

ISSN:0976-8165

# THE CRITERION

An International Journal in English



Vol. 7, Issue-I February 2016

7 YEARS OF OPEN ACCESS

[www.the-criterion.com](http://www.the-criterion.com)

Editor-In-Chief: Dr. Vishwanath Bite

About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

[www.galaxyimrj.com](http://www.galaxyimrj.com)

## The Creative Writer as a Creator-Continuum: A Caused Causer

**Okonkwo Gabriel Kosiso**

Doctoral Student,  
University of Ibadan.

### **Abstract:**

Despite his wide renown as an artist, a teacher, cultural apologist, romanticist, metaphysician, propagandist and nationalist, the creative writer equals the power of the Supreme Almighty in the creational act but not in His impersonal nature. He creates his fantastic world and recreates his material world with his ideals. Hence this study examines the universality of this motif in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* and William Wordsworth's *The World is too much with us*. It adopts the psychoanalytic and archetypal theories as its creational designs. All the texts explicate the enigmatic nature of the power possessed by the writer to create and manipulate his created. Their invented existence and existential domains are engineered to glorify and justify the writer's strong creed. The writer hopes to extend his creed to his material world through the reader who gets recreated.

**Keywords: Creational, Manipulate, Fantastic, Material, Recreated.**

### **Introduction**

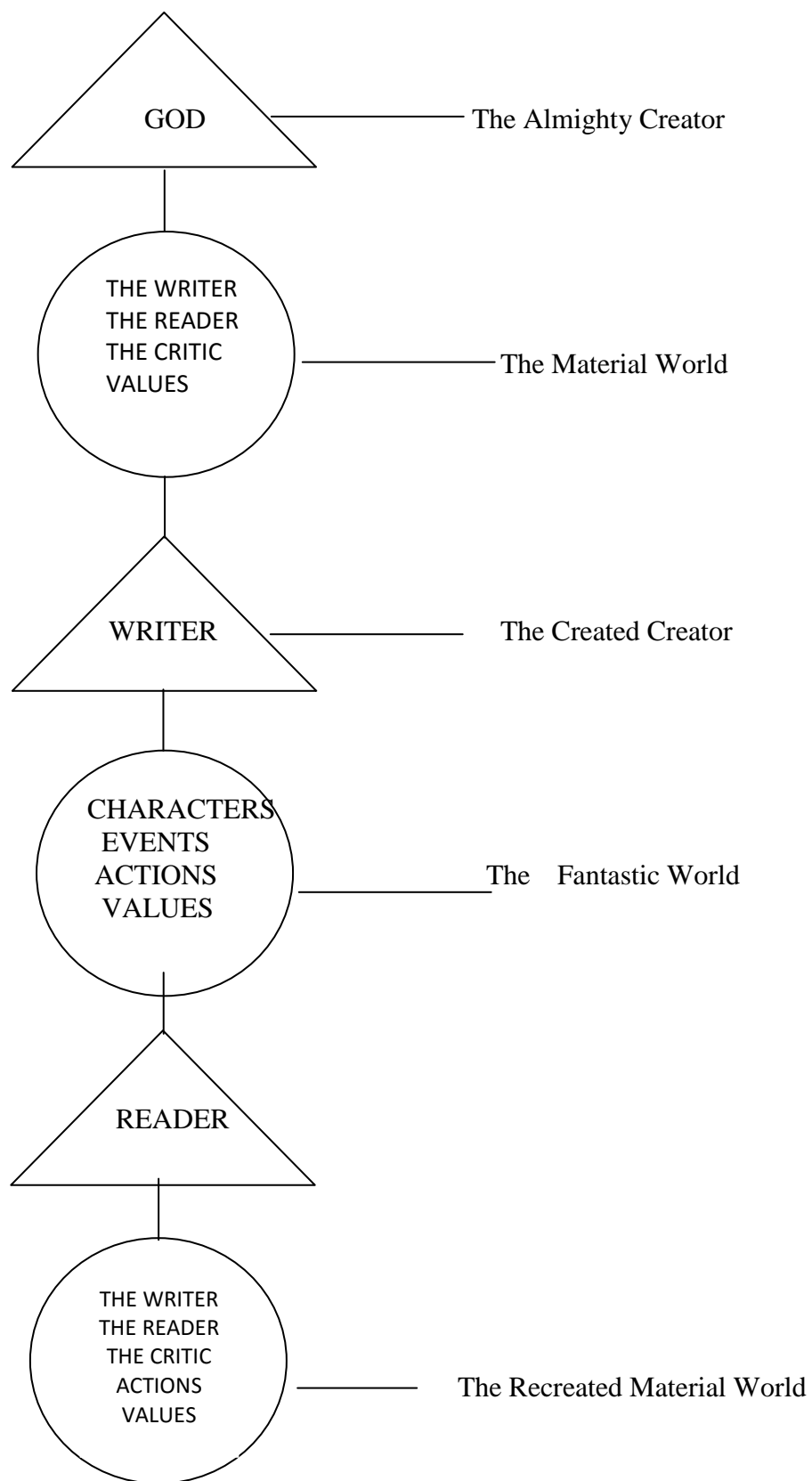
In a 21st century postmodernist world where dynamism is a noble creed in the mouths and minds of many, a discourse of this nature becomes pertinent and inevitable in the light of the potentials inherent in man. The creative writer is an obvious product of the human society but when he retires into his graphic world, he is out to make a statement or statements about the state of things in his society. Hence, the utilitarian function of literature can be said to be very essential as the writer's main aim is to either criticize his society or commend her for a job well done. The very fact that he lacks the political power to actualize his gigantic dreams for his society forces him into the act of creation. As a creational enigma, he creates a fantasy world that is ordered to suit his taste and principles but his ultimate aim is to recreate his material world. Janet Burroway (1992) Corroborates that "...we may even sense that it is unnatural or dangerous to live in a world of our own creation. People love to read stories about the dreamer who nobody thinks will come to much; and who turns out to be a genius inventor, scientist, artist or savior." (2)

