

(UN) CONTINUITY IN AFRICAN LITERATURE: FACEBOOK MEMOIR,  
SUICIDE AS ESCAPE IN AKACHI'S *SIXTEEN NOTES ON HOW TO END A LIFE*

BY

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Facebook nonfictional creative of Chukwuemeka Akachi discontinues and continues our perception of autobiography in the twenty first century. Depression is a clinical condition if not diagnosed on time, could lead to suicide. This paper, through application of Psychoanalytic and Trauma theories, observes that suicide is a product of accumulated memories that find meaning in individual memory, resulting in self-help. This paper observes that, mental illness is influenced by self-perception of Akachi's memory in relation to his identity: economic, cultural and socio-political being as received by others and self. It submits that suicide is a burden of memory, which either makes the individual or gradually leads the individual to end the self, thereby ending the sufferings. My findings show that social media space, through re-domestication of the space and experience, provides the space for continuous imagining of self and accounts for immediate and remote causes of trauma, as it is illustrated in Akachi's Facebook page. Chukwuemeka Akachi's constant posting about depression on his Facebook page and his *Sixteen Notes On How To End A Life*, which was written by him few months before the author committed suicide, is instructive on the emergent form of social media autobiography. This paper concludes that memory is identity creation and the defining characteristic of Facebook autobiography and the sustenance of self in the material world.

**Keywords:** Trauma, Memory, Self, Depression, Suicide, Social Media, Literature

## INTRODUCTION

This work focuses on accounting for the ever-expanding nature of African Literature and how Social Media and technology is inducing newer classification within the structure of generic perception of genres. It adopts Akachi's *Sixteen Notes On How To End A Life* to illustrate the foregoing and to account for how autobiography and trauma affects identity creation leading to suicide. Autobiographical writers on social media are collaborating with digital apps in creating compositions that are realized in creative clicking of human memory and identity into the social media platforms. Facebook autobiography is a form of African digital based literature, which manipulates the resources and ecology of social media platforms through creative clicking of the individuals on their pages. In this way Facebook becomes a site for identity creation, which houses various literary temperaments that are products of the writer's creative imagination. The foregoing is in line with Nathaniel and Ekpo's submission that, "Identity formation is a continuous task"(41), and this is implicated in Akachi's continuous creation of his abuse and subjugation in *Sixteen Notes On How To End A Life*. As such, Facebook becomes a site that is doubly re-appropriated as a creative platform for the autobiographer writer and a text for the literary critic. Like print, Akachi appropriates his social media space to carry the weight of his mental illness. Akachi perceives his Facebook page as a journal, which at the point of death creatively inks his memory and his identity perception on his personal platform. He notes:

I lie on the bed and let the rumble in my stomach continue. This is going

to be the last attempt. This will be a long night. It has been an hour since

I left the therapist's office, and I'm spoon-feeding this story to my journal.

No one holds my pain more than he does. When I sleep, I'm not going

to wake up again. We are in a long-term relationship.

Consequently, Akachi's Facebook page becomes an extension of imagined self as identity creation of depression and trauma. Suicide creativity and the enactment of suicide by the individual is a referent to memory and a means of trying to unburden self of the stifling effects of memory. And this is in line with Cathy Caruth's submission in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* that, "traumatic neurosis"—emerges as the unwitting reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind"(2). Akachi is in tune with the foregoing thus, "Memories are lonely horse riders. They never stay too long in a new town. They are always on the road. I'm learning to love them without getting committed." And memory that is part of a changing identity does not go ahead either; they take new forms in their new town within the psychic of the narrator. Akachi's *Sixteen Notes On How To End A Life* is a reenactment of unwitting memory. Suicide literature is an illustration of how gradually the body dies from memory and mental thought before the final death, an escaping from the actual self. The autobiographer submits that, "Goodnight therapist, filling station attendant, woman on the bus, sister, cousin, mum, dad, Onyinye. I forgive you. I'm the sin here. I'm unforgiveable." Caruth's seems to affirm the foregoing when she submits that, "...literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing (3). And this is implicated in Akachi's plight, thus:

My depression eats me patiently and washes me down with the sound  
of the silence in my bedroom. This is how I learn that when you stretch  
your body to occupy spaces, it weaves itself into a form of its own,  
another excuse to feel smaller each time you climb into your bed. Today I  
came back home with a belly drenched in liters of petrol I forced down  
my throat. This story will never end, but it does have a beginning.

