



# Existential Thrownness in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*

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## Abstract

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*, in their different ways, have continued to attract critical attention as allegorical explorations of post-colonial realities. This paper takes an existential outlook to inquire into the ontological structures and phenomenological foundations that engender the being of the characters in the texts as victims of existential thrownness. The paper adopts the theory of thrownness as expounded by Martin Heidegger, (1962) in *Being and Time*, to argue that the characters in the two novels are *Dasein* figures. Existentially, *Dasein* means 'being', but Heidegger uses it in everydayness to describe a kind of being that is particular to humans. The human *Dasein* is distinct from other beings, because it can ask questions about its mode of being and possesses care as what defines its 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 23). Thus, *Dasein* wrestles with being as an existential issue, having been thrown into the world without its wilful volition. The paper establishes that although Papa, Celie, and Jaja did not choose their existence, they have existential givens to leap ahead in every thrown condition. Such leaping is subject to the character's understanding of the historical-temporal world order that defines one's existence. Hence, temporality becomes the point of departure for the construal of 'Being'

and the ontological structures that make up the worldhood of the characters. In the texts, the heroes and deliverers, acting within the realm of temporality, are victims of existential thrownness. This paper demonstrates that existential thrownness is manifest in both novels.

**Keywords:** *Dasein*, Thrownness, Mood, Care, Angst, and Temporality.

## Introduction

Adichie's (2006) *Purple Hibiscus* and Walker's (1986) *The Colour Purple* have received sustained critical attention, mostly as allegorical explorations of post-colonial experiences. Scholars like Anthony Channells, Brenda Copper, Allwell Abalogu et al, Dieke Ikenna, and Dayana Mathew are worth mentioning for their scholarly discussions on the texts using different analytical approaches. The present paper offers a new perspective on *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Colour Purple* as discourse on existential thrownness, considering the writers' strive to recreate a unified body of thought through the portrayal of the intelligibility of the seeker (s) in their inquiry into the ultimate reality of human existence.

In 'Inculturated Catholicism in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*', Channells (2009) identifies Adichie's use of inculturation as a theological concept that presents the dialogue between

indigenous and colonial religion. The novel describes a 'Christian society that, rather than seeking to be informed by indigenous spirituality, debates doctrinal positions or liturgical practices within Catholicism' (Channells, 2009, p.17). In *New Novels in African Literature Today*, Copper (2010) reads of a mimicry escapade to argue that Eugene is a 'sycophantic anglophile, slavishly mimicking white ways and narrowing church doctrines' (Copper, 2010, p. 2). Central to their argument is the claim that the novel reflects a strong influence of Eurocentric religion, but Chukwumezie Thomas takes a different position. In *Africa and World Literature* Chukwumezie (2006–2007) draws our attention to issues of 'insincerity, gullibility, dogmatism, and abuse of religion' (p.108). Onukaogu et al. (2010) in *Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The Aesthetics of Commitment and Narrative* identifies the Bildungsroman lens in the text to argue

that Jaja experiences a hard life because of the protective nature of his religious family. The story focuses on the characters' 'gradual discovery of alternative personalities within themselves, with exposure to other environments as catalyst' (Onukaogu et al, 2010, p. 148). Similarly, Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* works out in a careful existential search that focuses on the ontical self as an authentic Being. Ontical self refers to the experiential fact that is particular to the being of the textual characters. An existential approach to Walker's text suggests that her agents are fraught with existential perils and are in need of self-authentication. Expressing this path of life's struggle, Dayana et al. (2019) in 'In Search of Self: Analysis of the Character of Celie in *The Colour Purple*' note that Celie's letters are a reflection of human sufferings. For them, 'her internal conflict, her silent sufferings, the impact of oppression on her spirit as well as her growing internal strength and final victory' are key factors in her search for the self (Dayana et al., 2019, p. 485). Dieke (1999) in *Introductions: Alice Walker, a Woman into Peril*, posits that the existential progression of Walker's agent(s) is a hard-hitting escapade, where the 'journey takes place on a hard Walker road, the kind of journey on the hard, rocky road of life' (Dieke, 1999, p.4).

Among the critical responses reviewed, Dieke's (1999) interpretation stands out, as his notion of 'Walker's hard road' highlights the existential significance of the text, though not from the perspective of thrownness, which is the focus of this paper. This paper addresses the existential gap in the criticism of the two novels by shifting attention from their post-colonial fixity to the characters as Dasein, whose being-in-the-world is characterised by thrownness.

