

AN EXPLORATION OF STYLISTIC FEATURES IN CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE'S PURPLE HIBISCUS

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ABSTRACT

This study offers a stylistic analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus, emphasising the interplay between language, style, and thematic expression in the novel. Purple Hibiscus is a profound narrative that explores themes of family dysfunction, religious extremism, colonial legacies, and the journey toward self-discovery. All of these are intricately woven through Adichie's stylistic choices. This analysis examines Adichie's use of language, imagery, symbolism, and narrative techniques to highlight the novel's central concerns. Adichie's language is characterised by its evocative simplicity and cultural specificity, blending Standard English with Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo phrases. This linguistic hybridity not only enriches the narrative's cultural authenticity but also mirrors the complex identity struggles faced by the characters presented in the novel. Her use of descriptive imagery immerses readers in the oppressive atmosphere of Eugene Achike's authoritarian household while simultaneously highlighting moments of liberation and hope. The study further explores how Adichie employs symbolism—such as the titular purple hibiscus, which signifies freedom and resilience—to encapsulate the protagonists' psychological transformation. The narrative perspective, delivered through the first-person voice of Kambili Achike, is another focal point of this analysis. Kambili's introspective and fragmented narration reflects her psychological turmoil, gradually evolving as she gains agency. This stylistic shift underscores the novel's overarching theme of self-discovery. Additionally, the study delves into the structural organisation of the novel, which juxtaposes the rigidity of patriarchal and religious oppression with moments of subversive rebellion. By analysing these stylistic elements, this paper illuminates how Adichie's artistic choices enhance the narrative's emotional resonance and thematic depth. This analysis underscores Purple Hibiscus as a seminal work of postcolonial African literature, showcasing Adichie's mastery in intertwining form and content to produce a compelling literary experience.

Keywords: *Stylistic Analysis, Cultural Specificity, Linguistic Hybridity, Titular and Thematic Expression.*

1. Introduction

The stylistic analysis of literary works has long been a vital approach in understanding how language contributes to meaning. One of the primary functions of stylistics in African fiction is to highlight the rich linguistic diversity that characterises the continent's literature. Many African authors incorporate local languages, idioms, and proverbs into their narratives, creating a distinctive linguistic landscape that reflects their cultural heritage.

This intermingling of languages not only enriches the text but also invites readers to engage with the cultural gradations embedded in the language. For example, Adichie's Purple Hibiscus utilises Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo expressions, which serve to authenticate the narrative voice and immerse the reader in the

protagonist's cultural milieu (Figuroa et al., 2020). In African literature, where narratives are often laced with cultural, political, and social realities, stylistic studies provide profound insights into the interplay between form and content. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus is a compelling novel that explores themes of family, identity, and power through compelling language and vivid imagery.

Exploring the style in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus reveals a complex interplay of narrative techniques, themes, and cultural contexts. Adichie's Purple Hibiscus is a poignant exploration of familial relationships, political oppression, and the struggle for personal freedom and women emancipation within a backdrop of post-colonial Nigeria. The rich, lyrical prose and deep

character development evoke a profound emotional response, highlighting different shades of the characters' experiences. Adichie uses detailed and immersive storytelling technique to engage the audience emotionally. This narrative style effectively engages readers in the intricacies of identity and social dynamics within a tumultuous historical framework.

While wider scholarly attention has been devoted to the thematic analysis of *Purple Hibiscus*, fewer studies have critically examined the stylistic mechanisms that capture its thematic and emotional impact on readers. This gap in the literature underscores the need for a focused stylistic analysis to better understand how Adichie's linguistic and narrative styles shape the reader's experience.

This study, therefore, aims to conduct a detailed stylistic analysis of *Purple Hibiscus*, examining such elements as language, imagery, symbolism, and narrative structure to reveal how Adichie uses language to articulate complex themes and character struggles. By offering a stylistic perspective, this paper contributes to the growing body of work on Adichie's literary artistry and provides a model for analysing language and style in contemporary African literature.

This submission argues that the stylistic elements in *Purple Hibiscus*—including its linguistic hybridity, symbolic imagery, and evolving narrative perspective—are central to its exploration of themes such as personal freedom, resilience, and cultural identity.

Plot Summary

The novel is narrated through the voice of Kambili, a fifteen-year-old girl, who lives in luxury in Enugu, with her parents—Papa and Mama—and brother, Jaja. Papa, Eugene Achike, is a famous wealthy man, a philanthropist as well as a human right activist. He is also a devout Catholic whose piety is visible to all who attend St. Agnes Catholic Church. Papa employs the services of a driver, Kevin, who takes Kambili and Jaja (and sometimes, Mama) to everywhere they go. Kevin has the mandate to report any misbehaviour of the children to Papa.

Whereas Papa is known as a very religious man and a champion of human rights in the country, in his own home, he is an abusive father and husband. He expects Jaja and Kambili to be perfect. He plans every moment of their lives, and punishes them if they do not follow his plan. Papa also physically abuses Mama, who endures his abuse by taking refuge in her collection of miniature figurines of ballet dancers.

