The Loss of Innocence in Chimamanda Ngozie Adiche's Purple Hibiscus: A Focus on the Development of Youth and Mental Health in African Society

Casimir Adjoe

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the rebellion of the male child through the concept of the loss of innocence in West African literature. The rebellion of the male child is traced through the successful or unsuccessful development of the human subject, based upon the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud. Generally, growing up can come in other jurisdictions as a realization or self-realization and recognition. In this sense, it is usually thought of as an experience or period in a person's life that leads to a greater awareness of evil, pain and/or suffering in the world around them. In Ngozie's novel, Purple Hibiscus, almost all the characters, both youth and adults, go through a kind of loss of innocence. The most notable experience of loss of innocence, however, occurred in the lives of the two protagonists of the novel - Kambili and Jaja – the two teenage children of the Eugene Achike family. The story is enacted through the eyes of Kambili, the younger sibling of Jaja; but the interest of this analysis is on Jaja, the male child in the family. The Achike family's seamless flow of life is disrupted suddenly by Jaja's rebellion against his father, Eugene Achike, during Holy Week, striking at Eugene's most cherished values which he sought to inculcate in his children and the family.

Keywords: loss of innocence, self-realization and recognition, the making of the human subject, [the pleasure principle]; the freedom to be and to do; the reality principle; [sublimation; oedipus complex] mental health.

Classification: FOR Code: 160899

Language: English

London Journals Press

LJP Copyright ID: 573331
Print ISSN: 2515-5784
Online ISSN: 2515-5792

London Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences

Volume 20 | Issue 5 | Compilation 1.0

The Loss of Innocence in Chimamanda Ngozie Adiche's Purple Hibiscus: A Focus on the Development of Youth and Mental Health in African Society

Casimir Adjoe

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the rebellion of the male child through the concept of the loss of innocence in West African literature. The rebellion of the male child is traced through the successful or unsuccessful development of the human subject, based upon the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud. Generally, growing up can come in other jurisdictions as a realization or self-realization and recognition. In this sense, it is usually thought of as an experience or period in a person's life that leads to a greater awareness of evil, pain and/or suffering in the world around them. In Ngozie's novel, Purple Hibiscus, almost all the characters, both youth and adults, go through a kind of loss of innocence. The most notable experience of loss of innocence, however, occurred in the lives of the two protagonists of the novel - Kambili and Jaja – the two teenage children of the Eugene Achike family. The story is enacted through the eyes of Kambili, the younger sibling of Jaja; but the interest of this analysis is on Jaja, the male child in the family. The Achike family's seamless flow of life is disrupted suddenly by Jaja's rebellion against his father, Eugene Achike, during Holy Week, striking at Eugene's most cherished values which he sought to inculcate in his children and the family. The situation sets up a conflict that needs resolution, but only when the source of the change of behaviour in Jaja can be identified. Some suggest moral questions (rules and regulations and institutions), the political (power and the exercise of power and oppression), and other basis to explain the conflict. This paper attempts to focus on the fact of the centrality of the family as the locus of the formation of the human subject and to locate the conflict in the conscious and unconscious, using a psychoanalytic theory to examine the disruption of the family and the rebellion of the male child leading to a loss of innocence and the possible consequences for mental health in African Society.

Keywords: loss of innocence, self-realization and recognition, the making of the human subject, [the pleasure principle]; the freedom to be and to do; the reality principle; [sublimation; oedipus complex] mental health.

I. INTRODUCTION

In accounting for the disruptions in various aspects of life and living, their consequences, and the efforts to rebuild broken lives, hearts, relationships, homes, trust and the like, literature heavily depends upon various theories or combinations of theories from the social sciences and humanities. For this interdisciplinary reason, a piece of literary work is amenable to examination under different theoretical perspectives. This applies similarly to African literary works, and that makes it possible to examine Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie's novel, Purple Hibiscus, in the light of various theoretical lenses, including the psychoanalytic perspective and the concept of the loss of innocence.

Purple Hibiscus is a novel constructed around a plot with a distinctive conflict set up within the Eugene Achike family. Conflict is an essential

characteristic of a promising plot that conducts into many possibilities, choices, and exigencies of decision- making (Dibell 1990). The conflict in the novel revolves around the teenage son of Eugene Achike, a seventeen year old boy, who rebelled against the father and his authority manifested by his refusal to take Holy Communion in Church, insisting that it was simply a wafer and nothing more than that, and further that the touch of the priest to his mouth made him feel nauseous, expressing his revulsion towards his father's most cherished values. Kambili, the younger sibling of Jaja through whose eyes the events of the novel were recounted noted right at the beginning of the novel how the family began to break apart through her brother's rebellion against his father, his authority and his values: "Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the étagère." (p. 11).

Adichie framed the story within Holy Week, a period of Christian observation, remembrance and enactment of the triumphant entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, his betrayal, arrest, trial, passion, death and resurrection as if to symbolize and underline the fact that the events of a coming of age are similar to the passion, death, and resurrection of the Christian Scriptures - a depiction of the 'loss of innocence' of the variant in which is embedded the implications of a greater awareness of evil, pain and/or suffering in the world around them, signifying the development of an understanding of the world's complexity and messiness. As the events of the story unfold, this projection is borne out in the case of Kambili who testifies to her own maturation through all the events of the story by revisiting Nsukka where the dawning of a new positive perspective on life began for her, but where from the same experience, a negative perspective was generated and endorsed for Jaja to begin spiraling him down the descent to the unconscious realms of chaos and self-destruction. In Kambili's words in the last chapter of the novel describing her own understanding of maturation, she summarized her concept in a trope:

"As we drove back to Enugu, I laughed loudly, above Fela's stringent singing. I laughed because Nsukka's untarred roads coat cars with dust during the harmattan and with sticky mud during the rainy season. Because the tarred roads spring potholes like surprise presents and the air smells of hills and history and the sunlight scatters the sand and turns it into gold dust. Because Nsukka could free something deep inside your belly that would rise up to your throat and come out as a freedom song. As laughter."

