

The Female Voice and the Future of Gender Relationships in the Nigerian Nation in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*

By

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Declaration

I declare that this Thesis is my original work and it has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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Dedication

Kwa ala oonthe mekalaa na umiisyo, muuo na wikwatyo. Mukavikia kumina vate thina na mukakwata nguma nene na kwikala na uthasyo. Endeeyai oou na kukitia u'wo wenyu.

**To my mother: Katundu Kivai,
My wife: Adelaide Khavai,
My three precious daughters: Ndendwa, Mueni and Ngina,
And finally, all those women who struggle for gender justice all over the
world.**

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Operational Definition of Terms

African Womanism: An African women movement which aims at achieving respect for the women and their talents and abilities beyond the confines of sex, class or race. The idea came from Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi in her desire to explain the experiences of African women. It is an African oriented theory which includes men in women struggles and looks into other problems of Africa and how they are linked to sex issues. In this study African Womanism is used to refer to the struggle by African women writers to voice the problems of their societies.

Feminism: The entrenchment of moral, intellectual and hence universal values of equality purportedly denied to women by the dominance of males and the upheld ideologies developed in society to legitimise and perpetuate that dominance. It aims at changing the way most societies treat women. It has several strands occasioned by different experiences from different women and our study is within the African strand of feminism known as African womanism.

Gender: A social construct which asserts that the expectations, capabilities and responsibilities of men and women are not always biologically determined. The gender roles assigned to men and women are significantly defined – structurally and culturally – in ways which create and reinforce and perpetuate the relationships of male dominance and female subordination. The construction of masculine/feminine, father/mother, husband/wife, superior/inferior is a social process of gendering power in society.

Gender complementation: Refers to situations whereby men and women demolish sexual and gender barriers that society constructs between them. Men and women come together and that way realise and achieve more as opposed to scenarios whereby a wall is erected because of their gender. In gender complementation men do not see women as ‘other’ and vice-versa and so each gender is seen as the half that completes humanity making it whole. Gender complementation heralds reduced animosity and mistrust between men and women and that way society functions better.

Ideology: Set of ideas and aims which form the comprehensive vision, a way of looking at things and also influences how members of a group interpret the world. It can as well be said to be the abstract thought applied in public matters. The main purpose of ideology is to offer change in society.

Intertextuality: This refers to various relationships a given text may have with other texts. Texts refer to other texts (or to themselves) in deconstructive thinking rather than to external reality. It can be an author's borrowing and transforming of a given text or reader's referencing of one text in reading another. It is used to explain why texts acquire as many meanings as users.

Patriarchy: It is a system of social structures that institutionalise male physical, social and economic power over women or put differently it is the male control of culture, religion, language and knowledge which tend to devalue female experiences and knowledge. Patriarchal power structure works to benefit males by constraining female's life chances and choices.

Self-Interpellative Reading: A reading foregrounded in the real history of the text. In it, the reader gathers enough information and knowledge concerning the form of cultural/literary product, the background information of the producer and the history at the time of production. Such knowledge accounts for complexities of a literary product and as such a reader is able to analyse and explain cultural/literary product.

Abstract

This study is a gender appraisal of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's two novels: *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006). It interrogates how the author projects the female voice(s) in her writing. We explore how Adichie, an African woman-writer suggests a new vision where men and women collaborate in liberation efforts. African women writers often grapple with neo-colonialism, racism, misrule, poverty, gender bias, ethnic animosity, religious fundamentalism, famine and misrepresentation and in confronting these social challenges, they have created stories that seek to explore their unique condition. In our efforts to examine the political motifs mingled with gender issues in the two novels, the novels are studied as political metaphors of the Nigerian situation. The study was guided by four objectives: to analyse subjugation and marginalization of women; to explore the strategies they employ to fight patriarchy; to interrogate how women agency is linked to national struggle in the two novels and to reveal the author's vision on gender. We worked from the assumption that African women are marginalized and different forms of oppression weigh on them. Womanist ideas advanced by Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (1996/97) and Mary Kolawole(1997) which offer a hybrid combining feminist concerns and African liberation was employed to explain the situation Africa finds itself in women's liberty and human freedom. Womanists argue that in the African context, gender cannot be handled in isolation since there are other major problems that bedevil the continent. They recognise the African man as a victim of colonialism and neo-colonialism and strive to end his suffering. A Self-interpellative reading of the two novels provided the lens for establishing the multiple structures of meanings embedded in the texts owing to the author's socio-political background. Close textual analysis was done with a view of getting enough data for the study and description of the main arguments. The study is configured in five chapters in line with the set objectives and the stipulated research questions. Chapter one details a comprehensive background of the study highlighting the problem, theoretical foundations, review of related literature, and overall conceptualization of the thesis. Chapter two surveys avenues of female oppression, interrogating the various social-political configurations that perpetuate and marginalize the African women. It discusses the ways adopted by Adichie and her female characters to fight patriarchy. The chapter also investigates how women negotiate power from their insignificant positions. The third chapter explores how the female tale parallels the story of the nation and that way the two stories are read as national allegories. The author's vision on gender is undertaken in chapter four whereby an alternative view on gender relationships in the African context is revealed. The final chapter recaps the study and gives suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.0 The Author's Profile

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born on 15th September 1977 at Enugu, Eastern Nigeria. She grew up in the university town of Nsukka which is the fictional town in her works. Adichie's two novels explore the complexities of human experience inspired by social and political events in her native Nigeria.

Her first novel Purple Hibiscus, which explores patriarchy, domestic violence, religious fundamentalism and general intolerance, was published in October 2003 receiving extensive international acclaim. It won Huston/Wright legacy award in 2004 and was short-listed for Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction. Later it was awarded the Commonwealth Prize for the Best First Fiction Book 2005. Her short story 'Half of a Yellow Sun' won the PEN/David Wong short story award in 2003 and she expanded it to her second novel, Half of a Yellow Sun (2006). Her story is built on the themes of colonialism, neocolonialism, tribalism, corruption, love, marriage and domestic (dis)unity in the background of the Biafra war. This novel won the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction 2007. Her anthology of short stories, The Thing Around Your Neck, was published in 2009.

Adichie is the latest Nigerian female writer to make a mark in the African literary scene and to win several international prizes within a short time. She is quoted to have said that her greatest inspiration comes from Chinua Achebe.

This study appraises her two novels; Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun and in the next sub-section we examine the background with special consideration to African female writing.

1.1 Background of the Study

Female authored texts offer self-images, patterns of self-analysis and general insights into women's world ignored by male/colonial writers. Aidoo (1996) submits that, 'Women writers write about women because when we wake up in the morning and look in the mirror we see women' (163). Similarly, (1989) says that female writers bring into focus their femaleness/femininity in their narratives and in doing so highlight power differences between men and women. As a result, women scholars and activists have pioneered intellectual revolution built on sexual politics aimed at stamping gender and feminism into both criticism and its philosophical appendage— theory, replacing a tradition that is masculine and domineering. Showalter (1985) maintains that gender has become an analytic category whether the concerns are representation of sexual difference, (re)shaping masculinity, building feminine values or exclusion of female voice from the literary canon.

Many African female writers like Nwapa (1966), Emecheta (1981), Dangaremba (1988), Mugo (1988) and Aidoo (1977) among others have written stories seeking to expunge women's marginal position(s) and thus their texts are 'spaces of strength within and between which they fluctuate' (150) as opined by Nfah-Abbenyi (1997). In line with this, D'Almeida (1994) considers writing by women as a 'weapon to destroy the ideas that perpetuate subjugation and inequality' (2). Most literary scholars dealing with

African literature such as Stratton (1994), Steady (1998), Ogundipe- Leslie (1987), Emenyonu (2004), Oyeronke (2009) agree that works by African women writers are rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in canon formation thus making much of the African literature appear male-centred. This makes Leek (1999) argue that African women have been indoctrinated to envision the world from a patriarchal perspective. We can then conclude that to be an African woman is to be totally deprived of equality and thus African female writers have taken responsibility of redressing this mistake and re-defining the meaning of being an African woman. In doing so, women writers have tried to look for a possible centre in the periphery of female imagination.

In our reading and interpretation of Adichie's two novels we explore how she struggles to give African women a proper place with dignity denied by patriarchy and other forms of subjugation. This is done through examining the state of personal or individual lives of characters such as Auntie Ifeoma and Beatrice in Purple Hibiscus and Kainene and Olanna in Half of a Yellow Sun. This is because the African writer, whether man or woman, is inevitably a public figure, adopting a public stance, functioning as the eye, the conscience and intelligence of the society.

In contemporary writing, African women wrestle with those problems that confront women and also shape the continent. According to Ogundipe-Leslie (1994), African feminism should endeavour to empower women and society and thus sexual politics is intricately intertwined with other struggles in the continent. Generally speaking then, the apparent concern of an African writer, male or female, is to speak about immediate issues

or concerns of social life. This is because Africa has a distinct condition occasioned by its history as argued by Amuta (1989), that:

African literature and its criticism testify the historical contradictions that define the African situation. In order to resolve these contradictions in the direction of progressive change, literary criticism must be predicated on a theoretical outlook that couples cultural theory back to social practice. In this respect, literary theory and practice must form part of anti-imperialist struggle thus demystifying literary criticism and reintegrating it into the social experience and practice of which literature itself is very much part of (7).

Amuta seems to suggest that literature should be part of the neo-colonial struggle in the African context where the process of emancipation is not yet over. The African man, like the African woman, is a victim of different forms of oppression; dictatorship, racism, poverty, ethnicity and neo-colonialism among others. Our study thus, interrogates the oppression of the African women as depicted in the context of other African problems as Adichie highlights them in her two works.

African women scholars like Emecheta (1981), Kolawole (1997), Badejo (1999) and Ogunyemi (1985) have disowned and rejected the label 'feminism' as they explore women's voicelessness and/or (in)audibility and human oppression in their writings. They have accused Western feminism of universalizing women's experience and hence occasioning cultural imperialism. Said (1993) confirms that Third World societies are designated in exclusionary terms and so women are excluded lot from most discourses even those that concern them. Min-Ha (1989) holds the same view when he argues that third world women are treated as an out-group to be spoken for by mainstream in-group. This leads us to the big question posed by Spivak (1999), 'How does one represent the self and others?' Such a debate has seen African women writers engage in an exercise of re-inventing, re-defining and re-assessing themselves in politics of appropriation implied

in otherness and inherent in the tradition of western feminism. Our study explores how Adichie through her characters defines and names the struggles of African women.

The desire for self-naming reflects the rights to self-validation, thus the quest by African women to name their experiences, map their strategies for struggle and the realisation of true liberation for African men and women. African women have rejected being named by outsiders because such are alien labels. Western women have named and defined the African woman within Eurocentric perspectives, disregarding her socio-cultural and political milieu. Women empowerment through self-definition and self-naming in the African situation enables women to cope and transcend their oppression. Argued this way, African women writers like Adichie are therefore Womanists and not feminists as pointed out by Ogunyemi (1985) and Kolawole (1997). This study is in line with the insights of Steady (1998), Kolawole (1997) and Badejo (1999) who argue that gender roles in Africa are complementary, similar, asymmetrical and automatically linked to continuity of life in the continent. Thus, it is true that a feminist movement confined to specific oppression of women cannot, in isolation end exploitation and imperialism.

The submissions of Hander (1999) are quite relevant to this study since she argues that women have broken rules of race and gender in order to embody hope for the future of the nation. This means that women are integral in building a new African society, stressing the damaging effect of subjugation outside the colonizer-colonized relationship. We read Adichie as an African woman writer and pay special attention to how she engages in creating oppositional discourse to bring to light human suffering and the humiliation

suffered by women and the African people. Adichie becomes the voice of her people and her generation by crafting fictional stories aimed at subverting oppressive structures in her society. This is because African women writers have to create stories that are tellingly appropriate and instructive as their first concern as they struggle with women oppression and innumerable problems that bedevil the continent. Ogunyemi (1985) contends that African female writers should not be limited to issues defined by their femaleness but should attempt to tackle questions raised by their humanity. The way African women partner with their men to fight oppression is an outstanding component of our study.

We can therefore argue that an African woman writer should not just bridge the gap between Western and African thought but create something new out of both with the aim of challenging the tradition which appears to ignore or trivialize either black (African) or female concerns. Our study thus situates the two selected novels by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun, in the Womanist discourse as argued by Ogunyemi (1996) and Kolawole (1997).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

African women writers have been subjected to Western theories of interpretation thus being divorced from their socio-cultural milieu. In such reading and criticism, the writers have been misunderstood, misread and misinterpreted. Consequently, African female scholars strive to name and define their struggle which is not exclusively sexist but inclusive of human problems in the continent. This study locates itself in the Womanist discourses so as to explore how Adichie highlights the struggle by African women and how she imagines problems of humanity in her novels.

