

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

PROJECT TITLE

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FAMILY SOCIETY
DYNAMICS IN ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'S *BY THE SEA* AND
CHINELO OKPARANTA'S *UNDER THE UDALA TREES***

A Postcolonial/Psycoanalytical Study

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (MPHIL) IN ENGLISH DEGREE**



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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is the result of an original study conducted by me, under the supervision of Dr. Kwame Osei-Poku of the Department of English of the University of Ghana, Legon. References made to other people's work have been duly acknowledged. This Thesis has never been presented to any other academic institution, in whole or part, for an award of any academic degree.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late son, A. A. Opoku Doe. He who made a strong woman stronger, taught me patience, rare love and taught me to count my blessings always.



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I am grateful to Odomankoma who has seen me through so much, and still grants me the grace to keep going.

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I also say thank you to my mother; Shirley Agowa Banafoe. You are forever a rock on which I stand, unshaken, unfazed and never disappointing. I love you from deep within my soul and owe everything I am to you. God bless you abundantly.

Also, to the Sefa Family, my best friend Juvian Osei-Bonsu, Leslie Carl Nii Amaa Ammah and partner in life, Boawulor Kofi Narh, I say God richly bless you and make all your dreams come true.

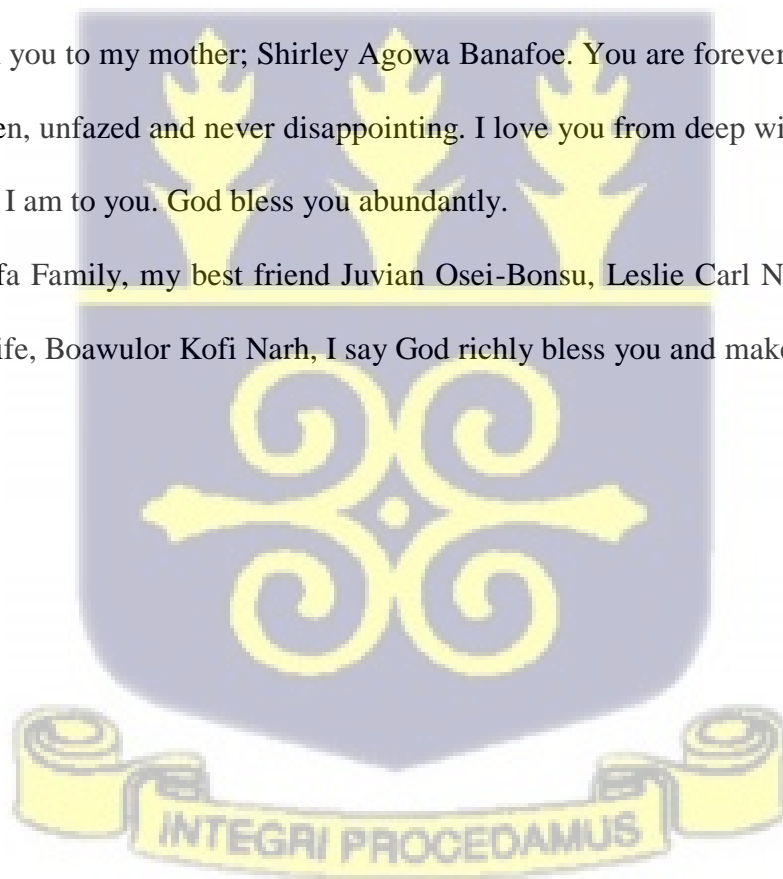


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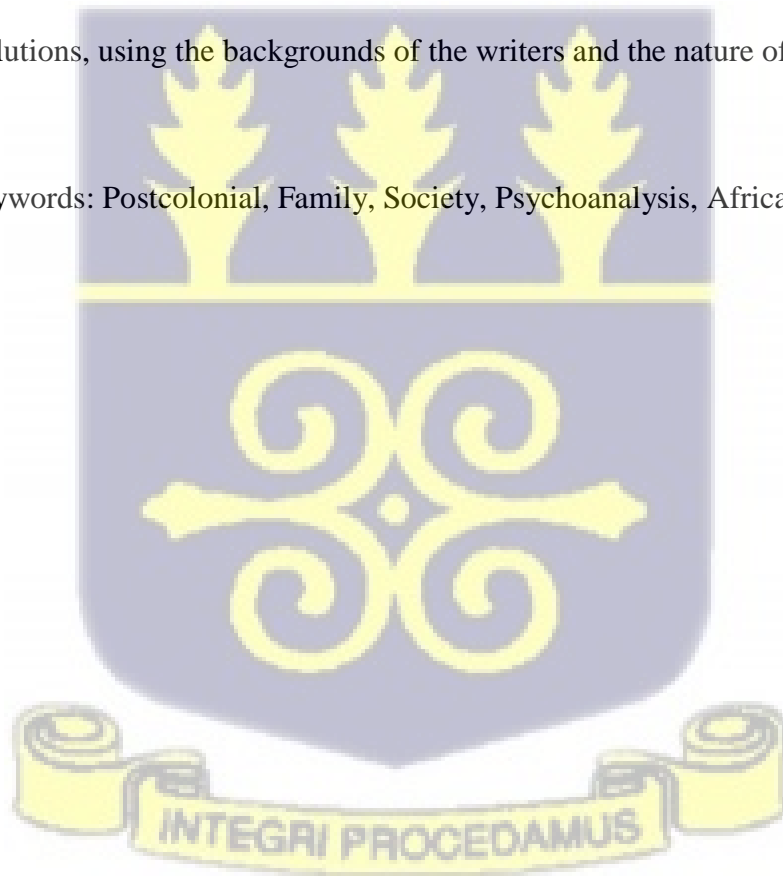
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ABSTRACT

This study delves into family and societal dynamics of Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* and Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* using postcolonial and Psychoanalytical theories. The family, in most African societies, has evolved since colonial times. Colonial cultures have overtaken part of indigenous ones. That notwithstanding, civilization continuously adds onto the changes in African cultures. The two texts under study, both written after independence, have traces of these changes. This study points these out and discusses the reasons they thrive and possible solutions, using the backgrounds of the writers and the nature of their characters.

Keywords: Keywords: Postcolonial, Family, Society, Psychoanalysis, African Novels.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The extended family system which is now being taken over by the nuclear in most African countries calls for a study into post-colonial Africa and factors which influence the change. This study is on two books written by Abdulrazak Gurnah and Chinelo Okparanta respectively, whose themes border on varied topics related to the African family and society in post-colonial times. Whereas the former's, *By the Sea*, is based on abuse of power, migration, corruption among others, the latter focuses on the system under the Biafra Civil War which tears down many families, presents a front for showing love of the society through guardianship, and shows trauma which even Christianity fails to heal.

Besides Gurnah's *By the Sea* and Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees*, this study will utilize library research and close critical reading. Using the Psychoanalytical and Postcolonial theories, together with the qualitative research analysis, the selected texts will be critically examined based on their characters, situations, thoughts, angst, fears, judgements and prejudices to achieve the study's objectives.

The two primary texts chosen for the study focus on family and societal relations in Tanzania and Nigeria respectively. Whereas *By the Sea* paints a picture of reasons some Africans flee their homelands, *Under the Udala Trees* takes us through a postcolonial Africa where civil wars destroy the very essence of some African families.

1.1.1 Insights into the Texts Under Study

Though Julius Nyerere tried to challenge the geopolitics of colonialism and the Cold War after the Arusha Declaration of 1967 (Sharp et al.), many problems abound in Tanzania due to

geopolitics. This has wrecked many families and homes. From poverty to powerplay where corruption is concerned, many families have had to fight for lands, houses, jobs and freedom, not to talk of peace. Gurnah creates a character which depicts some of these cruel existence in postcolonial Africa and takes readers through the character's pain of re-living their past.

Nigeria's Igbos, who have still not found their freedom from Nigeria, even after the Biafran Civil War which saw the deaths of many and destruction of many families, also inspired Chinelo's theme of family destruction, queerness and the colonial influences on the people of the time.

1.1.2 Family Society Dynamics in Both Texts

Diverse genres of literature in Africa are based on the family systems and the way they are evolving in contemporary times. Many writers, fictional and biographical, touch on marriage, religious beliefs, sibling rivalry, family disputes, unacceptable and shameful relationships, ties and love within the family among others, to show how far the family goes to define relationships in Africa in these postcolonial times. It seems the very fabric of the complex family systems exists in most parts of Africa and they are wrought by greed, threatened by the selfish need for power and wealth, thereby destroying a section of an otherwise beautiful system. It is for this reason the researcher seeks to study these family and societal dynamics in the books of an East African; Abdulrazak Gurnah and a West African; Chinelo Okparanta, to uncover what still remains of the family systems according to these writers and their narratives. These narratives are discussed bearing in mind the modern influences as against traditional norms of societies involved and explore how coups and wars destroy postcolonial African families.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The African family and society, though heavily criticized, have remained the very structures on which have inspired many great literary studies have been made. Needless to say, the evolving scope of literary works call for more studies into the family unit and society. Gurnah's *By the Sea* and Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* are texts which have not been studied together where the family and society are concerned maybe due to sexuality themes overshadowing all else. Yet the building of families in these texts mirror postcolonial times and show the struggles, friction and love which need attention to bloom. It is due to this that the researcher takes it upon herself to work on them to add to existing literature and also to contribute to the important discussion of the family and society dynamics in many African societies.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Determine the post-colonial effects on family society dynamics in African societies.
2. To find out the role society plays in the traumas of protagonists.
3. To determine the role of psychoanalysis in uncovering societal traumas.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study will:

1. What are the effects of family society dynamics in the texts?
2. What are the roles society play in the traumas of the protagonists?
3. How does psychoanalysis help in understanding societal traumas?
4. What are the postcolonial effects on the family in both texts?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Though there are many great theoretical perspectives to the selected texts, they have only been read based on Queer theory. This study is significant because it uses Postcolonial and Psychoanalytical theories to project the family for all to see the lapses and humanity therein. This is because Westernization is overtaking cultures in Africa and these texts outline these traits through their storytelling capabilities. Abdulrazak Gurnah, in his skilled narrative, speaks truths through fiction, and Chinelo Okparanta paints a narrative that is relatable, with bits and pieces of a factual war, which leave scars, which the whole Nigeria still battle with. This study brings out the many traumas some African migrants and those who have experienced wars go through, the challenges of their societal oppression and their personal struggles and clearly adds to Adichie's authorial notion in *Half of a Yellow Sun* that Biafra, no matter how it rises, loses in the end due to financial incapacitation and so is important as a literary study.

1.6 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* (2015) and Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* (2001) are both novels which are family oriented. Both books have protagonists who think family is everything and go all out to pour their hearts into their upbringing, hurts, surreal moments, disappointments, friction, and make obvious the love that is epic and amiss in their lives. They also situate well with both postcolonial and psychoanalytical theories, in that, both books were written in the post-independence era and both deal with traumas.

The fact that the family systems in Africa keep changing is enough justification to warrant this study. For cultures which loved the extended family systems, most African cultures are shifting to nuclear families and Gurnah's *By the Sea*, together with Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees*, give major reasons the extended family systems are giving way to the nuclear. Latif's difficult

life with his extended family; adulterous mother, drunken father, sexually queer and rebellious brother in a bullying community together with Saleh's witch-hunting due to a property he legally inherits from his step-mother, are some of the reasons Abdulrazak's characters eventually choose to live far from home, ending up lonely. Okparanta's protagonist, Ijeoma's account of war, the loss of her father, abandonment by her mother, rejection of her sexuality by her communities also contribute to her choosing to live life on her terms. These fictitious but relatable texts give perspectives from male and female writers considering Okparanta is female, and Gurnah is male.

It is worth mentioning that, although both texts were written in the same century, they mirror the perspectives of immigrants who have experiences in the extended family systems and the nuclear family systems. This is because both authors have lived in both Africa and Europe and know well why the family systems keep changing. The fact that both writers write from their gender perspectives also adds credibility to the study; Okparanta's major character is female, Gurnah's protagonists are males. These, in addition to other evidence, helps in the interpretation of both texts.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The argument in postcolonial discourse in recent times concerns itself with "the use of indigenous cultural traditions, the appropriation of English, and the impact (whether cultural, psychological or political) of colonialism and its aftermath" O'Reilly (2001, p.61). Said's *Orientalism* (2001) argues that "The (fabricated) Orient was a European invention, and had been since antiquity, a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (p1) and goes on to assert the realistic existence of the Orient despite the fabrication. To wit, the Orient is a real human toy which plays the role of their imaginative creature, hence the importance of waking the Orient through researches, in order to bring an end to them playing imaginative roles.

This study makes use of Postcolonial and Psychoanalytical Theories. This is because both texts heavily depict the influence of colonialism in post-colonial Africa, and also shows the traumas which influence the behaviours of the characters, perhaps, through the lives of their authors. Postcolonial and psychoanalytical theories are both important to the study of African literature because they provide different ways of understanding and interpreting the experiences and perspectives of African writers. Postcolonial theory studies all the literature affected by the cultures of colonial or imperial rule. Homi Bhabha's third space, mimicry, difference, ambivalence and hybridity will be used to appreciate the primary texts through Said's *Orientalism* to uncover the major lapses in the family systems in post-colonial Africa. Sawant (2012) opines "The concept of post-colonialism (or often postcolonialism) deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies." (p.1). Africa in postcolonial era is not growing as everything points to the fact that the continent is stagnated. It is a little wonder many books written in this era touch on the scars of imperialism. Abraham's *Mine Boy*, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, to mention but few. Frantz Fanon's book *Black Skin, White Mask* (1952) comes to mind, in which he states that Black people are 'psyched' by colonizers to be dependent through annihilation of the body, mind and soul. It is a little wonder many Black people are dependent on Western cultures and consider their inferior. Homi Bhabha contends that all cultural systems and statements constructed in a space called the third space. It is perhaps, this third space that forces contemporary writers to satirically produce works to help "their world" see their flaws and work on them. Some of these literatures have painted pictures of the formerly colonized, acting like the colonizers where dressing, eating, speaking, beliefs and many others are concerned. In hindsight, they have been plunged into a new world where their cultures are mixed with other cultures (hybridity) as they mimic, thereby mocking the colonizers. "When Diderot in the eighteenth century called for

African insurrection against European colonialists, he can be seen as an anticolonialist avant la lettre” Stam and Shohat (2012). Yet colonialism left a deadly legacy on Africans till this day and writers help the world to know of its devastating effects in hopes of correcting its ills.

Postcolonial theory focuses on the effects of colonization on both the colonizers and the colonized, and how this has shaped their identities, cultures, and societies. Said’s *Orientalism* and the orient throws more light on the importance of postcolonial theory where this study is concerned. According to Said (1985), Orientalism is “...a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (p2-3). Rao (2021) explains Said’s propagation better when he codifies:

“Orientalism articulates a relationship of knowledge to power that is both instrumental (to rule them you have to know them) and constitutive, producing the putative reality (the Orient) that it describes. Enabled by the brute material superiority of European imperial power, the production of Orientalist knowledge also comes to function as an enabler of such power by legitimating imperial rule in the guise of civilizing mission.” (pp2)

By the above, the orientalist happens to be colonial powers while the orient is the colonized, or for purposes of clarity, the formerly colonized.

The relevance is better put in the statement: “...the relevance of postcolonial theories extends beyond the studies of colonial realities.” Naum (2010, p.105). There is truth as Benjamin (1996) observed that, even if one adopts an oppositional stance, the prior body of thought shapes one’s starting point and holds on to the coordinates such that rejecting the postulates does not seem to be enough. This means that Postcolonial Theory will live as far as there will be a basis for its refutation and or inspiration. This study draws on the latter to delve deep into the selected texts to lay bare their metaphorical meanings, reflective of the African Continent.

Though there are assumptions as to Postcolonial Theory outliving its usefulness, a group of researchers are of the opinion that:

“This second broad framework of postcolonialism privileges hybridity and ambivalence, which, while less sanguine about the prospects of recovery and resistance, still holds resistance and redistributive justice to be its overriding ethical and political project” (Chowdhry & Nair, 2002; Goldberg & Quayson, 2002; Paolini, Elliott, & Moran, 1999)

It is worth mentioning that African cultures before colonialism took over might never be the same due to the impact of foreign cultures. That notwithstanding, conscious efforts must be made in order to salvage what remains of the African cultures in order to stop its extinction. Postcolonial Theory helps in making that conscious effort, hence its importance. In this study, postcolonial theory helps the researcher identify the postcolonial traits which are helpful to the family system in both texts, and those which are not.

Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic theory, on the other hand, examines the unconscious motivations and desires of individuals and how these can be seen in their works of literature. Defense mechanisms such as denial, repression, projection, suppression, depression, oppression, Thanatos and eros were used to uncover the traumas of the characters in both texts. This is motivated by Carl Jung's (1965) emphasis on the importance of understanding unconscious motivations in order to have the privilege of becoming one's true self. Anna Freud in *The Psychoanalytic Treatment of Children* (1946) thought that the child is not a miniature adult but an individual who must be understood in his own terms and also be incorporated in uncovering the traumas of the characters. Both of these approaches can help us to better understand the complexities and nuances of African literature and the experiences of African writers. One example of the relevance of psychoanalytical theory to African literature is in how

it helps us to understand the ways in which colonial powers have shaped the identities, cultures, and societies of African people. For instance, many African writers have explored the theme of cultural identity and the effects of colonialism on traditional African ways of life in their works of literature. By examining these works through the lens of psychoanalytical theory, we can gain insight into the ways in which African writers have grappled with the legacy of colonialism and its impact on their own sense of selves and community.

Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan are the founding fathers of this theory. Hossain (2017) is of the opinion that, Psychoanalytical Theory "... is a theory that is regarded as a theory of personality organization and the dynamics of personality that guides psychoanalysis. It is known that the closest connection between literature and psychoanalysis has always been deployed by the academic field of literary criticism or literary theory. Among the critical approaches to literature, the psychoanalysis has been one of the most controversial and for many readers the least appreciated"

This is so because of the technical and factual nature of the clinical sciences and the theoretical nature of social sciences. Still, psychoanalysis deals with the reading of human nature in order to know the triggers of their mental ails. The study makes use of part of this theory, like repression, depression, denial, ego, id and super ego. This is so because of the complex nature of the attitudes of some of the characters in the chosen texts.

Queer theory is a relation between sex, gender and sexual desires in intellectual engagement. This theory will be an addition, meaning only few parts will be used to discuss the queer patterns in both texts. (Harper, P. B., McClintock, A., Muñoz, J. E., & Rosen) 1997 reconceptualize queer theory "as a means of traversing and creatively transforming conceptual boundaries" by interrogating how people's sexualities, race and gender converge at a point. This study, by Harper's concept, will delve into the queer lives of Okparanta's Ijeoma and that of Gurnah's Hassan and see how society influences their actions, inactions and struggles.

1.7.1 Similarities between Postcolonial and Psychoanalytical Theories within Both Texts

Psychoanalytic Theory was propounded by the Australian Psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud. It views the artist in their art, a thing of the unconscious made through a conscious effort while Said's Postcolonial Theory, in relation to literature, deals with the study of literary texts written after colonialism. There is a need to study both texts selected for the study due to the nature of characters and the link with colonial attributes. Again, the texts under study were written after colonialism, making them study worthy where postcolonial studies are concerned. Many things that colonizers practiced, that is, religion, politics, socialization etc... are still seen in characters within both texts. Some of these traits leave traumatic experiences on the characters, thereby making psychoanalysis theory a practical pair of postcolonial studies.

Both Omar Saleh, protagonist in Gurnah's *By the Sea*, and Ijeoma in Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* live their traumatic experiences through their characters. Sometimes they suppress their emotions through repression, sometimes their depression is obvious to readers and sometimes they act out their alter egos when they are overwhelmed by their emotions. Saleh, in *By the Sea*, represses his emotions in Tanzania, even though he is abused, brutalized, unjustly arrested and forced to flee. Even in the course of his flight, he suppresses his emotions by pretending to be an illiterate in the English language, although he is duped or dispossessed of his ud-al-qamari, which happens to be his only treasure at the time. For someone fleeing for his life to be told by the Immigration officer who is supposed to help him find refuge:

“Mr. Shaaban, why do you want to do this, a man of your age?

