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# Fictional Verisimilities and the Didactic in Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's I do not come to you by Chance.

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## Abstract:

The 21st century Nigerian space has incontrovertibly incentivised the fictional writer with abounding dieges that predominantly narrativized the social realism of the author's society. It is from this mimetic assemblage that Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's I Do Not Come to You by Chance (2009) stems from. This paper uses the Postcolonial Theory as an investigative and analytical tool to explore the significance of fictional verisimilitude in communicating the didactic in the Nigerian socio-political and economic situation. Meanwhile, this qualitative research is hinged on the novelist's representational exactitude of the social realism of the Nigerian space while foregrounding the impact of the family as a social agency on the thematic preoccupation of the e-fraud or hustle narrative. Nwaubani's novel is insightful and even prophetically rendered to capture the socio-economic fragmentation that has become emblematic of contemporary Nigerian space. This paper further probes the aggressive Nigerian existentialist consciousness ultimately rooted in the e-fraud narrative. This paper implicates the apparatuses of power for their insensibilities to the plight of the Nigerian youth inadvertently and seemingly affecting the demonising image of Nigeria/ns in the global marketplace. Pertinently, Nwaubani strongly provokes a didactic evocation as she foreshadows the place of the family as a retooling moral compass. This paper, therefore foregrounds that, the text ultimately acts as an ethical road map for the re-evaluation and re-charting of the recent moral decadence bedevilling the Nigerian space, especially in the 21st century city space.

**Keywords: Fictional Verisimilitude, Didactic, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, I do not Come to you by Chance, E-fraud narrative and Didactic**

## 1.1 Introduction

Literary production, despite its montage of content and form, most often projects a politics of accountability. Hence, a literary text becomes an artistic mode of representation of discourses of man in his society. Speculative or fictional representations take diverse forms and contexts to birth their content. Some postcolonial fictional representations manifest contextual tapestries of Manichean allegory. For the writer Abdul JanMohamed, the manichean allegory is an arena of varied interpellation, yet centred basically on "inter-changeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilisation and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and other, subject and object," and many other binarisms. The literary landscape most times bears fidelity to human existence, most especially along racial, cultural, and social divides. The Nigerian literary space—old and new—explores these verities. As Nigeria continues to evolve as a need based society, many palimpsests of its needs have and would continue to be explored under the rubrics of its verisimilitude.

Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's novel I Do Not Come to You by Chance (2009) does not only capture the Nigerian social realism, which this paper, in other words, copiously explores as fictional verisimilitude; it also explores the complex and seamy underbelly of a growing existentialist ideal popularly known locally as "yahoo" and globally considered an internet scam. This paper also explores the complexity and significance of the family in in/advertently birthing and maintaining this global e-fraud. To underscore the interconnectedness and the significance of fictional verisimilitude in the Nigerian situation, Babatunde Omobowale stresses, "There are times when the work of an artist might not be a figment of his imagination, but an attempt at a reproduction of real life experiences from the perspective of the creator… (2)". Verisimilitude becomes a veritable literary currency in narratology. According to Neil Gaiman in "What is Verisimilitude?" "Verisimilitude comes from the Latin word "verisimilitudo" derived from verus meaning "true" and "similis" meaning "like". Verisimilitude therefore becomes convenient when an author portrays characters, situations, and dialogues that are seemingly truthful and authentic despite the fictional make-belief. Historically, fictional verisimilitude is traced to the "mimetic", a dramatic theory propounded by Plato and Aristotle. Mimesis, simply put, is the persuasive imitation of reality.

Indeed, many modernist and postmodernist narratives, like the novel under interrogation, give the reader, a janus-like exploration open to myriads of re-reading and un-reading in the pursuit of mirroring yet questioning society. M.A.R Habib consequently describes postmodernity as an era fraught with, "Human desire, material need, libidinal economy, and self-projection (4)" (qtd in Olugbemi). Despite Habib's insights being hinged on the explication of postmodernism, they are quite fitting in the understanding of Nwaubani's text. In the course of the novel, Nwaubani constructs the text to engage the reader in myriads of verisimilitudes

ranging from economic, cultural, political, marital, filial, educational, and even trado-spiritual values that comingle to demonstrate the portrait of a contemporary Nigeria.

It is pertinent to stress that the ideology behind fictional verisimilitude is to determine the level of societal truth embedded in any fictional representation. The fictive plausibility in Nwaubani's depiction in her debut novel also rests on the mimetic as well as the didactic position of the 21st century Nigerian space. Though fictional, some of the experiences projected from setting, character, and themes heavily resonate with the verisimilitude of the Nigerian situation.