African women writers have spoken for the oppressed groups in theory, in creative works and in politico-ideological commitment. Our study interrogates the two novels to establish the extent to which Adichie is engaged in centering women issues as well as those problems that face Africa. The central questions in this study are: how does Adichie empower her female characters within the existing power hierarchy? How do her female characters strive to subvert patriarchy?

In the past, critics have studied female tales and analysed them focusing on issues of gender and female oppression in society. For this study however, we investigate how the two novels are metaphors of the Nigerian political situation. The two narratives are then read as national allegories. We explore how the author elaborates a new model for alternate society in tomorrow's Africa to divulge her vision on gender.

The study was guided by a set of objectives which helped to formulate research questions and assumptions.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study aims:

1. To analyse marginalization and subjugation of women as depicted in the two novels.
2. To explore strategies adopted by women to battle with patriarchal oppression as depicted in the two novels.
3. To interrogate how women agency is linked to national struggle in the two novels.
4. To discuss the author's vision on gender in the Igbo society advanced in the two novels.

1.4 Research Questions

The study answers the following questions:

1. How is marginalization and subjugation of women depicted in the two novels?
2. What strategies have women adopted to fight patriarchy as highlighted in the two narratives?
3. How is women's agency linked to the national struggle in the post-colonial situation portrayed by Adichie?
4. What vision on gender does Adichie project in the two novels?

1.5 Rationale of the Study

The rejection of Western feminism by African scholars terming it as part and parcel of Western cultural imperialism has seen African women map new frontiers in writing and theorizing. Our study is therefore motivated by the desire to explore the new spaces taken by African women writers as they strive to voice their neglect, exploitation and oppression. Over the years, African women writers have explored the subjugation of women in their societies in a variety of ways. This study surveys the trajectory taken by Adichie as she tackles the subjugation of women in the Igbo society. Our Study then, is an attempt to expand the Womanist criticism and underscore the argument that works by African women can be read through culture specific theories as the African women writers take the initiative to name their peculiar gender struggles.

Besides being subjected to foreign interpretations leading to misunderstanding, African female writers have also been neglected in the criticism of their work and their inclusion to literary canon. Through their writing, the African women writers have struggled to voice their situations and kill silences as observed by D' Almeida (1994). This study

serves to explore how women have changed their tactics in the war against patriarchy especially in the 21st century. Although Adichie writes from the diaspora, we can argue that the experiences of her origin help her to avidly imagine and capture the problems of her people in the two novels.

Although critics have explored the depiction of women in literature and the way female writers correct the stereotypes perpetuated by male and colonial writing, very few have explored emerging trends on gender complementation in the emancipation of women and other isolated groups. There happens to be calls from contemporary African women scholars: Ogunyemi (1996), Kolawole (1997), Steady (1998) and Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) have called for the inclusion of African men in the struggle in order to end exploitation and oppression of African people including women. This study thus explores how the author succeeds in integrating African men in her endeavours to end human suffering and by extension women oppression and exploitation. An exceptional element of the study is how Adichie imagines and structures gender relations in complementary terms, subverting schisms suggested by radical feminists. We try to show that in the two novels Adichie suggests tolerance towards others regardless of gender, tribe, class, religion and probably the practice healthy politics of compromise at the national level as advocated by womanist thinkers.

We therefore proceed to examine literature related to the study with the intention of teasing out the knowledge gaps left by other scholars.

1.6 Literature Review

Stratton (1994) in her Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender explores the definitive discourses of African literature and identifies colonialism, patriarchy and dialogue on gender as the key features of categorization. She notes the complex link between colonial and African (male) literature and the literary tradition that excludes the female voice. She writes, ‘considering their invisibility in the dominant critical tradition, it is not surprising that women writers have not gained admission in the literary canon... the result is all male canons’ (3). Similar sentiments are expressed by Emenyonu (2004) who declares that there is a critical imbalance and lack of objectivity in the appreciation of works by women and the image of womanhood depicted by male authors. These ideas suggest that women’s writing has not attracted as much critical attention as male writing. Our study, thus, fills this gap by exploring Adichie’s novels to identify how her writing is an addition of female voice to African literary tradition.

Muriungi (2005), in a reading of Oludhe Macgoye's Victoria and Murder in Majengo and Genga-Idowu's Lady in Chains examines the prostitute trope recurrent in African male literature which critics link directly to the national metaphor of moral decay. However, in reading the two novels she concludes that, prostitution is a form of emancipation since it allows women to break away from certain traditional roles and networks to forge new and more fulfilling networks outside the watchful eyes of the family and traditional community. Such study hints to the fact that there is female subordination in several African communities although the situation varies in time and space. In an earlier study, Kassam (1996) also affirms that African women contest their oppression and

confinement in limited space by creating and recreating popular culture/songs suitable for both public and private consumption. From her argument, we can conclude that African women writers have tried to uncover the gaps and silences, exposing biases and prejudices. In writing stories women have demonstrated that literary tradition is an artificial construction and have actively taken part as canon makers – either as critics or writers. We can therefore argue that Adichie as a writer is also pursuing such a goal.

Oral literature has also been viewed as a space through which women contest the patriarchal social structure. Kabaji (2005) considers the Maragoli folktale as a site for contesting these structures, relationships, identities and ideology. He considers the folktale performers, mostly women, as active agents who struggle for a space in the patriarchal society. Drawing from the discourse of ‘othering’, Kabaji argues that the condition of otherness enables the African woman to stand back and criticise the norms, values, and practices that the dominant culture of patriarchy imposes on everyone including those who live at the margins.

The current study expands the discourse of women struggle by looking at how women agency is linked to the national struggle in Third World countries, an area explored by this current study. Stratton (1994) looks at the ‘Mother Africa Trope’ in African male literature and the subsequent romanticization of African womanhood, which masks subordination, and perpetuation of patriarchal socio-political order. Stratton argues that this trope goes against the interests of African women and should be purposely interrogated to subvert male dominance. Our study addresses this trope in a positive

outlook and argues for its inspiration to women struggles, looking at it from a woman's point of view. According to Ogunjipe–Leslie (1987) the three strands of commitment of the female African writer (commitment to art, commitment as a woman and commitment as a third world person) should seek to annihilate any form of oppression of the African people regardless of sex, race, religion, class, ethnic background or geographical region.

Shigali (2008) approaches the study of African women writers from the perspective of empowerment and tries to provide an alternative interpretive approach that deconstructs the western feminist readings of African literature. Her study enriches the gender discourse on power and emerging conceptual frameworks for understanding African female writers' works, but is silent on the contemporary challenges of the African people like corruption, misrule, ethnic tension, religious fundamentalism and neo-colonialism. These are issues which remarkably stand out in our discussion of Adichie's two novels. This is done along the line of thinking by Aidoo (1996) who believes that both African men and women suffer under capitalism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Seen in this light therefore, African women writers must address the question of gender exploitation and see it vis-à-vis the oppression of the African people.

Nwanjiaku (2004) in her article, 'Representation of the Womanist Discourse in the Short Fiction of Akachi Ezeigbo and Chinwe Okechuku,' analyses the position of women and cultural factors that subjugate them. To a considerable degree, she tackles the question of power of the African woman. She identifies womanism as a tool of reading African

women writings and this is a strand we pursue to find out how African women partner with men to tackle neocolonial oppression.

In reading Purple Hibiscus, Okuyade (2009), 'Changing Borders and Creating Voices: Silence as a Character in Purple Hibiscus,' maps the growth process of Kambili as she struggles to make her mouth function within totalitarian temperament of her father's home. African women have explored the feature of silencing as a component of their oppression in literature and according to Uwakweh (1995) silence is:

All imposed restrictions on woman's social being, thinking and expressions that are religious or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure (75).

Understood from Uwakweh's point of view, silence of the female characters is a trope that cannot be excluded or slighted as we make sense of the African female novel. Okuyade further submits that African literature will continue to pendulate between colonialism and neocolonialism because such history informs the writer and it is also critical in depicting the social-cultural and political disenchantment and alienation that has left the African people hopeless. It is in regard to these issues that we read Adichie's two novels, guided by womanist theory, to find out how she imagines and captures the post-colonial situation of women in Africa. The ultimate concern of this study is to identify the author's gender vision and how her female characters manage to find their voices denied by the existing patriarchal order. We read the two novels as metaphors of different forms of personal and political exploitation.

In reading Purple Hibiscus, Kehinde (2008) in ‘Rulers against Writers, Writers against Rulers: The Failed Promise of the Public Sphere in Post Colonial Nigerian Fiction,’ manages to capture the paucity of representation of the public sphere in postcolonial Nigeria. He investigates the distribution of power and the complex relationship between literature and politics of the nation. Through the family and a domestic saga, Kehinde captures the allegory of failed promise of public spheres. He observes:

Adichie makes a call for an all-inclusive public sphere in Nigeria society. The novel is a political satire that makes a call for change in a nation that is stunted due to failed promise of the public sphere. . . Eugene is intolerable and disallows his family members from the public sphere of his household (28).

According to this extract, the household is a metonym of the nation and Eugene’s family signifies the dehumanized citizens. The Standard and its editor Ade Cocker, who defends the truth with his life, represent the dissenting elements who confront the oppressive forces of the nation. We pursue Kehinde’s arguments to explore how Adichie’s stories are metaphors of the national situation in Nigeria.

In an interview with Kimber (2006), Adichie is quoted as saying that she wanted to write the story of war and love in Half of a Yellow Sun, because she grew up in the shadow of Biafra. She declares that she wanted to engage with history so as to animate the discourse of Biafra which is hardly a public topic in Nigeria. Adichie laments that those problems that led to Biafra war have not been tackled. In that interview Adichie identifies those issues of concern to her likely to find their way into her writing. These issues include: a concern for humanity; the class question in her society; the colonial and postcolonial experiences; national history and inter-ethnic conflicts. Adichie is angry about how the colonial administration set people against one another through the policy of divide and

rule. She laments how colonialism is an awful experience because it created Africans who were colonialists themselves. She also claims that her writing attempts to correct the negative portrayal of Africa by the West. Following Adichie's sentiments on politics, colonialism, imperialism and social inequality in several interviews by Uzoamaka (2008), Tunica (2005), Guest (2009), we study Adichie's novels as social documents seeking the reconstruction of social-political configurations of the African people.

In regard to evolving realities in Africa, realizing marginalization and oppression of women in the male dominated society and writing to establish women as speaking subjects, African women writers have rejected western feminism as a vehicle for their struggle. Kolawole (2004) affirms that Africans should have theories which remove the gorges without glossing over cultural specificities in order to build meaningful coalitions. Such thinking is also championed by Kisiang'ani (2005) who draws our attention on the need to decolonize gender studies in Africa. Kisiang'ani says that all forms of knowledge authored and authorized in the West should be dismantled. He argues that gender studies in Africa provide a fertile ground upon which the West uses its immense economic resources to pit the African man against the African woman. He advises on the need for gender studies to embrace a new identity.

African women writers try to map new ideologies that recognise their humanity before they engage in gender struggles. They have protested against patriarchy and oppression, but their major focus has been negotiation, compromise and reconciliation of power since the love of a good man and a stable home is a form of refuge for a woman. Beatrice in

Purple Hibiscus and Olanna in Half of a Yellow Sun are cases of women determined to keep their households intact despite betrayal from their husbands. African women scholars and gender activists are simply anti-patriarchy but not anti-men, thus the perception of man as 'dominant other' needs to be re-examined and repackaged since African men are victims of different forms of oppression as mentioned elsewhere in this thesis. The demand for total societal reformation cannot afford to isolate the male character in African literature. Ogunyemi (1996) thinks that the vital unity of the African people, regardless of gender, is critical as they struggle against other debilitating forms of oppression like misrule and neocolonialism.

Although Sugnet (1997) in 'Nationalism and Feminism: Equal and Dialogic,' argues that allegorizing women's struggle is a serious mistake since it subordinates their politics to masculine national master narrative, our study draws such parallels because one is seen as a source of inspiration for the other. To the womanist, the national concerns foreground gender concerns and hence unveil a complex situation for women writers who tailor the personal alongside the public. This is because life in African societies is perceived as communal without clear-cut boundaries between the personal and the public.

From the readings of African literature by women, critics have left some questions unanswered which are central to the current study: How do African women writers destroy patriarchy and other problems bedeviling their societies? What gender vision do these writers propose for the future of Africa? How do they link the women agency to other efforts in the post-colonial nation? Answers to these questions lie in gender

integration and complementation proposed by the proponents of African Womanist theory discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

1.7 Scope and Limitations

The study focuses on the two novels by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun which present contemporary feminine/womanist perspective on Africa. Since Adichie's novels are love stories spiced with war and political sub-plots, they give an acceptable chance to explore the issues raised by Womanists in this century. These texts have been evaluated in line with the gender discourse of our time and the politics of freedom struggle through textual analysis, given that people tell stories to express and explore ideas about their world and their position in it.

