

# ***Walking With Shadows* and the Critique of the Evolutionary Character of Nigerian Narratives**

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**Abstract** The emergence of a full blown representation of same-sex sexual relationship in the Nigerian literary tradition, courtesy of *Walking with Shadows* (2005), demonstrates a unique expression of the universal human will hitherto unknown in the Nigerian literary tradition. In analyzing *Walking with Shadows*, this article argues that the Darwinist tendency, the evolutionary character embodied in conventional Nigerian narratives is undermined in a number of respects. Since no same-sex sexual partners are primed by evolution for reproduction of humankind, this sexual phenomenon as demonstrated by the central character of this work is thus not only monumentally anti-evolutionary, but also immensely against human occupation of the earth through biological reproduction. The above tendency partly accounts for why the major same-sex character's kin and society cannot understand him. *Walking with Shadows* would be read against some conventional works in the Nigerian tradition in order to show how the vital indices of identity and marked kinship enhancements indigenous to Africa and, hence Darwinian, are upstaged, even as it adds an interesting but varying literary dimension to Nigerian literature.

**Key words** evolutionary character; Jude Dibia; Nigerian literature; Nigerian narratives; *WalkingwithShadows*

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About 150 years after Charles Darwin declared that "all organic beings are exposed to severe competition" (Darwin 70), a competition for life, no one has refuted him convincingly. Rather, within the span of the above years his influence has expanded, laying the foundation for today's Life Sciences. He further remarks that:

Owing to this struggle, variations, however slight and from whatever cause proceeding, if they be in any degree profitable to the individuals of a species, in their infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to their physical conditions of life, will tend to the preservation of such individuals, and will generally be inherited by the offspring. The offspring, also, will thus have a better chance of surviving, for, of the many individuals of any species which are periodically born, but a small number can survive. I have called this principle, by which each slight variation, if useful, is preserved, by the term natural selection, in order to mark its relation to man's power of selection. ... But Natural Selection, we shall hereafter see, is a power incessantly ready for action, and is as immeasurably superior to man's feeble efforts, as the works of Nature are to those of Art. (70)

Implied above are — one, that organic beings, including humans naturally abide by a universal principle operating through their action, or inactions, in their day to day lives as they attempt to maneuver pain to get pleasure in order to survive; two, that during these maneuvers and for the eternal transfer of this trait of maneuver from one generation to another as conditions of life vary from a generation to the next, reproduction, the willing coming together of two hosts of the female and male gametes, is very crucial. Without it, the whole process of natural selection is void, namely, there would be no Charles Darwin and his immense and foundational contribution to the Life Sciences. Therefore, Darwin's groundbreaking concepts of species, genera, variation, and tens of others, come about because of the operation of biological reproduction. Three, what is inherited by an offspring is what has enhanced the survival of the forebear; in other words, there is nothing inheritable

via reproduction by the offspring which has not been gainful to the ancestor(s).

Biological reproduction is inherently fundamental to Darwin. His theory asserts that life evolved, in a series of developmental stages, from the primitive to the present state through a rigorously proven complex process of mate selection (selection of opposite sexes) that spans millions of years and still does. This process is the origin, foundation, and the sustainer of life. The centrality of biological reproduction led him to what he called sexual selection, a competition amongst males of organic animals using very special weapons for winning members of the opposite sex, females. He explains:

This form of selection depends, not on a struggle for existence in relation to other organic beings or to external conditions, but on a struggle between the individuals of one sex, generally the males, for the possession of the other sex. The result is not death to the unsuccessful competitor, but few or no offspring. Sexual selection is, therefore, less rigorous than natural selection. Generally, the most vigorous males, those which are best fitted for their places in nature, will leave most progeny.

[...]

Thus it is, as I believe, that when the males and females of any animal have the same general habits of life, but differ in structure, color, or ornament, such differences have been mainly caused by sexual selection: that is, by individual males having had, in successive generations, some slight advantage over other males, in their weapons, means of defense, or charms; which they have transmitted to their male offspring alone. (93-94)

Cocks, alligators, hymenopterans insects, lion, male salmon, the rock thrush of Guiana, and others are cited as cases in point where this sort of selection takes place. Of course, humans are included.

If the above rule generally applies to all animals, including mammalian ones to which humanity belongs, it is therefore a fact that humans in Nigeria, whose (reproductive) activities Nigerian narratives and discourses capture before Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*, would not be different. In Nigerian narratives, to survive is to reproduce through the biologically reproductive means, and all efforts are geared towards realizing this in a most natural and organic manner, so natural that every agent of reproduction is oblivious of the superstructural principle of Darwinian evolution at work. This characteristic obtains from Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-wine Drinkard* (1952) to Tope Folarin's Caine Prize winner short story

