

Original Paper

Creativity and Self-Reflectivity in the Agnostic Construction of God and the Personal Realities in Selected Akpan's Facebook Narrative

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Received: April 18, 2025

Accepted: May 28, 2025

Online Published: June 28, 2025

doi:10.22158/wjeh.v7n3p55

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjeh.v7n3p55>

Abstract

Art through the framework of parodies and memory attempt self-reflection on the life of a creative writer in the free space. Most criticism on Adiaha Akpan's Facebook narratives are done by "religious people" without paying scholarly attention on the concept of creativity and self-reflectivity in the works of Akpan. This research examines creativity and self-reflectivity in the agnostic construction of God and the personal realities in selected Akpan's Facebook narrative. This study through the application of the concept of creativity, parody and trauma examines Akpan's recreation of self, God, and personal reality through the remediate of dimensions of selves in her selected Facebook narratives. Our findings reveals that there are mutations of Akpan's creative selves from the premise of practiced religion and previously lived selves. Through this mutated selves Akpan attempts to reconstruct her traumatic memory with organized religion. This research adopts the concepts of creativity, parody, and trauma in examining selected works of Akpan published on Facebook. This paper concludes that Akpan's writing is an attempt to reflect on her lived experiences about God, religion, and faith. In doing so, she reconciles herself with certain levels of her experience and doubts which becomes the creative vectors in her narratives.

Keywords

Creativity, Religion, Self, Faith, Parody, God

1. Introduction

There is no creative writing without the self-mediating the reality of the art as created. Adiah Akpan's traumatic memories of organised religion plays a functional role in the production of her narrative published on Facebook. Onyekachi Peter Onuoha and Frank Chukwuebuka Clinton affirm that; "Self-representation in social media age is an art form that is manipulated by the author through the vehicle of personal stories..." (p. 360). The affordance of the Facebook space gives her that distances to air her traumatic experiences without being killed by fanatic practitioners of organized religion. Facebook is a free space that provides netizens the environment to experiment with selves and personal realities in whatever dimensions they chose to. Onuoha notes that; "The digital space is a 'free' platform for the transplant of organic societies and their experiences..." (p. 33). Akpan through Facebook accounts for her lived experiences both physical and psychological. Wassily Kandinsky affirms the foregoing thus; "A work of art consists of the two elements, the inner and the outer. The inner is the emotion in the soul of the artist; this emotion has the capacity to evoke a similar emotion in the observer" (p. 7). It is the inner experienced of Akpan that gave birth to her narrative.

Autobiographical narratives are the product of the self, the attempt of the self to be referential to the lived experienced from the framework of creative art. Onyekachi Peter Onuoha corroborates the foregoing thus; "Self is an accommodating house within happenings in life..." (p. 17). Akpan's narratives published on Facebook are self-referential and makes reference to the scriptures to validate her points. Akpan is in the realist ministry of teaching people how to live their lives based on reality and in doing this; she appropriates from the Bible and modifies it to pass her message across. She is of the opinion that life would always have a plot twist and when it does, one should take practical steps in solving such problems rather than be disenchanted about life. Stephen De Stabler and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona affirms the foregoing thus; "Behind every artwork, there is a breathing, feeling human being called "the artist" who creates out of a drive and an energy that remain untapped in most of us. (...) the art we study comes from human hands and out of human experiences" (p. 24). Art is experiential and an attempt of the artist to reconcile personal encounter with reality or an attempt to give lived experience a new life as a premise of re-examination of the lived live. Akpan through her narrative engages in the universe of creativity of what Julia Cameron refers to as the universe as a vast electrical sea in which you are immersed and from which you are formed, opening to your creativity changes you from something bobbing in that sea to a more fully functioning, more conscious..." (p. 1). Akpan's lived experiences which is referential to certain happenings in the society becomes the premise of her creativity and the vast universe she is conscious of and which she draws from. Cameron affirmed the foregoing thus; "The heart of creativity is an experience.... Creativity is an experience..." (p. 1). The foregoing is affirmed in the narrative of Akpan understudy. Akpan through her narrative indicate that she had experience various levels of pain which is referential in her narrative and this becomes the source of her creativity. Cameron observes that; "Art is born in attention. Its mid wife is detail. Art may seem to spring from pain, but perhaps that is because pain serves to focus our attention onto details..."

(p. 21). Akpan's religion which is the focused referential experience is also a source of trauma to her which gives birth to her art. Through parody, Akpan maintains artistic what Cameron refers to as artistic ecosystem which is realised through the framework of attention and self-re-examination. Through creative rewriting of the autobiographical memories, Akpan attempts to live with her traumatic memories with organised religion. Stephen De Stabler and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona affirm that; "Much of art is that kind of play in a serious sense, like magic, trying to restructure reality so that we can live with the suffering" (p. 33). Akpan's creativity and art is an attempt to live with the pains inflicted on her by the practices of organized religion as indicated in the selected texts understudy.

2. PARODIC SELF-REFLECTIVITY AND CREATIVITY IN AKPAN'S FACEBOOK NARRATIVES

Akpan parodies the Bible in her attempt to create agnostic humanistic portrayal of God and reality as pedagogical art. John Dewey's observation implicates Akpan's art thus; "Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art. The artist selected, simplified, clarified, abridged and condensed according to his interest. The beholder must go through these operations according to his point of view and interest" (p. 56). Akpan recreates the Bible through a parodist framework and her personal memory and remediating it with her agnostic stands as a repudiation religious practices and God. Emmy Ikanaba Unuja Idegu observes that; "The creative experience in all genres of arts from the ancient period till date has had an interesting continuous patronage that is a mixture of receptivity and condemnation" (p. 48). The foregoing highlights the dual temperament of Akpan's narratives as depicted in her agnostic humanist parody of the Bible. Agnosticism is the belief in the unfathomable existence of God which is foregrounded in the concept of the unknown or unknowable. Pythagoras was the first to advance the theory of unexplainable things of nature. Pythagoras affirms that nothing exists; even if it exists, it cannot be known and even if it is known, it cannot be communicated. Thomas Henry Hurley coined the term agnosticism to mean that the idea of God, divinity or supernatural is unknown or is not knowable. For agnostic, the cognitive abilities or reason is insufficient to explain the existence of God or non-existence of God. Agnosticism is the fact that whatever one claims to believe in, so far as the individual does not have sufficient scientific grounds the individual cannot speak of them. Pythagoras tells us that nothing exists and if it does exist, it cannot be explained. This is so in the sense that as affirms by agnostic scholars that human reason is incapable of providing sufficient rational grounds to justify either the belief that God either exists or not. Bryan Frances, in writing about Agnosticism, observes that; "Belief in God can be and often is completely reasonable—and it can be and often is completely unreasonable" (p. 14). Akpan is a realist who has the knowledge of God and remediates this knowledge as a premise to educate fellow netizens on various perspectives such as theism, atheism, agnosticism, humanism and solipsism. Dewey further notes that; "Experiencing like breathing is a rhythm of in takings and outgivings. Their succession is punctuated and made a rhythm