It is less strange to think that man has an immaterial nature because of his psychological reality. That same feeling of estrangement from his world of reality could be responsible for his predilection for freedom and justice. In his created world of archetypes, the writer creates patterns similar to those in his material world; an archetypal world, archetypal characters, archetypal actions and words. Michael Meyer (1990:1790) substantiates that archetypes

“...evoke deep and perhaps unconscious responses in a reader because archetypes bring with them the heft of our hopes and fears since the beginning of human time.”

The writer-creator who is first a created of the Supreme Almighty joins the act of creation as a caused causer via his creation of archetypes of the real world of human existence. Chinua Achebe's thoughts on the writer's vocation as a creator is captured in Ezenwa-Ohaeto's collection of interviews granted by Achebe in the later phase of the 20th century entitled *Chinua Achebe: Straight from the Heart*. In Achebe's view, “Anybody who is not ready to put out what it takes is not a writer and I really don't have too much time for him. This is one thing you can't teach. You can't teach anybody honesty and integrity in his creation” (2003:2)

Psychologically, the writer is not happy with the way man handles his material world hence he sets out to recreate man and his seeming bastardized world of substance. He searches for truth and when he fails to find his truth and justice in his world, he quickly creates his Elysium, an apparent place of bliss where only his bid will be done. This is apparently what Burroway (1992:2) meant in saying “we like to escape from the way the world really works, including the way it works in us”. If the writer is not impressed with the way it works in him, he creates a new world. His new world is an imaginary world and in projecting his will in that world of phantasm, he sees it as a medium through which his philosophy would continue in the material world. As a caused causer, his creational powers are only supreme in his world of art and sub-supreme in his world of reality where he only recreates the values held by his readers. The reader in turn uses his new identity acquired from the writer to influence his concrete world thereby continuing the creational authority of the writer. The writer not only becomes a creator-continuum but also an immortal creator because even when he dies physically, he lives on and continues to create through his world of imagination. His fantastic world is only but a means through which he recreates the real human world. The diagram below illustrates this point:



## Re-engineering the Created World of Substance

Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* is an amazing quintessence of the inventive powers and finesse of a writer. Goldsmith lived in an English era classified variously as Augustan, Georgian and neoclassical. The era is also known as the age of Reason, Exuberance and Scandal. Whatever the classificatory paradigm may be, the era is known for its development of the novel, the growth of satire and the change of drama from political satire to melodrama. As characteristic of the 18th century growing capitalist society, Goldsmith's recreated dramatic world reeks of the common ideals of the Augustan Society.

The playwright creates a world where barriers created as a result of his society's social stratification are obliterated. In the writer's physical world, Kate Hardcastle and Charles Marlow would ordinarily be permitted to tangle since they are both from noble backgrounds, but the writer would not accept the logic behind such a perceived depraved practice hence he distorts that societal order by making Charles a reticent lad who would not flow well before a woman of his class. The writer knows that he does not have the power to change that order in his potential world hence his social creed would only be possible in a created imaginary world. This excerpt from the play illustrates Kate Hardcastle's mixed feelings on experiencing her coy admirer for the very first time and Charles Marlow's attendant cold feet standing before a high class lady: a sharp contrast with his emotional relief before lower class ladies:

**Kate Hardcastle:** (after a pause) But you have not been wholly an observer, I presume sir. The ladies, I should hope, have employed some part of your addresses.

**Charles Marlow:** (relapsing into timidity) Pardon me, madam, I – I – I – as yet have studied – only – to – deserve them.

**Kate Hardcastle:** And that some say is the very worst way to obtain them.

**Charles Marlow:** Perhaps so, madam. But I love to converse only with the more grave and sensible part of the sex. – But I'm afraid I grow tiresome. (Acts 2:32)

Despite his lack of courage before a woman of his class, Kate seems to understand his social predicament hence, she reassures:

**Kate Hardcastle:** Not in the least, sir, there's something so agreeable and spirited in your manner, such life and force-pray, sir, go on.

**Charles Marlow:** Yes, madam. I was saying – that there are some occasions – when a total want of courage, madam, – destroys all the – and puts us – upon a – a – (Act 3:3)

This dramatic illustration explicates the writer's belief in the communist ideology – some sort of classless society where constructed social barriers are removed and an individual or individuals is/are allowed to think freely with all sense of dignity and humanity. Goldsmith seems to be uncomfortable with the class structure of his time-the nobles/commoners dichotomy. His attitude

privileges the social freedom of the Marxist proletariats who are often abandoned and treated as outcasts. Hence he allows a kingly individual [Charles Marlow] to descend to the level of such people in his normal social interaction. His Marxist philosophy seems impossible in the material world of his time hence the need to create an entirely brand new world where his social creed would hold sway.

He creates the world of the play to suit his beliefs and manipulates the characters for his sole gratification. He hopes to create a new material world through his readers who may be affected by his philosophy in the play. His longing for a society that would be devoid of the aristocrats and people of high social principles explains Kate's eventual stooping to the ideological level of Marlow in order to win his love. Marlow is able to flow with Kate the very moment she stoops and makes herself more visible. Consequently the madam appellation disappears in his onomastic attitude towards Kate Hardcastle:

**Kate Hardcastle:** did your honor call?

(She still places herself before him, he turning away).

**Charles Marlow:** No, child! (Musing) besides, from the glimpse I had of her, I think she squirts. (Act 3:51)

The previous MADAM appellation suddenly changes to CHILD. The invisible social barriers have been removed by the writer. The writer also questions that societal social construction which mandates a noble to love a noble and a commoner to love a commoner. Obviously, Goldsmith couldn't have asked such questions in the court of the supreme kings of his time, the best place to do so would be in his liberal world. He wants his bold readers to help him recreate his 18th century world through the ideological insights they are able to get from his play.

In Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, we see the heart of the writer who is angry with the so called elites and educated of his time. There was then a gradual shift from the traditional norms of his society to the more recent western ideals. Moved in a painful nostalgia of the eroding values of what may be termed the days of innocence, a phenomenon Achebe rightly captures in the words of William Butler Yeats's *Second Coming* as "Things Fall Apart", the writer sets to correct the perceived idiosyncrasy in his material society in his play. He creates a hybrid world that stands in between the traditional ways and the modern ways. His four main experimental characters are Lakunle, Sidi, Sadiku and Baroka. Lakunle represents the playwright's disgust for schizophrenic Eurocentric individuals who think that obtaining a western education is all there is to life and existence.

As a thorough bred African and Nigerian who is himself torn between two ideologically different worlds, his wish is to see a liberal African society which is kind enough to blend the traditional heritage with the obvious dynamic trends of the contemporary time. Hence he creates in Baroka that spirit of tolerance and acceptance which is lacking in Lakunle and indeed Most Africans of that time. We also see a Sidi who lacks emotional maturity and rational ingenuity. Soyinka creates his imaginary hybrid world in order to preach the message of tolerance, dynamism and acceptance. For Lakunle, acquiring Western Education is synonymous with being a god who is self-sufficient and self-sustaining needing no other value or person. His definition of love and civilization as an educated man in western thoughts can be seen below:

**Lakunle:**(wearily) it's never any use.  
 Bush - girl you are, bush - girl you'll always be ;  
 Uncivilized and primitive-bush-girl!  
 I kissed you as all educated men  
 And Christians-kiss their wives.  
 It is the way of civilized romance. (9)

Although Sidi loves his ideas and orientation, she would however not compromise her African world view in the guise of being tolerant. Hence she replies Lakunle:

**Sidi:** (highly) a way you mean, to avoid  
 Payment of lawful bride-price  
 A cheating way, mean and misery. (9)

This is the seeming distortion that the writer seeks to correct in his material world through the instrumentality of his fantastic world. For Soyinka, formal education must go with rationalism.

The creational phenomenon can also be found in the world of the Romantics. William Wordsworth is a major proponent of this movement and so can be rightly said to be a romantic philosopher. As a lover of nature, Wordsworth disdains a world which is divorced from the love of GOD who is the progenitor of *Nature*-a supreme precursor. Knowing full well that he lacks the pastoral anointing to preach GOD and nature on the altar, he creates a convenient world where he is given the mantle of a preacher, priest and prophet. In that world, Wordsworth preaches the dangers inherent in a life without GOD and nature:

The world is too much with us: later and soon,  
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:  
 Little we see in nature that is ours;  
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
 This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;  
 The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
 And are – up gathered now like sleeping flowers (831).

Speaking in the first person pronominal narrative plural and singular, the poet transfigures, assuming a divine form that allows him to preach to his people in the material world through his fantastic creation. The two principal characters in the poem are represented by the personal pronouns 'I' and 'we'. The poet who is represented by the personal pronouns 'I' in the exclusive and 'we' in the 'inclusive' tells his romantic society the need for everyone to return to *Nature*. Through the poem, he hopes to create a new material society that would value the love dispensed by *Nature*. Just like the Biblical Joshua who concludes before the assembly of the Israelites that he and his family will worship the Almighty God, Wordsworth equally swears and vows to forever fasten to *Nature* rather than have an unholy romance with the *Technological Advances* of his time. Wordsworth vows "Great God! I'd rather be a Pagan suckled in a creed outworn; so might I, standing on this pleasant lea, have glimpses that would make me less forlorn" (831)



In *Purple Hibiscus*, Chimamanda Adichie, a renowned Nigerian *Feminist* writer, does something not too different from what the three writers discussed earlier have done. Adichie is not only a *Feminist*, but also a postmodernist writer who does not make light of any social discourse aimed at suppressing the feminine spirit or individual freedom. For this reason, she creates a cosmos of phantasm to query hegemonic systems especially the African society and the Catholic Church for what she perceives as a deliberate suppression of basic human rights. She hopes to recreate her African society and the Catholic Church through a philosophical enquiry aimed at recreating the *beingness* of the reader.