This qualitative research paper uses the Postcolonial theory as an investigative tool to interrogate and concretise both the familiar and the unfamiliar. Nwaubani writes a courageous, honest portrait of contemporary 21st-century Nigeria, which might not be unequivocally true but seemingly believable. In fact, Daniel Chukwuemeka opines that, the novel "articulates the extent to which the performance of e-fraud practice as a hustle economy intersects the arbitrariness and decline of the postcolonial Nigerian economy. E-fraud literature foregrounds hustle economy as a virtual site for articulating a national perspective to the African informal economy that deepens an understanding of contemporary African political economy" (32). Therefore, the idea of e-fraud does not only smear the individuals involved but the nation as well. Importantly stressed is that its narrativization becomes synecdochechal, a didactic model that attempts to reconstruct in miniature, or maybe in an abbreviated but not inaccurate manner, the world that we inhabit.

Another idea amongst others that has been neatly incorporated in this paper is that the novelist attends to that which is seemingly topical with the contemporary Nigerian space. That which Nwaubani engages with is sometimes considered too boring to the Nigerian reader. One such thematic preoccupation is the exploration of the didactic. Many Nigerians, faced with the realisms of economic hardship and political hopelessness, would vilify the proclamations of the didactic. After all, the function of didactic literature is to be informing, entertaining, yet instructive while lending its voice to disseminating ethical values that often make them rather preachy.

At a time where Nigeria's personage in the global marketplace seems despicable and less bankable, this paper therefore focusses on Nwaubani's argument and exploration of the Nigerian space as an existentialist jungle, conversely causal to some of the verisimilitude of which the novelist projects. This paper opines that in spite of the recurrent exploration of the novel under the ideological "afropolitan hustle experience," it is also imperative to periscope the text from diverse viewpoints. Here, the paper puts the family unit up for interrogation. It pinpoints that though the family unit is a core agent of socialisation capable of shaping the consciousness of the self, as well as the nation, and by extension central to generational value exchange—be it good or bad—. But this paper foregrounds that the moral currency once residual in the African family values continues to fade in the face of existential economic challenges. In all, this paper explores how Nwaubani's characters capture the significance of economic determinism as affective of the Nigerian social values, its moral and ethical choices, and consents.

## 2.1 The Representation of Fictional Verisimilities In Idcbc

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Helen Tiffin in their postcolonial text, The Empire Writes Back, accentuate the need for the re-appropriation of literary discourse and history in the quest to "write back" or "re-place" the once colonised discourse. They regard postcolonial writing as a hegemonic field that is or should be subversive, ironic, satirical, and "crucially concerned with undercutting, revising, or envisioning alternatives to reductive representation in the colonial mode" (5). The text I Do Not Come to You by Chance (2009) embodies this postcolonial gene as a fighting literature. The novel "replaces" some colonial discursive representation.

First, the novel projects black characters capabilities of intellectually hoodwinking white folks. Long before Charles Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection and The Descent of Man, which bestowed supremacy on whites (Europeans), it was arguably a universal truth in the colonial era that blacks lack cognitive ability. After all, Darwin savages (blacks) have insufficient powers of reasoning and weak power of self-command (97). Darwin's specific consideration of blacks lacking intellectual capacities is especially alarming. For Darwin and some post-Darwinian adherents, cognition, talent, morality, and even virtue were traits naturally and solely reserved for Europeans. Consciously and quite conspicuously too, the prologue of the novel interrogates Darwin's evolutionism (7, 11). This early mention of evolutionism is to question Darwinian postulation on the premise that black people considered "savages" and natural dunce can be intellectually smart to deceive a people (European), naturally selected as superior.

Though one might argue that Darwin is long dead, his ideas that seemingly birthed scientific racism are here to stay with us. So what is written and how what is written is perceived matter. After all, Roland Barthes in "Death of the Author" encourages individual responses to texts when he avers, "A text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet, this destination cannot be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology, he is that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted" (148). So as a free entity, a reader is expected to look upon a text and individually untie the knots fiction brings to the discursive table, bearing in mind space (location) and period (era).

As a postcolonial text, I Do Not Come to You by Chance, navigates what the acclaimed trinity of postcolonial theory in the persons of Edward Said, Homi K Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak describe postcolonial writings as writings from the "ostensible margin" (Mary Gilmartin and Lawrence D Berg 120). Therefore, the question of representation becomes central in the agenda of postcolonial scholarship.

So, to say Nwaubani's, I Do Not Come to You by Chance, published in (2009), does not consider the context of its propagation and

foreground its diegeses accordingly is unfounded. Apart from its narrative purpose, the novel tends to foreshadow its utilitarian function by telling a decadent story while exploring diverse social dysfunction in the Nigerian space. In fact, the novel holds a torch to several societal realisms propagated as fictional while provoking divergent readings. The novel opens with the protagonist's family at dinner. Humorously and sardonically, the narrative voice juxtaposes the times—the idealised against the real. Just like most Nigerians that measure and judge the socio-economic and political times based on the food on their plate, the protagonist notes: The soup should have been a thick concoction of ukazi leaves, chunks of dried fish, and boiled meat...But what I had in front of me were a midget sized piece of meat, bits of vegetables, and random specks of egusi, floating around in a thin fluid that looked like a polluted stream. The piece of meat looked up at me and laughed. I would have laughed back, but there was nothing funny about the situation at all" (17).