A military coup topples the government, and Papa gets caught up in pro-democracy work. At about the same time, Mama discovers she is pregnant again after several miscarriages. Early in her pregnancy, on Pentecost Sunday, Mama feels ill and asks to be excused from a social obligation. Papa beats her so badly for this that she miscarries again. Kambili and Jaja watch as Papa carries Mama out of the house to the hospital.

Mama comes home from the hospital, and Kambili's life resumes its strict routine. But she struggles in school and comes second, not her usual first, in her exams. When he hears of this, Papa becomes furious, but an emergency interrupts Kambili's punishment. The military government arrests Ade Coker, the editor of Papa's newspaper. After arranging Ade Coker's release, Papa turns his attention back to Kambili and reminds her that God expects perfection.

As is sometimes the custom in Nigeria, the Achike family returns to their home village, Abba, for Christmas. At their country mansion in Abba, Papa receives an endless stream of villagers and bestows gifts on them, while Mama and the other women feed the visitors. Papa's father, Papa-Nnukwu, also lives in Abba. Papa allows Kambili and Jaja to visit Papa-Nnukwu, but only for fifteen minutes because he views their grandfather as a heathen.

Aunty Ifeoma, Papa's sister, arrives in Abba with her three children: Amaka, Obiora and Chima. Against Papa's wish and without his knowledge, Aunty Ifeoma takes Kambili and Jaja to a traditional festival. To make matters worse, she brings Papa-Nnukwu along. Papa-Nnukwu explains Igbo folklore to his grandchildren. Later, when Aunty Ifeoma also

asks Papa to let Kambili and Jaja come with her on a pilgrimage to a Catholic shrine, Papa reluctantly agrees.

Kevin drives Kambili and Jaja to visit Aunt Ifeoma in Nsukka, where she lectures at the university. Her small flat lacks the luxuries they are used to. The electricity and water are unreliable; gas and food are scarce. But laughter and music fill Aunt Ifeoma's house; Aunt Ifeoma lets children speak their minds without fear of punishment. They listen to popular music and watch television. Jaja thrives in this new environment and takes up Aunt Ifeoma's enthusiasm for her rare purple hibiscus and the other flowers in her colourful garden. Kambili adjusts less easily. She must learn the simplest household tasks, and her cousin, Amaka, sneers at her for being rich. Kambili acts shy and nervous. Father Amadi, a handsome young priest, tries to bring Kambili out of her shell. He encourages her to run, sing, and smile.

Police once more arrest Ade Coker, so Papa asks Aunt Ifeoma to let Kambili and Jaja stay in Nsukka for a few days more. Then Papa-Nnukwu gets sick, and Aunt Ifeoma brings him to stay with her in Nsukka. While helping to take care of Papa-Nnukwu, Kambili and Jaja get to know him better and hear his stories. When Papa discovers that his "heathen" father is living under the same roof as his children, he travels to Aunt Ifeoma's house to take them back home. However, Papa arrives in Nsukka right after Papa-Nnukwu dies, and Papa then berates Aunt Ifeoma for not calling a priest. Back home in Enugu, Kambili and Jaja see their Mama's swollen face and black eye. After dinner, Papa punishes them for not telling him about Papa-Nnukwu, and he forces Kambili to stand in boiling water.

Later, Kambili and Jaja show each other their secret souvenirs from Nsukka. Kambili has a watercolour portrait of Papa-Nnukwu, painted by Amaka. Jaja has cuttings from Aunt Ifeoma's purple hibiscus plants. They keep their secrets as the political situation worsens and Papa becomes ever tenser. Leaders of the pro-democracy movement warn Papa that he is in danger. A pipe bomb kills Ade Coker.

One day, Papa discovers the portrait of Papa-Nnukwu and erupts in rage. He kicks Kambili until she falls unconscious. After Kambili gets out of the hospital, she and Jaja go back to Nsukka to stay with Aunt Ifeoma. Kambili spends more time with Father Amadi, with whom she is now in love. Mama arrives unexpectedly in a taxi. Once again, Papa has beaten her and caused her to miscarry. In spite of Aunt Ifeoma's outrage, Mama goes back home, taking Kambili and Jaja with her.

The day after Mama, Jaja, and Kambili return home is Palm Sunday. Jaja refuses to take communion at Mass. After church, Papa explodes in rage and throws a heavy liturgical book at Jaja. Instead of hitting Jaja, however, the book hits Mama's precious figurines and shatters them into bits. From that moment on, everything changes. Papa seems to shrink as Jaja continues to defy him. Aunt Ifeoma loses her university job and applies for a visa so she can go to America. Father Amadi gets a new assignment in Germany.

Papa dies suddenly. The autopsy reveals he has been poisoned. Mama tells Kambili and Jaja that she had been feeding Papa with poison, but when the police arrive, Jaja confesses to the crime. Mama spends a small fortune on lawyers and bribes to ease Jaja's time in jail. Meanwhile, the Head of State dies, and pro-democracy groups accuse the military regime of killing Papa. Finally, after more than thirty months, Mama and Kambili learn that Jaja will be released. They begin to plan a better future.

