Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* as a Rewriting of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Rappaccini’s Daughter”

**Abstract:** This paper focuses on the shared literary features between Nathaniel Hawthorne's “Rappaccini's Daughter” and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. It discusses Hawthorne's short story (1844) as a major work influencing Adichie's novel (2003). It investigates Adichie's approach of unraveling some of the primary issues of her time through referring to Hawthorne's views in “Rappaccini's Daughter”. The paper also examines the theme of Religion and character formation as two similar literary elements, and it examines how the symbolism of the experiment flower is used differently according to the authors' thematic views. By considering Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* as a rewriting of Hawthorne's “Rappaccini's Daughter”, the researcher aims to depict the themes of religion and science, character formation, and symbolism as shared literary elements between the two works.

**Keywords:** Hawthorne, Adichie, Short stories, novels.

**INTRODUCTION:**
In most of Hawthorne's stories, themes, characters and imageries depict false social and religious assumptions that are criticised through the use of symbolisms. In “Rappaccini's Daughter”, Hawthorne attacks science through the use of symbolism. The story denounces scientists and considers their profession as opposition to God's will. Another significant reading of “Rappaccini's Daughter” is the ideological clash between characters who face conflicts as a result of their different understanding and perspectives on social and religious matters. The conflict in Hawthorne's story, therefore, is external: Man against God, or Man against Man. Thus, the scope of this paper includes the external conflict, the realist views on science and religion, and symbolisms in “Rappaccini's Daughter” as they are perceived in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*. An important way for understanding Nathaniel Hawthorne's works is through studying his life. The American fiction and story writer Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in Salem, Massachusetts in 1804. When he was fifteen years old, Hawthorne had a leg injury that prevented him from going to school. During his stay at home, Hawthorne explored reading literature and the skill of writing. Hawthorne's use of symbolism and allegory is one of the features that make his works significant.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born in Nigeria in 1977. She is a Nigerian writer of novels, short stories, and nonfiction. Adichie left Nigeria when she was 19, and received her education in the United States. Her works have been translated into over thirty languages. Most of Adichie's works is centred around feminism and gender equality. She is considered the daughter of Chinua Achebe, the father of Modern African literature. Hawthorne's “Rappaccini's Daughter” is about Professor Rappaccini, a scientist, and his daughter Beatrice who loves nature and is attached to it. Giovanni Guasconti, their neighbour, is astonished by Beatrice's beauty as well as her strange relationship with the plants in her father's garden. Giovanni notices the death of an insect when exposed to Beatrice's skin or breath. Giovanni discovers that Beatrice is poisonous herself, because her father raises her around poisonous flowers. Giovanni brings a powerful remedy to Beatrice, but it kills Beatrice rather than cure her. Adichie's novel *Purple Hibiscus* is about a Nigerian teenager named Kambili who lives under the control of her oppressive father, Eugene. Due to the political problems in Nsukka, Eugene sends Kambili and her brother Jaja to their Aunt Ifeoma, a professor at the University of Nigeria. Ifeoma has a beautiful garden at her house where she plants an experimental purple hibiscus. Kambili finally discovers love and laughter at her Aunt's home. However, Kambili's mother, who is named Beatrice, suffers from the abuse of her husband, and she decides to poison him.
**Literature Review**

Although Adichie's novel *Purple Hibiscus* has not been explored excessively, studies have discussed important elements of the story. In “Changing Borders and Creating Voices: Silence as Character in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*” by Ogaga Okuyade, the researcher demonstrates the development of the story's main character, Kambili, and her struggle to speak under her father's abuse. The researcher also studies Kambili's growth in relation with religion and domestic violence, since she is presented in the novel as a observer and victim. Okuyade tackles Kambili's coming of age and how she finds her voice. At the same time, the researcher compares Kambili's growth with Nigeria after colonialism. The research explains how silent is conceptualize through characters; they are divided into subservient and dominant group. Finally, the researcher supports the hypothesis by considering silence the weapon of the subservient group; it helps them attain their power. Cynthia R. Wallace studies *Purple Hibiscus* as a postcolonial novel in her study “Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *purple hibiscus* and the paradoxes of postcolonial redemption”. The researcher analyses the issue of abused and its relation with Christianity, colonialism, and patriarchy. Wallace also criticizes the Igbo culture by studying the novel’s characters whose beliefs are a manifestation of a secular age. Wallace emphasizes that the paper is an exemplified and a theological account of Mercy Amba Odyoye. Lastly, the paper studies the paradox of Igbo culture.

