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THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN PURPLE HIBISCUS BY CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE

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ABSTRACT
Religion refers to a particular system of faith. As well, conflict means a serious disagreement. It is notable that Christian religion is in loggerhead with the traditional religion which creates conflict. It is to this end that this study seeks to carry out a thematic analysis of religious conflicts in the text Purple Hibiscus by Chimanada Ngozi Adichie. To this effect statement of the problem was formulated to investigate the extent of religious conflict portrayed in the text and research questions stated. Literature in the related fields was reviewed under conceptual review, theoretical review and empirical studies. Content analysis was the method used for the study. At the end it was established that the theme of religious conflict exists in the novel Purple Hibiscus by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Keywords: Thematic Analysis; Religious Conflict; Purple Hibiscus.

Introduction

The theme of any work of arts is the central message behind the work. It is that vital information that is contained in that work which the writer wants the readers to know.

Anderson et al (1989) try to differentiate between two related terms: theme and subject matter, they define them as, "the central idea or insight of a work of literature". They further postulate that:

"A theme is not the same of as the subject of a work, which can usually be expressed in word or two: old age, ambition, and love. The theme is the idea the writer wishes to convey about that subject – the writer's view of the world or revelation about human nature…. A theme may also be different from a moral, which is a lesson or rule above how to live",

From the above postulation by Anderson on the difference between theme and subject matter we can say that there are several themes contained in Purple Hibiscus. The first part of the book depicts the theme of high handedness as demonstrated by Eugene Achike to the members of his family. This leads to his doom and eventually his death.

Similarly, another theme that can be seen in the work is the theme of feminism. Feminism is a concept and ideology. It proposes equality of all sexs According to Ibeki's (2015):

"Adichie's purple Hibiscus is feminist work that challenges the dehumanizing tendencies of the menfolk as evident in the character of Mama (Beatrice Achike) who eventually exposed the African dumb even in the face of humiliation, victimization and brutality so as to be perceived as a good woman.

In presenting the work as a feminist, Adichie focuses her attention on women and what they go through in life, their love for the family, respect for their husbands even when they are treated unjustly by their malefolks. In the work two categories of women are presented: the intimidated and submissive woman (Beatrice) and the educated and enlightened woman (Aunty Ifeoma). Beatrice even when her life is threatened endures her husband's maltreatment but Ifeoma is a kind of woman who is not afraid of anyone and will always speak up when things are going wrong. Adichie at the beginning of the novel

presented Beatrice as quiet and obedient but became radical towards the end of the novel to show that any individual pushed to the wall can easily react.

The main concern of this work is the theme of religious conflict which shall be given serious attention under data analysis and presentation.

Statement of the problem

The problem this work seeks to investigate is the extent the work has succeeded in portraying religious conflict. In most cases, readers find it difficult to get the central message behind a work and as a result may not understand what the work is all about.

Every work of arts is always out to address problem that is bedeviling the society. Such problems can be poverty, effect of supernatural force or destiny, social oppression etc. The purple Hibiscus addresses through its theme the problem of colonialism, politics in Nigeria, silence, domestic violence, nature and above all religious Conflict.

The theme of religious conflict featured very well in purple Hibiscus.

Purpose of the study.

The purpose of the study is to ascertain the theme of religious conflict in "purple Hibiscus" by Chimamanda Ngozi Aduchie.

Specifically, the purpose is;

1. To examine how religious faith and practice is pervasively present in purple Hibiscus.
2. To ascertain the extent of conflict between the traditional African religion and western religion in Purple Hibiscus.
3. To show how religion has been used as an oppressive colonizing force in purple Hibiscus.

Significance of the study

This study is significant in many ways.

1. It shall be of great importance to students of literary studies, as it will help them on appreciation of other themes in the work – purple Hibiscus.
2. It will help other readers ascertain the extent of religious conflict in the work and the extent African writers demonstrate the struggle among the two religions.
3. The work shall provide accurate source of materials for further researchers in this field and other related fields.

Research Questions.

1. To what extent is religious faith and practice pervasively present in purple Hibiscus?
2. To what extent is African traditional religion in conflict with Western religion in Purple Hibiscus?
3. To what extent has religion been used as an oppressive colonizing force in purple Hibiscus?