Although our study is on the two novels, reference is made to other texts which have ideas likely to enhance the study. We restrict our study within the framework of the womanist theory. The gender discourse in African women writing and the interrelatedness of the feminine tale and the national narrative greatly informed the study.

In Purple Hibiscus we pay attention to the different forms of oppression the author depicts and how she subverts patriarchy. On the other hand, we analyse Half of a Yellow Sun to explore other problems affecting Third World, colonial history and the problems of neocolonialism to Africans. In both texts, we investigate the author's vision in integrating men and women in the fight to end oppression and suffering of African people.

The most challenging aspect of the study was getting secondary material about Adichie since she is new in the literary scene. Books ordered from out of the country took long to arrive and delayed the writing of this thesis. The literature and humanities journals subscribed to Kenyatta University were not sufficient and we had to rely on a friend from the University of The Witwatersrand who supplied us with the current editions of *Researches in African Literature* and other relevant material.

Having discussed the limitations and hurdles we encountered in the course of this study we then proceed to capture the essential elements of the theory used in the study.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study is conceptualized within the Womanist theory as expounded by Ogunyemi (1985), (1996) and Kolawole (1997). Womanism refers to an Afro-centric form of feminism that not only takes concerns of gender but includes class, race, politics, ethnic relationships, religious intolerance, colonialism and neocolonialism in their consciousness. Ogunyemi affirms that Womanism is a mother-centred ideology with its focus on caring- familial, communal national and international. Womanism arose out of a desire on the part of black women to name their experiences and perspectives within a specific socio-cultural and political context. It emphasizes understanding of sexist relationships, affiliations rather than domination, dialogue rather than division and thus it repudiates absolutism and dogmatism.

Womanists figure womanhood and motherhood in culture as symbolic means of understanding our interesting world. They stress the centrality of the African family and

uphold the role of mothering in the womanist ideology. As a postcolonial idea, womanism is couched in the anti-colonial and neocolonial discourse and making it a relevant theory in analyzing the two novels. The theory therefore helped the researcher to explore how Adichie evolves a Womanist consciousness in order to engage in the process of building a more viable nation in Nigeria.

Ogunyemi tries to claim equal space and opportunity in the literary scene and to acknowledge women as they complete the tenor of human experience and expression. Highlighting the complex situation inherent in Africa and the context of gender, Ogunyemi (1996) says:

Black women are disadvantaged in several ways; as blacks they, with their men are victims of white patriarchal culture; as women they are also victimized by black men; and as black women they are also victimized on racial sexual and class grounds by white women (67).

Seen in this sense then, a black woman is a victim of interlocking forms of oppression. This implies that black women writers should voice the problems of their society and still engage in sexual politics. The core ideals of womanist interpretation are gender in the context of other issues of humanity relevant to African women. In the Womanist realm, African women's writing should deal with misrule, national politics, corruption, inter-ethnic skirmishes and cleansing, religious fundamentalism, language issue, gerontocracy and in-lawism since such concerns are immediate and urgent to an African woman than patriarchy. Womanist philosophy directs that a black woman writer, aware of the heritage of subjugation, should empower the black man since he is equally a victim of colonial and neo-colonial oppression. In addition, a black woman writer should attack black patriarchy and all other forms of oppression burdening the African people.

Ogunyemi clarifies that Womanist theory is not just an idea but also a method with uniquely African considerations and sensibilities. Womanism affirms the traditional gender structures embracing a holistic view of emancipation without downplaying the oppression of women. This theory affirms that African women are oppressed by the various forms of patriarchy, homegrown and alien and calls for their fair treatment.

This study employs Womanism to understand how Adichie imagines the gender problem and how it closely connects with the national hitches that afflict Nigeria and other African nations.

1.9 Methodology

This study uses the two novels as the main source of primary data and textual analysis is done, guided by the tenets of Womanism. The novels are subjected to a Womanist lens and analysis is done to establish how complementation, conciliation, collaboration and consensus are achieved by various characters in the two novels.

Library research helped in gathering data on the African women writing. A self-interpellative reading looking at the circumstances around the history of Nigeria and Adichie's biography is explored in an effort to get historical details or personal information likely to filter into the two texts.

Descriptions of actions and scenes, analyses of characters and language provide data for this study and are used to present the main arguments of the study. Through close textual reading of the two novels, changing circumstances of the characters, plot and the

narrators' point of view, we investigate strategies employed by the author to map a path for emancipation of her characters. Interviews with the author carried out by scholars and pressmen, commentaries and other relevant writings are examined in line the objectives guiding the study.

1.10 Organization of the thesis

This thesis is made up of five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction and it demarcates the problem, specifies the objectives and captures the limitations of the study. The theoretical framework, justification of the study and methodology are also discussed in this chapter. In chapter two the research delves into the first and second objectives where we discuss female oppression and the tactics women employ to counter their exploitation and marginalization. In chapter three we discuss how the female narrative parallels the history of the nation thus the two novels are read as allegories of the nation. Chapter four argues on the author's vision on gender and finally chapter five recaps the major findings of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

Patriarchy and Female Voice(s) Against Patriarchy

2.0 General Introduction

In this chapter we interrogate gender power relations in Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun and further investigate how female characters grapple with their subjugation and the oppression stemming from patriarchy. We also survey the image(s) of women and their position in the universe of the two novels and the oppressive gender structures which push women to the margins as well as how women navigate back to the centre.

We operate from the premise that the position and role(s) of women within a body of literature can serve to investigate that society and the societal attitudes towards women. The duties and activities assigned to a particular gender can demonstrate their respective position in the overall power structure in that particular society. Rosaldo and Lamphere (1985) in Women, Culture and Society explicitly explain this phenomenon when they assert that all contemporary societies, regardless of kinship organization are characterised by a considerable degree of male dominance. They declare that there is no society in which women have publicly recognised power and authority exceeding that of men. Such assertions resonate with Kabaji (2005) who contends that everywhere women are excluded from certain crucial economic and political activities and their roles as wives and mothers are associated with fewer powers and prerogatives than male roles. We therefore argue that the society that Adichie writes from is not different from others referred to by several scholars, notwithstanding the peculiarities of every community. Adichie suggests a social transformation by first highlighting the different forms of

oppression, exploitation, exclusion and silencing which perpetuate and promote gender inequality.

2.1 Patriarchy

De Beauvoir (1989) modifies the Hegelian concept of 'other' in her studies and in description of the male dominated culture. De Beauvoir calls the 'other' the minority; the least favoured one and often a woman once compared to man. It is the idea of 'othering', which brings about domination. Domination depends on construction of social and cultural differences among people since without differences there would be no basis for distinguishing those who wield power from those who are subjects. The most potent ideas are those that are naturalized to appear not to be created by humans themselves but by nature. Patriarchal thinking for instance, holds that men are naturally superior to women. Such ideology justifies male domination and forms the firm foundation of patriarchy.

Patriarchy undervalues female experiences and knowledge and is a strong ideology that controls women in several societies. Women being the muted group are compelled to follow and accept what men devise and formulate. The basic pillar of the patriarchal power within the African context is the silencing and suppression of women including the control of their bodies. In an effort to empower the African woman, Adichie crafts stories with female subjects pursuing female interests. She also structures her narratives to contest the male power with its violent manifestations. Her exercise is an invention of gender power discourse that serves to inspire the female struggle against male domination. Kolawole (1997) believes that African women are products of multiple forms of subjugation: 'Patriarchy, tradition, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and

gender imperialism, all combine to act against the African woman's self assertion' (25). In this study therefore, we argue that Adichie is involved in the creation of discourse meant to push women from the margins to the centre.

Adichie confronts patriarchy and other forms of marginalization of women in her works. Our study is informed by the proposition that African women operate within the paradigm of dominated-periphery defined groups and so they are actively engaged in production of oppositional ideologies to counter the overriding patriarchal principles. We therefore consider Adichie's writing to be a form of protest literature subverting the male order and we strive to explore how she achieves a voice for her female characters.

Patriarchy compels women to believe that their inferior position is natural and irredeemable. Adichie's writing is an effort to voice internal knowledge and needs of women in a way that challenges the status quo. She reworks earlier images of African women projected by patriarchal order and figures female characters as speaking subjects in Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun. Her exercise echoes what Munara (2008) calls 'reworking power and subverting dehumanizing centres of authority' (4). This is in line with Kristeva (1980) who develops a semiotic language challenging paternal discourse and seeking a return to identification with the mother. Kristeva endeavours to subvert male hegemony and patriarchy and probably herald new thinking, a basic deconstructionist principle. The African woman writer's goal, thus, is to redefine the woman's exercise of authority and seek entry into the public sphere since women's

voices have been largely marginalized. Adichie's desire to investigate the marginal and liminal position taken by women marks the birth of her narratives.

Mabura (2008) in her reading of Adichie's novels concludes that the texts are forms of Gothic fiction where the female characters are often terrified, oppressed and driven to psychological disintegration by powerful tyrannical male(s) who embody patriarchal oppression. In the Purple Hibiscus we can argue that Eugene fits the descriptions of a Gothic patriarch and Beatrice, Kambili and Jaja the suffering subjects of his authority. These victims of paternal patriarchal authority do everything possible to claim their free space in the oppressive circumstances occasioned by Eugene.

Women are exploited in their different identities in the cosmos of the two novels. That notwithstanding, women courageously and continually challenge the patriarchal ideology in various ways. In the two narratives, women are wives, mothers, daughters or mistresses and these positions allow them to use the domestic space and the prescribed female identity to contest male power. Adichie surveys the identity of women as wives and highlights different forms of gender oppression linked to such identity. Women become wives through marriage whether monogamous or polygamous. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) identifies oppression at the matrimonial level as one of the mountains that keep the African women in subordination. Adichie's novels therefore hit at the glaring inequalities so as to engender the required change likely to bring equity among husbands and wives. Her writing seeks to collapse what Mazrui (1990) calls the 'triple custodial role (190)' of remaining in trusteeship of fire, water and earth and probably push them to

the public sphere which has in the past, been a male preserve. As a mediating process, Adichie's writing can be understood within the assertions of Wartenburg (1990) who argues that power is mediated by social alignments which are dynamic. He maintains that the subordinate agent is always in the position of being able to challenge the aligned agents' complicity in her disempowerment. The character of Beatrice and Ifeoma in Purple Hibiscus is a case of women asserting their positions in their societies and challenging patriarchy with its several manifestations. Any system of oppression draws much of its strength from the acquiescence of its victims, who accept their image and get paralyzed by a sense of helplessness. Characters in Adichie's novels are not acquiescent to exploitation but active in an effort to revolutionize their situation.

Adichie's two stories explore numerous societal structures through which women are oppressed. She identifies domestic violence, religion, traditions, family life, in-lawism, civil unrest, extended families, polygamy, desire for sons, racism, colonialism and neocolonialism as being responsible for unequal gender relations forming the basis of exploitation of women. She decries unfriendly masculine actions like rape in times of war, sexual exploitation of children as shown when Father Marcel exploits underage girls in exchange for food during the Biafra War in Half of a Yellow Sun and domestic violence that characterise Eugene's household in Purple Hibiscus. Adichie interrogates polygamy, in-lawism, demand for sons and religious fundamentalism and how they negatively bear on women. In the two texts, she prods society to review the way it treats women.

2.2 Women Confronting the Patriarchy in Purple Hibiscus

Purple Hibiscus is Adichie's first novel and one of its major themes is domestic violence. Women have always been on the receiving end when it comes to domestic violence and through the character of Beatrice this novel explores how wives are subjugated by their husbands. Beatrice's world is exclusively controlled by her husband. She is not entitled to any choice and feelings of her own. One occurrence that confirms this is when the family visits Father Benedict after a Sunday service. Beatrice happens to be unwell and thinks of waiting in the car:

‘Let me stay in the car and wait, *biko*’, Mama said, leaning against the Mercedes. ‘I feel vomit in my throat’
Papa turned to stare at her. I held my breath. It seemed a long moment, but it might have been only seconds.
‘Are you sure you want to stay in the car?’ Papa asked.
Mama was looking down; her hands were placed on her belly, to hold the wrapper from untying itself or to keep her bread and tea breakfast down. ‘My body does not feel right,’ she mumbled.
‘I asked if you were sure you wanted to stay in the car?’ Mama looked up.
‘I’ll come with you. It’s really not that bad’ (29).

Papa's word is final and he disregards the wife's feelings and thus Beatrice hangs at the periphery of Papa's world. Despite being unwell she is compelled to go with the rest to the priest's house. At home, she has no choice over what colour of curtains to hang on the windows of the family mansion. Kambili observes that ‘Kevin brought samples for Mama to look at and she picked some and showed Papa, so he could make the final decision’ (192). The indecision depicted here confirms the marginal position Beatrice occupies in relation to her husband. Beatrice struggles from the periphery and emerges as the pro-active character who decapitates patriarchy (by poisoning the husband) and that way moves to the centre where she is autonomous to make her own choices. The suffering that Beatrice goes through can only be eased by removing Eugene out of her

space and so the writer's act is the final act of tearing down patriarchy and its attendant violence. It does not mean destroying men since Beatrice desires to have a loving man in her life.