This innocent description of economic hardship by depicting a lack of victuals professes at firsthand an individual problem but gradually implodes to portray a nation and even a global problem that warrants quick intervention. Apart from the distasteful food, the narrator takes us through a labyrinth of diverse human denial made more lacerating by years of "rising inflation without any corresponding increase in civil servant wages..." (18). Here, the protagonist, Kingsley, narrates the causality of their impoverished situation. Though this narration comes from a place of innocence, it does not scuttle the ideological economic change that the fictional character witnesses. To say that Nwaubani's text prefigures it times is taking refuge in banality. Prophetically, the text forewarns of the impending economic quagmire and the attendant realities to befall the economy. And Nigerians witness its strangulation unfolding daily. Indeed, apart from the text being revelatory, it is also very foretelling in several frontiers. First, Nigerians now live in a time of galloping inflation. Prices of goods and services continue to rise daily since the pandemic induced recession. A general sense of hardship pervades several spheres of the Nigerian space. Various sectors of the Nigerian economy have come to use strike actions and sharp practices as curative to the economic malaise. In fact, industrial strike actions, just as seen in the novel as lecturers put down their tools, have become emblematic of 21st century reoccurrence in the Nigerian space. Strike actions have become a backlash to the hard times of which the novelist writes of in the novel.

In a rather bildungromaneque narrative style, the protagonist, Kingsley, a jobless graduate of Chemical Engineering, depicts the verisimilitude of his family, which in turn acts as an institutional microcosm and is used by the author as a sine qua non foreshadowing the deplorable socio-economic unit. His narrative portrait dispenses a guide to the reader into the everyday life of a lower middle-class Nigerian heading towards a downward spiral. Kingsley has been raised on the foundation that education is the key to all-round success. His father, a well-educated man, amplifies this ideological pillar in words and actions daily. He would stress repeatedly:

You must stop wasting your time on silly things. You must read your books. Focus on your studies and on the future you have ahead of you. A good education is what you need to survive in this world. Do you hear? ...without education, a man is though in a closed room; with education, he finds himself in a room with all its windows open to the outside world. (23).

In fact, to Kingsley's father, education and the English language were the recipes to success and wealth. They were so important to Engineer Paulinus Ozoemena that he vowed that his betrothed Augustina must be educated and "their children are going to be great. They're going to have the best education. They're going to be engineers, doctors, lawyers, and scientists. They are going to have English names, and they are going to speak English like the Queen..." (15). In most cases, Engineer Paulinus would end his preachy picture and the litany of the importance of education as the key to the windows of opportunity with a Bible quotation. For many Nigerians, the didactic seminality to every argument most rests on the Bible or some religious text as an arbiter of reason. For the Igbos, predominantly Christians, known for their business ingenuity, many readers might proclaim him the ideal. But his ideas resonate in a different era from the one his son lives in. So it was no surprise when Kingsley is denied employment and has his inamorata wooed by someone else, decides to seek the succour of a church. For Kingsley and many Nigerians living in the febrile economic malnourished Nigeria, religion becomes an opium. After all, "dire times require drastic measures" (63). Nwaubani further lampoons Nigerians predilection for the spiritual over the physical as they face untold hardship. The narrative voice stresses that Kingsley runs to church with the hope of solving his monetary issues, but apparently he is not in the right place. The government has failed him, and religion has failed him too. After the church service, he laments, "This was clearly not the place where my problems would be solved" (72).

While Kingsley narrates the hardship he faces on a daily basis, it is through his father, Paulinus, that the reader gets enmesh in the national and global politics. Through Paulinus, corruption, poor infrastructure, and moral decadence are explored by the author as causal to spawning the escalating e-fraud narratives as we see today in Nigeria. As a diasporic returnee, Kingsley's father, Paulinus, is an embodiment of a different epoch of Nigeria. The engineer belongs to a crop of patriotic Nigerians who return to improve their home country only to be betrayed. His disillusionment is experienced in his words, his silence, and even in his ailment. One can even read his death as a death to the ideal Nigerian. On several occasions, he vents his anger on the decay, explored as the verisimilities that surround him. He is vocal about the inadequacies of the government and its impact on the living conditions of the people. He speaks on these several truths as he sponges both the local and national news channels. The protagonist observes that in spite of his father's daily consumption of this acerbic reportage, the news "always reported things that infuriated my father" (48). Some of these verisimilitudes the Engineer Paulinus narrates are, bribery and corruption, incompetency, impropriety, godfatherism, nepotism, and avarice, amongst others (48–51).