... How much danger is your life really in? Do you realise what you're doing? Whoever persuaded you to do this is not doing you any favours, let me tell you that. You don't speak the

language, and you probably never will. It is very rare for old people to learn a new language. Did you know that? It may take years to sort out your application, and then you may be sent back, anyway. No one will give you a job. You'll be lonely and miserable and poor, and when you fall ill there'll be no one here to look after you..." (Gurnah, p.11)

For someone fleeing because his life is in danger, such outbursts, whether Kevin Edelman, the immigration officer thought he could understand or not, could get any listener who could relate depressed. Saleh did get depressed, hence his question to himself on the same page

"At what age are you supposed not to be afraid for your life? Or not to want to live without fear? How did he know that my life was in less danger than those young men they let in?" (p.11)

This is a clear example of a depressed man trying to hang onto his decision to flee, knowing clearly that staying will cost him his life. A life where the colonial system is being ran by ruthless countrymen, a clear case of a psychoanalysis in post-colonial times. Gurnah paints this helpless picture very well, a picture of broken people needing mental health professionals' help in order to stay sane in a broken world.

Okparanta does same in her representation of her characters. Ijeoma nearly gets a mental breakdown when she is caught having intimate relations with Amina, her Hausa lover. The guilt, fright of being dealt with like some abomination, the feeling of being shamed by an entire village, leaves her not only feeling short of a human being, but feeling afraid as one.

"I stood there watching her weep, and I imagined the punishment that the grammar school teacher had described: all villagers gathered together at the mouth of the river, Amina and I being

dragged into the river, stones thrown at us until we were sore and bruised and weak from all that pelting. I imagined us being left there to drown”. (Okparanta, p.154-155)

Ijeoma’s mother is an African who believes in Christianity to a point of feeling not only shame, but a demonic attack at the first thought of her daughter being a lesbian. She prays away the ‘demon’, making her daughter feel inadequate and forces her to marry against her will. This clearly shows the poor mental state of the characters, but as ridiculous as it sounds, the reality in real life is not farfetched and this shows how a psychological study is prudent in the study of both texts thereby alluding to its importance in lives of people who live like the characters.

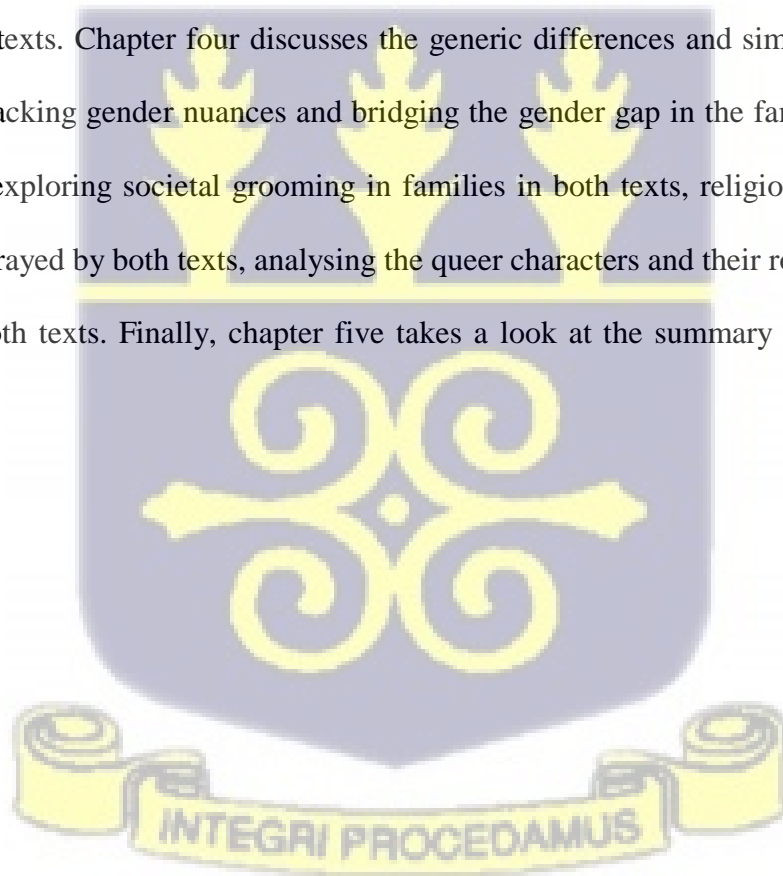
1.8 METHODOLOGY

This study uses Chinelo Okparanta’s *Under the Udala Trees* and Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *By the Sea* as the primary sources of data and textual analysis. Since both texts are postcolonial texts, the researcher touches on the geographical backgrounds of the authors. Chinelo Okparanta is a Nigerian based in the USA and Abdulrazak Gurnah is a Tanzanian who has travelled far and wide. They are both immigrants but are well versed in issues of home nations.

References are made based on both texts using postcolonial and parts of psychoanalytical theories. Analysis is based on the family systems and dynamics with points of reference being the various characters in both texts, their various situations in the family systems, their relationships and flaws which contribute to the climax of both texts. Critical research, valid online research, commentaries and other relevant analysis are referenced to add more insights into this work.

1.9 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study is organized into five chapters; the first chapter consists of the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, justification of the study, theoretical framework, methodology, literature review, and the organization of the study. The second chapter is made up of the authors' profile, brief summary of both texts and major themes which will help readers to better understand the places of the characters in the texts in family dynamics. Chapter three focuses on the reconstruction of the family in *By the Sea* and *Under the Udala Trees* and is made up of the chapter introduction, exploring the major characters in connection to the family in both texts, craving attention and warmth in the face of parental power in both texts, and exploring the trauma surrounding the family in both texts. Chapter four discusses the generic differences and similarities between both texts, unpacking gender nuances and bridging the gender gap in the family as projected by both texts, exploring societal grooming in families in both texts, religion and the family systems as portrayed by both texts, analysing the queer characters and their roles in the family dynamics in both texts. Finally, chapter five takes a look at the summary of the study and conclusion.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* is a widely read book. Due to this, many researchers have studied it in connection to queer theory and trauma studies. Kharoah (2016) worked on "Unbelonging and the Trauma of Imprisonment" using Atteridge's (2020) paper. He writes that racism is part of the reasons many Africans are displaced and traumatized for it left the legacy of oppression in postcolonial Africa. He states that "... the loss of freedom constitutes the binding theme in Gurnah's writing about the forces of separation that afflict one's identity as an exile" (p 128). He goes on to say that "The lamentable "camp mentality" thus tends to pervade the public arena in which the coalition of "race" and "nationality" in the discourse of modernity tends to prelude the violence limiting the freedom of both the incarcerated and the seemingly free" (p.129). These assertions are factual in the writing of Gurnah's *By the Sea*. An example is Saleh, who is unfairly arrested, detained and brutalized just to appease the ego of a "big man's woman".

I agree with Datta (2019) in her "Swahili Transmodernity and the Indian Ocean: Abdulrazak Gurnah's Ethic of Community in *By the Sea*, *Desertion*, and *Gravel Heart*" where she opines that

"Gurnah's Swahili Community is not a utopian space; it has its own hierarchies, power struggles, and violence. In short, it has the same historical complexity that any idea of cultural modernity incorporates, and Gurnah is not anxious to resolve them into a comfortable narrative of peaceful and uninterrupted co-existence." (p.7 & 8).

The complex societal structures, where marriage binds and extended families inherit and tend to be materialistic are prevalent in modern literature, so it is only fair that Gurnah is not in a hurry to resolve what in real life, has not been resolved in postcolonial Africa.

Soleymanzadeh (2021) opines in *Hospitality, Multiculturalism and Narrative Agency in Abdulrazak Gurnah's By the Sea, The Last Gift and Gravel Heart* that:

“As such, Gurnah’s narratives deal with his characters’ negotiations of their various experiences as immigrants or people leaving their homelands, entangled between different locations, and trying to (re)construct their identities and negotiate their shifting and (sometimes) ambivalent positionings within power relations.” (p.3 & 4).

This sums the core of Gurnah’s intentions for his characters and works with postcolonial theory together with psychoanalysis, to uncover the hard truth of racism. Soleymanzadeh’s analysis that Gurnah’s novel presents hospitality through multicultural home or host land setting through allusions is a hard nut to crack, seeing as Saleh, the protagonist, goes through series of taunts, depravity and is patronized even by those who claim to love him. This kind of hospitality needs to be negated rather than positivized. However, I do agree with Soleymanzadeh’s thoughts that unfamiliar spaces generate hospitality between feuding parties. Due to the fact that Latif, after meeting Saleh who is posing as his father, Shaaban, and venting his anger for their encounters in their home nation, grows some fondness for him. He eventually sees him as a father figure rather than the annoying antagonist he is to him in Tanzania. This may be because of the unfamiliar grounds in which they find themselves and thus, justifies Soleymanzadeh’s claim.

Chinelo Okparanta’s *Under the Udala Trees* is also widely read in connection with queer theory. There are however characters built to play into the roles of communities in Nigeria.

Lockwood (2022) asserts “Okparanta creates characters who use their religion to justify their bigotry to demonstrate the long-term impacts of colonization on Africans and LGBTQ people.” (p.2). This is factual because Ijeoma’s mother uses Christianity to pray away the lesbianism of

her daughter. It is known that Christianity is one of the colonial instruments of colonizers, which has turned into a postcolonial problem still persisting in contemporary times.

De Sevilla (2021) uses the works of some scholars in postcolonial, gender and queer studies, such as Green-Simms, Edelman, Hoad and Amadiume, to show how Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* works against hegemonic, heteronormative and Eurocentric representation in Africa. De Sevilla (2021) discusses, among other things, the relationship between contemporary Nigerian women and their societies far above westernization. She asserts on pages 8-9:

“*Under the Udala Trees*, articulated around six main sections and an epilogue, is, at its core, a rethinking of the relationship between the Nigerian woman and nation beyond Western notions of gender and sexual normativity.”

It is progress to have African studies beyond sensitivities and rise above Eurocentric notions which work to demean the continent. In this stead, Navas is the future literature many researchers will bank on for futuristic studies.

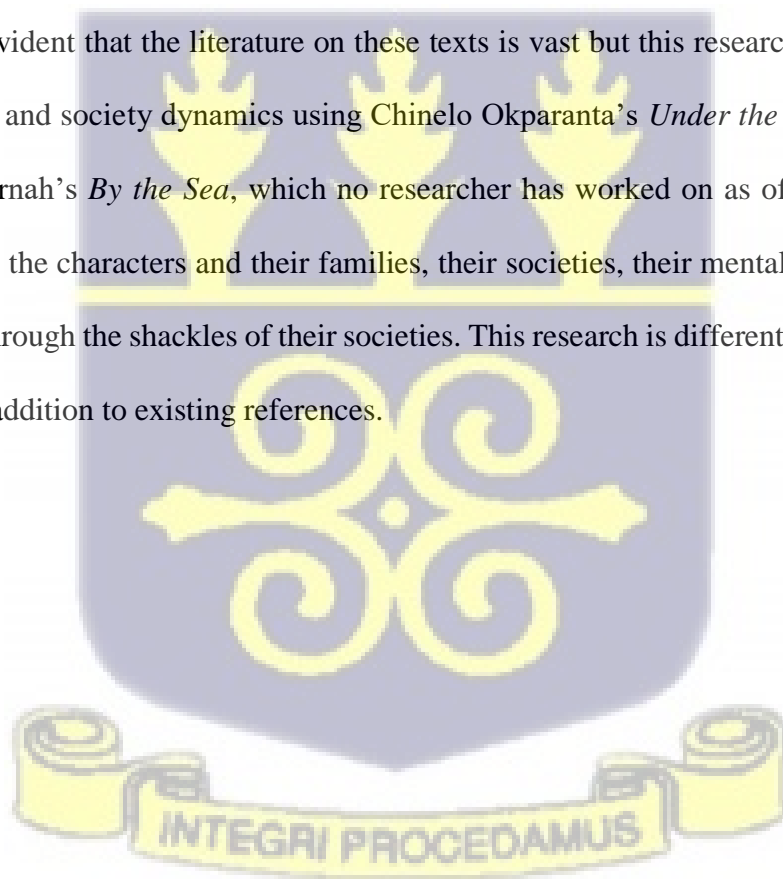
Cassano (2018) read Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* with the objective of analysing “the literary representation of the Biafra war, with a special focus on individual and collective memory production...” (Abstract). Cassano identifies two collective memories; characters' memories and writers' memories, the latter, exploring thoughts and narratives of the authors through the former. Her analysis focused on the traumas of people during and after the war and their healing journeys.

Pucherova (2019) opines: “...in her debut novel, *Under the Udala Trees*, Okparanta uses lesbian desire and sexuality as a way to reimagine the entire society”. (p.12) As much as there is some truth to it, it is this researcher's belief that his analysis will be a shame if it is considered the whole summary of Okparanta's work where society is concerned. This is because the writer

infuses African morality of hospitality, communal love, community assessment of individuals for positive change among others. So reducing Chinelo's novel to 'lesbian desires challenging an entire society' is unfair.

Count and Frateur (2019), write in their research *Adam and Eve Not Eve and Eve* that "*Under the Udala Trees* is understood as prophetic, since it emphasises the techniques to normalise same-sex desire in a Christian environment." (p.7). This researcher agrees with this assertion considering the current trend of same sex advocacy in many developed nations and the consequent friction it (the advocacy) is causing in many African nations.

Society deals with the body and pleasures of the humans. It is no wonder Courtois (2015) says: "...the exploration of the body is clearly one of the core issues" (p.127). From all these analyses, it is evident that the literature on these texts is vast but this research narrows on the study of family and society dynamics using Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* and Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*, which no researcher has worked on as of now. The study concentrates on the characters and their families, their societies, their mental health, and how they navigate through the shackles of their societies. This research is different and justified and will be a great addition to existing references.



CHAPTER THREE

3.1 THE SELECTED TEXTS IN FOCUS

3.1.1 Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees*

Originally published in 2015, the first-person narrator, Ijeoma, is a young Igbo girl living in Ojoto during the Nigerian Civil War. After the death of her father in an air raid, her mother, Adaora, falls into depression due to the trauma of her husband's death. Adaora's anger at her husband, the people of Nigeria and the Biafran soldiers, and the hunger which plays into difficult times in Ojoto, forces her to send her only daughter, Ijeoma, to live with a grammar school teacher in Nnewi. The equally traumatized girl who loves her dead father and is worried about her depressed mother, pleads with her mother to at least keep her but the family seems to be broken with the death of the man who seems to have kept it all together and chose to die rather than take cover. She looks on helplessly as her world changes, the family she knows breaks down, the society she has grown to love is taken away from her and the few friends she is accustomed to are separated from her as she leaves Ojoto to Nnewi.

In Nnewi, Ijeoma finds Amina, a Hausa girl under an udala tree, and brings her home to live with her guardian and his wife. Circumstances show that her guardians are good to her, give her their best but her yearning for her mother creates a void which outs her queerness as she enters into a relationship with Amina. This does not go down well with her guardians and so she is sent back to her mother, who forces her into a union which she is not fit for and ends in an eventual divorce after one child.

3.1.2 Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*

Based on an extended Islamic family of Saleh Omar and the Shaabans, Gurnah's *By the Sea*, tells the story of a broken family through a flashback, as to why Saleh takes up the name of

Latif Shaaban's father, acts ignorant and seeks asylum to live in a seaside of an English town, no one knows. Saleh Omar inherits a house through his father's marriage, a house which creates enmity between his stepmother's family and himself. It creates a feud which eventually lands him in jail when the wife of Shaaban gains power through her infidelity, causing him to lose his family and all he owns. The enmity between Omar and the Shaabans prove dangerous and eventually forces him to flee in order to save himself from further trauma and intimidation by the young Shaaban who has inherited his father's feud. He gets to England only to be met with the youngest of the Shaaban brothers, who also confronts him for his side of the story.

3.2 AUTHORS' PROFILE

3.2.1 Chinelo Okparanta

Chinelo Okparanta is a Nigerian-American writer. She was born and raised in Port Harcourt, Nigeria and emigrated to the United States with her family at the age of 10. She schooled at Pennsylvania State University, Rutgers University and the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

Okparanta has published short stories in publications including *Granta*, *The New Yorker*, *Tin House*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Southern Review*, *TriQuarterly*, *Conjunctions*, *Subtropics* and *The Coffin Factory*, and has held fellowships or visiting professorships at The University of Iowa, Colgate University, Purdue University, City College of New York, and Columbia University. She is currently Tenure-Track Assistant Professor of English & Creative Writing (Fiction) at Bucknell University, where she is also C. Graydon and Mary E. Rogers Faculty Research Fellow. Her essays have appeared in *Granta*, *AGNI*, *The Story Prize* blog, and the University of Iowa International Writing Program blog.

Her debut short story collection, *Happiness, Like Water* (Granta Books), was longlisted for the 2013 Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award, a finalist for the 2014 New York Public Library Young Lions Fiction Award, and won the 2014 Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Fiction. She has been nominated for a United States Artists Fellowship and was a finalist for

the 2014 Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative in Literature. Other honours include the 2013 Society of Midland Authors Award (finalist), the 2013 Caine Prize for African Writing (finalist), and a 2014 O. Henry Award (winner).

Happiness, Like Water was an Editors' Choice for The New York Times Book Review on September 20, 2013. It was also listed as one of The Guardian's Best African Fiction of 2013, and in December 2014 was announced as being a finalist for the Etisalat Prize for Literature. Her first novel, *Under the Udala Trees*, was published in 2015.

3.2.2 Abdulrazak Gurnah

According to British Council Online, Abdulrazak Gurnah was born in 1948 on the Zanzibar Island, off the coast of East Africa. He came to Britain as a student in 1968. He is on the advisory board of the Journal *Wasafiri* and lives in Canterbury, after retiring as a professor of English at the University of Kent.

His first three novels, *Memory of Departure* (1987), *Pilgrims Way* (1988) and *Dottie* (1990), document the immigrant experience in contemporary Britain from different perspectives. His fourth novel *Paradise* was published in 1994, and *Admiring Silence* his fifth, published in 1996. *By the Sea* is his 6th published in 2001.

His latest novels are *Desertion* (2005), shortlisted for a 2006 Commonwealth Writers Prize, *The Last Gift* (2011), *Gravel Heart* (2017), and *Afterlives* (2020). In 2007 he edited The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie.

He was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2006, and in 2021 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

3.3 EXPLORING MAJOR THEMES USING POSTCOLONIAL NEOLOGISM IN BOTH TEXTS

3.3.1 Exploring the Themes of War, Corruption and Migration in *Under the Udala Trees* and *By the Sea*

In embarking on postcolonial research, Bhabha (1994), is of the view that “a critic is faced with hybrid identities and should accord attention to the existing identity, multi-positionality, within the space discourse and how through difference of differentiation from ‘other’, a subject is to be identified” (p.156). By this, there is the need to mention colonialism which takes the forms of religion, wars, corruption as exposed by the primary texts. This means that the colonialists did not leave the Africa they took as the Africa that was. They left it in a state in where it neither identified as the authentic Africa, nor European. This leads us to the hybrid identities propagated by Bhabha. There is the need to mention the fact that, by hybrid identities, the cruel characters and attributes of the colonizer is what ‘dilutes’ the authentic African cultures and produces a state of chaos and confusion which make the people suffer.