Akachi comes to a new knowing, which is a product of his personal identity perception which traumatizes him and sometimes he gets to the stage of unknowing when depression "weaves itself into a form of its own" and this stifles him. Suicide occurs as a result of the suppressing effect of memory in the mind of the victim and death is an escape for

those who are depressed by the reality of their memories. This is chronicled in Akachi's submission that, "I'm ready to dream myself into a shiny casket" and this is an attempt to escape from memory. Goffman reaffirms the foregoing thus, that individual introduction guide and create certain image in which others assess themselves and become aware of themselves" (40). And this is a reflection on the Facebook page of Chukwuemeka Akachi as a form of identity creation. Thus, the advancement in technology is expanding our perception of knowledge to accommodate what is produced and consumed in social media spaces as literature. Starting from Pius Adesanmi and Pa Ikhide as public intellectuals who weaponize the social media as a virtual site for social criticism and the engagement of Nigerians on political issues, some Nigerian writers are re-domesticating the social media sites to carry the burden of their creative ingenuity. The social media's creative composition, which exists in a symbiotic relationship between the digital environment and creative composition, expands our understanding of what literature and book represent. It resists our idea of African Literature as a reflection of the binary of oral and print. Digital literature in various forms either in social media, coding forms or blogs is inserting itself into the definition of African Literature in the twenty first century.

### **FACEBOOK POSTS AS LITERATURE**

Facebook-autobiography like print literature is dependent on the artistic re-domestication of creative clicking of writers to carry the weight of their experience. The foregoing is illustrated in Akachi's acknowledgement of the ever presence of trauma as an identity, thus:

Death is a safe pair whispering my name, and I draw closer every day. A mere therapist's question can't make me betray his trust. My memory will never stick. She might just knit silently for two months till the grief slips through her needle. My father would just grunt for a week and go back to peeling avocados, with the same kitchen knife that flirted with my shirt buttons. My sister never cries. Every time I walk out of my bedroom I am aware that I'm an unforgivable sin. People like me shouldn't be allowed to walk free with all the monsters our depression carves into our brains. The attendant watched a sin walk

free and did nothing about it. My mother, well, will certainly cry.

Consequently, the Facebook autobiography of Chukwuemeka Akachi becomes a site for the depiction of his identity and the imagining of his family reactions in his premeditated suicide. Facebook autobiography is a creative imagining of human and inanimate condition for the purpose of entertaining, informing and instructing the rational mind. Facebook functions within that scope through the artist's re-appropriation of this space as canon like print to carry entertaining ideas of creativity with certain plot structures that are blends of the oral and print with the nuances of the digital environment. This is replicated in Daniel Haruna, Blezzed Abraham and Chukwuemeka Akachi's Facebook pages as fragmented collections of emerging autobiographies. The literary temperament of a writer determines the weight of the writer's social vision as indicative of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Writers in Politics*. This is implicated in Akachi's creative temperament when he submits that, "Why can't anyone see my mark? I never belonged here. I'm still too young to understand anything. The boy that watched kitchen knife flirt with his buttons and said nothing still lives here. For some reason, the knife has not stopped flirt with me." Chukwuemeka Akachi's Facebook page becomes a book for the interrogation of self, depression, and identity construction of what actually led to his committing suicide as reflected in the conscious creative nonfiction on his page that are influenced by his unconscious by extension makes the Facebook app an anthology of books. This is affirmed by George Yancy and Susan Hadley in their book *Narrative Identities: Psychologists Engaged in Self-Construction* when they submit that, "Psychologists are known for the work they do exploring the lives of others. They help to weave and reweave meaning in the lines of individuals whose lives have been fractured in some way. This process of weaving is a co-authored journey, of shared meaning, shared discoursed, and shared insight" (9). Akachi, through creative reweaving of his life, depicts his fractured life and shared experiences, which traumatize him and dent his identity to recreate his psychological identities. Social Media Autobiographical narratives are reconstructions of self and identity through the aids of memory recollection. Akachi's recollections of his memory and identity function in two strands as a collective memory or individual memory that is re-domesticated based on the intention of the

autobiographer. This is affirmed by Alice Godfred, thus, “autobiographical act of working and publishing their works as a part of personal identity building...(29) writing is identity formation and in Akachi’s case from the pool of traumatic memory. Dagmara Drewnick affirms the concept of the symbiotic relationship of the fluidity of spaces thus: “The Interplay between personal sphere and the socio-historical panoramic view is often a foundation for memoirs and other life writing genres”(93) which autobiography is part of.

