn't know what else to do. This had never happened before in my entire life, never. The compound walls would crumble, I was sure, and squash the Frangipani trees. The sky would cave in, the Persian rugs on the stretches of the gleaming marble floor would shrink. Something would happen. *But the only thing that happened was my choking. My body shook from the coughing.* (p.14 emphasis mine)

What I have tried to develop in the paragraphs above is the atmosphere within this familial space. What this chapter intends to do is to examine how Kambili transcends this silence. What we initially see is that she is a detached partaker of the religious norms, rituals, customs and practises in the household. She endures psycho-physical

violence because of the fear of her father. In the space of her bedroom, she pays keen attention to 'slap slap' sounds that her mother's slippers cause on the floor and the banging sounds in her parents' bedroom when her mother is being beaten. Kambili feels her father's omnipresence through the schedules he writes for them; family time, siesta time, uniform washing time, time with Jaja etcetera. All these as I tried demonstrating in chapter two rob her of a sense of direct agency, beyond just the view that she is able to tell her story. Her body and mind are silenced; silenced from her own self and alienated from her true self. It is for Kambili a feeling of perpetual entrapment to be in her own home; the coiled wires, the airy stillness of the ceiling fan in the living room and worst of all, the stale saltiness of holy water and the general ritual that defines the family.

Kambili's moments of growth peak when she gains contact with her cousins, aunt and Father Amadi a young Catholic priest she meets while staying in Nsukka with her aunt. This chapter will pursue key elements in Kambili's time of growth: laughter, music and sexuality at Nsukka, a dialogised familial space. These elements are symbolic of the experimental purple hibiscus growing in their garden at Enugu, flowers brought all the way from Nsukka. At the beginning she equates the flowers with Jaja's defiance:

> Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like Aunty Ifeoma's experimental purple hibiscus: rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the one that the crowds waving green leaves chanted at government Square after the coup. A freedom to be, to do. (p.16)

Kambili talks of a 'freedom to be, to do'. Quite clearly, the Nsukka experience is a journey that helps Kambili thirst for agency (to do) and for her individuation (to be). From Nsukka came the need for active engagement with familial structure and authority. For Kambili actually, the ability to tell this story can only be found in her experience in Nsukka. Laughter, music and a realisation of her sexual growth are chief factors that fuel her ability to narrate.

Before her journey to Nsukka where she experiences tremendous growth, she gives us sneak previews of her aunty Ifeoma during the visit to her rural home in Abba in the following way:

> Aunty Ifeoma came the next day, in the evening, when the orange trees started to cast long, wavy shadows across the water fountain in the front yard. Her laughter floated upstairs in the living room, where I sat reading. I had not heard it in two years, but I would know that cackling , hearty sound anywhere….And she spoke the way she walked, as if to get as many words out of her mouth as she could in the shortest time. (p.71)

Kambili is amazed at Aunty Ifeoma's fearlessness and her ability to speak to Papa Eugene like an equal (p.76-77). In her disbelief, she says:

> Every time Aunty Ifeoma spoke to Papa, my heart stopped, then started again in a hurry. It was the flippant tone; she did not seem to recognize that it was Papa, that he was different, special. I wanted to reach out and press her lips shut and get some of that shiny bronze lipstick on my fingers. (p.77)

The entrance of her cousins into the picture completes her perception of Aunty Ifeoma and her family. Her immediate perception of them is a preview of the dialogised space that exists in Nsukka, where they live:

> Papa had gone back downstairs, and I was still sitting on the sofa, watching Aunty Ifeoma talk to Mama, when my cousins arrived. Amaka was a thinner, teenage copy of her mother. She walked and talked even faster and with more purpose than Aunty Ifeoma did. Only her eyes were different; they did not have the unconditional warmth of Aunty Ifeoma's. They were quizzical eyes, eyes that asked many questions and did not accept many answers. Obiora was a year younger, very light skinned, with honey coloured eyes behind thick glasses, and his mouth turned up at the sides in a perpetual smile. Chima had skin as dark as the bottom of a burned pot of rice, and was tall for a boy of seven. They all laughed alike: throaty cackling sounds pushed

> out with her enthusiasm. (p.78)

Aunty Ifeoma and her family's infectious laughter first open in Kambili a dream world full of laughter; laughter which for her sounds unbelievable being that in her own familial space, laughter is a phenomenon:

> That night I dreamt that I was laughing, but it did not sound like my laughter, although I was not sure of what my laughter sounded like. It was cackling and throaty and enthusiastic, like Aunty Ifeoma's. (p.88)

Kambili is keen at noticing how her cousins smile, laugh and even dress, aspects which she tries to deal with in her own internal conflict. These things seem novel, yet without her knowledge these things gradually introduce her growth and exposure, out of a space of monologue dominated by Papa Eugene.

Kambili's visit to Nsukka starts a very significant (re)evaluation of her notions of prayer, familial relations, laughter, sexuality and music. She is amazed at the practice of physical and psychological spaces in Aunty Ifeoma's house. Having given us a preview of Aunty Ifeoma and her children, Kambili's arrival at Nsukka is elaborately narrated right from the time Aunty Ifeoma meets them at the door. What the reader sees is a space of dialogue, freedom and laughter:

> Then Aunty Ifeoma did a little dance, moving her arms in rowing motions, throwing each leg in front of her and stamping down hard. (p.113)

Aunty Ifeoma's acts of dance are, simple as they may seem strong symbols of freedom in her household in the perception of Kambili. Dance involves movement of the body; movement on the other hand means freedom of one's exercise of space. In the words of Michel De Certeau (1984) Aunty Ifeoma has created her own poetic geography in the consumption of space. What strikes Kambili immediately is the consumption of space in this household, the height of the ceiling, the kerosene smell and the smell from the kitchen. Kambili compares the atmosphere at Nsukka and that of her home and immediately feels she belongs in this space:

> I noticed the ceiling first, how low it was. I felt I could reach out

> and touch it; it was so unlike home, where the high ceiling gave our rooms an airy stillness. The pungent fumes of kerosene smoke mixed with the aroma of curry and nutmeg from the kitchen. (p.113)

Kambili is keen on the space, smell and most significantly the laughter:

> Aunty Ifeoma chattered as she put the rice back on the stove and chopped two purple onions, her stream of sentences punctuated by her cackling laughter. She seemed to be crying and laughing at the same time because she reached up often to brush away the onion tears with the back of her hand. (p.115)

The new poetic geography around Aunty Ifeoma's house is aided by Kambili's further experience of the effervescent laughter:

> Laughter floated over my head. Words spurted from everyone, often not seeking and not getting any response. We always spoke with purpose back home, especially at the table, but my cousins seemed to simply speak and speak and speak. (p.120)

Now laughter and dance both involve spasmodic movements of different body parts. In examining laughter as revealing an attitude towards life Joyce Hertzler (1970:11) says:

> To be sure, each manifestations of laughter in an individual does consist in a perceptible physical performance: a series of convulsive movements of the diaphragm, causing spasmodic expulsions of breath, with jerky sounds, accompanied by movements of the jaw muscles.

Hence laughter in Aunty Ifeoma's house not only creates a dialogic space away from the monologue of Papa Eugene in the perspective of Kambili, but as Mikhail Bakhtin writes (1968:123) in his description of laughter in medieval European carnivalesque:

> Laughter purifies from dogmatism, from fanatism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation, from didacticism, naivette and illusion, from the single meaning, the single level, from sentimentality.

For Bakhtin (1968) laughter in the carnivalesque was a discourse that broke through the monologic grammar and semantics in the language of the church: ritual, norm, values, beliefs, practices and customs that are rigid, that pattern human behaviour and eventual perception of life. As we in fact witness in Papa Eugene Achike's familial space, the language of the church dominates every perspective, perception of the household: mealtime, school time and every other time for socialisation. The mood in the house is dominated by that mood similar to one that characterises church ritual: penance, confession, worship, and general prayer.

As Bakhtin (1968) discusses, in the carnivalesque, the presence of laughter is the presence of dialogue, freedom of expression in speech and thought. The presence of laughter in Aunty Ifeoma's household for instance comes with the raised voices; at one point Amaka wonders why Kambili always lowers her voice when she speaks (p.117). Accompanied by this is also the presence of music, something which I will deal with in this chapter at a later stage. The presence of music in Aunty Ifeoma's household is a key factor for growth in Kambili. This is not only because music keeps them in touch with the outside world but also because the kind of music that Kambili is exposed to is culturally conscious and most importantly politically conscious: music that informs her of the political happenings in Nigeria.

Coupled with the freedom that laughter brings into this household is also the freedom that goes with the consumption of space. Space can be secularised and spiritualised, invested with particular meanings. Kambili for instance feels more exposed to sin because she has to share a room with Amaka and because she has to see her nakedness, something which she has been taught is a sin (p.117). What is actually interesting about all these is the coming in of class issues in discussing vulnerability to sin. In Kambili's perspective the fact that she is not used to sharing a bedroom puts her at the risk of not only seeing people undress, something which her church doctrine considers a sin, but also at one crucial point sharing the same room with Papa Nnukwu, her grandfather who according to Papa Eugene is a heathen.

The combination of laughter, music and sharing of limited space in Aunty Ifeoma's household is the cause of a culture shock for Kambili, she is perplexed at the way this family has socialised itself, the levels of independence that each of them has, the way

they can express opinion without fear of anybody, the short prayers at the table and the absence of the rigour of ritual in general. Kambili is shocked at such things as the sheer presence of multicoloured plates at the dinner table, as opposed to the uniformity of her own home in Enugu. Clearly, both in thought and in practice there is no monologue in this household; words fly across the table at dinner time and as she witnesses, laughter floats over her head. The best image she can conjure up is that of a football team:

> I did not say anything else until lunch was over, but I listened to every word spoken, followed every cackle of laughter and line of banter. Mostly, my cousins did the talking and Aunty Ifeoma sat back and watched them, eating slowly. She looked like a football coach who had done a good job with her team and was satisfied to stand next to the eighteen yard box and watch. (p.120-121)

Laughter becomes a novel experience for Kambili. Her expressions of shock at the way Aunty Ifeoma's children speak and keep on speaking clearly indicates to us the silenced nature of her own familial space. The proposition this chapter also makes is that laughter is a dual faced aspect in *Purple Hibiscus*: laughter not only works to portray the personal growth of Kambili as a teenage girl, it also adds towards the classification of *Purple Hibiscus* within the genre of the Bildungsroman because it is used as a trope of growth. The Bildungsroman here may also in a wider sense point to the general coming of age of contemporary Nigerian writing. The period which the text was written, from Kambili's own perspective also mirrors the author's own period of childhood.

Purple Hibiscus can be considered as the coming of age of new Nigerian writing. A current Nigerian writer examines history using the perspective of her childhood but with a tinge of an adult consciousness. In *Purple Hibiscus* is therefore a usable past for Adichie. This is a past which when appropriated into the current moment gives a different perspective of things vis-a vis when an older, say seasoned writer like Achebe writes of the same history.

Coming back to laughter, I have pointed out that Kambili's perspective of the laughter is something novel for her. The picture that one gets, in the perspective of Kambili is that, how can people afford laughter in a moment of solemnity like the one Nigeria was facing at that point in time? Well, fanaticism, and as Bakhtin (1968) discusses, always fashions itself in terms of what Bakhtin (1968) describes as 'didactism'. Things like laughter and the freedom of expression have no place in a country suffering from military dictatorship. In every situation that faces Nigeria, there is always the mention of God's will from Papa Eugene. Kambili tries to attribute every of her comments (in the presence of her father) to God's will.