Many factors, according to both texts, contribute to the inadequate development in Africa. Okparanta’s *Under the Udala Trees* outlines many, prominent among which are civil wars, poor attitudes, ethnicity and backward thinking all related to colonialism. Scenes of children being burdened by threats of insecurity, to a point of praying due to fear of the unknown is seen in Ijeoma’s first war prayer:

“It was in Church, at the tail end of the harmattan, that I prayed my war prayer, because it was there and then, just before the morning service, that Chibundu had joked that soon, bomber planes would be everywhere” (p.21)

This sad narrative by Ijeoma makes it evident that children go through many traumatic experiences due to insecurities post-independence. Children who are supposed to have peace of mind, happiness to grow in order to think through and select career paths which can help their nations grow, end up burdened by threats of insecurity. How can a mere child think of bomber planes trying to kill her? In Ojoto, Aba and Nnewi, are people who own a land forever changed due to hybridity and are finding it difficult to sustain their livelihood.

That aside, Ijeoma's narrative takes readers through the psyche of a child who has gone through civil wars and it is akin to colonial times.

“Corpses flanked the roads. Decapitated bodies. Bodies with missing limbs. All around was the persistent smell of decaying flesh. Even if I was no stranger to these sights and smells, Papa's case being the foremost in my mind, still I felt a lurching in my stomach.” (p.61)

Seeing dead people brings out the fear of death but seeing decapitated bodies with missing parts, and smelling decaying flesh surely leaves adults with traumatic experiences, so a child will be more affected. We see the protagonist living in fear which she tries to conceal, the relationship between the characters and their leaders is akin to ambivalence where Mama Ada regards the leaders of Biafra as corrupt yet enviable (probably because they have more information than them) and the leaders also regard the war-torn zone as inferior yet exotic. With Ijeoma torn between the meaning of life and death, how will the young generation think of development? They surely will think of their safety and how to live each day at a time rather than any other thing, same as in the colonial times or worse. So the leaders mimic the former colonialists and act nonchalant as innocent people die.

Okparanta takes readers through a candid journey by using a child as a narrator, and follows through to her adulthood, making readers feel the impact of war on the continent.

Mama Adaora, Ijeoma's mother, also goes through torturous experiences due to the Biafran war. Her daughter tells her story through a third person, as was narrated to her by her mother.

“She set her bag down at the entrance of the bungalow. She had just gone through the doorway when she saw the person, presumably a man, crouched on the floor to her right. She screamed ‘Chi m o! He was almost skeleton by now’” (p.76)

Okparanta sets the stage for thoughts of oblivion with her work, painting scenes which show how horrible wars can be to a point where the identity of dead people becomes a problem due to time and survival. She uses difference to satirize the current situation of a people freed after trauma. How a dead body gets into Mama Adaora's father's compound is unknown, how he died, whether through hunger, thirst, sickness, or fear of the bomber planes, is unknown. The fact that he died, without being known, without being seen for a long time, tells tales of the scars of war on the continent. It is no wonder Mama Adaora has second thoughts about staying in Aba, although it is the only viable choice. People going through a lot of difficulties, resonates throughout Okparanta's work. In the quote below, readers are forced to feel the sadness of the mother of our protagonist, in her third space, seeing as she has gone through widowhood, has had a mental breakdown, has been forced by her situation to separate from her daughter only to go to Aba, probably to seek refuge and be met by more deaths.

“She decided then that Aba was no better than Ojoto, at least not in the way she had hoped, this fact of her having once more been subjected to the vision of death... Wasn't the point of coming to

Aba to escape all the reminders of what had happened to Papa?
But here was this corpse in the house, soiling the energy of the place, making it so that her home was marred all over again with memories of death” (p.76-77)

It is evident through Ijeoma’s narrative that nothing good comes out of war, yet the sociohistorical context within which they find themselves makes it difficult for them to rid their nation of war. War which brings hunger, thirst, deaths, desolation, dejection, a people going through trauma and a lot of destruction. After having seen all of that, “She looked around in order to further examine the place. On the ground not far from her, shards of glass” (p.77), meaning there is no end to the problems arising from war. So, words fail her as she dramatically wails, not only for herself, but for the unknown man who will be buried like a non-entity: “She wanted to explain that she had come so far only to find things just as bad as where she had come from.” (p.77)

All these problems aside, one would think people who have gone through the trauma of war and have seen how useless it is to classify humans, will have empathy and respect for all, but Mama Adaora goes on to look down on Amina because she is not of her tribe, akin to racism. How then can the continent be built?

Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *By the Sea* is filled with many reasons why Africa is stunted in growth; migration, family feuds, corruption and brutal power stand out. Neo-colonial powers doing everything to keep their ropes around the neck of African nations is well narrated by one of Gurnah’s main narrators; Saleh. How Kevin Edelman candidly spills the truth about the people he represents at the customs, tells it all. Saleh’s self-imposed illiteracy in English blesses him with the truth that no English official wants to tell an African.

“I knew he would find that the British government had decided, for reasons which are still not completely clear to me even now, that people who came from where I did were eligible for asylum if they claim that their lives were in danger. The British wanted to make the point to an international audience that it regarded our government as dangerous to its own citizens, something both they and everyone else has known for a long time.” (p.10)

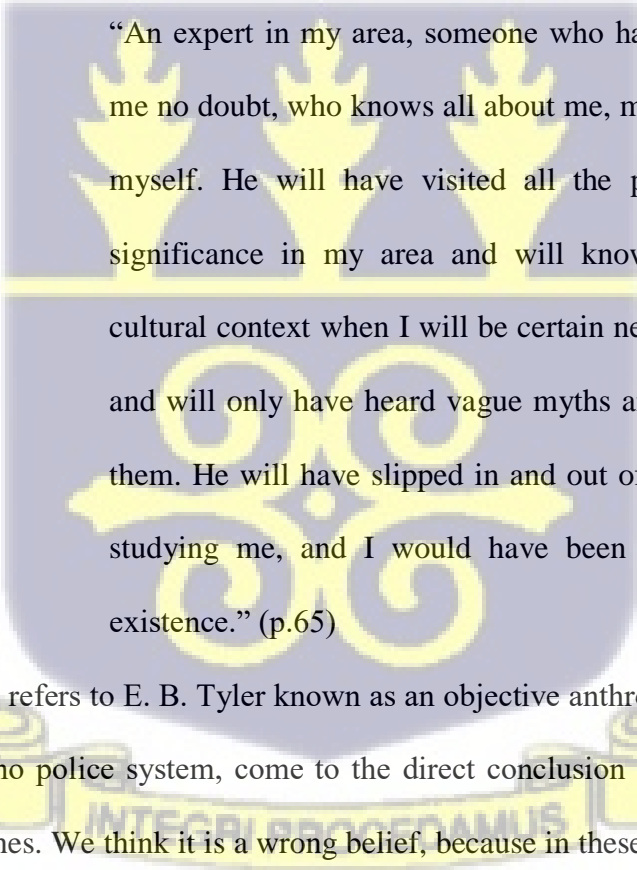
By this narrative, it is evident from the text that former colonial powers only rebranded into something more dangerous than it was with Black faces. Again, Bhabha’s sociohistorical context comes to bear. This is because it is easier to know a system which seeks to take control of you than to live through a shadow ruler through hybridity. For whatever reason colonizers still hold on to the reins of power in Africa, so many educated Africans know their actions because most of them schooled in their (colonizers) jurisdiction but the local people fail to believe the scholars and live mimicking their former colonizers. This is seen in how Gurnah paints the intentions of the British through their customs officer Kevin but many ignorantly think the British are doing Africans who are ‘suffering’ a favour.

The ridiculousness with which they welcome Africans who, to them, are being witch hunted, fades with time and they start showing their true colours.

“But times had changed, and now every puffed-up member of the international community had to show that it was taking no more nonsense from the unruly and eternally bickering rabble that teem in those parched savannahs. Enough was enough. What did our government do that was worse than the evils it had done before? It rigged an election, falsifying the figures in front of international observers, whereas before it had only gaoled, raped, killed or otherwise degraded its citizens.” (p.10)

For this delinquent behaviour, Gurnah seeks to paint a picture of a hypocritical people who created systems which look down on their own people, rig them for the gains of the creators, as they rape, jail, and kill only to hand over their systems to their specially created indigenes to continue their cruel work for their neo-colonial gains. So they make it seem as though the people are incompetent, as though they are right that the people cannot rule themselves, and always paint leaders who reject their ways as monsters, finding weaknesses which would justify their murders.

The horrors of neo-colonial narratives, includes the bit of storytelling which is done by imperial powers to suit their purposes. Gurnah basically spells it out to perfection through the words of Saleh who impersonates Shaaban in order to seek asylum:



“An expert in my area, someone who has written books about me no doubt, who knows all about me, more than I know about myself. He will have visited all the places of interest and significance in my area and will know their historical and cultural context when I will be certain never to have seen them and will only have heard vague myths and popular tales about them. He will have slipped in and out of my area for decades, studying me, and I would have been unaware of his busy existence.” (p.65)

Majumder (2007) refers to E. B. Tyler known as an objective anthropologist asserts: “The tourists...seeing no police system, come to the direct conclusion that the cannibals live there as their wishes. We think it is a wrong belief, because in these uncivilized countries, there are severe rules and regulations in each stages of life” (p.137) How people who do not understand the cultures of other people, write about them, their nature, their geography, their festivals, assuming the people do not know their own selves is a painful, understated

menace akin to Fanon's thoughts of colonial savagery. Not only does it undermine the humanity of the people 'under study', but it also sends false messages, descriptions, interpretations of the people and take undue credit for their tourist sites, taking credit for their stories, without the knowledge of the people involved. In the end, the people are misunderstood by the world, disrespected and treated as depicted, mostly as fools, while those who stole their stories and 'mistold' them are hailed as heroes. The most important moral in the quotation on p.65, is the importance of letting Africans tell their own stories, explain their own cultures to avoid cultural misappropriation, because representation matters in the power of being understood in this monstrous world where culturally disagreeable traits favours nations with power.

Then there are the age-old racist taunts which make Black people feel less of themselves. Gurnah's character Latif: "SOMEONE CALLED ME A grinning blackamoor in the street..." (p.71). This tells how affected he is by the name calling which was completely uncalled for. But then again, he is in his space, a space Latif's ancestral sweat built, so he called him names, knowing he would get away with it. What is more? The racist could not mention the words of his own language well but thinks it wise to call others names based on the colour of their skin:

"You gwinnin blackamoor. But not to mock, he might be in the midst of a crisis and contemplating self-annihilation, and his hiss of loathing was really a cry for help disguised in that bookish abuse." (p.72)

How 'grinning' turned into 'gwinnin' is laughable, and it makes the insult more hurtful, coming from a place of ignorance.

Another painful part of societies battling traumas of war is the hunger which does not discriminate where nature is concerned. The fact that food becomes a scarce commodity as

farmers can hardly farm in peace is perfectly painted by Okparanta as she, through her protagonist, narrates:

“Just past a grove of withering palm trees some puppies lay in crescent – shape mounded, fetal-like, nipping at the dusty earth as if to bury themselves within. Not too far from the dogs were several kwashiorkor children, carrying their begging bowls.”

(p.116)

Horror is another terrifying existence in war zones. Things one can only think of in horror movies, happen in real life, thus, Okparanta’s interest in making her fiction speak truth to face as she makes Ijeoma narrate:

“In the field right next to the road, a policeman was moving through a row of corpses, using a long cane to prod them or mark them as he went. He was a stone-faced officer, with a crinkly sort of nose and a mouth that appeared permanently upturned so that his lips seemed to cover his nostrils. Perhaps he carried his face this way deliberately, owing to the odour that the job required him to endure.” (p.116-117)

Then there is the trauma which leaves a lasting impression on hearts, leaves them with nightmares, forces them to see the vulnerabilities of the human body, and maims them in ways only gripping sorrow can. For a thirteen-year-old girl to tell readers:

“Up till now, I had seen so many images of death – Papa’s corpse, for one. For another, all those decapitated bodies that Mama and I had seen flanking the road on our way to Nnewi. Death was all over the place. But in this moment, I observed its opposite.” (p.117)

it tells of the toll war has on citizens in war zones. Imagine few living beings collapsing among the dead. The scene witnessed by Ijeoma on her way from the market is one worthy of mention when it comes to the terrors of war:

“They all stood watching as a body – a boy’s, naked – proceeded to rise from the field of corpses, like a resurrection. As the boy rose, all the people around me gasped, one perfectly synchronized, collective intake of breath. The boy wore a startled expression. Perhaps he had fallen asleep among the corpses, or perhaps somehow he had been stunned into imagining himself dead. The policeman, who had jumped back as the boy rose, quickly recovered from the shock, raised his cane, and began whipping it into the air like a warning. The boy recoiled, taking backward steps, tripping over the corpses among which he had been sleeping. The policeman raised his cane over and over again, using both of his hands, raising the whip and bringing it down with such a force that it made a sound like the shot of a gun and as it did, the boy run off into the distance, naked as the day he was born.” (p.117)

This shows how terribly frightening war is. It does not only leave fear, but it also decapitates, kills and traumatizes those involved, among which are innocent citizens including children, displacing many and leaving many more impoverished.

3.3.2 Contextualizing the Theme of Brainwashing and Gullibility in *Under the Udala Trees* and *By the Sea*

Homi Bhabha is a prominent literary critic where postcolonialism is concerned. Hoy (1992) says of Bhabha: “Bhabha’s postcolonialism is indebted to Bakhtin’s emphasis on the importance of paying attention to the sociohistorical context in which a literary work is produced” (p.765). In this case the historic context refers to colonialism. When a society, made up of a people with a common culture, strings of families with a common goal of living their stories no matter their hardships, lowers their guard for ignorant and greedy tramps to take over their lives, they suffer hardships, hurts and cruelty, thus culminating in a society bedeviled by deceit, manipulations and producing gullible people. How Mama Ada acts as though she is above advice, even when all she has is her daughter, misunderstanding her nature and acting ridiculous in her quest to heal her of what she actually is, is not only comical but hurtful. Okparanta seeks to speak against the advent of adult imperialism, opening the gate of thought as to whether it is all the time that adults are right in this statement through the thoughts of her protagonist:

“I have never properly considered the oddness of this before and it is only now that I think it, that I realize its strangeness. If you were over a certain age, it was as if you had gone over the point beyond which you could be instructed, like a coconut that had overripened and become undrinkable, or cloves that had been left too long on the tree and had swollen into seeds. And even now as I think of it, I can’t come up with an explanation for this stern exclusion.” (p.35)

How in the world, can a mother quote a proverb so limiting, in a conversation with her child? It is painful to read such a brainwashed exchange between mother and daughter, the latter

gullible to religious lies post-colonial times, knowing fully well that a parent must provide, and God is a God of plenty. “‘If God dishes you rice in a basket ...’ she said. I knew the second half of the proverb. ‘Do not wish for soup,’ I finished.” (p.63)

Again, the tribalistic attitude of some Africans come to bear through Mama Ada’s character. That Nigerian brainwashed trait of seeing the other as inferior is justly attacked, albeit softly, by Okparanta when Mama Ada thinks it is unfair to have kept her daughter together with a Hausa girl (as if a Hausa girl is a living abomination), when it is her daughter who obviously brought in the said girl and initiated the relationship which she (Mama Ada) finds despicable. That she mentions it to her daughter’s benefactors shows that she is an ingrate. This is one reason some African countries fail to develop, gullible and successfully brainwashed to hate on each other. How then do they resist neo-colonial rule?

Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *By the Sea* also spells out some painful narratives which can be related to the sociohistorical background of Tanzania. Postcolonial Tanzania is still bedeviled by greed, forced migrations and many other brutalities because colonialists did not leave with them. The discomfort felt by asylum seekers who justifiably toe the line of lies in order to succeed is a painful story to read. How the most unfortunate people, flee their motherland in order to live, feeling gullible, only to make them feel like criminals and pressurized to submit to whatever fate imposed on them is another point worth mentioning. Seeing as Saleh makes humour out of his misfortunes in order to calm Rachel down:

“But I was concerned for her, so I told her the story of my deception and the small discomforts it had led to, and told it in a way that made me comical and at that made her smile again. Now that I could speak, she was ready to hear about my asylum.”
(p.66)

Although he was wrong to lie that he could not speak English, customs officials know better than to throw tantrums around traumatized people. In a way, he makes it seem like he is at fault, a brainwashed way of viewing a situation he cannot help. An old single man will certainly not flee his country just to play gimmicks on a developed country. Rachel certainly loses her composure, forcing Saleh to add onto his traumatic experiences but we can also note that she is only doing her job through a rigid system.

It is uncomfortable and painful to think of a relation with anxiety, knowing not how they live after losing contact, so much so even the relief in getting to know of a culturally right representation for one's own culture does nothing to lower the pain. Saleh, getting to know about the close proximity of Latif brings a whole lot of pain, through these fictional characters, readers get the realistic sense of anxiety and its painful path to confrontation:

“The story of the rest of his life, his real life, I knew only as a rumour. I could not suppress a feeling of anxiety and apprehension as I thought of him, that after having come such a long way I should have come so close to him. So he was the expert on our area. Maashaallah, that was something, not a stranger who came to summarise us, but one of our own.” (p.67)

One other pain that cannot be looked over is the pain of being looked down on. Racists and their racist taunts, European writers and their despicably painted black narratives, are all things which contribute to the horrors of a society susceptible to emotional breakdown.

“So I looked up black, and quailed: blackhearted, blackbrowed, blacklist, blackguard, blackmail, Black Maria, black market, black sheep. Entry after entry like that, so that by the time I finished reading through them all, I felt despicable and disheartened, smeared by the torrent of vituperation. Of course,

I knew about the construction of black as other, as wicked, as beast, as some evil dark place in the innermost being of even the most skinless civilised European, but I had not expected to see so much black black black on a pave like that. Stumbling on it so unprepared was a bigger shock than being called you gwinnin blackamoor by a man who looked like a disgruntled, dated movie persona.” (p.72)

Latif justifiably feels hurt by all the negative exposure to blackness and wonders why there is no “whitehearted”, when colonialism stems from white supremacy, why there is no word like “whitelist” when many white nations block other nations as a means of punishment, why there is nothing like “whitemail” when people who describe themselves as white, mostly manipulate others for their own welfare, why there is no word like “white market”, when a people were paraded like goods and bought by white people, to mention but few. It sure is pain added onto the pain of colonialism and it is a wonder Black people accept them all.

What is more? How one perceives one’s self after being in asylum is one of the painful parts traumatic people have to face. Psychoanalysis makes us understand that conflicts within the self is deadlier than conflicts without. For one to think about how he or she will be perceived, after migration is a painful addition to the pain of being a migrant.

“I suppressed the dread I always felt when I was required to meet someone from nativity. Would they tell me, or think to themselves, how English I had become, how different, how out of touch? As if it was either here or there whether I had not, as if it proved something uncomplicated about alienation, as if I was

no longer myself but a self-treacherous pretense of myself, a processed stooge. And I also suppressed my irritation with the suggestion that the language they spoke out there was unnameable or unknown, when more people spoke Kiswahili than spoke Greek or Danish or Swedish or Dutch, or probably all of them together.” (p.73)

Why must a people doubt their authentic selves just because they resettled for better conditions of living? Why should a language spoken vastly be tagged unnameable by the few unenlightened people just because of their ignorance, thereby making the language speakers feel inadequate and by so doing cancelling them in cultural insignificance? All these add onto the painful parts of a pained society.

3.3.3 The Theme of Gender Roles in Both Texts

There are some undertones of gender expectations in both texts, leading to the behaviours of characters built to suit those narratives in the texts. Some of these behaviours go a long way to expose some western advocacy gaps in the African systems.