“Miracle” (2013). Father of the gods in *The Palm-wine Drinkard* goes in quest of his dead palm wine tapper only to return with a wife (not a male as a “wife”), and not his object of quest; in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Okonkwo, including his sisters, begotten by Unoka, engages in a sexual selectional competition with another male for the hand of Ekwefi in marriage. His rival succeeds in marrying her, but it is with Okonkwo she remains, experiencing conjugal bliss and fulfilment having run off to his place. His being an able wrestler was his unique weapon for winning her. Fifty-five years later, a work in this tradition, E. E. Sule’s *Sterile Sky* (2012) makes explicit in a grandma’s conversation with her grandson what is implicit in *Thing Fall Apart*. She says, “I married your grandfather because he was the greatest wrestler of his time. Do you know how to fight, city boy? Come let me teach you” (Sule 41). Okonkwo later has another wife, an opposite sex, a female with whom he has other children, among whom is Nwoye. Nwoye’s son, Obi Okonkwo, is the main protagonist in Achebe’s *No Longer at Ease* (1960). He loves Clara and before he knows her well enough, she is pregnant for him, a fetus that, had he allowed it to be, would have been his child, fathered by him, and would have become the fourth generation of the Okonkwo we met in *Things Fall Apart*. All the major characters of Wole Soyinka’s *The Interpreters* (1972) are all procreated by the biological union of their father’s (male) and mother’s (female) gametes. Though what brings sexes together is commonly ascribed to as “love”, technically, in Darwinian terms, it is natural selection, or specifically, sexual selection. Take, for instance, Professor Oguazor’s libidinousness in *The Interpreters*. He has a wife, a female, with whom he has had some children, but finding the youthfulness of his maid irresistible as against the shooing wrinkles of his rapidly aging wife, he fathers a child by her, and to avoid the ridicule his action attracts, sneaks both mother and child away to the United States from public knowledge. From the house maid who yields to him and in other characters in the text, we observe the imprint of Darwin’s evolutionary theory. His wife having reached menopause (because if she continues to procreate, unless naturally thus hindered, she would bring about an explosion in population that would be unhealthy to nature’s system) and with his virility intact, he is guided by nature to a far younger female than his wife, not on account of her beauty or youthfulness, a layman’s reason, but because of nature’s implicit guide in order to make this young and blooming maid yield her due by bringing forth offspring, favoring Darwin’s argument that the evolutionary code is as much a subtle and potent factor dictating the destiny of the female and the male as a powerful gravitational law holding man from falling from the earth to space.

So when children are in Nigerian narratives and there is joy, to the joyous, as

already claimed, they have got people to bury them after they die, but to Darwin, as expository ascertained, they are only fulfilling nature's interest in continuity and sustenance of life from one generation to the other as the process of natural selection enacts itself indefinitely into the farthest future. And when characters sorrow for not having children in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966), *One is Enough* (1981), Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966), Zaynab Alkali's *The Stillborn* (1982), and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* (2005) or they grieve over a character's inability to procreate, either in the male or female, a phenomenon very common in Nigerian literature, this circumstance, with insights from Darwin, is the consequence of natural selection, namely that, if both sexes are unable to reproduce, virile males had already chosen equally virile females in the process of selection leaving behind the unreproductive ones to serve as the offscouring of the (market) economy of biological reproduction. The same would equally apply in instances where either of the opposite sexes is virile and the other not. The left over is expected to perish with her/his traits as those with the highest capability of reproducing themselves and transferring their traits, maximally, are likely to survive to fulfill nature's whims, and one way of doing it is to, abiding by Nature's dictates, choose the opposite sex capable of making procreation possible.

When natural disasters, including war, take place, especially as warfare has been since time immemorial and at an increasing rate an instrument of mass death since Darwin first postulated his theory of destruction (crisis or war being paradoxically the tool for survival), it is because Nature wants to moderate the population of the world through the insupportable conditions of life. Darwin says, "There is no exception to the rule that every organic being naturally increases at so high a rate, that, if not destroyed, the earth would soon be covered by the progeny of a single pair" (72). Intended in the term "destroyed" is agency of action. If destruction does not set in by an active agent, with the relative stability of the size of food and other scarce resources for the upkeep of mankind, humanity would soon outnumber in organic world the resources needed to not only keep them comfortable but also to keep them alive. We infer further from Darwin:

Hence, as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life. ... Although some species may be now increasing, more or less rapidly, in numbers, all cannot do so, for the world would not hold them. (72)

Indeed the world cannot hold the increasing number of the human species, so there must be some form of struggle, and in the Nigerian literary tradition, this struggle is in form of war, lethal politicking and intrigues, assassination, manslaughters, abortions, and so on. The phenomenon of war is the most perceptible in Nigerian narratives, with examples showing forth in Festus Iyayi's *Heroes* (1986), Eddie Iroh's *Forty-eight Guns for the General* (1976), Amadi Elechi's *Sunset in Biafra* (1973), Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1982), Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007), and undeniably, in a segment of the Nigerian literary tradition that has got "the war novel in Nigeria" tacked on to it (Emenyonu xiv).