Laughter in Aunty Ifeoma's household is a signifier of internal freedom even in a space of a harsh military rule that has fueled economic and political shortages. It is actually in Nsukka that Kambili comes across water shortages (p.121), electrical blackouts and general lack of what in her Enugu home is very basic. This is growth for her because her picture of Nigeria was initially handed down to her by a religiously fanatic father who dictated how she thought and generally viewed the world, skewing her perception of the world to black and white, good and evil, Catholic and Protestant, holy and heathen and other kinds of dichotomies.

Laughter and freedom of speech at table presents for Kambili a space for growth. As Hewett (2005:86) says, 'whatever her (Kambili's) cousins lack in material wealth, they make up for in opinions'. Laughter for Kambili is the creation of a dialogic space. Ifeoma's household presents for her not only a dialogic space, within its very own boundaries, but also comparatively, as Hewett (2005:86) observes 'their polyvocal speech interrupts and contests the dominance of Eugene's monologue'. In Bakhtinian terms, the Ifeoma household is a heteroglossic space. Bakhtin (1981:261) observes the nature of the novel as 'multiform in style and variform in speech'; understood in the larger picture of canonical discourses, *Purple Hibiscus* presents a case for heteroglossia within the same discourses.

Speaking of laughter as a strong signifier for freedom and as complicating (at least for Kambili) the dichotomic perceptions of life anticipates one of Valentine Y Mudimbe's (1990) arguments about the 'discourses of power' and his concepts on 'otherness'. Laughter, sexuality and music in Kambili's situation presents *Purple*

Hibiscus as a text that debunks familial discourses of power, discourses that make people like Papa Eugene see the world in manicheistic perspectives of good and evil, male and female, modern and ancient, black and white. In the words of Mudimbe (1990:5), Adichie deals with those 'spaces designated for marginality'; the grey spaces symbolised by the rare (at least in Africa) purple hibiscus. Mudimbe (1990:9) looks at this space as an 'intermediary space' in which is inhered a tension that brings out the concrete examples of developmental failures in African societies through things like 'progressive disintegration of class family structure…dictatorial regimes functioning under the cathartic name of democracy, the breakdown of religious traditions, the constitution of syncretic churches, etc'.

It is within this 'intermediary spaces' as Mudimbe (1990:9) conceptualises, that we get double representatives and 'ambivalent similitudes' akin to the duality that exists in the private and public spaces of Papa Eugene Achike's family as I discussed in chapter two. Adichie's diasporic experience (reflected in Aunty Ifeoma's migration to the United States of America) further makes even greyer these spaces. Adichie's choice of language and her straddling between erstwhile traditions and theories deepens our engagement with this space of marginality, which the contemporary African family occupies.

Kambili speaks from a worm's eye view; she observes what is happening from the position of not only a fifteen year old adolescent, but also as a girl. She speaks from a marginal perspective; considering that her life is scheduled and 'penciled' by her father. This position, despite it being a worm's eye view is, in the words of Jo Anna Isaak (1996:4), a position that gives 'an agency for intervention'. Isaak (1996) discusses the power of laughter in the context of feminist art and she borrows the post-modernist ideas of Stephen Connor (1989) to explain the 'subversive potential' of the marginal condition of women through laughter.

Isaak (1996:5) discusses laughter as a 'metaphor of transformation', giving it the position of effecting 'cultural change'. Culture here refers to norms, beliefs, customs, practices and values held by a particular people.[29] In a sense as Isaak (1996:4) says

[29] Refer this definition of culture to E B Tylor (1958) *Origins of Culture*.

earlier, her study of women's laughter is an activity of 'pluralizing, destabilising, baffling any centered discourse'. Laughter comes as something very novel for Kambili. Laughter plays out in the text as a cultural shock for Kambili. Kambili is baffled at the way laughter floats over her head and the way that her cousins speak. Hence in Kambili's situation is a dramatic cultural change. Laughter as Isaak (1996) discusses is an agency for 'cultural transformation'. Isaak (1996:5) in her study of the revolutionary effect of female laughter says:

> Laughter, as it used throughout this study, is meant to be thought of as a metaphor for transformation, for thinking about cultural change. In providing libidinal gratification, laughter can also provide an analytic for understanding the relationships between the social and symbolic while allowing us to imagine this relationships differently.

Libidinal gratification is part of the process of sexuality aided by the processes of laughter. In a sense and without veering into psychoanalytic positions, laughter helps to free Kambili's body into a position where her sexuality, erstwhile repressed by the monologue of Papa Eugene finds space for development. Hence laughter provides a space for other processes of growth. Isaak (1995) also points out that laughter helps to understand the relationships between the social and symbolic. This means that laughter is a signifier of how social relationships in specific contexts in which it occurs work. It is in the effervescent laughter in Aunty Ifeoma's household that one also locates a free space that opens Kambili's world to the reality of power blackouts, fuel shortages, riots and other things that had been cushioned from her by the repression in her own familial space.

The brand of religiosity in Aunty Ifeoma's household comes as a shock for Kambili: Aunty Ifeoma prays together with her family, just like Papa Eugene does with Kambili, Jaja and her mother. However, the brand of prayer here is customised to the realities the family faces. But even more surprising for Kambili is how someone can pray for something as 'banal' as laughter. The didacticism that exists in prayer in her own familial space differs completely from the one in Aunty Ifeoma's house:

> When we finished, we said morning prayers in the living room, a

> string of short prayers punctuated by songs. Aunty Ifeoma prayed for the university, for the lecturers and administration, for Nigeria, and finally, she prayed that we might find peace and laughter today. As we made the sign of the cross, I looked up to seek out Jaja's face, to see if he, too, was bewildered that Aunty Ifeoma and her family prayed for, of all things, laughter. (p.126-127)

What we see is how laughter occupies a very significant space in Aunty Ifeoma's familial space. However, as Kambili gets used to the laughter and the freedom within this familial space, she encounters something else which leads to many changes in her own body and mind, sexuality. The freedom of laughter and consumption of space become a background for the more subtle and significant transformation of her body's sexual stirrings. These come with the entrance of Father Amadi into the picture; Kambili describes his entrance as in a 'whiff of earthy cologne' (p.135) and his 'singer's voice that had the same effect on my ears that Mama working Pears baby oil into my hair had on my scalp' (p.135).

Kambili instantly connects with Father Amadi who is essentially a counterfoil of Father Benedict back in Enugu: he is young and liberal. In Father Amadi's presence she suddenly becomes too conscious of her self, a mark of growth:

> I looked up to find Father Amadi's eyes on me, and suddenly I could not lick the ube flesh from the seed. I could not move my tongue, I could not swallow. I was too aware of his eyes, too aware that he was looking at me, watching me. (p.139)

Kambili at this point of growth can also notice other bodies:

> He wore only a pair of denim shorts, and the muscles on his back rippled, smooth and long like the ridges he weeded. (p.143)-

Despite all these however Kambili's body still harbours repressions:

> I wanted to tell the girl that it was all my hair, that there were no attachments, but the words would not come. I knew they were still talking about my hair, how long and thick mine looked. I wanted to

> talk with them, to laugh with them so much that I would start to jump up and down in one place the way they did, but my lips held stubbornly together. I did not want to stutter, so I started to cough and then ran out and into the toilet. (p.141)

A lot of her past history is repressed in her body, a history of silence and the fear implanted by violent familial relations. She has lived a life perpetually stalked by didacticism, what she says has to bear in mind Catholic spirituality, whoever she associates with has to be fearful of God's word, her life is entirely a monologue from Catholic rituals, norms, principles, practices, values and customs. Her network of friendship is tied to her brother Jaja, her mother and Papa Eugene. Kambili actually lives within her familial monologue. We saw earlier on that her friends at school call her a backyard snob (p.51). Schedule and the perpetual control from her father structure her relations with any other persons even outside her family. Hence what we witness in this case is that Kambili has to (re)learn relations with people outside her own family. The familial space at Nsukka becomes a challenge for her personal growth. Kambili observes precociously how her cousins interact with each other and with her mother, she (re)evaluates her own perceptions about the things she and her own family do back home, she learns to accept short prayers before meals, Igbo songs in the middle of prayer and lives with the fact that her Aunty Ifeoma has disregarded the schedule Papa Eugene has written for them to follow at Nsukka.

Kambili experiences the abrasive Amaka, her dressing patterns, the lipstick and her predilection for red clothing, seemingly a marker of her own independence. Kambili significantly now notices her own body, her own physical growth alongside that of others. She connects with Father Amadi's liberty, handsomeness and is challenged by his particular liking of her. Her sense of belonging and attraction to Father Amadi come of course with her realisation that she is becoming a woman and that she can think of a man in a different way. Compare these instances for example:

> I could not even think of her and Papa together, on the bed they shared custom- made and wider than the conventional king-size. When I thought of affection between them, I thought of them exchanging the sign of peace at Mass, the way Papa would hold her tenderly in his arms after they had

clasped hands. (p. 21)

And:

> I looked down at my chest, which was heaving now. I did not know why but I was grateful that he had said my name, that he remembered my name. (p.164)

After Kambili gets the courage to try Amaka's lipstick before meeting Father Amadi for a trip (p.174) we witness a tableau of emotions when Father Amadi is driving with her in his car. This instance reflects Kambili's struggle with her body and mind, with the history of her familial relations intermingling with her religious upbringing:

> Father Amadi's car smelt like him, a clean scent that made me think of a clear azure sky. His shorts had seemed longer the last time I saw him in them, well past his knees. But now they climbed up to expose a muscular thigh sprinkled with dark hair. The space between us was too small, too tight. I was always penitent when I was close to a priest at confession. But it was hard to feel penitent now, with Father Amadi's cologne deep in my lungs. I felt guilty instead because I could not focus on my sins, could not think of anything except how near he was. (p.175)

And later:

> I looked away. I had never heard anything like that before. It seemed too close, too intimate, to have his eyes on my legs, on any part of me. (p.176)

Slowly Kambili's contact with Father Amadi reveals her ultimate exposure- the tension between what her mind has been fed on and the realities of her bodily freedom, how to control it away from the silenced spaces of her own home in Enugu. Embedded in Kambili's experience with Father Amadi is the critique on religious celibacy and its relation to emasculation as reflected in her thoughts here:

> Then I thought with a fierce, unreasonable sadness, how Father Amadi's smooth skin would not be passed onto a child, how his square shoulders

> would not balance the legs of his toddler son who wanted to touch the ceiling fan. (p.180)

For Kambili this was, a moment of introspection, an experience of tremendous growth:

> Didn't he know that I did not want him to leave, ever? That I did not need to be persuaded to go to the stadium, or anywhere, with him? The afternoon played across my mind as I got out of the car in front of the flat. I had smiled, run, laughed. My chest was filled with something like bath foam. Light. The lightness was so sweet I tasted it on my tongue, the sweetness of an overripe bright yellow cashew fruit. (p. 180)

As laughter, sweetness, light and sexual stirrings continue to fill the life of Kambili, she also comes into contact with music. Music here is not just another of the factors that fuel her growth out of silence but it is something that comes in to tangle with the process of secularisation within familial spaces. Early on in the story when Aunty Ifeoma brings her children to Kambili's rural home in Abba, Amaka questions Kambili about the presence of the satellite dish outside their house and wonders whether Kambili and her brother watch CNN. While Kambili once again stutters to answer the question what comes out clearly is that Papa Eugene does not pencil in TV time in their schedules. Papa Eugene's familial space is in the dark about the happenings within Nigerian politico-social, economic and cultural spaces. There lies an irony in all these: while Papa Eugene through print media is a fearless critic of the government, he gags exposure to the media in his own family.