However, the paper adopts the theory of thrownness as expounded by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, as the framework that examines the ontological structures that ground the existential realities of the major agents in the novels. Thrownness, (*Geworfenheit* in German), refers to one of the existential structures that describe the *Da-* (there or here), of Dasein, which means 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 23), in interrelatedness of being. Dasein designates the human mode of existence, which is characterised by thrownness into the world. Thrownness, writes Heidegger, 'is meant to suggest the facticity of its being delivered over' (Heidegger, 1962, p.174). It is an aspect of *existentiale* of Dasein in which the human Dasein discovers that its existence has already been wrought without its wilful consent. The idea of thrownness

shows that the Dasein grows in cognizance of its birth into a certain family, social class, cultural values, and nationality without its willful consent.

This paper construes thrownness as an existential condition grounded in historical and cultural knowledge, which one does not decide, but rather contends with and wrestles with, as it is bound up with human becoming. Thus, man interprets life through the lens of his historico-cultural dimension by impressing meaningfully on his immediate environment. Rafey (2005) affirms this when he conceives thrownness as an existential transcendence 'whereby a human being appropriates her world, impressing on it the unique image of her own existence and potential' (Rafey, 2005, p.715). Notably, the phenomenal sequence of thrownness oscillates within Heidegger's three ecstase units of: past, present, and future. These tripartite units define Dasein's being in the world as temporality. Thus, Dasein as a thrown subject is always already gripped by circumstances of his past (who he was), as an antecedent that discloses his current state of mind (who he is) towards the futural projection, or what Hans-Georg Gadamer terms 'thrown projection' (Gadamer, 2006, p. 287) of his

possibilities (who he will be). This paper argues that the structural significance of thrownness presents the characters with a choice, because they have existential givens to leap ahead by circumspectly concerning themselves in any thrown condition. Therefore, the paper posits thrownness as an existential reality that entangles one's birth and how one understands and relates with things that make up their worldhood and yet care about their very being.

So, concern (*Bersorgen* in German), refers to the things that matter to Dasein, which show themselves in a phenomenological way, not as an extant being, *vorhanden* 'present at hand', but a functional being, *zuhanden* 'ready to hand' (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 98– 99). Hence, using a phenomenological method, this paper seeks to investigate the ontological structures that constitute thrownness in the texts under the following ontological strata: (i) Thrownness as deliverance, (ii) Mood as the state of mind, and (iii) Temporality as the lens for understanding of being. These strata disclose the being of the characters in existential modification of care and are interpolated with the mood of angst, fear, and dread to show that thrownness is at work in the texts.

### Thrownness as Deliverance in *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Colour Purple*

*Purple Hibiscus* and *The Colour Purple* are narratives of existential thrownness. In *Purple Hibiscus*, thrownness is already pre-given in the existential constitution of Papa's society, as a structural community of Dasein's otherness in terms of communality of relations. The text renders thrownness in a twofold sense of existential and *existential* categories. At the level of existential category, the idea of thrownness captures the being in the world of the major characters like Papa, Jaja, Kambili, and Mama in a historical understanding of existing beyond the frontiers of the physical world, to the overwhelming presence of the divine in the metaphysical world. The second level, *existential*, is brought about by the affectedness of the subject (s), considering how Papa's facticity works around the three ecstase units of Future, Past, and Present, out of which springs his existential angst. Actually, these units direct the strand of events that make up the mythos: Before Palm Sunday (future), After Palm Sunday (Past), and A Different Silence-the Present.

The first instance of thrownness occurs within the metaphysical realm with the inscription 'Breaking Gods' (Adichie, 2006, p. 9). Within this realm, thrownness

revolves around Papa, but the story is that of Kambili, whose repartee uncovers the possibility of a shift in the movement of thrownness from Papa to other family members. This episode temporalizes the 'Present' by disclosing the terrible anxiety that drives Papa's daily activities and its effect on Kambili, Jaja, and Mama, who grow in cognizance of their birth into a flawless Catholic family. Inherently, Papa construes existence from the consciousness of human finitude and the need for individuals to conform their being in austere adherence to religious practices that preserve being(s) away from existential nullity. Hence, Papa's family understands being from an eschatological perspective and the individual response to religious acts. Such activities as going to church, receiving Holy Communion, and the annual celebration of Ash Wednesday, which reminds them of human finitude, constitute their present thrownness. The text reads: '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'... (Adichie, 2006, p. 11). This excerpt illustrates the religious phenomenon that triggers off thrownness in the text, following Jaja's refusal to receive the Holy Communion. One reads in Jaja's action a negation of