Akachi, through his psychobiography, chronicles his struggles with depression and resists and accept certain identities that were created through his interaction and reaction by his family. Caruth observes the implicating effect of peoples’ history, “...that history, like trauma, is never simply one’s own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other’s traumas” (24). However, Akachi’s history and trauma is his and they are double expressions as they are implicated in his existence. The writer thus through his creative clicking, becomes creative nonfictional artist in his guise and human by extension, in his distancing of self in his narrative. Freud is of the view that, “...the conscious and the unconscious are part of the same psyche, the unconscious with its hidden desire and repressed wishes continues to affect the conscious in the form of inferiority feelings, guilt, irrational thoughts and feelings, and dreams and nightmares” (153). This unconscious in Akachi’s case keeps returning and it influences his art greatly to the extent that “suicide’ becomes his art’s focus. The autobiographer acknowledges thus:

A moth will always dance to flames. I tried petrol because kerosene didn’t work out the last time. I threw up in my bedroom and the whole plan was gone. I was in second year then. Death is a safe pair of hands whispering my name, and I draw closer every day. A mere therapist’s questions can’t make me betray this trust. My memory will never stick. She might just knit silently for two. Months still silently for two months till the grief slips through her needle. My father would grunt for a week and go back to peeling avocados, with the same

kitchen knife that flirted with my shirt buttons.

Akachi in almost all his posts on Facebook struggles to live and advance the survival of those who suffer depression with the existence of three dots as a reflection of the constant survival battles of these persons with a certain form of mental illness in the society. Facebook is a posthumous center of human memory and composition. Facebook keeps reminding all in the friend list of a particular artist and precisely Chukwuemeka Akachi about his birthday and turned the deceased page as a memorial of him. Chukwuemeka Akachi's Facebook page becomes a focused literary nonfiction composition that is varied in size depending on the technological device used in accessing it and having creative nonfictions that are thematically connected by varied presentations. In his final nonfictional post titled *Suicide Note* on his Facebook-autobiographical page, he wrote: "Forgive me. In case you are the one who found the body, I am really sorry. It had to be someone, you know. I have chosen Jo Nketaih's poem as my suicide note: "They said you came looking for me. I didn't drown; I was the water." Where do atheist go when they die? Lol. Amen." The foregoing is his final perception of his identity and the final silencing of trauma. Facebook is a netizens' society that houses the functionality of human, social and official activities in the virtual space through Internet connectivity. Technology is the enabler that propels the private into the public space such as mental health to the extent that the individual seeks understanding of his or her plight and dies at the failure of the society to pay attention to the seriousness of such poetic fiction, which the persona might have presented as simply a sole product of art. This is affirmed in Akachi's *May 12, 2019 at 9:15Am*, which functions as title of the piece and date of publication of the autobiographical entering, he says: "My mental health has been on life support now. Thanks to those who call. Text. Visit. Speak to me. May we always remember. May we never forget. You may have added a few hours, months or days to my time here. But you know life support is expensive right? Thanks for trying. Amen." This is his appreciation before his actual suicide as a result of his traumatic experience. As Jeffrey A. Kotter in *Divine Madness* highlights that most English writers did suffer from the heavy burden of depression and this chronicles in the submission of Achebe when he postulates that there is a thin line between madness and creativity, and at the point of