What is most interesting also is the way in which whatever happens in the public spaces is filtered to Kambili and her brother through not only their father but also through other secondary sources, at school, or through Papa Eugene talking on the phone. This in fact happens when these things directly involve Papa Eugene, like the arrest and also later the death of Ade Cocker, his editor in the *Standard*. The practice of public execution in Nigeria is revealed only once:

> Mama did not come home that night, and Jaja and I had dinner alone. We

> did not talk about Mama. Instead, we talked about the three men who were publicly executed two days before, for drug trafficking. Jaja had heard some boys talking about it in school. It had been on television. The men were tied to poles, and their bodies kept shuddering even after the bullets were no longer being pumped into them. (p.33)

What we see here is more than meets the eye, the fact that all that is happening in the public space is completely denied Kambili and her brother is something crucial as a condition that is a consequence of the silenced spaces this family occupies. Kambili and her brother are totally in the dark, they only get to know about the execution through secondary sources. While Kambili is keen on mentioning the fact that it had been on television, she leaves it for the reader to wonder why despite the satellite dishes and all the grandeur supposed to be at her disposal, she cannot access public news first hand: all this boils down to ritual, norms, schedules, fanaticism, didacticism drawn and perpetuated by an overly religious and pious father. It not only exposes the undersocialisation of Kambili but also the general lack of relational experience that she needs for her to grow. Her experience in Nsukka accesses her all these.

Nsukka, for Kambili and her brother, brings them closer to the mass media and subsequently closer to rich experience with regards to the larger Nigeria: public executions, black outs, water shortages and fuel shortages in a country that ironically extracts oil. Nsukka bares the thin line that exists between the family and larger state processes. It is in music that Kambili is also brought closer to the politically and culturally conscious elements in Nigeria. Amaka exposes Kambili to the music of Fela Kuti, Osadebe and Onyeka. Amaka's brand of music is Afrobeat, a brand that is associated with resistance as Hewett (2005) discusses.

With time Kambili grows into understanding and distinguishing Amaka's brand of 'culturally conscious music':

> Amaka went into her room and turned on her music, high enough that I heard it clearly from the verandah. I could tell her culturally conscious musicians apart now. I could distinguish the pure tones of Onyeka Onwenu, the brash power of Fela, the soothing wisdom of Osadebe. (p.151)

This type of music is popular because of the fact that it not only helps to shape popular Nigerian culture but also grapples with politically sensitive issues, especially at this point in time when Nigeria is under military rule. Fela Kuti, one of Amaka's favourites for instance has been described by Tejumola Olaniyan (2004:3) as a political musician. Olaniyan (2004) connects the music of Fela Kuti with the larger state processes and points out that Fela Kuti's music is a significant narration of the post-colonial state because it grapples with the crisis that obtains in Nigeria.

Kambili's exposure to this kind of music brings her closer to macro state politics specifically because Afrobeat music, according to Olaniyan (2004:5), best captures the post-colonial experience:

> If there is one most pervasive experience that afrobeat has invested with such intensity, is the experience of the post-colonial state…to listen to Fela's music then is to listen to a kind of cultural, specifically musical, "biography" of the post-colonial African state: an account of the state's crisis-ridden life.

The significance of this exposure is seen when Kambili goes back home. However, chapter four will be devoted to connecting familial space to the state. As I have suggested, Kambili's sojourn to Nsukka brings her closer to the state than when she is in Enugu and the events that follow that experience in Nsukka have special bearing on the happenings in the state.

Music, laughter, consumption of space and her sexual stirrings slowly invest her body and mind with a seed that is yet to explode when she returns home. During her visit to Nsukka, her grandfather Papa Nnukwu comes to stay with them, something that Kambili dreads because she has been taught that it is a sin sharing the house with a heathen. While Papa Nnukwu's visit is occasioned by his sickness, Kambili's worry is how her father will react at finding out that they (Kambili and Jaja), shared the house with a heathen. As it turns out anyway Kambili's perceptions of heathenism face a challenge: Papa Nnukwu is a source of laughter and happiness in Aunty Ifeoma's household. Kambili wakes up one morning to witness Papa Nnukwu's morning prayer (something that Adichie deliberately brings in to draw obvious parallels with the

Catholic rosary ritual) and she is surprised that Papa Nnukwu prays earnestly even for his son Papa Eugene who despises and disowns him.[30] Beyond this experience is also the fact that Papa Nnukwu's death is also occasioned by a medical workers' strike, something that portrays the labour issues in Nigeria.

Papa Nnukwu in *Purple Hibiscus* is obviously the personification of the past, he carries with him certain artefacts of the Achike and Ifeoma families but his presence is a perpetual threat to Papa Eugene's identity. Like Okonkwo Papa Eugene not only feels threatened by his father's 'heathenism' but also by the fact that his father never succeeded materially in his own fruitful life. Yet Papa Eugene's logic about his son's hatred and defiance is interesting. Let me quote him at length:

> "I remember the first one that came to Abba, the one they called Fada John. His face was red like palm oil; they say our type of sun does not shine in the white man's land. He had a helper, a man from Nimo called Jude. In the afternoon they gathered the children under the ukwa tree in the mission and taught them religion. I did not join them, *Kpa*, but I went sometimes to see what they were doing. One day I said to them, Where is this god you worship? They said he was like *Chukwu*, that he was in the sky. I asked then, who is the person that was killed, the person that hangs on the wood outside the mission? They said he was the son, but that the son and the father are equal. It was then that I knew that the white man was mad. The father and the son are equal? *Tufia!* Do you not see? That is why Eugene can disregard me, because he thinks we are equal." (p.84)

Yet Papa Eugene, like Unoka harbours no ill feelings towards his son. His own life despite the misery and poverty is full of laughter, life and love for his children and grandchildren. Upon his death in Nsukka, Papa Eugene's discomfort is not about his death, but whether Aunty Ifeoma his sister, had called upon a priest to give him extreme unction. (p.188). Papa Eugene insists that he can only help with the funeral expenses if Aunty Ifeoma arranges for a Catholic funeral. This reminds one of Babamukuru in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and his insistence that

[30] It seems to me that Adichie deliberately involves competing norms when she draws between the ritual practices of Papa Eugene and those of Papa Nnukwu.

Tambudzai's parents had to have a Catholic wedding, much to the chagrin of Tambudzai's mother.

Nonetheless Papa Eugene displays extreme fanaticism to Catholic spirituality in a manner that subverts the logic of spirituality as a better version of humanity. For Kambili memories of Papa Nnukwu's aetological narratives and humour will remain alive when she travels back home. She also carries with her the experience of laughter, sexual stirrings and a renewed sense of freedom and defiance, part of which she about Jaja at the beginning of the text: a freedom to be and to do; a freedom that reminded her of Aunty Ifeoma's experimental purple hibiscus. This freedom to be and to do comes out of her experience of growth, her ability to now laugh, to know culturally conscious music and to have sexual feelings. Aunty Ifeoma's house has provided for Kambili polyvocal speech, a dialogue that has affected her perceptions of Papa Eugene's monologue which she has been brought up with.

Kambili's return home is marked by an immediate sense of growth:

> I wanted to tell Mama that it did feel different to be back, that our living room had too much empty space, too much wasted marble floor that gleamed from Sisi's polishing and housed nothing. Our ceilings were too high. Our furniture was lifeless: the glass tables did not shed twisted skin in the harmattan, the leather sofas' greeting was a clammy coldness, the Persian rugs were too lash to have any feeling. (p.192)

Kambili's return is made worse when she meets her mother's swollen eyes from a previous beating and also realises her mother has been polishing the étagère, something she does after a beating from her husband. Yet Kambili and her brother are still to face punishment for sleeping with Papa Nnukwu in the same house. In this instance, Papa Eugene pours steaming hot water onto her feet in another tableau of emotions:

> "Kambili, you are precious". His voice quavered now, like someone speaking at a funeral, choked with emotion. "You should strive for perfection. You

> should not see sin and walk right into it". 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. He was crying now, tears streaming down his face. I saw the moist steam before I saw the water. I watched the water leave the kettle, flowing almost in slow motion in an arch to my feet. The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding, I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed. (p.194)

From this instance one can see that Papa Eugene is such a complex character who punishes and seeks perfection from his children with a lot of passion. His embrace of religion is total and in Louis Althusser's (1976) words, Papa Eugene has been 'interpellated' by the ideology of religion. His anxiety about religion and the path he charts out for his children is fairly genuine despite it being complicated by a missionary identity (p.196) he has since subscribed to among other factors. This is why Kambili struggles all the time to understand her father's emotions. How different, however, are Papa Eugene's methods of punishment in this familial space to the torture of convicted criminals who eventually face corporal punishment? He emphasises the pain, as Kambili narrates. At that point in time Kambili's body is that of the 'condemned' in the words of Foucault (1977) and the pain she is exposed to after that is supposed to redeem her from condemnation.

Yet Kambili's sense of growth is reflected in her constant nostalgia for Nsukka; the punishment only makes it worse (p.195-196). In her memory are the dialogue, laughter and music that existed in that familial space. These things have come to permeate her mind when she returns home and the purple hibiscuses that Jaja brings from Nsukka become a symbol for growth, freedom and the cause for the house to 'fall apart'.

In a final showdown, Kambili and her brother are found looking at a paint that belonged to Papa Nnukwu, something they carried with them back home as a souvenir from Amaka. This for Papa Eugene is the ultimate height of heathenism. To make it worse both Kambili and Jaja are suddenly defiant, something that really shocks Papa Eugene. This is a significant moment because it is the only time that Kambili is openly defiant of her father. It is a significant moment of growth, when she openly

questions her father's monologue and puts up a challenge to it. The punishment is as brutal as it can be, yet in it we see Kambili's resistance and growth, her memories of Nsukka and the culturally conscious music. Papa Eugene has lost it at this point, shouting in a mixture of Igbo and English, something he only does when he is angry:

> "Get up !" Papa said again. I still did not move. He started to kick me. The metal buckles on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitoes. He talked non-stop, out of control, in a mix of Igbo and English, like soft meat and thorny bones. Godlessness. Heathen worship. Hellfire. The kicking increased in tempo, and I thought of Amaka's music, her culturally conscious music that sometimes started off with a calm saxophone and then whirled into lusty singing. I curled around myself tighter, around the pieces of the painting; they were soft, feathery. They still had the metallic smell of Amaka's paint palette. The stinging was raw now, even more like bites, Because the metal landed on open skin on my side, my back, my legs. Kicking. Kicking.Kicking. Perhaps it was the belt now because the metal buckle seemed too heavy. Because I could hear a swoosh in the air…More stings. More slaps. A salty wetness warmed my mouth. I closed my eyes and slipped away into quiet. (p.210-211)

In this severe beating, we see Kambili's resilience and resistance, her memories of Nsukka, the place of her growth still very much alive in her mind and by implication, the reason for her defiance, resilience and eventually her growth. Amaka's music and Papa Nnukwu's painting, alongside the experimental purple hibiscuses growing outside from the garden are the visible symbols of freedom, dialogue, laughter and the reason for the things to fall apart in Papa Eugene Achike's household. The beating I have quoted above is also the third one Kambili narrates for us and also the last of them all because after it happens, Nsukka becomes the place of refuge for Kambili and her brother. From Papa Eugene's perspective it happens when he is dealing with issues of the state; Ade Cocker has just been buried, meaning that he has lost his fearless editor and has had to close down the *Standard*.