ontological structure that defines being in Papa's world, a reason he questions his gut: 'Jaja you did not go to communion' 'the wafer gives me bad breath' Jaja said (p. 14). Actually, his unapologetic, yet hurting response sets Papa with angst that triggers off chains of thrownness in the text. In due course, Jaja's action goes beyond the violation of care structure to function as an ontical trigger of fear, resulting from Papa's anxiety, and for which most of Adichie's characters become victims of existential thrownness. Metaphorically, the narrative causality of thrownness is akin to the palms that hang in Papa's parlour, which are burned into ashes on Ash Wednesday of the following year to remind the Christians of their finitude. In like manner, Jaja, Kambili, and Mama experience constant scourge to Papa's angst to remind them of his care towards the salvation of their souls. Undesirably, Papa's efforts to save his family from damnation run counter-productively. This is because he carries most of his actions in anxiety that keep the family members in the state of anxiousness to the point that it conceals their authentic being. Adichie wordily highlights Papa's effort in playing the deliverer with the invocation: 'dust and unto dust you shall return' (2006, p. 14). His reprisal of Jaja's action dazed him with anxiety, and what is more, Papa

suffers in aloofness or 'fallenness' (Rafey, 2005, p. 716) as he is deep into the distractions of his day-to-day living. Papa's existence is marked by a great deal of anxiety, or what Akwanya (2006–2007, p. 4), drawing on Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, terms 'starkeres Dasein' (a stronger form of being), manifested as an overwhelming presence. In any case, all the characters except Papa experience this terrible anxiety as what typifies their being and they live in constant fear, following Jaja's refusal to take Communion. Since Papa is the strong Dasein, Jaja's action is for him a violation of the care structure that defines being, and because the entity in question has an ontological property of Dasein, Jaja must make reparations for his lack of attunement towards the divine presence.

Conversely, in *The Colour Purple*, Walker (1986) weaves the narrative within Heidegger's ecstase units of Past, Present, and Future (PPF), to describe a 'throw into language' (Rafey, 2005, p.712), the language Celie was born into, which speaks through her and to her. The Present discloses thrownness in Celie's initial diaries to God as an absolute confidant. The past uncovers Mr—'s primordial origin in a fallenness that drives his existence with angst, while the future unconceals Celie's emerging and

authentic self in what Gadamer (2006) terms the thrown projection of Dasein. *The Colour Purple* is the story of Celie, a fourteen-year-old girl who grows in cognizance of her birth into a perilous family that understands life at an object-level existence. It also tells the story of Nettie, who, in revulsion of Mr—'s 'fallenness' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 220), leaves for a missionary jaunt in Africa alongside Mr Samuel and Corrine. But then, the story is different for Walker's deliverer, Shug Avery, whose existential precision provides other agents with the creative force to project into the future. Celie, the protagonist, lost her parents quite early in life and is forced to live with the anonymous family of Mr—, her supposed stepfather, thereby experiencing her initial thrownness into an unwanted relationship. The issue with her existence lies in a misgiving marriage with Mr—, who, like Adichie's Papa, lives most of his life in anxiety because he did not marry his dream wife. He reasons thus: 'after they marry her off to me, her folks behave like they'd throwed her down a well or of the face of the earth, I didn't want her I wanted Shug, but my daddy was the boos, he give me the wife he wanted me to have' (Walker, 1986, p. 229). This initial failure drives his existence with angst, which results in his show of cruelty to Celie and other

characters with whom he shares the world. He rapes, hits, deracinate and derationalise Celie with a stern caution to tell no one 'but God, it'd kill your mammy' (Walker, 1986, p.3).

Nonetheless, the discourse on Mr—'s logic 'it'd kill your mammy' is a point of departure in our investigation of thrownness in the text. Ontologically, the active word 'kill' operates as an ontical trigger of thrownness, because it brings Celie face to face with the possibility of being nowhere, or 'not-at-home' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 234), which belongs to Dasein's uncanniness. Thus, Celie's thrownness discloses itself in anxiousness, a mood of fear and dread, ambiguity, and resoluteness. The issue of death, existential nullity, is a subject matter in the two texts under study. This is because death is an aspect of Dasein that sets it with anxiety and for which Dasein defiantly rebuffs to accede to the 'they' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 221) world. The certainty of death drives both Adichie and Walker's agents with a mood of fear and dread. The pervasive nature of fear about death makes Celie unable to rebut Mr—'s threat, so she could not set better boundaries for her existence at the onset. In any case, her individualised thrownness reflects Heidegger's avowal that 'anxiety individualizes Dasein and