depression, it is considered as creativity. The chapbooks which are housed in blogs and social media spaces is a reflection of the advancement in technology and a process of mapping the private spaces into the public without any clearly drawn lines of the demarcation of these spaces. This is clearly illustrated by the Chukwuemeka Akachi's poetic memoir of *Sixteen Notes On How To End A Life, Suicide Note, Dear Self, etc.* Technology affects the production and reception of creative nonfictional compositions by netizens in the digital spaces. It is an indication through which their composition and their traumatic autobiographical muse would possess and illuminate their mental state while some others actually lived such muse, as it is indicative of Akachi's perception of his identity which stifles him. Trauma theory is an offshoot of Freud's psychoanalysis theory, which is hinged on the concept of the return of the unconscious, which is motivated, by loss and rejection experienced by an individual. It is based on the structure of the return of the unconscious that Caruth developed her concept of trauma theory in which she refers to trauma as, "...understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (4). The autobiographical persona decides to escape the mind through suicide, as is illustrated by Akachi's actual suicide and in most of his autobiographer entering, Akachi accounts for why many Nigerians choose suicide as an alternative method of escape from trauma that actually stifles their existence and sometimes defend the actions of suicide victims.

### **WRITING SELF INTO DEATH**

The private space is symbolic of the shared public spaces to the extent that those who have the power of agency use the social media platforms to represent the plight of the individual as a metaphoric depiction of the collective. Dagmara Drewniak collaborated the foregoing thus, "The interplay between personal sphere and the socio-historical panoramic view is often a foundation for memoirs and other life writing genres" (93). Akachi alludes to this in his autobiographer narrative thus:

I was sitting on my father's lap in the seat closet to the window.  
We: my cousin and I used to visit my dad Nsukka from time to time,  
but that was, visits. I had already made home out of a strand land.



My sister would have slapped me if she heard me call Wukari my home.

This time, I was supposed to stay in Nsukka for a longer time. Maybe forever. I'm not sure how I felt about that. I hummed the few Hausa songs I learnt till I got tired.

Identity creation on Facebook and within the autobiographer text is done amidst other social activities and the construct of oppression by her sister having the physical power to suppress his desire creates innate fear in him. Romanus Aboh observes that, "...the way we see ourselves does not always align with the way others see us" (108). And this is clearly captured in Akachis *Sixteen Notes How To End A Life* and in his autobiographical Facebook page. How he is perceived and he perceives himself, is quite different and this difference in identity is mediated through gender and he is suppressed by the patriarchal structure in his home. The foregoing is illustrated by the constant terror he faces at home which became a factor for his depression and later suicide because of the ways his mother and sister consistently construct him. Thus:

One night, my elder sister urinated in my bathing water and my mum made me use it. My sister had beaten me while we were alone at home. I don't really know why she did that. I managed to run the few blocks it took to reach the shop. I cried so hard that my father got me a bottle of Sprite, and handed me some slice of bread. At night, my sister struck. My mother didn't believe me.

... She made me bathe with the water. I remember crying, I remember the water and my sister's urine washing the tears in joint mockery.

His sister constantly abuses him because she has the physical and economic power over him and his sister is supported by their mother who occupies a form of gender power steeped in the economic, political, social and religious she uses in dictating his identity perception. This is in line with Okereke and Egbung's submission that, gender impacts on

the consciousness, choices and responses of the male and female characters...(2058). And this is implicated in how Akachi's mother responded to his subjugation in the hands of his sister. Onyinye and her mother's action reverses what Okereke and Egbung notes that, "...African culture discriminate against female child in favour of the boy child in the execution of these rights in the day to day affairs of the family" (2058). In Akachi's case, matriarchy, which is also, African structure discriminates against the boy child to the extent that he is deprived of voice and space in the family union. The birth subjugation of Akachi also negates Gloria Worugji's submission in her paper "Marginalization of Women in John Pepper Clark's *The Wives Revolt*" that male are preferred as a matter of birth right priority (25) what Akachi's case illustrates is how gender does preferring rather than the culture and what feminist scholars mentioned above failed to understand is that feminism seems to do to the male child what patriarchy did to the female child in the attempt of female scholars to reconstruct and interrogate identities in literature. As a result of Akachi's subjugation, his memory which has become his identity keeps recurring and reordering his identity in his relationship with others and this is reflected his constant saying, "I remember" and he went further to say that:

Life still pees in every bucket of water I use. My bathroom walls  
look helplessly as the liquid mockery trickles into my mouth. My  
bathing water is always warm. At twenty, there is not much  
difference between now, and the night my sister peed in my bathing  
water. I'm still the boy who doesn't know how to shout at bullies.  
Who still falls for every girl in the playground (she doesn't even have  
to lie on the a pew). Who still floats into spaces without occupying  
them. Who leaves no traces. Who is mute. My bed feels smaller each  
time I lie on it. The boy never grew up.