Themes

Family and Domestic Violence

The novel examines the complex relationships within the Achike family, highlighting the impact of domestic abuse on each family member. Eugene Achike, the patriarch, is portrayed as a strict disciplinarian who uses physical abuse to enforce his ideals, demonstrating how power and control shape family dynamics. This theme also shows the children's fear and obedience due to their father's abuse (Shands, 2006).

Self-discovery

The theme of self-discovery is the overriding theme in the novel. It is demonstrated in the novel through the characters of Kambili and Jaja. In fact, the entire story is woven around Kambili's and Jaja's coming of age. Their encounter with Aunt Ifeoma and her children including Father Amadi is a turning point for them. Their visit to Aunt Ifeoma's house taught them that young people like them could talk, express themselves and be happy too. Kambili's encounter with Father Amadi taught her that she could love and be loved. Her love for Father Amadi became a motivation for her to begin to open up to let out some emotions.

At the beginning of the novel, Kambili is a shy, introverted girl whose identity is shaped entirely by her father, Eugene, a controlling patriarch. Eugene's rigid adherence to religion and discipline silences Kambili, leaving her unable to express her thoughts and emotions. Her self-discovery begins when she and Jaja spend some time in Nsukka with their Aunt, Ifeoma, whose household is vibrant, open, and nurturing—a stark contrast to their own home.

In Ifeoma's care, Kambili is exposed to a world where opinions are valued, laughter is encouraged, and faith is practiced with compassion rather than fear. These experiences challenge the beliefs and norms she has been taught. Encounters with her cousins and the empathetic Father Amadi further catalyse her growth, as she learns to articulate her feelings and recognise her worth beyond her father's expectations.

Jaja's journey of self-discovery runs parallel to Kambili's but manifests more outwardly through rebellion. Initially, he is as subservient as his sister, but his awakening begins when he observes the freedom and confidence in Aunt Ifeoma's household. His refusal to take communion on Palm Sunday becomes a symbolic act of defiance, marking the first time he consciously challenges his father's authority. Jaja's journey culminates in his decision to take responsibility for their father's death, an act of agency that demonstrates his growth and sense of accountability.

Religion and Hypocrisy

Religion plays a significant role, contrasting the devout Catholicism of Eugene with the more open-minded spirituality of his father, Papa-Nnukwu. Eugene's extreme religious beliefs justify his authoritarianism, depicting how religious zeal can become toxic when combined with power and lack of tolerance. His harsh application of religious doctrine highlights hypocrisy within rigid, conservative religious frameworks.

Feminism/Women Empowerment or Emancipation

Feminism is one of the major themes in this novel. Adichie in her craft, subtly empowered women in her work, *Purple Hibiscus*. From the beginning of the story, it is as if the women are oppressed. They have no voice of their own, except for Aunt Ifeoma. This is seen in Kambili and Mama's submission and lack of courage to resist Papa's tyrannical operations. However, towards the end of the novel, women triumphed. The killing of Papa by Mama is a subtle victory given to the women. Also, Aunt Ifeoma is presented in the novel as a strong independent woman who survived against all odds and was able to take care of her three children despite the hardship in the country and the absence of her husband. The way Aunt Ifeoma speaks to Papa also shows a rejection of patriarchal dominance and control. Thus, the theme is a call for women empowerment and emancipation; a call for women to rise up and fight for their rights in the face of operation.

Colonial Legacy and Post-Colonial Identity

Through Eugene's preference for Western culture and his disdain for Igbo traditions, the novel critiques the lingering impact of colonialism on personal and cultural identity. This contrast reflects how colonial history influences characters' attitudes, values, and even family roles.

Silence and Voice

The silence that Kambili and Jaja experience within their oppressive household contrasts with the freedom they begin to experience with their aunt, Ifeoma. The theme

of silence versus voice represents the search for identity and the courage to express one's thoughts and beliefs.

Stylistic Deployment in the Novel

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is a rich narrative that utilises a variety of stylistic techniques to explore the Postcolonial, Feminist, and Marxist representation of Nigerian society. Through her use of language, imagery, symbolism, and narrative techniques: first-person narrative, focalisation, silence and speech, Adichie gives voice to the marginalised and oppressed, while critiquing the postcolonial condition and patriarchal systems.

Language

Language in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is one of the most striking features of the novel. The simplicity of the language is one remarkable thing about the novel that sets it apart from most of its contemporaries. The language is simple yet deeply evocative, rich in dialogue and emotional resonance with descriptive and symbolic imageries. Adichie's blend of Standard English with Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo languages helps to create a rich linguistic hybridity. This hybridity reflects the cultural context of Nigeria and lends authenticity to the characters' voices and experiences. The occasional use of Igbo phrases, often untranslated, underscores the cultural specificity of the story and setting while inviting readers to engage with the cultural background on its terms.

Linguistic Hybridity

Adichie seamlessly integrates English and Igbo languages with Pidgin English, reflecting the cultural multiplicity of her characters and setting. This bilingualism mirrors the post-colonial Nigerian experience, where traditional heritage coexists and conflicts with Western influences.