discloses it as '*solus ipse*' (Heidegger, p.233), that is, being by oneself alone. *Solus ipse*, referring to 'Aloofness' (Heidegger, p.161) in the context of *The Colour Purple*, describes the moment Celie gets lost in knowledge of herself beyond worldly proscriptions. This formidable presence interrupts her being-in-the-world; so aware of her ineptness, she turns to God in letters by way of sublimating her existential pathos, though not as a projection of thrownness into the future. The text reads: 'Dear God, ...I have always been a good girl, maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me' (Walker, 1986, p.3). The discourse on 'Dear God' has a twofold meaning. It has an existential import in which Walker's characters, like those of Adichie discover the residue of their being in overwhelming presence, confident of attaining that which the world of Mr— and Papa could not offer. Again, it brings to the fore the speaker's quest for self-recovery and authentication, as Celie reasons: 'long as I can spell G-o-d I got somebody along' (Walker, p.18). But a more critical response problematizes the characters' existentiality on the plane of the 'they' *das man*' (Heidegger, 1962, 167) since being is being-with the other.

However, the trouble with Walker's protagonist is an existential one. Existentially, the nexus that makes up Celie's existence often presents itself in a non-relational mode that delimits possibilities available to her, which renders her into a 'fleeing' (Heidegger, 1962, p.69) *Dasein*. For instance, when Nettie asks her to put up a fight and end Mr—'s cruelty, she declines, thus: 'but I don't know how to fight, all I know how to do is stay alive... I stay where I am told' (Walker, 1986, p. 17, 21). Notably, 'I stay where I am told' grounds Celie's ineffectuality, which characterises her falling away and unsettledness in the world. Indeed, being is always a being-with-others; yet, in the context of the text, Celie is excluded from authentic publicness – a condition she did not choose but which nevertheless defines her relationship with Mr—Therefore, as a matter of safety, she transcends her immediate environs to a higher realm by turning towards the Supreme Being. Gadamer in *Truth and Method* describes this as *Dasein*'s 'thrown projection' (Gadamer, 2006, p.254) into the future.

Transcendentally, Celie grows in understanding of the need to bond herself with the world available to her consciousness. So, like Kambili, she acquiesces herself to being with Shug,



who schools her into pant making. Prior to that, Shug's facticity, especially her lyrical composition with Celie's name, instantiates a moment of self-worth and belongingness that are germane to Celie's journey of self-recovery. The lyrics have a referential signification where naming unlocks Celie's potential towards a meaningful existence. The text reads '...I hear my name, Shug saying Celie...she say this song I'm bout to sing is call Miss Celie's song...first time somebody made something and name it after me' (Walker, 1986, p.65). This excerpt expresses the importance of cohesive existence among Walker's agents. Interestingly, Celie's encounter with the world around her liberates her from the initial fear of her thrownness and makes her come to terms with the reality of being-in-the-world in a most purposeful mode. Thus, she takes responsibility for her existence. In this way, a Walkerian essentiality of being draws our attention to the inseparability of Dasein's call of care for the other as a commitment to oneself.

### Existential Constitution of Mood

In *Purple Hibiscus*, mood is an existential condition that discloses thrownness in the text. The recurrent mood element in the text is that of fear. Fear is at work in many communal and individual activities in the text. One reads of fear in Papa's

effort to deliver Jaja from eternal damnation and in Jaja's refusal to take the Holy Communion. Fear (*furcht* for Heidegger) is an existential mood that 'discloses the state of mind' (Heidegger, p.180) of Dasein. Arguably, fear is not a negative existential trait; of course, every extant being has the character of fear, but what one does with it (fear) is what problematizes it as an existential magnifier of thrownness. The text experiments with fear in a two-fold sense: 'fear of and fear about'. Notably, 'fear of' is directed towards objects, it describes the characters' mood in the face of things that threaten them in the world. A case in point is Jaja's choice to embrace death as an assertion of his authentic self, in self-understanding of God as a Being that cannot be usurped, in contrast to Papa's rigid religious code: 'Then I will die' (Adichie, 2006, p. 15). Kambili notes that, 'fear had darkened Jaja' eyes ...but he looked Papa in the face now, then I will die...Papa moved, looked around the room quickly, as if something had fallen... '(Adichie, 2006, p.15).