Manifest in consequence of the above is that both in pristine organic and socialized (before *marriage* came to be known, alongside its accompanying [socio-cultural] ceremonies that differ from society to society and the taken-for-granted factors that influence mate choice-making) selection, the free will of human is at work. Nigerian narratives have represented the afore-discussed evolutionary principles and features so adequately that when Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* appeared in 2005, it sent shockwaves through critical circles in Nigeria. This may have prompted Jude Dibia's revision of the same work two years later, inserting the Rotimi kissing episode and a few others possibly to ambiguise his representation some more. Before him, African writers (Nigerians inclusive) abstained "from fully characterized and nonschematic depiction of a homosexual relationship between African" (Desai 733); when they did, their representation was monothematically offered (Dunton 737). So Dibia is the first to give us a mouthful of same-sex relationship in a full length novel where the psychological growth of the central character can be tracked. After him, some short stories of the Chimamanda Adichie's collection, *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) as "On Monday Last Week," "Jumping Monkey Hill," and "The Shivering" supplies us snappy depictions, too. But these other narratives being short stories, the characters, as with stories of this brevity, lack space for development and thus proper character appraisals of these works are sketchy. For instance, Kamara, in "On Monday Last week," arrives in America to work as a nanny with no obvious account of how she comes by her same-sex attraction for Tracy, the mother of the boy she is a nanny to. The story leaves us with the question: "why is it that it is after her marriage and her arrival in America that she begins to feel this way?" In the second story, the same-sex issue comes up in form of an assertion of identity in an argument, while in the third through its same-sex lover character, Chinedu, we are lead into the equal access involved in matters of faith and religion. With these grossly insufficient

representations, one is left with no option than to focus one's critical attention on Dibia's *Walking with Shadows*.

On the other hand, sociological and anthropological scholarships have tended to make up for African writers refraining from the depiction of same-sex sexual relationships right up to *Walking with Shadows*. There is no longer any doubt that same-sex sexual relationships abound in Africa (the denial that it never existed in Africa was first made by Western colonialists possibly for political and racial reasons, which in a way confirms the belief of Africa being an exotic continent [Dunton 727]) (Murray and Roscoe; Hoad; Epprecht; and Zabus). I shall use the term *same-sex* in this article (except when reporting the narrator or characters in the works under analysis and furthering and expanding their descriptions and statements) because other somewhat substitutive terms such as *heterosexuals*, *gay*, *queer*, *sissy*, *homosexual*, and the like are so burdened with inexactitude in capturing other same-sex sexual relations that contrast significantly with the Euro-American sort, say, that of Africa (Epprecht 38; Guadio 119), that its usage becomes very problematic in describing African same-sex sexual relations. Unfortunately, these imprecise concepts have been resorted to in the representation of same-sex tendencies in current Nigerian short stories and novels, including *Walking with Shadows*. My term for *heterosexual(ity)* would be "Darwinian" or "Darwinism" since his theory of opposite gametes from opposite sexual mates which help to further evolution and biological reproduction has remained scientifically unrefuted till date and, if I may say, so will be.

So when *Walking with Shadows* appeared and broke new grounds in the depiction of same-sex sexuality, readers, especially critics and bloggers, reacted differently, ranging from outright loathing, rejection to disinterestedness. I am not sure it would get to the stage of acceptance without qualification. A modest search has revealed that not one critic has applauded the work as groundbreaking in the tradition without ascribing conflicting remarks to it. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu's comment is moderate and adulatory:

Jude Dibia's *Walking with Shadows* has remained of the talking points of present day Nigerian literature because of its audacious exploration of homosexuality. No Nigerian novel, present or past, has taken such a sacred and blasphemous tangent that has found a home in the West. With this novel, Dibia has become almost the Salman Rushdie (*Satanic Verses*) or Naguib Mahfouz (*Children of Gebelawi*) of Nigerian literature. (131)

Such is the paradox with which the work is greeted in Nigeria. In praising the work as “audacious exploration of homosexuality,” they show they are not free from the general atmosphere characterizing its reception in tagging it “sacred and blasphemous.”

Rather than observe it as such, this article regards it as hugely anti-traditional through its undermining of the evolutionary character embodied in modern Nigerian narratives as already bared. In arguing this, I will do a close-reading of the work from the perspectives of Adrian’s assertions and actions, the language and actions of his wife and brothers who are Darwinists and whose attitudes in being evolutionary is purely anti-same-sex, and those of his same-sex friends and (sexual) lovers who are pro-gay and anti-Darwinian. The implications of this work, Adrian being its preeminent image and presence, on the evolutionary nature of Nigerian narratives, using a few canonical narratives of the tradition as examples, would be unearthed. In doing the latter, I will bring into view references to the socio-cultural forces and identity-informing and -forming elements that have furnished Nigerian narratives their character and the Darwinist reproductive nature that derives from these. Adrian is in consort with the narrator in furthering the biological argument regarding his sexuality. In a philosophically-encrusted expression, he claims to his wife Ada that:

... being gay has nothing to do with the physical action of sex or a person’s sexual preference, be it with the opposite sex or same. Sleeping with a man or woman will always remain the individual’s choice. I am gay because it is who I am. It is the way I see the world. It is the way I reason and live. It is waking up in the morning and going to bed at night. It is listening to music and loving it. It is watching a movie and wanting to see it over again. It is laughing when I am happy and crying when I am sad. It is appreciating the simple things life brings and not the act of sexual intercourse. Sex on its own is a physical expression of love or lust. ... a man can be gay all his life without actually sleeping with another man. Can you understand this? (Dibia 239)

But he falters, engendering notable inconsistencies. Here is a professed gay lecturing a nongay, his wife, in order to make her, who has just discovered his sexuality and is seeking divorce, unlearn what *gay* means, but it is pure deception and hypocrisy. Physical contact is the very essence, the definitive essence of being gay — the evidence he and his gay group of friends exhibit. His rumination a few pages later authenticates this. Antonio himself declares: “I got careless after you

left me. Too many beautiful black men, so little time ..." (247). All the gays in the text, with no exception, engage in physical sexual contact. Listen to Adrian's consideration of Antonio's predicament:

But Antonio had brought this on himself. He had chosen to have multiple partners and not use protection when it mattered most. This was a part of the reckless lifestyle of many gay men that bothered Adrian. He wondered why so many people thought nothing of having multiple partners. He wondered why some felt incomplete if they did not sample as many partners as possible. He was no saint himself, there had been a time he was like that, but then he had believed he was trying out as many options he had available to him to find the right partner for himself. [...] For him, moving on to the next partner had been his own emotional trump card against disappointment. But even then he had been careful. Could this be the driving force that made promiscuity within the gay community rampant? (248-249)

If what he says negates what he does in this very vital and all-defining instance, it would be germane to take whatever he says concerning his sexuality with a pinch of salt pending when what he does corroborates what he says impeccably. In consequence of these, two conclusions are reached: Adrian's same-sex sexuality might have been environmentally induced, and hence, not in perspective with Darwin's evolutionary and his rigorous theory of the origin of species. In a word, Adrian and his lovers are critiquing the evolutionary character of their forebears in *Walking with Shadows*, and by extension, the evolutionary character of Nigerian narratives. The attempts by the text to undermine evolution begin with Adrian, the second child of three children born of a woman who was inseminated by a man, both nonsame-sex sexual parents that never were gays. He first undermines himself and his argument through his reproductive actions on his wife Ada, before proceeding to do same to the narratives of the tradition. Throughout a substantial portion of the text, he keeps reaffirming that "I am gay" after Abdul drums it into him (47). But is he?

After he was conditioned by his sexuality to same-sex love desire, an unbiological orientation, in the many years after the bath incidence, the shower of love meditation, the acceptance of the term *sissy* as being sexual, and having no sister as a sibling, he decides to marry, his "second", Ada. When his wife discovers that he was once gay, even in spite of the conditioning, he blurts: "I made up my mind to suppress my need to be with a man" (50). When we read

this *need* against what he says of Ada: “Ada was a wonderful person ... I was in love with her” (50), we observe that the homosexual choice to him is not inborn him. But by opting for marriage, he allows the innate to overrule culture and lets the Darwinistic to overthrow the anti-evolutionary when he fathers Ego through Ada. Begetting Ego means there was *jouissance* that helped inseminate Ada, and afterward, detumescence of his organ, all of which also aid him in suppressing his gay orientation and relieved him of pressure from within for five full years after his body was conditioned for twenty-six years. This cannot be a miracle; gay instinct is not just natural for him.

So when Adrian debates the incrimination of sodomy in both the Koran and Bible (51), he was challenging statutes but not his biology, a thing he privileges in the last five years. We hear him: “‘Ada is a wonderful person.’ Adrian said. ‘I was in love with her ... I thought marrying her was the right thing to do. I made up my mind to suppress my need to be with a man’” (50). Nevertheless, with his sexual lovers before marriage being all males including one same-sexual marriage, for about twenty years, it is a marvel how he quickly adjusts sexually to Darwinist marriage and suppresses his homosexual desire for another five years after this marriage. His homosexuality could not have been “biological somewhat” (52). We hear the narrator utter thus, “They made love that night and, for the rest of the week, they made love several times each night” (61); it is a little wonder how he suppressed his gay urge for five years, for it appears sex in the Darwinist fashion is so pleasurable to him that it could be said to be innately driven. The evolutionary nature in him has the upper hand, and rightly so because he is not anatomically, hormonally, and neurotically disjointed to do otherwise.

