

Annotation of Lily G.N. Mabura's "Breaking Gods: An African Postcolonial Gothic Reading of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*", *Research in African Literatures* 39.1 (2008), pp. 203-222.

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As its title suggests, Lily G. N. Mabura's article undertakes an "African postcolonial Gothic" reading of the novels *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) by Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. In the introduction, Mabura states that Adichie is not the first African writer to use Gothic elements in her fiction, and the critic accordingly situates in this tradition novels such as Mongo Beti's *The Poor Christ of Bomba* (1971), Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* (1974).

The bulk of the essay is devoted to the analysis of what the author perceives as typical Gothic traits in Adichie's books. Among the many arguments advanced, Mabura suggests that Eugene Achike, the narrator's violent father in *Purple Hibiscus*, bears resemblance to the oppressive patriarchs of Gothic fiction; she further contends that, in both of Adichie's novels, the tension between traditional culture and postcolonial Catholicism epitomises a conflict between past and present that is also at the heart of Gothic tales. More specifically, Mabura argues that the Gothic genre associates the past with either nostalgia or anxiety, and that both tendencies find expression in Adichie's work: the longing for bygone days is illustrated in the novelist's celebration of precolonial Igbo-Ukwu art in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, while the fear of the past is exemplified, in *Purple Hibiscus*, in the Christian father's repression of Igbo traditions and of sexuality, which is positively connoted in some ancestral African cultures.

The article occasionally identifies thought-provoking similarities between Adichie's books and the Gothic literary tradition, but some of the claims put forward in the essay are decidedly less convincing, mainly because they fail to be supported by strong textual evidence – one may, for instance, frown at the author's reading of *Purple Hibiscus* as a Gothic romance. Arguably, Mabura deserves credit for her bold attempt to interpret Adichie's fiction in the light of an original theoretical approach that combines the Gothic and the postcolonial perspectives; whether this audacious attempt is entirely successful, however, will be for the reader to decide.