In the incident above, it is not only history that clash but also interests. It is the irony that underlies the interests: while Papa Eugene is trying to deal with the government's

assassination of his editor[31] Kambili is dealing with how to negotiate her sense of new found freedom. While Kambili is trying to negotiate for dialogue Papa Eugene insists on maintaining a monologue, something he decries of the military regime at this point in time because of the death of Ade Cocker. The clash of monologue and dialogue is the clash of centripetal and centrifugal forces; those that act inwards and those that act outwards. Kambili is in the familial margins; a fifteen year old and a girl at the same time helps to confound her marginal status. I positioned her as presenting a worm's eye view of that particular familial space. However her new found sense of freedom from Nsukka is pushing her to assume a space of freedom. The laughter, the music and her sexual stirrings have become forces that push her outside her designated space of silence.

Yet Kambili's resistance at this point in time, one could say, is the visibility of an accumulated struggle within herself about her status in the family and her father's omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence and the irony of it all. She as one witnesses, has used the silence within herself as a weapon of resilience, but when the silence is finally exposed and she gets a dialogic space in Nsukka she finds a voice, yet going back to earlier status of silence is impossible. Having been exposed to laughter, sexual stirring and culturally conscious music she can endure no more of the monologue in the house and she seeks to free herself by all means.

The violence that is visited upon her at this point is overshadowed by her sense of resistance, resilience and rational growth. It is a big victory of the mind for her to cushion herself using Amaka's cultural music, rather than to feel she is the one on the wrong. She overcomes what Fairbairn (1952) calls the internalisation of bad objects, something I discussed in the first chapter. This particular moment of violence and her interpretation of it reveals a marked growth, which in my opinion is an accumulated sense of growth that only needed to be sparked off by exposure to a space of dialogue.

In the meantime, the larger family, Jaja and Mama are also in this situation. Mama faces the brunt of regular violence; the miscarriage, her limping, the marks on her face are visible signs of the regular beatings she gets from her husband. What is interesting

[31] The death of Ade Cocker is significant in the context of Nigerian history, particularly the death of Dele Giwa through similar circumstances.

though is that she does not complain, but instead endures all these, still in obeisance to Papa Eugene's supreme authority in the household. The way things finally turn out in the text brings to question whether Mama is really in 'The Shallow Grave' as Stratton (1988) says of stereotypic female experience in African fiction. The final and deathly blow she delivers on Papa Eugene subverts this 'archetype' of the woman in African fiction. In fact as James Scott (1985) would put it, Mama's weapons, and probably Kambili's are like 'Weapons of the weak'. She, like the peasantry, who Scott (1985) discusses, appears to conform and maintain a larger symbolic order but the 'real gains' for her are gradual, long time battle, almost cumulative. Scott (1985:33) relates this to feminist literature on peasant societies:

> There is an interesting parallel with some feminist literature on peasant society. In many but not all, peasant societies men are likely to dominate every formal, overt exercise of power. Women, it is occasionally argued, can exercise considerable power to the extent that they do not openly challenge the formal myth of male dominance. "Real gains" are possible, in other words, so long as larger symbolic order is not questioned. In much the same fashion one might contend that the peasantry often finds it both tactically convenient as well as necessary to leave the formal order intact while directing its attention to political ends that may never be accorded formal recognition.

In much the same fashion Mama enacts an unexpected end to Papa Eugene's life through poisoning him through his daily ritual of tea. The marginalised members of a family can appropriate norm as a weapon. The poisoning takes place when Kambili and Jaja are in Nsukka, a gradual and slow process that accumulates the poison in Papa Eugene's body until he is finally overpowered and found dead in his factory office. The women of the household, Sisi the house help and Mama conjure up the plan and execute it at an opportune time and using a norm so ordinary and usual, the ritual of tea.

Kambili, as precocious as usual narrates the atmosphere preceding the final and deathly blow. As she hints at the beginning, the house started to fall apart after Jaja's refusal to go to communion and after Papa Eugene broke Mama's figurines. Towards

the end she narrates how the 'gods were broken' in a section entitled 'The pieces of gods'. This is a point where growth has reached an elastic limit even for Mama:

> Everything came tumbling down after Palm Sunday. Howling winds came with an angry rain, uprooting frangipani trees in the front yard. They lay in the lawn, their pink and white flowers grazing the grass, their roots waving lumpy soil in the air. The satellite dish on top of the garage came crashing down, and lounged on the driveway like a visiting alien spaceship. The door of my wardrobe dislodged completely. Sisi broke a full set of Mama's china.
>
> Even the silence that descended on the house was sudden as though the old silence had broken and left us with the sharp pieces. When Mama asked Sisi to wipe the floor of the living room…she did not lower her voice to a whisper. She did not hide the tiny smile that drew lines at the edge of her mouth (p.257)

This point marks Jaja's height of defiance and Kambili's most precocious and sensitive moment, one marked by growth and freedom. She, as always, occupies the best position to tell the story. She is calmer and more intelligent at examining the details of the change in atmosphere, in Papa's moods, Mama's moods, connecting all these to what has been happening in the near past.

A second and third visit to Nsukka crowns the climax of Kambili's growth; more contact with Father Amadi, more of her sexual awareness, more freedom without the regular schedules from Papa Eugene and even more easy relations with her cousins, a relationship that was strained before. However after several premonitions through her dreams the final moment comes when they are informed of Papa Eugene's death. For Kambili it is not only a turning point. Her reaction to Papa Eugene's death is the best summary of how religiosity, intermingled with familial relations, affects familial relations and perceptions of the same:

> I had never considered the possibility that Papa would die, that Papa could die. He was different from Ade Cocker, from all the other people they had killed. He had seemed immortal. (p.287)

In Papa Eugene's death lies a family secret that Kambili and Jaja are yet to find out. However what we witness in this household is a different kind of silence, not the one tinged with tension in the presence of Papa Eugene; some kind of a relieving silence, that of approval, (re)evaluation and shock at the same time. Jaja's defiance, at its height, even after his father's death leads him to openly question Christianity:

> "Of course God does. Look what He did to his faithful servant Job, even to His own son. But have you ever wondered why? Why did He have to murder His own son so we would be saved? Why didn't He just go ahead and save us?" (p.289)

The irony of all this is that at the point when policemen come to arrest whoever poisoned Papa Eugene, Jaja stands up for his mother and chooses to be arrested by claiming that he is the one who poisoned his own father. In a sense Jaja is the sacrificial son, for the sins of his mother. This is akin to Obika, Ezeulu's son in *Arrow of God* who in a last minute ritual for the sake of the family actually dies at the point where Christianity is penetrating interior Nigeria.

The general public lays the blame on the government, for the death of Papa Eugene, something that is a dramatic irony since only the family members share the secret. It is in another sense the complexity that surrounds what we designate as private and public spaces. Nonetheless the 'different silence' that appertains after Papa Eugene's death is a silence of growth, freedom and dialogue within an erstwhile silenced familial space; Kambili finally takes charge of the realities on the ground, after her brother's arrest bringing her closer to the realities of corruption which she and her mother engage in to finally seek Jaja's release.

Tragic as the ending might seem, it is the climax of growth, out of silenced familial spaces. The journey motif, both in physical and psychological terms has been used by Adichie to demonstrate growth in her characters, making *Purple Hibiscus* fall within the genre of the Bildungsroman. Laughter, music, and sexual stirrings have been elements of augmentation for Kambili, out of a space of violence in her own family and a religious fanatic of a father. Arguably, these elements have been successfully pursued with their strength lying in their context of very complex characters like Papa

Eugene. Adichie's focus on the familial space and her deliberate yet strategic distancing of the military state is something I will deal with in the final chapter of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FAMILIAL PORTRAIT OF THE STATE AND THE LARGER SOCIO-ECONOMICS

Chapter one focused on aspects of familial theory, narrowing down to the family trope in African literary historiography. The family is a unit, as Benedict Anderson (1983) would argue of the nation that has survived through many centuries where other social structures have not. The nuclear family as Talcott Parsons (1955) argues is one of the stable structures of the society.

One of the key elements discussed was that the family as a social unit is a major prerequisite for the individual and how that individual relates to the larger society. The family's role in socialising its members stands out as key to linking the family with the larger socio-economic and cultural life. In *Purple Hibiscus* right from the beginning, the state and the family are held in a tight embrace through a complex interface that is against the background of the broader institutions of the society such as the school, the church and other related formations. What Adichie does in *Purple Hibiscus* is to foreground the role and condition of the family in this embrace and at the same time to blur the line between the state and the family. Put differently, what she has created is a complex familial portrait of the state.

This chapter aims at discussing the family as a unit that tries to isolate itself through the insular nature of some of its practices. It also aims at examining the relationship between the family and other institutions, such as the school and the church, but most significantly, the state. The family's relationship with the state, this chapter aims at establishing, is complex in the sense that while the family seeks to remain insular and autonomous, it intersects with the state at a point, yet like a subset, one can easily distinguish it from the state. The family's relationship with the state is more complex than imagining the family as a portrait of the state. This chapter will examine the familial space in relation to the explicit events at the level of the state but will highlight the way these events are not just a simplistic replay or reflection of either institution.

One cannot escape the proposition that Adichie deliberately shifts the gaze and creates an alternative site for dealing with post-colonial Nigeria through the family. The possible implication is that we do not have to look beyond the family if we want to have a nuanced perspective of the social, economic, political and cultural life of Nigeria. The psyche of the nation may well be played out in the family drama we are witnessing.

Imagining *Purple Hibiscus* as a familial portrait of the state means placing it within the larger framework of Nigeria as a post-colonial state, a category that is resoundingly problematic to a feminist critic like Anne McClintock (1995) whose ideas about 'Imperial leather' are a strong critique of how categorical structures are set through a male perspective.[32] The underpinning context of a military government however cannot escape a close reading of *Purple Hibiscus*. Contextualised during the juntas of Babangida and Abacha, it was a tumultuous time in the politics, social, cultural and economic fabric of Nigeria.

The chapter on religion and the violence at the familial level is a background to the narration of a state where everything (as Kambili says of the family) has 'fallen apart', a statement that echoes Achebe's (1958) perception of the traditional Igbo state. Adichie's imagination of the post-colonial Nigerian state echoes her encounter with a major literary forefather, Achebe.

The familial space is made complex by the way colonial missionary history is replayed by Papa Eugene, through Catholic rituals, yet these historical forces are pitted against a military dictatorship in the post-colony. The family is caught in between this conflict of histories. The family however struggles for autonomy in between these conflicting forces, and also between other societal institutions that the family is linked to.

Purple Hibiscus presents the story of a rich man, Papa Eugene, who owns many factories, who is very Catholic in conduct and who at the same time owns a newspaper that is very critical of the government. Papa Eugene, the chief agent of

[32] Stratton (1994) also decries the way gender has come to be 'assimilated' in the larger category of the 'postcolonial' . P.7

socialisation and an instrumental leader of the household connects his family to the state by virtue of his explicit political activities.

The *Standard* newspaper which he owns makes him a public figure in the political sphere, even earning him an award:

> Papa himself would have a blank face when I looked at him, the kind of expression he had in the photo when they did a big story on him after *Amnesty World* gave him a human rights award. (p.5)

One immediately notices, maybe by virtue of the narrator's position that the familial angle that this story is presented through complicates the formation of the characters, forcing ones analysis to begin from the familial perspective. Kambili knows little about an Amnesty award, or anything about human rights. Yet her narration of the violence in the familial space reveals the biggest irony of such an award. Her father tortures her, at least three times in the text, together with her constantly battered mother and brother. It is only Kambili who can tell the human rights violation that her father does in the space of the family, yet at the larger auspices of the public, he is a human rights crusader and actually wins an Amnesty award.

Evidently there exists a thin line between the private and public spaces of the characters in the text and this is something that Kambili discovers. When we meet Papa Eugene at the beginning of the text he is the contact between his family and the state, yet he insists at the familial level to be spiritual. In fact, he denies his family access to public media, but as precocious as Kambili is she gets whiffs of it all through the calls Papa Eugene receives about Ade Cocker's arrest. Kambili's narration of her father's bodily reactions to bad political times is interesting: 'His face looked swollen already, with puss-tipped rashes spread across every inch, but it seemed to be swelling even more' (p.6).