In “Beyond the odds of the red hibiscus: a critical reading of Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*”, Anthony Oha discuss the production of realities in African fiction. Oha examines the significance of the African literary works. The researcher also suggests that the need to write stories about the real life in Africa may be the reason for their success. The writer also suggests that the presentation of African in *Purple Hibiscus* is critical. Oha's paper investigates how Adichie has unraveled the problems of politics, freedom, and gender. Koskei Margaret Chepkorir's research “Representation of Female African Immigrant Experience in the West: A Case Study of Chimamanda Adichie’s *Americanah*” examines the challenges that female African immigrants encounter as presented in Adichie's latest novel Americanah. The study focusses on gender role of African immigrants in the West and compares it to the Adichie's representation of African immigrants. The researcher uses African feminism as a theoretical framework to depicts the plights that female African immigrants face. The study considers racism, stereotyping, male domination, and economic pressure as four of the major issues of female African immigrants. Chepkorir also illustrates Adichie's vision on the empowerment of female African immigrants and their significant response to their experience in the West.

Camille Isaacs's article “Mediating women’s globalized existence through social media in the work of Adichie and Bulawayo.” discusses the influence of communication through social media in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Americanah* and NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. The researcher studies the protagonists of the novels, Ifemelu and Darling, and their use of the Internet to mediate and solves problems. Isaacs studies Ifemelu and Darling and demonstrates their relationship with their homeland and the diaspora through the use of Internet. The research also discusses the Internet and blogosphere and how they create access to the homeland and the host culture. Isaacs concludes by stressing on the importance of physical communication over computer communication, as it creates a bigger influence on mediating. Bimbola Oluwafunlola Idowu-Faith's paper “Fictionalizing Theory, Theorizing Fiction: The Stylistics of Return Migration in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Americanah*,” investigates the style of *Americanah* and the role of migration in the novel. Idowu-Faith portrays a connection between migration and romance, hair politics, and skin colour, and she illustrates the influence of migration on these issues. The researcher utilises international migration theory as a theoretical framework and explains Adichie's terms of “Americanah” and “American” through it. Idowu-Faith demonstrates how the protagonist's choice of being “Americanah” is a closure to her migration journey. The research also depicts the challenges faced by Ifemelu after her return to her homeland and establishes the relation between them and the return migration theory.

Omolara F. Abiona's paper, “Of Maps, Margins and Storylines: Sociologically Imagining Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*” investigates the sociological imagination in "The Thing Around Your Neck" and *Americanah* through her fictional character. The research apply's the theory of Wright Mills' *The Sociological Imagination* to analyse the relation between the historical implications of Nigeria in the modern time and the biographies of Nigerian women by using a feminist analysis. Abiona uses two theoretical frameworks: hybrid of cultural sociology by Griswold and diaspora studies by Butler. The findings of Abiona suggests an existence relation between sociological knowledge and African narrative literature and a better understanding of Nigerian diaspora. The writer also emphasises on the significane of storytelling to liberate diaspora communities.

Nora Berning's article "Narrative Ethics and Alterity in Adichie's Novel *Americanah*" examines the notion of alterity and narrative ethics of alterity in Adichie's *Americanah*. Berning studies Americanah as an ethical genre of the modern times that deals with question of identity and perceptions of individuals and their surroundings. The researcher conceptualises a narrative ethics of alterity by addressing the relation between “the ethics of the told” and “the ethics of the
telling”. Berning demonstrates the ethical and political importance of alterity in fictions of migration.

