

The Representation of the Rough Beast in
Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

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Abstract

In order to preserve the socio-political order in every human society, there are norms, values, beliefs and institutions, which individuals imbibe in the process of socialization. However, in every society, there are individuals – citizens and foreigners alike – whose behaviour and actions are extreme and devastating and are outside the expected standard. These are the individuals William Butler Yeats in his highly allusive and symbolic poem refers to as the rough beasts, whose paths are marked by blood-bath. The focus of this research, therefore, is to use Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* to evaluate the essential characteristics of some of the fictive characters, who may be referred to as the rough beasts in the fictive world of these texts. Also, the consequences of the actions of these figures of anarchy on the weak and the innocent will be dealt with, as well as the examination of the revolutionary

characters in the texts, who checkmate the rampaging powers of the beasts, and who bring their reign to catastrophic ends.

Introduction

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
 The best lacked all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity (Yeats 1973: 1700).

William Butter Yeats's 'The Second Coming' is a biblical allusion to the second coming of Jesus Christ in the Book of Revelation. However, in Yeats's poem, the child that would be born would not be a peaceful saviour, but a beast that would bring a new world order of ruthlessness and violence. He designates this as the rough beast that 'Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born' (1973:1700). William Butler Yeats's beast has been portrayed in literature as individuals – citizens and foreigners – whose action and behaviour are outside the society's standard. Their coming would be devastating to the culture and would leave terrible, indelible imprints on the consciousness of the people. However, like everything in human affairs, the activities of these rough beasts, who are seen as divine forms, would be checkmated by revolutionary leaders, who could destroy the hold of the rough beast on the people and restore order and equilibrium in the system.

According to Amechi Nicholas Akwanya and Virgy A. Anohu in *Fifty Years of the Nigerian Novel (1952 - 2001)*, there is a:

...special individual perceived in the Nigerian novel's meditation on history as the place of the origin of social crises and convolutions Despite that we often see him as part of a social convulsion, he is not to be confused with the kind of character we have called ... the historical individual, an Okonkwo or an Ezeulu, for example. He is what we here designated as the Rough Beast, a figure whose original home is in Yeats's poetry (2001:153).

However, before we go on with the tacing of the rough beast and the consequences of his presence in the novels, through the secondary methodology of library research, we must look at some of the critical reviews on the two novels. In T.M.E. Chukwumezie's 'A vision of the Ancient Terror: Promethean Archetype in Achebe's 'The Madman''', he focuses on how the classical archetype has been reflected in Achebe's short fiction, 'The Madman'. He argues this ancient terror shapes the consciousness and the tragedy of Nwibe, because:

...his fear of madness and consequent separating of an individual from the rest of the community from where he draws the source of his individual strength is what catches up with him. He struggles to control the manifestation of it, at least within his family, but having been caught up by his fears and confirmed mad, he is denied a place in the ozo cult which has been his ambition, a testament of his supposed nobility (2013:172).

Also Romanus Egudu's 'Chinua Achebe's Counselling Creativity', he argues that Achebe's creative works are a store-house of diverse human experiences and artistic dimensions. He sees him as a teacher whose works should be watched as one would watch

a huge masquerade from different perspectives in order to see it well. He concludes that 'Achebe's works constitute an immortal reservoir of wisdom, discernment, prudence and art, out of which various aspects of counselling and the aesthetic vehicles for conveying them have ensued' (2013:102).

Besides, in Iniobong I. Uko's study of the diverse cultural trends and codes that oppress women, particularly the black women, she situates the oppression of women with a comparative study of the experiences of female fictive characters in the novels of three female African writers – Nawal El Saadawi's *God Dies by The Nile*, Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough* and Chimamada Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. She submits that:

Whether in the family or in the larger society, the oppressed woman remains a pawn and a victim in the hands of agent(s) of oppression. Unattended in that situation, the oppressed woman's condition degenerates and often threatens her dignity as a woman, and her sanity and life as a human being (2013:188).