Gurnah, writing from a male perspective, empathizes with the plight of women as he opines:

“I don’t know what happened in girls’ schools and wish now that I did. Perhaps the girls would have just disappeared from school, there one day gone the next, and everyone would have guessed they had been married. Married off, married by, done to. I try to imagine what that would have felt like. I imagine myself a woman, feeble with unuttered justification, unutterable. I imagine myself defeated.” (Gurnah, p.36)

By this, he speaks of the limitations some societies put on females. Patriarchal societies’ expectations of women being in the shadows of men they marry, tending to domestic work,

giving birth, nursing and nurturing babies, leaving behind their dreams and aspirations. He as a man sympathized with girls who might have dreams which are cut off due to forced marriages, or due to societal definition of a “good” woman. In the same way, Okparanta, who is a woman and understands the dictates of patriarchal society builds characters who speak to the issue of gender imbalance to a point that even a nine-year-old Osita thinks of being married and having children. The fact that some girls are brainwashed to think only as wives to a point that Osita had to tell her friends to go sit under the Udala Tree and count to a hundred so they can be fertile when their time arrives is heartbreaking. When asked why, she says

“Because nine was not too young to prepare, she said. Because sooner or later we would each become somebody’s wife, and as wives, it would be our obligation to be fertile, to bear children for our husbands, sons especially, to carry on the family name.”

(p.359)

All these conversations were had on the legend of the spirit children

“...tired of floating aimlessly between the world of the living and that of the dead, take to gathering above udala trees. In exchange for the dwelling, they cause to be exceptionally fertile any female who comes and stays, for even the briefest period of time, under any one of the trees. They cause her to bear sons and daughters, as many as her heart desires.” (p.358).

It is important to note the fact that these girls dream of having male children to carry on family names belonging to husbands they must serve. This shows how low society regards women and how unfair and demeaning it is to be a woman.

Mama Adaora in her quest to change the sexuality of Ijeoma, quotes Judges Chapter 19, where a Levite offered his damsel to be raped instead of him in a distant town. When the

damsel collapsed, he forced her onto a donkey and sent her home, cutting her into pieces and sent pieces of her to all territories of Israel. When Ijeoma, confused asked how the story applied to her, she explains:

“Don’t you see? If the men had offered themselves, it would have been an abomination. They offered up the girls so that things would be as God intended: man and woman instead of man and man. Do you see now?” (p.97).

This argument shows how little society thinks of females. Even brutal rape was not condemned, murder was used as punishment for the damsel’s humanity, and yet, a mother, instead of condemning this act no matter where it is found, decides to use it to “cure” her lesbianism. The bigger part of society also agrees with her that it is better to be used as anything, better to be abused by anyone, than to be with another woman.

Ijeoma rightly asks in her internal conflict

“How could she really believe that that was the lesson to be taken out of this horrible story? What about all the violence and all the rape? Surely she realized that the story was even more complex than just violence and rape. To me, the story didn’t make sense.” (p.97)

This story further pushes Ijeoma to ask

“Why was it that these questions never came up at church? Instead, everyone nodded and cried ‘Amen’ after everything Father Godfrey said, and clapped, no one asking him to explain anything.” (p.97)

Okparanta advocates for Christians to be curious, read their Bible and ask all the important questions there are in order to sanitize the religion and relive them from sharing some misquoted verses.

Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* does not give the impression that Islam frowns on homosexuality. His account on the deeds of Hassan, through the narration of Latif, gives the impression that he was seduced by Hussein. The candid narration, because Latif was only nine years old, introduces Hassan's new sex life thus:

“But I was desperate, and banged on the door and whined with all the pathetic piteousness of a nine- year-old about to explode.

Hassan opened the door, stood there dripping and spangled with water, and then stepped past me with eyes lowered... When Hassan had first opened the door, his eyes were large and round with misery, or perhaps with embarrassment or guilt. Then he had dropped his eyes without a word and walked past, deep in whatever it was that absorbed him. All that was unlike him. I had never known him to have a shower at that time of the afternoon. He had stood there gleaming in the nude, and then walked out of the bathroom like that when normally he was never undressed outside our bedroom. Had either of my parents been around, his nakedness would have seemed an intolerable indecency. Hassan was well-built and full, a youth, and recently he had been so conscious of his maturity that even when we were alone in the room he had taken to covering his genitals when before he would have lolled about without a care if the mood took him. And the look of catastrophe in his face, in someone whose eyes glared

and stared or leapt with scorn and mischief and insurrection at any misuse.” (p.91-92)

So he might have been raped being that he was barely fifteen years old, was not spoken to about sexual options and differences, as sex education, in both texts, is notably nonexistent, and so he takes it all in, thinking them natural, and battles within himself whether he should feel shame, love or defilement.

Sexual maturity can never bypass parents, especially mothers. It is therefore not surprising that his beautiful mother sees his amorous relationship with Hussein and seeks to protect him to no avail.

“I had heard him arguing with my mother when she had first suggested it, and then had seen her becoming stern and insistent, almost frantic with anger. You’re sleeping in your room whether you like it or not, you child of sin, she said, speaking to him with much unfamiliar rage that there was nothing more to say. It made me wonder why she was so angry and whether it was Hassan she was angry with or Uncle Hussein.” (pp.92-93)

Hassan’s mother was so frustrated that she wanted to exchange herself with her son. So much so that Latif says he saw her with Hussein in an adulterous scandal which later infuriated her husband and made him feel disgusted, all in the hope of saving her first son.

“I peeped out slowly and I saw my mother and Uncle Hussein standing inches apart outside the open door of his room. Then I heard her say, ‘Unataka niingie ndani?’ Do you want me to come in? She walked past him into the room, and he followed behind her and shut the door. That was what I saw and understood

nothing but unease, and a great deal of relief that I had not been discovered.” (pp.94)

Just as in the case of Okparanta’s protagonist, rumours and disapproval, Hassan also experienced same to a point of his younger brother experiencing same:

“The rumours started very quickly, and I was taunted about them by the boys at school. They said our guest had eaten Hassan, had eaten honey there. It was one way of saying something cruder, and they said it crudely too. One of Hassan’s secondary school mates, who had been a former friend, chased after me in the street as I was walking to Koran school to ask me if it was true that I had a new father. When I passed by adults lounging at street corners, which they seemed forever to be doing, I thought they smirked behind me, I feared they did.” (p.95)

The cruelty with which vile rumours can affect and hound an individual is made manifest in Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *By the Sea*. Hassan was harassed, made fun of and made to feel out of his gender just because of a rumour. True or not, the rumour-mongers were at work, with the aim of frustrating him:

“They never left Hassan alone after that, the plunderers of flesh. There was nothing gay in what they did or what they sought to do. They coveted his grace and his effortless, supple beauty, and muttered to him as he strolled by, offering him money and gifts and transparent predatory smiles. A man gave me a letter to take home to him, a page out of a school notebook, folded over roughly like a page of accounts or a shopping list... Hassan read

it and then tore it to shreds which he put in an old envelope that he put in his pocket to throw away somewhere far away.” (p.95)

Latif, even as a child, knew the hounding of his brother was partly due to jealousy of his brother’s grace and beauty. It was also obvious from the narration that some of those who were making fun of Hassan also wanted to have their way with him. So it makes it difficult to tell if, besides his parents, others disapproved or not. The ways of society is no less cruel as Latif narrated:

“They never left him alone, the looks, the comments, the casual touch, all were suggestive, something between a cruel game and a calculated stalking exercise. And Hassan suffered. The brashness and chatter disappeared as now he learnt to avert his face from these callous acts of love, from seductive flourishes that promised only pain. I thought sooner or later, they would wear him down.” (p.95)

His fears of the society wearing him down materialized as his father’s slap, mother’s accusatory tones, forced him to flee with Hussein.

There could be a lot of differences in the sexual orientation of different societies. Be it that cis men and women are not enlightened or ignorant of the existence of same sex couples or whether it is an angst culminating from religious positions on the homosexual community, or whether it has to do with African societal conventions which are against homosexual relationships, most African nations are still battling with its acceptance and it will do the world a whole lot of good to let them take their time to decide whether to maintain their cultures or not. As the whole world cannot be forced to believe in everything or have same beliefs at all times.

3.3.4 The Theme of Cruelty in *Under the Udala Trees* and *By the Sea*

Fanon, (2001) says of colonialism “For colonialism, this vast continent [Africa] was the haunt of savages, a country riddled with superstitions and fanaticism. Destined for contempt, weighed down by the curse of God, a country of cannibals- in short, the negro country” (p.170). Cruelty, no matter where it is meted out, who dishes it out, why it is meted out to another, makes it no less mean and despicable, not to mention hurtful. It seems the “savages” and their cruel treatment of the African continent did not end with colonialism. It was inherited. In the complicated family relationship of Gurnah’s characters, the depiction of a friendship turned brotherhood and eventually turning into unspoken enmity, (which is sold to a third party, Saleh, who is also related to the victim, Shaaban, by marriage), sends a message of fear, and warnings of the downside of familiarity, then again, even those related by blood, can do worse to their own, as seen between Shaaban and his wife and Shaaban and his own aunts. How Hussein plants himself in the Shaaban household, and sinks an average family so low is worthy of notice. The quotation below paints the treachery in the so-called friendship between Hussein and Shaaban, the one that brings the misconceptions, the miscommunication and eventually leads to the woes, or compounds the woes of an innocent Saleh:

“Hussein must have known that all along, and must have known that all along and must have lent him the money to put him under a crushing obligation for some reason. And if there was any truth to the rumours of the seduction of his son, then that reason was the gratification of what was beginning to look like a playfully malicious desire.” (p34)

How a friend to a man, Hussein, rapes the son of his own friend and proceeds to seduce him (eventually fleeing with him), tells of some of the despicable things family can do to one

another. It is cruel to think that someone once called family, can do to you what your known enemy cannot.

That aside, Saleh's imprisonment, loss of his family and home, cruel treatment at the prison, taste of cold and near fatal experiences, depict the cruel ways a family can treat each other. For Aisha, Shaaban's wife, to use her adulterous relationship to be cruel to Saleh only based on him taking over their house, the house whose deeds is given to him by Hussein after he takes a loan from him, is not only outrageous, but unfair. Then again, hatred only knows the hands which gives out pain, so it can be understood. But for even Hassan, to travel on his homosexual escapades, return only to falsely accuse a victim whose life has been made miserable by his (Hassan's) mother, is an example of Fanon's (2001) reference to savagery..

The expression 'Ignorance is bliss', though true, strictly applies to the ignorant Hassan. Feigning ignorance, even with the best of intentions, can be cruel due to the ghostly narratives which can hound for hounding sake. Readers can pardon Kevin Edelman for his brutal honesty, because he is telling it as it is, certainly not for his cruel dispossession of Saleh's only true treasure, but for those who are supposed to give refuge, turning to mock a refugee, is cruel beyond words. When Ibrahim and Georgy make fun of Saleh because he does not eat pork, it is an emotional torture, something worse than physical abuse:

"Georgy laughed out loud at black man. I don't know if it was the thought of a black man who was a Muslim that made him laugh, or the comedy of a dark – skinned man in a frenzy if clean, clean, wash, wash, wash, or if they were sharing a private joke."

(p.53)

The racist undertones do not only feel disgusting, but also feels immensely cruel to readers who know that Saleh understands every bit of the conversation.

Nature too can be cruel in a pathetic fallacy only felt through experience. Nature and nurture can root a people in a weather which they will grow to know is agreeable to their persons. For a character born in Tanzania, who had lived in Tanzania all his life, to be put in a cold place without appropriate clothes and covers is perhaps as Fanon sarcastically puts it “a curse of God” Fanon (2001, p170). God knows extreme weather can kill a person. The cold can turn into a monstrous animal to fatally bite a person to death, a little wonder it is called frost bite. I guess it is the reason Gurnah brings the cruel reality to bear, using this fictional but realistic story. The personification, seemingly outrageous hyperbole and metaphor in the quotation below is a perfect depiction of the cold when felt by one adapted to heat all their lives:

“There were three large structures that looked like sheds or warehouses, where they gave us a place to sleep and fed us. It was cold. The wind howled and wailed outside, gusting at times as if it would lift the whole building and hurl it away. I felt as if the blood in my veins had stopped flowing, had turned into sharp-edged crystals which bit into my inner flesh. When I stopped moving my limbs went numb.” (p.42-43)

There is also the cruelty of changing names to make you feel less than an animal, this I will say is tantamount to cultural misappropriation. The Kunta Kinte menace is cruel by all standards. Names are basically the worldly identities of people, but to the African, it tells of their cultures, it tells stories of their births, it tells, in some instances, their fate, and tells of their beliefs. So changing a person’s name is tantamount to killing the person and creating a robot to do your bidding. But that is what the shed owner does to Saleh, forget he was impersonating his sworn enemy, calling him “Showboat” instead of “Shaaban” is cruel.

“Yes, Rachel sent a message, my darling. Everything’s all right don’t worry about a thing, Mr. Showboat.” (p.60) She continuously does it, knowing it is spiteful and pretending to offer shelter while acting as though the refugees are like her family members. “Do you, Mr. Showboat? That’s what I call him. It’s our nickname for him. He doesn’t mind, I’ve asked him.” (p.62) Whoever wants to live in this toxic environment surely is not yet born.

Latif says of his father

“He had so much cruelty in his life that I hesitate to judge him harshly, but he was negligent. That was how he lost my brother Hassan and how he lost the house when he should have known better, and nothing that came after that gave him content. I don’t know how he lost my mother, exactly.” (p.77)

The burning of Adanna because of her non-conforming sexuality is another cruel theme in Okparanta’s *Under the Udala Trees*. That a person would be beaten and burned by other “God-fearing” people just because of their sexuality is incomprehensible. One would be forced to ask, what about prayers and forgiveness? What about penance and repentance? Why would those who sin differently kill another? Who is not fallible to sin? The answer is so fearful but, in the end, cruelty forces humans to think only about those who are outed by their sins and not of themselves. Okparanta’s message through this narrative is simple, humans are fearful beings who commit so many atrocities on others like them. We so need to look into our mirrors and the faces of others to know the monsters within.

There are some situations which normally, many will think must not end in cruel death but that is what relativity does. People in same sex relationships have different reactions and emotions where societies are concerned. Many religious practices frown on them and assert that death is their penalty. Some also advocate for such people to be left alone as it is their bodies and feelings which they have no control of. No matter where one stands, burning a young girl due

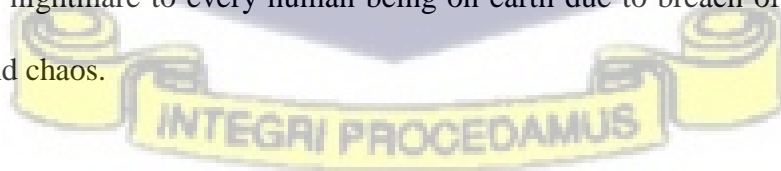
to her sexual orientation is the height of cruelty. For the girl Adanna, her crime was being caught at the scene of rumoured homosexuality, which is unfair considering she is not alone in the act, but she pays for the sins of so many people which is unfair:

“We had hardly walked two yards when we saw, in the backyard of the church, a flame of orange and blue. A stack of burning logs. Nndidi begun to cry, and then all of us were crying too, because we had all seen what remained of the face, and we had all recognized her: Adanna in the midst of the logs, burning and burning and turning to ashes right before our eyes.” (p.244)

The emotional torture where lack of security is concerned is another cruelty which needs to be noted in Okparanta’s fictional tale. The fact that many people are displaced, others running helter skelter at even a mere sound of a loud noise is cruel to traumatized communities:

“The whole first month at the grammar school teacher’s place, it was as if we were always running in and out of the bunker. Even on my way back from the market, I would hear the bombers appear above and would have to run and hide in the bushes. There was usually no way to tell if they were enemy planes or not, so we all hid in the bushes to be safe. We stayed there until we could no longer hear the bombers up above.” (p.116)

This is surely a nightmare to every human being on earth due to breach of security and the unfair deaths and chaos.



3.3.5 Exploring Techniques of Building the Family in *Under the Udala Trees* and *By the Sea*

Slemon (1995:101) argues that colonialism exists within the concept of imperialism, and is “a concept that is itself predicated within large theories of global politics and which changes radically according to the specifics of those larger theories.” Ashcroft et al (2002) are of the opinion that “postcolonial writing seizes the language of the center, the colonizer west. It then replaces the language in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized context. Appropriation is the process by which the colonizer’s language is taken and prepared to ‘bear the burden’ of one’s own cultural experience. The language is adopted as weapon and used to express different cultural experiences” (p.37,38). This means that African literature, written in postcolonial times in English, seeks to showcase the cultures and lifestyles of their people. This includes morality and conscientiousness. That is why Latif learns to keep time because his father helps him know how important it is to keep to time regardless of the agony it comes with:

“He worried about being late even more than I did, my father. He was a complete nuisance about it. And he worried about other people’s lateness as much as he did about his own. He made me realize just how much of our lives were spent in waiting, waiting for someone, waiting to go and meet someone, waiting for the muadhin to make the call to prayers, waiting for the new moon to appear at the beginning of Ramadhan... For my father, this waiting was agony, impossible to ignore, and so I learned to dread delay because of the anguish it put him through.” (p.77)

Ijeoma makes some compromises with her mother due to her father’s death and to boost her mother’s mental health due to the strain of loss, though she is suffering from her own grief. Despite this, Mama Adaora’s kind of upbringing, which limits one’s expectations in times of

need, shows. Her religious nurturing also shows in the way she parts from her daughter. Ijeoma narrates:

“She fumbled with her bag, searching for something in it. When she found what she was looking for, she pulled it out. It was Papa’s old Bible, the one he used to read from Sunday at church. She handed it to me, holding my hand in hers even as I held the book in my hand. ‘If God dishes you rice in a basket...,’ she said. I knew the second half of the proverb. ‘Do not wish for soup,’ I finished.” (p.63)

It is almost as though Mama Ada is telling Ijeoma, *take this book of wisdom, read it, learn from it, and live by it as your father and I did before he parted. You know he cherished it, so cherish it.* She might simply have wanted to do away with it to ward off memories of her dead husband, but Ijeoma knows how important religion is to her mother. Also, she engages her in a call and response proverb which she knows would guide and guard her life in the end. Ijeoma heeds and quotes it in one of her vulnerable times when she feels lonely and afraid: “No matter, I decided. If this was the rice that God was putting in my basket... there was no point wishing for soup.” (p.69) This shows the thoughts of Okparanta pertaining to the influence of parents and the importance of being intentional with parenting. Mama Adaora limits Ijeoma’s expectations and helps her to easily adapt to an environment where she knows no one.

Also, this same parenting skills can make a child feel entitled, Just as Gurnah’s Shaaban Mahmud feels entitled to his aunt’s house and harbours hatred in his heart towards Saleh Omar for dispossessing him of it, as the latter feels grateful and remains respectful even in the most trying times.

Ijeoma knows her mother is lying when she suddenly decides to abandon her on her father’s friend in Nnewi and runs off to her (Mama Ada’s) father’s house in Aba, yet she complies.

“I’ve been thinking, Mama said. Your grandparents – my parents – have that house in Aba. It’s still there. If there’s a place for me to go, that should be it... No matter what happens, you must keep in mind that not a day will go by that I will not think of you.”
(p.48)

The last statement did hit Ijeoma hard. She thinks a bad situation cannot get worse but there it does. She is aware her mother does not have to send her away or abandon her the way she is doing.

“Already I knew what was causing her to hurry that way. Already I knew what was causing her to seem out of breath. It was a problem with her words. Because she did not in fact have to send me off. And yet there were the words, flowing out of her mouth, all of them justification for what was essentially a lie, though an honest kind of lie, an unintentional sort of self-delusion. She could not possibly have believed what she was saying.” (p.49)

The above shows how much Ijeoma knows her mother, her trauma, her intentions to send her away in order to heal from her father’s passing. Yet she stays respectful after years of staying with people she is not familiar with and returns home a disgraced lesbian even in the eyes of her own mother. Some other kids might have run away, or rebelled, but not Ijeoma. Okparanta seems to create the narrative that children brought up well are understanding, respectful even in their traumatic experiences.