"A life Elsewhere?: Afropolitanist Reading of Race Struggle, Identity and Home in Chimamanda Adichie’s Americanah.” by Hammed Oluwadare Adejare underscores race politics in the West and the psychological struggle that the African immigrants face due to their unique identity among the Western society. Adejare's study studies the contextual meaning of the word “Back” in Americanah. The study defines the meaning of “Black” as a conferred identity and an undesirable profile in the American society. Therefore, Adejare provides evidence that African immigrants adapt a new identity by creating a new meaning of “Black” to fit in the American society. The researcher also traces Adichie's criticism of the American and British race system on the African immigrants' identity, trial, and triumph. In a research by Mevi Hova “Redefining the African Diaspora: Migration, Identity, and Gender Narratives in Diasporic West African Women's fiction”, the researcher addresses the contemporary works of African women who write about gender dynamics in the West by using the identity of diasporic African women in their stories. The study includes Adichie's Americanah as well “The Thing Around Your Neck” and “The Arrangers of Marriages” from Adichie's story collection The Thing Around Your Neck. Hova focusses on the destruction of patriarchy in African diaspora as a result of their migration. The researcher also reviews the interplay between class and economic and African women's choice of migration. Jeannine Ortega's article "Post-Colonial Female Identity: An Examination of the Twentieth Century Narrative Between Nation and Identity in A Question of Power, See Then Now, and Americanah.” depicts the post-colonial development in the three novels of female African writers such as Adichie. The writer argues the use of narrative to center the colonial themes in the stories (immigrant experience, local movement, and migration and return), and using them as a means of seeking independence. Ortega's article tackles the complexity of decolonisation in the narrative of female African writers like Adichie. The article also studies the characters of female identity and compares their post-colonial locations and time to understand post-colonial aspects through narrative of modern fiction. Soheilla Arabian's article "Journey and Return: Visiting Unbelonging and Otherness in Adichie’s Americanah.” explores the influence diaspora and displacement on immigrants. The article aims to address the discriminatory behaviou and its result in changing the decision of return of the immigrant characters. The article also examines the immigrants' mind-set of creating a better home in the West, but fail due to racial discrimination. Arabian's tackles the effect of sense of alienation on the immigrants characters in Americanah, by focussing on diaspric facts such as displacement, unbelonging, discrimination, otherness and return.

In Draia Tunca’s “The Confessions of a “Buddhist Catholic”: Religion in the Works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie”, the researcher depicts the role of religion in Adichie’s works (from 1997 to 2013). By investigating Adichie's creative writing, nonfictional works, and interviews, Tunca examines the Adichie's religious development and reflections on her Christianity, as well as Islam, Pentecostalism, and traditional Igbo religion. The researcher argues that Adichie's use of religion in her works reflect her high awareness of the relation between ethnic, religious, social, and political changes that have impacted post-colonial Nigeria. Tunca demonstrates Adichie's attempt to denounce religious extremism and to put an emphasis on spirituality. The paper also indicates Adichie's clear and direct presentation of Catholicism.

Stefanie Reuter's "Becoming a Critical Subject: Developing a Critical Consciousness and Coming to Voice in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah.” focusses on Ifemelu's social struggle and how it helps her develop an active consciousness. The paper considers Americanah a bildungsroman novel since it traces the life of a central character. Thus, Reuter investigates Ifemelu' coming to voice as well as her consciousness of race and gender. The paper views Americanah a learning tool that explains race and Black feminism through Ifemelu's character – the main character. It also illustrates two motifs that build the plot of Americanah: hair and normative language.

The article "Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah: Reopening a Conversation about Race and Beauty.” by Verónica Baldomir Pardiñas provides a social commentary on Americanah. The first part of the article discusses the issue of race in the United States in relation with other issues that make up beauty standard such as hair texture, skin colour, and weight. It also demonstrates how race has changes through time until the twenty first century. The second part illustrates the influence of black hair and colourism in be

Emelda U. Ucham and Jairos Kangira's paper "African Hybrids: Exploring Afropolitan identity Formation in Taiye Selasi's Ghana Must Go and Chimamanda Adichie’s Americanah.” discusses the formation of Afropolitan identity in Taiye Selasi’s Ghana Must Go and Chimamanda Adichie’s Americanah. The paper uses Selasi’s essay “Who is an Afropolitan” as its framework. The researchers focus on the theme of Afropolitan identity formation, and compare the use of this theme in the two novels. The paper investigates the identity formation of Dike, one of the characters in Americanah, and it demonstrates his struggle with his identity among his American friends. Ucham and Kangira finds that Afropolitan identity is
composed of three levels, according to Selasi’s essay: national, racial, and cultural.