Igbo Language: The frequent use of Igbo words, phrases, and proverbs, such as "nwunye m" (my wife) or "ọkpụkpọ" (communion), grounds the narrative in Nigerian culture and provides authenticity to her own (author's) identity. The untranslated Igbo terms invite readers to immerse themselves in the

cultural context and underscore the importance of language as an identity marker.

English Language: English, often used for formal communication, reflects the colonial legacy and the globalised aspirations of the characters, particularly Eugene, who embodies the tension between traditional values and Western ideals.

Pidgin English: The use of Pidgin by characters like domestic staff and market vendors introduces a layer of social realism, reflecting class distinctions and the diversity of Nigerian society.

This interplay of languages highlights the characters' struggles to navigate their identities in a society shaped by both indigenous traditions and colonial history.

Narrative Voice

The novel's first-person narrative is delivered in Kambili's introspective and subdued voice, which evolves as the story progresses. In the beginning, her language is hesitant and fragmented, mirroring her suppressed emotions and fear of her father. As she gains confidence and agency, her voice becomes more assured, reflecting her personal growth. This progression in tone and language parallels the thematic journey from silence to self-expression, enhancing the reader's connection to Kambili's internal world.

Religious Language and Themes

The novel is permeated by religious language, reflecting the centrality of faith in the lives of the characters. Eugene's strict Catholicism is expressed through formal, dogmatic language, while Auntie Ifeoma's more liberal approach to faith introduces a contrasting tone of inclusivity and questioning.

The juxtaposition of these linguistic styles reinforces the broader theme of faith as both a source of control and liberation. Kambili's evolving use of religious language mirrors her shifting perspective on her father's oppressive beliefs and her growing awareness of alternative interpretations of spirituality.

Dialogue and Characterisation

Adichie's use of dialogue is a powerful tool for character development and social commentary. Eugene's speeches, for instance,

are formal, reflecting his authoritarian nature and his internalised colonial mind-set. His speeches are devoid of warmth, emphasising his rigidity and control. In contrast, Auntie Ifeoma's speeches are lively, humorous, and nurturing. Her tone underscores her role as a catalyst for change in Kambili's life.

Emotional Resonance through Language

Adichie's language is rich with emotional vibrations, capturing the complexities of familial relationships and personal struggles. Her choice of words and sentence structures often evoke a deep sense of empathy, drawing readers into Kambili's internal conflicts and her moments of quiet triumph.

Summarily, the use of language in *Purple Hibiscus* is a cornerstone of its literary brilliance. Adichie's blending of English, Pidgin and Igbo languages, her symbolic use of imagery, and the evolution of the narrative voice all contribute to a story that is both culturally specific and universally relatable. Through her conscious and evocative language, Adichie not only brings her characters and settings to life but also invites readers to reflect on themes of identity, freedom, and resilience.

Imagery and Symbolism

The use of imagery by Adichie is deeply symbolic, and it reflects both Postcolonial and Feminist concerns. One of the recurring symbols is the purple hibiscus, which represents freedom and rebellion against oppression. When Kambili visits her Auntie Ifeoma's home, she sees the blossoming purple hibiscus in her garden, a stark contrast to the abundant red hibiscus in her father's house revealing the rigidity of her own home. The hibiscus becomes a metaphor for postcolonial hybridity and the possibility of resistance against colonial and patriarchal oppression: "Auntie Ifeoma's purple hibiscus was rare, fragrant with the scent of freedom." The colour purple, often associated with royalty and empowerment, also reflects Kambili's gradual awakening to her power and identity.

Also, red colour is used vigorously in the novel to symbolise danger and anger. This

symbol, red, emphasises Papa's domestic violence. For instance, when Papa is about to punish Kambili for coming second in the class, he is wearing 'his red silk pyjamas'; the children can imagine "the rage in [Papa's] red-tinged eyes" when he finds out that they are staying in the same house with Papa-Nnukwu at Auntie Ifeoma's house. Also, when Papa finds out that his children have Papa-Nnukwu's picture, he is "wearing his wine-red pyjamas that lent a slightly red shimmer to his eyes". Of course, blood was used as a symbol in the story to accentuate the effect of redness. When Mama refuses to meet with the priest, Papa beats her to the point that she has another miscarriage with "blood on the floor".

Adichie's use of religious symbolism also plays a central role in the novel. Eugene's devout Catholicism, which he uses to justify his tyrannical rule over his family, contrasts with the more open and inclusive form of faith practiced by Auntie Ifeoma and Father Amadi. Eugene's religious zeal becomes a symbol of his internalised colonialism, his adherence to Western religious traditions at the expense of his indigenous identity. This contrast is further reflected in Adichie's use of language, where Papa's rigid control over his family's speech symbolises his broader control over their lives. The symbolism in *Purple Hibiscus* invites readers to engage with the emotional and psychological layers of the narrative. By using symbols such as the purple hibiscus and the religious motifs, Adichie creates a richly layered text that invites deeper reflection on the complexities of postcolonial identity and resistance.