Eugene often batters his wife and Kambili is always tensed when her parents exchange words over anything. The narrator observes:

I WAS IN MY ROOM [*sic*] after lunch, reading James chapter five because I would talk about the biblical roots of the anointing of the sick during family time, when I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parents' hand-carved bedroom door. . . . I sat down, closed my eyes and started to count. Counting made it seem not that long, made it seem not that bad. Sometimes it was over before I even got to twenty . . . 'There's blood on the floor,' Jaja said (32-3).

This episode portrays the assault that Papa metes on Mama and at a higher level the violence that is directed towards women, thus unmasking the negative side of patriarchy. The violence at the domestic front is demeaning to Mama and her children. Mama has become frail, vulnerable and powerless as portrayed by the narrator who in another episode says, 'I followed her downstairs. She limped slightly, as though one leg were shorter than the other, a gait that made her seem even smaller than she was' (11). Mama's image is contrasted with that of Papa who towers over everyone. Papa's image is that of the oppressor. Mama is always captured by the narrator as having swollen eyes or face in tears, a jagged scar or bleeding from the violent assaults of her husband. The family is always experiencing nervous moments due to paternal brutality. They are silent or talk with suppressed voices.

Eugene's attack of his pregnant wife is not only a manifestation of the evil face of patriarchy but also the insensitivity of such practice to basic principles of humanity. His

personality is well described by Hewett (2004) as ‘a strict catholic who lives within the Manichean dictates of unforgiving faith.’ Mama’s act of raising her hands while being flogged together with her children (102) is symbolic of surrender and helplessness that grip women once exposed to male violence.

The author condemns Mama’s failure to speak about her situation since the silence re-energizes Eugene resulting to several misfortunes that would have been averted. Although Mama is abused and unloved, she is subservient to her husband as expected in her marriage. She can only respond to her predicament by crying. Kambili observes that:

She cried for a long time. She cried until her hand, clasped in hers, felt stiff. She cried until Aunty Ifeoma finished cooking the rotting meat in a spicy stew. She cried until she fell asleep, her head against the seat of the chair. Jaja laid her on a mattress on the living room floor (249).

Crying makes Mama’s situation starkly hopeless and irredeemable. As readers we pity Mama and sympathize with the anguish she is going through. Mama cries in the face of violence and when Kambili is hospitalized after being assaulted by Papa she observes from her hospital bed that:

Mama reached out to hold my hand. Her face was puffy from crying, and her lips were cracked, with bits of discoloured skin peeling off. I wished I could get up and hug her and yet I wanted to push her away, to shove her so hard that she would topple over the chair (213).

The feelings afflicting Kambili in this episode are due to the indifference that Mama has exhibited over time in regard to Papa’s violence. Kambili wishes that Mama could do something.

At St Agnes hospital Mama cries out of the love she has for her injured daughter. She acts in a similar manner when Papa scalds the feet of his children for sharing a house

with their grandfather in Nsukka. African women are therefore seen as helpless but sympathetic to their daughters' suffering as is the case with Beatrice in Purple Hibiscus. Mothers' sympathy comes from within their souls since they closely identify with their daughters because one day the daughters will grow to be mothers/women. Adichie depicts women as sympathetic to their situation. However, she disparages Mama's silence and inaction and suggests that women should shout their oppression in an effort to confront the conscience of their oppressors.

To Beatrice a husband coronets woman's life and she cannot quit the marriage despite the prodding from Ifeoma. In Purple Hibiscus Adichie uses the character of Beatrice to encourage women to react to oppression since remaining passive gives the oppressor some impetus to repeat his behaviour.

The opening lines of Purple Hibiscus signal a threat to continued co-existence of the family members because of lack of free space. The home is in turmoil and things are about to fall apart. It means the centre symbolised by the paternal authority cannot hold anymore and further suggests that several centres of authority are necessary. It is in the other centre(s) where the characters living in Eugene's family enjoy freedom. Kambili is concerned about every member of the family but does not speak her mind because of 'lack of freedom to be, to say' (16). Mama informs the daughter that she will not replace the figurines and Kambili realises that, 'when Papa threw the missal at Jaja it was not just the figurines that came tumbling down, it was everything' (15). 'Everything' implies

even the authority that Papa has over his family. Mama's refusal to replace the figurines suggests a need to live without the usual patriarchal control occasioned by Eugene.

Religion is partly to blame for what Papa becomes since he is brought up by a priest and as a result his world is structured in Biblical terms of evil versus righteousness. The familial space, occupied by Beatrice and her children is so packed with catholic rituals and religious activities that they have no time left for anything else. However, this constriction of people's freedom dictated by religion exists only at St Agnes in Enugu and not anywhere else. At Nsukka the church accords its members some liberties and that way religion is a source of freedom and not a burden to the faithful. The church at Enugu knows the happenings at Eugene's house but does nothing to rectify the mess. Because God is love as per the inscriptions on Mama's T-shirt, the church is ridiculed by Adichie when it fails to preach the same love to wife batterers like Eugene. Father Benedict becomes one of the contemptible priests in the novel in sharp contrast with Father Amadi. Adichie pours scorn on any kind of faith that encourages oppression. She calls on her people to snub those churches which do not do anything to expand democratic space or entrench equity among the faithful.

Mama's duties attract fewer benefits than those of her husband who is always meeting business people, government officials and his Standard editor to discuss seemingly very important national issues. Mama's influence is limited to the domestic space whereas that of Papa is the public space (international) since Amnesty World gives him an award for speaking against oppression. The irony of this award is evident when Eugene does not

accord the slightest freedom to his immediate family members. In this episode Adichie attacks the patriarchal order that purports to support and speak for women but oppresses them instead.

Everyone at Eugene's family exhibits peculiar apprehension occasioned by Papa's religiosity and ritualized living. Eugene's ghost dangles precariously threatening other family members in their private lives. The narrator feels suffocated and the framed photos of the grandfather bear down upon her. Any symbol of male authority becomes a burden and Kambili happens to see this in all those things that Papa stands for like his religion. Therefore the portrait of Kambili's maternal grandfather becomes one of the symbols of the suppressive patriarchal order in place. Hot tea, given to Kambili by Papa in the name of 'love sip' is a source of torment to the young narrator:

The tea was always too hot, always burned my tongue and if lunch was something peppery, my raw tongue suffered. But it didn't matter because I knew that when the tea burned my tongue, it burned Papa's love into me (8).

This kind of punishment that Kambili suffers yet cannot complain about serves to explain how patriarchy manifests itself and destroys those who it is meant to shelter. The hot tea experience points to the contradictions in Papa's house.

Eugene's family is housed in an enclosed compound where dealing with the outside world is completely curtailed. High walls topped with electric wires contain anything from either going out or coming in. This ensures that the violence that the family suffers is not known to the outside world. It also prevents new and liberatory ideas from filtering in. They are very much held in a controlled domestic space thus they depend on Papa's knowledge and ideas over everything. It can be argued that patriarchy has always tried to

control the domestic space and deny women the chance to enter into the public sphere symbolised by the Eugene's family compound. Mama, a symbol of oppressed African women, suffers such suppressing internment. She has no voice and does not talk to Papa; she is a dehumanized wife and suffers in solitary. Adichie's texts therefore seem to prod women to identify and challenge structures of patriarchal exclusion which possibly serve to deny them vital knowledge for their emancipation.

In an effort to voice prejudice in gender relations, polygamy is vilified in Purple Hibiscus through the character of Ezendu's second wife. She is said to have driven out the 'senior' wife. It is from the spitefulness of such practice that mother and daughter applaud Papa for not taking a second wife despite encouragement from the clan to do so. What we discover from Beatrice and Kambili's discussion can be construed to mean that marital comfort for most women in polygamous set ups is never realised. What polygamy does is to isolate women, control their sexuality and promote patriarchy. In highlighting this Adichie disparages polygamy and opens it for social ridicule.

Yewande Cocker weeps for her husband when he is arrested and wonders how she would manage to sustain the family alone. But as Yewande cries out for the simple arrest, Auntie Ifeoma's husband is dead and she manages her family single-handed. Adichie, in these events is suggesting that women can make a living without husbands (men) and still be prosperous and happy. The desire for a good man to complement a woman's life is however hinted at when Beatrice strongly talks of the need of a man in a woman's life. It is such a need for a loving companion that makes Yewande cry. It can therefore be

argued that Adichie proposes that women should live a happy married life but where situations do not work they should strive to make their life livable without men.

Marriage makes women proud and the way Ifeoma's student keeps calling the fiancée '*dim*', 'my husband' pinpoints to the way courting and marriage presents women with multiple positive possibilities. Ifeoma, however, has different perceptions regarding marriage. She harbors feelings close to bitterness when her students move to marry at a young age. To her, marriage suffocates the numerous chances for women and makes them live like Beatrice, her sister-in-law. The family consequently becomes a site of oppression for women.

Adichie highlights a situation where married wives belong to the extended family and that is why Aunt Ifeoma calls Beatrice 'my wife.' The family then becomes a source of power for the daughters who own their brothers' wives but elsewhere the family appears to disempower and subordinate the married women. Aunt Ifeoma is supposed to take the children to the late husband's hometown even though she complains that Ifediora's *umunna* is not treating her well. Mama informs aunt that the boys should get to know their *umunna* a thinking which places boys and generally men at a position above girls and women. The demand made by Beatrice that Ifeoma should take her children to their hometown shows how children tie married women to their husband's clan. Ifeoma is reluctant about taking the children to Ifediora's hometown and that way serves as a symbol of the rebellious modern woman who will eschew patriarchy.

Ifeoma challenges the way the government appoints university administrators. She is thereafter accused of being disloyal and is subjected to police harassment, sacked and finally forced to go into exile. It is from exile where her daughter Amaka writes home to condemn the Nigerian justice system. Ifeoma and Amaka can therefore be read as Adichie's schema aimed at suggesting ways of emancipating the African women from the yoke of patriarchy and other forms of exploitation.

Aunty Ifeoma brings up her children teaching them how to do all sorts of household tasks. She does not discriminate against the children on gender lines especially when assigning domestic duties. Adichie appears to challenge society to bridge the chasm in the socialization process where boys are treated differently from girls. The experience that Eugene's children have at aunty Ifeoma's house in Nsukka leads to a revolution. There is increased consciousness and desire for freedom at the domestic front as Jaja and Kambili head home from Nsukka. Jaja demands to have the key to his room and Kambili notes:

I wanted to tell Mama that it did feel different to be back, that our living room had too much empty space, too much wasted marble floor that gleamed from Sisi's polishing and housed nothing. Our ceilings were too high. Our furniture was lifeless: the glass tables did not shed twisted skin in the harmattan, the leather sofas' greeting was a clammy coldness, the Persian rugs were too lush to have any feeling (192).

A considerable change in thinking and looking at the world has taken place because of the visit to Nsukka's. Kambili is able to identify the high goals Papa sets for them contrary to Nsukka where Ifeoma allows the cousins to explore and scale their heights. Through the journeying motif Kambili discovers her true self and her desire for freedom is heightened. The cousins have a voice to speak their joys, aspirations, sorrows and to

explain their world, which are the things Jaja and Kambili miss at Enugu. Silence in Eugene's house is perverse but there is a lot of talk, laughter, singing and exchange at Aunty Ifeoma's house. In superimposing the two environments Adichie advocates for upbringing like that of Ifeoma where girls are not discriminated from boys and domestic chores are shared equally regardless of gender. The home, according to Adichie should be a garden where different flowers bloom like Ifeoma's garden. Exaggerated religious rituals are also not very common in Nsukka as they happen to be in Enugu. Amaka has to choose a confirmation name and has insists on an African name but Kambili has Papa pick the name Ruth for her. The author pairs the two families to suggest an alternative upbringing and gender socialization.

When Eugene attacks Kambili with kicks and blows, Mama stands aside and pleads 'please *biko!*' (211). Mama unconsciously approves Papa's way of doing things thus presents submissiveness, piety and domesticity equivalent to Okonkwo's wives in Achebe's Things Fall Apart (1958) who stand aside as Okonkwo beats their co-wife Ojiugo. Mama's action also maps to what Maiguru does when Babamukuru assaults Nyasha in Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions (1988). Such behaviour from married women shows how patriarchy compels women to comply with its ideology through the use of violence. Adichie suggests that women should do something to change how society functions through the character of Ifeoma. Ifeoma wonders when people would speak out against oppression:

'When do we speak out, eh? When soldiers are appointed lecturers and students attend lectures with guns to their heads? When do we speak out?' Aunty Ifeoma's voice was raised. But the blaze in her eyes was not focused on the woman; she was angry at something bigger than the woman before her (223).