So when the patriarch, Paulinus, dies, Kingsley, as the opara, must carry the burden of the family, and that is when he begins to feel

extremely overwhelmed by the Nigerian disillusive reality of a 'full brain, empty pocket' (46). In spite of his good grades, and his impeccable morals, his shining education seems to have failed woefully. As an opara of his family, Kingsley views the realisms of lack of employment, poverty, and general hardship lurking around his family further galvanising his feet towards a road never taken. So it not out of place to empathise with a tragic situation and a tragic hero whose implosion is not wholly undebatable.

Stylistically and also thematically, Nwaubani skilfully weaves in a psychological angle to Kingsley's relationship with his Uncle Boniface, aka Cash Daddy. In fact, the contact between the two gives room for intrusive exposition. Psychologically, their relationship can be deconstructed from the perspective known as attachment theory. According to attachment theory developed by John Bowlby and expanded by Mary Ainsworth foreground, "attachment is a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (qtd in Cherry 2). Hence, this further heightens when a person loses a parent, they look to form attachments with the next available person that comes into their life. That person becomes a caregiver who would be sensitive and responsive to their needs and provide love, support, and many more. This person becomes a behaviour model. Drawing from this argument, therefore, when a character like Kingsley who has recently lost a parent meets a quirky character like Cash Daddy, worlds are abound to shift.

Therefore, it takes little time and persuasion for Kingsley to jettison his puritanic upbringing to become Boniface's wingman and a key part of his fraudulent gang. In his new employment and with further attachment, Kingsley becomes more aware that money is a veritable gate-opener to human existence. In spite of his new found riches gained through fraudulent means as an e-scammer, Kingsley is in an abyss of its own.

The 419, or e-fraud ideology, has been viewed from diverse moral lenses. Some, like Boniface, see the justification in it, while many denounce its practice. The title of the text seeks for its historicity and causality. In fact, the title provokes questions: how, why, and when did e-fraud become an existential ideology in Nigeria? Some authors, like Olumide Osagbemi in his article "I Do Not Come To You By Chance: Yahoo-Yahoo and the Realities of a Postmodern World" proclaims that Nigerian fictional representation of the Yahoo or hustle narrative dates back to Chinua Achebe's Chike and the River and because one of the characters, Ezekiel, and some group of boys extort money from some white kids in England, therefore, their actions initiate the birth of 419 in Nigerian literary narrative. Though this analogy might be debatable due to the transactional modalities, age, and other factors involved, to some degree it lays a fictional foundation. What Osagbemi fails to understand is that Achebe's schoolboys' shenanigans cannot be compared to Nwaubani's men at war. It is no longer child's play but a survivalist labyrinth. Osagbemi further opines that "Achebe's text equally provides a good lead to submit that the crime (419) was alien to Nigeria; it came to us as a result of education, globalisation, and technology" (7). Osagbemi fails to note that it would be inaccurate to blame 419 on the advent of colonialism on the basis that, ideationally, hustle narratives like e-fraud, prostitution, and drug trafficking, amongst others, are moral and ethical issues that do not necessarily come with the baggage of colonialism but manifest as social and existential reactions.

The prevalence of e-fraud by Nigerian nationality does not mean Nigeria is the poorest country, so practitioners are merely individuals exhibiting fraudulent survivalist ideals. It is of importance to state at this juncture that clearly, the novel deals basically with the various utilitarian responsiveness of Nigerian citizens in a failed society. Didactically, these individualistic ideals become synecdochical and collective of the Nigerian people and space. Therefore, Nwaubani's characters are not merely responding to their socio-economic immediate environment as they navigate through both negative and positive impacts, they are adding to the tapestry of what is gradually becoming the Nigeria of the 21st century.

Apart from the survivalist tendencies, another key angle to look at e-scams as a hustle narrative is the rapaciousness of the scammers. Europeans and Americans cannot be blameless or exonerated in the exploration of e-fraud. In fact, their ignorance, greed, and sometimes generosity can be considered stokers of the hustle narrative that can translate to present certainties. Nwaubani succinctly implicates the scammers in the success and boom of e-hustle. Nigeria has one of the highest populations of smart and jobless youth. And as such, restiveness is channelled into survivalist mentality. Many seemingly blame the Nigerian youth and its government for being irresponsible, but it takes two to tango. Some, if not all, of the narrative explorations of e-scamming are rested on the greed and ignorance of the scammers by African youths. In fact, Osagbemi opines that the scammers known as "clients" or "victims" are locally known as "mugu," a derogatory Yoruba word for a fool or dunce. Within the context of the Yoruba language, the referential importance of "mugu" is far more significant than in its ordinary usage. When the Yoruba call someone a "mugu," it is a blatant insult to the victim for being foolish enough to allow himself/herself to be scammed in the first place. Interestingly, both parties, as accomplices, share in the liability and assets of the supposed transaction—even in the name-calling. This is illustrated in Kingsley's account of his first 'hit'" (10).