Moreover, in Amechi Nicholas Akwanya and Virgy A. Anohu's 'One Long Crisis: The career of the Rough Beast' examines the presence, characteristics and consequences of the rough beast, the figure of anarchy, in several of Nigerian novels and state that: the coming of the rough beast is marked at the social-political level with war and slaughter; and it has implications at the cultural level as well – the drowning of all ceremonies of innocence. Finally, and perhaps most crucially, is its impact on the consciousness of the individuals who survive its passage. The worst become confirmed in their ways, while the best are shaken and undermined. Anarchy in this vast scale of social and psychological convulsion is how the Nigerian civil war is textualized in many of these novels (2001:153).

There is no doubt that these studies, in one way or another, dealt with Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* or Chimanda's Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. However, while the first three works that were reviewed never subjected the works to the crucible of examining the characters as rough beasts, the last did, but Chimamanda Adichie's novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, which was published after was not included in the study. Therefore, the focus of this research is a comparative study of the presence and the consequences of the appearance of characters who are designated as rough beasts in the fictive worlds of these novels – *Things Fall Apart* and *Purple Hibiscus*.

Textual Analysis of the Two Novels

One remarkable thing about the appearance of the rough beast is the devastation of the culture and institutions in the world of the novels. For instance, in *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe presents the agrarian settings of Umuofia and Mbanta. Umuofia, the tragic hero's fatherland is a society that adores masculinity and has its standard of judging a man's status. According to the omniscient narrator:

He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles. And had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. And so although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered (6)

Because of Okonkwo's achievement, he is sent as Umuofia emissary to Mbaino, when the latter murdered one of Umuofia's daughters. He is also one of the *egwugwu* cult of the clan. And

Okonkwo, knowing that his society disdains weak and effeminate men, is ashamed of his father and has a psychological fear of being regarded as a weakling like his father, who is a good musician, but improvident and fears the sight of blood. He also insists that Nwoye should be brought up to be able to hold his head high in Umuofia, to run his household and be able to offer sacrifices to the dead ancestors.

However, the same Umofia that adores masculinity accommodates, the weak among them. And that is why his own father, Unoka is able to borrow money from his clansmen without paying, and even has the impudence to discharge Okoye, one of the debtors he owes two hundred cowries thus, 'Each group there represents a debt to someone, and each stroke is one hundred cowries. But he has not come to wake me up in the morning for it' (6). The same Umuofia that has contempt for untitled men has to force Okonkwo to apologize to Osugo, when he calls him a woman publicly.

Umuofia has norms and institutions that guide the actions and behaviour of its members. Umuofia is not only a masculine society, but it is a republican one that is highly religious. It has deities like Agbala, that is, the Oracle of The Hills and Caves. It also has the Earth Goddess. These deities have priests and priestesses that interpret their will to the people whenever they consult them. For example, the earth goddess is sacrosanct to the agrarian community and a Week of Peace and the Feast of the New Yam are dedicated to her. Within the Week of Peace, it is an abomination for anybody to quarrel or assault anybody. And that is the reason Okonkwo's beating of Ojiugo within that period is frowned at by the priest of the earth goddess. He refuses his kolanuts, and warns him he must make sacrifices because, 'The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess

whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish' (22). Because of the sacredness of the earth to the clan, those that die of abominable diseases like Unoka, who died of swollen stomach, cannot be buried but are thrown into the evil forest. The same fate awaits twins. But apart from the deities that are worshipped, there are also family and personal gods. Sacred animals like the pythons which are dedicated to the deities and must not be killed deliberately or eaten.

There are other cultural institutions like the masquerade cult or the nine *egwuugwu* that are regarded as the spirits of the ancestors and come from the nine villages that make up the Umuofia clan. There are other masquerades that can be seen during the burial of Ogbuefi Ezeudu. However, the nine *egwugwu*, whose spokesman is *Ajofia* or Evil Forest, is the highest court in the legal system of Umuofia. It can adjudicate on divorce petitions and on land matters. These masquerades are sacred and the unmasking of any of them is an abomination that has never been seen in the history of Umuofia. The narrator underscores the gravity of Enoch's unmasking of one of the masquerades thus:

That night the Mother of the Spirits walked the length and breadth of the clan, weeping for her murdered son. It was a terrible night. Not even the oldest man in Umuofia had ever heard such a strange and fearful sound, and it was never to be heard again. It seemed as if the very soul of the tribe wept for a great evil that was coming – its own death (134).