His subjugation becomes a definite definition of his identity. The digital writers, like the print writers, who also appropriate the digital space to announce their sojourn into the

world of the beyond chronicles the sort of experiences of the collective in African society. The writing of one's self as preparation for transition into the world beyond is becoming an art practiced by most creative writers of African descent. In Okigbo's *Labyrinth*, he wrote "This is final" and it was prophetically the last of his poetic composition published before his death. Ikogue Oke knowing that he would leave this material world wrote on his Facebook page his epitaph "Here lies a man who loved virtue and art. And gave to both his fortunes and his heart. Ikeogu Oke Kalu (1967-2018). This is reflective of Pius Adesanmi who had some premonition of his anticipated end, maybe not clearly his sojourn, but as a public intellectual announced his demise before he boarded the flight thus: "If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me- Psalm 139:9-10", Adesanmi expressed his faith in the resurrection hope and Facebook becomes a platform for the preservation of his epitaph and other memories that were erected for them. Akachi kept announcing his demise in his autobiographical entering titled *April 15, 2019 at 7:04PM* and *April 12, 2019 at 9:35PM* thus, "What is dead may never die." And "You tell him about one of your attempts. The pity in his eyes adjusts its tie as he tells you, "You don't know how to die, Akachi." Now you want to learn how to. At all cost." This is constant announcing of his dying. In his entering titled *April 9, 2019 at 2:11PM* "I am still tasting myself". Then he says again in *April 5, 2019 at 5:57Am* "Dear Everything, I am afraid of dying, I am afraid of living." This depicts the depth of Akachi's trauma. The Nigerian social media poets and autobiographer writers are employing the digital platforms as a means to write their epigraph before their death and to chronicle stages in their depression. Akachi, before his death had creatively played with his attempt to end his life. In *Dear Self*, he accounts for his unconscious attempt to end his life as a result of his trauma. Caruth, in respect to trauma observes thus: "...that the traumatic nature of history means that events are only historical to the extent that they implicate others" (19). Akachi's historical trauma, which is resident in his childhood memory of his sister urinating into his bathing water, enlivens other traumatic experiences in his life. However, he still stomached the will to live when his psychic interacted with himself, thus:

I never imagined you going this far and it's been years since you begged

for yourself in front of the mirror to stay alive. You have been brutally damaged then lost yourself when you tried to love the world. Right now, I want you to know that I forgive you for being so cruel to yourself that you have forgotten how important self love is. I forgive you for all those years when demons tried to take over and started blaming yourself for even existing.

Akachi, through psychobiography, gradually accounts for the causes of his depression, which he hinged on his attempt to love the world more than he loved himself. Akachi, through psychoanalyzing himself hoped to save his being but the recurrent nature of the unconscious frequently takes hold on him and, this is emphatic of Caruth's trauma theory concept that, "...so trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance— returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4). Akachi is hunted by his memory even in his constant appeal to it for his survival still his existence is threatened by the missing void of the unreciprocated. Through his conscious actions, he appeals for his actions to himself, thus:

I forgive you for the leaving the suicide notes on your mom's table and your best friend's bed before running away to an abandoned place. I forgive you for giving yourself away just to fill other people's emptiness. And I forgive you for isolating yourself from everyone else who really cared because you were so scared of being left alone all again and you thought it'd be better to shut them out.

Akachi kept speaking to his self consciously to suppress the unconscious that influenced almost all his actions on suicide but Akachi's wound was still fresh in the sense that as he struggled to survive the wounded memory of him being neglected, he bleeds gradually to his death. In one of his creative nonfiction posts he says: "Dear everything, I am afraid of dying. I'm afraid of living." Akachi is caught within his psyche to the extent that life is a complicated war that ranges in his psychic. The protagonist's experience is in line with Caruth's submission 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). And this endless

impact is reflected in Akachi's life as he creatively and physically tries to survive his traumatic experiences. Akachi affirms Caruth's foregoing postulation when he submits that: "My mental health has been on life support for a while now. (...) May we always remember. May we never forget. You may have added a few hours, months or days to my time here. But you know life support is expensive right?" Even an attempt to preserve that life of the protagonist, which he consciously acknowledges, the impact of the unconscious and his memory bleeds him to the point of death.