By loving a woman, an opposite sex and marrying her, fathering a child, with his anatomical sexual organs functioning well in keeping true to Darwin’s rule of selection, he not being an incipient member of the species of humanity, he makes himself a real Darwinist the sort Nigerian narratives have in large numbers. For example, despite his declared sexual orientation, he is better than Emenike in Elechi Amadi’s *The Concubine* (1966) and Adizua in Flora Nwapa’s *Efuru*. In the second, the offspring dies in contrast to Adrian’s who lives; in the first work, there is none. While Ada in *Walking with Shadows* is by far more productive than both Ihuoma and Efuru in the above works, respectively, and the southern Nigerian woman in Alkali’s *The Stillborn*, in that her child lives, the latter have difficulties and they have no children. But while Habu in *The Stillborn* is forced to stick to his woman, the southern Nigerian, Adizua and Eneberi in *Efuru* are free to move on to other women. Both Efuru’s and the southern Nigerian lady’s abilities to bear

children are greatly stunted, the first by her body nature, the second by medical condition, with the former reacting in a Darwinist fashion to her situation. She, Efuru, is so reproductively conscious and consistently aware of her inability to bear children that she is willing to bring a second wife for Eneberi, her second husband to give him children, in giving him directly she receives indirectly. Though Darwin does not recognize the extranatural, because what he acknowledges we are able to ascertain, she is said to be like her *chi* who has no children. So it is fitting to say that Efuru is an incipient species for not being able to bear children, for managing to bear that which survives not, a remote reason why she has husbands in quick succession.

By fathering Ego and for having a blissful marriage for those five wonderful years that — courtesy of a wonderful lady — would have gone on to six, seven, and so on had the secrets of his past gay life not been known, to Darwin, he is an accomplished innate Darwinist in sexuality whom the environment has pushed to become gay. His being a successful Darwinist rests on his “success in leaving progeny” (Darwin 62). Another reason is that, to Darwin, he is not an “incipient species” (53), one whose variation of the reproductive drive, a variation in structure brought about by the environment, a structure transferable to the next generation and inheritable from an earlier one is qualified to be so classed. Nonetheless, in Adrian’s homosexuality as lived out with Antonio and so many others negates Darwin and the above, given that a homosexual dies a homosexual without bringing an offspring through his coitus with another man. If climate has tampered with Ebele in bringing about the homosexual trait, this character in him is neither transferable nor inheritable; so he is not an incipient species. His is a patchy difference in a natural and familiar reproductive layout that bears the similitude of variation that is not, a “variation” taking place for the good of the varied being alone; it does not “tend to the preservation of such individuals” and is generally not “inherited by the offspring”. The consequence is the sort of picture Adrian projects in asserting the innateness of his gayness does not exist within the perimeters of Darwin’s clear-cut evolutionary theory; Darwin declares that not even an instance subsists and it has not been found to date. We are told:

Natural selection will modify the structure of the young in relation to the parent and of the parent in relation to the young. In social animals it will adapt the structure of each individual for the benefit of the whole community; if the community profits by the selected change. What natural selection cannot do, is to modify the structure of one species, without giving it any advantage, for the

good of another species; and though statements to this effect may be found in works of natural history, I cannot find one case which will bear investigation. (83)

Adrian partakes of sexual selection in picking Ada as a wife and Ada finding in him those attractive qualities of a young and capable man, including being a fully employed in a high-paying telecommunications company, and so is a comfortable man who can take care of his progeny, she sticks to him and marries him. Adrian is a huge success in the economy of sexual selection inasmuch as this selection always allows “the victor to breed” (84); he begets Ego. As natural selection will never produce in a being a structure more injurious than beneficial to that being, since it “acts solely by and for the good of each” being (179), the structure of homosexuality falls short of being biological.

What led to his homosexuality in the first instance, such environmental factors as neglect and loneliness also lead him back to homosexuality after those who really matter to him and who fill the void of loneliness in the last five years, first, Ada, his wife and later, Ego, his daughter by her, are denied him access. The narrator authenticates: “not having the security of their presence was killing him ... He was feeling so naked and lonely. Though he had been a loner all his life he had never felt that lonely” (Dibia 86). Rotimi and the man on the beach, both interjections on his loneliness, are at this time a recapitulation of his childhood conditions, a reemergence of the suppressed which would not be tamed by a seeming superior feeling of exhilaration of seeing his wife intermittently after leaving home. In the two days of packing out from his matrimonial home, his psyche acquires momentum to be assertive of his sexuality that would not be assuaged by occasionally seeing Ada, for Ada is in no state to yield to him sexually. So the prospect of continuing his five-year Darwinistic sexuality is bleak during this stage of upsetting transition. It is therefore understandable that when on the surface he blames society, readers know better — he is only overreacting.

No sooner has he established his Darwinist sexual propensity and trait than he complicates it. First, Abdul tries to bring him to a level where he could be assertive of his suppressed sexuality. Therefore, when he says, “Your friends will always be your friends. Your family will learn to love you for who you are and life will go on” (Dibia 26), even Adrian is incredulous somewhere in the inner recesses of his mind but because of “the way he said it”, because of the need to clutch at some straw at this critical moment of neglect and abandonment and the need for emotional support, the narrator who is not omniscient declares that “he knew he was right”

(25). The assertive confession of his being gay takes place under the cover of compulsion that could be mistaken for biological impulse. When he responds to Chiedu's queries regarding his sexuality that: "I am gay, Chiedu. ... I've always been and I've always known. Yes, I'm married and I have a kid but that does not distract from the fact of who and what I am." (47), in what seems to be a bold step towards owning up a sexuality he is not at the present time familiar with, that he is at pains to understand, Abdul seems to be speaking through him. He rephrases Abdul's words maintaining similar semantic contents in "I've always been and I've always known."