Fear shows a charisma that discloses the state of mind of Adichie's agents, and gnarls the creative force that makes Jaja take a stand in his state of thrownness. In view of Papa's hazy state, there is a

noticeable shift in fear from the object to the subject (Jaja to Papa). The most hit is Papa, whose 'state-of-mind, not only discloses thrownness and his submission to the 'they world' (Heidegger, 178), but the feebleness that severs him from the position of a bossy father. Fear also draws one's attention to the reticent character, Kambili who ponders her facticity in self-reflexivity. While fear dumbs her, dread suspends Jaja to refile Sheehan's assertion in Heidegger's *What is Metaphysics*, that: 'dread suspends us, strikes us dumb and the world becomes strange... for our very way of being' (Sheehan, 2017, p. 7). It is at the level of dread that Jaja bursts out, 'then I will die' (15), his mood sways beyond the physical, to the transcendental realm in understanding death as the necessary end of every mortal. Jaja and Celie understand death as what brings Dasein to its no-longer-being, hence, they seek a personal relationship with God as their ultimate end. That is why Jaja's dread springs from 'fear-about', which for Heidegger is a condition of 'being-afraid-for-oneself ...which is not aimed directly at him who fears...' (Heidegger, p. 181). Thus, his resolve to die triggers Papa's anxiety as he senses the danger of Jaja's action as a leap of faith, which risks the soul in what Ricoeur (1984) in *Time and Narrative* terms 'radical ontological

difference that separates the creature from the creator' (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 27). This situation unleashes endless chains of thrownness that drive Papa's being in the aftermath of anxiety. In this way, Adichie crystallizes thrownness in the facticity of the agents to show that mood, understanding, and comportment towards sacraments and sacramental objects uncover moments of thrownness in the *Purple Hibiscus*.

Another instance of thrownness unfolds in Papa's mode of 'being with one another' (Heidegger, p. 157) in the manner he lets himself to be encountered in the world. Ontologically, 'being with' discloses to us the 'who' of Dasein, that is, the real character of Papa, considering how he apprehends entities in his worldly environs. Papa is not only oblivious of other entities, but finds it hard to encounter other beings in their self-evident form. Like Walker's Mr—, the degree of Papa's absorption in angst places his existence at the level of 'unhomelike' Dasein (Heidegger, p.233). Unhomelike Dasein describes the state of mind when the Dasein (e.g., Papa) is not himself, since anxiety drives his facticity. Nobody knows why, except that anxiety 'brings one back to one's thrownness as something possible which can be repeated' (Heidegger, p.394). Therefore, if

anyone wishes to know why Papa acts the way he does, an inquiry into his primordial self would be essential.

Ontically, Papa's anxiety arises from his birth into a pagan family of Papa-Nnukwu, whom he terms heathen, and like Achebe's Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, dreads to relive. His early beginning is something he did not choose, yet it accounts for his anxiety and unsettledness in the world. Thus, his character of having been born into a pagan family, attunes his state-of-mind (anxiety) and brings him face to face with repeatability of actions. Since Papa is not at home with his primordial origin, dread of being alongside Papa-Nnukwu overpowers him. This fact remains part of his history, which he cannot go back to change, but can act upon through thrown projection into the future.

Adichie, wisely, portrays the possibility of futural projection in her agents, as seen in Papa's *a priori* condition of being, which is characterised by 'Being-in' (Heidegger, p. 79), – the residing or dwelling with white missionaries in understanding of being. To reside with, is 'to be familiar with' (Heidegger, p.80), and this entails that Papa's 'being-in' should bear the sense of being alongside others without exclusion. Heidegger concretizes 'being alongside' in the

context of the existential possibility of Dasein to care about entities by being close to them. However, one wonders why Papa's knowledge of his past origin often sets him with angst to the point that being-in and alongside his father results in thrownness. Since he abhors Papa-Nnukwu's presence, the fear of the latter stifles his being-with and renders him incapable of answering the call of care.

However, Papa-Nnukwu is different, considering his aptitude to answer the call of care within a historical temporal order. His rationale for sending his son to learn the ways of the white missionaries is to show that his actions occur within time-ness and other-ness; he is open to the essence of being. While Papa-Nnukwu's openness to being shows the basic constitution of Dasein as care, Papa's actions is contrary to this existential character. His logic of action reveals his circumspective concern to be at variance with what ought to matter to him as a beneficiary of Western civilisation whose mandate is to learn the art of being-alongside entities, in understanding of care and concern. Papa lacks this basic constitution of Dasein, which agreeing with Wrathall in *Heidegger and Unconcealment*, (2010) 'projects a human life onto the care structure that allows it to be a human

form of life' (Wrathall, 2010, p.4). His inability to answer the call of care renders him an unchosen character or the Das man. Das man describes the 'they' (Heidegger, p.169) form of inauthentic Dasein. Yet, Papa-Nnukwu embodies Heidegger's authentic Dasein that knows and cares about other beings by comporting himself towards entities in the world. Comportment (*Verhalten* in German), in this paper, explains the various ways in which characters engage with other beings by taking a stand that confers value/meaning on their world. Dreyfus (1995) interprets comportment as a natural mode of Dasein's being-in-the-world, one that projects itself toward things of concern, thus: '...that kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use' (p. 62). Similarly, Wrathall (2010) extends the notion to encompass 'every instance in which we experience something, and everything that we do' (p.22). Thus, comportment, together with the encountering and understanding of entities, discloses their use-value. Yet as Heidegger argues in *Basic Problem of Phenomenology*, understanding lies at the root of all comportment toward being (Heidegger, 1982, p.16). In this paper, comportment brings to the fore the character's dexterity, a sort of skilful coping, which

facilitates their movement into thrownness.