The father's reaction to the son's omission of receiving Holy Communion on Palm Sunday was anger, but not without restraint: ''So when Papa did not see Jaja go to the altar that Palm Sunday when everything changed, he banged his leather-bound missal with the red and green ribbons peeking out, down on the dining table when we got home." (p. 14).

But when the son became defiant, it changed the father's understanding of the situation and his own reaction towards his son:

"'Jaja, you did not go to communion,' Papa said quietly, almost a question. "

"Jaja stared at the missal on the table as though he were addressing it. "The wafer gives me bad breath".

I stared at Jaja. Had something come loose in his head? Papa insisted we call it the host because 'host' came close to capturing the essence, the sacredness, of Christ's body. 'Wafer' was too secular, wafer was what one of Papa's factories made – chocolate wafer, banana wafer, what people bought their children to give them a treat better than biscuits. " And the priest keeps touching my mouth and it nauseates me," Jaja said. He knew I was looking at him, that my shocked eyes begged him to seal his mouth, but he did not look at me. "It is the body of our Lord." Papa's voice was low, very low. His face looked swollen already, with pus-tipped rashes spread

across every inch, but it seemed to be swelling even more. "You cannot stop receiving the body of our Lord. It is death, you know that."

"Then Iwill die." Fear had darkened Jaja's eyes to the colour of coal tar, but he looked Papa in the face now. "Then I will die, Papa." . Papa looked around the room quickly, as if searching for proof that something had fallen from the high ceiling, something he had never thought would fall. He picked up the missal and flung it across the room, towards Jaja. (pp.14-15).

This scenario began the conflict between father and son, father's value system and son's value system, father's language and son's language. From then on, the family will be on a path of struggle, one against the other, consciously or unconsciously. The intervention of Aunty Ifeoma, the sister of Eugene would make things even more complex as her value system seemed to contradict Eugene's, conforming more with what Kambili describes about her Aunty Ifeoma's garden:

"Nsukka started it all; Aunty Ifeoma's little garden next to the verandah of her flat in Nsukka began to lift the silence. Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like Aunty Ifeoma's experimental purple hibiscus: rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the one the crowds waving green leaves chanted at Government Square after the coup. A freedom to be, to do." (p. 24).

Thus, the story sets up a conflict with two children about to begin a process of awareness of a different mode of living and, thereby, of growth towards a different kind of maturation from what their father had designed for them. Within this process and encounters, Kambili, the fifteen year old sibling of Jaja does not rebel against their father in spite of his stern authority. In contrast, the male child does, setting up the 'loss of innocence' pertinent to the 'coming-of-age' story genre or *bildungsroman*. This analysis focuses on Jaja, a teenager and the male child, and his rebellion and its effects on his maturation process. What does his rebellion mean for his growth and maturation, and how can his rebellion be explained and appreciated? Was it necessary? Was it conscious? Was it reasonable? And, above all, was it helpful to him and to the family? What difference did it make? What does 'a freedom to be, to do' mean and what are its implications and consequences?

II. THE PROBLEM

Being a significant concept in literature, the 'loss of innocence', which inspired the bildungsroman genre, is helpful for its discussion and depiction, especially of youth and growing into adulthood, as an integral part of coming of age. This variant, known as bildungsroman in which 'bildung' means 'education' and 'roman' means 'story', in effect, is regarded as a novel of formation, education and culture, or the story dealing with the formative years or spiritual and moral education of a young child. It presupposes without doubt a development between childhood and adulthood imbued with a deliberate moral content, particularly of the culture in which a child lives and participates; but equally, it anticipates and expects also a spiritual and psychological development, in the face of worldly challenges. Generally, however, growing up can come in other jurisdictions, and even for adults as a realization or self-realization and recognition in the face of the awareness of pain, evil, or complexity in the world. In this sense, it is usually thought of as an experience or period in a person's life that leads to a greater awareness of evil, pain and/or suffering in the world around them which they had not known or presupposed (www.quora.com, June 25, 2016). In Purple Hibiscus, almost all the characters go through a kind of 'loss of innocence'. The most notable experience of loss of innocence, however, occurred in the lives of the two protagonists of the novel - Kambili and Jaja – the two teenage children of the Eugene Achike family. The novel sets up a conflict that needs resolution, but only when the source of the change of behaviour in Jaja can be identified and meaningfully defined.

In explaining the genesis of Jaja's rebellion, some scholars suggest a focus on the moral questions related to the observance of rules, regulations, and institutions, and evaluate the actions of characters accordingly. Such an evaluation based on the moral questions will lead to a focus on the judgement of the father's cruel acts towards his children and his wife. Such a perspective is illustrated in one such typical review of the novel as follows:

"Purple Hibiscus captures for us the traumatic moments of a wealthy Nigerian family as it gradually breaks up, mined tragically on the one hand, by the cruel abuses of father turned callous by an inexorable, fanatic brand of Catholicism, and on the other, by the familiar brutalities of the murderous military regimes of our recent past... The victims survive however, rescued by the love that binds the children to their mother, and the mother to her children." (Back cover reviews of the book).

Other perspectives focus on the political dimension and point to power and its exercise for oppression by the father, such as reflected in his wife-beating, culminating also in expansion of this theme to the discussion of patriarchy and the domination of man over woman to explain the conflict between son and father and Jaja's rebellion, and sometimes even to the extent of endorsement of the murder of oppressive family members.