by the existence of intervals, periods in which one phase is ceasing and the other is inchoate and preparing” (p. 57). This is clearly illustrated in Adiaha Akpan’s art. She employs parody as a literary frame in rewriting her knowledge of the Bible to suit her message. Linda Hutcheon, in theorizing about parody, is of the opinion that; “Parody is one of the major forms of modern self-reflexivity; it is a form of inter-art discourse” (p. 2). Akpan makes use of parody as she appropriates from memory to communicate her experience with organised religion. Simon Dentith, in accounting for parody, submits that; “By the mere repetition of another’s words, their intonation exaggerated but their substance remaining the same, one utterance...” (p. 1). The foregoing is reflected in the works of Akpan who exaggerates some of the Bible messages in her works and extends the boundaries of meaning through her (auto) biographical experience. This is in line with Dentith submission that; “...parody involves the imitation and transformation of another’s words” (p. 3). This also includes transforming other peoples message through self-reflexivity as in the case of Akpan. This is in line with John Dewey’s submission that; “Art is thus prefigured in the very processes of living” (p. 24). Akpan’s thought is in a state of fluidity as it is highlighted in her narrative of 29/10/2022 and she avers that:

Atheism would have been interesting but atheism is boring. No flying at night. You can’t enter people’s rooms with your invisible body and press their necks. You can’t do magical things. Any ewu can talk to you and get away with it. Not me. In my own private practice, if you try me, I don’t care where you are, you will get it hot. I don’t do that business of loving everyone. Atheists are nice to all people.

Mbanu.

Atheism in the words of Ahmad Faizuddin Ramli et al is an ideology that rejects the existence of God (p. 99). It is this “ideology” Akpan looks at the nature of atheist and considers it as a boring practice as a result of the assumption which is associated with traditional religious practices which include flying in the night and having the power to press people in the night. She introduces mild humour in to her rewriting of religious assumptions and bases her autobiographical narrative in rewriting and owning the religious belief of her people. Jennifer Hay in accounting for the functionlity of humour submits that; “...women much more likely to share funny personal stories to create solidarity...” (p. 709). Akpan through her rewriting shares solidarity with her traditional religion. She notes that:

I love those who love me.

Those who hate me, I press them at night

It’s not sleep paralysis

Na me dey press you

I slam doors in their houses

I scratch them when they are sleeping

You see that scratch on your arm, it’s me.

Yes me. If you don’t believe me, send me your pant and I will teach you a lesson.

You think that I am all those small small atheists that you can go and argue on their posts anyhow.

Come and try me and you will know something.

Akpan rewrites religious and social practices of her people and owns it through mild humour. Dentith is of the opinion that; "... the importance of parody as rejoinder, or mocking response to the word of another" (p. 9). Akpan's response is against the atheists and within her narrative frame she addresses theists who respond to her agnostic messages harshly. She is aware that her narrative unsettles people and she attempts to warm them from a belief system they are aware of. At the start of her autobiographical narrative, Akpan was a pantheist; her pantheistic view was of the belief that the universe and God are one. Akpan holds a monistic view about God and the universe are all one. She held this view through her theorizing of Jesus.

This is the view of Akpan highlighting the superiority of Christ to any other opinion in human existence leaving many to wonder how she developed into being agnostic and using her "faith" and the knowledge of its practice to rewrite the theory of her new belief. The Sophists were concerned with rhetoric, training people to prove themselves as wiser. Socrates is alleged to be one of the Sophist but he is not because unlike the sophist he was not teaching for material gain or a fee. He however, shifted the concern of philosophy from the cosmological perspective to the anthropological perspective by emphasising that man should know himself and that an unexamined life is not worth living. Akpan, in an attempt to examine her life, attends the height of indifference toward God. However, she uses her knowledge of God and the scripture as a premise to parody, rewriting and expose man to reality which is a mixture of religious content and humanism. Dentith notes that; "...parody: 'Parody includes any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice'" (p. 9). Akpan accounts for those she writes for in her narrative of 21/8/2022. She writes that:

I write for three groups of people:

1. Me, God and Satan. We are besties as I embrace my light and my darkness
2. Those who love me unreservedly. I love you right back
3. Those who can't stand me. Triggering you is my morning coffee

Let's all keep making magic together

These are the focus of her messages which revolves around religion and humanism thereby foregrounding the ethics of religious humanism. Irhas Sya'bana asserts that; "Religious Humanism is a religious concept that places humans as human beings, as well as the humanization of sciences while still paying attention to the *hablun minallah* and *hablun minannas* responsibilities" (p. 18). Religious Humanism refers to a worldview or philosophy that integrates humanist principles, emphasizing human value, reason, and ethics with religious or spiritual frameworks. It does not reject religion as seen in the case of Akpan, but rather seeks to harmonize human dignity and development with spiritual or divine responsibilities. She engages in different forms of rewriting the ideological strand of the Bible in her drive to educate netizens about life and living. She sees her act of writing as bonding with her fellow netizens on Facebook which she refers to as keeping the magic together. In this rewriting, she digresses a bit amidst the point she wants to make but still within the context of the message. She submits that:

And making money

A young woman told me how she makes 10,000 Naira a day frying akara.

Sigh.

How much do doctors even make sef?

I almost started akara business.

Omo, make money.

Let your head be about money only

Come up here for air

Come see what I have written for the day

React to and comment on the ones you like

Make counter posts on your page for the ones that annoy you, or go to the places where they can't stand me and congregate there to get annoyed with yourselves

But whatever you do, don't forget to make money

Your friends may go

Your marriage may end

Your interests may change

God may move in mysterious ways but your money?

Loyal till the very end

Make money

Akpan advises humans to focus on making money because it is the most loyal friend because everyone, including God, fails as a result of God not being our own thought. Amidst her attempt to educate, she also entertains as she invites her friends to come and see what she has written. She informs them that they have a right to aid the creation of meaning through their commenting on her work but lays down the rules of them doing so on her page. Dewey accounts for art, which also implicates Akpan's practice thus; "Art celebrates with peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is" (p. 17). Akpan seems to have grown on a certain psychological level and her growth is a product of the reality of her society and those who serve God which forces her to be indifferent toward the concept of God and Christ. Like the Sophists who were disenchanted with the actions of people of their time who did something different from what they teach, Akpan is also disenchanted by the actions of religious people and she parodies their actions from personal memorial and encounter with them. Akpan is disenchanted with what Sikiru Adeyemi Ogundokun refers to as religious hypocrisy (p. 117). So she reaches a point where she begins to doubt the existence of God. This is in line with Dentith's opinion about parody that; "...parody is one of the many forms of intertextual allusion out of which texts are produced" (p. 6). Akpan alludes to her experience with organized religion and the Bible and thus, in her engagement of these two constants in her life, produces agnostic literary texts. She observes in her narrative of 25/11/2022 that:

Pastor: You do not need God for success.

You need God for salvation.