It is therefore pertinent to stress that e-fraud is marked by layered human stupidity, deceit, and intelligence. And to juxtapose this, one can say that, like a terrorist cell, scammers act together while the scammed act alone. According to Nwaubani, e-fraud perpetrators have been successful because they are loyal to the quota system of who gets what, when, and how, while the scammed are closed-lipped and greedy, keeping family and friends out of the big picture. On the whole, Nwaubani opines that it takes skills, luck, intelligence, and above all, human stupidity to execute an e-fraud.

To further stress on the foregoing thematic preoccupation of e-fraud that the novel is centred, just like other situations when lots are drawn, letters are "blasted out every day; very few were replied to" (199). And unlike lots, these are baits, and it is mostly the greedy, the ignorant, and people with their eyes wide shut that fall into such entrapments. In Kingsley's first successful letter to Mirabelle, we are aware that Kingsley "sang dough-re-mi to the tune of about $23,000" (201). In our little typification, Mirabelle falls under the greedy and the ignorant categories. Meanwhile, Kingsley's next client (mugu) is the knowledgeable Edgar

Hooverson, whose case is that of blatant greed. In fact, in his very first letter, he stresses, "PS: You mentioned you were going to give me 20% of the total sum. Does that mean I get $11.6 MILLION (eleven million six hundred thousand dollars)? Please clarify. Thank you. These characters are greed personified. Edgar Hooverson started doing the math quite early, and unlike Mirabelle, this character's outright greed is legendary. In fact, in his second letter, we can better attest to his rapacity. The narrative voice stresses that he is not naïve or ignorant, in fact, he is a businessman, he then boasts, "You could not have made a BETTER CHOICE. I am a business EXPERT and can give you PROPER ADVICE on how to invest your money" (228). Where Kingsley brings out the ingenuity in e-scamming, this character is an epitome of stupefaction. And these and other scammers are the ones to be typified as accomplices, not victims. The last category of Europeans and Americans who inadvertently encourage e-fraud are the ones who "reach out" to the young e-scammers out of character and of charity.

Some scam letters are positively responded to out of the victim being charitable or acting in benevolence. In this case, the proposed client knows the intent of the scammer yet would send the scammer some money. In this case, such magnanimity encourages the fraudster and can yield some dire consequences. For instance, the character Azuka's letter to Condoleezza is met with a rebuke but with Kingsley's tutelage: "Condoleezza sent him $600 the very next day and a letter full of advice on how to turn his life around. Dollars were hard currency, no matter how small" (267). This form of perceived charity tends to encourage e-scamming and should be avoided. In fact, this buoyed Azuka to his death. Scammers should not be encouraged in one or the other. Therefore, this taxonomy can help us to first avoid the risk of merely seeing the scammed as victims. Second, to allow us to recognise scamming as complex, e-scammers as intelligent, both scammers and the scammed are both criminal accomplices, and lastly, to view some international charitable transactions as encouraging of e-fraud and e-hustle narratives.

Another cogent verisimilitude portrayed by Nwaubani is that of political decay. The author depicts the historical and recurrent political violence and bloodletting in Nigeria. This decadence continues as politicians' device diverse means to gain political power, even if it includes political assassination. This is a disturbing trend. The Nigerian political space becomes open only to candidates that diabolical outwit the other aspirants, be it financially, physically, or spiritually. The narrator stresses the political rot through the character of Uwajimogwu, which can be roughly translated as the "world's greatest voodooist." This character is Cash Daddy's biggest contender (348). Uwajimogwu, as an antagonist, is said to have used various tactics, like blackmail, to disrupt Cash Daddy's political ambition but to no avail. He then finally resorted to assassination by poisoning Cash Daddy. Through Kingsley, we are made aware that, "Cash Daddy had heeded the warnings of his lawyer about the dangers of Nigerian politics" (398). Despite strengthening both his physical and spiritual security, his said fortification was not enough, at the end, he dies like a dog. It is unequivocally stressed that, this and several forms of demonisation and diabolic elimination characterise contemporary Nigerian politics.

It is pertinent to stress that Chinua Achebe, in There Was a Country, aptly affirms that "postcolonial theory aims to deconstruct colonial narratives, challenge hegemonic power structures, and give voice to the marginalised perspectives of the colonized. (33)" Nwaubani foregrounds the hegemony between colonised and coloniser as causal to e-fraud. In the dialogue that ensues between Cash Daddy and Kingsley concerning their client, Mirabelle. Cash Daddy raises this postcolonial question of "claiming back" the exploitive years of colonial imperialism through e-fraud, thus:

> 'You, you went to school. Did they not teach you about slave trade?'
>
> 'They did'

Who were the people behind it? And all the things they stole from Africa, have they paid us back?