The figurines in Kambili's household serve as significant imagery. It shows the illusion of a perfect, submissive wife. They also serve as a symbol of Beatrice's silent endurance and eventual rebellion. When Kambili's mother, Beatrice, repeatedly polishes the figurines, they become a metaphor for her forced submission under Eugene's control: "Mama polished the figurines on the *étagère* until they shone". And the way she takes care of these figurines shows that they mean so much to her. "She put the figurines back on the *étagère* carefully,

arranging them in neat lines". So, the act of breaking these figurines after another episode of abuse symbolises the shattering of Beatrice's silence and submission. This reflects a feminist moment, where the destruction of these symbols marks her first act of resistance against the violence she endures.

This use of this symbolism, which can be analysed within the feminist framework, highlights how patriarchal structures enforce silence on women, while small acts of rebellion (like breaking the figurines) represent attempts at reclaiming freedom. Adichie's subtle narrative devices point toward how deeply entrenched gender roles and silence are, especially in postcolonial African societies, where women often bear the weight of tradition and patriarchy.

Narrative Techniques

First-Person Point of View and Focalisation

Adichie employs a first-person point of view through the voice of Kambili, a young girl growing up under the authoritarian rule of her father, Eugene. The use of first-person narration allows the reader to experience the world through Kambili's constrained perspective. Her limited voice symbolises her lack of agency and her oppression, both as a young woman and as a child in a postcolonial patriarchal household. Kambili's narration is often fragmented, reflecting her fear and emotional suppression: 'I wanted to say something, but my mouth felt dry. Nothing came out.' This choice of style aligns with feminist themes by emphasising how women are often denied the power of speech in patriarchal settings.

Focalisation plays a role in highlighting the tension between Kambili's inner world and the external forces controlling her. For example, when Kambili witnesses her father pour boiling water on her feet as punishment; the narrative lens is tightly focused on her physical and emotional pain: "The pain was as sharp as a cut, and I saw the scars Papa's belt had left on Jaja's back, and felt the heavy silence." Here, Adichie merges physical suffering with emotional silence, a powerful feminist critique

of the silencing of women under male dominance.

The use of first-person point of view and focalisation in literature serves as a powerful tool for authors, allowing them to present characters' inner thoughts and experiences in a way that engages readers on a personal level. This narrative technique is particularly evident in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, where the story is told through the eyes of the protagonist, Kambili Achike. By employing a first-person perspective, Adichie invites readers to experience Kambili's emotional journey, creating a sense of intimacy and immediacy that deepens the reader's connection to her struggles.

Focalisation, which refers to the perspective through which a narrative is presented, plays a crucial role in shaping the reader's understanding of characters and events. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the limited focalisation through Kambili's eyes allows readers to witness her world as she perceives it, steeped in fear and silence due to her father's authoritarian rule. This restricted perspective effectively conveys Kambili's internal conflicts, as her thoughts and feelings are intricately tied to her experiences of oppression and longing for freedom. As Kambili navigates her father's violent tendencies and the oppressive atmosphere of her home, her first-person narrative becomes a means of articulating the complexities of her emotional landscape, thereby inviting readers to empathise with her plight.

The emotional weight of Kambili's narrative is amplified by her introspective nature. Her reflections often reveal the complexities of her relationships with family members, particularly her father, Eugene, and her brother, Jaja. Through Kambili's eyes, readers gain insight into her admiration for her father's public persona as a wealthy and benevolent figure, contrasting sharply with the tyrannical behaviour he exhibits at home. This duality highlights the psychological impact of living in a household marked by fear and love, forcing readers to grapple with the moral

ambiguities of familial loyalty and the quest for individual identity.

Interplay Between Silence and Speech

One of the most notable stylistic features of *Purple Hibiscus* is the interplay between silence and speech. Throughout the novel, silence is a powerful tool that Adichie uses to reflect the suppression of the characters' voices. Kambili is often unable to speak freely in her father's presence: "I didn't know that I was holding my breath until it all came out, in a rush, in front of Auntie Ifeoma." This line underscores how Kambili's silence is a pattern of life and a form of survival under her father's tyrannical rule, but it also highlights her eventual release from oppression when she is away from him.

In contrast to Eugene's household, Auntie Ifeoma's home is characterised by free speech and open expression. She encourages her children to speak openly and debate freely, which highlights a postcolonial feminist contrast between the suppression of women's voices in patriarchal settings and the possibility of autonomy in a more egalitarian environment. When Auntie Ifeoma says, "Being defiant can be good sometimes. Defiance is like air. If you stop breathing it, you die," it represents a feminist call for women to reclaim their voices and assert their agency.

Silence as Resistance

Silence in *Purple Hibiscus* is more than just a theme; it is a stylistic device that Adichie manipulates to highlight both oppression and resistance. For example, Kambili's brother, Jaja, uses silence as a form of rebellion. His refusal to speak to his father or participate in religious rituals is a quiet but powerful protest: "Jaja's defiance seemed to hang over the room like the odour of open gutter." This imagery equates Jaja's silent rebellion to an all-pervading presence, one that cannot be ignored, thus illustrating how silence itself can become a tool of resistance within oppressive environments.