While all perspectives illumine the process of growth of these two children and its significance for their aspirations towards the 'freedom to be, to do', this paper is of the opinion that more light can be thrown from a different perspective with a focus on the rebellion of the male child in the family and its consequences for his maturation. It locates the conflict in the domain of the 'conscious' and the 'unconscious', using the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud to examine the disruption of the family and the rebellion of the male child leading to his 'loss of innocence' and tragic development and disintegration.

III. SIGNIFICANCE

The paper turns attention from the moralistic and political perspectives towards a more psychological basis of understanding and reaching the genesis of rebellion in the male child. Such an approach, apart from conforming to one of the major purposes of the *bildungsroman* genre to focus on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood, also promises a more plausible explanation of the child's rebellion towards the father and the disruption of the family in spite of any moral or human flaws of the father. Locating the genesis of the problem of male child rebellion is crucial for understanding how youth deal with the process of growth and why they can successfully negotiate it or be unable to do so. Growth and maturation are important for every life, but for the young, it is most crucial to determining a promising future or a blighted one and could account, to a great extent, for the escalating mental health situation of youth in African societies. For instance, a WHO situational report on Ghana (retrieved 19.3.2020) indicates: "It is estimated that of the 21.6 million people living in Ghana, 650,000 are suffering from a moderate to mild mental disorder. The treatment gap is 98% of the total population expected to have a mental disorder." And at least one psychiatrist has observed that mental health disorders are on a steep rise among youth in Africa today. And although awareness of this rising problem has prompted conferences and certain responses they are mainly medical. Eaton and Ohene (2015) note in a conference paper some of the efforts to stem the tides: "These efforts, over the past decade, have also seen the emergence of the strongest service user movements in Africa, new cadres of trained personnel, and a greater awareness of mental health issues in the country". The question remains though to be answered as to what could be some of the main factors resulting in the problem of mental health and its rapid growth in Africa? The population of the youth in Africa (Ghana, 45% as at 2015 [Eaton and Ohene 2015];

almost 60% of Africa's population is under 25 years of age [Mo Foundation, 10.6. 2019]) is high, which makes it so much more an urgent problem. What can we discover from literary resources in African writing, reaching into the unconscious of African society, pointing to some of the crucial underlying factors that are indicated and can possibly be controlled to stem the tide of this rising tragedy? And as a result of the weak health systems in Africa, how do we search for preventive measures to manage and curb this menacing development in the medium to long term? The argument here is that understanding the crucial elements in the constitutions and development of the human subject and the process of growth is of immense help to adults with children, and those who take care of children and their maturation in education and other spheres of existence. Also, in the wake of the widespread blighted childhoods in our societies, and the ongoing experiences of abused childhood manifesting in several guises owing to poverty, to abandonment, and cruelty towards children and youth, child slavery, and others leading many to mental breakdowns, desertion from home, the proliferation of street children, and other experiences of evil in the lives of children and youth, the ability to determine the genesis of some of the causes and their effects can be of enormous help in assisting victims, and those who wish to assist in the growth and rehabilitation of children, and those of a seemingly natural rebellious inclination, including even adults. But above all, it is exploring the effects of the unconscious in order to help in understanding the constitution of the human subject in the process of growth and maturation and its effects on the actions and experiences of individuals in developing societies.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The paper adopts a psychoanalytic approach to analyzing the 'coming of age' story, especially focusing on the character of Jaja, the male child of Eugene Achike. In spite of the work of other psychoanalytic literary theorists such as Lacan (2001), this paper adopts the understanding of Eagleton (1992) on account of its simplicity and clarity. Psychoanalytic theory, which depends mainly on the theories of Sigmund Freud, according to Eagleton (1992), "makes it possible for us to think of the development of the human individual in social and historical terms. What Freud produces, indeed, is nothing less than a materialist theory of the making of the human subject. We come to be what we are by an interrelation of bodies – by the complex transactions which take place during infancy between our bodies and those which surround us." (Eagleton, 1992: 163). The making of the human subject and its interrelationship with the bodies that surround it to produce a social being will be a preoccupation in this analysis and will underline this investigation.

V. LITERATURE REVIEW: FREUD'S THEORY.

The author draws upon Eagleton (1992) to explain Freud's theory. The underlying belief of Sigmund Freud can be summarized in one single expression: '"The motive of human society is in the last resort an economic one" (Eagleton 1992: 151). Although some motivational psychologists, such as Pink (2009) seem to differ slightly from this perspective with a variant view of "the deeply human need to direct our lives, to learn and create new things, and to do better by ourselves and our world", even such views seem directed towards the overwhelming emphasis on production and consumption as we currently experience which weigh heavily towards the economic perspective advanced by Freud. For Freud, then, the dominant theme of human history is the need to labour. The harsh reality developing from this need postulated by Freud, which is nonetheless also a necessity, is that human beings have to repress some of their tendencies towards pleasure and gratification in order to be able to realize labour. Without repression, the tendency towards pleasure and gratification would otherwise consume human beings to such an extent that they would avoid work by all means and thereby be unable to survive because they would not

labour in order to survive in spite of a clear awareness of the need. Consequently, every human being has to learn to undergo the repression of what Freud called the 'pleasure principle'. However, sometimes, for individuals, including even for whole societies such as happens during some military dictatorships as described in *Purple Hibiscus*, the repression could become excessive; and excessive repression results in illness.