The article “Afropolitanism for Black Women: Sexual Identity and Coming to Voice in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Americanah,” by Caroline Lyle is an expansion of Taiye Selasi’s essay “Who is an Afropolitan.” The article adds sexual identity as a fourth dimension to Selasi’s concept of Afropolitanism - Selasi’s three dimensions are: national, racial, and cultural. Lyle argues that Selasi’s conceptualisation of Afropolitanism is incomplete, since female Afropolitans experience racialised sexual identity. The researcher focuses on the construction of female Afropolitans through the concept of Afropolitan identity. The article finds that female racialised sexual experience as well as the voices of female Afropolitans are essential to becoming a full subject. Although many critical works have been done on Hawthorne’s “Rappaccini’s Daughter” and Adichie's Purple Hibiscus, no research has been found to indicate the relation between the two works, in spite of the obvious similarities in the depiction of themes, characters’ names and formation, and use of symbols. Thereby, the researcher aims to study this topic by investigating the shared literary elements between the two works and considering Purple Hibiscus as a rewriting of Hawthorne's “Rappaccini's Daughter”.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie comments on Hawthorne's views on science in “Rappaccini's Daughter” through her novel Purple Hibiscus. Firstly, Hawthorne was against the fast development of science and considered science a destructive tool. According to Frederick William Dame, Hawthorne had beliefs in the evilness of human knowledge. He states that Hawthorne believed science does not create moral developments (144). Hawthorne's negative ideas of science and academic knowledge inspire Adichie to write a post post-modern commentary on Hawthorne's perceptions by focussing on the constructive nature of knowledge. Therefore, in Purple Hibiscus, Adichie unravels the attack on science and human knowledge by regarding science as a powerful instrument of developing high morals and creating hope.

In “Rappaccini's Daughter”, Hawthorne denounces human knowledge and considers it harmful conduct. Rappaccini, a college professor, becomes obsessed with his science until it makes an evil of him; he sacrifices his daughter Beatrice for his science experiment. While Beatrice believes that her life became miserable after the experiment, her father tries to force his immoral, inhuman ideas when he says “[m]isery, to be able to quell the mightiest with a breath?”. Moreover, Rappaccini tries to convince Beatrice that she must be evil and not weak, “[w]ouldst thou, then, have preferred the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil and capable of none?” (Hawthorne, “Rappaccini's Daughter” 17). In “Rappaccini’s Daughter”, Professor Rappaccini is a representative case of the destructive nature of human knowledge and its evil purposes. Consequently, Hawthorne criticises scientists and educated people for using science in awful purposes, and presents science as a corrupting tool. Adichie refuses the presentation of science and education as destructive, so she reconsiders Hawthorne's negative image of science. In Purple Hibiscus, Professor Ifeoma, Kambili's Aunt, represents the educated class in her community. Her education and profession make her capable of setting her morals and achieving maturity. For example, Ifeoma stands for her beliefs regardless of the consequences, and “she will speak the truth, even if it gets her fired.” from college (Adichie, Purple Hibiscus, 55). Ifeoma is also presented as capable of providing a loving and comforting place for her niece and nephew: Kambili and Jaja. When Kambili is sent to Ifeoma's home, she finds what she lacked at her father's home: conversations and joy. Kambili describes the situation at home and says, “Jaja and Mama and I spoke more with our spirits than with our lips.

[Until] “... Aunty Ifeoma’s ... flat in Nsukka began to lift the silence”. However, when Kambili describes her life at Ifeoma's home, she says “[l]aughter always rang out in Aunty Ifeoma’s house, and no matter where the laughter came from, it bounced around all the walls, all the rooms” (Adichie, Purple Hibiscus, 16). Thereby, Adichie believes in the benefits of education through presenting a positive image of professors and educated people like Ifeoma.