In *Sixteen Notes On How To End A Life*, Akachi employs rhetorical questions as a means to explore the content of his traumatized memory that progressively took hold of his material body and his psyche. He envisaged that he was speaking to a therapist trying to draw out the content of his trauma and this he did voluntarily on his Facebook page but the audience did not see his art as an extension of him until he committed suicide. He asked:

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"Sir, when was the last time you thought of killing yourself?"

"now"

"Do you want to talk about it?"

"Can we reschedule?"

The foregoing illustrates the content of a traumatized individual performing his own therapeutic sessions in the presence of his audience on the social media platform in a form of art and hoping that the society would see his presentation of what it is which is beyond art but an extension of his inner trauma. In other words, an attempt to find healing through the duality of self fails given the cyclic nature of the trauma experienced. And this is realized in the persona of the therapist created in the text. Suicide is not an easy choice to make even when it is a premeditated form of self-murder as seen when Akachi accounts for his first attempt to take his life. Caruth observes that, "...the history of the traumatized individual, is nothing other than the determined repetition of the event of destruction" (63). Akachi avoids and repeats the traumatized memory of his existence and unconsciously relives them in his attempt to forget them. Trauma is a term in the

psychic world of individuals. For some, it heals while for others they struggle with it for life and sometimes successfully end their lives. Some psychic injuries hit hard so much so that the “shock” leaves the victim in the grips of fear. It is worthy of note that only the brave attempt suicide, and the bravest of all actually pull through. Akachi was scared of death but his memory continuously stifled him. Caruth observes 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” (18). The protagonist acknowledges the foregoing when he says:

Dear everything,  
I'm afraid of dying.  
I'm afraid of living.

Death and life were continuous proceeds in the psychic planes of the protagonist so much so that ‘death’ is used in continuous present tense like “living” and as identity depiction. Dying was a gradual process in the psyche of the protagonist that he continuously relieved the experiences of death like it is reminisce of his life. *Sixteen Notes on How to End a Life* illustrates that Akachi did not commit suicide because it was convenient for him or an easy feat. In fact, his remarks corroborate the foregoing thus: “The first time I ever thought of killing myself was in Nsukka...when I held the knife in our bedroom in Nsukka”. He goes on to tell us that he “repeated it every day,” because “moths have no choice then to flirt with flames”. In *Sixteen Notes on how to end a life* the protagonist, who also doubles as the author, suffers from series of psychic injuries to the extent that he needed to be free from the body that bears the brunt of these wounds. The author described “memories” as “lonely horse riders” who “are always on the road” and as such has no need to commit to them. The weight of loneliness is so much on him and all he remembers is “floating in and out of places.” Akachi feels alienated from this world and he only remembers ‘being at... places’ and was “everywhere” his “mum thought” he was “supposed to be, without leaving a trace.” The protagonist’s immediate environment does not give him a chance to influence the happenings in his environment. This further inflicts on the injury that already exists. Besides that, his sister Onyinye emasculates him. This further pushes him down the dark alley of trauma. In “note 5” he states that, “Once,