…Since you don't appreciate this opportunity God has given you to abolish poverty in your family… (204)

Call it pay back or back pay, this ideological historical conflict here presented seems to be causal and central to many e-fraud arguments. To crown it all, the Bible as an agency of colonial power apparatus is aptly used here as a bargaining tool of reason. Gayatri Spivak, in her popular text, Can the Subaltern Speak? asserts, "The legacy of colonialism persists in the economic, social, and cultural structures of postcolonial societies, affecting their development and identity" (9). In the above conversation, we see the subaltern, in the characters of Cash Daddy and Kingsley speaking. Also, when the character, Azuka travelled to Iran and never returned, Cash Daddy, in his infinite wisdom, enlightens the postcolonial reader, "Doesn't he know that those ones are not real oyibo people? Their level of mugu is not as high. In fact, they are almost as smart as we are." (400). In Chiweizu's The West and the Rest of Us, and Edward Said's Orientalism, both postcolonial texts explore the historical and geographical typification, identity, and its stereotypic undertones. In drawing these stereotypes, Said professes, "The colonizer will always seek to justify their actions by portraying the colonized as inferior, in need of civilization and incapable of self-governance." (14). Hence, the colonised are forced to rewrite their hegemonic history; after all, Franz Fanon has maintained, "The colonial encounter is not simply a meeting of peoples, but an encounter that influences the lives of both colonizers and colonized." (21) The meeting of the colonised and the coloniser continues to draw out representational hangovers and newness.

## 3.1 Reading the Didactic In Idcbc

### 3.1.1 Characterisation and Setting as Veritable Verisimilities Agencies

Characterisation is a literary device that writers employ to describe, portray, and provide narrative information about certain characters in their text. Here, the author chooses the best way possible to present a character to the reader by portraying personal

and physical traits, actions, inactions, and inter-actions that are cogently and creatively weaved together by the author to give the best results necessary. Nwaubani explicitly and implicitly, through direct and indirect characterisation, respectively, explores the psychology and the sociology behind some of her prominent characters. Suffice to say that if characterisation is poorly handled, readers are given stilted and unbelievable characters typified as "flat" and "stock." Fortunately, Nwaubani fictionalises some memorable characters like Boniface, aka Cash Daddy, and Kingsley Ibe. The novelist fleshes out their motivations in spite of their perceived villainy, which draws out empathy for them.

Meanwhile, setting, simply put, is the time, place, when/how, circumstance, scenery, and duration an author chooses to write about. A setting has a direct impact on the story. Nwaubani weaves into the fabrics of her story the physical, social, historical, and psychological types of setting by using the integral setting style. Setting as used by Nwaubani is not just a mere backdrop; it informs on the fictional mould of the character and how these come together to further reveal conflicts and themes. The novelist uses the eastern part of the country, most especially Abia State, as a verisimilitic setting. Characterisation and setting comingle to give the novel a verisimilitic reading.

On that basis, and on several occasions, the reader cannot help but juxtapose Kingsley's father's ideal against his uncle's. Nwaubani's characterisation at this point becomes revelatory and even puzzling. Though she identifies and paints the processes of evil in subtlety, showing that there is a thin line between good and evil. Most noteworthy in this exploration is the character of Boniface. This flamboyant and finely painted decadent character draws us into a revistation of John Milton's Paradise Lost. To take this a notch further, a contrapuntal juxtaposition of Kingsley's father Paulinus and his uncle Boniface can be interpreted from a Miltonic standpoint as God and Satan, respectively. And like Milton, who graciously and attractively painted Satan as the ideal villain, Nwaubani crafts Boniface's life style, wit, ebullience, and predilection on the same Miltonic frequency. Suffice to say that Nwaubani, like Milton, expects us to behold the enigma that is Boniface (Satan) rather than the ideals of Paulinus as God. Though this binary oversimplifies Nwaubani's projection but raises big moral questions like, Does Nwaubani sympathise with e-frauders? Does she believes that e-fraudsters in Nigeria are irredeemable? Or is it to show the ruse meant to embellish the heroics but decimation as a finality?