To achieve this, she creates Kambili who becomes her mouthpiece in the novel. Kambili has a brother named Jaja and together they suffer a quandary occasioned by their father's rigid credence in the societal norms and dogmas of the Catholic Church. However, Papa Nnugwu as he is fondly called acknowledges that he sins and cites example of one occasion when he committed a sin against his body:

I committed a sin against my own body once,  
He said 'and the good father, the one I lived with  
while I went to St. Gregory, came in and saw me.  
He asked me to boil water for tea. He poured the  
water in a bowl and soaked my hand in it. I never  
sinned against my own body again. The good father  
did that for my own good. (203)

Understandably, he is being a meticulous father who would not want his children to make the mistakes that he made when he was young but he forgets so soon that it is through that experience that he has become a better person. It is good assumption to believe that precaution is the best cure but good sense also makes us know that man is not perfect in every way hence the need for him to keep getting better through his daily experiences. Childhood is a phase in life and just like every other phase, a person is supposed to cherish the glorious moments of each life phase whether positive or negative. Understandably too, life presents us dual choices, possibilities and experiences –the negative and the positive. So Adichie frowns at that system that would try to make a person believe that he is meant to be an angel, a perfect being lacking the influence of the negative. Kambili's father cages his children always in order to avoid them from being exposed to the dark side of life.

The writer also hopes to recreate her paternal Christian affiliation which is the Catholic Church also known for her rigid dogmas through a contrastive analysis of two Catholic Priests- Father Benedict and Father Amadi. Father Amadi represents contemporary Catholic Priests who are in tune with the tenets of the 21st century world and so understand the peculiar language of the time. Kambili describes a close experience with Father Amadi below:

Father Amadi ran his hand over the loosening braids  
in gentle, smoothing motions. He was looking right  
into my eyes. He was too close. His touch was so  
light I wanted to push my head toward him to feel  
the presence of his hand. I wanted to press his hand  
to my hand, my belly, so he could feel the warmth



that cursed through me.(232)

The writer uses this description to suggest that the Catholic Church is hegemonic and oppressive not only in her doctrines but also in the way she handles the human mind. Otherwise what else would explain the reason why a marriageable man would be subjected to a life of celibacy thereby creating a growing industry of spinsters who have reached the age of marriage? Adichie protests all these in her created Elysium hoping that her readers would eventually join her in her protest in the real world– the result of which would be a recreated world.

## Conclusion

The writer cannot be said to be anything less than who he is – a creator who is only *co-* and next to the Almighty. This innate potential explains the reason why the characters, human beings, values, fantastic and real worlds created by the likes of William Shakespeare, William Wordsworth, Chinua Achebe, Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Alfred Tennyson, John Donne, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Wole Soyinka and the likes still exist today. Even when the writer dies physically as a created creator, his legacies, philosophies and principles continue to live in his created fantastic worlds flowing down to the human world of substance. That way, he continues to create spaces occupied only by his recreated beings. The writer is indeed a creator-continuum.

## Works Cited:

- Adichie, Ngozi. *Chimamanda. Purple Hibiscus*. Lagos: Farafina. (2006)  
 Burroway, Janet. *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*. New York: HarperCollins. (1992)  
 Goldsmith, Oliver. *She Stoops to Conquer*. Ibadan: Maximillan. (2013)  
 Meyer, Michael. *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*. Boston: St. Martin's Press. (1990)  
 Ohaeto, Ezenwa. *Chinua Achebe: Straight from the Heart*. Lagos: Jimanz. (2003)  
 Perrine Laurence, and Arp. R. Thomas. *Literature, Structure, Sound, and Sense*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanavich. (1983)  
 Soyinka, Wole. *The Lion and the Jewel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (1989)