she suggested we play father and mother, and then chose to be father.” This surprise turn of events ensured that, “the boy never grew up” from his traumatic memory due to his sister’s negation of gender specific roles. Chima E. Onuekwe and Chinyere L. Okam observe that, “A gender role is a set of behavior, attitudes, and personality characteristics expected and encouraged of a person based on his or her sex” (37). And this is the gender role his sister review and enforced on Akachi’s identity. Furthermore, disillusionment hits him hard. He is further launched into the abyss of trauma because he had to unlearn all that he was taught. He was taught to laugh, to “laugh in-between the lines, in monosyllables that come off neat and harmless.” This is done in such a way that his sister attempts to reconstruct gender roles as product of identity creation in consonants to the submission of Onuekwe and Okam in their paper “Gender Disparity and Psycho-Sexual: An X-ray of How Imbalance is Perpetuated by Sexual Behaviour” that, “Sexual divisions of power acknowledges gender power inequities ascribing to man a sense of superiority, risk taking potentialities and intelligence” (37) and this is what Onyinye negates thereby denying Akachi of his identity as a man. He realizes that in the world he has to teach himself “peace” and, everything he was taught because he “wouldn’t move to the next class” if he did not unlearn. This illustrates the troubles that ensue in his psychic that led to his being “mute”. This disillusionment stifles Akachi to the extent that he loses the will to contribute to the outcome of events and he justifies this because he feels he is “just too young.” And it illustrates powerlessness as a result of imposed identity of a child. This, he further asserts when he calls himself “an unforgiveable sin.” This depressive feeling is very strong as it is illustrated in his saying goodnight to a host of persons and blocking them from his world as a reaffirmation that he is an “unforgiveable sin”. Caruth affirms the foregoing when she submits that: “...the repetition of the traumatic experience in the flashback can itself be re-traumatizing; if not life-threatening, it is at least threatening to the chemical structure of the brain and can ultimately lead to deterioration” (63). Akachi is constantly re-traumatizing even in his attempt to recreate the historical contents of his trauma on Facebook.

**STYLISTICS DIMENSIONS IN *SIXTEEN NOTES ON HOW TO END A LIFE AND SUICIDE NOTES***

## **LANGUAGE USE**

In *Sixteen notes on how to end a life*, there is media mediated use of language, which is influenced by the nuances of “conventional” social media creative use of language. And it is realized in the blended usage of words, numbers as semantic structure of the emerging characteristics of new literacy. The foregoing illustrates one of the characteristics of social media language use as in most cases having numbers, letters and emojis as words of sentence structure.

## **THE USE OF FIRST PERSON POINT OF VIEW**

In Akachi’s work, depression is a function of nostalgia that threatens to end the life of his protagonist. The use of first person point of view as a means of self-expression and it individuals the idea of depression. He makes use of certain kind of language to depict the idea of depression. 6 – this expression is used to metaphorize the poet persona’s affinity with death. To the persona, death is an escapist method that frees him from the bondage of his own memory. Akachi domesticates memory as a recurrent motif in literature in his work to show the link between the protagonist’s past and present. The protagonist is trapped in his own memory; the persona is psychologically in his own space and left to drown. Akachi’s work is characterized by lacerations, which do not only perform aesthetic functions but also go a long way to show the perforations in the protagonist’s thought patterns. The protagonist is not a unified whole but one who has been dented by his childhood memories. For the protagonist, these memories are things he cannot live with and suicide invariably becomes his only method of self-care.

## **PAIN AS A CREATIVE METAPHOR**

The protagonist never seems to have a connection with the physical world except on the altar of pain. The idea of death stems from the protagonist’s inability to shape his pain into meaningful use. Pain for him is a product of memories, of the time when his sister “peed into his bathing water and life too” and the protagonist feels that life is also peeing into his bathing water. So memory, although a product of the past is a recurrent phenomenon in the life of the protagonist, this pain that tries to drown or put correctly,