After a close reading of Hawthorne and Adichie's different views on science, it is evident that Adichie supports science and knowledge, unlike Hawthorne. Adichie believes that through education, new opportunities come and people find their happiness. Hawthorne, on the other hand, considers knowledge a road that takes human to wrongdoings. Thus, Adichie replaces Hawthorne's presentation of science and knowledge, and employs a positive image instead. Another thematic idea that Adichie rewrites is Hawthorne's views on religion, which makes a vivid theme in “Rappaccini's Daughter”. Although Hawthorne was not a member of religious organisations and rejected many of the Puritan ideas, religion plays a major role in his works (Stuart and Donavel). According to Graham, Hawthorne depicts religion with hypocrisy, criticises the duplicity of Puritans, and describes evil in Catholicism as a stereotyped image (33). In “Rappaccini's Daughter”, Hawthorne stresses on the Puritans prejudice against sinners. This idea is especially shown in Giovanni's relationship with Beatrice; he forbids her to pray and call God when Beatrice shows her truth to him. When Beatrice prays for God's mercy, he angrily stops her and asks, “[l]houl! Dost thou pray?” cried Giovanni, still with the same fiendish scorn” (Hawthorne, “Rappaccini's Daughter” 16). Giovanni as a representative of the Puritans, he
shows the harshness of this community and how it is abusive against those who need forgiveness.

Similarly, Adichie uses religion as a critical social phenomenon in her novel Purple Hibiscus. This theme is delivered to the reader by Kambili's father, Eugene. Regardless of the father's religious aspects and interest in church, he is abusing his family. Eugene is presented as a character that is kind and helpful outside the house, but evil and oppressive inside the house. The father advocates improving the churches in Nsukka and constructing it by making religion a priority of his people, while he is deconstructing his family at home. Eugene, moreover, forbids his children from visiting their grandfather because of his different religious faith. His prejudice against Catholicism makes him consider others who are not Catholic as evils. Kambili tries to find the truth and asks herself, “I wondered if Papa was right, if being with Papa-Nnukwu had made Jaja evil, had made us evil” (Adichie, Purple Hibiscus, 175). When Kambili visits her grandfather, Eugene tortures her by hot water and says, “[y]ou should strive for perfection. You should not see sin and walk right into it.” (Adichie, Purple Hibiscus, 177). Therefore, Adichie agrees with Hawthorne on the hypocrisy and prejudice of Catholicism in Purple Hibiscus. As a result of this depiction of the theme of Religion in “Rappaccini's Daughter” and Purple Hibiscus, there is evidence that Adiche's religious views are influenced by Hawthorne. Although Nigeria has different ethno-religious groups (Catholics and Muslims), Adichie focuses on Catholicism and follows Hawthorne's approach. Adichie also uses Hawthorne's demonstration of Catholics and critiques their lack of honesty and compassion.

Adichie's novel Purple Hibiscus also tackles other literary elements from “Rappaccini's Daughter”. The authors of “Rappaccini's Daughter” and Purple Hibiscus share the symbolism of the experimental purple flower. Employing the purple colour represents science, as the making of this secondary colour requires mixing two primary colours: red and blue. In both stories, flowering the experimental flowers takes place at the professors' garden, the Professors Rappaccini and Ifeoma. While the setting and colour of the flowers are the same in “Rappaccini's Daughter” and Purple Hibiscus, they symbolise different ideas about science.

In “Rappaccini's Daughter”, Hawthorne's use of the purple flower as a representation of Rappaccini's rule. Moreover, Rappaccini's evilness is demonstrated in the flowers' poisonous nature, as both of them harm what surround them. Yet, the appearance of the purple flower and its fragrance is deceiving. After Giovanni smells the flower, he finds later that the poison smell like the odor of flowers; “It might be the odor of the flowers. Could it be Beatrice's breath, which thus embalmed her words with a strange richness, as if by steeping them in her heart?”