Practically, Amaka's painting of Papa-Nnukwu's portrait in *Purple Hibiscus*, Shug's lyrical compositions and Celie's Pant making are ontical pointers to skilful coping of the characters. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili and Jaja's experience of Amaka's artefact leads to their maverick choice of comportment towards the object in historical understanding of being. According to Kambili, 'Amaka gave his hair one last pat-a caress,-and then sat down on the floor in front of him, I followed the swift movement of her hand ...until I looked and saw the form clearly taking shape -a lean graceful form (Adichie, 2006, pp. 171-172). The portrait in this context is no mere aesthetic icon, but an ontological event that sustains the gaze in 'the concrete bonds of custom and tradition and the corresponding possibilities of one's own future' (Dreyfus, 1995, p. 254). Hence, the artefact brings Kambili and Jaja to the awareness of their primordial origin where they discover their *oluwa* in their grandfather's picture. In this way, comportment towards the object matters to them because it refines the residue of their ontological rootedness and reconnects them back to their history. Despite this meaningful presence, Papa's

mood blurs his access to the portrait, yet the same object discloses the 'directing-oneself-toward...' (Dreyfus, 1995, p. 51) of other characters who understand its use value.

Remarkably, mood is responsible for how the characters comport themselves to entities in the world. Mood means *stimmung* in German, but Heidegger uses the word *Befindlichkeit* to describe how one discovers oneself in a given situation. In the two novels, mood manifests the tone of 'being there' of the characters in varied ways that show 'sensibility of an age... (such as aggressive), the temper of the times (such as revolutionary), as well as the mood in a current situation...' (Dreyfus, 1995, p.169). Adichie and Walker are close in the spirit with which both experiment with mood, either in elevated or depressed modes to show that things matter to their characters. Mama and Celie for the most part of their existence have their state of mind in a depressed mood that plunge them into the 'they world' (Heidegger, 1962, p. 32). For instance, Mama's knowledge of her status as a wife of angst-ridden husband already sets her in a sad mood, although she tries hard to conceal it from her children. But because mood is so pervasive in nature to the point of overpowering its object, one sees in

Mama a disclosure of mood variation in the manner Papa's facticity affects her. For instance, 'when Papa threw the missal at Jaja, it was not the figurines that came tumbling down; it was everything' (Adichie, 2006, p.15). Everything refers to what matter to other characters, which Papa could not discern. Mood is responsible for Jaja and Mama's temper after Papa broke her figurines, as seen in Jaja's expression when he knelt beside Mama to help her park the pieces of the figurines: 'Careful, Mama, or those pieces will cut your fingers, he said' (Adichie, 2006, p.16). Kambili wonders at their unusual mood as she questions their equanimity of spirit 'why were they acting so normal, Jaja and Mama, as if they did not know what had just happened?' (Adichie, 2006, p.16). Already, Jaja and Mama understand how to master their mood by sorting for a better way to deal with their thrown state, productively.

In *The Colour Purple*, mood pervades the entire structure that make up the 92 letters written by Celie and her sister Nettie. Precisely, depressive and depersonalised moods are at work in the text and in each case disclose the thrown state of the characters. In the onset, Celie's mood shows her inability to be in touch with her inner self and reality of

her thrownness. Her encounter with Harpo displays the depth of her despondence and withdrawal from affects because of recurrent beatings from Mr-. She remarks thus: 'he beat me like he beat the children, ...it all I can do not to cry, I make myself wood, I say to myself Celie, you a tree' (Walker, 1986, p. 22). Also in Letter 73 of *The Colour Purple*, Celie appears as a weary soul slipping into the forgetfulness of Being. Her discourse with Shug reveals that, while she experiences deep feelings, she adopts a mood of indifference to the things around her, worse being the question of her absolute relationship with God. Writing her sister, Nettie, Celie notes, 'I don't write to God no more, I write you, what happened to God ast Shug, who that? I say...what God do for me? I ast, She say, Celie! Like she shock, He gave you life, good health, and a good woman that loves youu...' (Walker, 1986, p.164). Beyond Celie's melancholy is what Dreyfus, citing Sören Kierkegaard, terms a 'relationship between the eternal and the temporal' (Dreyfus, 2010, p. 294). Celie's argument concerning the position of God remains imprecise, and one perceives Walker's anxiety to recover Celie from existential error. Thus, Shug's expressive rejoinder 'He gave you life', is Walker's effort to re-route Celie's fate to the unchangeableness of God, to whom every

smallest (insignificant) being is significant. Thus, what Celie requires is a leap of faith and avid bond to God to see 'every object of desire as relative and ... as of equal significance' (Dreyfus, p. 294).