Me: Hahaha. Salvation is the biggest lie ever told. Nobody needs salvation. There is nothing to be saved from. A baby who is born is innocent and has no hand in anything on earth that has occurred before he or she landed on earth. That baby may either have been planned or unplanned for. Regardless, that baby is not a sinner who needs salvation. Nobody is born in sin.

Akpan is on a mission to rewrite the teachings of Christ and to question the practices of pastors and she does this from the premise of the knowledge she has as a Christian. She engages in rewriting as a tool of parody to question the religious belief of people including hers. Dentith account for how parody works which finds practicality in Akpan's works thus; "...interrelatedness of writing, the fact that all written utterances—texts—situate themselves in relation to texts that precede them, and are in turn alluded to or repudiated by texts that follow. Indeed, there is a tradition of specific 'rejoinder...' (p. 5). Akpan's works are interrelated to the Bible message but she parodies them and attempts to repudiate certain entries of the Bible texts she parodies. She attempts to fault religious dictum that all have sin and fall short of the glory of God. Akpan faults it and says that a baby is innocent and she premises her argument on the fact that the baby has no hand in the sins of the earth. She uses her knowledge of the Bible in an attempt to mark a new boundary of sin and attempt to define what the Bible constitutes as sin.

Dentith notes that; "...parody forms part of a range of cultural practices, which allude, with deliberate evaluative intonation, to precursor texts" (p. 6). Akpan alludes to the Bible with a deliberate attempt to fault the concept that everyone is born a sinner thus:

That's a lie that is adapted from a character called David who wrote about 150 poems called psalms. A character who much of his time comes across as melancholic, he once said, "In sin did my mother conceive me". Many bible apologists have tried to make sense of that sentence and so there are many explanations for it. To stretch that to mean that all humans were conceived in sin is typical bible believer inference, inserting themselves into what does not concern them.

In Akpan's rewriting, she attempts to explain the reason for David's action and that it is due to his sadness that makes him consider everyone a sinner. Implying that assuming David was a happy person, his submission would have been different. Hutcheon is of the opinion that parody is derivative in its composition as it is clearly highlighted in the above text (p. 13). Akpan classifies those who defend the Bible and its teachings like she did in the past as "Bible apologists", illustrating that part of her agnosticism temperament includes attack which is a product of her deep knowledge of the Bible. She affirms, while referring to the Bible, Apostles and God, that: "He is quoted to have referred to the gentiles as dogs. Another huge character in the book is called Paul. None of his letters is addressed to Africans let alone Nigerians. But my people carry this book on their head like akara." Akpan continues in her classification and attempt to reclassify through rewriting by observing that the Bible is an Israeli myth. She attempts to rationalise the actions of God from the premise of humanism by saying that, "...book is based in Israeli mythology and centres around a bloodthirsty God and his son who only says

he came to save Israel.” At the reference to the Bible, she does it through indirection and it is within the narrative of her sentence that one finds out that she is referring to the God of the Bible through her entry and summarizes some actions of God and his dealings with his people in the past as a blood thirsty one, which she frowns at from a humanistic perspective. Hutcheon accounts for how parody function thus; “The auto-reflexivity of modern art forms often takes the form of parody and, when it does so, it provides a new model for artistic process” (p. 5). Akpan’s work provides a new artistic model of the Bible through her direct questioning of certain biblical submissions. Akpan questions the start of salvation from the house of Israel and why it should be the basic reference for all man’s salvation and seems to suggest that since Christ excludes others at the start, she does not want to forcefully include herself even if it has been extended to her. She frowns at the exclusion of Africans from the narrative of the gospel and wonders why her people personalise and own the gospel. She affirms the bible as; “A book that clearly has nothing to do with them. Their obsession with it is evidence of a lack of identity.” Akpan’s annoyance seems to be partly born out of the perceived exclusion of Africans from the letters of the Apostles. She sees the Bible as exclusionist document and an ideological threat to the identity of her people. She attacks the core message of the Bible by rewriting the fundamental core of its principle. Hutcheon notes that; “Parody can, of course, be used to satirize the reception or even the creation of certain kinds of art” (p. 16). Akpan’s humanist agnostic narratives are “new” text of art in creating meaning beyond the frame of the Bible and sometimes it satirizes the Bible message. Sometimes she attacks the contents of the message through reframing of its content. For instance, she states:

Nobody needs salvation. It is a fake product created for a problem that does not exist. Salvation is in the same category as advanced fee fraud. The idea of salvation is 419. Nobody needs salvation. No God is saving anyone from anything - real or imagined. I can’t believe that human beings can choose salvation over real time success and prefer to follow a God who cannot help them live a good life, but who can give them salvation. You people and your pastors should gettat.

Salvation is a premise by which people becomes believers and thus she attempts to rewrite salvation and classifies it as a fake product for a problem that does not exist in an attempt to sway the thinking of believers to rethink the concept of their faith. Since salvation provides the letter for the hope of people that would be saved, she disrupts the principle of being saved by virtue of salvation which is a product of faith and says that no God is saving anybody from anything. Her knowledge of the scripture is at work, even in her agnostic state. Akpan sees economic prosperity as hard work rather than the one premised on the promises of God. She seems to suggest that their salvation could not give some humans who believe in him to live “a good life but who can give salvation.” Placing that side by side, she attempts to question the salvation as promised by God. Akpan becomes a reality that acts against everything she once believed in as form of rewriting and a rebellion against her belief. Dewey observes that; “...art, in its form, unites the very same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy that makes an experience to be an experience. Because of elimination of all that does not

contribute to mutual organization of the factors of both action and reception into one another, and because of selection of just the aspects and traits that contribute to their interpenetration of each other, the product is a work of aesthetic art” (p. 49). Akpan engages in the doing and undoing her experiences in regard to religion and she states; “Prayer cannot solve a problem it could not prevent. #PrayForNigeria.” The agnostic writer attacks the core and the foundation of her faith as a medium to get her people thinking and to take the destiny of their society is in their hands. She frowns on Nigeria's indifferent attitude toward their challenges as a result of spiritualizing it. In her narrative of 16/8/2022 she observes that:

Nigerians are always saying that God will save Nigeria. Which God will save Nigeria? Is it the God who told his son's foster parents to run to Egypt when Herod was killing babies? Or the God whose only son was killed by soldiers? The same God whose only son's direct followers all died violent deaths?

You people play too much in this country,

I swear.

She draws greatly from the Bible to illustrate that God is not coming to save Nigerians from their afflictions. Akpan uses vivid examples to illustrate the impossibility of God saving Nigeria because he did not save his son nor did he save those who were killed in his house. She sees this “God save Nigeria” as a jocular enterprise that should stop. Akpan's works demonstrates the nature of art which Dewey account for thus; “The real work of an artist is to build up an experience that is coherent in perception while “moving with constant change in its development” (p. 53). This is the case of Akpan's narrative. Akpan rejects social perception that leaders are chosen by God. In her narrative of 7/10/2022 she observes that:

As at 2015, many of my fellow Nigerians believed that all Governments were ordained by God according to Romans chapter 13 verse 1. Our wonderful God gave them Buhari as president. They immediately started complaining and some even prayed for him to die. A friend of mine who is a pastor's wife in Church of God Mission in Nigeria, called me, and asked me to join in praying for Buhari to die.