Ifeoma is angry about oppression and lack of freedom at both domestic and public levels. It is the disturbing helplessness and passivity that she finds with Beatrice and some colleagues at the university that Adichie admonishes. Adichie's voice calls upon women to identify all forms of social oppression and to go ahead and confront the same.

After Papa's death and Jaja's incarceration Mama and Kambili take over the management of the family and the family finances. They even get to know who to bribe, to hire or to fire. Though they are silent it is silence with freedom. They have their own voice and when Mama turns to Kambili and says 'Thank you' Kambili tells us, 'It is one of the few times in the past three years that she has spoken without first being spoken to' (306). This is an indication of a new family that has freedom and some joy though it has its problems and ghosts. Although Papa is dead, Jaja as a son and brother is ready to suffer on behalf of the mother and sister. Through Jaja, Adichie suggests masculine selflessness and a regard for women.

Wives are expected to be mothers and motherhood has over time been seen as a source of strength in most African communities. All over the world women have had status and respect for their role in nurturing and ensuring continuity. Freud (1963) describes the mother as the child's primary love object and the parent most responsible for its optimal development. He argues that in the early years of an infant's life the relationship of the infant with the mother is close but during the Oedipal conflict the boy renounces the love of his mother in fear of his more powerful father. Freud further affirms that the girl moves away from her mother who she sees as powerless and castrated. Motherhood is

highly valued among the Mende people who according to Kolawole (1997) worshiped wives for being bringers of life. Kolawole however, argues that women have over time been excluded from vital areas of decision making in the public arena. According to Oyewumi (2001) motherhood is a defining feature for African women but for this study, we investigate how it is a possible source of exploitation, oppression and exclusion within the social-political space in Purple Hibiscus.

Purple Hibiscus surveys motherhood through the characters of Beatrice and Auntie Ifeoma. De Beauvoir (1989) argues that women's ability to give birth is subsequently the source of their subordination. She contends that motherhood signals that women were twice doomed: biologically during pregnancy and socially when children restricted them at home. Chodorow (1978) blames sexual inequality in society on the division of labour that allocates the primary infant and child care to women at home while men take valued occupations outside. She further posits that in most societies daughters and sons are treated differently and consequently developed differently. The daughters who share the core female identity with the mother copy their mother while the sons remain separate and autonomous.

The societal desire for children happens to be an avenue through which women are exploited and oppressed. Linked with the desire for children is also the strong social demand and desire to mother boys. Due to the high premium attached to boy-child girls inhabit second position and that leads to their degradation. This desire for babies makes Beatrice in Purple Hibiscus struggle desperately to meet the *umunna's* expectations of

omelora's (an Igbo elder) wife. The members of Eugene's *umunna* are opposed to his having two children only.

Beatrice spends much of her time attending to domestic duties mainly on behalf of her children and the husband. Immediately Papa throws the missal to Jaja and breaks the figurines it is Mama who picks them with bare hands since it is risky for the family members if they remain strewn there. Jaja warns Mama 'careful, Mama, or those pieces will cut your fingers (8).' This is a confession from the son that Mama would do anything to make sure the family is safe. Mama plaits the hair of Kambili every Sunday before lunch. While Beatrice [mama] does most of the domestic duties after Sunday, Papa enjoys his siesta. This highlights an uneven situation for men and women. Mama's obligations place her squarely in the domestic arena. It is no surprise that when Auntie Ifeoma wants to take them out Mama cannot go because she tells Ifeoma that, 'you know Eugene likes me to stay around (80).' Therefore, the domestic space, reserved for mothers, is a site of patriarchal oppression.

The characters and circumstances in Purple Hibiscus compare well with Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions (1988) where Eugene just like Babamukuru are symbols of masculinity. Both are domineering, benevolent and they provide for their own families and the clan but are callous, unreasonable, brutal and oppressive. Despite these men being highly educated they exploit their wives and Just like Beatrice in Purple Hibiscus, Maiguru in Nervous Conditions has to lie low and to continuously pamper Babamukuru. The attitude towards women and girls does not change whether the men are educated or

not since Eugene is well educated and so is Babamukuru. Adichie seems to suggest that negative patriarchy rears its ugly face in Africa in the modern era despite the progress made in different areas of human endeavour.

It means that women can only be respected if they fulfill their biological duty of mothering. Mama fears Papa may marry other women who may give Papa more sons and displace her. For a woman to have security and a permanent position then she should have several children and more so boys. The experiences of Beatrice are reminiscent of what Nnu Ego in Emecheta's The Joys of Motherhood (1979) goes through as she struggles to prove herself as a mother. Such a demand is pegged on African women's need to be disparaged or at least revised to give women a breathing space as hinted to by Adichie.

Although Auntie Ifeoma is educated and enjoys more freedom than Beatrice, she is also held by her family such that she spends much of her time with the children: helping, correcting, punishing, encouraging and cooking. She is widowed and struggling as Papa-Nnukwu realises 'since the father of her children died, she has seen hard times' (65). Kambili notes that she behaves like a referee who has done a good job and admires to watch the players who in this case are her children: Amaka, Obiora and Chima. Adichie uses Ifeoma's character to open women's eyes to the realities of patriarchy and also to suggest alternative avenues to self-actualization. She stands against oppression when everyone else is silent. Through this character Adichie pronounces her convictions that the oppressed should constantly challenge their oppressor.

The identity of women is linked to their children and we realise that those women who are childless suffer the indignity of lacking mother-derived identity. This is realised in Ogige Market where Kambili notes:

Mama Joe's shed in Ogige Market just barely fit the high stool where she sat and the smaller stool in front of her... Women and children worked in the neighboring sheds, twisting hair, weaving hair, plaiting hair with thread. Wooden boards with lopsided print leaned on broken chairs in front of the sheds. The closest ones read MAMA CHINEDU SPECIAL HAIR STYLIST and MAMA BOMBOY INTERNATIONAL HAIR [sic]. The women and children called every female who walked past... While she turned my hair... she chattered nonstop to... mama Caro (236-7).

From this extract we realise the identity of mothers is crucial in getting business names. Such identification serves to marginalize those who are childless.

Rarely have women been studied as daughters in literature since the identity of wives and mothers overshadow other identities. This happens despite the affirmations of Oyewumi (1997) that seniority; to be precise older/young is more important than sex/gender in African context. She further points out that sex/gender are absolute: one is either a man or a woman or is not (for the transsexuals) yet seniority is relational; one is young or older depending on the context and situation. Seniority unlike gender is only graspable as part of relationships and neither rigidly fixated on the body nor dichotomized. These insights are critical as we try to make sense of the identity of women as daughters which is an identity in transition in the worlds of the two novels.

In Purple Hibiscus, the socialization of daughters produces docile, submissive and unimaginative characters due to the oppressive and overly patriarchal environment they grow up in. To Papa, Kambili should be God fearing and a 'backyard snob' as the girls in

her class point out. She simply does things in a weird way; isolating herself from the other students and remaining silent. Okuyade (2007) affirms that silence in Purple Hibiscus is magnified to a level whereby it can be heard. Kambili, Jaja and their mother are so oppressed that they speak with their spirits.

In a rare twist Mama kills her husband and that way frees herself and her children from the yoke of domestic servitude. This killing is symbolic in that it points to the author's desire of a world free of gender-engineered violence at the domestic level. The Biblical allusion of Jesus serves to exonerate Mama from the killing since Jaja and Kambili believe that someone has to die for some other people to be saved. Kambili says:

‘God knows best,’ I said. ‘God works in mysterious ways.’ And I thought how Papa would be proud that I had said that...Look what He did to his faithful servant Job, even to His own son. But have you ever wondered why? Why did He have to murder his own son so we would be saved? Why did He have to go ahead and save us? (289).

For the freedom of women to be fully realised sometimes drastic and radical measures have to be taken.

In a different scenario Ifeoma goads the sister-in-law (Beatrice) to quit an abusive marriage. In doing so Ifeoma braves those women living in abusive relationships to seek an alternative lifestyle outside marriage. Ifeoma moreover disputes the undemocratic way of appointing the sole administrator in an effort to have positive change in the manner the University is managed. Although she is eventually sacked her efforts mean a lot since she provokes the other lecturers to resist dictatorship from all fronts. The indispensable position taken by women in Purple Hibiscus points to the need to centre women issues in Adichie's society.

2.3 Women as Agents of Social Progress in Half of a Yellow Sun

Adichie, in her second novel Half of a Yellow Sun tackles issues which are thematically related to what is in Purple Hibiscus. The author projects women characters struggling to keep their families hopeful even when the country is going through a civil war. In Half of a Yellow Sun women are depicted as resolute and progressive. They give direction when and where necessary and guide their men and society in time of difficulties. Those women who are not progressive are drawn in the negative light and we, as readers, are called upon to disregard them. Adichie uses characters like Alice to state her position on mistresses, concubinage and being second wives. Alice is depicted as eccentric and anti-social. She is always sheepishly taking herself to very unfulfilling male relationships. Even though she complains of the army officer who dupes her we are quite unhappy when she lures Odenigbo while Olanna is at Orlu. Adichie uses the character of Alice to rebuke women who betray other women in infidelity or in polygamy.

Infidelity on the part of men is a serious challenge women have to often grapple with in Half of a Yellow sun. Mrs Ozobia is a victim of negative masculinity since her husband has a mistress, a Yoruba woman for whom he has bought a house in a neighborhood where Lagos socialites live. The adjectives used to describe the Mistress: ‘...common riffraff... A Yoruba goat...old and ugly’ (218). These descriptions make the readers share in loathing women who take other women’s husbands. Mariama Ba in So Long a Letter (1980) captures unfaithfulness in the marriage institution when she submits that for the sake of variety men are unfaithful to their wives. Such actions are a source of

humiliation to the wives. It is out of such humiliation that Mrs Ozobia cries when telling her daughter, Olanna, about the father's mistress:

Her mother held a glass of tonic water in one hand and a handkerchief in the other. She was crying. She was telling Olanna about her father's mistress. 'He has bought her a house in Ikeja,' her Mother said, 'My friend lives on the same street.'
... 'Have you talked to him?' Olanna asked.
'What am I to say to him?' *Gwa ya gini?* ... 'There is nothing I can say to him. I just wanted to let you know what is happening so that they will not say I did not tell somebody' (217).

Mrs Ozobia's confiding to a woman could point to the idea that it is cooperation amongst women that will aid in their liberation from patriarchal chains. When Mrs Ozobia says '...so that they will not say I did not tell somebody' (217) suggests that the society does not approve Chief Ozobia's behaviour. The above incident points to the desperate situation women find themselves when playing the role of wives. When Mrs Ozobia informs the daughter that 'there is nothing she can discuss' with the husband about his infidelity it confirms her inferior position in the arrangement. She is almost confirming that she fears the husband and so he can do whatever he wishes. Such fears imply the unequal gender relationships that characterise marriage and the position of African women in patriarchal societies. The fears Auntie Ifeka has about Uncle Mbaezi getting involved in affairs with other women demonstrates the prevalence of male infidelity and the negative effects it has on married women. Despite male infidelity women are positive about life as is shown by Auntie Ifeka, Mama Dozie, Edna Whaler, Kainene and Olanna.

The desire for children is explored through the characters of Olanna, Arize, Odenigbo's mother and Anulika among others in Half of a Yellow Sun. It is the desire for a child and a grandson that drives Odenigbo's mother to coerce Amala into sleeping with Odenigbo

and this leads to the near collapse of Odenigbo's relationship with Olanna. To Mama Odenigbo, a spoiled woman is one who cannot bear children. She says, 'No-body knows if she can have children. Do you know? Does anyone know?' (198). Mama's concern grows out of the significance attached to children in Igbo society and by extension Africa. She seriously wants to have a grandson. She complains that those girls who go to University follow men until their bodies are useless to have children. She says 'no wonder my son has not married while his mates are counting how many children they have' (97). The situation described here resembles what happens in Nwapa's One is Enough (1990) where Amaka's relationship with her husband Obiora is strained by mother-in-law who accuses her of being barren. We can therefore conclude that childlessness is apparently a permanent source of frustration to the African women as portrayed in the above cited examples.

Children take care of parents and carry on the family name. This explains why women and society are controlled by the desire to have many children so as to carry the family name and enlarge the husband's *umunna*. This in itself points to the patriarchal nature of Adichie's society that ties a woman to the husband's *umunna* by virtue of having mothered boys.

In an effort to bring about change in the institution of motherhood, adoption is suggested as a more progressive way to tackle childlessness. Olanna adopts Amala's child and cares for her because the mother rejects her immediately she is born. The same happens with Mrs Ozobia in that Auntie Ifeka nursed Olanna and Kainene because her breasts dried

soon after they were born. As a result, Olanna thinks that Aunty Ifeka was as good as her mother. It is Aunty Ifeka that Olanna runs to when she has problems with Odenigbo.