It is suggested that when one looks at the way Okonkwo runs his household with an iron fist, one would feel that he is to be seen as the rough beast in *Things Fall Apart*. He intimidates his household such that his women are very much below his children in the family organogram. When his first wife, Nwoye's mother, mildly asks him, how long Ikemefuna will stay in the household,



he tells her, 'Do what you are told, woman' (11). His third wife, Ojiugo, for not serving him his food on time during the Week of Peace, he has to desecrate the age-long tradition of his clan and disobey the injunction of the earth goddess for '... when she returned he beat her very heavily' (21). Again, Ekwefi, the second wife, is almost killed by Okonkwo, when after scolding her, she '...murmured something about guns that never shot' (28). Because of the manner he runs his family in a violent way, the narrator says, 'His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children' (9). One of his children who cannot tolerate the violence he metes out on the family is his first son, Nwoye, who his father '... sought to correct ... by constant nagging and beating. And so Nwoye was developing into a sad-faced youth' (10). The chasm between father and son widens, when the former participates in the killing of Ikemefuna, the only light in Nwoye's dark and fearful existence. With the coming of the Christian missionaries in Mbanta, Nwoye joins them and renounces his father, when Obierika inquires about him.

Furthermore, the masked spirits of the clan may also be seen as rough beasts because they claim divinity and are seen as such by the people. The divinity in the masked spirits is glimpsed in the Evil Forest calling Uzowulu and Odukwe 'bodies'. It is particularly seen in the omniscience and omnipresent nature of the spirits, when the same Evil Forest tells Uzowulu, 'I am Evil Forest. I kill a man on the day that his life is sweetest to him' (67). He also addresses Odukwe thus, 'I am Evil Forest, I am Dry-meat-that-fills-the-mouth, I am Fire-that-burns-without-faggots' (67). Umuofia clan before the coming of the white man recognizes the *egwugwu* as a divine form, because not only that they are seen as the spirits of the ancestors that emerge from ant holes, but wherever it

addresses a man, the man touches the ground as a mark of reverence. When the spirit asks if they know him, the men answer, 'How can I know you father? You are beyond our knowledge' (67). The decision of the nine masquerades delivered by the Chief Judge, Evil Forest, is the final decision in any matter they adjudicate on. However, the divinity in the masked spirits is not acknowledged by Mr. Smith, who neither understands Ajofia's language nor is moved by his guttural voice and the rattling of his spear, but 'Mr. Smith stood his ground' (137). He even has the boldness to tell the interpreter, Okeke, 'Tell them to go away from here. This is the house of God and I will not live to see it desecrated' (136).

Despite Okonkwo's violence on his family members and his occasional desecration of Umuofia's religious rituals, he cannot be classified as a rough beast in the novel. The same is the case with the masked spirits of Umuofia, despite the fact of their divinity. Both the tragic hero and *Ajofia* do not cause any social and psychological convolutions on the individuals. Both of them work seriously to protect Umuofia customs from desecration. As *Ajofia* tells Mr. Smith succinctly before they burn down his church, 'But this shrine which he built must be destroyed. We shall no longer allow it in our midst. It has bred untold abominations and we have come to put an end to it' (136).

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is a continuation of the tradition – the presence of the rough beast – already established in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and other African creative works that detail the theme of conflict of culture. In fact, in *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie examines the institutions left by the colonizers. She particularly focuses on leadership in the private and public spheres. In 'Breaking the Gods on Sunday', the naive narrator presents her father, Eugene Achike, as a very pious man, a