When Ijeoma feels judged by her mother due to her sexuality, she still keeps her composure and resolves not to disrespect her despite her fears, hurts and embarrassments as she tells

readers how she feels in her own mother's house after she brings her back from the Grammar Teacher's house:

“I stopped in the doorway and fought a mental battle over whether to stay or leave. It occurred to me that whatever I decided to do, I must do it respectfully, which essentially meant that, whatever I did, I must first greet her.” (p.79)

Yes, she feels worried, weird, neglected and feels like a stranger in her own house, but surely, she knows better than to disrespect her mother due to her upbringing. She is grateful for the mere fact that she rebuilt their home after her father's death, despite abandoning her for a while, she does not feel entitled.

Also, when Ijeoma goes out with Ndidi on the night Adanna is lynched, Mama Adaora questions her in a manner which shows readers the efforts she put into her upbringing:

“What in God's good name were you thinking to stay out all night?... Do you not know better than to do that to me? Have I not trained you right?” (p.244) This shows she has been trained never to stay out all night without prior notice, a good trait.

3.3.6 The Theme of Hope in *Under the Udala Trees* and *By the Sea*

Fanon (2001) maintains that “there was nothing to be ashamed of in the past, but rather dignity, glory and solemnity. The claim to a national culture in the past, does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture” (p.169). This means many great things existed for the African continent in precolonial times. The prominence of communal labour shows in both texts under study. Communal Labour and upbringing are well painted by both writers. Okparanta goes a step further with how Mama Ada is helped by his neighbours to build her father's house and settle in. When she is frustrated and out of her wits, it is one of her father's neighbours in Aba who says “All will be well again. Together we will fix up the place. One person alone cannot move an elephant, but an entire village, that is a

different story. (p.77). When she rethinks staying in Aba, and she desperately asks the rhetorical question: “Just how am I to stay here?” (p.78), her neighbours’ reassurance makes her stay, this is because:

“The villagers helped her rebuild the bungalow, its roof, its windows, its doors. They painted its walls ivory. They cut the overgrown grass with their machetes, and Mama irrigated the land with jerry cans full of water. For camouflage, they covered the place with palm fronds. Inside, they swept and washed the tile floors.” (p.78)

They even go a step further to help her gain her independence as a human being.

“It was they who helped her plant a garden and trees in her front yard after the war ended. Another guava tree and an orange tree. A mango tree and a pawpaw tree. Pineapples, their crowns sticking up in the spikes above the surface of the earth.” (p.78)

Her fruits, shade for her house, herbs, are all planted through communal labour, telling of the hope Okparanta feels for the rebuilding of Africa through communal work. For even if a people have lost everything and still have life, they can rebuild and actually live in a community which supports them. Hence, the community’s benevolence in even helping in providing her with her occupation:

“It was they who helped to put up the four walls of the little shop that stood in front of the bungalow, just behind the compound’s gate” (pp 78), a direct contrast to Saleh’s narration of his treatment while in asylum, where he says:

“No one was concerned whether I ate or not, whether I was well or ill, whether I rejoiced or grieved. I heard the boys getting up

and later running downstairs like a couple of barking baboons...” (p.59)

This supports Fanon’s view that there is hope in the rather stunted Africa than in the developed world.

Also, despite Gurnah’s character, Latif’s anger towards Saleh, he worries about him though he does not know for sure if he (Saleh) is the one or not. When Rachel calls for a language expert to help Saleh (who impersonates Shaaban, his father) to make his case for asylum, he (Latif), has a hunch that it is Saleh, it still bothers him that he does not get to see him after the meeting is called off due to Saleh outing himself that he is not an illiterate in English after all. So, Latif calls Rachel, and even tells a lie that he is not the one the eager sixty-five-year-old Saleh knows after his conversation with Rachel Howard which went this way:

“I was calling about that old man you rang me about a while back, apparently a long while back, the one from Zanzibar. You left a message on my answering machine. I wondered how he was, if everything worked out.” (p.75)

Readers get to know the regret Saleh has after being told of Latif’s existence. One would have thought he would not want to meet him due to the trauma his stepmother’s family inflicted on him, but he too is eager to meet him.

“Latif Mahmud. I thought I’d hear some more from him too, if she told him my name. I thought he would come to find out about me and to tell me the story of all that had happened to him since all those years ago.” (p.68)

Despite all that happened between that family: the marriage link, the willing of the house to Saleh Omar, Shaaban Mahmud’s anger at the loss of the house of his aunt, which is supposed to be rightfully his by inheritance, Saleh’s takeover of Mahmud’s debt through Hussein,

Shaaban and Saleh's disagreement on the payment of the loan, Saleh's takeover of the Mahmud's house, Latif's errand plea for Hassan's parcel from Hussein and the subsequent refusal, Aisha (Shaaban's wife's) power through adultery, her instigation for the arrest of Saleh and subsequent imprisonment for years, leading to the loss of his family, Hassan's comeback and pursuance of his (Saleh's) rightfully owned assets, his fleeing for asylum and gaining it, he still wants to see the family that took him through hell, left him with so much trauma and made him lose everything that mattered to him in life. This is proof enough that Fanon never lied. There is hope among a rather hopeless people because a family that can forgive, is a family that can bond for the greater good to mend their "tattered" nation.

3.3.7 Analyzing the Queer Characters and their Roles in the Family Dynamics in *Under the Udala Trees* and *By the Sea*

Homosexuality is one thing that both Okparanta's and Gurnah's texts have in common. Whereas the former concentrates on lesbianism, the latter is based on male homosexuality. Perhaps, this may be the very believable narratives as they come from female and male perspectives respectively. Both writers project homosexuality as one reason the extended family systems are breaking down. Gurnah's Hassan runs away from home with his lover in his teen years, Okparanta's Ijeoma divorces her husband due to lesbianism. The most iconic rhetoric Ijeoma gives, and she gives many, is the quotation below:

"I had just come out of my studies with Mama. My headscarf, which I always wore during the sessions, had come completely undone by now, and my braids hung loose, around my shoulders.

I was in the middle of gathering the braids together, of tying the scarf around them, when my mind circled back to Adam and Eve.

The thought occurred to me: Yes, it had been Adam and Eve.

But so what if it was only the story of Adam and Eve that we got

in the Bible? Why did that have to exclude the possibility of a certain Adam and Adam or a certain Eve and Eve? Just because the story had to focus on a certain Adam and Eve did not mean all possibilities were forbidden. Just because the Bible recorded one specific thread of events, one specific history, why did that have to invalidate or discredit all other threads, all other histories? Woman was created for man, yes. But why did that mean that woman could not also have been created for another woman? Or a man for another man? Infinite possibilities, and each of them perfectly viable.” (p.99-100).

These are obvious questions needed to be asked where theology is concerned but it is typical of theologians to tag these viable questions blasphemous. To add onto her line of questions, why is the Bible not wholly explanatory to a point of not being questioned by curious believers? Ijeoma, according to Okparanta’s narrative, is someone who is attracted to people with the same biological makeup since she childhood:

“As I looked at the girls, I found myself thinking that maybe in time, with age, the sun would darken my skin enough that I would be at least a shade closer to theirs. Beyond their skin there was something else that made me think: their chests. They actually had chests. Mine on the other hand, was hardly a chest at all, more like two tiny balls of pounded yam, flattened, each about the size of a tablespoon not even enough to fill a palm.

Maybe it was the side effect of envy, or maybe it was something else. Whatever the case, I felt suddenly shy and inadequate...”

(p.44)

A progressive society would have made her see, through mental health assistance, that she is a tomboy or has a certain type of beauty, but certainly not the traditional setting in which she is brought up. No one, without same feelings, would listen to these feelings with an open mind in Ojoto, let alone in Nnewi and certainly not in Aba. Ijeoma herself does not consider the thought of homosexuality when she has these feelings. It must be her nature which instinctively leads her to have sexual encounter with Amina. The fact that she keeps it a secret, shows she knows it would not be approved by her benefactors. But still, like the snake food in the Garden of Eden, she has to taste it repeatedly until she is caught.

Okparanta in her Biblical allusions in *Under the Udala Trees*, challenges Christianity where same sex relationships are concerned and forms a notion that many Christians quote parts of the Bible which suit their causes and do not necessarily understand, let alone utilize their Holy Book as should be. An example is Mama Adaora quoting Judges 19 while counselling Ijeoma on the need to stop having feelings for girls. The brutality of rape, why a woman is exchanged for a man and eventually chopped into pieces to wage war for her unfair death, shows how difficult it is for some Christians, according to Okparanta, to understand the Bible, let alone make sense and use of it. Imagine a mother, a woman, saying this after reading Judges 19:

“Don’t you see? If the men had offered themselves, it would have been an abomination. They offered up the girls so that things would be as God intended: man and woman instead of man and man. Do you see now?” (p.97)

This shows how incorrectly Mama Ada uses her Bible and justifiably, Ijeoma is disgusted. This shows that even the mode of counselling homosexuals to desist from the act is almost always wrong on the part of Christians and even on the part of most Africans as those who despise it are not well vexed in the knowledge presented by their books to enable them to speak sense to

reasoning. With many on point quotations denouncing homosexuality, why does Mama Ada choose Judges 19 when she knows her daughter is a deep thinking educated girl?

When Mama Ada goes back for Ijeoma after abandoning her at the grammar school teacher's house and learns that she is into lesbianism, she makes it clear to her daughter, just as society defines the act, that it is a sin but unlike those who killed Adanna, she says:

“There's no sin so bad that it can't be forgiven, no wrongdoing so terrible that it can't be repented of. You will repent and you will be forgiven by the glory and the power of God.” (p.107)

and later, the same Mama compares lesbianism to a sickness: “You will be cured by the glory and power of God.” (pp.107) making Ijeoma reaffirm her healing after her mother. The whole idea of making “culprits” of lesbians sounds less than human, the idea of shaming them to conform to the normal or “natural” ways of having intimacy (heteronormativity), may not work much, as Okparanta posits through her characterization. Yet Hassan's hushed but loud ridicules, initial quietude from her parents does not help much, it only motivates him to run away with Hussein only to return after the death of his parents.

The cruelty associated with same sex relationships, the cruelty codified and permitted by the holy books, may contribute to the increase in the same sex communities in Africa. There is a belief that the more dangerous something is, the higher it is for daring people to engage in it. That said, the hunt, the castigation, the torture and abuse, the killing of such people, according to Chinelo Okparanta, may just not be the solution needed in the fight for cis relationships among communities or societies which abhor it. Let's consider this narrative:

“We had hardly walked two yards when we saw, in the backyard of the church, a flame of orange and blue. A stack of burning logs. Ndidi begun to cry, and then all of us were crying too, because we had all seen what remained of the face, and we had

all recognized her: Adanna in the midst of the logs, burning and burning and turning to ashes right before our eyes.” (p.244)

If the killing, as severe as it was, could scare people to change their ways, Ndidi, Ijeoma and the rest would have ‘repented’ there and then, but they seem shaken alright as Ijeoma tells readers:

“Everything seemed to settle above us. The screaming died out. The praying faded away. We stood rigidly breathing in the scent of our bodies, of our collective sweat. Breathing in the scent of our collective fear.” (p.243)

Yes, it leaves them with fear but certainly does not change their feelings for same sex relationships.

Also, the trauma it leaves Ijeoma with is immeasurable as the mere mention of it reminds her of a hell she wishes to swerve. As Mama Adaora goes on talking about Adanna’s death, her daughter keeps wishing she would stop as it reminds her of the poor girl who was burned to send a strong message to people like her. She takes readers through her mind:

“I listened quietly, gazing out into the grey outdoors, praying that Mama would move on to some other topic. The last thing I needed was to be reminded that it could have been me. And by extension that it could have been Ndidi. Since the incident, every couple of hours or so, the image of Adanna flashed through my mind. The recurring reminder that one of us had lost her life in that terrible way. The reminder that Adanna had burned at the stake while the rest of us continued to live.” (p.247)

She goes on to add:

“I wanted Mama to stop her preaching, to stop the reminders. As it was, I remembered the incident clearly enough on my own. I didn’t need any more reminders. Just stop, I prayed silently. Please, God, make her stop.” (p.247)

Even when she is about to go to secondary school, Mama Ada would not stop torturing Ijeoma with prayers, but the question is, can prayers solve such issues? Many Africans, it seems, turn to their religious practices when they realize that their relatives are homosexuals. Perhaps this is Okparanta’s way of using satire to force readers to look into their own mirrors to see the ridiculous nature of their habits. After making her read out loud Leviticus 18:22, 19:19, 20:13, Mark 10:6-9, Romans 1:26-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 7:2, 1 Timothy 1:10-11, Jude 1:7, and Revelations 21:8, she preaches to her thus:

“You really must understand that that kind of behavior between you and that girl is the influence of demonic spirits... Are you listening?... Satan finds a way to influence us all the way from hell,... But I will continue to pray for you, and you must continue to pray for yourself. There is nothing that can’t be conquered when we receive Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.” (p.110-111)

According to Okparanta, all these Biblical lessons leaves Ijeoma tired as her own words say: “By the end of all those lessons, all that praying, if anyone had asked how I felt, I would have told them that I was exhausted. Not angry, not confused, not even penitent. Just exhausted. (pp 111) It also forced her to lie for the first time:

“A week before I was to leave to board at the secondary school, two or three days after that last Bible session, Mama turned to me again and asked, “Do you still think of her in that way?” I looked into her eyes, knowing better than to tell the truth, but I

could not get myself to speak the lie. I shook my head. I forced myself to shake it with authority, making sure not to blink. It was the first time that I had lied to Mama. I comforted myself with the thought that at least I had not spoken the lie.” (pp.111)

All these show that maybe the approach used in handling same sex relationships in the family systems might be wrong and might need a rethink as it contributes to the shift from extended family to nuclear family. Perhaps more understanding and amore conversations from both sides; the community and the family might even out and help with positive family dynamics.



CHAPTER FOUR

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FAMILY USING PSYCHOANALYSIS IN *BY THE SEA AND UNDER THE UDALA TREES*

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The family is thought to be made up of a mother, father, children and extended family members, but there are many complex relationships which constitute the family system. Marriage, adoption, and even friendships which over time turn into a family relationship, exist. It is because of this that the family is complex in its own way. The term trauma is broad and has branches in law, psychology, history, public health and literature. Freud defines trauma as “a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind” (p.3)

This part explores the many instances where families are built, the systems and or traumas that shape and or destroy them, instances where different people form a bond through love and or hatred and how the family grows from all that binds it using Chinelo Okparanta’s *Under the Udala Trees* and Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *By the Sea*.

Thus, major themes will be explored to showcase the title under study and resolutions that are inherently highlighted in both texts. The eventual recommendation will succeed the brief summary of the work for readers to have a holistic understanding of the study.

4.2 EXPLORING THE PLACES OF MAJOR CHARACTERS IN CONNECTION TO THE FAMILY IN *UNDER THE UDALA TREES* AND *BY THE SEA*

Gurnah paints pictures of different families, intertwined into a community which later translates into a society in his novel *By the Sea*. Shaaban’s family becomes Saleh’s family through marriage, Hussein becomes part of Shaaban’s family through friendship (for a period). Gurnah takes his time to build his characters. He narrates the family backgrounds of the major characters, defining their Tanzanian families denotatively while creating a connotational

connection between family and friends, that is, Shaaban and Saleh. Craps & Buelens (2008) are of the opinion that “colonial traumas such as dispossession, forced migration, diaspora, slavery, segregation, racism, political violence, and genocide caused discrimination” (p.3). It is therefore not surprising that Gurnah builds his characters in the light of these traumas.

Hussein, for instance is built from the patriarchy of Jaafar Musa, a businessman who owns several ships and is succeeded by his three children with his first wife; Mariam Kufah, two daughters; Zeynab and Aziza and a son; Reza Musah. After Jaafar’s death in 1899 through a stroke, with the help of his gardener, Reza takes over the family business and traumatically loses a greater portion of it due to his impatience and anger towards the Europeans. Hussein, who succeeds Reza, takes over and extends the business through determination, and ruthlessness borne out of his childhood traumas. This patience in taking the reader through the background of characters helps in understanding the psyche of the characters, and as it is their attitudes towards life and others in general.

Rajab Shaaban, who happens to be Hussein’s bosom friend is also a man whose background helps to understand why he acts the way he does. As his son, Latif, recalls:

“...my father Rajab Shaaban Mahmud worked as a clerk in the Public Works Department. Some people called him Bin Mamud, after his grandfather, my great – grandfather, who was well-remembered for something I’ve forgotten. No, that’s not true, I know very well what he was remembered for: for high-level probity and for a pious soul. Something useless in itself, and probably useless to him but which made him and everyone else feel human.” (Gurnah, p.81)

Latif goes on to narrate how his father takes to an exaggerated piety even though he is a drunkard, a cuckold and we later get to know through Saleh, that he is also bitter and quarrelsome. Readers can understand why he lives miserably, he is depressed that he cannot fit into the shoes of his ancestry. Someone who has been backstabbed by his bosom friend, Hussein, and lost his home and a son, someone whose behaviour causes his aunt to disinherit him, will actually act bitter and live a farce through an over exaggerated spirituality in his religion in postcolonial Africa. This is because he is depressed, is living through his adulterous wife's oppression and decides to ignore it all through denial.

Saleh also narrates his own background, taking readers through the life of his father till the time his father meets his stepmother who happens to be Rajab Shaaban's aunt. Latif, compares his father and grandfather to throw more light on their lives on pages 86 and 87: "And by then I knew that my father's father was a disappointment, a wild man who drank and fornicated in brothels and died young." It is evident that Latif himself is traumatized by the history of his family. He is depressed and does not have anyone to talk to so is also going through what I will term 'speech suppression'.

Gurnah presents the friends turned family part of most African cultures which sometimes go well, and in Rajab's case, goes sour. This is because Hussein does not only make him lose his house, he also causes him to lose his son after making him a homosexual, the bisexual also sleeps with his wife several times. He shames him in the full glare of society and makes him a bitter man too. This is a friend turned family gone wrong. That notwithstanding, Saleh's relationship with the prisoners (trauma bonding) and the asylum seekers is also a kind of friendship which relates to a kind of family. No matter the animosity, they bond in the common need to survive and live through the horror of depression. The African brotherhood where people become each other's keeper is creatively painted by Gurnah as against the aid workers

who hypocritically mock Saleh, thinking he cannot understand their language, and make fun of his life and religion.

Gurnah paints a great picture of the society by using these families to a point of insinuating through Latif's narration that the society even names people according to their disposition or outlook or whatever it is that catches their fancy. "People called him Faru, rhinoceros, for reasons I've forgotten and no longer care about." Gurnah (p.99). This shows how powerful the society is in both texts. It is no wonder both stories are woven around the society which is made up of different families. Gurnah's protagonists are family through marriage, and go through traumatic feuds which end up nearly killing Saleh Omar, forcing him to flee his country and becoming an immigrant at an old age. Sending a message of a deteriorating society which oppresses its people.

That aside, Gurnah tells the story in such a way that the major protagonist becomes the person whose family ruins his life, thus, Saleh Omar becoming Rajab Shaaban Mahmud. "And my name is Rajab Shaaban. It is not my real name, but a name I borrowed for the occasion of this life-saving trip." (p.41). This shows the complexities of a dynamic family, feuding but engaging, hating but being the hated. No matter the postcolonial trauma and justification, no matter how a family comes together, whatever plagues them, they forever remain who they are, bonded by whatever spirit that brings them together, in their case marriage.

4.3 CRAVING ATTENTION AND WARMTH IN THE FACE OF TRAUMA IN *UNDER THE UDALA TREES AND BY THE SEA*

Gurnah's *By the Sea*, published in 2001, heavily dwells on the traumas of some citizens which force them to migrate or seek asylum in some developed countries. Saleh, who is first in denial when the problems with the Shaabans start, suppresses his feelings to a point of fear and eventually, through the loss of his wife and child, get depressed to a point of deciding to flee.