And then of course those moments when familial incidents collide with what is happening at the larger podium of the state, like Kambili's punishment which is postponed after her father receives a call informing him of Ade Cocker's arrest. There are also other explicit incidents like Ade Cocker's death and the public hanging of

drug dealers shown on national television. In these instances, the family is directly affected by the actual events that are happening on larger public spaces.

The theme of religion in *Purple Hibiscus* directly links the familial space to that of the state. The family and the state intersect at the point of religious fundamentalism; through the religious history of Nigeria and how it is being historicised through Papa Eugene in the family. The way religiosity manifests itself in Papa Eugene Achike's household is interesting. Religion in Papa Eugene Achike's family not only historicises itself through the colonial missionary attitudes in Papa Eugene and his monologic perception about life but also in Papa Eugene's benevolence, something that complicates the violence and monologue that Papa Eugene is associated with.

Because religion overdetermines other factors like ethnicities that are crucial in Nigeria's history, it further threatens the stability of the state. Religion was a discourse that was marginalised until it manifested itself in violent ways in a bid to get its own space in the political, cultural, economic and social divide in Nigeria. Religion continuously erases the concept of unity in the Nigerian state. The fanatic nature of religion structures the national fabric in many ways. Religion narrates the nation from a position that was erstwhile marginalised but is finding a space of its own. Religion, because of its overdetermining nature has made Nigeria internally diasporic and this is played out at the level of the family in an interesting way. Papa Eugene Achike's family for instance has insulated itself from the rest of the world through its practice of Catholic rituals. The insulation is a form of alienation.

Looking at the way religion has played itself at the level of the state in Nigeria, and also how it plays itself through Papa Eugene Achike's family, one can easily see how these religious divisions have alienated communities in Nigeria and at the familial level Kambili portrays for us how Catholicism has in fact isolated her and her family from the realities of post-colonial Nigeria. At both levels is an increasing sense of internal diaspora. Communities, institutions and societies claiming this space called Nigeria are increasingly alienating themselves from the same Nigeria. As Stuart Hall

(1996) discusses the factors that came with colonialism such as religion and education already make the post-colonial state 'internally diasporic'.[33]

Of importance are also the author's views about religion and her perception of how religion has been appropriated into the state podium as a scapegoat for other malpractices. Religion is used as a public show yet in private, worse things are happening. This is something which one sees is manifested in the conduct of Papa Eugene. In the public circles, he is a feared and fearless man of God, who owns a newspaper that heavily criticises the military regime. In the public sphere Papa Eugene is respected in his own church and known throughout the country as a fighter for democracy and good governance. In the private space of the family, he is a sectarian fundamentalist who abhors other Pentecostal churches and has no space for people like his father, who have not converted to Christian ways. In many ways Papa Eugene can be considered a hypocrite, just as the state and its leaders seem to be.

Papa Eugene in the public spaces continuously presents a discourse that threatens the powers that be. He speaks about dialogue, democracy, the fight against corruption and bad governance practices in the public. In his public life, Papa Eugene actually helps in erasing the false concept of unity and the illusion of a Nigerian nation. In familial spaces, he does exactly what the military government does. He insists on a monologue aided by his Catholic faith. He isolates his family by forbidding them from relating to other people such as heathens like his own father. The schedules he draws for his children ostracise them from the larger social and cultural life.

State politics and related issues can have resonance within the familial space and can affect familial relationships in a complex way. This is an idea that has origins also from the political scientific thoughts of Aristotle in his classical book *Politics* where he describes the relationships between the father, his wife and children as one that reflects monarchical and republican governments at the same time.

[33] Hall (1996) in 'When was the Post-colonial? Thinking at the limit. .242-260. Hall's discussion is in line with the ideas of Gates about how colonialism through its multi-faceted elements of religion, language and education has made the post-colony and by extension the writer a 'double voiced individual'. Internally diasporic implies also that while the post-colinial individual might strive to go back to indigenous ways, the effect of colonialism has already made him far removed from this previous state making him, , 'internally diasporic' , removed even as an insider.

Other emerging modernist thinkers like De Bonald (1993) factor in the emerging forms of the family, like the nuclear family and the challenges that have led to its disintegration and have posited that the disintegration of the family brings about the disintegration of the state. There are similarities with the famous statement 'things fall apart'. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the disintegration of Papa Eugene Achike's family begins at the moment when state politics reaches a turbulent state: the death of Ade Cocker and the renewed and vigorous calls for democracy are at familial level symbolically represented by Jaja's defiance to go to the Holy Communion.

Kambili witnesses something about her father's involvement with the federal government that she explains in very simple but significant ways. For Kambili the red hibiscuses outside the compound for instance have a special meaning:

> It was mostly Mama's prayer group members who plucked flowers; a woman tucked one behind her ear once - I saw her clearly from my window. But even the government agents, two men in black jackets who came some time ago, yanked at the hibiscus as they left. They came in a pickup truck with Federal Government plates and parked close to the hibiscus bushes. (p.9)

The Federal government agents come as an afterthought, Kambili is concerned with the significance of the hibiscuses and the constant contact with the people who come to visit their home. For her the hibiscuses have a history. Her sight of them holds for her all these memories, the significant one being that her brother Jaja brought from Nsukka the purple version of the hibiscuses which remind her of her freedom 'to be' and 'to do', as she says:

> Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like Aunty Ifeoma's experimental purple hibiscus; rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the one the crowds waving green leaves chanted at the government square after the coup. A freedom to be, to do. (p.16)

These plants are symbolic for the narrator because they hold a history that represents change. She describes them earlier as 'vibrant bushes of hibiscus' (p.9). For Kambili these plants represent the potential for individual freedom and dialogue. She is

categorical about the kind of freedom that the crowds at government square seem to want and the personal freedom that is 'to be, to do' (p.16). Personal freedom seems for Kambili the prerequisite, a micro kind of freedom, from a silenced familial space that for her will count first before moving to the larger spaces of the state.

It is interesting to note how Kambili is not only categorical about the kind of freedom she is talking of but she seems to be drawing certain parallels here. The green leaves that the crowds are waving have become like the ritual processes discussed in chapter two. They have become banal like the rituals in her family. The purple hibiscus has become a new symbol of meaning, from her experience of growth in Nsukka. The green leaves have become part of the tradition that is hollow and ritualistic and eventually banal. Purple becomes a colour of novelty for Kambili. The hibiscuses become symbols that explain the history of familial silence and at the same time the growth after the visit to Nsukka.

The statement the narrator seems to be making is that significant as issues of the state might be, hard as they may affect the ordinary citizen, personal freedom from a space like that of the family is important, because for her it is the original point of action, 'to do' and point of individuation, 'to be'. This is the reason why whatever happens at the level of the state affects Kambili's family but Adichie fashions these instances in a way that the familial angle is highlighted to complicate our understanding of these issues from both the state and familial spaces. The reader can see the ironies that surround these spaces. For instance, Kambili interprets her father's perception of what Nigeria needs in a rather sarcastic tone, displaying at the same time the rhetoric of democracy:

> Of course, Papa told us, the politicians were corrupt, and the *Standard* had written many stories about the cabinet ministers who stashed money in foreign accounts, money meant for paying teachers' salaries and building roads. But what we Nigerians needed was not soldiers ruling us, what we needed was a renewed democracy. *Renewed Democracy*. It sounded important, the way he said it, but then most of what Papa said sounded important. (p.24-25)

Speaking of the rhetoric of democracy here, one must be careful to pit rhetoric against agency. Papa Eugene's agency is found in his role in the *Standard.* Yet his agency is made complicated by the way he straddles between the spaces of the family and the political sphere. For Kambili, Papa Eugene's calls for democracy appear rhetoric because of her experience of him as a violent father in the familial space. In political circles Papa Eugene's agency is in his role as an agitator for democracy through his editor Ade Cocker. To the public, his benevolence and fearless approach to the military government creates a different picture from the one Kambili paints at home.

Papa Eugene's personality makes for Kambili the ultimate decision as to what should be done at levels of the state in correcting the mess. Considering Papa Eugene's reputation at the church, his magnanimity and his reputation as the owner of the *Standard*, his actions in the space of the family are internalised for Kambili. The violence, the tension, Kambili takes in good stride, she internalises all these and apportions blame to herself whenever she does not understand the ironies that straddle these two spaces in relation to her father's actions. Papa Eugene's personality overshadows all these ironies that Kambili is trying to deal with. She struggles to overcome the omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence that Papa Eugene's presence on the family imposes on her. All the time in the text Kambili is trying to deal with her father's shadow, his monologic alter-ego.

Kambili's perceptions and experience of what is happening at the level of the state is also mediated by her father. Kambili knows Ade Cocker is 'easily the best out there' (p.25) and that the *Standard* is a popular paper that advocates for dialogue in a military environment. Since her father owns the *Standard*, what else can she assume apart from the fact that her father is the personification of democracy and the knowledge of what is good and bad? Coupled with the fact that he uses Catholic principles to explain his actions, Kambili is interpellated by her father's world view.

Kambili always experiences the outside world in most cases as a spectator. While being driven to school, she can see the effects of the coup: demonstrators, soldiers all over the market (p.27) but despite these she is keen on comparing change in both state and familial levels:

> But nothing changed at home. Jaja and I still followed our schedules, still asked each other questions whose answers we already knew. (p.28)

This reminds one of David Maughan-Brown's (1985) arguments about the romantic and assumed immunity with which the institution of the family is associated. What is interesting is the way Adichie connects Kambili's mother's pregnancy with the coup. Kambili points out that:

> The only change was Mama's belly: it started to bulge, softly, subtly. At first it looked like a deflated football, but by Pentecost Sunday, it had elevated her red and gold-embroidered church wrapper just enough to hint that it was not just the layer of cloth underneath or the knotted end of the wrapper. (p.28)

Despite the changes in the public spaces, the coup, the soldiers, civilians chanting shouts of freedom, Kambili observes no change in their rigid schedules but she singles out her mother's emerging pregnancy. Coups usually signal changes in guard and as in the case of Nigeria always gave hope for change. The coups initially signaled a new lease of life for the ailing leadership. What is interesting about Mama's pregnancy is how Kambili connects it with the religious and political context at this point in time. In the first instance of violence that Kambili narrates, Papa Eugene batter's Mama on the Pentecost day, a day which is symbolised by the colour red, the same colour of Mama's wrapper as Kambili explains and in an allusion, the colour of the blood that her mother sheds the same day after a beating from Papa Eugene:

> 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. (p.33)

This incident explains the miscarriage that Mama has due to the beating she receives from Papa Eugene. Kambili mentions earlier on that the only change that she sees is her mother's pregnancy. Her father eliminates this change. At familial level this miscarriage is an obvious connection to the coup that has just happened, clamour for change through a coup that ends up becoming clamour for blood. One can relate this

to the concept of Ogbanje and the 'Abiku nation'[34]. Papa here symbolically represents stagnation and resistance to change; he represents a monologue that is sustained by bloodshed, as he does to Mama. Papa Eugene's actions speak of a history of colonialism in post-independent Nigeria, one that insists on a monologue and uses the bible to practise power.

In fact the conception of Papa Eugene as omnipresent in Kambili's imagination is quite common in postcolonial African states. The image of the head of state is one that represents absolute power, akin to Achille Mbembe's (2001) discussion of how power is practised through the many symbols of the nation and how the head of state saturates the public space through a display of his portrait everywhere. Papa Eugene's presence in the house with or without his appearance is felt through the palpable tension that is perpetually hanging over the house.