Still on a Miltonic train of deconstruction, Boniface, like Satan, seems to motivate his workers with money, fine words, clothes, insights, and diverse grandiose gestures, thereby creating a picture of a strive towards regaining a once-lost paradise. Even Boniface's coarse, perverted view of himself as a hand of justice and benevolence is also magnificently rendered, expressing sympathy and justice, which further engages the Miltonic discussion. Boniface's crusade reminds readers of Milton's of Satan's, as seen in his addressing the Fallen Angels thus:

> Sudden, and ere we are aware, the Foe,
> Infernal Foe! Environed us around,
> And to the speed of God got them
> (Paradise Lost, Book 1, Line 84-86)

Prior to pumping his staff on why and who to scam, Boniface assures Kingsley and his other staff that his scamming activities are to even the scores against the West (Europe and America) that have exploited his people, and like Satan, Boniface takes us back to colonial era and hence sees the justification in his schemes thus:

> What though the field be lost?
> All is not lost—the unconquerable will,
> And study of revenge, immortal hate,
> And courage never to submit or yield.
> And what is else not to be overcome? (Lines 622-626)

Just like the character of Satan and God in Miltonic representation, even when Boniface was living with Paulinus, he, Boniface, was untouched by the litanies of the moral path that Paulinus preaches to his household. An indirect allusion is made to this effect when Aunty Dimma notes, "God made Lucifer, then Lucifer turned himself into the devil" (420). Though this is a warning to Kingsley, a reference made like this further accentuates our juxtaposition of the Miltonic portrayal of God and Satan. Also, Boniface's lust and cravings for wealth, women, and the finer things of life are palpable. Also like Miltonic Satan, Boniface is conversely depicted in a humane, seductive portrait to encourage and keep the attraction burning. His character, one may argue, seems rounder than that of Kingsley. But unlike the Miltonic Satan, Boniface has a humanitarian side. He indulges in e-fraud not only for himself. He is a philanthropist, a humanist, and very charitable to his state and community.

In Cash Daddy's demise, we are made aware that he "would have been good for Abia State. After all was said and done, my uncle loved his people" (426). Even the association of Tomato and Pepper Sellers, Aba branch, took to the street in angry protest. Not wanting to be left out, the street tout joined in" (423). The general atmosphere was of genuine grief: "Everyone else loved Cash Daddy" (425). In spite of his believed persona, he is seen as a Robin Hood of his time. He steals from the white/rich and gives to the poor/black. In a documentary for his gubernatorial election, many magnanimities, like scholarships to students, gifts of money and properties, and other significant charities given by Boniface, were revealed, further creating layers of complexity to the character of Boniface.

## 3.2 The Family and the Didactic in I Do Not Come to You by Chance

The family is an indubitable organ of disseminating the didactics of any society. Many ideals attributable to both positive and negative society are often determined by the family. Nwaubani portrays the family as a montage of signification. Two different families are robustly portrayed in the novel, and we can relate to them as they cogently project the verisimilities of contemporary Nigerian society.

First to be deconstructed is Kingsley Ibe's family. Kingsley's family is portrayed as a nuclear family but with extended live-in family members. This is typical of most Nigerian families today. Through this family, we are open to a wealth of social realisms like economic hardship, the importance of education for youth empowerment, and unemployment as causal to deviant behaviours. Kingsley's family has a patriarch whose death further propels the story towards the anathema of e-fraud and its attendant realities. This lower middle class Roman Catholic Christian family believes in hard work and in being morally just. Diverse forms of discipline are meted out for deviant behaviours, and Cash Daddy, as a young man, had his share of thrashing for his errant behaviours.

The economic situation almost shattered the family, but for Kingsley's mother, whose constant moralising glued back her family. This character stands out as a harbinger of moral uprightness, and the motif of mother is gold is firmly represented through her. Intermittently, Kingsley's mother perceiving her son is straying from the moral path would appeal, "Kings, whatever it is you people are doing, please be very careful. Be very, very careful" (246). Such chastisement does not go unnoticed. It continues to haunt Kingsley as he becomes more embroiled in the 419 business. Kingsley might have easily walked in and fill Big Daddy's shoes but for his mother's sake, he decides to choose the hard way. Women play important role in the society and Nwaubani weaves this cogently in her novel. Women affiliated to Kingsley are predominantly morally upright Kingsley's mom and Aunty, Ola, and Merit. These women as lovers and relatives resonant a sense of moral uprightness. One would expected Ola to give into Kingsley's sexual and marital demands as some married women would have done for their exes but Ola insists on being faithful. In fact this affirms Kingsley's earlier assertion, "Ola was 100 percent wife material" (34). Marriages in Nigeria continue to suffer on the altar of infidelity. Ola's character might be judged to have married for money but she should be commended for respecting her marital vows. Also Merit is aptly named as she decides to leave Kingsley when she discovers he is a fraudster.