philanthropist, a business mogul and a human right crusader. It is obvious that at the level of public space, Eugene Achike is admired and worshipped. In his sermon, the white priest of St Anne, Father Benedict, gives priority to Eugene Achike instead of the founder of the Christian religion. According to Kambili, 'During his sermons, Father Benedict usually referred to the pope, Papa, and Jesus – in that order' (4) And to the congregation, he is associated with miracles for after his donations to the church at Abba, as he walks away, '... smiling and waving at the many hands that reached out to grasp his white tunics as if touching him would heal them of an illness' (91). There is no doubt that they regard Eugene Achike as a divine form. He tries as much as possible to encourage this divinity and holiness by always sitting in 'The front pew for Mass, at the end beside the middle aisle' (4). He always receives Holy Communion and reports anyone who fails to do so to Father Benedict, and he encourages him to 'call and win that person back into the fold; nothing but mortal sin would keep a person away from communion two Sundays in a row' (6). His son Jaja, missing Holy Communion and trivializing 'the Sacredness of Christ's body' (6), as 'wafer' are heresies that must not be condoned in his house.

In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the people of Umuofia before Christianity are afraid of darkness, but in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, the Christians, particularly Eugene Achike's family, are mortally afraid of committing sin. In order to ensure that his family is sinless and a holy family, he disowns his own father. He allows his children to see him in his house for only fifteen minutes, and forbids them from eating and drinking in his house. However, he prays for his father's conversion from Traditional Religion to Catholicism, and when he dies a heathen, he never participates in his burial and funeral rites. He scalds his children's feet with hot

water for sleeping in the same house with him at Aunty Ifeoma's place at Nsukka. In fact, he despises everything about Igbo culture, discourages his children from speaking Igbo, and watching masquerades. His only sister, Aunty Ifeoma, is led to conclude that 'Papa was too much of a colonial product' (13).

Also at the public sphere, Adichie examines the dictatorial leadership in the country and in the university. While in the public domain, the republican manner of governance seen in *Things Fall Apart*, gives way to rulership of the rough beast. Whether civilian or military government, there is no relief for the citizens. According to the narrator, it is not only that the politicians are corrupt, but also, 'Coups begat coups... A coup always began a vicious cycle. Military men would always overthrow one another, because they were all power drunk' (24). The effect of the bad leadership is that 'This country is going way down' (20). The people migrate to Europe and America, the roads are untarred and the 'tarred roads spring potholes like surprise presents' (299). The same situation is seen in the university, which is a microcosm of the society. The Sole Administrator that runs the university with a heavy hand devastates the institution. There is the brain drain of the bright and hardworking academic staff, and the family that moves into Aunty Ifeoma's flat offers Kambili on her visit 'a glass of warm water... because there was no power' (289).

The white District Commissioner in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is presented as a rough beast. He usurps the powers of the *egwugwu* and the elders of Umuofia. This is possible because he is seen as a divine form by the people. Obierika tells Okonkwo and Uchendu about the destruction of Abame. He presents the first white man who appears in Abame as a strange being who is riding a bicycle, and 'He was not an albino. He was quite different ... The first people who saw him ran away...' (99). Even Abame's oracle



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predicts disastrous consequences for the appearance of this lone white man, who is a harbinger of other white men, who are like locusts. His killing has disastrous consequences as a band of three white men and a large number of other men raid Abame and wipe out the clan. The narrator underscores the consequences of that military expedition thus, 'Their clan is now completely empty. Even the sacred fish in their mysterious lake have fled and the lake has turned the colour of blood. A great evil has come upon their land as the Oracle had warned' (100). To the Umuofia people and other clans around them, the invincibility of the white man is doubtless. They believe that they 'must have used a powerful medicine to make themselves invisible until the market was full' (100). With the story of Abame's destruction, no clan wants to challenge the authority of the white man. And being aware that the natives are afraid of his powers, the white man establishes churches and schools in the surrounding clans. At first, the people are making fun of Mr. Kiaga, the first missionary at Mbanta, and when he asks for land to build a church, the rulers of Mbanta, with a hidden motive, allocate evil forest which is where they:

...buried all those who died of the really evil diseases, like leprosy and smallpox. It was also the dumping ground for the potent fetishes of great medicine-men when they died. An 'evil forest' was, therefore, alive with sinister forces and powers of darkness (107).