5.1 Labour, Neurosis and Sublimation

Knowing the necessity of labour, human beings are sometimes willing to forego pleasure and gratification even to the extent that they become heroic. But we do so not without self-interest; we do so only under a tacit understanding and trust that this deferment of pleasure and gratification will bring us greater or richer rewards. For this reason, we can be willing to undergo repression to the extent that we see that there is something in it for us. Even then, if too much is demanded of us, we can become unhealthy. The form of sickness that results from excessive repression is known as 'neurosis'. On the other hand, we do not always become ill because of excessive repression. Instead, we sometimes deal with excessive repression by devising a means of coping with it. We do so through 'sublimating' the desires we cannot fulfill. 'Sublimating' means that we channel or redirect the desires we cannot fulfill towards a more socially valued or higher end. Thus, for instance, "We might find an unconscious outlet for sexual frustration in building bridges or cathedrals.". Hence, for Freud, "it is by virtue of such sublimation that civilization itself comes about: by switching and harnessing our instincts to these higher goals, cultural history itself is created." (Eagleton 1992: 151-2).

An interesting aspect of Freud's theoretical understanding of the relationship of the formation of the human subject to the need to labour is its social dimension in the manner in which it bears resemblance to the framework of Karl Marx's understanding of the consequences of our need to labour. However, the difference arises between them in the dimension that while Marx explored this framework of the consequences of the need for labour in terms of the social relations, social classes and the forms of politics which it entailed, Freud, on the other hand, examined them through the implications of the need to labour for psychical life. From this framework and its exploration through human psychical life, Freud creates a certain paradox or contradiction on which his work is to rest – the paradox that we come to be what we are only by a massive repression of the elements which have gone into our making. Yet Marx and Freud converge again in the way men and women are not generally conscious of the social processes which determine their lives; so for Freud, men and women are not generally conscious of the processes that determine their physical lives. This is so because the place to which we relegate the desires we are unable to fulfill is known as the 'unconscious'. (Eagleton 1992: 152)

5.2 Instincts, Drives, and Sexuality

The nature of the 'unconscious' and its operations are made possible by the manner in which it developed. One major distinguishing feature of human beings is that due to evolution and its processes they are born almost entirely helpless. For this reason, they need a very long period of care while they mature. The further consequence is that they have to be wholly reliant on the care of the more mature members of the species, that is, usually parents, for survival. In other words, human beings are all born 'premature'. It means that the absence of immediate, unceasing care, will lead to imminent demise. This prolonged dependence on parents is primarily a material matter consisting of being fed and kept from harm. This also means the satisfaction of biologically fixed needs called 'instincts', including nourishment, warmth, and others. Such instincts are self-preservative and are fixed. (See also Winston 2003). These are, however, different from their more unfixed and changing counterparts known as 'drives'. 'Drives' are a deflection from the instincts; they change the

nature of instincts owing to the pleasure associated with them. Thus the dependence on parents for the satisfaction of biologically fixed 'instincts' is not the end of the story. During this process of dependence, the infant who sucks its mother's breast milk discovers in doing so that this biologically essential activity is also pleasurable; and this, for Freud, begins the first awakening of sexuality. The drives stimulate the baby's mouth to develop; but the mouth develops, not only as an organ of its physical survival but as an erotogenic zone, capable of being reactivated a few years later as sucking its thumb, and into subsequent adult years as the practice of kissing. By this development, an infant's relation to its mother has taken on a new, libidinal dimension. Sexuality is born in the child as a drive which was in the beginning inseparable from the biological instinct of feeding, and gains its autonomy. It means that by means of changing the nature of the instinct of being fed, the child develops drives deflected from its instincts owing to the pleasure associated with them. Thus, the sexuality of the child develops as a drive separating itself from the biological instinct of closeness and warmth of the mother, and gains autonomy. For this reason, Freud considers sexuality a 'perversion' in itself – in the sense of, "a 'swerving away' of a natural self-preservation instinct towards another goal." (Eagleton 1992: 153).

5.3 Three Stages of Drive Development

As the infant grows, other erotogenic zones develop in connection with the pleasure principle and the development of sexuality. Three most distinct and iconic stages include: 1) The Oral stage. 2) The Anal stage, and 3) The Phallic stage.

Although the three stages are clearly marked out, they nevertheless, usually overlap and do not necessarily exist in distinct sequence. Freud notes that the oral stage is the first phase of sexual life to manifest and is associated with the drive to incorporate objects and includes the suckling of the mother's breast. In the anal stage, the anus manifests as an erotogenic zone; and this is emphasized by the child's pleasure in defecation. It demonstrates itself also in its focus on activity and passivity in terms of either 'releasing' or 'withholding' faeces as a pleasurable game. This anal stage is, therefore, sadistic, in that the child derives erotic pleasure from expulsion and destruction; but it is also connected with the desire for retention and possessive control as the child learns a new form of mastery and a manipulation of the wishes of others through the 'granting' or 'withholding' of his/her faeces. The ensuing phallic stage begins to focus the child's libido (or sexual drive) on the genitals. But Freud designates this stage as the 'phallic' rather than 'genital' because only the male organ is recognized at this point. "The little girl in Freud's view has to be content with the clitoris, the 'equivalent' of the penis, rather than with the vagina." (Eagleton 1992: 153).

What is happening in this process – though the stages overlap, and should not be seen as a strict sequence – is a gradual organization of the libidinal drives, but one still centred on the child's own body. The drives themselves are extremely flexible, in no sense fixed like biological instincts; their objects are contingent and replaceable, and one sexual drive can substitute itself for another. The implication of this is that the child is not yet a 'unified subject', or has no 'centre of identity' that can confront or desire a stable object. It is still a complex shifting field of force in which the subject (the child itself) is caught up and dispersed, in which the boundaries between itself and the external world are indeterminate. The child's body, at this stage, can be described as simply a play of drives lapping across it. One can speak of this also as an 'auto-eroticism'; the child takes erotic delight in its own body, but without as yet being able to view its body as a complete object. Auto-eroticism, though, is not the same thing as what Freud calls 'narcissism', a state in which one's body or ego as a whole is 'cathected', or taken as an object of desire. (Eagleton 1992: 154).