She cites the Bible ironically to illustrate that “God” gave Nigerians Buhari as a result of the unwillingness of many Nigerians to participate in the electoral processes. Akpan makes an allusion to her autobiographical memory to highlight the reactive docile nature of many Nigerian Christians who do not participate in the electoral process but burden God with the need to kill a man who had worked to be elected. She affirms how she responded to a friend who asked that they should pray for the death of Buhari. She submits that:

I rebuked her and that is how our friendship ended. I cannot be friends with wicked people. She was not alone. Many churches prayed for Buhari to die, accusing him of having an Islamic agenda. (...). This is 2022. I wonder if these people have seen that their prayers were ineffective, as always. In 2023,

if they continue to pray for God's will, God will give them Bola Tinubu as president. Do you want God's will for Nigeria or the will of the electorate? The choice is yours.

Akpan criticises Christian actions for praying for the death of the president. She then satirically says that "To the glory of God, Buhari is alive and has left some who prayed for his death." She uses the foregoing to demonstrate the need for Nigerians to participate in an election rather than pray for the death of the one who emerged. Akpan inscribes continuity in the Biblical and Nigerian political discourse of the need for Nigerians to participate in the electoral process, through parody. Hutcheon notes that; "...parody as operating as a method of inscribing continuity while permitting critical distance" (p. 20). Akpan encourages the masses to seek for their own will rather than waiting for God's will. Akpan, in her narrative of 15/1/2019, suggests that tithing does not improve the lives of the congregants and that economic prosperity is a function of good policy of government and she alludes to bad economic policies of Buhari, the Nigeria president, to clarify religious practices of Nigerians thus:

Anyone else notice that Nigerians started realizing the folly of tithing, the ineffectiveness of seed-sowing, and the futility of spiritual fatherism with Buhari's coming into power? I smile because given the next four years; many more things will go the way of those three. Love or hate Buhari, he is God's gift to Nigeria. Allahu Akbar.

Akpan illustrates that irrespective of how Nigeria sows seed as a medium of prosperity, Buhari policies have made them to make progress irrespective of the weight of their seeds. She seems to suggest that religious seed sowing is a futile venture in bad economic and monetary policies of government like that of Buhari. She praises the Islamic God for using one of his own for teaching Christians a lesson in humanism. In her narrative of 14/8/2022 she informs:

You have never needed salvation of your soul. You have never needed salvation of any sort. The only saving you need is being salvaged from the wrong thinking that you ever needed salvation. No human being anywhere in the world needs salvation. There is nothing wrong with you and your state of existence. You were born pure and whole and fully human. The circumstance of your birth determines your life's outcome. If you were born to poor parents, you will struggle. If your parents are not enlightened, your life will be tough. You have never needed salvation.

She sees one's success and failure in life as a product of birth and the economic status of one's parents. She seems to suggest that the parents' one is born to plays a very prominent role in the outcome of one's life. Akpan considers salvation as a facade. She notes that; "Every story that speaks to your needing salvation is A LIE. All you need is knowledge. KNOWLEDGE IS THE TRUE SALVATION. The knowledge of how to navigate life is all you need to enjoy your time on earth." She reconfigures salvation from Christ and locates it in knowledge as a tool to navigate one's life on earth. Akpan, through her parody of the bible, deviates from the bible norms and includes her humanist norms. Hutcheon states that; "Parody art both deviates from an aesthetic norm and includes that norm within itself as backgrounded material. Any real attack would be self-destructive" (44). Akpan holds firm to the things she had learnt as a Christian while extending the premise of prosperity that it should be

materially evident in the life of Christians. She holds that those who obey and associate with Christ and God should have material prosperity as its physical evidence. In her narrative of 8-6/2022 she observes that:

All you need to know about whether Jesus is effective or not is to look at your own life and the lives of your family members. Yes, you....I am talking to you. Do not try to convince us about the goodness of your God. Allow us to judge from what we see of your life. Dangote does not need to tell us that he is rich. Forbes list will.

She associates the goodness of God to material prosperity of the person speaking and that of his or her family members. Akpan criticizes religion through parody. Hutcheon observes that; "...as a form of criticism, parody has the advantage of being both a re-creation and a creation, making criticism into a kind of active exploration of form. Unlike most criticism, parody is more synthetic than analytic in its economical "trans-contextualizing" of backgrounded material" (51). She attempts to force in material prosperity as an index that a believer should use to testify about his or her god and include "worldly wealth" as a testimony to the goodness of God. She therefore emphasizes the importance of the vanities of this world as reflection of the goodness of God using big business men to illustrate how the goodness of God should be pronounced and not from the ways in which practicing Christians go about it.

3. TRAUMATIC SELF-REFLECTIVITY AND DOUBTS IN FAITH IN ADIAH AKPAN'S FACEBOOK NARRATIVE

Creativity is a product of traumatic memory. Cameron affirms that art seems to spring from pain..." (p. 21). Adiah Akpan's art is a product of her religious pain which Facebook gives her a secure space to engage with her traumatic memory through the framework of parody of art. Wassily Kandinsky observes that; "Every work of art is the child of its time; often it is the mother of emotions" (3). Akpan's art is a child of her traumatic experiences and her interaction with organised religion. Onyekachi Peter Onuoha is of the opinion that childhood trauma is unexplored fear that influences and conditions a child even unto adulthood" (153). Through her work, she attempts to examine her traumatic memory of her childhood. Within the same narrative, Akpan seems to inform us that her agnostic writing is a product of traumatic neurosis. Cathy Caruth observes;

'...that trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language" (4).

Adiaha tells of her reality as a traumatic one, which is a product of religion. She corroborates the foregoing when she submits that; "I thought I had healed from the emotional abuse that comes from being forced at an early age into a relationship with Jesus, but this red-letter edition of Jesus trending

on Naija social media has triggered me.” The social media becomes a site that triggers her trauma as a result of the social media trend which engaged netizens, sometime ago, to use Jesus as their display picture (DP). Akpan stands at her trend to point at her perceived subjugation. She observes that; “Imagine making a pre-pubertal child sing, “I am married to Jesus”! Is that not child abuse? Parents who make their children sing that song are programming those children for abuse. Why are you putting marriage ideas into a child’s head?” She interrogates religious pre-conditioning of the girl child to marriage and that such psychological marriage between Jesus and a minor as forced by religious composers who forced the children to sing such song, pitches the children into a union of un-equals and she does this through referential frame to the sight of her own trauma. Akpan interrogates the content of the songs and observes that they prefigure them to be homosexuals. She submits that:

Let’s not talk about the men who sing “I am married to Jesus”, and force their sons to sing it as well, yet claim to be against same sex marriage. The evidence for Jesus is obvious. Just x-ray the lives of those who have Jesus...