While mood presents Walker's agents with the absoluteness of the divine to whom everything in the world has a meaningful presence, Papa in *Purple Hibiscus* represents one whose deliverance to Western value ranks God in the semantic dialogue between the white God and indigenous Igbo Catholic God. Mood discloses how other characters comport themselves towards God and how Papa suffers anxiety as he tries hard to please God's representative – the white missionary priest. With Fr. Benedict, Papa is always in a happy mood, but when the new visiting priest celebrates in St Agnes, he feels sad over the priest's attunement when he chants an *Igbo* song: '*Bunieyaenu*' (Adichie, p. 36) during his sermon. Papa complains openly to the children after the Holy Mass: 'you see that priest, we must remember to pray for him' (Adichie, p. 37). The trouble with Papa lies in his making sense of mood at the cognitive level, than how one finds oneself in a temporal world order. Thus, he fails to attune himself to the sound of the symphony that elates the spirit of the

priest and the worshipping congregation in St Agnes. Sound of symphony in this context operates at the level of 'readiness to hand' (Heidegger, p. 99) of Dasein, or what Akwanya (2017) terms 'Use Value' (Akwanya, 2017, p. 46), considering its serviceability to the worshipping congregation. In this paper, readiness-to-hand has existential import; it discloses being to the characters and attunes them for comportment towards other entities in the world. This describes Dasein's

thrown projection, but Papa is ambivalent in his comportment to some of the entities that make up his world. One does not know why, however his antithetical mood suggests that deep down, like Achebe's Okonkwo, he has a deteriorative mood, which often makes him flee, each time his ontologically rootedness is called to question. Therefore, time, which is temporality, defines Papa's being in the world in terms of what matters to him.

Figure 1. Thrownness and Heidegger's Tripartite Ecstase Unit



### Temporality and Dasein's Thrownness

The idea of temporality has time as a point of departure in the understanding of being. In *Purple Hibiscus*, temporality structures the characters' experiences across the dimensions of having-been, the present, and the not-yet-to-come. A case in point is how Papa's experience of living with the white missionaries reshapes his present, as reflected in the

inhuman treatment he inflicts on Kambili. Papa reasons that Kambili commits sin by staying in the same house with her grandfather in Nsukka, so he scales her feet to caution her on how to avoid sin. Kambili notes that 'Papa lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it towards my feet, he poured the hot water on my feet... that is what you do to yourself when you walk into sin, you burn your



feet, he said' (Adichie, p. 201). Despite this unthinkable action, deep down, Papa suffers emotional breakdown. Amidst his anguish, his pensiveness discloses one who answers the call of 'authentic care' (Heidegger, p. 374), he does not intend to inflict Kambili with pathos. Adichie equally exonerates Papa's action by showing his rue sensibility and empathy. He enjoins Kambili, thus: 'everything I do, I do for your own good,... I committed a sin against my own body once,' he said, 'And the good father, the one I lived with while I went to St. Gregory's, came in and saw me, he asked me to boil water for tea, he poured the water in bowl and soaked my hands in it...the good father did that for my good' (Adichie, 2006, p. 203). Hence, Papa's action shows how his past sways his present, by refilling his sense of pathos.

Furthering the course of temporality, thrownness operates on three temporal zones: Enugu, Nsukka and Abba. Enugu presents the care structure of the characters with already existing values patterned on eschatology. The characters' eschatological understanding of being alongside Papa constitutes thrownness, because it reminds them of the correctness of values to imbibe, even when such values or norms infringe on their circumspective concern. For instance, all the members of the family

except Papa stood in shock at Mama's miscarriages as a result of Papa's successive kicks on his pregnant wife. Regrettably, one of the things that matter to the family is having children, and Kambili and Jaja already show interest to protect the child from Papa's angst when it is born, but their projection terminate in tremor.