VI. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STABLE IDENTITY: THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX

From what is known about the child so far, in its pre-Oedipal stage, it cannot be regarded as a citizen with the ability to work hard. This is the situation because at this stage, it is anarchic, sadistic, aggressive, self-involved and remorselessly pleasure-seeking, and under the sway of what Freud calls 'the pleasure principle'. Besides, in its condition, it does not have any respect for differences of gender. Hence it is not yet what we might call a 'gendered subject': the child surges with sexual drives, but this libidinal energy it exhibits recognizes no distinction between masculine and feminine. If, therefore, the child is to succeed in life, it has to come under control and be guided towards specific genders. The mechanism by which this happens is through what Freud terms the 'Oedipus Complex'. Prior to this stage of control and guidance, the child is in a 'pre-Oedipal stage'. The child who emerges from the pre-Oedipal stages described so far is not only anarchic and sadistic but uncontrollably incestuous: the boy's close involvement with his mother's body leads him to an unconscious desire for the pleasure of sexual union with her. The girl, on the other hand, who was also initially bound to the mother in a similar way, and therefore at first developed a desire for her mother and was, therefore, also homosexual, begins to turn her libido towards the father, identifying with the mother instead. In this way, the early 'dyadic' or two-term relationship and circuit between infant and mother is disrupted and opened up into a triangle consisting of child and both parents by the arrival of the father. From now onwards, on the part of the child, the parent of the same sex will come to figure as a rival in its affections for the parent of the opposite sex rather than maintaining the homosexual tendencies developed within the dyadic relationship with the mother alone.

VII. THE FEAR OF CASTRATION AND THE MALE CHILD'S DETACHMENT FROM THE MOTHER

What persuades the boy-child to abandon his incestuous desire for the mother is the father's threat of castration. This threat need not necessarily be external; but the boy unconsciously perceives that the girl is herself 'castrated'. This makes him begin to compare and imagine this as a punishment which he might suffer if he fails to repress his desire for his mother. He thus represses his incestuous desire in anxious resignation and adjusts himself to the 'reality principle' that he would not be able to have an incestuous relationship with his mother because of the presence and threat of his father's punishment. He subsequently submits to the father, detaches himself from the mother, and comforts himself with the unconscious consolation that although it was not immediately possible to replace the father and possess his mother, his father's position itself symbolizes a place and a possibility that he himself will be able to take up and realize in the future. If, therefore, he is not a patriarch now, he will become one later. With this justification, the boy makes peace with his father, identifies with him, and is thus introduced into the symbolic role of manhood. By this process, too, he becomes a gendered subject, surmounting his Oedipus Complex. What enables the child to be able to accomplish this process eventually is because he is able to drive his forbidden desire underground, that is, repress it into the place called the 'unconscious'. The unconscious is not a place that was ready and waiting to receive such a desire, but it is produced and opened up by this act of primary repression. Now becoming a man in the making, he will grow up within those images and practices which his society happens to define as 'masculine'. Based on this, his reward for his ability to repress his desires is that he will himself become a father one day, capable of sustaining his society through his contribution to the business of sexual reproduction. The overall meaning of this is that the earlier diffuse libido of the child has become

organized through the Oedipus Complex in a way which centres it upon genital sexuality.

Jacques Lacan (2001, Eagleton 1992, Homer 2005), in explaining how the separation between child and mother occurs eventually, further postulates that the introduction of the father represents law and authority. It is this representation of law and authority that eventually breaks the circuit of infant and mother. In this process, the introduction of the father enables the infant to realize that there is an established pre-existing social order, or the 'symbolic order' into which it has to fit, consisting of the triad of mother, father and infant or child.

7.1 Failure to Transit the Oedipus Complex Stage Successfully

If the boy is unable to successfully overcome the Oedipus Complex, the result may be sexual incapacitation in adulthood. This may happen because the child may privilege the image of his mother above all other women. The recognition that women are 'castrated' may have traumatized him so deeply that he will be unable to enjoy satisfying sexual relationships with women. (Eagleton 1992: 155).

Also, since the Oedipus Complex is the structure of relations by which we come to be the men and women that we are and is the point at which we are produced and constituted as subjects, a child who is unable to make a successful transition of this stage cannot be constituted as a human subject, let alone a gendered one.

7.2 Benefits of a Successful Transition of the Oedipus Complex Stage

The first benefit of a successful transition of the Oedipus Complex stage is being constituted into a human and gendered subject, that is, the development of an 'ego' or identity. The child is now capable of being socialized into the symbolic or social order to which it belongs since the successful transition signals a movement from nature to culture and the readiness of the child to assume a position within the cultural order.

A successful transition also signals the transition from the 'pleasure principle' to the 'reality principle', and hence a readiness to repress its unwanted and unsanctioned desires in order to be able to work and to achieve production: to fit into the order and need for labour. In essence, it also means that it is capable of turning its repressed desires towards higher social ends and goals through 'sublimating'.

It further means that the child's attention is now capable of turning away from itself and from its sadistic, narcissistic and incestuous desires and the enclosure of the family to society at large, leading to a departure from Nature to Culture. Consequently, the successful transition signals the beginning of the development of morality, conscience, law, and all forms of social and religious authority. For Freud, the Oedipus Complex is the crux of the genesis of morality, conscience, law and all forms of social and religious authority. The father's real or imagined prohibition of incest is symbolic of all the higher authority to be later encountered; and in 'introjecting' (making its own) this patriarchal law, the child begins to form what Freud calls its 'superego', the awesome, punitive voice of conscience within itself. (Eagleton 1992: 156).