Akpan implies that singing of “sameness” in song is a form of sexual construction and institutionalisation of homosexuality in the psyche of the male child. Akpan, like Michael Foucault, is of the opinion that; “...gender is discursive and socially constructed by power” (p. 49). Akpan sees this influence of songs in boys’ sensibility as discursive and a process of construction homosexual male. Like Judith Butler, Akpan’s affirmation is implicated in Butler’s submission that gender is performative (30), and that fathers engages in this performative gender by forcing their children to bond “sexually” with a fellow male. Hutcheon observes that; “... the “target” of parody is not always the parodied text at as...” (p. 50). The same can be said of Akpan’s parody of the Bible, her attack is on religious practices assumed to be deduced from the Bible.

Furthermore, Akpan is traumatized by the faith of others which was also referential to her previously held faith and believe like those she criticized. This is so in the sense that trauma exist in the referential and this referential is found in the site of other practices of the Christian faith as indicated in the criticism of Akpan’s narrative. Akpan through her writing also makes historical allusions to the issue of insecurity in Nigeria. She observes that:

So, this weekend, while a man of God was on the altar serving his God, assailants killed him and the other worshippers and neither his God, his son Jesus, the host of heaven, the angels, the Cherubims and seraphs could intervene. Then people asked the same God who could neither prevent the crime nor protect the victims, to punish the perpetrators of the crime.

She chronicles the mass murder in Owo Catholic church in Yoruba land. She wonders why God, his son and angels could not prevent the murder and yet people are asking the same God to punish the perpetrators of the crime and this is highlighted Akpan’s indifference toward God. A form of mind set that could not fathom the silence of God in the plight of man on earth. She uses herself to illustrate as an example of how God should act. She observes:

No vagabond can enter my house and beat up my child in my presence. You will have to beat me first. But this God. You can kill his children inside his house. Kill his worshippers on his altar. All we will do is take pictures and hope that the name of our God goes viral....

There is power in the name but no commensurate action to demonstrate power.

She affirms that nobody can come into her house and beat her child in her presence without bearing her first. Through self-illustration, she questions the silence of God. She seems to encourage Christians to stand up and defend themselves. Although she accepts that there is power in God's name that the action of the said does not demonstrate his actions. She reiterated her submission and observes that:

As I have said before, "A God who can be killed cannot save you" But since we are seeing with the eyes of faith, those people that were killed in that church are not dead.

They are sleeping. And in everything, give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. So if you are a believer, do not complain about what happened, give thanks to God for this is his will. After all, MANY are the

AFFLICTIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUS In

Jesus name, AMEN!

She observes that the death of Christ cannot provide a medium for salvation as many Christians claimed. She mocks believers for seeing what happened in Owo Catholic Church from the eyes of faith and that the persons are not dead. Hutcheon observes that; "The ideological status of parody is a subtle one: the textual and pragmatic natures of parody imply, at one and the same time, authority and transgression..." (69). Akpan speaks from traumatic referential and from a deep sense of knowledge about the practice of the Christian faith. Hutcheon continues that; "Parody is one of the techniques of self-referentiality by which art reveals its awareness of the context-dependent nature of meaning, of the importance to signification of the circumstances surrounding any utterance" (85). This is the case with Akpan's art. She quotes from the Bible as a means of satirizing the people into action as she uses the people's resilience and expression of faith and hope as a premise to engage what she considered as their "folly" in waiting for a god that would intervene on their behalf. Akpan, in her narrative of 8/6/2022, first of all calls the attention of her fellow believers and says:

Let's talk about JESUS today.

No emotions

No drama

Just facts

Because of my 45 years of church life, coming from a family of a million and one pastors, president founders, maternal and paternal grandparents were clergy men who both brought different brands of church to my village, I know Jesus and bible from cover to cover. I have experienced the God business from every angle. I have seen GOD in action and his preferred mode of action is INACTION.

Akpan mentioning that she had spent fifty-five years of her life indicates her movement to the site of her trauma. She alludes to autobiographical history as a testimony to the fact that she has a deep

knowledge about God as a result of the ways her family functions in the commerce and spirituality of religion. Axel Gelfert observes that; “Testimony stands alongside perception, memory, reason and to as one of our main sources of knowledge” (1). The foregoing is gleaned from Akpan’s submission in respect to her existence and relations with God from her family practices. She accounts for the challenges she faces as a result of talking about Jesus in an unconventional way. She submits:

Today, I want to talk about JESUS

Because of my views on Jesus, I have had to close a Facebook group because our emotions cannot handle people who do not toe the line. I have been told not to try to sell anything on Facebook or run for political office because I have publicly condemned religion and therefore I will have no support. F.*U.*C.*K your support. Today, I want to talk about JESUS and the red letters trending on display pictures

She affirms that due to her view about Jesus; a lot of persons have threatened her as a result of her rationalising Jesus from the premise of humanism and its utilitarian value rather than from the eyes of faith and hope. Hutecheon observes that; “It is also often possible to infer from a parody text, a certain vitalizing, competitive response on the part of the encoder to the past of his art. Doing consciously what time does more slowly, parody can work to distort the shapes of art, synthesizing from them and from the present of the encoder a new form - one not burdened, but enriched, by the past” (97). Akpan is a traumatic religious patient whose religious activities on Facebook space trigger her trauma. Her narrative of 8/6/2022 is triggered by the use of the name of Jesus spelt on white background on red display picture on Facebook. Caruth observes that; “The story of trauma, then, as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality—the escape from a death, or from its referential force—rather attests to its endless impact on a life” (7). Akpan’s trauma finds expression in her deciphering opinion about religion. Akpan, through the act of autobiographical remembering, accounts for sources of her trauma. In her narrative of 6/11/2022, she recalls that:

I remember how pastors would lie about seeing Jesus and being taken to heaven and hell. And we would stare in shock. And listen with rapt attention. Lies. I remember having a dream where a man spoke with me from behind, and gave me instructions on how to solve a problem that I was facing. I was convinced that it was Jesus. Thereafter I had two dreams, one about the rapture and the other about some apocalypse. These were as recent as 2014 and 2015 respectively,

Akpan suffers from traumatic memories of the pastors’ word on being taken to heaven and hell. One could deduce the extreme joy and pain that are associated with both places and this becomes a source of fear and torture for Akpan which in turn leads to trauma as a child and still hunts her as an adult. Onuoha observe that some Nigerian pastors inflict psychological trauma on children (15). Akpan’s trauma makes her to dream dreams, which is structured closely to the narrative of the pastor and this illustrates how narratives condition the children in life. In view of her trauma as a result of the pastor’s narratives, Akpan says:

I came to Facebook to warn people. I felt like God's messenger. Tugh! Those dreams are a result of subconscious programming. There is no Jesus coming back from anywhere and no rapture. Just look at your pastors and their lives and admit to yourself that it's all a lie. I warn my friends who are still in religion to prepare for their retirement, cos this religious gaffe will soon be over. Your children will despise you for lying to them, and you may not have it good like our parents' generation, whom we still have relationships with. You will die lonely when your children realize how unwise you are.