Literature Review

The literature review of this paper shall be based on three major areas, namely; conceptual review, theoretical review and empirical studies.

Conceptual Review

Conceptual review dwells on those concepts that make up the topic. They are, thematic Analysis, Religious conflict, purple Hibiscus and the Author.

Thematic Analysis

According to Memam Webster Dictionary (2020) theme means a subject or topic of discourse or of artistic representation. On the other hand, analysis refers to a detailed examination of anything complex in order to understand its

nature or determine its feature: a thorough study and doing a careful analysis of the problem. From the definitions of theme and analysis we can conclude that thematic analysis is the process of identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning neither a text. Thematic analysis here means identifying within religious conflict as well as giving meaning (interpreting) it.

Religious conflict

Religion refers to a particular system of faith and worship. On the other hand conflict means a serious disagreement or argument. From the two definitions we can refer religious conflict as a serious disagreement or argument among two systems of faith and worship. Here in it is context religious conflict refers to conflict among the observers of African traditional religion and Christian religion

According to Brahim (2005), all religious have their accepted dogma, or articles of belief, the followers must accept without question. This can lead to inflexibility and intolerance in the face of other beliefs. Religious extremists can contribute to conflict escalation.

They see radual measures as necessary to fulfilling God's wishes". This can be noticed in the behavior of Eugene Achike both in his relation with his own father papa Nnukwu and the members of his family. Achike tries to impose his own religious dogma on everybody neither his fold and failure to accept spells war and cries to the extent he defies the "Holy Week" by using the Missal (a book for celebration of mass) to break etagagere (a shelf that holds small decorative objects of worship) because of failure of Jaja to receive Holy communion.

Religious conflicts in the Novel Purple Hibiscus

Religious conflict can be seen in the novel purple Hibiscus as the main tension among Eugene Achike on one hand and papa Nnukwu his father, members of his family (wife Beatrice, Aunty Ifeoma on the other hand. Eugene Achike and Aunty Ifeoma are children of papa Nnukwu. Two of them have also been converted to catholic the religion of the colonizers. Papa Nnukwu through allowed his children to go to school but remained committed to his traditional religion that is the worship of his ancestors. This situation does not go well with Eugene Achike who sees his father as a heather and refuses to have anything to do with him. Eugene refuses to allow papa Nnukwu into his home and severely restricts his father's access to Kambile and Jaja. Eugene's fanatic nature to his catholic faith makes to be angry anytime there is blending of igbo elements into the church service or daily prayers.

Papa Nnukwu is a traditionalist. He follows the rituals of his ancestors and believes in a pantheistic model of religion. This results to a serious religious conflict between the two papa Nnakwu and his son Eugene Achike. This is to an extent that Eugene refuses to have anything to do with aged father.

` There is also a sharp contrast between father Benedict and father Amadi. Father Benedict is a white man from England who celebrates his masses according to Western custom Eugene Achike admires the style of father Benedicts style Jethsoning every trace of his own Nigerian heritage Achike uses his faith to justify abusing the members of his family.

Father Amadi, on the other hand, is an African priest who blends Catholicism with igbo traditions. He believes that faith is both simpler and complex than what father Benedict preaches. Father Amadi is a modern African man who is culturally conscious but influenced by the colonial history of his country. This is also another source of conflict as what is innate him as African is conflicting with his training as catholic priest.

Purple Hibiscus

The novel is set in Enugu, a city in post-colonial Nigeria and the story is told by the main character, Kambili Achike. Kambili in the novel is the daughter of a staunch catholic Eugene Acike. The story revolves around Eugene Achike's family comprising of his father papa Nnukwu, his wife Beatrice and the two children Kambili the protagonist and his brother Jaja (Chukwu Achike), a teenager who like his sister, excels at school. Eugene Achike is seen in the family as an authoritarian whose strict adherence to Catholicism overshadows his love for the family. He punishes his wife, Mama (Beatrice Achike), and his children when they fail to live up to his impossibly high standards.