7.3 The Split Subject and the Continuing Intruding of the Unconscious

With a successful transition of the Oedipus Complex, all things are set for gender roles to be reinforced, satisfactions to be postponed or deferred, authority to be accepted and the family and society to be reproduced. Nevertheless, the 'unruly' and 'insubordinate unconscious' which was suppressed into the unconscious still exists. But the child has now developed an ego or individual identity, a particular place in the sexual, familial and social networks; but it can do this only because it was able to split off its guilty desires and repressed them into the unconscious. Owing to this, the human subject who emerges

from the Oedipal process is a split subject, living between the conscious and unconscious. Consequently, the unconscious can always return to intrude on the conscious, attempting to assert itself. The unconscious is both a place and a non-place which is completely indifferent to reality; it knows no logic or negation or causality or contradiction, and is wholly given over to the instinctual play of the drives and the search for pleasure.

7.4 Jaja and the Unsuccessful Transition of the Oedipal Stage

Jaja's rebellion against his father for no tangible reason signaled his inability to negotiate his anarchic and aggressive pre-Oedipal stage and his preoccupation with himself. His rebellion for no reason is paralleled in his action against the prison guard in the last chapter, spitting in the guard's face without any tangible cause. Seeing the prison guard as the image of his father, the representative of authority and law, he was transferring his aggression towards his father to the prison guard. Mr Eugene Achike had explained to his children the reasons behind his stern approach to disciplining them. He did not want them to be "like those loud children people are raising these days, with no home training and fear of God." (p.66). He worked hard, owned his own newspaper company, and many other businesses besides. He carried out many philanthropic works and contributed in many ways to the betterment of his own communities, including the state. He knew that he achieved these by dint of hard work, and through a purposeful goal of service of God and neighbour. He wanted to train his children in his own ways – to abandon the pleasure principle and embrace the principle of reality; that is, to be able to work hard, establish a purpose for their own lives, to serve God, to serve humankind, and steer away from choices that would deflect them from sublimating their drives into the achievement of higher goals.

On one of those occasions when Kambili did not top her class, Eugene led her to the school and harangued her. His main concern, he explained:

"Why do you think l work so hard to give you and Jaja the best? You have to do something with all these privileges. Because God has given you much, he expects much from you. He expects perfection. I didn't have a father who sent me to the best schools. My father spent his time worshipping gods of wood and stone. I would be nothing today but for the priests and sisters at the mission. I was a houseboy for the parish priest for two years. Yes, a houseboy. Nobody dropped me off at school. I walked eight miles every day to Nimo until I finished elementary school. I was a gardener for the priests while I attended St. Gregory's Secondary School."

On occasions, he was extreme in his disciplining of the children; but he equally regretted his excesses, often trying to soothe the children back to serenity. In spite of that, he did not spare the children, in order that he might fashion them towards an ultimate goal of abandoning the pleasure principle and opt for the principle of reality. But Jaja was unable to understand or cope with his father's actions and explanations to events. He remained unconvinced about the father's values, explanations, and actions. Instead, he had a deep sympathy towards his mother, always feeling that he should be the mother's protector against the father, and at every turn, showing inseparability with the mother. Being completely unsympathetic towards his father after rebelling against him, he nevertheless was always concerned about the welfare of his mother: "Jaja knelt beside Mama, flattened the church bulletin he held into a dustpan, and placed a jagged ceramic piece on it. 'Careful, Mama, or those pieces will cut your fingers', he said." (p. 16).

Jaja's father tried to teach his children how to love, inventing for the family, the 'love sip' at breakfast as a first act of family union and recognition before the main eating. As Kambili observed, "Papa sat down at table and poured his tea from the china tea set with pink flowers on

the edges. I waited for him to take a sip, as he always did. A love sip, he called it, because you shared the little things you loved with the people you loved." (p. 16).

He also sought to teach them the values of appreciation and thanksgiving; but Jaja did not seem to find it a thing worth sustaining and practicing. When the father's factory produced a new kind of fruit drink, as became his practice, Eugene brought a sample home for the family to test and to give their verdict and express appreciation of the new product. Jaja refused to take notice when a new cashew drink product was brought to table by his father to be tasted and evaluated. After every member of the family had given their verdict, Jaja remained silent:

"Papa was staring pointedly at Jaja. 'Jaja, have you not shared a drink with us, gbo? Have you no words in your mouth? ' he asked, entirely in Igbo. A bad sign. He hardly spoke Igbo, and although I and Mama spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak it in public.....Have you nothing to say, gbo, Jaja? Papa asked again." But Jaja replied: " Mba, there are no words in my mouth." "What?" There was a shadow clouding Papa's eyes, a shadow that had been in Jaja's eyes. Fear. It had left Jaja's eyes and entered Papa's." (p. 21).

Eugene had now begun to fear for his son's ability to enter into the symbolic order. He realized that the possibility of socializing Jaja into the role of a human subject capable of abandoning the pleasure principle and embracing the reality principle was slipping by. He was turning out to become a being who would remain anarchic, narcissistic, sadistic and utterly ruled by his unconscious. He began to make his own decisions before he was capable, assuming authority for things that related to him and his sister Kambili. Thus, on occasion, he decided at the spur of the moment, after a short telephone conversation with his aunty Ifeoma, that he and Kambili were going to visit their aunt at Nsukka, there and then, with or without the permission of their father. Kambili was surprised about his brother's behaviour but was unable to challenge him. She said: "After Jaja talked to Aunty Ifeoma, he put the phone down and said, "We are going to Nsukka". I did not ask him what he meant, or how he would convince Papa to let us go. I watched him knock on Papa's door and go in. 'We are going to Nsukka. Kambili and I,' I heard him say. I did not hear what Papa said, then I heard Jaja say, "We are going to Nsukka today, not tomorrow. If Kevin will not take us, we will still go. We will walk if we have to."' ..... Jaja came in to say that Papa had agreed that Kevin could take us. He held a bag so hastily packed he had not even done up the zipper, and he watched me throw some things into a bag, saying nothing."(p. 265).