The family is a key unit in the Igbo traditional system. Another family deserving of our analysis is Ola's family. Many readers might castigate Ola's mother, but she is quite pragmatic, direct, and hard-working, symptomatic of the Igbos. Nwaubani powerfully depicts the Nigeria of the times as "this country was not fucked up. It was also not a place for idealising and Auld Lang Syne. Once you faced the harsh facts and learnt to adapt, Nigeria became the most beautiful place in the world" (318). This survivalist truism continues to be concentric of the jungle that Nigeria has become. Ola's mother is an existentialist single parent who sees the need to get her daughter married off well to an uneducated man. After all, she has financial and maternal responsibility, which many may see her as being a gold digger who stands against Kingsley and Ola's love. But against idealism, this character performs within the ambit of realism. Indeed, the Ibo society, in contextualising this against the backdrop of this novel, stresses that only those who have transactional things to bargain with in terms of affluence, beauty, and other material or non-material possessions can survive the scrutiny and expectations of such a society.

It is pertinent to stress at this point that though Kingsley, as a male, is the opara of his family. According to Chima J Korieh and Reginald C Keke, the "okpara/opara" is the head of the kindred. He is the eldest son of the extended family and is responsible for maintaining and managing the family affairs. He acts as the spokesperson, resolves disputes, and has a significant influence as a leader. It is pertinent to note that the position is heredity, and in most cases his word is law (4). But Ola is an ada but bears the similitude of the Opara, especially in carrying the family burden. It is even more difficult for Ola, a female child with no male siblings and a father, to carry the family's financial burdens. The sacrificial persona and the Igbo culture placing responsibility on the shoulders of the first child, be it boy or girl, encourage radical pursuit of wealth, as seen in the characters of Kingsley as a male and Ola as a female. Nwaubani tends to ridicule the Igbo society for this unnecessary family pressure. To this end, Chinua Achebe had confesses:

Anyone who has given any thought to our society must be concerned by the brazen materialism one sees all around. I have heard people blame it on Europe. This is utter rubbish. In fact, the Nigerian society I know best-the Ibo society-has always been materialistic…All the four titles in my village were taken –not-given and each had its price (12).

It suffice to say that these family pressures have made many Igbo youths engage in criminalities or sharp practices like e-fraud, armed robbery, assassination, kidnapping, thuggery, drug abuse, and prostitution, be it locally and internationally. The didactic aspect of this paper is our reconsideration of the impact of these social vices in the long run on the social balance of people. For instance, Cash Daddy and Azuka meet their untimely deaths, and Kingsley almost divided his family because of his choices. But sardonically, Nwaubani fails to have expressed a more heavy-handed attitude toward e-fraud perpetrators, but she decides to tamper with the consequences of their actions.

## 4.1 Conclusion

Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's debut novel, I Do Not Come to You by Chance, was well received, apart from thematic preoccupations and the craftsmanship, Nwaubani has been judged to be the first modern African writer to have an international book deal while living in her home country, Nigeria. This is significant in the sense that, despite capturing weightier "truths" deconstructed in this article as fictional verisimilities and the didactic concerning the Nigerian space, she, publishing her novel from Nigeria, projects a

sense of faith and hope in Nigeria in spite of the montage of criminalities and sharp practices narrated in the text.

This article, amongst other explorations, uses the Postcolonial Theory to investigate fictional verisimilities and the didactic. It navigates the socio-economic and political labyrinths, which Nwaubani aptly captures to centre on the debates of Yahoo-yahoo or 419 as an e-fraud narrative. Satirically, the novel narrates the complexities, causality, and comedy of human stupidity, intelligence, greed, and largely existentialism. Nwaubani's is not preachy about the deplorable moral choices bothering crime and punishment. Overall, this fine text, through its use of characterisation, setting, and epistolary, fails to aggressively impose the moral repercussion of 419 as expected of its consequence in the global marketplace. On this note, one might argue that, Nwaubani, like Cash Daddy, may be projecting the postcolonial modus operandi of decolonisation through "claiming back" the capital and all else that the West has and continues to take from Africa. Quite commendable is that Nwaubani cogently fails to mention the apparatuses of financial crime control in Nigeria because of their inefficiency, laxity, or indifference to 419 and other e-fraud narratives. In fact, Nwaubani implicates the Nigerian government by portraying their indifference as frightening, which in turn might make them accomplices. The thematic preoccupations of e-fraud and political rot are finely argued by questioning the causality and malaise of the reality of crime and decay in 21st century Nigeria.

A reader of Nwaubani may say that the internal corruption and squalor seemingly continue to birth social vice cells like e-scamming in speculative fiction and in real time. In fact, the protagonist, Kingsley, is caught in a double bind juxtaposed as unemployment and poverty on the one hand against scamming and survival on the other hand. Despite the fictional dark truths of e-fraud, negligence, corruption, and human lack and want inherent in the text, Nwaubani leaves the Nigerian reader with a sense of hope resonating in mostly the female characters as mothers, sisters, aunties, lovers, and wives. Through family relationships, this paper has explored I Do Not Come to You by Chance by drawing out the role of the family, most especially the importance of the female in repositioning our didactic moral compass, which seems broken at the time, due to the socio-economic and political downturn in Nigeria.

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