She sees herself as a humanist preacher, informing the people that dreams are product of the subconscious. Akpan seems to suggest that the materialistic lifestyles of religious leaders indicate that Jesus is not coming anytime soon and that rapture is a tool for religious subjugation. Akpan sees her humanistic teachings as a form of liberation and she advises her friends to prepare for retirement. She encourages parents not to expose their children to teachings of hell because it will be traumatic to them and the children might not be able to forgive their parents. Akpan observe that:

Religion is a lie.

It's trauma.

Growing up in a deeply religious household is childhood trauma.

Leave your children to enjoy their lives.

It's balderdash. It's brainwashing. Its mind control. It's fear mongering

Akpan accounts for sources of her traumatic memory using childhood as a reference to the site of her childhood subjugation. She advises parents to allow their children to grow psychologically before exposing them to such narrative horror of hell. Akpan's narrative trauma is triggered by narratives of religious subjugations by other netizens which she mentioned as:

I was reminded of all the pain of religion after I read Kingsley Peter's post, and all the lies after I read Nnanna Uma's series, that both of them wrote on their individual pages earlier today. I still look back at the wasted years in anger. But I have no choice but to accept that I wasted 45 years of my life believing nonsense.

The narratives of Kingsley and Uma's Series become referential to the site of her trauma. Caruth, accounting for traumatic history, submits that; "For history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence. The indirect referentiality of history" (18). These writers' narratives become referential to Akpan's trauma. In her re-traumatized state, she says:

I am tempted to ask God to punish all the adults who lie and terrorize children with religion. They are wicked people. But where is the God though? Why can't he tell people that he is not the one who has asked these so-called men of God to defraud the poor? May all who seek find the courage to be true to themselves.

Even in her trauma, her knowledge of the Bible is still functional in the sense that she absorbs God from the actions of pastors. She further questioned the silence of God in regards to the teachings done

in his name. Akpan emphasizes new relation criteria in dealing with religious people which is premised on proof. She avers that:

Thomas in the Bible doubted Jesus and Jesus is said to have appeared to him as proof. Seek proof. Request for proof. Whatever cannot be proven is 419. As for those people who come to my page to post nonsense and say that their proof is the experience they have in their head and in their hearts, I also used to tell myself that nonsense. I spoke in tongues. Healed the sick. Held halls spell bound. It's no different from being a motivational speaker but the difference is that you use the Bible. Church is motivational speaking interlaced with lies and fear mongering. And don't tell me you are following God not man. You cannot follow a God that you cannot see. Gettat.

Akpan alludes to the Bible as a medium of liberation to those who have used the Bible to subjugate their fellow humans. She uses an agnostic approach that whatever cannot be is a fraud (419). She affirms that religious leaders use fear to hold the folks captive and that if God cannot be seen, then he cannot be followed. Akpan is of the opinion that "children of God" should not lack due to the personality of their supposed father. In her narrative of 12/10/2022, she observes that:

Each time I see a child of God having problems, I dey waka me go my corner. Make I no come put mouth for family matter. In the book of Job, when the sons of God went to meet with God, and Satan the first son went as well, God said to Satan, "See Job? Pepper him". So any time I see any of God's Children having issues, I follow another road. It must be a family issue. Either God is punishing the person or Satan, the family disciplinarian, is teaching the person good manners. Any time I see people of God having issues, I mind my business. Na dia family mata be dat.

Akpan rewrites tribulations and extends the boundary of meaning to include tribulations on Christians as a family. Akpan exaggerates the issue between Satan and God and states that she does not what to interfere in family issue. She parodies the account of Job as a means to validate her points. She informs, in her narrative of 2/10/2022 titled "SUNDAY SERMON", where she foregrounds that the issue of the world is a family one. She notes that:

Many people do not understand that Satan is the first son of God and higher in spiritual hierarchy than Jesus. This is why even when congregations have spent a trillion many hours today binding Satan, Satan cannot be bound. Have you ever wondered who keeps loosening the ropes that God's people use in binding Satan? Abi is the binding is not working?

She parodies the representation of Satan and seems to suggest that Satan is God's first son, even when the Bible says that Jesus is the first born of God's creation as indicated in Colossian 1:15-20. In Akpan perplexity, she questions a religious practice of binding Satan frequently and says; "The more you bind Satan, the more you invite problems into your lives. Be careful else you are going to annoy Satan, and when you do, he will punish you severely and there is nothing that God will do about it." She attempts to fault religious practices of binding Satan because even the Bible is clear on God's plan for Satan as recorded in Revelation 20:7-9 which is the complete destruction of Satan and the binding which religious people engage in is an attempt to alternate God's decision and that is why she said God would

not protect those who try to bind Satan. Akpan's disposition is also motivated by her pragmatic approach to issues. In her narrative of 12/10/2022 and observes that:

Everything that God promised me and did not give me, I did not die. I moved along. Created my own life and lived on my terms. Common house rent that someone promised to add 30k for you and has not added, you want to die. Die already. What are you waiting for? You sef, are you too small to be self-sufficient? You know how to have sex in different styles but you can't make money. Shame on you. She parodies her dream and her anticipation from God as promise from him. She expressed optimism and resilience for people to be courageous and face the challenges of their lives without relying on others. Hutecheon observes that; "Parody is certainly one mode of auto-referentiality..." (20). This is indicative of Akpan's art. Adiaha Akpan, from the weight of her memory, questions religious believe by attempting to invalidate the religious beliefs she was natured on during childhood and the same knowledge she had hold dear to as an adult. In her narrative of 3/4/2022, she asks:

Please can someone give me the location of Lazarus? I need to ask him a question. I mean the Lazarus who is the brother of Mary and Martha; that Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead after four days. I recall Jesus saying that those who are alive in him will never die. Please I need to locate Lazarus ASAP. I want to ask him something.

This question is to highlight that the narrative was a myth and never existed and her attempt to search for a physical location is to corroborate her indifference toward the gospel. She interprets Jesus words and through such indirection questions his death, ignoring that Jesus was referring to everlasting life. Andreas Hepp is of the opinion that; "communication is fundamental to the human construction of reality; that is, we observe "create" our social reality in multiple communicative processes" (3). Akpan, through her narrative of Jesus, communicates her changing social reality as a human being. Akpan gradually communicates her social reality through Jesus and God as a narrative motif to depict her life and stages in the development of her existence. In her narrative of 3/4/2022, she narrates the factors that necessitate her indifference toward God and her agnostic temperament. She submits that:

Today I remember a pastor of a church I used to attend when I was a Sheep. He borrowed my camera in Year 2002, lied that he was going to Dubai, went to Abuja and lodged in a hotel with women, and never returned that camera. That camera cost over \$200. His name is Frank. His church used to be somewhere around Ikot Ekpene road. I am ready to retrieve my camera now. May I not remember your matter when you think that I have forgotten.