The motive for such allocation is that the Christians cannot survive in such a place, but their survival wins them their first set of converts who are called the '*efulefu*, worthless, empty men' (103), who in Umuofia, the priestess of the Oracles of the Hills and Caves refers to as the 'excreta' of the clan. Surprisingly, and with time, even titled men like Ogbuefi Ugonna also joins the Christians.

They not only join the foreign religion, but like the white man they also insist that their customs are bad.

It is obvious that within the masculine clan of Umuofia, even before the coming of the white men, there are people who abhor some of the traditions of the people. Nwoye, Okonkwo's son, despite the father's fanatical belief in the tradition of the clan, resents some of the cultural practices. The new religion with the 'hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul – the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed' (106). Obierika, even though a titled man and one of the distinguished men of Umuofia is not comfortable with a custom that sends a man and his family into exile and destroys his property. After his participation in enforcing the will of the earth goddess, he sits in his obi, mourns his friend's calamity, and wonders, 'Why should a man suffer so grievously for an offence he had committed inadvertently' (89)?

The titled men and rulers of Umuofia and Mbanta feel strongly about the greatness of their tradition and see the white man as a rough beast because:

An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and brothers. He can curse the gods of his fathers and his ancestors, like a hunter's dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you; I fear for the clan (120).

This fear expressed by one of the eldest members of Uchendu's family who thanks Okonkwo for feasting them as he prepares to go is well-founded. The members of the clan, who have joined the new religion, particularly the ones that have suppressed ill-feelings towards the old order that leaves them at the margin of society, become the fanatical agents of the white rough beast.



Okoli, one of the converts in Mbanta, is accused of killing and eating the sacred python in Mbanta. His action brings sanctions from the community, which proclaims that the 'adherents of the new faith were thenceforth excluded from the life and privileges of the clan' (115). It is also the excesses of Enoch, under the leadership of undiplomatic and tactless Reverend James Smith that brings about conflict between the church and Umuofia clan. Enoch unmasks an *egwugwu*, an action which is unimaginable in the old dispensation. This forces the masked spirits, accompanied by the elders of the clan, to burn down the church. This act of the community brings a reprisal from the District Commissioner, who detains six elders of Umuofia, including Okonkwo, and imposes levies on the clan. One cannot also neglect other agents of the rough beast, who carry out his orders, and maintain his hold on the people. In the destruction of Abame, the narrator says that '... three white men led by a band of ordinary men like us come to the clan' (100). In other words, it is the black people, probably from Umuru, who lead the white people to Abame. And during the military raid on it, 'The Three white men and a very large number of other men surrounded the market' (100). Also in the supplanting of the Umuofia legal system by the English legal system, the Christians help his legal machinery. For instance, when Oduche dies after eight days, as a result of a fight over a piece of land with Aneto '... the Christians had told the white man about the accident, and he sent his *Kotma* to catch Aneto. He was imprisoned with all the leaders of his family. In the end Oduche died and Aneto was taken to Umuru and hanged. The other people were released, but even now they have not found the mouth with which to tell of their suffering' (127).

The natives complain that the white man neither speaks nor understands their language, nor does he understand their custom

before he delivers his judgment. In the case of Aneto and Oduche, if Umuofia custom is applied, it recognizes the killing as manslaughter, and Aneto would have gone on exile for seven years and his property destroyed like Okonkwo's. There is also no need to arrest and punish his kinsmen, who are not part of the fight. Again, the judgment of the white man's court would have been ineffective in Umuofia if not for the corrupt black court messengers, who extort money from the people and brutalize them. It is the black messengers, who are the agents of the District Commissioner that send the white man's invitation to the elders of Umuofia.