Olanna also feels glad when the nurse asks her how many children she has. Her feelings emanate out of what society demands from women: motherhood. A similar societal obsession with the desire to have children is what makes Arize's mother-in-law disgrace her by demanding to know how many abortions she has had before marriage. Nnakwanze also is worried when Arize does not become pregnant the first, second and third year of their marriage. Arize's 'misfortune' is a source of oppression from her mother-in-law. It is what Amala suffers in the hands of Odenigbo's mother, in that Odenigbo's mother wants to use her to get a grandson. Such a situation puts women under a lot of pressure, curtails their freedom and makes them slaves of societal demand(s) and desire(s) leaving them without a choice of their own.

The characters of the old women (mother-in-law) in the text shows that patriarchy has conditioned women to accept demands put across by the male order. In accepting the patriarchal demands and forcing fellow women to follow suit they have become perpetrators of their own suffering. Through the characters of Ifeoma, Olanna and Kainene, Adichie shows that motherhood can be revised in order to stop women oppression and suffering. In the use of Kainene and Olanna Adichie revises the perception that women should have on issues of motherhood. Whatever is captured in Half of a Yellow Sun in terms of women and motherhood is progressive unlike what we get in Purple Hibiscus. Kainene and Olanna do not value motherhood so much and

Kainene remains in her relationship without a child for the entire life of the novel. Olanna adopts Amala's child. Kainene and Richard are happy and prosperous despite childlessness. This is the world that Adichie proposes whereby women are less burdened by their biological duties of mothering.

In Half of a Yellow Sun Adichie depicts daughters who reject to be tools of male aggrandizement through the episode where Ozobia uses his daughter Olanna to get a contract from the Minister of Finance; chief Okonji. Olanna is uncomfortable about it:

She wondered, too, how her parents had promised chief Okonji an affair with her in exchange for the contract. Had they stated it verbally, plainly, or had it been implied? ... Her father stabbed at his avocado. 'I see' (32-3).

This extract points to the question of daughters being used as sex enticements as Kainene later observes:

'The ten per cent is standard, so extras always help. The other bidders probably don't have a *beautiful* daughter.' Kainene dragged the word out until it sounded cloying, sticky: *beau- ti- ful*. She was flipping through the copy of Lagos Life, her silk robe tied tightly around her skinny waist. 'The benefit of being the ugly daughter is that nobody uses you as sex bait,' ... (35).

This demonstrates the use of women by men in the society represented by Adichie for material gains. When the parents conspire to have Olanna get sexually involved with the finance minister they paint an ugly picture of daughters who have no choice of even sexual partners. We learn that Olanna's father did not receive her choice of Odenigbo positively. The narrator identifies that all is not well with Odenigbo as Olanna's fiancée and notes, 'her father only wanted to gall him and show how unimpressed he was by a senior lecturer from Nsukka' (32). Such wish of parents to control Olanna's choice of partners is explored when Olanna talks about her mother and the different opinions they hold over her choices. Adichie brings up a situation where Olanna rebels to suggest that

women should stand their grounds on issues of personal choice. Personal choice points to characters' autonomy and some degree of liberty on the part of women. Eberechi suffers during the war in that she is used as sex bait and denied her right to choose a partner. Such an act is a total disregard of her humanity and denies the young girl her basic rights. Adichie highlights these episodes to herald positive change for the betterment of women's welfare. In commodifying daughters, Adichie is condemning the difference of being the owner of property, the heir (for boys and men) and being the property (for daughters and women) and thus suggesting a revision to the existing gender parities.

Arndt (2000) in an interview with Ogunyemi highlights how women find solace in unattached living. She explains recent studies which hint that young women find concubinage a better deal than marriage in both Nigeria and Kenya. What she does not explore is how women are exploited or exploit other women in such relationships, something which preoccupies Adichie in her current works. Half of a Yellow Sun investigates concubinage through the characters of Chief Ozobia and the Yoruba woman he is keeping in one of the Lagos neighborhoods. The personalities of Kainene, Richard, Susan, Olanna, Mohamed, Ugwu, Eberechi, Alice and the army colonel are examined and how concubinage is a possible source of female oppression and exploitation. The narrator observes:

She seemed more like a mistress: her brazenly red lipstick, her tight dress, her smoking. But then she didn't smile in that plastic way the mistresses did. She didn't even have the generic prettiness that made him inclined to believe the rumour that Nigerian politicians swapped mistresses (57).

Women are so marginalized that being in dignified social spaces unaccompanied by a man is 'abnormal.' Going to such places for Kainene is a pointer that she has a choice

and thus she is exercising her freedom. Adichie highlights the episode above to show that the progressive contemporary woman has the ability to be in social gatherings unaccompanied.

Adichie discredits those women who are perpetuating practices that degrade and oppress fellow women like Alice, Amala, Nnankwanze's mother and Odenigbo's mother. Although African scholars like Emecheta, Aidoo, Nwapa, Frank and Mariama Ba argue that wifehood and motherhood are the major sources of oppression, it is palpable from this study that other relationships with men are also oppressive. In such relationships women, unconsciously exploit fellow women as they cohabit with their husbands or boyfriends and that way such women help the institution of patriarchy to continue subordinating them. In bringing up such observations Adichie wants the conscience of the women in such liaisons to be pierced so as to lessen the suffering of fellow women.

Adichie in Half of a Yellow Sun sees women as progressive elements in society in the sense that they are the promoters of their society during very trying times like during the Biafra War. Women desperately and continuously search for food and medicine during the war and that way sustain their communities. Kainene introduces the idea of growing crops to feed the refugees during the time when there is no food forthcoming to the Biafrans. Olanna goes ahead to try and get an alternative job for her husband who appears withdrawn as the war presses forward. She also starts a school to teach the children such that there would be continuity after the war.

2.4 Opposing Oppressive Cultures and Traditions

Culture is the bedrock of development since it determines the entire spectrum of relations and activities in any given society. Cham (1987) affirms ‘any movement in society must have its feet firmly rooted in healthy cultural grounds if it is to be of any lasting and meaningful value to the welfare of individuals and society at large. A healthy culture is a culture of equality, a culture free from all forms of exploitation and above all, a culture rooted in the true traditions of the people’(100). I present this argument by Cham in an effort to discredit some traditional cultures and more so those that propagate subordination of women in the world drawn by Adichie in her two novels. We can then affirm that one actual tragedy of the African women is a culture which hinders their progress and permanently sustains them in a state of submission.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) identifies the socialization process which is gendered in that it connects macho strength and heroism to males and associates traditional roles of wife and mother with women. A woman’s honour and dignity in most cultures in Africa consists of strict adherence to idealized norms of wifeness and motherhood. In Achebe’s Things Fall Apart, for example, Okonkwo beats his wife for failing to provide his meal on time and also Ekwueme assaults Ahurole when she demands to know why he does not eat her food in Elechi Amadi’s Concubine. These examples confirm that aggression and violence is a feature of men whereas acquiescence is associated with women in most African communities. In order to rethink the position of the African women in regard to limitations occasioned by culture and traditions Miss Adebayo in Half of a Yellow Sun challenges most men when they meet for evening discussions at Odenigbo’s house.

Kainene is physically described in overly masculine adjectives and she takes after Beatrice Okoh in Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah who defies gender conventions which serve to decenter and disregard women and all their issues. Beatrice considers trivial and chauvinistic the idea 'that every woman wants a man to complete her' (88). Ifeoma confronts similar chauvinism when she suggests to the sister-in-law that life may begin at the end of a marriage in Purple Hibiscus.

Catholicism is shown as patriarchal in Adichie's works and the voice of women is totally subsumed in its masculine system. Adichie dismantles this ideology when Papa reverts to praying through Mary Mother of God. Papa prays through Mary and he had designed his own title which is 'our lady shield of the Nigerian people' (11). From such prayers Adichie undermines the patriarchal order characteristic of the catholic faith. The prayers done through Virgin Mary do prop women to a considerable level of power in the Catholic Church circles. It is worth noting that the apparitions of Virgin Mary at Aokpe are the source of inspiration to push the quest for freedom a notch higher.

The illustration of the gospel by Father Benedict rarely mentions Mary-Mother of God, but through Papa, Adichie inscribes the name of a woman in his daily prayers. Consequently authority of women is realised and their state of subordination subverted. Since Catholicism accords a lot of respect to Mary Mother of Jesus, the failure to regard her and other women is a peculiar shortcoming of Father Benedict probably resulting from his colonial and patriarchal mindset. When Amaka suggests an African name for her

confirmation she goes against the traditions of Catholicism and draws an ideal world with stretched freedom.

Beatrice goes against the mourning norms which maintain the widow at the traditionally inferior position. Kambili observes:

The compound gates were locked. Mama had told Adamu not to open the gates to all the people who wanted to throng in for *mgbalu*, to commiserate with us. Even members of our *umunna* who had come from Abba were turned away. Adamu said it was unheard of, to turn sympathizers away. But Mama told him, we wished to mourn privately (287-9).

This deviation from the mourning practices demonstrates how the author discards the oppressive norms. Mama also does not wear 'all black or all white' (298) for a year and even does not cut her hair as custom demands. Mama's desire to change the way of mourning serves to advocate for a situation where women are not subjected to senseless rituals and customs at the expense of their comfort.

Adichie satirizes the activities of *umunna* which is a male caucus for enslaving women. Women are totally against what *umunna* does or says since it is an institution that serves to marginalize them. Members of Ifediora's *umunna* say a lot of negative things about Ifeoma. And as mentioned earlier in this thesis Eugene's *umunna* advises him to take a second wife so that he could have children since a man of his stature cannot take pride in only two children. Cultures are mostly created by men and that is why most of them are oppressive to women making them act within male confines.

Bride-price, polygamy, picking partners for sons/daughters, desire for children and the value attached to boys are some of the practices and norms that Adichie challenges in her

two novels. She advocates for a world without such oppressive practices. Adichie's novels are a clarion call to all women to realise that 'they can live comfortably without being attached to the cultural beliefs and obligations which control women's lives' (Muriungi, 2003:60). Some of the constricting beliefs which confer titles to males only (like *Omelora* and *ima mmuo*) are deconstructed and instead women made heroines in the two novels. Ifeoma does not attach too much importance to the *ima mmuo* ritual. In doing so she passes a message across that such titles serve to degrade women and they have no place in a progressive society.

We therefore argue that Adichie's characters: Olanna, Kainene, Adebayo, Ifeoma, Amaka, Mrs Muokelu and Mama Onitsha are modeled to subvert the customs and traditions which continue to marginalize women in contemporary Africa.

2.5 Empowerment through Education

Onyango (2006) argues that abolishing illiteracy has been top on the women's agenda for emancipation. He however admits that in many patriarchal societies in Africa educating a male child is more of a priority than educating a girl child. In this study we argue that women's education is a strong socialization tool used by women in Adichie's novels to fight female subordination and oppression.

In Nwapa's novel Efuru (1986) Gilbert, a man of education restates the reason as to why women are rarely educated in patriarchal societies, 'It is a waste sending girls to school he says. They get married before the end of their training and the money is wasted' (191-2). Although most patriarchal societies have men who think like Gilbert, in Adichie's

novels female education is perceived differently. Odenigbo informs Ugwu in Half of a Yellow Sun that, 'Education is a priority! How can we resist exploitation if we don't have the tools to understand exploitation? (11).' This statement is quite applicable to the education of women because through education, women would understand the structures that oppress them and strive to end their predicament.

Miss Adebayo, Ugwu notes, is not the soft African woman who is quiet but rather argumentative and firm. She is knowledgeable on numerous issues and able to actively and progressively engage male scholars. She is well-informed and challenges other professionals who meet at Odenigbo's house. Olanna's entry is spectacular and Ugwu is carried away by her spoken English since she spoke 'the kind of English Ugwu heard on Master's radio' (22). Olanna has a master's degree from the University of London. Abdulmalik holds Olanna with lots of respect and when he is introduced to her, he portrays that 'expression of people who marveled at education with calm certainty that it would never be theirs' (40). We learn from Arize that education for women delays marriage and the subsequent subordination of that institution. The narrator observes:

Arize's round eyes were admiring and bewildered. '-It is only women who know much Book like you who can say that, sister. If people like me who don't know Book wait too long, we will expire'. Arize paused as she removed a translucently pale egg from inside the chicken. 'I want a husband today and tomorrow, oh! My mates have all left me and gone to their husbands' houses' (41).

There is a strong statement in that education delays a woman's entry into marriage. Frank (1987), Emecheta (1982) and Nwapa (1981) argue that by getting education women enter into the public sphere and favourably compete with men as equals in job market. Olanna is employed as a lecturer at the University of Nigeria – Nsukka and when she quarrels with Odenigbo's mother she goes to her flat and continues to do her job. Kainene

informs chief Okonji that she would manage the father's businesses in the East and that way she will put her degree to good use. Olanna chides the cousin Arize to concentrate on her sewing training so as to be independent. Adichie's writing therefore makes a strong point that education makes women acquire some autonomy thus competing favourably with men outside the confines of patriarchy.