She remembers a pastor who exploited her when she was still a "sheep". The said pastor borrowed her camera and never returned it and even the country he said he was traveling to, he did not but was at Abuja with a girl in a hotel. This experience would have demoralized Akpan and because she trusted him, his failure becomes the failure of his God. Akpan thus question actions and practices of religion through her narratives. Akpan examines the church and its practices, focusing her examination on the practices of the pastor, members and pastor's wife. In her narrative of 17/8/2022, she informs that pastor's wife is complicit in the crime committed by her husband. Akpan observes that:

One of these days, we will talk about pastors' wives. Behind every lying, corrupt, crooked pastor is a wife who is helping him to uphold his empire, working behind the scenes to quell scandals, and using manipulation and fear to hold weaklings captive. We all agree that most pastors are crooks but do not forget that most of their wives are even more crooked. They are the ones cooking the courage for him. Madam Kingdom, First Lady, the original timber and caliber. If you think that pastors are bad, wait until someone in the inner caucus tells you about their wives.

Shudders...

Akpan implicates pastors' wives as helpers, even in corruption. She informs that sometimes, pastors' wives pressure their husbands into committing crime to satisfy their needs. She observes that pastors' wives work behind to quell scandals.

In her narrative of 3/4/2022, which is subtitled; "Sunday Sermon", Akpan observes that; "I was chatting with a female cousin in her 40s who was a little concerned that in spite of her church attendance, prayers, fasting and giving in church, her prayers for a husband had not been answered." She satires religion and "god" through (auto) biographical narrative. She testifies against and faults the religious practice of her cousin, which has no positive result and this is a source of knowledge to her. This is in line with Gelfert submission that; "much of our knowledge depends on others. As social creature, we take ourselves to know a great deal about our immediate social networks..." (7). Akpan's attempt to account for her cousin's action becomes a premise for knowledge to her and reconciling her indifference toward organized religion. She goes further to observe that:

Well, the truth is that the Bible God is very specific about the people whose offerings he will not accept. If you fall into any of the following categories, all your giving has been in vain. It just might be why you and yours are still experiencing the devourer in certain aspects of your life.

- 1) You have a blemish
- 2) You are blind
- 3) You have a flat nose (African nose)
- 4) You are lame (paralyzed such that you cannot walk)
- 5) Any part of your body is superfluous (big breast and big bum bum)
- 6) You have had a fracture
- 7) You have a crooked back (scoliosis, kyphosis, or any back problem)
- 8) You are short (like me)
- 9) You have eye problems meaning you wear glasses or contact lenses

She amplifies God's law to Moses about the Israel priesthood and extends the context of the narrative by including even herself as part of the reference which the scriptures made. She validates her point by quoting "Leviticus 21 vs 17 - 20," then she adds that; "...some of you should not approach God's presence and your offering is unacceptable. It does not matter how much you love God, if your body is anyhow or you have some "kind kind" problems, I am sorry but the Kingdom of God is a kingdom without blemish." Akpan provides a realist interpretation of the scriptures far from the site of faith and

she seems to deliberately ignore the modifications Jesus introduced to the concept of salvation and approach to God. She picks at the consciousness of her generation and those who come in contact with her message. She states that:

In God's kingdom, there is no space for people who look anyhow. If you already gave today's offering, e don loss be dat. Those who lost money to other Ponzi schemes have not died, so you too will not die. Take heart

She continues to emphasize her message and likens it to offering to Ponzi schemes when she says that those who lost money to Ponzi scheme have not died. Akpan attempts a re-interpretation of the Bible and "popular" messages as deviant to such messages and religious ways of being. Akpan's indifference toward God and the Bible teaching is focused on her "misappropriation" of that system of knowledge as an alternative system of idea by extending the meaning of the idea beyond the context of faith and it's usage to encourage her fellow netizens to keep questioning the Bible and religion as a whole. In her narrative of 26/6/2022, she says:

My brothers and sisters in the Lord. Peace be unto you! Please when you get to Sunday school today, help me ask your pastor one question. In the book of Genesis, God told Adam and Eve that if they ever ate the fruit in the middle of the garden, they would surely die. The serpent came and told them to go ahead and eat the fruit. He assured them that they would not die but rather, their eyes would be opened. They ate the fruit, their eyes opened, and they did not die. Who lied? Who told the truth? Please help me ask your Sunday school teacher those questions.

Thank you!

"Pretence" seems to be a motif in Akpan's narrative where she seems to ignore the follow up information in respect to the message she attempts to pass to sway the thinking of her audience. Adam and Eve did not live up to a day in God's eyes because, as indicated in 2 Peter 3:8-9, a day is a thousand years in God's eyes and Adam and Eve actually died the day they ate the forbidden fruit and they did not live up to a day in God's eyes. Akpan, asking critical questions and sending netizens to ask their pastors certain questions in relationship to their faith and utterances made by God, is an attempt to fortify netizens to worship God from the premise of deep knowledge. Akpan straddles between agnostic and atheism, as is illustrated in her narrative of 27/7/2022, and in this, she attempts to provide an alternative interpretation to the scriptures. She asks questions as a means of moving her fellow humans to think. She asks:

Did Jesus ever mention what happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? During a sermon? As a passing remark? On the cross? After resurrection? If Jesus came to die for the sin of the world that was first committed by Adam and Eve and inherited by sinners, why did he not at least reference the sin for which he came to die? Not even once. Think about this. Take as much time as you need.

Actually Jesus mentioned Adam and Eve. For instance, in Matthew 19:4, Jesus says: "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female" and this is in reference to Genesis 1:27. Jesus was aware of Adam and Eve but seemed not to consider them as a focus of his

message and only made reference to them in the issue of divorce. There are constant references to the interchangeable oneness in condemnation and salvation in a correlation between Adam and Eve, as highlighted in Romans 5:12. She highlights the effect of her message from the testimony of others when, in her narrative of 28/6/2022, she submits that:

Him: You are threatening my faith in God.

Me: Your God does not exist. If He did, you would have sufficient evidence of him as to not let you be threatened by my knowledge of god.

You know the sun exists. Why?

You do not know that your God exists because....

You know I exist.

Your God?

If I tell you that I live in Canada, you can only believe, except you have come to my house in Canada and seen me, then you will know.^[66]

Akpan, through her atheistic and agnostic submissions, provide a medium for netizens to test their convictions of their faith. She seems to ignore how the existence of God is implicated in the material of her reference, which is that in the beginning God created man in his image. Akpan, through her message and the narratives of others, who considers their faith threatened by her writings, indicate that they have no personal basis for their faith and as such, their convictions are threatened by alternate understanding of their faith. She uses her location and confirmation of living in Canada as a premise for the need to identify her existence and, by extension, the non-existence of God. She continues:

Until then, you can only believe and should you talk about my physical location, you speak without knowing for sure. This is why you know the sun and believe in God. When people are susceptible to believing without proof, they encourage the proliferation of advanced fee fraud schemes. Why do apparently educated people get scammed? They believe without evidence. Knowledge is superior to belief and more effective. When faced with a choice between knowledge and belief, I choose knowledge. Once I believed...

Today I know and now, I AM FREE.