They are also the ones who ignore the District Commissioner's injunction to treat the six elders with respect. They not only shave the men's heads, starve them, but 'At night the head messengers came in to taunt them and to knock their shaven heads together' (140). As if this level of humiliation and indignities is not enough, a messenger 'carried a strong stick, and he hit each man a few blows on the head and back' (140). It is this ill-treatment of the elders and leaders of Umuofia that forces Okonkwo to swear to take personal revenge, if the clan does nothing. Therefore, the beast with his agents is presented as a figure of violence in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. And because of his violence, his power goes unchallenged as seen in the statement of the head messenger, 'The white man whose power you know too well has ordered the meeting to stop' (146). It is the coercive power of the rough beast that deters the Umuofia men from killing the other messengers, but allow them to escape when Okonkwo beheads the head messenger. They break out in tumult and ask, 'Why did he do it?' (147) It becomes obvious after Okonkwo's suicide that Umuofia clan recognizes the power of the rough beasts and accepts it for we are told about the small crowd of men sitting in



Okonkwo's *obi*, that 'He commanded them to come outside, and they obeyed without a murmur' (148).

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, the rough beast of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the white District Commissioner has been replaced by black rough beasts – Eugene Achike, Big Oga, and Sole Administrator. These fictive characters have been exposed and have acquired the culture and mannerisms of the white colonizers. Eugene Achike is a fanatical Catholic, who follows the dogmas and doctrines of Catholicism sheepishly. He is a man who can be said to have faith and good work, but lacks love. This is inscribed in the T-shirt his battered wife wears, 'GOD IS LOVE' (7). There is emphasis laid on this, for a good Christian cannot do without Christ's corporal works of mercy, like visiting the sick. Eugene Achike never takes his father to hospital when he is sick, because he is a heathen. He also turns away poor, old Anikwenwa with his torn clothes because he sees him as a godless man like his father. Moreover, he is a very violent man that does not have love for anybody. Despite his faith, he beats his wife into a coma on Pentecost Sunday and she miscarries. He also beats his whole family members on a Sunday because Kambili eats cornflakes within one hour before the Eucharist feast. He beats Jaja when he is still very young for failing catechism questions and thus failing to be first among his mates. Jaja's little finger is permanently deformed as a result of the beating. He flings a Missal at Jaja on Palm Sunday and this culminates in crisis in the family. He beats Kambili into a coma for coming home with Papa-Nnukwu's painting. The history of violence he subjects his family to can be seen in the wife losing three pregnancies. Beatrice Achike recounts one of her experiences to Aunty Ifeoma and her family, 'My blood finished

on the floor even before he took me to St Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he would do to save [the baby]' (248).

The same level of violence which the rough beast in the domestic or private sphere subjects his family members to is also unleashed on the citizens by the rough beast in the public domain. Citizens, including full-grown men and women, are flogged by the agents of the rough beast. Kambili recognizes the connection between the violence that her father subjects her mother to and the one the military head of state imposes on the people when she says, '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, that I had always known her' (44). She sees in the women the soldiers are whipping in the market the reflection of her mother who is always battered by her father at home. Ade Coker's back is burnt with cigarette butts by the soldiers, and he is later murdered with a letter bomb. Nwankiti Ogechi and drug peddlers are also killed by Big Oga's agents. The same violence is unleashed on the university community, particularly those who disagree with the Sole Administrator. He sends four hefty security men to search Auntie Ifeoma's house and finally ejects her from her accommodation on the campus, after sacking her.

Whether in the private or public domain, the rough beast cannot enforce his power and violence on the people without his agents like in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. In *Purple Hibiscus*, some of the characters who may have controlled Eugene Achike's violence on the family members, like Father Benedict, keep ominous silence because of the monetary benefits they get from him. In fact, the priest seems to worship him, and does not care about the violence he unleashes on his family. He simply gives them extreme unction when they are battered and are lying critically ill in hospital. Kevin, the driver, is the greatest agent that



Eugene Achike uses to monitor his family. He is the driver, who takes them everywhere they are going. He takes them to school and reports anyone who does not come out in time after the closure of school and reports them to their father when they stay twenty-five minutes with their grand-father instead of fifteen minutes he allows them. Immediately Eugene Achike dies, Beatrice Achike sacks Kevin because of his role in the family violence, and employs Celestine because, 'His voice is gentle; Mama says it is the reason she hired him after she asked Kevin to leave. That and also that he does not have dagger-shape scar on his neck' (295). With the husband's death, Beatrice Achike sacks Kevin because she does not want any reminder of the old violent order in her house.