Again, he complicates his Darwinist sexual orientation by leaving Nigeria for Europe. Armed with a United Kingdom green card as a skilled immigrant, he leaves Nigeria, calling to mind Joe Golder of Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters*, who runs from home visiting "several European countries" only to discover that "human beings are all the same. Boring, insincere" (Soyinka 191). He continues, "I came here hoping Africans were different" (191). It is ironical that the West, the United States of America where Golder runs away from is the same place where Adrian hopes to find peace of mind. The West, like in Germany where George's sexual male mate, Johan, lives that would condone his sexual orientation in *Walking with Shadows*. But he would soon discover as George philosophizes, that Nigeria with all its ills, holds a special sort of an ironical enchantment to her citizens. But for now, whatever prospects the West — the US or Europe — holds for him, he would reel in his cogitation as he travels. The narrator gives us a peep into this musing:

Yes, he was leaving his home country to pursue new beginnings abroad, but he did not view this as running away. He had simply decided to move on with his life and remain true to himself. Unfortunately he would not be able to be himself if he remained in Nigeria. The majority of the people here still viewed his sexuality as abnormal. Maybe they were right, maybe they were wrong. Ebele simply knew he was the way he was right from the moment he became aware of himself as a human. No one had a right to judge him. But people would. He understood that ... He felt a tinge of abandonment and loneliness walking through the airport alone. No one had come to see him off that morning. He had wanted it that way. He had wanted to depart quietly and without fanfare, and that was why he had chosen a weekday morning to travel. ... The divorce had come through over a month before. ... His in-laws, Ada's parents and her siblings, had remained civil throughout the proceedings and the separation period. They wanted nothing to do with him, which he

could understand. ... Hopefully, Nigeria would be a different place then and its people would be more receptive and less judgmental than they were now. He could only hope. (Dibia 151-3)

The rumination above is mainly hinged on free will: freedom to live out his sexuality in a country other than his. And on his way to this country, he is struck by loneliness. But it would be mere wishful thinking for him to assume that his brothers, parents, friends, and well-wishers would come to the airport to see him off if they were told. No. No one would and they would not miss him at all like the parents of Joe Golder, the three-quarter white and one-quarter American, did in *The Interpreters* (1972). Adrian would be, like Golder, “an archaic figure disowned from a family album” (Soyinka 247). In the reflections above, Adrian is like Golder baring “his soul, mangled, spurn in the murky fountains of grief which cradled him, the long lost child” (247).

By choosing to leave Nigeria for the United Kingdom, and insisting that he is gay owing to his history but definitely not his biology, he seems to be giving voice to what is inherently unvoiced, but in so doing, he privileges the anti-evolutionary, in that what is silent is invariably absent in the evolutionary development of living creatures, including humankind and thus unacknowledged by such a precise exposition of the origin of species. In choosing to leave Nigeria and claiming his gayhood much more in words than in action, he appears to negate the argument of conditioned sexual orientation, complicating it thereby. With this complication, he proceeds to undermine the Darwinist character of the Nigerian narratives and all the vital indices of identity and kinship native to Africa and already in place for societal health as represented by Nigerian narratives. The wheel of generational existence and subsistence of humanity as represented in Nigerian narratives are at worst, tremendously undercut and, at best, problematised through him, though this also adds enriching variety to the literature of the tradition. Reading *Walking with Shadows* against conventional works in the tradition, one observes that marriage, age-group initiation rites, societal norms, family ties, bride-price payments, kindred units and affinities, all manifestations of Darwinistic process of natural selection that brought Adrian life are mocked at. The life he yearns for can be understood as his right and desire, but is it to the good of humanity, his immediate community, and the individual, considering the impact his departure on his daughter, Ego? I am sure Adrian would be very happy with a world peopled with only gays. But the implications of a global same-sex village are stunning. A century would be see the entire world wiped out because as same-sex lovers, they will NEVER reproduce

their kind in the Darwinist fashion.

The implications of Adrian's actions, in his same-sex marriage and in departing from his Darwinist family to follow his craving, are hefty when set against the Darwinistically-provoked concept of marriage, and the adjoining identity-forming and -informing categories in the Nigerian literary tradition. In *Things Fall Apart*, we are presented an occasion of Obierika's daughter's bride-price payment:

On the following morning the entire neighbourhood wore a festive air because Okonkwo's friend, Obierika, was celebrating his daughter's *uri*. It was the day on which her suitor (having already paid the greater part of her bride-price) would bring palm-wine not only to her parents and immediate relatives but to the wide and extensive group of kinsmen called *umunna*. Everybody had been invited – men, women and children. [...]