Silence as resistance can be supported by the Marxist theory, as Jaja's silence disrupts the family's hierarchical power structure, challenging his father's authority and

questioning the validity of Eugene's dictatorial hold over his family. Silence can be understood as a powerful form of resistance within various socio-political contexts. This notion is particularly salient in the analysis of policy and urban studies, where the absence of voices can speak volumes about underlying tensions and conflicts. Geva-May, Hoffman, and Muhleisen (2020) emphasise that comparative policy analysis often overlooks the role of silence, which can reflect systemic inequalities and the marginalisation of certain groups. In their survey of the field, they argue for a clearer understanding of how silence interacts with policy frameworks, calling for methodologies that can capture these subtleties (Geva-May et al., 2020).

Similes, Metaphors and Irony

Similes

Similes are direct comparisons between two unlike things, using the words "like" or "as." They provide clarity and imagery, helping readers visualise concepts or feelings more vividly. For example, saying someone is "as brave as a lion" not only conveys bravery but also evokes a strong visual image associated with lions. This figure of speech can enhance storytelling by adding depth to character descriptions and emotional states. For instance, Adichie employs simile when Kambili describes her father's voice as "as smooth and calm as the surface of the water". This creates a sense of eerie control and deception. The smoothness of his voice contrasts with the violence he inflicts on his family, creating an ironic tension between appearance and reality.

Metaphor

Adichie employs rich metaphorical language to illuminate its themes, characters, and settings. Metaphors are crucial in capturing the emotional intensity of the narrative and providing insight into the complex relationships and societal dynamics portrayed in the novel. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie's use of metaphor adds depth to the narrative, revealing layers of meaning that enrich the reader's understanding of the characters and their struggles. Through metaphors such as the purple hibiscus, the

broken figurines, and the slicing rain, Adichie captures the fragility of human relationships, the stifling effects of authoritarianism, and the transformative power of rebellion and freedom.

The Purple Hibiscus as a Central Metaphor

The title itself is metaphorical. The purple hibiscus, a rare and experimental plant grown in Auntie Ifeoma's garden, symbolises freedom, resilience, and defiance against oppressive traditions. Unlike the red hibiscus found in Papa Eugene's rigid, authoritarian home, the purple variety represents the possibility of a different life. Kambili, the main character and the narrator of the story, has this to say:

"Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like Auntie 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 Government Square after the coup."

This metaphor illustrates Jaja's personal growth and his eventual rebellion against his father's tyranny, as well as the broader theme of liberation from oppressive structures.

The Figurative Use of "Palm Fronds"

Palm fronds in the novel; metaphorically represent peace, celebration, and submission. However, the palm fronds also appear ironically in scenes of conflict, suggesting the fragility of the peace they symbolise. For instance, when Kambili witnesses the dissonance in her family, she notices the palm fronds as part of a ritualistic Catholic celebration in her home, even as the house is stifling with fear and pain caused by Eugene's harsh discipline. She has this to say:

'Papa sprinkled palm fronds around the house on Palm Sunday, their fronds turning brittle and brown with the weight of silence.'

Here, the fronds metaphorically carry the weight of the family's unspoken suffering, signifying the hollow rituals that mask deeper dysfunction.

Papa (Eugene) as a Metaphor for Religious Fundamentalism

Eugene is not just a character but a walking metaphor for religious extremism and the colonial legacy in Nigeria. His rigid adherence to Catholicism mirrors the inflexibility and violence often associated with oppressive ideologies. For instance, when Kambili describes her father, she says:

"Papa was like a pitcher of water that spilled onto the ground, destroying the soil."

This metaphor suggests how his obsessive religiousness damages the family, much like spilled water destroys soil by making it muddy and slippery. It reflects how rigid systems can corrupt and suffocate growth.

The Weather as a Metaphor for Emotional States

The frequent references to rain, harmattan, and other elements of weather serve as metaphors for the emotional landscape of the characters. For instance, when describing her mother's suffering, Kambili notes:

"The rain came down in slants, like blades slicing through the air."

The slicing rain mirrors the violence Mama endures at the hands of Papa, emphasising her physical and emotional pain. The weather often mirrors the characters' inner turmoil, reinforcing the mood of a scene.

Broken Figurines as a Metaphor for Family Discord

The breaking of Mama's figurines is a recurring motif and a potent metaphor for the fractured relationships within Achike's household. The figurines, which Mama carefully arranges, symbolise her attempt to maintain order amidst chaos. But when things fell apart, Kambili describes the situation with the following statement:

"The figurines on the étagère were gone, replaced by a vase of wilting flowers."

This metaphor reflects the family's shattered facade of unity after Jaja's rebellion and Papa's death. The wilting flowers signify the loss of vitality and hope.

The Silence in the Achike Household

Silence is a powerful metaphor throughout the novel, symbolising fear,

oppression, and the lack of authentic communication. Kambili frequently reflects on the silence imposed by her father's authoritarian rule. She speaks:

"Silence hung over the dining table like the blue-black clouds before a storm."

Here, silence is likened to the oppressive weight of storm clouds, forewarning conflict and tension within the family.

Irony

Irony involves a discrepancy between expectations and reality, often highlighting contradictions in a situation, statement, or character. There are three primary types of irony: verbal, situational, and dramatic. Verbal irony occurs when someone says the opposite of what they mean, often for humorous or emphatic effect. Adichie employs irony in different ways in the novel to explore the themes of cultural identity, family dynamics and social change.