Saleh puts it best when he metaphorically laments the unfair state of ordinary citizens whom the system has forced into classes:

“The upper air is always full of agitation because God and his angels live there and debate high policy, and flush out treachery and rebellion. They do not welcome casual listeners or informers or self-servers and have the fate of the universe to darken their brows and whiten their hair. As a precaution, the angels release a corrosive shower every now and then to deter mischievous eavesdroppers with a threat of deforming wounds. The middle air is the arena for contention, where the clerks and the ante-room afreets and the wordy jinns and flabby serpents writhe and flap and fume as they strain for the counsels of their betters. Ack ack, did you hear what he said? What can it mean? In the murk of the lower air is where you’ll find the venomless time-servers and the fantasists who’ll believe anything and defer to everything, the gullible and the spiritless throngs that crowd and pollute the narrowing spaces where they congregate, and that’s where you’ll find me. Nowhere else suits me quite as well.” (p.3)

This quote sums up the entire citizenry in Gurnah’s *By the Sea* where there happens to be three classes: The ‘UPPER’ (caps used for emphasis of their importance), ‘Middle’ and ‘lower classes.’ Just as the colonizers when they were in power. The colonizers are the ‘UPPER’ classes who cannot be touched, their recruits were the “Middle” classes who grumble but live somehow comfortably and the colonized are the lower classes who are stepped on and used

like donkeys, the class that Saleh notes he belongs to. So it is no wonder Saleh goes through hardships and unfairness in the hands of his own people through his nation's poorly built systems forcing him into depression to a point of fleeing for his life, stating on page 4, "I am a refugee, an asylum-seeker. These are not simple words even if habit of hearing them makes them seem so." He is victimized, manhandled, forcefully arrested, unfairly imprisoned right to threatening his life, until he can take no more and flees. All these, happening post-independence, shows a new form of trauma in a hybrid nation which according to Young, operates

"...as a policy of state, driven by the ostentatious projects of power within and beyond national boundaries. On the one hand, imperialism is susceptible to analysis as a concept grounded in exploitation, partnership and assimilation" (p.26-27).

Gurnah paints a great picture of a colonial leftover and traumas which leave hints of the unhealthy systems Africans inherited from imperial rule. One of such hints can be found on page 6, when Saleh reaches immigration at the Gatwick Airport, where he recalls the posture of Kevin Edelman, the British Immigration Officer:

"As he strode briskly ahead of me, I saw that he was overweight and looked unhealthy, and by the time we reached an interview room, he was breathing heavily and tugging at his shirt." (p.6)

Kevin is representative of the unhealthy inherited political systems which are running down Saleh's nation, nevertheless, he has no option other than relying on him, knowing fully well it might end up disastrous. He suppresses his fears and dangers and goes with his (Kevin) dictates. Saleh uses his religion to pray in hope that it gets better, saying in his head as he pretends to be

linguistically illiterate in the English language “May God give you health, Kevin Edelman”, an irony on his own emotions and state. One can’t help but note the fact that Gurnah humours the religious nature of lower-class citizens who pray for the systems to work knowing fully well that it will not and that at the end of the day, the ‘UPPER’ classes will be blessed in ‘Eros’, the ‘Middle’ classes will survive but they (the lower classes) will perish or suffer the most depression and maybe succumb to ‘Thanatos’, as they have nowhere to go.

Abdulrazak creates a world of the African after colonialism in a manner depicting a state of utter desperation and backward mentality. It is safe to add ‘Unintentional Thanatos’ to the Freud’s analysis, as it is caused by a state of confusion where those who indulge in it are forced to believe in life through something that can cost them their lives. How a burst appendix kills Saleh’s mother whose husband fails to take her to the hospital for proper diagnosis, shows how backward post-colonial Africa, in Gurnah’s view, is. Saleh recounting this hard time says to Latif:

“Later, after I returned from Kampala, I asked my father what she had died of and he said it was a burst appendix. In his ignorance he had not known about such things, and thought it was something in her bowels, some blocking or constriction, so he had given her a laxative.” (p.14)

This state of mind of Saleh’s father, coupled with the beliefs of his mother, which includes her belief in laxatives, eventually kills her after she suffers great agony, there should be a name for this type of death and ‘Unintentional Thanatos’ or ‘Ignorant Thanatos’ fits fine.

Gurnah also tackles the colonial systems left for Africans, which forces Africans into a state of frenzy to the point of telling lies in order to fit in.

“The British brought us schools, and brought the rules to make school work. If the rules said you had to be six and no older than six to be allowed to start school, that was how it would be. Not that the schools had things their own way, because parents shaved off however many years it was necessary to have their children allowed in.” (p.35).

This paints the lack of suppression on the parts of the orientals, to change into befitting systems, as they use dubious means to fit into the British leftover systems. They do not care, according to Gurnah, if they have to “shave” ten years off the ages of their wards, they will be able to beat the requirements set by those in authority. And the worst part of this horrible system, is:

“Birth Certificate? They were poor, ignorant people and never bothered to obtain one. Which was why they wanted their son to go to school, **so he wouldn't end up a beast like them.**” (p.35 – 36)

The boldened part speaks to the neo-colonial attitudes which make Africans talk down their own humanity, branding themselves animals and justifying the colonial rule which treated them like ‘the beasts they are forced to be through the loss of their self-esteem,’.

Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* reveals an African country wrought in civil war, and oppression, specifically Nigeria. The peaceful country, she recounts in her novel, turns into a war zone and births the Biafra War.

“By 1968, our men had begun slinging guns across their shoulders and carrying axes and machetes, blades glistening in the sun; and out on the streets, every hour or two in the afternoons and evenings, their chanting could be heard, loud voices pouring out like libations from their mouths: Biafra, win

the war!... By this time, talk of all the festivities that would take place when Biafra defeated Nigeria had already begun to dwindle, supplanted, rather, by a collective fretting over what would become of us when Nigeria prevailed.” (p.12).

Okparanta uses her novel to reveal existing friction within some African countries which impede growth and development of those nations. She paints a picture of a hopeless Independent Africa with stagnant with internal conflicts, conflicts factions fail to think through before they manifest and tend to live in *oppression*, fear and instability afterwards asking:

“Would we be stripped of our homes, and of our lands? Would we be forced into menial servitude? Would we be reduced to living on rationed food? How long into the future would we bear the burden of our loss? Would we recover?” (p.12)

One would think these questions would be thought through and their answers would bind different ethnic groups to seek peace and work together for their common good. Okparanta seeks to tell a story of an Africa which thinks not of their times during colonialism, takes no advantage of the fact that fore-parents risked their lives for their independence, and do not think of the probability of rising above traumas and poverty and preventing the growth of these nations. She takes readers into the lives of a people who always ask ‘Why us?’, victimhood; playing victims when they are the very cause of their woes.

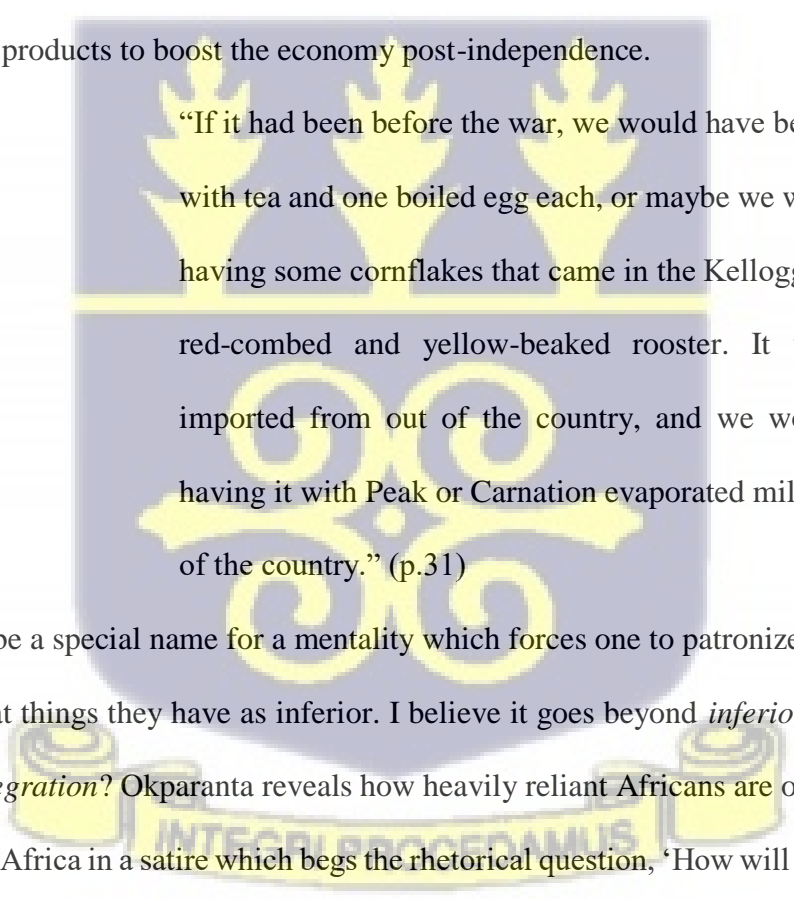
“The way Mama tells it these days, it’s a little like a Hollywood drama, or maybe a James Bond film –” (p.75). Writing the African story is supposed to be simple and representative of Africa, but Okparanta’s building of her character; Ijeoma, on page 75, leaves readers thinking “Are there no better African comparisons than the Western Hollywood drama, or James Bond film?”

Surely there should be. Likening the story Mama tells of the refurbishment of their Aba residence to a ‘Hollywood’ or ‘James Bond film’, puts a dent on her narrative capabilities as an African. What happened to the many Nollywood movies? It paints a picture of a

brainwashed writer, but then again, some people will attribute this to her relocation and brand her a half-baked African, in opinions they are entitled to.

There is a metaphorical representation of Papa Uzo's refusal to go to the bunker, choosing *Thanatos*, and losing his life as a result, and his wife's initial *Denial* and refusal to take care of their ward due to *Depression* and shipping her to her father's acquaintances, as representative of the *blame games* and *psychological tactics* most politicians in African countries indulge in to avoid taking responsibility for their part in the failure of their countries. As Ijeoma recounts: "...there is no way to tell the story of Mama's sending me off without also telling of Papa's refusal to go to the bunker." (p.13)

Okparanta also brings to mind the brainwashed mentality of patronizing foreign goods instead of locally made products to boost the economy post-independence.

The background of this section features a large, semi-transparent watermark of the University of Ghana crest. The crest is a shield-shaped emblem with a blue background and yellow/gold elements. At the top, there are three stylized, flame-like or leaf-like shapes. Below these, there are two circular motifs. The central part of the shield contains a complex, symmetrical design. At the bottom of the shield, there is a banner with the Latin motto "INTEGRUM PROCEDEMUS".

"If it had been before the war, we would have been eating bread with tea and one boiled egg each, or maybe we would have been having some cornflakes that came in the Kellogg's box with the red-combed and yellow-beaked rooster. It was cornflakes imported from out of the country, and we would have been having it with Peak or Carnation evaporated milk, also from out of the country." (p.31)

There needs to be a special name for a mentality which forces one to patronize what others do and see the great things they have as inferior. I believe it goes beyond *inferiority complex*, so maybe *inferiodegration*? Okparanta reveals how heavily reliant Africans are on foreign goods in post-colonial Africa in a satire which begs the rhetorical question, 'How will African farmers and manufacturers survive in this world where industries and products make nations powerful?'

Okparanta tackles the issue of bad press in post-colonial Africa. Stating through Ijeoma:

“A toddler-aged boy was leaning against the cement wall near a gate down the road, as if to catch his breath. Behind him several other children stood, a little older than the toddler, their bellies swollen like inflated balls from kwashiorkor, holding small plastic begging pans in their hands. If someone were to have snapped their picture, it could have been another one of Papa’s newspaper front pages.” (p.39)

Chinelo means to advocates against poor or desperate storytelling, where the African story is told to make its people look desolate and mostly like beggars. That even messes with the *psyche*. Even when there are great sites which can paint the wealth of a country, even its own press prefers to give bad scenes headlines in their media to send a message of hopelessness to the world, and by so doing, making Africans out to be the desolate lot out of all people in the world even after gaining their own sovereignty.

With regard to the Biafran War, Okparanta takes us into a post-colonial Africa where “corpses flanked the roads. Decapitated bodies. Bodies with missing limbs. All around was the persistent smell of decaying flesh.” (p.61). Hurt people hurt people. This depicts the traumas which force others to inflict pain and chaos in order to seize the “freedom” of their own people after colonial rule; how nationals turn on themselves, butcher themselves and treat each other like “garbage”, and force traumas on others just as the exploiters did during colonial rule. Readers are tempted to ask, ‘What is the difference between colonial rule and independence?’

One of the most intriguing things about people of post-colonial Africa, is their religion. How Ijeoma’s mother is attached to her religion to a point of using it as a tool to suppress her daughter’s sexual orientation, to Okparanta, is not only pathetic, but reeks ignorance. Ijeoma looks on helplessly as her mother goes into her religious mood: “She said, “Nwoke ne nwunye.

Man and wife. Adam na Eve. I ne ghe nti? Are you listening?’ She was shaking her finger, a reminder and a warning.”

The humour in this quote is not lost on the reader, but it is a well-known fact that most Africans are very attached to their religion and depend on them for everything, especially Christians, and Chinelo aims at pointing that out, showing post-colonial Africans a picture of themselves. This in itself is a delusion of some sort.

Okparanta’s *Under the Udala Trees* poses an almost perfect satire of the African story in an independent Nigerian state overtaken by the Biafran Civil War, probably to ring the bells of indifference and to wake the African to the problems that plague their nations.

Okparanta’s *Under the Udala Trees* also has its fair share of traumas where Ijeoma’s family, her guardians, Amina’s family and the Biafra war are concerned. Ijeoma’s loss of her loving father, her need for her mother in critical times and the trauma of having to live through that with people she is not familiar with, throws more light on her sexuality. Family, to her, is the most important thing, losing all that to a war she does not even understand is a hard blow but there is nothing like therapy so the only way she can find comfort is through her sexual orientation, but the same family she has grown to love, shames, threatens and sends her back to her mother, who religiously tortures her to eventually choose heterosexuality so as to satisfy her religion and the heteronormative society. Ijeoma in her confusion at the horrid quotations of her mother from the Bible says: “I wished that Papa were here so that I could have asked him what he thought”. (p.97). This points to how depressed she feels by the death of her father. The fact that her broken family makes her feel she is missing someone whose lessons are valuable to her life is heartbreaking. She recalls her life with her father who tells her stories amidst her traumas. The father figure she loses and is sent immediately after to the grammar school teacher and his wife:

“Before the war came, Papa told candlelight stories, folktales about talking animals and old kingdoms. In his voice, gruff from hours of silence at his drawing table, he told of kings and queens, of magic drums, of scheming tortoises and hares... He spoke of allegories, and of literal versus the figurative. He explained that certain things were symbols of other things, and that certain folktales were only allegories of certain situations in life. ‘What is an allegory?’ I asked” (p.94)

This quotation shows how close she was with her father and why. It is evident that the man was open with her and gave her an opportunity to not only converse with him but to ask him questions, which was very important to her up growing. So, her father represents her confidant, companion and role model. You can call it ia complex, but Ijeoma’s family head is her everything. Losing that important part of her family kills a part of her and breaks down her whole family. Her mother’s grief also adds to her fear of losing all her parents.

At the grammar school teacher’s place, Ijeoma, sad to have lost her father and disappointed to have been abandoned by her mother (but suppresses her emotions), narrates her meeting her guardian, the grammar school teacher and his wife:

“I stared at the ground, pondering the way he was saying my name. I hoped he would not taste it only to turn around and spit it out. By the sound of things, probably not. There was, after all, a warmth to his voice that reminded me of Papa’s voice. But then he was not Papa. He was fat and awkward-moving where Papa was thin and lithe. Would he really be warm like Papa, or was this warmth in his voice just a trick? Would it melt away the way a candle melts with fire?” (p.65)

This quotation shows how much she misses her father, how she wishes to replace him but how sad it is to know he can never be replaced. The family representation, for her, consists of her father, as head and mother. Losing them both displaces and depresses her, but meeting the grammar school teacher and his wife somehow gives her hope, hope with doubts, yet she knows her family will never be the same again.

Mama Adaora, who also represents the only family of Okparanta's protagonist, has her fair share of loss where the family is concerned. Her love for her husband is evident in the way she cares for him. Ijeoma recounts the events leading to his death thus:

“Mama remained crouched by my side, not saying a word, as if at any moment she would rush out and go looking for Papa.” (p.23)

When the evasion finally dies down, she rushes out to look for her husband, after finding him deceased, Ijeoma describes the scene:

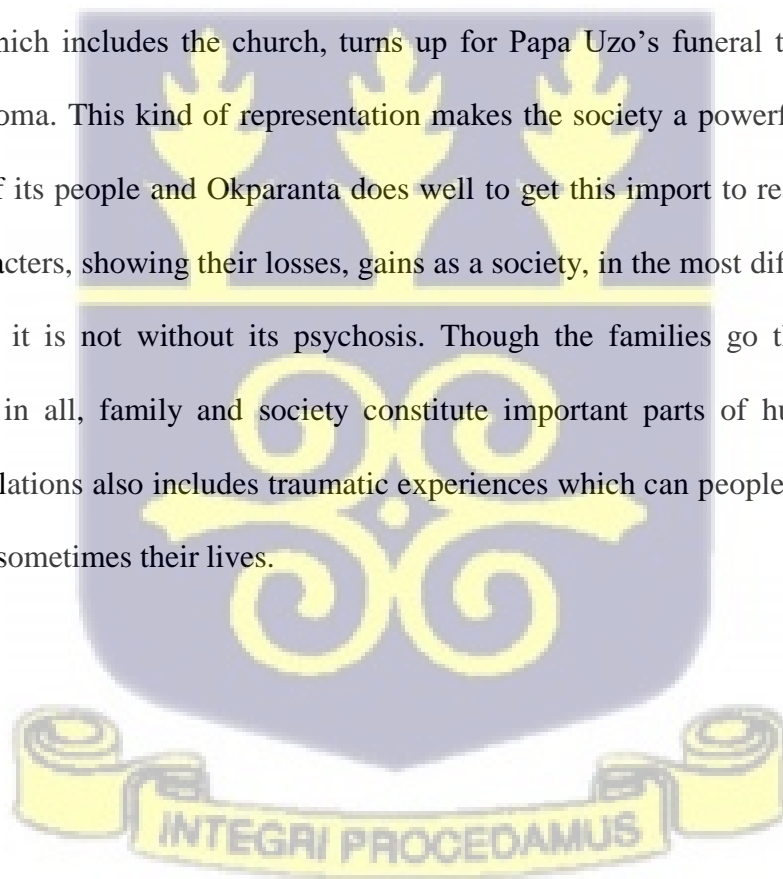
“She stayed bent over his body, the cloth of her wrapper soaking up his blood. ‘Uzo, biko, mepe anya gi! Ana m ayo gi!’ I’m begging you, Uzo. Please open your eyes for me! She continued to call his name, and each new call was louder than the one before... Her calling became shouting, and shouting turned into wailing.” (p.29).

This shows how affected Mama Adaora is and to some extent, explains her trauma and grief. She goes from shock, denial to anger in the same day. To these characters, the family is everything. No wonder Mama Adaora forces Ijeoma into a loveless marriage, stating: “With a man, life is difficult. Without a man, life is even more difficult. Take it from me.” (p.256). This shows that Ijeoma's mother intends to force her into a family of her own at all costs, fearing a deviation might have a devastating effect on her in the scary society.

The society is also culturally well created and forms part of the arts of both writers. Uzo (Ijeoma's father's funeral is well narrated to show how the society works for the good of families. Though Mama Adaora, (Ijeoma's mother) feels angered and numb, her husband's interment is well attended by the society.