After the military coup, the Big Oga at Abuja, is the new head of state, but his agents, the soldiers go around subjecting the people to violence. It is these agents who are destroying people's wares in the market; they are the ones that mounted a roadblock and stop cars and search them. Kambili is surprised to see ... a man kneeling on the road beside his Peugeot 504, with his hands raised high in the air (27).

The same soldiers burn Ade Coker's back and later kill him because his publications in the *Standard* are critical of Big Oga. They are also the ones that murder Nwankiti Ogechi. It is Big Oga's agents that attempted to bribe Eugene Achike with pickup 'full of dollars' (9) in order to buy his silence. When he rejects their offer, they dump dead rats into his factory and shut it down on trumped up charges. Sole Administrator similarly operates with agents, particularly members of the university community, who spy on others and report to him. And in order to intimidate and silence the people he suspects are against him after the student riot, he sends in security agents to search and ransack their premises.

The power and the violence which the rough beast and his agents unleash on the characters in the fictive worlds of the novels are unimaginable and have tremendous consequences. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the customs of Umuofia are turned upside down and desecrated as outcasts now live with the freeborn; twins are no longer thrown into the evil forest, and so on. But the impact of the white rough beast's presence is seen in the indignities which the elders of Umuofia are subjected to. It is unheard of in the old order that elders are beaten by young men and their heads shaved off. It is also unheard of that people would extort money from others as seen in the white man's new government for, 'On the morning after the village crier's appeal the men of Umuofia met in the market-place and decided to collect without delay two hundred and fifty bags of cowries to appease the white man. They did not know that the fifty bags would go to the court messengers, who had increased the fine for that purpose' (141). The white rough beast has divided Umuofia, and the natives can no longer speak with one voice and act as one. The Mother of the Spirit that mourns the unmasking or death of one of her sons is equally mourning for the soul of the clan. The abomination resulting from the actions of the rough beast has cumulated in the village and is fore-grounded in the oratory of Okika as he addresses the Umuofia men after the six detained elders come back home. The consequences of the evil presence are seen in the foregrounding of imagery and linguistic parallelism:

All our gods are weeping. Idemili is weeping. Ogwugwu is weeping. Agbala is weeping, and all the others. Our dead fathers are weeping because of the shameful sacrilege they are suffering and the abomination we have all seem with our eyes (145).



But despite this piece of beautiful oratory by Okika, Umuofia is afraid of the violence the District Commissioner wields and unwilling to challenge him. Moreover, they cannot fight him because:

There were many men and women in Umuofia who did not feel as strongly as Okonkwo about the new dispensation. The white man has indeed brought a lunatic religion, but he had also built a trading store and for the first time palm-oil and kennele became things of great price, and much money flowed into Umuofia (128).

Okonkwo who feels terrible about the white man and his activities, particularly having lost his first son, Nwoye, to the new order, his position displaced in Umuofia by the new rough beast, the white District Commissioner, and having been subjected to a lot of humiliation and indignities by the court messengers, swears to have a personal revenge if Umuofia remains silent. He kills the head messenger and commits suicide, when it dawns on him that his clan does not approve of his action. Okonkwo's death is not in vain, for the first time, the rough beast takes notice of Umuofia's customs, when Obierika tells him that he has forced Okonkwo to kill himself and he is to be buried like a dog by strangers. This time around the District Commissioner does not arrogantly believe that Umuofia customs are bad, but:

In the book which he planned to write he would stress the point. As he walked back to the court he thought about the book. Every day brought him some new material. The story of this man who has killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate (149-150).

By this recognition, Okonkwo ends up not only being a hero whose heroism is recognized by his people and the White District Commissioner, but he ends up a revolutionary figure, who challenges the power and authority of the rough beast and heroically chooses to die than to live in fear as a slave and weakling under the new dispensation.