Title Irony: The title, purple hibiscus, symbolises beauty and fragility which ironically contrasts with the novel's exploration of violation. Here, irony plays a significant role in critiquing postcolonial power dynamics.

Societal Irony: societal irony is explored in the portrayal of Nigeria as prosperous country outside the country, while internally there is turmoil both at the family level and at the national level.

Religious Irony: religious irony presents Eugene's fanaticism and abuse of his family as a contradiction. Eugene is portrayed as a devout Catholic, who uses his religion to justify his abuse. The piety he claims is ironic when juxtaposed with his brutal control over his family. Adichie uses this irony to underscore the postcolonial critique of how the colonised elite often adopt the colonisers' tools (such as religion) to perpetuate oppression.

Cultural Irony: Adichie uses cultural irony to critique the traditional Igbo cultural patriarchal norms, while at the same time celebrating its rich heritage.

Figures of speech, particularly similes, metaphors, and irony play a crucial role in enriching language and enhancing the expressive power of communication. They

allow writers and speakers to convey complex ideas, evoke emotions, and create vivid imagery, thereby engaging their audience more effectively.

Structural Organisation of the Novel

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus is a meticulously structured novel, with its organisation playing a significant role in shaping the narrative's emotional depth and thematic resonance. The novel employs a carefully planned structure that reflects the protagonist's internal journey, highlights key contrasts, and builds dramatic tension.

Nonlinear Narrative Structure

Adichie employs a nonlinear narrative structure that begins with the novel's climax and then uses flashbacks to provide context. This is called *media res*. Here the novel starts from the middle of the story, on Palm Sunday. The opening scene, where Jaja refuses to receive communion and Papa throws a missal at him, signals the unravelling of the Achike family. This dramatic start immediately captures the reader's attention, setting the tone for the subsequent exploration of how the family dynamics reached this breaking point. The narrative then shifts back in time, Before Palm Sunday, retracing the events that led to Palm Sunday. Then the story shifted again to the end, After Palm Sunday.

This structure effectively mirrors the themes of repression and eventual liberation. By starting with the climax, Adichie foreshadows the disintegration of the Achike's household, creating a sense of inevitability that underscores the tension throughout the story.

Three-Phase Division: Silence, Change and Healing

The novel can be viewed as unfolding in three distinct phases, corresponding to the stages of Kambili's and Jaja's evolvment:

Silence and Oppression: The beginning part of their lives in the story captures the stifling control of Eugene over his family. The rigid structure of their daily lives mirrors the unyielding dominance of Eugene's authority. This is basically seen in the second part of the novel: Before Palm Sunday.

Exposure and Change: Kambili's and Jaja's visit to Auntie Ifeoma's home introduces them to a contrasting world of freedom and individuality. This phase is a turning point, as it challenges their previously unquestioned beliefs and begins their transformation. This is mostly seen in the first and last parts of the novel: Palm Sunday and After Palm Sunday

Rebellion and Healing: The story presents a dwindling of Eugene's authority with Jaja's act of defiance, and the family's attempts to rebuild their lives. This phase marks Kambili's growth into independence and resilience. This is found also in the first and last parts of the novel.

Symbolic Juxtaposition of Settings

The novel's structure is enriched by the symbolic juxtaposition of settings of Enugu and Nsukka. The Achike's home in Enugu is rigid and oppressive with Eugene's strict control, reflecting a suffocating atmosphere of fear. In contrast, Auntie Ifeoma's home in Nsukka is lively and open, symbolising freedom, intellectual curiosity, and the possibility of change and growth. This structural juxtaposition heightens the impact of Kambili's and Jaja's transformation by emphasising the stark differences between these environments. The beauty of this juxtaposition is that Adichie uses it to reduce tension in the novel. She tactfully sends Jaja and Kambili to Nsukka each time tension seems to heighten in the novel.

Pacing and Emotional Tension

There is a deliberate pacing of the novel with moments of tension and release carefully distributed to maintain engagement and balance. The oppressive routines in Eugene's home are depicted in painstaking detail, creating a sense of suffocation that mirrors Kambili's experiences. These moments are balanced by the periods of warmth and freedom in Nsukka, providing emotional relief and hope.

The climactic scenes—such as Jaja's refusal to receive Holy Communion, Eugene's death, and Jaja's imprisonment—are spaced strategically to maximize their impact. The emotional peaks and valleys create a rhythm

that mirrors the characters' tumultuous journeys while it maintains a steady capture of the readers' attention.

Narrative Perspective and Voice

The novel's first-person narrative perspective, told from Kambili's point of view, is integral to its structural organisation. Her perspective allows the reader to experience the world through her eyes, gradually unveiling her internal growth. Adichie's choice to filter the story through Kambili's lens lends intimacy and emotional depth to the narrative, making the reader a witness to her journey.