Purple Hibiscus which was published in 2003, has been shortlisted for and awarded several prestigious prizes. The story in the novel begins on palm Sunday where Jaja refuses to receive communion seeing it as waters. This results to disagreement between Eugene and Jaja to an extent Eugene thrones missal to Jaja thereby breaking Etagere containing his wife's figures. This defiant act and resulting violence marks the beginning of the end of the Achike's family.
Eugene Achike is a prominent figure in Enugu. He owns several factories and publishes the pro-democracy newspaper the standard. He is always praised by his priest Rev. Father Benedict and his editor Ade Coker, for his Philanthropic activities. Eugene is seen as a nice man outsider but a very difficult person in the family. His authoritarian tendencies in the family resulted to a situation where the members of the family conspire and killed him.

About the Author

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born in 1977, Enugu, Nigeria and educated in Nigeria and United States. She has written so many works among them are purple Hibiscus (2003), (the bone of contention of this work), Americanal (2013), half of a yellow sun (2005), we should all be Feminist (2014), the thing around your neck, (2009), Akwaeke, and the flawless. She has won several awards from her works. (Wikipedia, 2020)

Theoretical Review

This study is based on thematic Analysis theory

Thematic Analysis Theory

Thematic analysis theory aims at analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts such as works of arts like novel, drama, poetry as well as interview transcripts (Caulfied, 2019). In this process the researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly. This process was originally developed for psychology research by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke. However, thematic analysis is a flexible method that can be adapted to many different kinds of research.

In this work thematic Analysis theory is important because, the study seek to identify how the theme of religious conflict repeated occurred in the work. Papa Nnukwu and the grandfather of the protagonist of the novel represents African traditional religion.

On the other hand, Eugene Achike the fanatical catholic together with Rev. Father Benedict and Amadi represent the west religion. It is obvious in the work that the two religious are in great conflict as demonstrate by the observation of the religious.

Empirical Studies

The rationale behind empirical study lies on the need for the research to ascertain the extent other researchers have gone in fostering knowledge in the area under study. Bearing this in mind, the researcher conducted the review in the following order.

Eze (2008), carried a research on "The Theme of struggle in Modern African Drama using Efua Sutherlands's "Marriage of Anansewa and Loa Rotimi's "The Gods are not to Blame". The researcher found out that the authors have used their works to explore the themes concern of struggle in modern African drama

In the same manner, Okolo (2017) conducted a research on "Thematic and Stylistic Analysis of Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus: The research unraveled that another major theme in the work is the problem and conflict of religious fanaticism or dogmatism. According to him;

The first action on the first chapter which first strikes our faculty and signifies tragedy is as a result of religious fanaticism. Fanaticism is synonymous to extremism. It is an extreme religious belief which is usually violent; it is a foolish adherence to teachings and practices of a religion; a situation where non-believers of a person's religion are excommunicated, alienated, ostracized and even seen as satanic.

The above is the submission of Okolo (2017) on the religious theme as discussed by Adichie in her novel Purple Hibiscus. Similarly, Nwankwo (2018) researcher on Purple Hibiscus and theme of Moderation as a Metaphor in the Evolution of Contemporary Nigerian Fiction." The researcher concluded his work by saying: ….amidst the gargantuan religious strife in the contemporary Nigerian society, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie seems to have a solution with the suggestion of moderation in her debut narrative, Purple Hibiscus. "He goes further to state that the myriad vexing religious issues of the Nigerian society Adichie so aptly captures in Purple Hibiscus therefore considers a model which is relevant for any developing society desirous of unity in diversity.

Summary of the Review

The literature review was divided into three sections or sub-headings, which are the conceptual review, theoretical review and the related empirical literature. Under the conceptual review, some linguistic terms that bear on the topic were examined in order to lay a proper foundation for the understanding of the study. These terms include; Thematic Analysis, Religious Conflict, Purple Hibiscus and the Author.

In the same manner, under the theoretical review, the review relied on Thematic Analysis Theory. Thematic Analysis Theory is concerned with analyzing a qualitative data. The theory seeks to identity how the theme has been portrayed in work of arts. Finally, under the related empirical studies, various researchers conducted by different researchers were consulted and the conclusions that the theme of religious conflict is portrayed in the work purple Hibiscus.