Okonkwo's family was astir like any other family in the neighbourhood. Nwoye's mother and Okonkwo's youngest wife were ready to set out for Obierika's compound with all their children. Nwoye's mother carried a basket of coco-yams, a cake of salt and smoked fish which she would present to Obierika's wife. Okonkwo's youngest wife, Ojiugo, also had a basket of plantains and coco-yams and a small pot of palm-oil. Their children carried pots of water. (Achebe 79)

Adrian will have none of these. "The first two pots of palm-wine" arriving from Obierika's in-laws will not be there for Adrian's father from the would-be in-laws (82). In fact, in his very first "marriage" to Antonio, the Spanish national, none came from Antonio nor from his family in Spain. Obierika that day was honoured, but not so for Mr. Njoko, Adrian's father. The narrator continues: "'Obierika's relatives counted the pots as they came. Twenty, twenty-five. There was a long break, and the hosts looked at each other as if to say, 'I told you.' Then more pots came. Thirty, thirty-five, forty, forty-five. The hosts nodded in approval and seemed to say, 'Now they are behaving like men.'" (83-4). One of the prayers offered by Obierika's eldest brother is: "We are giving our daughter [not a son, like Adrian] today. She will be a good wife [not a man-wife] to you. She will bear you nine sons like the mother of our town'" (84). And when "the oldest man in the camp of the visitors" replies, amongst the things he says is: "'Prosperous men and warriors.' He looked in the direction of Okonkwo. 'Your daughter will bear us sons like you'" (84). It is unnatural for Adrian to bear children like a female human; bearing

offspring is as impossible to him as planting a cobble in the soil and expecting it to take root and sprout — it is against nature's law. Already, he has Ada, his estranged wife, who could perform that function, with his place in the system of reproduction remaining unruffled.

We observe the biological, Darwinist essence of marriage in this canonical narrative, but with what Adrian has become to be, one would ask: what anatomical and biological restructuring of his Darwinist nature would make him bear children as a gay? Who will accompany him to the kind of marriage he envisages? Who will be his kinsman/woman, or who will pay his pride-price (since he has textually chosen the place of a passive gay,) when he is expected to be the one paying for his bride? — he did that before when marrying Ada To whom will the bride-price he paid? When he is prayed for that *he* “will bear us sons like the mothers of the clan”, will he say “amen”? The answers to these questions are “no’s” and “nobody”. Even in the myth of the origin of Umuofia town, it is a woman that bears the nine villages, not a man. We can now glimpse at why his first ‘marriage’ to Antonio was done surreptitiously? And to think that Adrian comes from the same cultural background as all the characters in *Things Fall Apart* is all the more baffling and disquieting. He is then fit to be tagged as one odd person out, the sort he has chosen to be by opting out of his cultural background rather than face reality by facing Ada, and salvage his five-year loving marriage in which he successfully abstained from any homosexual practice whatsoever. He is so odd that nothing odd in the pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial contexts appropriated by Nigerian narratives can be compared to him.

The marriage above in *Things Fall Apart* might have been too traditional and pre-colonial to Adrian. What this indicates that as someone who is religious enough to have been baptized and christened Adrian and have dropped off Ebele, modern marriage would appeal to him, like the one he had with Ada. But even then, in Nigerian narratives, marriage is between a man and a woman, whether proposals and engagements are initiated and consummated like Isaac and Hannah Okonkwo's in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) or is later broken off before consummation like Obi and Clara's in the same work or broken off after engagement, marriage, consummation and offspring, like Sunny and his wife's in Sefi Attá's *Everything Good will Come* (2006), after Enitan is born. There could be misgivings because modern marriages are conducted with Christian standards in view, but the kin, family members, would not have any reservations about a man and a woman coming together as man and wife. Rather, they would be joyful. This joy is seen in Okonkwo's reflection in *Things Fall Apart*: “With two beautiful grown-up

daughters his return to Umuofia would attract considerable attention. His future sons-in-law would be men of authority in the clan. The poor and unknown would not dare to come forth" (*Things Fall Apart* 125). Okonkwo is expecting men that are males, and not women, females, to come marry his grown daughters. With what we know of Okonkwo, what would he have felt if Obierika's son, Maduka, had come to marry Nwoye, his first son, or Ikemefuna, the child that calls him "father"? Rage. And he would have seen it as an abomination. If Nwoye's defection to Christianity was abominable, the male-male thing would simply have killed him, a staunch Darwinist that he is. Listen to him regarding Nwoye:

As Okonkwo sat in his hut that night, gazing into a log fire, he thought over the matter. A sudden fury rose within him and he felt a strong desire to take up his matchet, go to the church and wipe out the entire vile and miscreant gang. But on further thought he told himself that Nwoye is not worth fighting for. Why, he cried in his heart, should he, Okonkwo, of all people be cursed with such a son? ... For how else could he explain his great misfortune and exile and now his despicable son's behaviour? Now that he had time to think of it, his son's crime stood out in stark enormity. (110)

Okonkwo ascribes effeminacy to joining Christianity; this simple act has no relation to anti-Darwinist sexuality. Adrian, from the knowledge we have of Okonkwo, he would have killed him before his baptism. It is fortunate for him not to have lived in Okonkwo's household, or days.