Summarily, the structural organisation of *Purple Hibiscus* is a testament to Adichie's skill as a storyteller. The nonlinear narrative, strategic pacing, and juxtaposition of settings work in harmony to reflect the novel's themes of oppression, growth, and liberation. This structure not only enhances the emotional impact of the story but also underscores the complexity of the characters' journeys, making *Purple Hibiscus* a compelling exploration of personal and familial transformation.

Significances of Adichie's Narrative Techniques as Observed by Different Authors

Eugene Achike's strict adherence to Standard English reflects his deep-seated desire to impose order and control, not only over his family but also over his cultural identity. Eugene's insistence on Western values, as opposed to his rejection of his native Igbo language, is an expression of his internalised colonial ideologies. As Bamgbose (1995) argues, language in African literature often represents a battleground for cultural and ideological dominance, and Eugene's use of English serves as a means of asserting his authority while suppressing any form of resistance. Kambili's restricted language, particularly her stammering and silence, reflects her submission to this authoritarian rule of her father.

The story unfolds through a first-person perspective, allowing for an intimate exploration of Kambili's internal struggles and her journey toward self-discovery. This narrative choice enhances the emotional impact of the story, inviting readers to

empathise with Kambili's plight as she grapples with her father's tyranny and her own growing sense of identity (Rahnuma, 2023).

Adichie's use of religious imagery and the juxtaposition of domesticity with violence serve to highlight the conflicts between personal faith and institutional oppression. This symbolism is reflective of broader themes in African literature that explore the intersection of spirituality and social justice (Ndi, 2022).

Family conflicts serve as a microcosm of national tensions, suggesting that personal and political struggles are inextricably linked. This notion is echoed in contemporary scholarship, which emphasises the need for new frameworks in understanding the complexities of African narratives (Figueroa et al., 2020; Gu et al., 2021).

The protagonist, Kambili's voice, which is initially constrained by her father's authoritarianism, gradually evolves as she seeks her own identity, a theme echoed in contemporary discussions of personal and cultural liberation (Geva-May et al., 2020). This transformation mirrors broader societal shifts, reflecting the ongoing struggles for agency and expression in post-colonial contexts (Robinson, 2022).

Adichie's portrayal of female characters navigating patriarchal structures re-echoes feminist discourses within African literature, emphasising the need for intervention and empowerment (Narciso, 2022). Kambili's eventual assertion of her voice serves as a powerful metaphor for the broader struggle for women's rights in contemporary society.

The socio-political context in which the narrative is situated further informs her stylistic choice and thematic explorations. Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is deeply rooted in the political turmoil of Nigeria, reflecting the complexities of post-colonial identity and the legacies of oppression. The historical context enriches the narrative, providing layers of meaning that resonate with readers' familiarity with Nigeria's tumultuous past (Winston, 2023).

Furthermore, the interplay between language and style in her work offers insight into the author's cultural identities. Adichie's

use of language, infused with Igbo phrases and proverbs, serves to infuse her narrative in its cultural context, fostering a sense of authenticity and connection to her heritage (Surak, 2023). This linguistic richness resonates especially with the Igbos and invites wider audience to appreciate the variations of Nigerian culture while also engaging with universal themes of love, loss, and resilience.

The author's engagement with themes of family and society further underscores her stylistic ingenuity. In *Purple Hibiscus*, family dynamics are fraught with tension and secrecy, emphasising the psychological toll of authoritarianism on personal relationships. Adichie's focus on family bonds and their complexities invites readers to reflect on the interplay between individual desires and collective expectations (Heinrich et al., 2022).

2. Conclusion

This study has analysed the stylistic and thematic elements of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, demonstrating how the novel uses language, symbolism, and characterisation to explore themes of family, faith, and freedom within the context of post-colonial Nigeria. Adichie's use of linguistic hybridity—merging English with Igbo expressions—creates a richly textured narrative that reflects the cultural dualities faced by her characters. The vivid imagery and symbolism, particularly the recurring motif of the purple hibiscus, underscore the tension between oppression and liberation.

Through Kambili's introspective first-person narration, Adichie provides a lens into the emotional and psychological impacts of authoritarianism on a family. The narrative style evolves in tandem with Kambili's growth, transitioning from a subdued and fragmented tone to one that reflects strength and agency. This stylistic shift mirrors the broader thematic arc of the novel, which traces the journey from silence and fear to self-discovery and empowerment.

The analysis also highlights how the contrasting environments of Eugene's oppressive household and Auntie Ifeoma's vibrant, nurturing home serve as microcosms of

larger societal conflicts. These settings underscore the clash between rigid traditional structures and the growing desire for individuality and reform, particularly as embodied in the novel's nuanced portrayal of faith and feminism.

While this study has focused on the stylistic dimensions of *Purple Hibiscus*, further research could explore its intersections with political history, particularly in how the novel reflects Nigeria's socio-political dynamics during the military regime. Additionally, comparative studies with other African novels

addressing familial and cultural conflicts could provide deeper insights into the recurring themes of post-colonial literature.

In conclusion, *Purple Hibiscus* is a powerful narrative that skillfully blends personal and political struggles, offering a poignant exploration of the resilience of the human spirit amidst adversity. Adichie's stylistic choices not only enrich the story but also amplify its universal relevance, solidifying her place as a leading voice in contemporary African literature.

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