In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, the rough beasts also have some devastating impact on the characters in the world of the novel. The naive narrator suffers from hallucination as a result of the mother's miscarriage after the violent beating she gets from her husband. She says, 'The words in my textbooks kept turning into blood each time I read them' (36). She does not come first in her examination because of this disorder. Kambili and Jaja are also very withdrawn from other young people because of their defective socialization. They are isolated at home, at school and at Abba. Their houses are presented as beautiful prisons, so also their schools. They are also isolated from their cousins and schoolmates. Furthermore, Beatrice Achike gradually develops into full blown schizophrenic as a result of the violence of the rough beast on her and her children. The husband beats her, even when she is pregnant and she miscarries three times. Kambili describes her psychopathological disorder thus:

Her wrapper is just as loose around her waist, and she ties and reties it often, giving her the air of the unkempt women in Ogbete market, who let their wrappers unravel so that everyone sees the hole-riddled slips they have on underneath. She does not seem to mind that she looks this way; she doesn't even seem to know (295-296).

In the public sphere, Big Oga's violence on the people is particularly felt by Ade Coker's family. When he murders him with a letter bomb, the trauma from his violent death drives the



daughter into depression, for she 'had not spoken since her father died' (259). And despite the fact she has been medically treated by the best doctors at home and abroad, Jaja recognizes the life-time effect of the trauma. He tells Kambili, 'She will never heal... She may have started talking now but she will never heal' (259). The same fear and violence which the people undergo is also replicated in the university where the Sole Administrator is the rough beast.

As in in *Things Fall Apart*, the power and authority of the rough beasts are challenged in *Purple Hibiscus*. Jaja challenges the authority of his father when he refuses to receive Holy Communion and insists that the wafer gives him bad breath. But before then, he tells Kambili that they must protect their unborn baby against the father's brutality. In other words, he cannot allow him to be subjected to the same type of trauma they experience at home. However, Jaja is unable to protect the family against the father's violence until he goes to Nsukka and Auntie Ifeoma and her family nurture him. It is after the visits that he is able to resist and challenge the father. His mother realizes she has a man in the house and can no longer bear the violence. This can be deduced from her refusal to replace the figurines. According to the narrator, 'Maybe Mama had realized that she would not need the figurines anymore; that when Papa threw the missal at Jaja, it was not just the figurines that came tumbling down, it was everything' (15). She plans and poisons the rough beast in her family to set herself and her children free. Because Jaja fails to protect his mother and sister against Eugene's violence, he offers himself as a scapegoat when he accepts the guilt of the killing of his father the mother's. His three years of incarceration is like going into exile to cleanse the blood of the family head his mother

spills. Beatrice also has to suffer schizophrenia because of Jaja's detention.

In the public sphere, Big Oga is also poisoned like Eugene Achike. The narrator says, 'After the Head of state died months ago – they say he died atop a prostitute, foaming at the mouth and jerking' (296-297). At his death, and on the payment of bribes to the right persons in the positions of authority, Jaja and some other detainees are released. In the university, the Sole Administrator's reign of terror drives some of the vocal lecturers into migrating to Europe and America. However, Auntie Ifeoma and a few others resist his power and authority over them. Therefore, in the world of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, characters like Jaja and Beatrice Achike are able to rein in the devastating powers of the domestic rough beast while in the public space, Ade Coker, an unnamed prostitute and Auntie Ifeoma checkmate the powers and violence of the public rough beasts. They are resented as revolutionaries in the world of the novel.

Conclusion

There is no doubt, indeed, of the presence of rough beasts both in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. In Achebe's text, the rough beast is the white District Commissioner, who usurps the powers of the masquerade cult and the elders, and whose actions and behaviour lead to the collapse of Umuofia's customs and ethical code which are the pillars of the clan's existence. However, some black men who have replaced the white rough beasts in Achebe's cultural novels and other novels in that tradition run the institutions the colonizers leave behind. The rough beasts in both novels cannot enforce their powers and divinity without the active connivance of their agents. However, there are revolutionary individuals who



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challenge the authority of the rough beasts. In *Things Fall Apart*, the tragic hero, Okonkwo, does not succeed, but in *Purple Hibiscus*, Beatrice Achike and an unnamed prostitute manage to eliminate the rough beasts in the private and public domains, and save the family and the entire society the violence of the rough beasts, but the rough beasts in the university survives.

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