“There was an extensive wake-keeping – people coming in steady streams to give their condolences. This continued for over a week, with Papa laid out in the parlour on a bed, borrowed for the occasion from one of our church members. Mama, dressed in white, sat on a chair by his side surrounded by a troop of female parishioners.” (p.30-31)

The society, which includes the church, turns up for Papa Uzo's funeral to support Mama Adaora and Ijeoma. This kind of representation makes the society a powerful system which dictates lives of its people and Okparanta does well to get this import to readers. Okparanta builds her characters, showing their losses, gains as a society, in the most difficult time of the Biafra war but it is not without its psychosis. Though the families go through so many challenges, all in all, family and society constitute important parts of humanity, but the psychosocial relations also includes traumatic experiences which can people to sacrifice their real selves and sometimes their lives.



4.4 EXPLORING THE THEME OF TRAUMA IN THE FAMILY SYSTEMS IN *UNDER THE UDALA TREES AND BY THE SEA*

Both texts under study are perfect for the study of psychoanalysis, in that, many of the characters suffer from traumatic experiences which can be equated to real life. Sigmund Freud did note that “anxiety originating from traumatic experiences in a person’s past is hidden from consciousness, and may cause problems during adulthood (in the form of neuroses).” (McLeod, (2018, p.1)

Kevin Edelman projecting his thoughts through his experiences on Saleh (who poses as Shaaban in order to flee, is worth every bit of study in psychoanalysis. *Projection*, according to MacLeod (2018), is individuals attributing their own unacceptable thoughts, feelings or motives on others. Gurnah’s message of all humans being emotionally wounded, comes true through Kevin Edelman, an Immigration Officer, when he tells Saleh:

“I know something about uprooting yourself and going to live somewhere else. I know about hardships of being alien and poor, because that is what they went through when they came here, and I know about the rewards” (p.12)

A bitter story the trader who sold the ud-al-qamari, the Persian trader from Bahrain told, recounting the trauma of the people of Africa:

“And they brought with their hungers and greeds, their fantasies and lies and hatreds, leaving some among their numbers behind for whole life-times and taking what they could buy, trade or snatch away with them, including people they bought or kidnapped and sold into labour and degradation in their own

lands. After all that time, the people who lived on that coast hardly knew who they were, but knew enough to cling to what made them different from those they despised, among themselves as well as among the outlying progeny of the human race in the interior of the continent.” (p.15)

This shows a *Regression* to a time when Africans, among other continents, were treated like “non-humans” leaving them with traumas which have travelled through generations.

Gurnah’s major narrator, Saleh, probably is the most traumatized character in his novel. The fact that he is harassed, assaulted, arrested and molested with hard labour only to be released as a widower, say a lot about his mental health. Nonetheless, his self-respect being all he has, makes him rational enough to know he would not win no matter what because the system only favours those with political power. In his bid to flee, he asks in an internal soliloquy:

“At what age are you supposed not to be afraid for your life? Or not to want to live without fear? How did he know that my life was in any less danger than those young men they let in? And why was it immoral to want to live better and in safety? Why was that greed or a game?” (p.11)

All these questions make evident to readers all the repressed emotions which together makes up his traumas, making it obvious he is in a bad place and needs help to deal with his mental health.

After Hassan accuses Saleh of owing Hussein money whose affidavit says he (Saleh) is supposed to give part as his (Hassan’s) inheritance, and Saleh explains it is the other way round, he misbehaves towards him and makes a public scene which obviously embarrasses Saleh.

Latif, whose raw emotions are repressed, represents Gurnah's indifferent characters, who equate to indifferent Africans who look on as their nations deteriorate and sometimes migrate to other countries to escape the shame. Latif says of his own family:

“I wanted nothing to do with them and their hatreds and demands. Their hatreds of each other, the hatreds that made him rage and mumble and fall into that corrosive silence of his. I know you're not supposed to be able to say that about your parents, but it was a bit of luck, being able to escape from the GDR into a kind of anonymity, even to be able to change my name, to escape from them.” (p.239)

This shows his level of trauma stemming from his mother's infidelity, his father's drunkenness, his brother's homosexuality and the taunts of his school mates. That he is able to *repress* all these feelings only for sublimation to take place, for him to use his trauma for academic gains, gains he hopes not to share with his own nation, owing to the bitterness he feels is heartbreaking.

When Saleh comes out of prison, his own people, neighbours, under the guise of helping him, treat him like a destroyed being needing aid deepening his depression further as he suppresses his thoughts and tries to be friendly to all. Here, Gurnah takes a swipe at innocent people turned beggars by societies once they become ex-convicts.

“People treated me like a man destroyed by prison and personal tragedy, and they spoke to me kindly and forbearingly, and I responded with grateful and witless goodwill. And later, when I was on my own in the darkness of my crumbling store, I lamented the loss of my loved ones and grieved for them, and

when that grief palled, I was saddened by the wasted life I had lived. (p.235)

It is obvious there are many Salehs in Africa and elsewhere, who Gurnah aims to speak for, so the world can help them heal. Saleh does go through many injustices, among which is this situation he narrates to Latif:

“Then he stepped into the doorway of the shop, in sight of passers-by in the street, and abused me in public, the same way your father used to do now and again. He repeated the accusations, and then threatened me with imprisonment or worse when his case was won. I sat behind the shop-counter like a whipped creature while he leapt and swooped and raged all around me, and a crowd gathered with broadening smiles to watch the spectacle. I thought he would beat me...” (p.240)

It is obvious that the traumatized Hassan (who was raped by Hussein when he was a teenager and turned into a homosexual) has learned to also traumatize Saleh, through the lies of Hussein, a case of traumatized people traumatizing others.

The metaphor in Saleh becoming Shaaban is African leaders becoming shadow colonizers after suffering under their systems, and using their powers to abuse and suppress their own people. So, the citizens become powerless under those they give power to. Gurnah reiterates this throughout his novel *By the Sea* and leaves no stone unturned to make sure his message comes across to all, pointing to an Africa where many are psychotic and others are mentally sick and weary and need help.

In Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees*, many of her characters are also traumatized. Uzo chooses *Thanatos*, that is, death, in order to escape the traumas of the war. Ijeoma, who is a young girl does not choose such a path, but lives through the trauma of the passing of her father, and so she 'thought' for her dead father:

"Maybe it was that he could not have imagined himself in a Nigeria in which Biafra had been defeated. Maybe the thought of having to live out his life under a new regime where he would be forced to do without everything he had worked for – all those many years of hard work – a new regime where Biafrans would be considered lesser citizens – slaves – like the rumours claimed, was too much for him to bear." (p.17)

Papa Uzo's death (or choice of death, *Thanatos*), also traumatizes Mama, Ijeoma's mother. "By the end of July, over a month had passed and Mama had not so much as mentioned Papa." (p.34) This was the phase of disbelief or *denial*. Her denial eventually turned into anger:

"She snapped, her head whipping up with a sudden unexpected anger. In a low, grumbling voice she replied: 'Why should I miss him? Was he not the same man who made a widow of me and almost an orphan out of you? Tell me, just why should I miss him?'" (p.34).

Here, it looked like Mama Ada had repressive feelings she expressed through her rage. She gives up and tells her daughter about the anger she feels:

"Anger, that is what I feel towards him. Anger. Sometimes I feel like I will just explode with it." (p.34-35). Okparanta projects the trauma of women and children due to civil wars across Africa. These wars, to her, leave mothers desolate and in Mama Ada's case, left her with nightmares:

“At something like one or two a.m. on the night of Mama’s anger confession, her scream came piercing a hole into the darkness, a hole so big that I felt as if I were spiralling at full speed down the length of it. ‘Uzo!’ she cried. Never before have I heard her scream this way in her sleep.” (p.35)

There is a long battle of emotions when people lose their loved ones through unfair wars, wars they never bargain for, wars they never agree to and in cases of children, wars they do not understand but are left to go through with it. So when they are finally faced with destruction, the wounded, hunger, thirst, death, they hardly recover, and in instances when they go through the period of acceptance, it does nothing to help them heal from their traumas associated with being bombed, seeing others murdered and sometimes losing all they have.

Okparanta’s protagonist, young as she was, was made to grow so fast as she was all her grieving mother had. She had to suppress her grief in order to console her mother. She heartbreakingly narrates:

“I leaned in to her and very gently said, ‘Papa is dead. Do you forget? ‘I whispered it to her over and over again.

Papa is dead. Do you forget?

Papa is dead. Do you forget?

Papa is dead. Do you forget?

She began to cry, as if hearing the news for the first time. Her shoulders heaved. Her breaths caught. I held her, rocked her in my arms. It was some time before her crying subsided. Finally

she looked up at me, looked into my face. ‘Your papa is gone’, she whispered.” (p.36)

Ijeoma turned into her mother's mental support system, helping her not only to accept their horrible circumstances and reality, but also to grieve. She turned into her shoulder to cry on, and posed as a place she could share her grievances without being judged because loss takes time to sink into hearts.

Her hurt, raw emotions and hatred for her dead husband still haunted her, tortured her to a point where she was seeing things that were not there:

“The voices and all the sounds were also a reminder of his death. Not just the screaming and the war sounds, but now the floors of the house creaked, and each creak was something like the sound of his footsteps.” (p.46)

Is it a wonder she eventually sends Ijeoma away? She was the representation of her loss, and was a reminder of her husband and a remnant of the horrid war she endured. She put her mental health first, and decided to build herself to healing, before dealing with her daughter, who was also struggling through it all.

Okparanta also pushes for the brainwashing of many Africans who believe that prayers can do all things, including healing lesbianism or homosexuality. The fact that Mama Adaora, thought lesbianism was a spirit, and was determined to rid her daughter of it was not only pathetic, but humorous, not to mention torturous for her daughter and for herself. Ijeoma narrates her ordeal:

“I had just come out of my studies with Mama. My headscarf, which I always wore during the sessions, had come completely undone by now, and my braids hung loose, around my shoulders.

I was in the middle of gathering the braids together, of tying the scarf around them, when my mind circled back to Adam and Eve.

The thought occurred to me: Yes, it had been Adam and Eve.

But so what if it was only the story of Adam and Eve that we got

in the Bible? Why did that have to exclude the possibility of a certain Adam and Adam or a certain Eve and Eve? Just because the story had to focus on a certain Adam and Eve did not mean all possibilities were forbidden. Just because the Bible recorded one specific thread of events, one specific history, why did that have to invalidate or discredit all other threads, all other histories? Woman was created for man, yes. But why did that mean that woman could not also have been created for another woman? Or a man for another man? Infinite possibilities, and each of them perfectly viable.” (p.99-100).

It must have been torturous to have her sexuality questioned, her mental health compromised and her self-esteem bruised and battered, taking her through a psychological roller-coaster.

Chinelo uses Ijeoma to ask the difficult questions Christians fail to ask.

Psychologically, Ijeoma struggles with the fact that her mother abandoned her after the death of her father. Even after Mama Adaora goes for her, she struggles to live with her, partly due to her sexuality and partly because of the grudge she held against her mother. “I remained at the doorway. I said, ‘I’m sorry for interrupting you. I’ll come back when you’re done.’” (p.79)

This shows how uncomfortable Ijeoma was in her own home due to hurts she harboured in her heart.

It is important to note both texts deal with homosexuality in a manner that suggests it is part of the lives of East and West Africans. That notwithstanding, Freud’s psychoanalysis, though unable to predict behaviours but great at explaining traits. That is why it is good for studying as a theory, the characters of the texts.

4.5 GENERIC DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN *BY THE SEA* AND *UNDER THE UDALA TREES*

Both texts, though written by Africans, have their differences and similarities. Whereas Abdulrazak Gurnah is a Tanzanian, Chinelo Okparanta is a Nigerian. So East Africa meets a West African text, that is. We get a combined feel of some human experiences when we take into account the perspectives and points of view of both male and female respectively. That aside, Chinelo writes from a Christian perspective, whereas Gurnah writes from a Muslim perspective. It is same God but different cultures, beliefs and societal expectations.

Both texts are fictitious and present reality as fiction, making them satiric. It is the reason many readers can relate to the traumas of the protagonists knowing the overly religious characters like the real Shaaban and Ijeoma's mother in *By the Sea* and *Under the Udala Trees* respectively. The culture in Gurnah's text, from their perfumes, their worship to their dressing, speak to the Islamic religion while Ijeoma's mother's quotations and worship, speak to the Christian religion. That notwithstanding, their eating habits, stories Mr. Shaaban told his boys, stories Papa Uzo told Ijeoma and other societal conversations, bring out the African cultures from both nations.

Due to the fact that both texts are satiric, they provide mirrors through which societies view themselves. Okparanta's message of horror where wars are concerned comes clear to readers, her message of respecting the sexual orientations of others also comes to bear, her message of communal upbringing where children are concerned also comes to bear, and through it all, neo-colonial systems are shown to be the bedrock of many of the failures of Nigeria and Biafra's frictions. Gurnah's message of a chaotic post-colonial Tanzania, also comes through, his message, reiterating the reasons some Tanzanians migrate also comes through, his message of national brotherhood in international spheres also comes to bear, corruption and witch hunting are themes he makes sure stand out, and societal vices like sodomy, drunkenness, adultery, and bullying also come to bear.

It is worth mentioning that both writers have vast Western knowledge through their travels and in Chinelo's case, migration. In that same vein, judging by their tone, and the fact that they are able to set readers' emotions through apt mood of African experiences, they are well-versed in their cultures, enough to paint their homelands to the best of their abilities.

Both texts use the first-person narrative which gives some level of credibility to their narratives. Whereas Okparanta uses the straight forward first-person narration, Gurnah uses it with a twist. He has two major narrators telling their stories from their perspectives, leaving readers to choose who to believe by reading between their narratives. This type of narrative brings about some level of objectivity and leaves space for open-minded people read between the lines of narration.

The fact that both texts infuse themes of homosexuality is worth noting. Gurnah tackles it from the male perspective, and blends it to be almost normal with societal sexual orientation while Okparanta paints a perfect picture of the Nigerian state where they are against homosexual relations. So the study presents a somewhat wholesome view of the situation at hand and the situation to be in the near future.

The points of view in both texts differ. Whereas Okparanta uses the first-person narrative, where her protagonist, Ijeoma, narrates the story from beginning to end, Gurnah uses two narrators, probably to give an all-round believable view of the whole story, so readers get to read from the perspective of Saleh, who begins the story from its near end, and Latif, who provides the story from the side of the Shaabans.

Both have mostly simple dictum with some complex words and present serious tones, but Chinelo presents a humorous front once in a while with her depiction of a skewed Christian thoughts of prayers changing the sexual preference of her daughter. Gurnah's humorous parts are shown in Saleh acting mute in order to get a pass-through migration.

4.6 UNPACKING GENDER NUANCES AND BRIDGING THE GENDER GAP IN *UNDER THE UDALA TREES AND BY THE SEA*

There are some undertones of gender expectations in both texts, leading to the behaviours of characters built to suit those narratives in the family systems where both texts are concerned. Some of these behaviours go a long way to expose some western advocacy gaps in the African systems and the psyche of the characters.

Gurnah, writing from a male perspective, empathizes with the plight of women as he opines: "I don't know what happened in girls' schools and wish now that I did. Perhaps the girls would have just disappeared from school, there one day gone the next, and everyone would have guessed they had been married. Married off, married by, done to. I try to imagine what that would have felt like. I imagine myself a woman, feeble with unuttered justification, unutterable. I imagine myself defeated." (Gurnah, p.36)

By this, he speaks of the limitations some societies put on females. Patriarchal societies' expectations of women being in the shadows of men they marry, tending to domestic work,

giving birth, nursing and nurturing babies, leaving behind their dreams and aspirations. He as a man sympathized with girls who are suppressed and or oppressed due to forced marriages, or due to societal definition of a “good” woman. In the same way, Okparanta, who is a woman and understands the dictates of patriarchal society builds characters who speak to the issue of gender imbalance to a point that even a nine-year-old Osita thinks of being married and having children. The fact that some girls are brainwashed to think only as wives to a point that Osita had to tell her friends to go sit under the Udala Tree and count to a hundred so they can be fertile when their time arrives is heartbreaking. When asked why, she says

“Because nine was not too young to prepare, she said. Because sooner or later we would each become somebody’s wife, and as wives, it would be our obligation to be fertile, to bear children for our husbands, sons especially, to carry on the family name.” (p.359)

It is important to note the fact that these girls dream of having male children to carry on family names belonging to husbands they must serve. This shows how society suppresses women and how unfair and demeaning it is to be a woman in postcolonial Africa.

Mama Adaora in her quest to change the sexuality of Ijeoma, quotes Judges Chapter 19, where a Levite offered his damsel to be raped instead of him in a distant town. When the damsel collapsed, he forced her onto a donkey and sent her home, cutting her into pieces and sent pieces of her to all territories of Israel. This story projects uselessness of women on her daughter. When Ijeoma gets confused and asks how the story applies to her, she explains:

“Don’t you see? If the men had offered themselves, it would have been an abomination. They offered up the girls so that things would be as God intended: man and woman instead of man and man. Do you see now?” (p.97).

This argument shows societal oppression of females. Even brutal rape was not condemned, murder was used as punishment for the damsel’s humanity, and yet, a mother, instead of

condemning this act no matter where it is found, decides to use it to “cure” her lesbianism. The bigger part of society also agrees with her that it is better to be used as anything, better to be abused by anyone, than to be with another woman.

Ijeoma rightly asks in her internal conflict

“How could she really believe that that was the lesson to be taken out of this horrible story? What about all the violence and all the rape? Surely, she realized that the story was even more complex than just violence and rape. To me, the story didn’t make sense.” (p.97)

This story further pushes Ijeoma to ask

“Why was it that these questions never came up at church? Instead, everyone nodded and cried ‘Amen’ after everything Father Godfrey said, and clapped, no one asking him to explain anything.” (p.97)

Okparanta advocates for Christians to be curious and not to accept whatever dictatorial assertions by their religion.

Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *By the Sea* does not give the impression that Islam frowns on homosexuality. His account on the deeds of Hassan, through the narration of Latif, gives the impression that he was seduced, just as any lover would, by Hussein. The candid narration, because Latif is only nine years old, introduces Hassan’s new sex life thus:

“But I was desperate, and banged on the door and whined with all the pathetic piteousness of a nine-year-old about to explode.

Hassan opened the door, stood there dripping and spangled with water, and then stepped past me with eyes lowered... When Hassan had first opened the door, his eyes were large and round

with misery, or perhaps with embarrassment or guilt. Then he had dropped his eyes without a word and walked past, deep in whatever it was that absorbed him. All that was unlike him. I had never known him to have a shower at that time of the afternoon. He had stood there gleaming in the nude, and then walked out of the bathroom like that when normally he was never undressed outside our bedroom. Had either of my parents been around, his nakedness would have seemed an intolerable indecency. Hassan was well-built and full, a youth, and recently he had been so conscious of his maturity that even when we were alone in the room he had taken to covering his genitals when before he would have lolled about without a care if the mood took him. And the look of catastrophe in his face, in someone whose eyes glared and stared or leapt with scorn and mischief and insurrection at any misuse.” (p.91-92)

So he might have been raped being that he is barely fifteen years old, and has not been spoken to about sexual options and differences, as sex education, in both texts, is notably nonexistent, and so he takes it all in, thinking them natural, and battles within himself whether he should feel shame, love or defiled. That state of confusion for a child, certainly needs analysis and possible diagnosis to heal.

Sexual maturity can never bypass parents, especially mothers. It was therefore not surprising that his beautiful mother saw his amorous relationship with Hussein and sought to protect him to no avail.

“I had heard him arguing with my mother when she had first suggested it, and then had seen her becoming stern and insistent,

almost frantic with anger. You're sleeping in your room whether you like it or not, you child of sin, she said, speaking to him with much unfamiliar rage that there was nothing more to say. It made me wonder why she was so angry and whether it was Hassan she was angry with or Uncle Hussein." (p.92-93)

Hassan's mother is so frustrated that she wants to exchange herself with her son. So much so that Latif mentions her scandal with Hussein (adultery) which later infuriated her husband and made him feel disgusted, all in the hope of saving her first son.