Papa Eugene's editor, Ade Cocker has his model in real life. Adichie models him after the late Dele Giwa who passed away on October 19th 1986 during the eight year rule of General Ibrahim Babangida and died after receiving a letter bomb with a government seal. Like Dele Giwa, Ade Cocker has a daughter who is an infant. Like Dele Giwa again, Ade Cocker is also killed by a letter bomb in *Purple Hibiscus.* These events in the text are (in)directly witnessed by Kambili and are events that directly affect her family through Papa Eugene. Ade Cocker's arrests affect Papa Eugene's moods and by extension disrupting planned schedules. Ade Cocker and the events surrounding him seem the major highlight and indicator of the state under General Ibrahim Babangida in the late 80s and early nineties.

But Ade Cocker's role is very general, sensational and with a strong historical presence. In fact most people get to know Ade Cocker's role only through the media. On the ground though, the effect of the military regime is something that Kambili experiences only once, as a detached spectator through a car window. In a rare ritual where Kambili, Jaja, her mother and brother go to the market without Papa Eugene to

[34] Refer to Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (p. 478): 'Our country is an Abiku country. Like the spirit-child, it keeps coming and going. One day it will decide to remain. It will become strong.' Okri uses the metaphor of the spiritual child Abiku to portray a country that keeps lapsing into coups and counter coups, like miscarriages, each coup promises hope but ends up like all the others.

get new sandals and bags, Kambili witnesses something that brings her closer to the realities of the military government:

> As we hurried past, I saw a woman spit at a soldier, I saw the
> the soldier raise a whip in the air. The whip was long. It curled
> in the air before it landed on the woman's shoulder. Another
> soldier was kicking down trays of fruits, squashing papayas
> with his boots and laughing…. I thought about the woman lying
> in the dirt as we drove home. I had not seen her face, but I felt
> that I knew her. (p.44)

What one sees in this instance is not so much the brutality of the soldiers with the market women but an extremely patriarchal regime that these men are operating under. Later when her father is driving her to school this image of the woman haunts her:

> He slowed down on Ogui road to fling some crisp naira notes
> at a beggar sprawled by the roadside…The beggar stared at the
> note, then stood up and waved at us, clapping and jumping…
> He reminded me of the market woman in the dirt. There was
> a helplessness to his joy, the same kind of helplessness as in that
> woman's despair. (p.44-45)

A combination of patriarchy and patronage brings out the complex image of people, who as Kambili says have helplessness in both despair and joy. Compare the scene above to this one here:

> Papa wrote a check and handed it to the usher, telling her he did
> not want to make a speech. When the MC announced the amount,
> the priest got up and started to dance, jerking his behind this way
> and that, and the crowd rose up and cheered so loudly it was like the
> rumblings of thunder at the end of the rainy season. (p.90)

Priest, beggar and market woman, according to Kambili's description seem to act in the same way. There is as Kambili points out, helplessness to their joy. She watches as a spectator at the market women's woes, from the safe cushion of a car window. In

a visit to her rural home in Abba, as they drive past people and houses, she is keen on noticing the different levels of architecture, relating them to issues of class: 'Mud-and-thatch houses stood close to three-storey houses that nestled behind ornate metal gates' (p.55). From her position Kambili can navigate the infrastructural inequalities that material practises expose to the eye.

In this one can easily see a complex state where mansions exist with mud and thatch houses, religion exists with intolerance and domestic violence together with corruption and its attendant practices. Kambili, who directs the reader occupies the upper quartile of this society, but feels the brunt of a military regime through her father's involvement with issues of democracy and the church.

In chapter three I dealt with the elements of growth in Kambili's narrative which included laughter. I explained laughter in that context as a marker of personal growth for Kambili. Laughter can also be explained here through Ade Cocker's role. Throughout the text Ade Cocker's presence has been felt because of the effects of his writing. In most cases he has been developed as character through the speech of other characters; through the effects that his column has on Papa Eugene; through the effect on the whole Papa Eugene Achike's family and the state as a whole. He has been felt through events such as Kambili's punishment being put off because of his arrest. When we meet him though, Kambili uses Ade Cocker's propensity for laughter as a marker of his affinity to freedom, dialogue and democracy:

> Ade Cocker was a small, round, laughing man. Every time I saw him, I tried to imagine him writing those editorials in the *Standard*; I tried to imagine him defying the soldiers. And I could not. He looked like a stuffed doll, and because he was always smiling, the deep dimples in his pillowy cheeks looked like permanent fixtures, as though someone had sunk a stick into his cheeks. (p.56-57)

In this David versus Goliath kind of relationship which Kambili perceives of Ade Cocker with the military regime, she uses his propensity for laughter to distinguish him and in this we can see similarities between him and Kambili's relatives in Nsukka. Ade Cocker's perception of Kambili and Jaja is important. He tells Papa

Eugene that they are always quiet, to which Papa Eugene remarks that they are trained in a Christian way and not like 'those loud children people are raising these days without fear of God' (p.58). Ade relates such a familial situation to what happens at the level of the state I this statement: 'Imagine what the *Standard* would be if we were all quiet' (p.58).

Ade Cocker's statement exposes all the ironies that exist in the personality of Papa Eugene and his family. This is something that clearly does not go well with Papa Eugene and Kambili sums up the incident in these words:

> It was a joke. Ade Cocker was laughing; so was his wife Yewanda. But Papa did not laugh. Jaja and I turned and went back upstairs, silently. (p.58)

Papa Eugene's perceptions of democracy at the level of the state are different from democracy in his own household. There is a marked difference in the level of identities at these two different podiums. Papa Eugene and Ade Cocker seem to share a different view of how democracy in macro and micro terms means. For Ade Cocker, it seems, democracy has to reflect itself from the level of the family and that is why he wonders why Kambili and Jaja are always quiet. It is quite interesting that the owner of the newspaper and his editor act at different levels in their perception of things they are apparently fighting for. For Papa Eugene, freedom and democracy has to be conceived within a spiritual perspective and seemingly for Ade Cocker a secularised kind of freedom is what he believes in. But how can the space of the state, as Papa Eugene seems to think be spiritualised when the state itself is an institution that serves people of different religions? This is perhaps the reason why religion when involved with matters of the state creates a situation where it competes with ethnicities in Nigeria.

It means therefore that the battle for supremacy between these two (religion and ethnicity) is brought down to the level of the family. It is at the familial level that members are bound to certain loyalties. Having been brought up, provided for and socialised in it, the family members are bound to certain traditions that make the particular family unique. One sees the way Kambili is fearfully loyal to her father that

his absence or presence means the same thing. But when Kambili actually comes face to face with another family, with another tradition, from a different class, with another perception and contact with the larger social, economic, political and cultural elements of the state, her perceptions meet a challenge. That is why the space in Nsukka (de)spiritualises Kambili with regards to her own church and familial practices. Kambili comes into contact with the secular realities of the state, riots in the university, the political and culturally conscious music of Fela and Osadebe, cousins who have little regard for schedules, deep contact with Papa Nnukwu, her grandfather, who she initially considers (as her father wants of her) a heathen, the mass media, laughter which she says 'bounced around the walls, all the rooms' (p.140), a liberal young Catholic priest who does not act utopian like the one in Enugu, and most importantly, she manages to talk, laugh, sing and fall in love.

It is in Nsukka that Kambili experiences shortage, something she had never experienced before. Her stay in Nsukka has been used by Adichie to expose some of the ironies of the Nigerian post-colonial state like the shortage of fuel in a country that extracts oil. We also have the story of the American dream, something that is so common in contemporary Africa and is related to brain drain. Adichie builds up a situation that justifies the migration of professionals to America. The doctors and health workers' strike that hastens Papa Nnukwu's death, the perpetual strikes by university students, strikes by oil workers, the sacking of Aunty Ifeoma out of fabricated charges and her eventual migration are an exposure to Kambili, of how things happening at the level of the state can directly affect family life.

In Nsukka the University and its administration present a microcosm of the military state. The university administration oppresses its liberal academic staff like Aunty Ifeoma and even goes to the extent of using its repressive apparatuses to harass Aunty Ifeoma and her family. The university is another institution, but unlike the family, it has a more direct link to the state, yet it directly affects families, individuals as we witness in Nsukka. Aunty Ifeoma and her family are therefore directly in contact with state apparatuses because Aunty Ifeoma works in a state owned institution. What is of course important is the way that she refuses to be subdued by the masculine excesses of the university administration. Aunty Ifeoma's presence in this text is the symbol of a strong woman. Aunty Ifeoma has been used by Adichie as a strong critique of many

things: familial patriarchy by facing up to Papa Eugene and helping to transform Kambili, state patriarchy and patronage by facing up to the university administration and her eventual migration to the United States of America.

The family and the university are therefore institutions in *Purple Hibiscus* that perpetuate patriarchy enshrined by the larger dictatorial nature of the state. Mama and Aunty Ifeoma share in this dilemma. As Stratton (1988) points out, patriarchy is a cultural constant that makes similar experiences of women. Aunty Ifeoma is however an outspoken academic and mother who is ready to face her dilemma head on. Mama on the other hand is quiet and presented as though she is resigned to her position, something which she dispels at the end. One would definitely argue that Aunty Ifeoma's independence is deliberately aided by her being a widow. She has a larger space to think independently in the absence of a husband and because, she has a career as an academic at the university. Kambili's mother on the other hand is dependent on her husband's income from the factories and therefore is, fully trapped in what Ogundipe–Leslie (1994) describes as the 'six mountains': foreign institutions and colonial domination represented by the church and the ritual and norms in Papa Eugene Achike's household; heritage of tradition perpetuated by Papa Eugene as the instrumental patriarch and bread winner; Mama's own internalised fear, a syndrome portrayed by her sticking to a violent marriage, Papa Eugene, and Mama's own self, her ambitions and rationalisation of the violence she endures for a very long time.

The position of the women in *Purple Hibiscus* is something of concern that the author foregrounds. Adichie's focus on the domestic space, something that using the words Katherine Frank (1984) can be described as domestic realism, is a convenient strategy in criticising the larger social, economic, political and cultural institutions from a familiar perspective. The family is an institution that is familiar to most people, but its familiarity is something that Adichie tries to (de)familiarise by presenting a family where domestic violence exists alongside strong church rituals. In this case her focus necessarily falls on the position of the woman in this familial space. The position of the women, that of Mama and Kambili is externally defined and imposed by the masculine nature of the church and the state. It means that the roles within the family are structured for the convenience of an outside society that is already male defined. The family is perhaps the most stable unit next to the state in this case, so that in a

situation where the position of the state is explicitly overpowered by military governance, the family becomes the next level at which certain traditional values, beliefs, customs and practices can be maintained.

However gender issues as Kambili exposes to us are a malignant problem within familial spaces and can best be understood by relating them to the external forces such as the church and the state; forces which perpetuate this divide. In other words, the people who bear the brunt of all these are the women within domestic spaces. Mama and Kambili bear the violence from Papa Eugene - violence that has its history on a masculine church tradition. It is this kind of tradition that for instance, leads to disregard for things like menstruation, when we see the family getting whipped by Papa Eugene because Kambili is having her periods and is therefore forced to eat on a Eucharist fasting day. The Nigerian state at this point in time is extremely phallic in its attempt at the pacification of its subjects as we see with the market women in Enugu. Economies that sustain these women are destroyed by the military government. The presence of soldiers, majority of who are male sustains the picture of an extremely masculine government.