As Kambili discovered a little later, their father had actually been taken ill. The children should have waited to help take care of him; but Jaja cared less about his father. " Is Papa still in bed?" I asked, but Jaja did not answer as he turned to go downstairs. I knocked on Papa's door and opened it. He was sitting up in bed; his red silk pyjamas looked dishevelled. Mama was pouring water into a glass for him." (P.266).

And when the driver, Kevin, attempted to draw the children's attention to the father's needs, Jaja snubbed him. " Kevin stood by the car when we came outside. 'Who will take your father to church, now?' he asked, looking at us suspiciously. 'Your father is not well enough to drive himself.' Jaja remained silent for so long that I realized he was not going to give Kevin an answer, and I said, 'He said you should take us to Nsukka'" (p. 266).

In contrast, Jaja was inseparable from his mother, caring deeply about her unquestioningly. This inability to separate from his mother and make peace with his father unconsciously embedded him in an incestuous relationship with his mother, leading to many impulsive and faulty decisions that caused tragic consequences for his life and that of the family.

His reaction to his father's death was bizarre, more so after the revelation that it was their

mother that had obtained a poison and poisoned their father till he died. Their mother telephoned to announce their father's death while they were still with their aunt Ifeoma at Nsukka.

"Mama's low voice floated across the phone line .... 'Kambili, it's your father. They called me from the factory, they found him lying dead on his desk.' .... 'It's your father. They called me from the factory, they found him lying dead on his desk.' Mama sounded like a recording." (p. 290). When Jaja heard the same news about their father's death that shook her sister to the core, he merely stared; his "eyes were blank, like a window with its shutter drawn across." (p. 293). His sister wanted to express her sorrow, but was unsure what Jaja represented: "I took off my slippers. The cold marble floor drew the heat from my feet. I wanted to tell Jaja that my eyes tingled with unshed tears, that I still listened for, wanted to hear, Papa's footsteps on the stairs. That there were painfully scattered bits inside me that l could never put back because the places they fit into were gone. Instead, I said, 'St Agnes will be full for Papa's funeral Mass.' Jaja did not respond."

Instead, what was in Jaja's mind was his mother. "I should have taken care of Mama. Look how Obiara balances Aunty Ifeoma's family on his head, and I am older than he is. I should have taken care of Mama." He assumed that he would have been more qualified and capable of taking care of his mother than his father ever did; and he should have protected his mother from his father. And when their mother eventually confessed to having committed the crime of their father – ''I started putting poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor" - (p. 294), in a way that suggested that she assumed the children were already privy to and approved of already, as if it was ''something we all had known about, something we had put in there to be found..." (p. 294), Jaja acquiesced as if in total agreement with his mother's crime. When his sister, Kambili reacted, "Why did you put it in his tea (which represented the love sips)?' I asked Mama, rising. My voice was loud. I was almost screaming. 'Why in his tea?'", Jaja snuffed his sister's protests at her mother. Jaja yanked his sister away from his mother in impatient protection of his Mama. He then wrapped his arms around both his sister and his mother. Although a caring gesture towards the mother, it was the kind of protection he imagined he could have always given his mother. However, this caring goes beyond a concern for the mother and the rest of the family to the unconscious incestuous relationship with the mother. He raised not a single protest at the mother for murdering his father; instead, he was going to protect her to the hilt. And when the police arrived to make enquiries about the poisoning of their father, he did not wait for them to discover the truth about their mother. Because he was completely controlled by his nature instead of by culture, his decision-making was always impulsive. Impulsively, he owned up to the crime, taking responsibility for the mother's crimes.

"The policemen came a few hours later. They said they wanted to ask some questions. Somebody at St Agnes Hospital had contacted them, and they had a copy of the autopsy report with them. Jaja did not wait for their questions; he told them he had used rat poison, that he put it in Papa's tea. They allowed him to change his shirt before they took him away." (p. 295).

Thus, Jaja's inability to negotiate the Oedipus Complex successfully did not enable him to learn to repress his desires and to differentiate his instincts from his drives. He lived for pleasure, against his father's wishes that he learn repression of the pleasure principle in order to be able to labour and be productive. He did whatever pleased him and remained an 'ungendered' human subject. His love for the purple hibiscus, which is itself a symbol of budding love, which he discovered at Nsukka in his Aunty Ifeoma's garden and held on to passionately, was more appropriate to girls like his sister Kambili than to boys, signifying his unconscious confusion and desire to see himself as a girl rather than as a boy, as well as his over-identification with the mother and anxiety over her loss of the phallus.

In prison, the symbol of extra-familial authority, and also society's unconscious, Jaja was relegated to the unconscious eventually as a consequence of his antinomial tendencies resulting from his unsuccessful negotiation of the Oedipus Complex. As his repression led to his deterioration, he began to learn too late about culture and decency, questioning for the first time, his mother's manner of dressing. In prison, the last time when his mother and sister brought him food, "He stops chewing and stares at me silently with those eyes that have hardened a little every month he has spent there; now they look like the bark of a palm tree, unyielding. I even wonder if we ever really had an asusu anya, a language of the eyes, or if I imagined it all" (p. 308).