Anyway, Adichie is not mindless of the post-traumatic effect of Mama's individualised throw in her young heroine, a reason she uses metaphor of red substance to capture Mama's miscarrying conditions: Kambili notes: 'I went upstairs and sat staring at... the red of fresh blood, flowing from Mama, flowing from my eyes...' (Adichie, p. 43). Mama's thrownness gets worse, as she reports to Aunty Ifeoma, 'I do not know if my head is correct' she said and pressed the back of her head to her forehead...I got back from the hospital today, the doctor told me to rest' (Adichie, p.235). Like Mama, Celie in *The Colour Purple*, experiences a sickening condition to the point of wanting to kill her oppressor, Mr-. She tells Sofia: 'I think I can't even remember the last time I felt mad...then after while every time I got mad, or start to feel mad, I got sick, felt like throwing up, terrible feeling...' (Walker, p. 39). In Celie's confused state, Shug Avery schools her in the hard journey of

becoming. Unlike Celie, Mama's thrownness conceals and at the same time unconceals her innate situatedness. Although she gulp into the depth of existential crisis when Papa broke a wooden table on her belly, causing her to miscarry at the sixth week, her radical response to the situation places her existence in an antithetical mode. She tells Kambili: 'You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, nne? Your father broke it on my belly'...my blood finished on the floor...' (Adichie, p.253). In order to end the drama of being-with an angst driven husband, Mama takes the ultimate option of existential nullity of the hunter and deals with the problem directly: 'I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka' (Adichie, p.294). Like Mama, Celie also tries to kill Mr--, but rethinks her action by routing her pains in a positive venturesome way.

Ontically, Mama's logic of action to kill Papa has setbacks in nexus of public clearing, which is the ground that authenticates being in any thrown state. Public clearing is essential in self-authentication since 'we are supposed to see that individual closeness and individual moods require a public clearing and that they reveal the situation and the things in it under some public aspect, i.e., an aspect available to others too'(Dreyfus,

1995, p. 169). Due to lack of clearing, Mama's action has a flaw of fallenness; her quest and actions fail to answer the call of care. Her dangerous adventure is against Dasein's ontological structure as Care. Therefore, her existence has a taint of bad fate.

Back in Nsukka, Adichie's characters start to lift off their thrownness in a nod of freedom. Auntie Ifeomas' small garden that grows purple hibiscus provides a spacio-temporal site of this empirical knowledge that metaphorically turns Jaja's thrown state towards authentic care. At Nsukka, the characters experience freedom of both spirit and will in doable actions. Freedom is self-evident in Jaja's involvement and participation in the world around him: 'that's hibiscus, isn't it Auntie? Jaja asked, staring at a plant... I didn't know there were purple hibiscuses' ...auntie Ifeoma laughed and touched the flowers... 'Everybody has that reaction the first time...' (Adichie, p. 136). Obviously, Jaja blossoms like auntie Ifeoma's hibiscus, free from Papa's angst, and leaps off his thrown conditions through the agency of Auntie Ifeoma by developing the right skills to comport himself to entities. Freedom is also manifest in *The Colour Purple* with Shug's presence as the catalyst that spurs Celie up beyond her morbid existence to a world of creativity. Celie's sense of

freedom resonates with Heidegger's stance in *On the Essence of Human Freedom*, as a 'determination of true Being ...insofar as man is man; he must participate in this determinations of Being' (Heidegger, 1985 p. 9). Like Jaja, Celie participates in her worldly environs as she changes the harmful tool (razor) in her hand with a skill in pant making. Her skill in pant making is a pointer to the new emerging-self. So, she leaps ahead by being in-touch with her emotions and in self-discovery of her true being as an individual that has right to live in a most possible authentic mode, free from Mr—'s angst. Therefore, an existential reading of *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Colour Purple* shows that thrownness is manifest but not absolute in the texts, since the characters have existential givens to leap ahead of their thrown conditions.

### Conclusion

An existential reading of the two novels studied, offers multiple interpretation of the texts as classical exploration of existential thrownness. The current study examines the texts' engagement of

thrownness within Heidegger's tripartite ecstase units of, Present, Past and Future. The findings reveal that Adichie and Walker's characters experience thrownness as deliverance into a particular world, cultural and religious sensibility, which they did not choose. Such temporal world order determines their mood in any thrown state' hence, temporality is the point of departure for understanding of being. It is within the vista of temporality that the characters answer the call of care by comporting themselves to entities in their world as ready to hand. The study also finds that thrownness is inseparable from human existence; hence, the characters live in a state of immediacy. While other characters attain this goal, Adichie's deliverer, Papa, acting outside the realm of temporality, loses himself in existential nullity. But, Walkers' agents, Celie, Shug, like Jaja, and Kambili are Heidegger's authentic Dasein through skilful coping. Therefore, an existential approach undertaken in this reading demonstrates that thrownness is at work in the two texts.

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