Matters that deal with nationalism are made an explicit male affair (Minh Ha, 1989) yet the struggle within the domestic space seems greater for Adichie and as Gwendolyn Konie (1984:144) points out, it is simply because it is a struggle between 'husband and wife, brother and sister, father and mother' meaning that for Gwendolyn, it is a global affair.[35]

Adichie's portrayal of domestic realism is by extension the meta-critique of African literary critical tradition. Obviously, her focus on the family is nothing novel. Others before her like Emecheta and Nwapa focused on the family quite distinctly, with Emecheta's concern with domestic slavery a running theme in her oeuvre. What she brings in is a (re)evaluation of the examination of the family and its relationship with the state. In content Adichie creates a familial situation, akin to her literary foremothers. She also creates a situation where the family has strong relations with the state, like her literary forefathers, links which I explored in the introductory

[35] Gwendolyn Konie in Robin Morgan (ed) (1984) *Sisterhood is Global.*

chapter. *Purple Hibiscus'* strongest point lies in this intertextual (re)definition of the position of the family and the state. Adichie who can be considered as an emergent Nigerian writer has the benefit of a host of literary forefathers and foremothers from whom she (re)appropriates ideas. The most outstanding is Chinua Achebe, from who Adichie says she 'pays tribute to'.[36]

Having hinted earlier the intertextual connections of *Purple Hibiscus* with *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, I would also add that the magnanimity for instance of Papa Eugene, creates out of him a *Man of the People*, something we have examined when dealing with the ironies of private and public representation. But these connections are merely in the vertical axis in the sense that Kristeva (1980:66) understands intertextuality.[37] This vertical axis is arguably Adichie's connection with a male tradition. There exists also a syntagmatic connection, that of a horizontal axis that comes from Adichie's contact with her foremothers. There is a (re)evaluation of the institution of the family, and the explicit thematic connection with a more recent writer like Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous conditions* and *The Book of Not*, books that deal with Christianity, patriarchy, from the point of view of teenage female children and their positions in the family. These connections are stretched even more closely temporally to Yvonne Vera's works with whom thematically Adichie shares taboo subjects with, domestic violence-child abuse and wife battering (Hewett, 2005:83).

What one sees therefore is a text that is not only intertextually connected but also how within this axes it cuts across traditions in terms of gender and time. Adichie straddles across Achebe, Emecheta, Nwapa to Tsitsi and Vera, something that I demonstrated in detail in the introductory chapter.

What is interesting about her treatment of the family though is the way she blurs the line between the state and the family: this stylistically also positions her at a point

[36] See Author Q and A-ww.randomhouse.com/catalog/display, also interviews with Laila Lami, Wale Adebanwi, Azuka Ogujuiba and many others.

[37] Kristeva (1990:15) warns however that the term intertextuality has been misunderstood to simplistically mean an influence of writers on others. Graham Allen's *Intertextuality*. London: Routtledge, 2000 traces Kristeva's arguments, linking them to Bakhtin's concepts of 'ambivalence' and 'dialogue'. Allen in fact traces how Kristeva invests Bakhtin's notion of 'dialogism' with her idea of axes within texts, the 'inside' and 'outside' meanings of texts and where they intersect to the evolution of the term 'intertextuality'

where she cannot be directly linked to feminism. Her (re)appropriation of the works of Achebe for instance, the way she speaks of Achebe as mentor complicates her perceptions of feminism. Her rendition of the story through the perspective of a fifteen year old shifts the gaze that Achebe gives in his *Things Fall Apart*. Kambili can be said as Hewett (2005) argues, to be the voice of Okonkwo's wives and daughters. The first person narrator helps in (re)directing the position of the household from Okokonkwo's point of view. What is interesting is that decades later, the house is still apart, but the implication is that women are beginning to find a voice in that house.

Adichie does not give herself fully into a feminist disposition considering her stylistic choices. The context within which she writes however is informed by the effects of the state to the family and also the effects of the state to vulnerable members of the household, particularly women. Kambili's perspectives can be considered least important but essential in explaining the banality and injustice of adult-driven world views.

Adichie's context in *Purple Hibiscus* is authenticated further through allusions to the happenings in the state arena. After the death of Papa Eugene, the family gets into what Kambili calls 'a different kind of silence'. This is not the silence of oppression but the silence full of knowledge of a family secret behind Papa Eugene's death. It is the silence of understanding, quiet satisfaction and rumination over the past and its effects hitherto. However after Jaja, the son, sacrifices himself on behalf of his mother, Kambili and her mother come face to face with the realities of Nigeria without the erstwhile intervention of Papa Eugene. In their efforts to try and free Jaja they encounter corruption in the system and participate willingly, something that indicates the realities on the ground that come as a shock to them: 'There is so much more that Mama and I do not talk about. We do not talk about the huge checks we have written, for bribes to judges and policemen and prison guards.' (p.297).

This point is an anti-climax within the Nigerian political space; the silence of the present is the year 1998, something which is alluded to by the death of the head of state in Nigeria. As I mentioned earlier Adichie hints at many things that help us to

contextualise particular points in time in actual socio-political history of the Nigerian postcolonial state:

> After the head of state died a few months ago - they say he died atop a prostitute, foaming at the mouth and jerking… that our lawyers would quickly work something out. Especially with the pro-democracy groups demonstrating, calling for a government investigation into Papa's death, insisting that the old regime killed him. (p.297).

The allusion of the death of the head of state here refers to the death of General Sani Abacha who died on 8th June 1998. What was very controversial about his death is how it happened. As Kambili points out in a very naïve tone 'they say' (p.297), meaning that it was a rumour, something that captured the interest of international media. The gendered politics that accompany the explanation of his death 'atop a prostitute' is symbolic of an extremely phallic political dispensation. Several stories arose during that time on what exactly happened in relation General Abacha's death. One of the most popular was that he got a heart attack after an overdose of Viagra or Burantashi, both of which are versions of a virility drug. Virility, considered a marker of masculine strength is one issue that is of concern in narrating a nation that is overdetermined by a military dispensation whose material practises are exposed to masculine performances through the use of soldiers as I demonstrated with the market women. The entire story of Papa Eugene Achike's family also points to how masculinity can be practised and abetted by the context of the state the institutions that it supports; the church and the university.

General Abacha's death is made even more interesting by the nature in which it is explained, the more reason why I refer to it as an anticlimax. After a half a decade of military rule which has been expressed by the phallic nature in which leadership is practised, it seems an anticlimax for all these to end 'atop a prostitute'. The inference here is the *passive* role in which the alleged prostitute plays in the death of the military strongman. There is an implied Adam and Eve symbol here and Adichie fuses this situation with the irony of Papa Eugene's death. While there is an implied *passive* role of the prostitute regarding Abacha's death, there is as Kambili narrates to us an *active* role in which her mother plays in the death of Papa Eugene, even though

she acted *passively* all along. This is the climax of Adichie's stylistic fusion of what happens in the arena of the state with what happens in the family. The irony which of course is dramatic, known to Kambili and her family together with the reader comes out in this statement:

> Especially with the pro-democracy groups demonstrating, calling for a government investigation into Papa's death, insisting that the old regime killed him.(p.297)

This is the height of the irony that exists between what happens at familial level and what happens at the level of the state. Unknown to the demonstrators, Papa Eugene's death has nothing to do with his political activities. It has all to do with what Kambili has been narrating all along in the text: domestic violence and the violent silencing of the familial space. Papa Eugene's image, even after his death has something to do with how complex his character is. While the general public imagines him as a man of the people, and therefore murdered by the military government, Kambili and her mother know the inner truth but choose to be silent about it, with contentment and with vindication. They know the marks of violence on their bodies and where these come from, they know the miscarriages of Mama and who caused them but they also know other things that perhaps the public also knows, other things which makes their silence even more complex than it should be:

> We do not talk about how much money we have, even after half of Papa's estate went to St. Agnes and to the fostering of missions in the church. And we have never talked about finding out that Papa had anonymously donated to the children's hospitals and motherless babies' homes and disabled veterans from civil war. There is still so much that we do not say with our voices, that we do not turn into words. (p.297).

Quite clearly, Papa was committed to a public cause, unwavering and sincere as Kambili and her mother come to find out after his death. Kambili however offers a categorical verdict at the end of the text, a verdict that separates the present nature of the silence to the other kind of silence with the presence of Papa Eugene:

> Silence hangs over us, but it is a different kind of silence, one that lets me breathe. I have nightmares about the other kind, the silence of when Papa was alive. In my nightmares, it mixes with shame and grief and so many other things that I cannot name, and forms blue tongues of fire that rest above my head, like Pentecost, until I wake up screaming and sweating. (p.305)

There existed before this, a barrier between the private and public lives of Papa Achike's family, one that was made up of a history of patriarchy, threatened masculinities that manifested itself in a silenced familial space, a warped socialisation environment for the family. The barrier has finally crumbled and Kambili is exposed to the naked realities of the world and to her self in relation to other family members.

When the text comes to an end, one has the feeling that the atmosphere that was present in Papa Eugene Achike's household and how it was shattered by the visit in Nsukka is the complex story of Nigeria from 1985 to 1998 in the military juntas of Abacha and Babangida. Of dictatorship that reflected itself in the household violence of Papa Eugene Achike family. As Kwameh Anthony Appiah (1992:73) points out 'if there is one aspect that epitomises change in the African world then it is the writer, not the sociologist, critic or priest'. *Purple Hibiscus* is a text that not only concretises the thematic concerns that appertained in Nigeria but also deals with them from a micro-perspective, worm's eye view, one that greatly influences the understanding of the larger picture. In a sense the story of the state is (re)told through the story of two families. The point however is that none of the stories overshadows the other as one always gets the shadow of one in the other and vice versa.

Yet *Purple Hibiscus'* story of the state has elements of the critique of how the state and the writing of it has faced what Stratton (1994) calls 'The overdetermiation of national allegories' by the elements of a very masculine perspective[38] in terms of the nation's conception. Can one therefore say that by blurring the line between the family and the state, elements that have in African literary historiography been prioritised according to gender predilections, Adichie feminises the state? Her

[38] Florence Stratton (1994) in her discussion of 'exclusionary practices' and the critic of definitive categories as gender biased

rendition of Nigeria arguably between 1985 to 1998 collapsed in the fifteenth year of Kambili's birth, comes in the wake of a reflexive glance at a history that the writer experienced as a child.

Growing up in this atmosphere there is a way in which the activities of a politically unstable state pull the forces of socialisation on one hand and the customs, beliefs, practices and norms of the family pull the same forces to a different and opposite direction. The instability of the state is translated to the instability of the family and the children are trying to grapple with how these two sides influence each other and which one comes as a priority to the other. In the case of Kambili, the space of her family is overdetermined by certain aspects, yet the space of the state is also overdetermined by stronger economic, political, social and culturally oriented aspects; corruption, greed, religious fundamentalism, poverty and general chaos. What really weighs Kambili down is trying to find the balance between these two forces, allegiances, and what makes her case more complex is a space of undersocialisation (vis- a- vis Ifeoma's family) that translates to one of silence.

What Adichie in fact does is to draw parallels between the lives of the two family members in order for the reader to map out Kambili's direction of growth in terms of temporal and spatial spaces. Then she pits the miniature society (of the family) against the larger happenings of the state and interlocks this battle between the two families. The position with which the story is told aids in giving a detached narration, as the author deliberately intends. At this point the author, having experienced, as a child, all these contending forces, her family stands out as the most affected part of the social organisation in which she was involved. There is reason to revisit this past as a usable part of her life and therefore as a memory work. Significant aspects of her own personal life are involved in the entire story. She grew up at the University of Nsukka, a small self contained, laid back town then. Her life revolved around the library, church and the university and before emigration to the United States of America she experienced the rule of Ibrahim Babangida and partially that of Sani Abacha, some of whose highlights during leadership like the murder of Dele Giwa are found in the story.