Research Method

The research design used for this study is the content analysis. Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts with some given qualitative data (i.e. text) (Columbia Public Health, 2021). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes or concepts. This method was used to evaluate the extent religious conflict is portrayed in Purple Hibiscus by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It was based on this the researcher established that in view of the man Eugene Achike practiced his religious-Christian faith and discriminated against his father Papa Nnukwu who is a traditionalist it is possible to adduce that the book Purple Hibiscus contains the theme of religious conflict.

Analysis and Presentation

Research Question One: To what extent is religious faith and practice pervasively present in Purple Hibiscus?

At the beginning readers are exposed to a situation where Eugene Achike violated the "Holy Week" by breaking the etagere with his missal. That contravenes the Catholic doctrine of keeping the Holy week holy. Eugene was brought up by the missionaries and made to see idol worshippers and traditional rites as being contrary to the church doctrine. He could not have been mad; Surely, he would not have liked it either. That Jaja did not go for the communion. "The body of our Lord" (6) which he strongly belives and professes Jaja dismisses it as: The water gives me bad breath" (6). He sees other churches with contempt that is why he regards Pentecostal churches as "mushroom churches".

Eugene stopped Papa Nnukwu who represented traditional religion in the novel from coming to his house, simply because he (Papa Nnukwu) refused to turn a Christian. Eugene does not even give him (Papa Nnukwu) money and things for his upkeep only because he refuses to throw away his "Chi" (personal god) and become a Catholic not necessarily a Christian but a Catholic. In another occasion in the novel Eugene chased Anikwenwa out of his compound because, he had decreed that heathens were not allowed in his compound.

On the other hand as an aspect of this conflict, Papa Nnukwu hates Christianity and Catholicism in particular for the doctrine of trinity which he sees as the cause of his son's unruly attitude towards him. He explains:

"One day I said to them, where is this god you worship? They said he was like Chukwu, that he was in the sky. I asked them, who is the person that was killed, the person that hangs on the outside the mission? They said he was the son, but that the son and the father are equal. It was then that I knew that the white man was mad. The father and the son are equal? Tufia! Do you nit see? That is why Eugene can disregard me, because he thinks we are equal. (84).

It is as a result of this result this religious conflict that Eugene Achike refused to take care of father Papa Nnukwu to the extent of refusing to attend his burial when he died, Eugene only gave money to Aunty Ifeoma to take care of the burial. Also Eugene harmed his children for living in a house with a heathen (Papa Nnukwu).

Research Question Two: To what extent has religion been used as an oppressive colonizing force in Purple Hibiscus?

Religious faith and practice are pervasive presence in Purple Hibiscus. The novel's time line is defined by religious holidays, and its settings includes Churches and pilgrimages. As earlier mentioned, t is also the main source of tension between Eugene Achike and his father Papa Nnukwu. Eugene and her sister Aunty Ifeoma have converted to Catholicism, the religion of the colonial masters but their father Papa Nnukwu, has maintained his traditional Igbo beliefs and practices." In religious practices, people are meant to obey all the doctrines without asking questions and making choices. Jaja's refusal to take Holy Communion attracted his father's wrath. While at the alter the priests dish out instruction and expect people to obey without reasoning or thinking about it.

Research Question Three: To what extent is African traditional religion in conflict with Western (Christian) religion in Purple Hibiscus?

In the text Purple Hibiscus, the characters used to portray the two religions are at dagger drawn. Eugene Achike does agree with his father's religious belief. The situation is also applicable on the position of Papa Nnukwu who believes that the missionaries have spoilt their children by making them to believe the father and son are

equal. To this extent the religions are portrayed as opposing forces.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research is meant to explore the thematic analysis of religious conflict in Purple Hibiscus by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The study through review of literature adopted content analysis method to conduct the research. In this process, the three research questions generated were adequately attended to. It is pertinent to note that the theme religious conflict exists in the novel. This can be seen by the roles characters in the novel play. Papa Nnukwu represents the traditional African Religion and his son Eugene Achike and he two reverend fathers Amadi and Benedict represents the Christian religion.

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