When Adrian or Abdul is placed beside Nnu Ego in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, he would still lose his kin, friend, and relations because as the passive partner of the gay sexuality, his parents and the elders of his family would not be able to, after his wedding, say to his other same-sex sexual male partner that: "My Daughter has been found an unspoiled virgin. Her husband people are here to thank us" in *The Joys of Motherhood*. In *The Joys of Motherhood*, biological reproduction and all that go with it are captured even more vividly:

Each visitor would peep into the kegs of palm wine and shout, "Oh, the kegs are very full. Nnu Ego has not shamed us. We pray that in less than ten months our in-laws will come and thank us again for the birth of her baby."

Agbadi and his life-long friend allowed themselves to be really drunk. "There is nothing that makes a man prouder than to hear that his daughter is virtuous. I don't like visiting families where the wedding kegs of palm

wine are half filled, telling everybody that the bride has allowed herself to be tampered with.” Idayi declared.

“When a woman is virtuous, it is easy for her to conceive. You shall soon see her children coming here to play.” Agbadi said with assurance. (Emecheta 31)

Anatomically, the above will never be said about Adrian (though he has had several sexual escapades before marriage and so he is not a ‘virgin’) because in same-sex sexuality, it is male organ to male organ, no vagina, nothing feminine, I mean that which can be reproductively ascribed to Darwin’s female, it is just bone to bone and muscle to muscle. Moreover, he is only a sissy in words, not in body structure and biology. He is totally off Darwin’s rigorous theoretic radar. What his gay partner could say to him and not to his parents, though the circumstances are different, is:

“... I have no time to waste my precious male seed. ... I have to raise children for my line. If you really want to know, you don’t appeal to me anymore. You are so dry and jumpy. When a man comes to a woman he wants to be cooled, not scratched by a nervy female which is all bones.” (32)

That is Amatokwu speaking in *The Joys of Motherhood*, and how reasonably consistent his remarks are with the entire gamut of same-sex sexuality as represented in *Walking with Shadows*. This comes very close indeed to describing Adrian’s situation with his fellow men who are gay. But on the other hand, Adrian in truth, is much more reproductively privileged than Amatokwu, in siring Ego through Ada, that magnificent lady, while Amatokwu is unable to achieve same with Nnu Ego.

Beyond marriage, child-bearing and ceremonies marking Darwinist sexuality in Nigerian narratives, the central place of the family unit is undermined by Adrian’s decision and the sort of sexual relations he is intent on living out in the United Kingdom. He might feel an artificial means of getting around the aches of being gay exists, say, in adopting children (Rootes 43-64 and Averette et al. 129-151); this is trending in the West at present. In going this way, as no other alternative is left, he would be discounting the distressing fact, especially to Africans, that children ‘begotten’ through this medium would lay no claim whatsoever to African ancestry by blood; s/he would never be seen as the grandchild of Mr. Njoko, Adrian’s father, in Nigeria. No trace of his forebears, a necessary ingredient of natural selection, can ever be passed on to his offspring by this method. Abdul’s mother, for example,

on learning of his gayness, cried. Abdul continues, “But I don’t know if she was crying because she had lost her husband or that she was not to expect a grandchild from me” (Dibia 22). If his father died two years earlier and the subject was not broached, it is certain his mother was crying because of the grandchildren she would be denied. Darwin shows up here again. For Adrian who would choose to go round this difficulty, his family unit would be undermining not only the sort found in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, Buchi Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood*, Isidore Okpewho’s *The Last Duty* (1976), Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* (1991), Festus Iyayi’s *Heroes* (1986), Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007), and E.E. Sule’s *Sterile Sky* (2012), but also the Darwinist character observable in the entire conventional Nigerian narratives. Whatever he does in the UK and wherever he goes, Adrian would be in constant remembrance by his family back home as one lost member, an outcast, like Joe Golder of Soyinka’s *The Interpreters*, the only other same-sex lover in the tradition before him. Adrian like Golder, a very disconcerting model for Adrian, would have no family, relations, and in fact, no friends. Golder captures clearly for himself what Adrian struggles to express through action: “I know I am a misanthropist. I don’t care for people and I don’t want them to care for me. Most of them are phonies anyway” (191). Here is a rolling stone that gathers no moss, kin and companions and this would be Adrian’s fate.

With these situations in view, Adrian like Golder in following his free-will upstages the traditional mode of sexuality that him into being. By him (the first full Nigerian fictional same-sex sexual protagonist) and his fellow gays in Jude Dibia’s *Walking with Shadows*, Nigerian narratives stand undermined in their evolutionary character through which they slightly but decisively alter the geography of sexual orientation in Nigerian narratives, despite the stirring variety they offer.

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