Olanna's mother who is less educated clings to the husband and is terribly depressed when she learns of her husband's mistress. The least educated girls like Anulika, Nnesinachi, Amala and Arize are most likely to suffer the oppression of the patriarchal order. Anulika is ready to marry when she is barely sixteen and Amala is used by Odenigbo's mother to sleep with Odenigbo and produce for her a grandson. The desire for boys which is a feature in the world of the two stories seems to afflict the less educated since Olanna, Kainene and Ifeoma do not suffer such gender misgivings.

In Purple Hibiscus Auntie Ifeoma and Auntie Phillipa are educated and thus liberated. Ifeoma does not want to marry again after the death of her husband and when Papa Nnukwu informs her of his prayers for her to get a good man to marry her, Ifeoma discredits him because what she requires most is a promotion to a senior lecturer. She is free from male influence and determined to enjoy her freedom. Ifeoma's forthrightness and assertiveness are as a result of the power of education. She is educated and aware when things are going wrong. Adichie uses her so that she can contrast her with the sister-in-law Beatrice who depends on her husband economically. Due to lack of proper

education and a paying job, Beatrice suffers all the effects of patriarchal domination perpetuated by Eugene and the Igbo culture.

Adichie portrays the miracle of education to women empowerment through projecting characters who are educated and others with less or no education so as to draw parallels and give some freedom to the educated ones. Educated women in the two novels are able to escape male oppression unlike the uneducated ones. The theme of women education in Adichie's novels resonates well with Mariama Ba in So Long a Letter where education has the potential to provide women with the possibility of crafting new identity beyond that of womanhood and acquire consciousness of empowerment that impacts on their relationship with males at the family and societal levels.

2.6 Female Bonds: An Antidote to Women's suffering

Oyewumi (2001) in 'Ties that (Un)bind: Feminism, Sisterhood and other Foreign Relationships' argues that sisterhood is a term of political solidarity which speaks of women activism. Sisterhood has been criticised by several feminist scholars and critics of African literature consider it a loaded term inadaptable by women outside the Western/white world to advance their cause and agency. As a result men and critics of African literature have avoided the use of sisterhood as they seek to explain the common oppression under patriarchy. We have opted to use female solidarity as we explore how Chimamanda Adichie's female characters forge helpful relationships to ameliorate their situation as they tackle the problem of patriarchy.

Forming groups to attain a purpose is the process by which traditional Africans acquired an energizing spirit as affirmed by the adage that ‘unity is strength.’ African communities presented a strong sense of communalism and the individual experience was better realised in a group. Oyewumi affirms that organizing to attain a political goal speaks to the issue of forming political alliances and constitutes group identity.

In Adichie’s novels, cases of women coming together to challenge the effects of patriarchy or to aid one another to overcome male-created misfortunes are notable. In Purple Hibiscus Ifeoma forms friendship with the sister-in-law Beatrice and attempts to pull her out of a violent marriage. Ifeoma is ready to take the children to Nsukka so that Beatrice can think independently and quit domestic abuse. It is on the same scale that women at the University of Nigeria-Nsukka are concerned about the management and the problems bedeviling the institution and people like Phillipa opt out of the troubled waters. This movement out of Nsukka probably to America serves to expand the space for women to challenge domination. Ifeoma bonds well with those women she is working with and she is given information about the list of disloyal lecturers long before she is sacked. It is out of her closeness with the female students that they even announce to her their plan to marry. Beatrice is close to Sisi and it is her who gets Mama the poison that kills Eugene. This is a case of a woman helping a colleague woman to surmount oppression. After Eugene’s death Sisi is married but spends a considerable amount of time instructing Okon; the new family steward. Kambili also forms a strong bond with Mama and at one point she comments:

Silence hangs over us, but it is a different kind of silence, one that lets me breathe. I have nightmares about the other kind, the silence of when Papa was alive. In my nightmares, it mixes with shame and grief and so many other things

that I can not name, and forms blue tongues of fire that rest above my head, like Pentecost, until I wake up screaming and sweating (305).

This serves to celebrate the freedom that mother and daughter enjoy after Papa's death. The silence that grips this family can afford them some freedom that lets them breathe. Kambili supports the mother in her trying period of widowhood and can also be analysed as a trope of heralding female bonding. Kambili comes out as a character who exhibits strength before adversity and an inspiration for the much desired change.

Although Kainene and Olanna in Half of a Yellow Sun have drifted apart considerably they come together during hard times and help each other to surmount the effects of war and starvation. Kainene welcomes the sister to Orlu and is ready to stay with Olanna and her family as the war rages. The same friendship can be said of Mrs. Muokelu and Olanna. Mrs. Muokelu helps Olanna when she is in a crisis. She is ready to sacrifice some egg powder for Olanna's family when Baby falls sick. She even teaches Olanna how to make soap when the commodity becomes scarce.

We notice the same kind of solidarity between Olanna and her mother when they meet at the ladies parlour and we realise that it is here where Mama Olanna narrates to the daughter about the father's mistress. When the mother confides to her daughter about the father's affairs with other women we witness the formation of a bond that is very strong and a likely source of comfort to suffering madam Ozobia. This is what moves Olanna to confront the father and talk about the mother. The talk solves a problem that would otherwise have led to domestic confrontation. Mrs. Ozobia's house has a parlor where ladies congregate and it is here that sisterhood and female solidarity are crafted.

When Olanna has problems with Odenigbo's mother she turns to one Edna Whaler for consolation. Olanna observes that Edna 'cultivated *zinnias* in her front yard and finally she cultivated a friendship with her' (228). She speaks to Olanna and informs her to stop pretending that things are okay during the time when she has problems with Odenigbo. She encourages her to seek help from someone and even suggests the Priest at St Vincent de Paul. Edna's story of the man who left her a week before their wedding at Montgomery serves to lessen the suffering Olanna is going through.

Olanna receives advice from Aunty Ifeka who narrates her own experience about when she first married uncle Mbaezi and how troubled she was by the thoughts that another woman would come and displace her. The words from Aunty Ifeka encourage Olanna who is having problems in her relationship with Odenigbo. Aunty Ifeka has a strong bond with Olanna since she is the woman whose breasts Olanna and Kainene sucked when her mother's dried immediately they were born. We note a bond of women who nurse babies for others like Olanna's mother and Ifeka. Adichie uses these episodes to propagate the idea of bonding among women so as to overcome problems of oppression and exploitation occasioned by mothering.

Women also come together for the sake of their communities such as when they supply food and singlet to the Biafra army. Women supply things to the army in their win-the-war efforts: Madu says there is a group of women at the barracks every other day, from all sorts of backwater villages, bringing yams and plantains and fruits to the soldiers (183). In another episode Olanna joins a sewing group in Abba to make things for the

army. Women organize a seminar in Nsukka duped 'In Case of War,' in an effort to prepare fellow women in case war breaks out. Such groups are empowering because the knowledge they deliver lessens the suffering of women in the event of such situations. Olanna creates a relationship with Alice and gives her soap when she gets some supplies which make life bearable for Alice during unpleasant circumstances. When Olanna exchanges with Alice sensitive information about their men, the narrator observes that, 'they laughed and she sensed, between them a vulgar and delicious female bond' (336). These bonds are helpful and assist women to transcend unfriendly situations. Female bonds allow women to talk about their most immediate problems including domestic issues. Kolawole (1997) argues that womanism highlights female bonding and collective action as a part of struggle of all women. Adichie therefore advocates for collective action so as to achieve great good for the suffering African women.

African Women have always come together to pursue a way that is aimed at challenging domination and oppression. The case of women joining hands to pursue a common goal in the novels of Adichie is laudable since there is triumph in groups. Adichie appears to suggest to women to come together because there is strength in numbers and there are higher chances of succeeding.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we identified inequalities, restrictions, penalties and denials directed toward women in Adichie's novels. It emerged that tradition, religion, marriage, motherhood and the desire for baby boys among other factors are to blame for the

silencing of the African woman. Adichie strongly indicts those institutions and practices which perpetuate gender inequality and continue to marginalize women.

The chapter also explores the different strategies Adichie adopts to accord women a voice in the face of the silencing structures. Women's writing is taken and understood as a process of challenging the dominating powers and creating oppositional discourse so as to engender change since according to Kolawole counter discourse is a healthy approach in African women's search for acceptable feminine aesthetics. The way Adichie's female characters struggle to end their oppression is an issue that has received special attention in this chapter. Speaking to traditions and cultures that are suppressive, strong female characters, education for women and female bonding are identified as the strategies that women and female writers utilize to fight oppression and exclusion.

Although other African female writers explore the gender issues discussed in this chapter before, Adichie is unique voice in the sense that her works are cast in wider human oppression and not necessarily exploitation confined to sexuality and gender. Her approach to fighting oppression confirms that despite the struggles by women to assert themselves in a world dominated by men through the ways identified in this chapter the war against gender subordination in Africa is far from over.

The following chapter interrogates how the female narrative parallels to the story of the post-colonial nation. In the chapter the two novels are read as allegories of the Nigerian nation.

CHAPTER THREE

The Female Narrative and Socio-Political Evolution of the Nigerian Nation

3.0 General Introduction

In this chapter we strive to situate Adichie's novels at the intersection of gender and nationalism discourse in Nigeria. We argue that Adichie weaves narratives which looks at patriarchal political and aspects of social violence against a backdrop of Nigerian turbulent history. We interrogate how the family is a microcosm of the nation and how paternal authority relates to that of the head of state. Romantic relationships and marital infidelity are taken to connote to the postcolonial condition of the Nigerian nation while rape is read as a political metaphor. Death and maternal miscarriages are analysed as tropes linked to the struggle towards nationhood. The chapter proceeds from the premise that Adichie uses her two stories to allegorize the Nigerian nation. Exploring the national condition is in line with the Womanist ideals in that Womanism attempts to identify the oppression of the nation's citizens and propose ways of overcoming it.

Taken from the Greek word 'allos', allegory means the other i.e. in saying one thing you also imply something else. In The Glossary of Literary Terms Abrahams (1993) defines allegory as:

A narrative fiction in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are continued to make coherent sense on the 'literal' or primary level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of agents, concepts and events (4).

Allegory is a device much like metaphor that is used to imbue a text with multiple meanings. It is used as an alternative to didactic discourse because of its elusive nature and the way in which it functions. Jameson (1986) states that:

All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I call national allegories even when their forms develop out of predominantly Western machineries of representation such as the novel (69).

In defining the Third-World, Jameson talks about the range of countries which have suffered and experienced colonization and imperialism. Although Elleke Boehmer (2005) opposes Jameson's gender-blind assertions and nation-informing stories of the Third-World she, however, asserts that women writers use the novel as a genre to perform national identities.

In this study, we argue that Adichie uses the family and the male-female relationships to make significant statements about the nation in her two novels. We then take the nation as a social construct validated by imaginative literature then proceed to explore the signifiers which represent nationalism positions even as Adichie privileges a feminine opinion. We interrogate how individual experiences of the female protagonists are juxtaposed within the national condition in the post-colony. This is so because Jameson further argues that the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situations of the Third World culture and society. Jameson's ideas resound with the assertions of Smith (1952) that African writers, '...are fond of playing with words. They have a remarkable gift of drawing analogies. They are adept in the use of metaphor. They habitually think and speak in pictures' (20). It is in line with these assertions that the two novels are read as allegories of the Nigerian nation. This is

because in the modern African female novel, characters are inscribed in a complex sphere of multiple meanings given that minor literature is supposed to subvert dominant discourses and create a new site of engagement with centres of power.

Ogunyemi argues that Nigeria as a nation was popped out of Lord Lugard's head without the would-be-Nigerians participating in the birthing process and that way, the resultant thing has been a monstrous polygamous house-hold characterised by petty rivalries and perpetually at war with herself. She further advises that what is called for in her motherland is to play the politics of a polygamous household, with a mother in charge of all small units. She calls for decentralization and collaboration because if the big house collapses, all will go with it. The analogy of taking Nigeria as a polygamous institution seeks to explain the post colonial situation in most African states where culturally unrelated people were brought together by the colonizing powers to form the new nations and subsequent conflicts exacerbated by ethnic animosity and mistrust. Ogunyemi calls for a womanist understanding of the overall problems and seeks collaboration of the different wives (tribes) forming the nation. Her ideas will help in the study of the two novels since her analogy has been captured very well by Adichie in her efforts to imagine what is happening in her country- Nigeria.