(Hawthorne, “Rappaccini's Daughter”10). Consequently, the purple flower is similar to Rappaccini's deceptive and corrupting use of science; Rappaccini's profession as a professor deceives people like Giovanni, while the flower is deceptive by its beautiful colour and fragrance. Hawthorne's symbolism of the experimental flower, thus, refers to Rappaccini's deceptive nature and harmful use of science.

Adichie follows Hawthorne's literary feature of employing an experimental purple flower in her novel Purple Hibiscus, but modifies Hawthorne's symbol of the flower. Adichie's symbolism of the purple hibiscus carries a positive image of science. In Purple Hibiscus, Ifeoma implants the experimental flower at her garden. The purple flower denotes the feeling Kambili finds at Ifeoma's place: Kambili's hope and love. Thereby, Ifeoma's uses science as a tool to construct the environment and her society, rather than to harm it. Unlike Hawthorne, Adichie believes that through science and experiments, humans find hope.

The name Beatrice is used in both works for abused characters. In “Rappaccini's Daughter”, Hawthorne names the daughter of Rappaccini Beatrice, who is abused and misused by her father. Throughout the story, Beatrice is portrayed as a sad daughter who is unhappy with her life and calls is miserable. When she kills an instinct by her breath she “observed this remarkable phenomenon, and crossed herself, sadly, but without surprise”. Beatrice's poisonous nature apart her from her lover Giovanni, hence she asks her father, werefore didst thou inflict this miserable doom upon thy child?” (Hawthorne, “Rappaccini's Daughter” 17).

Similarly, Adichie names one of her main characters in Purple Hibiscus Beatrice, who is Kambili's mother. Firstly, Beatrice is abused by her husband Eugene, while she sadly endures such pain. At the end of the story, however, Beatrice cannot handle Eugene's oppressive nature against her and the children. Therefore, she poisons him. Secondly, since all the characters in this novel have Nigerian names except for Beatrice, this suggests that Adichie intends using the name Beatrice to make her rewriting vivid. Consequently, the characters of Beatrice is presented as an abused and poisonous person in “Rappaccini's Daughter” and Purple Hibiscus.

CONCLUSION:

This paper views Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus as a rewriting of Nathaniel Hawthorne's “Rappaccini's Daughter”. First, the paper demonstrates how Adichie uses her novel to comment on Hawthorne's negative presentation of science. This commentary develops a different analysis of the stories most important symbolism: the experimental purple flower. According to Hawthorne's story “Rappaccini's Daughter”, the experimental flower symbolizes Rappaccini's evilness in particular, and human's harmful
use of science in general. On the other hand, Adichie's novel *Purple Hibiscus* has some disagreement concerning the disadvantages of science. The author suggests that science is a powerful tool that creates a better world. Since the symbolism of the purple hibiscus is related to the theme of the story, the flower, thus, is a representation of science. It provides an optimistic image of science where it creates a place of hope and love for Kambili and her brother.

*Purple Hibiscus* also shares with Hawthorne's “Rappaccini's Daughter” literary elements. The theme of religion, as well as the character formation and naming of Beatrice, are similar. Considering the stories' mutual theme, Adichie supports Hawthorne's religious view; she presents hypocrisy and prejudice as dual aspects of Catholicism. Likewise, the name Beatrice is used in relation with poison; Beatrice in “Rappaccini's Daughter” poisons her lover Giovanni, while in *Purple Hibiscus* Beatrice poisons her husband, Eugene. The two character of Beatrice also experiences patriarchal violence in “Rappaccini's Daughter” and *Purple Hibiscus*.

Through these stories, Adichie agrees with Hawthorne on the dual aspects of Catholicism and the unjust social system of patriarchy and disagrees with Hawthorne's negative views on science and the harm of human knowledge. For future researches, the researcher suggests comparing the theme of religion in Adichie's short story “A Private Experience” with Hawthorne's “The Minister's Black Veil”, as both works raise the issue of the influence of religion on social relationships and the assumptions about religious people.

**REFERENCE**