She requests for physical evidence as proof of faith which the universe provides in abundance. However, what Akpan attempts to do is for believers to have reasons for their faith. She refers to herself as someone who once believed and now she is free. The issue of her religious belief is a site of trauma for Akpan and she searches for a certain kind of healing through telling and retelling as a medium of confronting this traumatic religious experiences. Caruth is of the opinion that; "Through the notion of trauma, ...we can understand that a rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting history to arise where immediate understanding may not" (11). Akpan, advocating through critical questions, stirs the thinking of netizens to try and rationalise their faith through reasoning. The silence, which is associated with how Adiaha was raised, is a source of her trauma and this trauma takes form in her questioning and

rewriting the message of the scriptures as a search for healing. She corroborates the foregoing in her narrative of 28/7/2022 and avers that:

When you are an honest person, it's difficult to be fooled for long. When you are factual and accept what you see, it is difficult to be fooled for long. I was raised not to question religious practices and got rebuked for daring to ask who created God. If God created all things, then someone or something must have created God. Yes, man created God to explain away the things he could not understand.

Akpan was suppressed as a child, and her questions about God became a source of trauma for her. The constant silencing by those who raised her is a form of oppression. Kennan Ferguson observes that; "Insofar as communication between people is popularly considered, the acme of human endeavours and silence is seen as the failure of communication, to be silent means to betray the goals and hopes of humanity, to renounce ties with fellow citizens" (3). Akpan's existence is suppressed and her thoughts seem to be constant war with her and as she grows to a level of independence, she uses her questions, doubts and anticipation as premise of her socialization with her fellow netizens. She observes that:

Due to her childhood, which is steeped in the suppression of her questions, she constitutes God from the premise of such suppression. She affirms that God is the end of knowledge and the beginning of ignorance, which is a rewriting of the concept of God as the beginning of wisdom. Hutecheon notes that: "Parody, therefore, is both a personal act of supersession and an inscription of literary-historical continuity" (34). Akpan's narrative is double continuity from the Bible, personal grief in interaction with organized religion. The place of personal grief and deep knowledge also engages certain religious practices that she finds abhorrent. In her narrative of 24/7/2022, she examines peoples' religious practices in a social circle. She asks:

When people say, "I bless God" or "We bless God", what exactly do they mean? How are they the ones who are blessing their God? Well, I guess they are right because if they give money to their God and help to keep him relevant by their actions, they are blessing him. The interesting thing about God is how he minds his business and ignores all of them. They claim that he is blessing them but....oh well. How is it a blessing if one works for it?

She wonders in her rhetorical question why people bless God and still proceeds to answer her questions, explicating the giving and actions of Christian giving as a form of blessing to God. She observes that God minds his business and ignores humans. She seems to sound like theist or someone who has certain knowledge about God. She continues and states that:

When he does not bless them as anticipated, they turn around and bless him. Chuckle. God and his people are very interesting but I truly love them. I have a lot of admiration for this God. He is quite popular without ever needing to say a word. Some sort of Mr Bean and this is why I study him. There is a lot to be learned from his *modus operandi*. Theists will praise and worship.....no comments. Atheists will insult and derideno comments. Regardless of how much people complain, cry, shout, curse, or bless him, he never responds. He simply acts like Buhari. Oblivious to all the hanky panky.

HAPPY SUNDAY!

She seems to amuse herself with certain knowledge of the reality of Christians which she is a part of. Akpan likens God to Buhari as a certain metaphor for indifference toward the plight of his citizens. Akpan personifies God in Buhari as a God who is oblivious of the sufferings of his children.

Christianity requires following and living according to the laws of Christ. However, when one is free from such moral and religious obligation, such one is free to act in the way he or she wants and this is seen in Akpan's narrative of 19/7/2022 when she states that:

One thing that leaving the church will do for you is reduce how many people have the opportunity to beg you for money. Church people can beg. Sigh. They are taught to beg. An adult who should be working will wake up and beg his unseen father, "Give us this day our daily bread". Just imagine the indignity. The pastors have mastered the art of begging and trained their sheep as well.

Akpan uses her page as a tool for religious criticism of Christian practices as well as questioning the actions of religious leaders. She rewrites her knowledge about God and Christ's teachings on reliance on his father, God. She sees this act of asking for sustenance from God as a throwback to how pastors beg and have also taught their followers to beg. She continues:

Pastor will encourage testimonies so that he knows who has the means and he will calculatingly put you on a committee that drains your purse. (...). The trauma is real. When church people say that they are just checking on me, my heart drops. It most often ends with a sob story. I am yet to recover from church trauma. But I am thankful that I ran away with my life intact, and even more thankful, that my children will never again experience the abuse that is called church. Sigh.

Akpan frowns at religious activities and the exploitation of members. She critiques the actions of pastors who see their rich members as their means for survival. She also frowns at members who run after rich members for assistance and this is a source for trauma to her which she assumes she has escaped from, but it still finds expression in her (auto) biographical representations of reality. Akpan criticizes religious practices and rewriting religious beliefs and actions as a premise for the interrogation of reality.

Conclusion

Adiaha Akpan is a humanist agnostic writer who composes her narrative through parody of the scriptures. Through agnostic humanist engagement of the scriptures, she engages in a literary continuity of the scriptures and her personal experiences which are a product of childhood traumatic memory and her interaction with organised religion. Akpan's work is an attempt to understand life and the search for meaning in life through art and rational thinking since faith seems to have failed her. Akpan's narrative illustrates the nature of trauma that cannot be healed! It changes form and the agnostic parodical narrative becomes a vent in becoming art. Her engagement with her trauma with religion makes it difficult for her to heal from trauma because art nurtures traumatic memories in the recollected process. In examining Akpan's Facebook narratives, this study reveals the intricate interplay of creativity and self-reflectivity within her agnostic construction of God and personal realities. Through her unique use

of parody and autobiographical memory, Akpan navigates the complexities of her traumatic experiences with organized religion, ultimately seeking to reconstruct her identity and beliefs. The findings indicate that Akpan's narratives serve as a means of catharsis, allowing her to confront and articulate her doubts and disillusionments with traditional religious practices. By engaging with themes of trauma, faith, and humanism, she not only critiques the rigidity of religious dogma but also invites her audience to reflect on their own beliefs. Her work transcends mere storytelling; it becomes a vehicle for questioning and redefining the relationship between the self and the divine. Moreover, Akpan's creative expressions challenge the prevailing narratives imposed by organized religion, asserting the validity of personal experience and individual interpretation. This study underscores the importance of recognizing the artistic dimensions of Akpan's work, as it encapsulates a broader discourse on faith, identity, and the quest for authenticity in a world often dominated by unyielding religious conventions. Ultimately, Adiah Akpan's narratives exemplify a profound journey of self-discovery and resilience, illustrating how creativity can emerge from the depths of trauma and serve as a powerful tool for personal and communal reflection. Through her lens, we are reminded that the exploration of faith and self is not a linear path but a complex, multifaceted journey that can lead to new understandings and reconciliations with one's past.

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