drowns the protagonist, leads him to a path of depression and death. Caruth observes that: “The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all” (17). She seems to be suggesting that trauma hardly wears off and it constantly finds its existence in its forgetting as illustrated in the case of Akachi. The protagonist sees himself as an “unforgivable sin” and the use of this primarily un-derived form “sin” psychologically joins the protagonist to the idea of his pain. The clamor for death becomes a product of pain. The protagonist talks about killing himself when the narrative is almost drifting to a close. The first time he thinks of killing himself, he says, is in Nsukka. For him, Nsukka represents all the things that separated him from his childhood memory and here, he could not find himself. It is as a result of this that he says, “I always let the knife dance around my shirt for a while before I put it back. I repeated it every day. I cannot remember when I stopped trying, but I remembered not telling anyone, including myself.” The protagonist also is involved in an internal war where he is not one with himself. Through numerical presentation, the protagonist illustrates the failure of the society to pay attention to his existence or actually see him. The author affirms the foregoing when he asserts that, “on the bus, the woman next to me didn’t seem to notice I probably wouldn’t be alive in the next thirty minutes” because Akachi feels he should be “visibly marked,” that “everyone would notice.” Freud has identified that what leads to neurosis are unexpressed feelings lodged in the unconscious and this is illustrated in the life of the neglected protagonist. He lacks love and attention and hopes that by wearing the fragrance of death, people would smell that he exists and possibly care and show him some love and attention. He lets out his frustration when he says, “I thought he would see the sign. He is marked, the sign should say. Nobody saw it. I was dizzy and everything was becoming fizzy. How could they not see that? God should have sent somebody...what kind of God lets a human time bomb... walk into a bus and sit next to a woman thinking of dinner?” Akachi’s invisibility among the human race complicates his trauma. Akachi accepts the negligence on the part of the human race but least expects it from “God.” This negligence from “God” further throws him back into trauma; he sought refuge in a “god” that turned his back on him. Trauma is a psychic wound and a wound that can heal if properly treated. However, when fresh wound is hit

and pain is inflicted on it, the wound grows and sanity bleeds out seeking escape and at some point, even the strongest of men escape from the body and memories carrying such wounds through suicide. The awakening of the unconscious triggers the memory of trauma for an undiagnosed patient in the sense that even the simple event of Akachi's father's visit was battering to his memory. He comments, "...each time he came, something bad had happened to me": one of which was his elder sister urinating in his bath water, and this inflicts more wound on his psychic. Consequently, his family represents site of remembrance of his trauma and subjugation. He struggles and says, "I'm trying" (15) and the very fact that these were the only words that made up that paragraph demonstrates his frustration. His father and family becomes a symbol of his trauma. Akachi's family and sister became a symbol of life's constant urinating in his bathing water and his mother forcing him to bathe with it still because she does not believe his tale, consequently reducing him to a depressed child the same way the society including his friends on Facebook did not believe that he was capable of taking his own life. Since "God" could not rescue him or at least send those around him, he focused on "dinner", contemplating death "peeling onions and avocados" and knitting death although his family ignored him and he sought refuge in the hands of death because "no bride leaves death at the altar." In his helplessness to death, he submits that, "moths have no choice than to flirt with flames, it's their destiny" and he feels destined to die. Akachi is stifled by his thought. He recollects that, "I had already made home out of strange land". But "His sister would have slapped" him "if she heard me call Wukari my home".

### **THE USE OF NUMBERS**

The use of numbers in a retrogressive progression is not just for aesthetic realization but also a means to portray the diminishing value of the protagonist's life. And this is indicative of the lifespan of millennial. For the protagonist, he is trapped in his childhood memories and seems to be inextricably bound too them and this results in his inability to create a valuable present. In the work, the part numbered "1" is used to show how detached the protagonist wants to be from reality. Rather than being present in the physical space, he would prefer an alternate reality where there is freedom depicted by his use of ellipses. From the arrangement of the work which starts from point "16", demonstrates dimensions of issues that break the will of the protagonist to live and these

are not in isolation but various family mistreatment that is spearheaded by arrowhead of matriarchy which are in persons of his mother and sister including the society which is fashioned by the woman.

## **VOICELESSNESS**

The idea of being mute is an aesthetic representation of voicelessness in literature. In the course of the narrative, the persona in “8” says, “I don’t remember saying much”. This voicelessness is further seen in blatant refusal to engage with the therapists and if he would say anything it would be an affirmation of his internal will to die. Voicelessness to his “sin” in the protagonist’s inability to refute his subjection by his mother and sister, he is unable to speak for himself and allows himself to be coerced into bathing with water that was urinated in. He was a child always at war with himself as a result of his voicelessness and the internal war.

## **CONCLUSION**

Facebook for most creative artists is a site for the creation of identity and preservation of self. It is a form of literature for most autobiographer writers to impose their biographies on their time lines as fragmented entering of a whole in a form of created chapters of their lives. Facebook is now a “book of books” that houses the creativity of the African netizens in the age of digital technology. Akachi’s suicide is a product of the burden of memory, identity creation and Facebook becomes the centre for creative dying for artists who seek escape from their stifling memories before the actual death.

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