The new language he had begun to learn in prison, which began to teach him the culture and decency he failed to learn from his father now enabled him to query his mother for the first time: " 'You did not tie your scarf well,' Jaja says to Mama. I stare in amazement. Jaja has never noticed what anybody wears. Mama hastily unties and reties her scarf – and this time, she knots it twice and tight at the back of the head." (p. 309). Jaja was now learning in prison, what he should have learnt from his father's disciplinary endeavor, albeit a difficult one.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Thus, in spite of the moralist perspective that focuses on the father's cruelty, and the political perspectives that emphasize the father's oppression of the mother, and others that see the father and the situation as a metaphor for religious and political oppression, the psychoanalytic perspective reminds us that, to be able to survive in the world, we need to be first and foremost a human subject, an individual endowed with an identity and therefore capable of focusing on a stable object, leading to the ability to cultivate oneself into readiness for labour, to be able to produce. To be able to achieve this, the presence of a father figure is crucial. It is the only way to be able to successfully negotiate the pre-Oedipal stage of life that makes us human subjects, gendered, and able to repress our desires, and able to sublimate our desires equally to achieve higher goals. Failure, as in the case of Jaja, has many consequences, and is disastrous for the process of maturation and living. The refusal to enter into the symbolic order is to risk death: "You cannot stop receiving the body of our Lord. It is death, you know that." ... "Then I will die." Fear had darkened Jaja's eyes to the colour of coal tar, but he looked Papa in the face now. "Then I will die, Papa." (p.14).

Consequently, the necessity of the father figure in the development of children, if they are to be able to grow into secure adulthood with a clear sense of identity and gender cannot be gainsaid. Similarly, is the necessity of learning about repression, sublimating, and the creation of culture from nature, as the building of character and achievement depend upon these capabilities. The ability to be able to prepare for the objective of labour cannot be possible without these either. Formation and maturation have to be able to overcome the pleasure principle and substitute it with the reality principle, no matter how hard it becomes, to be able to make any headway towards a meaningful life – one that would not make the pursuit of anarchy, aggression, sadism, narcissism and other anti-social activities a staple to such an extent that it leads to being consigned into society's unconscious – prison or nonentity.

In the same vein, comes the realization that 'A freedom to be, to do', may not be as simple as the saying sounds euphoric, and should not be confused with the anarchic, aggressive, self-involved pre-Oedipal stage of growth. The 'freedom to be' has to have a complement – a freedom to become 'something' or 'somebody', but not just to be. In the same way, the 'freedom to do' has to have an object – a freedom to do work, or a freedom directed at something – a freedom to receive education, and so on. Freedom cannot stand on its own without a complement or an object towards which it is directed. This is what infuses freedom with a purpose and constitutes a stable object for a human and gendered subject to be able to form a distinct identity.

Consequently, the exploration of the Oedipus Complex and its stages of growth, and the ability to successfully negotiate these stages or not, and the consequences thereof, are also able to help us understand how certain tendencies can possibly emerge in children and lead to their adulthood participation in their practice. It also means, therefore, that there is a necessity to investigate how we raise our children, ensuring the presence of a father figure in their formation. But it also means, in the first place, that we have to be able to examine our own Oedipal development in order to understand our most irrational behaviours and tendencies and their sources, in order to help others locate theirs. This can help society understand some of the behaviours of both some children and adults that sometimes defy rational explanations, and I daresay, some of the underlying factors jeopardizing the mental health of youth on the African continent that need urgent attention.

REFERENCES

1. Barry, Peter (1995) Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
2. Brown, J.AC. (1961). Freud and the Post-Freudians. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books
3. Caudwell, Christopher (1973). Illusion and Reality. London: Macmillan Publishers
4. Chodorow, Nancy (1978). The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender. New Haven: Yale University Press
5. Dibell, A., Scott Card and Turco. (1990). How to Write a Million: The Complete guide to becoming a successful author. London: Robinson Publishing Ltd
6. Eagleton, Terry (1990). The Ideology of the Aesthetic. Oxford: Basil Blackwell
7. Eagleton, Terry (1992). Literary Theory: An Introduction. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers
8. Eaton, Julian and Sammy Ohene (2015). Providing Sustainable Mental and Neurological Health Care in Ghana and Kenya: A Demonstration Project. National Academies Press
9. Ellmann, Maud, ed. (1994). Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism. London: Longman
10. Felman, Shoshana, ed. (1982). Literature and Psychoanalysis –The Question of Reading: Otherwise. New York: John Hopkins University Press
11. Foucault, Michel (1978). The History of Sexuality .Vol 1. New York: Pantheon Books
12. Foucault, Michel (1995). Discipline and Punish. Transl. Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin Books Ltd
13. Frankl, George (1992). Archaeology of the Mind: The Social History of the Unconscious, Vol 1. London: Open Gate Press
14. Gallop, Jane (1982). Feminism and Psychoanalysis: The Daughter's Seduction. London: Macmillan Publishers
15. Hartman, Geoffrey, ed. (1978). Psychoanalysis and the Question of the Text. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press
16. Herman, David (ed), 2007, The Cambridge Companion to Narrative, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
17. Homer, Sean (2005). Jacques Lacan. London: Routledge Critical Thinkers
https://simple.wikipedia.org
https://www.quora.com
https://www.theguardian.com
18. Kearney, Richard (1990). Modern Movements in European Philosophy. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.
19. Lacan, Jacques (2001). Ecrits. London: Routledge
20. Mitchel, Juliet (2000). Psychoanalysis and Feminism.Harmondsworth: Ingram Publisher Services
21. Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019). Africa's first challenge: the youth bulge 'waithood'. Mo Ibrahim Foundation Webpage Pink, H. Daniel (2009). Drive: The truth about what motivates us. New York: Riverhead Books
22. Rabate, Jean-Michel, ed. (2003). The Cambridge Companion to Lacan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Web resources

WHO: *A Situational Analysis Report on Ghana*: Retrieved: 19.3.2020
Winston, Robert (2003). *Human Instinct: How Our Primeval Impulses Shape Our Modern Lives*. London: Bantam Books
www.oxfordbibliographies.com