"I peeped out slowly and I saw my mother and Uncle Hussein standing inches apart outside the open door of his room. Then I heard her say, 'Unataka niingie ndani?' Do you want me to come in? She walked past him into the room, and he followed behind her and shut the door. That was what I saw and understood nothing but unease, and a great deal of relief that I had not been discovered." (p.94)

Just as in the case of Okparanta's protagonist, rumours and disapproval, Hassan also experiences same to a point of his younger brother experiencing same:

"The rumours started very quickly, and I was taunted about them by the boys at school. They said our guest had eaten Hassan, had eaten honey there. It was one way of saying something cruder, and they said it crudely too. One of Hassan's secondary school mates, who had been a former friend, chased after me in the street as I was walking to Koran school to ask me if it was true that I had a new father. When I passed by adults lounging at

street corners, which they seemed forever to be doing, I thought they smirked behind me, I feared they did.” (p.95)

The cruelty with which vile rumours can affect and hound an individual is made manifest in Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *By the Sea*. Hassan was harassed, made fun of and made to feel out of his gender just because of a rumour. True or not, the rumour-mongers were at work, with the aim of frustrating him:

“They never left Hassan alone after that, the plunderers of flesh. There was nothing gay in what they did or what they sought to do. They coveted his grace and his effortless, supple beauty, and muttered to him as he strolled by, offering him money and gifts and transparent predatory smiles. A man gave me a letter to take home to him, a page out of a school notebook, folded over roughly like a page of accounts or a shopping list... Hassan read it and then tore it to shreds which he put in an old envelope that he put in his pocket to throw away somewhere far away.” (p.95)

Latif, even as a child, knows the hounding of his brother is partly due to jealousy of his brother’s grace and beauty. It is also obvious from the narration that some of those who are making fun of Hassan also want to have their way with him. It makes it difficult to tell if, besides his parents, others disapprove or his life forces their insecurities to rise and cause them to project their fears on him. The ways of society is no less cruel as Latif narrates:

“They never left him alone, the looks, the comments, the casual touch, all were suggestive, something between a cruel game and a calculated stalking exercise. And Hassan suffered. The brashness and chatter disappeared as now he learnt to avert his face from these callous acts of love, from seductive flourishes

that promised only pain. I thought sooner or later, they would wear him down.” (p.95)

His fears of the society wearing him down materialize as his father’s slap, mother’s accusatory tones (projections of his cowardice and her own philandering respectively), force him to flee with Hussein.

4.7 EXPLORING SOCIETAL GROOMING IN FAMILIES IN *UNDER THE UDALA TREES AND BY THE SEA*

African societies, from oral narration, have always been made up of a community inclusive child nurturing. It is no wonder Okparanta creates a narrative around it in hope of Africans looking into their cultures and reinforcing some of these traditional systems for growth and development. The fact that Mama Adaora is comfortable enough to leave her daughter in the hands of her a grammar school teacher who is her late husband’s close friend in Nnewi, with good advice shows how efficient this system can be.

“Nee anya,’ she said. You must be respectful, always do as they say. Are you hearing me?... They are your father’s very close friends, almost family, so you can call them Aunty and Uncle. I’m sure they will like that.” (p.63)

The fact that all close families in Ojoto would take in Ijeoma, if her mother considers them is proof enough that many families consider those in their societies as members of their families, maybe not as a nuclear family, but certainly as extended. When Chibundu asks “Why can’t you come stay with me and my mama and papa?” (p.53) and Ijeoma tells her about Mama Adaora’s concerns about the hardship in Ojoto which will make it a burden on other families to take additional mouths, readers get to know of Ijeoma’s suggestion of rather staying in Ojoto with

families of school mates and friends, which her mother refuses due to the failure of the relief lorry reaching Ojoto because of the road blocks. Even the Ejiofors' visit upon hearing of the departure of Ijeoma and her mother, shows how much individuals depend on each other to raise their families in their societies.

There are many instances where gossips have caused more traumas than upright lives. Both writers, with African backgrounds, touch on societal taunts through gossips and hatred. Abdulrazak Gurnah in his *By the Sea* takes readers through the first-person narrative journey of the emotional trauma that Latif goes through due to gossips about her mother's infidelity and his brothers sexual orientation which is against the norm of the society:

"I found out as I grew older, as events gradually became clear to me, as I began to understand the meaning of things I had seen, and because people at school made fun of me, and sometimes girls in the street shouted mocking innuendos at me. But I knew before then, I just didn't know for sure what I knew." (p.80)

But after all the ruckus of taunting these two and their family members, Latif goes on to tell readers how the rumours die down, and it does not put society in the right perspective:

"Or because one of her lovers became powerful. In any case, for reasons I will never know for sure, no comments of her were made in my presence in those later years." (p.80-81)

How can rumours die down because of how powerful a lover is in a society where marriage is sacred? Readers can assume that the narrator may have been naïve and not know what he is talking about but this tale is not new to many Africans as there is truth in the satires of both writers. Also, it begs the question why a woman will dare to cheat on her husband in such a religious state but then again, one would ask why not? When men do it with impunity. Latif takes us through his father's background:

“My father was not pious, not yet, not in that year. He drank, which according to the way we lived made him a shameful failure. And although he was discreet, there was no way of hiding such things.” (p.81)

We know Latif’s father may fall below the standards of their society but does that warrant him being cheated on? Latif gives us more details on Mr. Shaaban Mahmud, his father:

“Once or twice, no more than twice that I can remember, he went too far and had to be helped home, silent and weeping. I imagine it was shame. He didn’t speak for days after those two times, creeping about with eyes downcast, walking with the softest of footfalls.” (p.81)

So yes, he does not abide by the words of the Qur’an, he drinks, feels ashamed of himself and punishes himself for days on end maybe due to the fact that he is living in denial. How these people live through their harams without divorcing is a mystery, but their imperfect living condition and how it works remains a story for a different type of analysis.

Taunts from Ijeoma’s community and the psychological battering from her mother’s religious misinterpretation also affect her. The Biafran war also affects not only societies, but also displaces many and murders so many. The burning of Ijeoma’s community acquaintance is also a societal hatred bait which leaves a lot of psychological strain on the protagonist. As to whether it must be classified as justice or an injustice is another study worthy of researching into due to the fact that societal conventions dictate their dos and don’ts. It still does not excuse the gruesome murder of a wayward teenager.

In both texts, money, political leadership and education means power. Gurnah’s portrayal of Aisha, Mahmud’s wife, who shamelessly flaunts her boyfriend, used his political power to exact her revenge on Saleh for taking over their home, shows the unfair use of power

(oppression) within many African systems, the same way the political clash between the Biafrans and Nigerians makes perfect sense the proverb that ‘when two elephants fight, the grass suffers’, the grass here, being the innocent victims under Biafran jurisdiction. Here is Latif recalling his mother’s infidelities:

“In the year I was nine, and Hassan was fifteen, and my mother groomed herself for her afternoon sorties among friends and lovers, my father Rajab Shaaban Mahmud worked as a clerk in the Public Works Department. Some people called him bin Mahmud, after his grandfather, my great-grandfather who was well-remembered for something I’ve forgotten. No, that’s not true. I know very well what he was remembered for: for high-level probity and for a pious soul.” (p.81)

The fact that Aisha’s powerful boyfriend gives her the boldness to fit into society despite her infidelity, shows the hypocritical nature of some of these African societies. Gurnah seems to satirically be making fun of these societies, throwing the ridiculousness of their double standards to their faces.

The fact that Okparanta’s Mama Ada leaves her daughter (Ijeoma) to be alone after her marriage fails, the fact that she cannot care less about what she is so passionate about before her daughter gives her a granddaughter also shows the double standards of one who professes to be so pious that she does not want her daughter to be in a community of homosexuals.

In conclusion, the society’s taunts and hatred are riddled in suppression, oppression, projection of fears on deviants of societal conventions. Be it good or bad, this analysis seeks to appreciate the society as presented by the satires and hopes societal eyes see this and make changes.

4.8 RELIGION AND THE FAMILY SYSTEMS AS PORTRAYED IN *UNDER THE UDALA TREES AND BY THE SEA*

Religion has been used to project so many horrible things in years past; suppression, oppression, and brutalities. This still persists and has been captured by both authors to mark a reality which needs to be brought to an end in order for Africa to grow. Many use their religion to cover bad things they do knowing the sacredness therein. When Mama Adaora was about to abandon Ijeoma;

“She fumbled with her bag, searching for something in it. When she found what she was looking for, she pulled it out. It was Papa’s old Bible, the one he used to read from every Sunday at Church. She handed it to me, holding my hand in hers even as I held the book in my hand.” (p.63)

In a way, she feels she has given her the world, and a warrior to protect her, which in itself is not bad, but for a mother to abandon her child, never to visit until the unfortunate incident is not characteristic of a Christian and Okparanta clearly points that out in plain words using Ijeoma as her mouthpiece.

When Mama Ada tells the story of Judges Chapter 19 which tells a story of a woman whose husband gives her out to be raped in his place, just to avoid the sin of homosexuality, according to Mama Adaora, it shows how she wants to suppress and or oppress Ijeoma’s urges through her religion.

Ijeoma is horrified and justifiably so after the biblical story which insensitively project rape as better than homosexuality. She cannot think of why a man would give out his woman to be raped and cut her up into pieces to stage a revenge which points to war, especially when she has tasted war and lost her father in a cruel manner. She is horrified the kind of moral lesson

that her mother speaks of. Poor interpretation of the Bible to demean women just to prove a point she could have used Romans Chapter One verse 26 – 27, which reads:

“That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.”

Or Leviticus Chapter 20 verse 13. Why Mama Adaora chooses Judges 19 beats thinking and is representative of many modern-day Christians who misquote chapters and interpret them to suit their needs. How can she question and state that:

“Don’t you see? If the men had offered themselves, it would have been an abomination. They offered up the girls so that things would be as God intended: man and woman instead of man and man. Do you see now?” (pp 97)

To this, Ijeoma wonders:

“How could she really believe that that was the lesson to be taken out of this horrible story? What about all the violence and all the rape? Surely she realized that the story was even more complex than just violence and rape. To me, the story didn’t make sense.”

(p.97)

The fact that her mother thinks it genius that a woman is given out to be raped instead of a man in order to obey the order and nature of God, horrifies her and leaves her feeling justified in

her sexuality, but she has been trained to be polite, so she keeps her questions to herself. Ijeoma rightly struggles with these questions which are never asked let alone be unanswered:

“Why was it that these questions never came up at church? Instead, everyone nodded and cried ‘Amen’ after everything Father Godfrey said, and clapped, no one asking him to explain anything.” (p.97)”

Abdulrazak Gurnah also ministers through his characters, about how sacred Islam is by first telling the story of how they came to pray five times a day.

The story of the night of the Miraj;

“On the night of the 27th of the Rajab, the Prophet was sleeping when Angel Jibreel woke him and made him mount the winged beast Burakh, who took him through the sky to al-Quds, Jerusalem. There, in the ruins of the Temple Mount, he prayed with Abraham, Moses and Jesus and then ascended in their company to the Lote Tree of the Uttermost Limit, sidrat al-muntaha, which was nearest that any being could approach the Almighty. The Prophet received God’s injunction that Muslims were to pray fifty times in a day. On his way back, Moses advised him to return and haggle. He had been in the business a lot longer than the Prophet, and guessed that God would probably come down a bit. The Almighty came down to five times a day.” (p.42)

That notwithstanding, he creates a character who pretends to be pious but uses any chance he gets to get drunk. Surely, Rajab Shaaban knows it is “haram” that is, an abomination, for Muslims to drink alcohol, so what is his motivation for drinking? Why is he filled with so much

bitterness? This is probably because of his low self-esteem due to his cheating wife, or his lonely and boring life.

It might not be a bad idea to seek solace in religion. Saleh, who is impersonating Shaaban, and feels miserable acting like an English illiterate after having gone through so much cruelty from family, neighbours and strangers, narrates his faith in Allah

“I went to the bathroom and performed the udhu in preparation for prayer, washing my hands, my face, my arms and my feet. Then I returned to Alfonso’s towel and began. First the statement of the intention to perform Ya Latif, then seeking refuge in God from Satan, the stoned one. Then bismillah, In the name of God who is merciful and compassionate. After that, al Iklas three times: Say God is one, is eternal. He is without child, and without father. No one is equal to him. Then the latifun: Gentle is God towards his servants. He gives to whom He will. He is invincible, the Almighty. Then the prayer on the prophet, a beautiful-sounding prayer:

‘A salatu wa salamu alayka ya sayyidi ya habiba-Llah,
A salatu wa salamu alayka ya sayyidi ya nabiya-Llah,
A salatu wa salamu alayka ya sayyidi ya rasula-Llah,
Blessing and peace upon you, o beloved of God,
Blessing and peace upon you, o prophet of God,
Blessing and peace upon you, o messenger of God.’” (p.59-60)

It must be good to have something to believe in, Gurnah seems to say, as through his ordeal, if Saleh had not believed in an Omnipotent, Omniscient and an Omnipresent existence, he might find his life unworthy of living. In a way, it is to say, where family fails, neighbours fail and

strangers fail, God is still with us. Just as Okparanta's Ijeoma uses the existence of God to console herself after losing her father and is abandoned by her mother:

“She thought of church, and she thought that change was indeed a thing sanctioned by God, whether good change or bad change. Perhaps it was part of His aesthetic, part of His vision for the world. Perhaps everything was a reflection of that vision of change. Perhaps the nature of life was change. Wasn't creation the ultimate proof of this? The changing of something without form into something with form. Turning void into full. The division of light from darkness, of waters from waters, of sky from land. Maybe even death was a reflection of God's vision of change, the same way that birth was. Maybe it was the point of life, and the Bible, that things had to change. Was this not what the pastor had said was the reason why the New Testament was created after the Old?” (p.47).

This shows the depth of religion where comfort and hope are concerned. How most people turn to God to heal them from traumas, how people hang onto their religion when they are being oppressed, suppressed, how they cry to God when they are depressed, are evidences to show the importance of religion to 21st century Africans.



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the society in the African system portrayed by both Abdulrazak Gurnah and Chinelo Okparanta help to identify common continental traits like the importance of community and extended family grooming, distaste, and in Okparanta's case, abhorrence of same sex relationships, poor governance, unfair deaths, inadequate skill projection of women, and Africans' overly religious nature. There are however great projections like communal help where help is needed, the African hospitality, great friendships, great marriages and great bonds between siblings where Hassan and Latif are concerned.

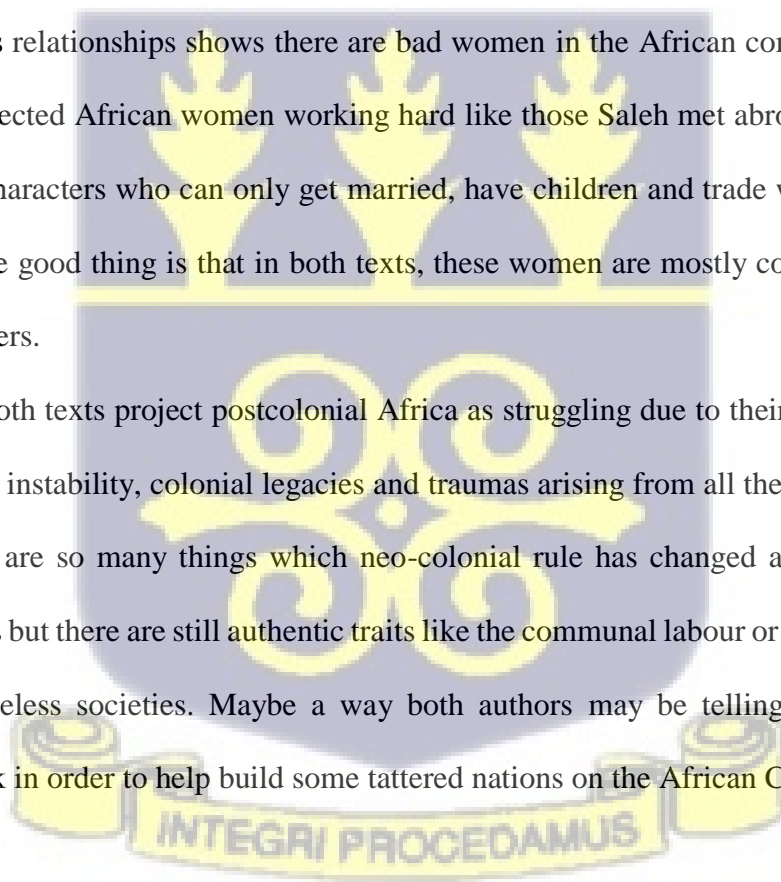
Gurnah's Shaaban Mahmud and his family are sheltered by Shaaban's aunt, who is an extended family member in the same vein, Okparanta's Ijeoma is taken in by her late father's friend who was a grammar school teacher and was treated as a daughter, despite the initial agreement for her to be a house help. It is great to know you can count of your extended family or acquaintances when need be. The fact that Saleh's community helps him one way or the other after his many years of unfair imprisonment, and Mama Ada's father's neighbours also helps her to rebuild her life tells that both texts highlights some great aspects of the African culture. The great relationship between Mahmud's aunt and Saleh's, is a great relationship, the same way Ijeoma's mother and father is good, just as that of the grammar school teacher and his wife.

The ridicule, hatred, (In Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees*) murder of same sex people in relationships are worthy themes considering the setting. Whereas Gurnah's Hassan is ridiculed, made fun of, hooted at in the streets and harassed by dubious minded people, Okparanta's

Ijeoma goes through the trauma of her mother trying to pray away her sexuality, her community hunting and burning into ashes one of her community members, to mention but few.

Poor governance runs through both texts as Gurnah's *By the Sea* paints a picture of the cruel and unjust deeds of ruthless leaders who imprison the innocent, assault them, confiscate their properties and make Tanzania unbearable for them to live, whereas Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees* paint a fictional narrative of the Biafran Civil War, where war planes bomb villages and cities, kill innocent people, bring hunger and thirst to people and make life unbearable for many Nigerians. Also, women are projected as mere marriage dolls in both texts. Gurnah's female characters are only into either marriages or in Shaaban's case, an adulterous marriage. How Aisha, Hassan and Latif's mother, goes from one man to another, having amorous relationships shows there are bad women in the African communities but he could have projected African women working hard like those Saleh met abroad. Chinelo also creates female characters who can only get married, have children and trade without excelling at anything. The good thing is that in both texts, these women are mostly compassionate and great homemakers.

To sum it up, both texts project postcolonial Africa as struggling due to their overly religious nature, political instability, colonial legacies and traumas arising from all the aforementioned. In effect, there are so many things which neo-colonial rule has changed about the African societal systems but there are still authentic traits like the communal labour or help which helps build even hopeless societies. Maybe a way both authors may be telling us to look into communal work in order to help build some tattered nations on the African Continent.



5.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

This study has covered the family as projected by Chinelo Okparanta in her novel *Under the Udala Trees* and Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*. The study explored blood relations, home-building, friendships which eventually turn family relations, marital affiliates who turn into families and their relationships – both good and bad in postcolonial Africa and their psyche. It also explored the relationship between the family and society, how society grooms and shapes the various families and the loopholes which turns divisive, thereby standing in the way of peace where the family is concerned.

The study also took a look at the gender narratives which have a bearing on the family system and child-nurturing, and how wars, corruption and its socially coercive instruments, influence the postcolonial family. The researcher also looked at some of the traits deemed deviations of the family system; homosexuality, adultery, drunkenness, selfishness and hatred and their psychoanalytical implications. In all, the study concludes that there is hope where life is concerned in 21st Century Africa and hopes the reality changes so it can impress upon the characters of authors of the near future.

5.3 RECOMMENDATION

These texts are fertile grounds where studies can be made in communal labour and the need to revise the political systems of some African nations. Studies can also be made in the family dynamics in relation to sexual relationships of teenagers. It is only fair to add the positive projections of Africa in these texts.



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