The bigger statement, one would want to say is that *Purple Hibiscus* as a Bildungsroman is a statement towards the coming of age of contemporary Nigerian writing. Something unique about it is that it is a text that faces macro issues of the contemporary post colony through exploration of miniature and micro structures of the society, the family. The family is an apposite institution to model the story of a nation precisely because it is an institution that models on the basic meaning of growth. It is the surest institution in which an individual can immediately identify and also can map out a genealogy, preferably of gradual growth. In a sense it is an institution that one can comfortably take a good grasp of its history since one has grown in that history and is familiar with the most intimate moments within that history.

The state on the other hand, is something very basic to contemporary organisation. Focus on the state in the post-colony is something almost inescapable. The aftermath of colonialism entailed the reorganisation of formerly colonised countries into units that fit into a global order. The (re)organisation of the post-colonial state therefore meant focus on it increased in theorising and in general artistic disciplines; the African writer and critic followed this pattern. Considering that the nation in Africa as feminist critics (Entoe 1989, Stratton 1994, McClintock 1995,)[39] have argued is gender contested, *Purple Hibiscus* is conceived at a time when there is need to (re)look into the turbulent histories of the nation that were controlled and directed by masculine forces. Thus the need to (re)tell these stories through unmediated sources, sources that may seem to occupy a worm's eye view but give renditions that are not intervened of those times.

But *Purple Hibiscus* is also a statement towards the growth of African literary criticism. Its intergenerational, intertraditional, inter and intratextuality gives it a highly rich stylistic position. It benefits from a biased tradition without necessarily antagonising this tradition, but in fact benefits from it by (re)appropriating aspects of it that can reflect what Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1984) described as the 'double voicedness' of the post-colony. The writer in the post-colony is faced with a medley

[39] Cynthia Entoe for instance says that nationalisms have 'typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope' p.44.

of choices, a biased tradition of style which needs to be (re)evaluated, the continued manacles of neo-colonialism, the constant urge to return to an unmediated past, something that Fanon (1967) talks about, the urgency to form a tradition specific to Africa but at the same time has to deal with a turbulent past which is equally quite usable in trying to achieve his/her supposed goals.

The family is therefore not only a portrait of the state, but in it one finds the accumulated forces of a history of colonialism and the struggle it shares with the post-colonial world. Its members find themselves at a point where all these forces of history that bedevil the state seep down to the family and they have to wade through all these whereas the only secure space that they claim familiarity with, the family, is also facing a lot of pressure to the point of potentially crumbling.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In the chapters that precede this I have analysed the family, the state of familial theory, narrowed down to the fictive Papa Eugene Achike family in *Purple Hibiscus* and examined the way religion acts through ritual and norms and how all these are contextualized in contemporary Nigeria as a post-colony. My focus narrowed even further to Kambili, the narrator, her final growth out the silenced spaces of her family in what I establish as a coming of age story. All these were finally related to the state, as an arguable narrative of the state.

But speaking of the narrative as an allegory of the state is perhaps too simplistic. I say this because when I locate Adichie's writing within contemporary post-colonial Nigerian writing I argue that her rendition of what one would imagine is Nigeria under General's Babangida and Abacha is not simplistic in itself. I refer to the style she chooses to represent this period. *Purple Hibiscus'* content and form are the two ways through which Adichie articulates her presentation. Her thematic concerns here are set in the space of the family. The family remains one of the most resilient, stable forms of social organisation and at the same time one of the most internally stratified forms as I discussed in chapter one.

Adichie recognises this fact and therefore cuts spatial boundaries for her story within familial spaces. Quite ordinarily one would say that the space of the family is one that she is intimately aware of, but still anyone can tell such a story. Her choice of Kambili as the narrator first of all gives the story a detached view. She acts as an observer and Adichie gives her, quite appropriately, a precocious nature. Kambili's perception of the happenings around her are presented to the reader not as the child narrator in say, Anthony Michaels *The Year in San Fernando*. Kambili is a fifteen year old girl, meaning that she is at the point of transition. Her perception of things is likely to look half mediated by an onset of adult consciousness and at the same time struggling to get the innocence of childhood out of the way.

It means therefore that Kambili is likely to give a very complex account of the happenings in her familial space. Kambili's account places her as not only a girl child

within the space of the family but an adolescent who seeks to come out of familial space and be socialised into the rest of the world. Yet the rest of the world, like Kambili, is in transition. By transition here I mean that the political atmosphere in Nigeria is not only volatile but unpredictable, coups counter coups, the press is gagged, corruption is rife, oil economies do not translate to the ordinary man on the street and religious fanaticism has reached fever pitch. This point of transition in Kambili's life, I argue, makes complex for her perceptions of the daily happenings in the space of the family and the nation at large.

Adichie's focus on the family finds its thematic concerns in how power is generated, reproduced and finally abused when it translates to domestic violence. Most visibly is the history of how this power is abetted by forms of colonial missionary education through Papa Eugene. The history of the problems of the state are made visible by Adichie's focus on the familial space. I discussed in chapter four that it is arguable to say Adichie's goal was to narrate the state, with the family as an opportunity cost. What I found interesting is the way that the family and the state are made to appear in a tight embrace, yet the story is predominantly that of the family. This would lead one to Adichie's form.

The choice of Adichie's form is crucial here as a statement towards her own perceptions about African literary history. She chooses to tell the story through not only a person in transition as I mentioned above but a girl child. While one will definitely say that a worm's eye view of the familial story is lopsided, the detachment gives it an element of objectivity. Beyond this is also the proposition that a worm's eye view would definitely present a minority discourse. Being that Kambili seeks to journey out of the silenced familial spaces, her discourse is one that is marginalised. She is not only a fifteen year old but also a girl. The point here is therefore that in the space of the family, while one might think that there is an element of a monologue out of a dialogue as Bakhtin (1981) would discuss in "Discourse in the novel' there is, as the story of Kambili presents, a monologue within a monologue in Papa Eugene Achike's familial space.

Papa Eugene's monologue is seen as the monologue of the entire family, his children and wife are seen through what he has achieved in the public sphere. Papa Eugene's

missionary history, in terms of education, training and general upbringing comes to take a heavy hold onto his family. However Kambili's story continuously erodes this monologue, continuously creates space for reevaluating Papa Eugene's monologue, continuously erodes boundaries that he defines for the family. Her narrative employed with fear, awe and finally courage to resist utilises the silence of her body: the violence, the psychological tension to create a very complex perception to the reader. A situation that allows the reader not to superficially dismiss Mama's silence about the battering she receives from Papa Eugene and about Kambili's larger than life perception of her father.

In fact Papa Eugene is created to expose societal ideals, the banality of them all and their effects at familial level. I discussed in chapter two how religion is exposed through the banality of the rituals in the house and how in fact they wreck rather than build the house. Adichie creates a situation where Christianity's masculine and patriarchal orientation is brought to the fore. Papa, Pope, Jesus and father Benedict are made to occupy Kambili's life, what I called the trinity of men. Yet this is Adichie's major critique of religion. Father Amadi is brought in as a counterfoil to Father Benedict and Papa Eugene. He attracts Kambili immensely and his presence helps Kambili realise her sexual stirrings, yet Adichie makes him deliberately celibate. One would want to compare his entire portraiture with Kambili's description of the stale saltiness of holy water during church rituals.

Adichie's style and what informs it is something that makes her text peculiar. She tries to move out of a tradition that stereotypes gender roles without exposing the efforts that each gender makes in trying to cross over gender boundaries in understanding the roles ascribed to each. What I find intriguing is her ability to use the lopsided perception of Kambili to try and understand her father's complex character, such as when he cries while punishing her at the same time. The immediate perception of a reader about Papa Eugene will be that he is the quintessence of patriarchy and the unapologetic image of patriarchal sadism. However Adichie creates an intelligent narrator, one who tries to read in between the black and white image that Papa Eugene paints: good and evil, heathen and Christian, God and Satan, heaven and hell.

While for instance one would seemingly ascribe her style to that of Achebe in terms of her character creation, Adichie is keen at pointing out that her focus is fairly different from Achebe, since her focus is on the status of the women in the family. One thing she is critical about is the fact that she is described as writing in the footsteps of Achebe. This intertextual ascription can be particularly disturbing as Wilson and Maltzan (2001:10) point out because such ascriptions of intertextuality can be themselves confining, imprisoning, marginalising and silencing. Something that Hewett (2005:76) discusses in her examination of *Purple Hibiscus*. She points out that such ascriptions of intertextual relations can give what she calls an 'illusive unity'. This is so much so that criticism may be blinded to the peculiar voice that the text ascribes to itself. She speaks of social contradictions and differences between texts that expose the illusive unity usually imagined.

The point Adichie seems to make is that while her stylistic choices have been informed by the writings of Achebe which are predominantly masculine, the content of her writing differs significantly in terms of the gaze that she ascribes to it. A familial gaze and at the same time a girl child perspective is a significant difference to that of Achebe for instance. But in this content-form difference Adichie stands to reap a certain complex level of hybridity as a writer in her generation. She reaps of both the vertical axis of form and general style, one that has been canonically masculine[40] but uses it to articulate issues with a precocious feminine gaze. The voice of Kambili seems the voice of Okonkwo's wives and children, those that have been historically blighted and blanked out of the familial voices that speak from a space that seems significant yet narrated as distinct from the larger happenings in the state.

Quite obviously the days of Okonkwo are presented by Achebe as extremely patriarchal, judging by the roles he gives the women. But as Griffiths (2002) discusses the fiction and gendering of the Nigerian past, there are things that he points out that are blanked out by Achebe with regards to the agency of women in Okonkwo's time. Arguably Adichie restores this sense of agency by not only restoring the narrative potential of the women as we have in the case of Kambili but also giving the women

[40] Here I refer to the history of the African literary canon as defined through masculine categories; the shifts for instance of African literary movements have been seen largely from masculine categories. See Fanon 1967, Grisworld 2000 and Griffiths 2002.

agency within the family; a space that they understand immensely and one that gives them power to interpret things at the level of the state in much more complex and interesting ways.

But Adichie's portraiture of the men is of worth critiquing. Papa Eugene is made unbendingly rigid, Catholic and violent, Jaja is made resistant as the history of his name suggests[41] and ends up in jail for the crime his mother commits, Father Amadi who is apparently Kambili's treasured male is made celibate, Papa Nnukwu is made a hated heathen and killed.

This brings me to one of the sub themes in this text which eventually leads to Adichie's choice of style. Although most of the action in the text is intensely crafted around the family space and therefore the study necessarily narrows down to it, there is however, the issue of brain drain which is expressed through the departure of Aunty Ifeoma to the United States of America at the end of the text. *Purple Hibiscus* in fact comes out of the author's perception of the flower's red and white variation in Nigeria as opposed to her shock in being told that purple hibiscuses are in fact plenty in America.[42]

Adichie's concern with brain drain is probably manifested in her own departure from Nigeria at the age of eighteen for America. She is therefore writing from a diasporic position. While the choice of a child narrator obviously points to a useable past she chooses to archive, the detachment that goes with the choice of a child points to the effects of a diasporic position. Perhaps one may want to ask, how does the position of the diaspora affect rendition of past events in one's childhood at this point in time? Her contemporaries, Abani, Oyeyemi, Atta, Habila all write from the same space though each with a different socio-historical, economic and political upbringing. Adichie did not leave out of direct coercion as compared to Habila or Abani. The impact of exilic conditions is not fully explored in this report but it remains an important issue for future research exploration.

[41] Refer to the introductory chapter where I gave a history of the name Jaja.
[42] This was in an interview with Eve Daniels.

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