Espinosa (2008), in a reading of three Mexican novels of Carlos Fuentes identifies *polis* (the power to connect people politically) and *Eros* (the capacity to bond people sexually) as the manipulating factors that help to engender the modern nation. In the three novels, Espinosa interrogates the links between love and the nation, the personal and political,

the private and the public. Espinosa's observations echo those of McClintock (1995) who affirms that nationalism is a gendered allegory where the power of the masculine philosophy is enforced by the nation but the subjects of state power and symbols of nationhood have remained female. Some critics feel that imperial, colonial and postcolonial discourses can largely be seen as allegories of the never ending gender contest. Women's writing therefore becomes a critical engagement with the problems of race, class, gender and the colonial aftermath. Stratton (1994) in her efforts to disclose the weaknesses of 'Mother Africa Trope' in male writing, affirms that the trope is an emblem of male potency/power and sexual/political allegory in which the women's tale is transformed into a male story of supremacy. She further argues that the 'Mother Africa Trope' exploits the male-female power relations of domination and subordination where women oppression is taken as the paradigm for the fate of Africa since the inception of colonialism. Espinosa further contends that patriarchy encroaches in the nationalist discourse denying women a chance to form an identity since their participation at the national level is limited to wives, mothers or mistresses.

We argue that women writers like Adichie employ the same metaphor so as to debunk their insubordination, thus subverting oppressive patriarchal structures. In this case, female writers link the personal with the communal and ultimately realise the goals of Womanism in the African situation. Kehinde (2008) identifies nature, tenets and trends of socio-political commitment in Nigerian literature where he comments that Adichie's Purple Hibiscus is an allegory of failed participation in public space in post-colonial Nigeria. He interrogates how the formal structures of the novel revolve around the

dissonance between the rulers and the ruled and the subsequent future of the public sphere. Anyokwu (2008) asserts that Half of a Yellow Sun is an allegory of modern Nigeria which is beset with ethnic militias, inter-tribal skirmishes and cacophonous calls for self-determination by ethnic nationalities, the Niger Delta crisis, sectarian violence, ethnocentrism and superannuated animosities. Our study therefore, seeks to explore the discourse on the trouble with Nigeria and possible remedies suggested by a female writer.

3.1 The Family as a Microcosm of the Nation

Kehinde (2008) observes that Purple Hibiscus reads like a mere family saga although it has political overtones. Using the family, Adichie mirrors the Nigerian nation replete with conflicts, oppression, misrule, dictatorship, religious intolerance, corruption and moral decadence. Eugene who is a religious fanatic bars his family members from interacting with the neighbourhood. Such barring serves to maintain the male authority and to deter subjects from having other experiences which would enlighten them and lift their silence. Papa uses crude means to punish his children and wife for petty offenses. He is totally intolerant and his world is controlled by the fear of sin and hell. It is the voice of Papa that we hear in Purple Hibiscus since he has silenced all the other characters and denied them freedom. Silencing in patriarchal societies has been taken as a male tool of controlling women and confining them in very particular roles but in the national scene silencing comes with gagging the press and muzzling all voices of dissent as happens in Purple Hibiscus. In this section therefore, we explored how Adichie's novels are metaphors of the Nigeria situation.

We can argue that Eugene represents the phallocratic state authority whereas his wife and children are symbolic of the dehumanized citizens. The state power represented by soldiers who demolish vegetable stalls in the market is equivalent to Papa's authority in his household. Papa condemns whatever he does not like especially those who cannot conform to his faith and those who are liberal, represented by Papa Nnukwu, Ifeoma and her children.

Kambili, in the scene at the market says:

As we hurried past, I saw a woman spit at a soldier, I saw the soldier raise a whip in the air. The whip was long. It curled in the air before it landed on the woman's shoulder. Another soldier was kicking trays of fruits, squashing papayas with his boots and laughing (44).

A similar episode is replayed at Eugene's household in a scene where Kambili eats cornflakes before the Eucharist feast and thus goes against the church teachings. This attracts punishment from Papa. Kambili narrates how papa attacks his family:

He unbuckled his belt slowly. It was a heavy belt made of layers of brown leather... it landed on Jaja first, across his shoulder. Then mama raised her hands before it landed on her upper arm ... Papa was like a Fulani nomad – although he did not have their spare tall body, as he swung his belt at Mama, Jaja and I (102).

These scenes capture the brutality and violence through which state authority is exerted on the helpless citizens. Kambili says that her father does not have the spare tall body of the Fulani nomads and in that the author draws a nexus of power and authority at both the domestic and national fronts. She is also suggesting that although the nation has the power to force its citizens to comply, exercising of such power is seriously opposed by the citizens especially if it serves to deny them their basic freedoms.

The despair described as soldiers destroy market stalls is a similar despair realised at Eugene's family where the authority of Papa towers above everyone. There is despair captured though the anxiety that has gripped Jaja whom we are told, 'His seventeen-year old face had grown lines; they zigzagged across his forehead and inside each line a dark tension had crawled in' (11). The boy is stressed because of the heavy hand of Papa. We learn that his little finger was chopped off by Papa because he failed to get a question right in his catechist class.

Kambili is a very silent daughter and is not able to start a conversation. She has been labeled a 'backyard snob' at school since anytime she tries to talk, she stutters. She displays isolative inclinations even when at school because of Papa's authoritarianism. Oppression at the national level heralds silencing. This silencing is what is expected of Aunty Ifeoma at the University and when she speaks out she is sacked. The system is totally intolerant. The state power controls whatever information consumed by the public and such censoring is evident in the media. A news reporter and critic of the system, Ade Cocker, suffer incarceration and eventually death. The state instills fear in all those who want to speak or those who have a dissenting voice.

The question by Ade Cocker when he visits Eugene's family on his way to Lagos is ironic in that it ridicules Papa's domestic oppression. Cocker asks, 'Imagine what The Standard would be if we were all quiet' (58). This statement serves to indict Papa who uses the paper to comment on issues of national/public concern, in fact freedom of the Nigerians, yet does not give his family members room to voice their opinions. Okuyade (2009)

conceptualizes silence in Purple Hibiscus as an articulation of how the dominant group employs it to regulate the subservient groups around the margins. Uwakweh (1995) conceptualizes silence as a patriarchal weapon of control used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure. In this study we take silence as a weapon employed by the state and its phallographic apparatus to keep the citizens always dominated. Papa uses religion to justify the silencing of his family but the state employs violence to keep the governed submissive. Jaja, Kambili and their mother speak with their spirits. They use their eyes at times. Kambili listens to Jaja answer Papa:

I stared at Jaja. Had something come loose in his head? Papa insisted we call it host because 'host' came close to capturing the essence, the sacredness, of Christ's body. Wafer was too secular (6).

The silence that comes after the scene above is interrupted by the ceiling fan as it slices through the air. When Jaja leaves the table before the prayers after meals, Kambili gives a stare, 'I turned to stare at him. At least he was saying the thanks the right way, the way we always did after meal. But he was also doing what we never did...' (14).

These episodes indicate that free will of this family is so constricted that a stare becomes a mode of communication for the muted group. This is what happens at the national level when the citizens are overly silenced by the political systems. People like Nwankiti Ogechi and Ade Cocker dare speak against the system and its weaknesses, which becomes a direct attack on the head of state (Big Oga) and the consequence is death. Okuyade (2009) further argues that just like Kambili, Jaja and their mother, the Nigerian people continue to be subjected to silent spaces, which is the art of the leaders stealing the nation's conscience and hence its voice.

It is out of this desperation that Mama believes that she cannot move out of her marriage and subsequently remains under Eugene's control. The state controls its people so much that many cannot disentangle themselves from its grip. The movement of aunty Ifeoma and Phillipa to America is a kind of exile where the citizens have to identify a safe location to speak back to the forces of oppression like Amaka is doing. Kambili says:

Amaka used to write the office of the head of State, even the Nigerian Ambassador in America, to complain about the poor state of Nigeria's justice system. She said nobody acknowledged the letters but still it was important to her that she do *something* [sic] (300).

Amaka and other citizens in exile could not register their complaints while at home and thus by being away they are in a position to condemn leaders' excesses without fear of intimidation. For Jaja and Kambili, moving to Nsukka is a kind of journey that comes as an eye opener and heralds the quest for autonomy. It symbolises the movement from oppressive spaces to more accommodative spaces where they are able and secure to speak back.

The University of Nigeria, Nsukka and St. Agnes Catholic Church are social institutions that do not accept an opposing voice and which are linked to the neo-colonial state of Nigeria. The university should be the centre of both academic and social freedom but it turns out to be corrupt in the selection of administrators, salaries for lecturers are not paid and students go without water and lights. The irony in Purple Hibiscus is that the state has taken over the institution in the appointment of the 'sole administrator' against the traditions so as to control that freedom and to isolate those opposed to the system.

Aunty Ifeoma, Papa Nnukwu and Phillipa are the elements among the citizenry who oppose undemocratic state policies. They suffer a lot since just like Papa-Nnukwu is never supported materially by the son, so are those who oppose the head of State (Big Oga). Papa Nnukwu is not ready to go against his democratic convictions symbolised by his worship of Chukwu; he cannot destroy his gods and their shrine. Ifeoma strongly opposes the ideas of her brother that she stops wearing make-ups. She also opposes Eugene's idea of taking Amaka to a convent. Eugene had promised Ifeoma a car if she went his way but then Ifeoma is one of those die-hard opposition figures who cannot sell their freedom for material gains. Ifeoma becomes a symbol of iconoclasm and demystifier of a patriarchal and despotic political system. She is one of those Moyana (1996) would describe as 'Women who refuse to be compartmentalized into the chiseled up roles' (30). Marriage institution is therefore symbolic of the national arrangement between the leaders and the citizens. Polygamy and its attendant mistrust, rivalries and petty competition stand for the nation with the several tribes as identified by Ogunyemi (1996) in African Wo/man Palava as discussed in chapter two.

Nsukka for Kambili is a place where ideal freedom is realised, 'Nsukka started it all; Aunty Ifeoma's little garden next to the verandah of her flat began to lift the silence' (116). Nsukka and its purple flowers then becomes a symbol of liberty and freedom. It is here where Kambili's complete development is realised. She smiles, talks, cries, sings, laughs, jokes and falls in love. And as mentioned earlier in this study, it is in Nsukka where Kambili learns that there's a different side of Catholicism where women are not controlled on what to wear by the church. In Nsukka Kambili realises that Papa Nnukwu

is not a pagan as she has been made to believe by her father but very religious. She observes him one morning when he is praying and realises the diversity of religion as opposed to Eugene's fundamentalism.

The movement and interaction of characters with other people is what makes them conscious of their exploitation but Eugene curtails such movement. Adichie appears to suggest that people should take a journey from what they often consider secure ground so as to examine their state in relation to other areas. The journey could even be psychological as realised in the episode that follows the death of Eugene and the incarceration of Jaja. The different spaces help both the characters and the audience to explore the different levels of atrocities the characters go through in the two novels.

In *Nsukka* there are no rigid written schedules for Kambili and Jaja like they go through at Enugu. These schedules match with the prescribed government policies and decrees which restrain and subdue the masses. In *Nsukka* life is controlled by common sense and there is relative freedom and creativity at Ifeoma's house. Enugu is a place of confinement and oppression. At the national level, people are silenced and all they happen to say is censored and a journalist can get killed anytime. The citizens should only say those things which praise and please the Big Oga and his system. Failure to heap praise on the system attracts wrath as it happens to Jaja when he does not praise Papa's new product.

The quest for freedom and democracy on the side of citizens is captured by Kambili and Jaja's rebelliousness and Mama's action to decapitate patriarchy by poisoning Eugene so as to liberate herself and her children. Adichie, as Okuyade observes, explores the shades of female marginalization stemming from patriarchy and how it relates to the government's exploitation of the masses. She also writes to discourage people from overcondoning oppression.

By the use of irony Adichie is able to comment on the decay and hypocrisy at the national level using the symbol of the family which serves as an intertext in her novels. When Papa is described by Father Benedict as a champion of truth and freedom we identify the way the nation and church are complicit in oppression of women. Papa, through The Standard, champions the freedom of the citizens yet he is not able to guarantee the same at the domestic level. Papa's story parallels that of those leaders who preach democracy but act undemocratically; it is the equivalent of national figures who use their privileged position to invade and control the public space in Nigeria.

In Half of a Yellow Sun the birth and struggle of nationhood is explored through families and the romantic experiences of the principal characters. The unequal and unfulfilling relationship between Nigeria and the former colonial masters is explored through the lives of Richard, the white man, studying Igbo-Ukwu art and Kainene the masculine, aggressive, business minded daughter of Chief Ozoibia.

Nigeria which was fraudulently born by a hurriedly crafted independence constitution by Britain is captured in the birth of Baby- Chiamaka. Though Baby is born of Odenigbo and Amala, Olanna adopts and cares for her because Odenigbo's mother could not keep her. We learn that Odenigbo's mother wanted a grandson and so when Amala delivers a baby girl she discards the whole idea. The birth of this child is symbolic of the birth of Nigeria which was created by the colonial masters bringing people who were culturally diverse thus making it impossible to actualize a homogenous national identity. The way Nigeria was realised by coercion from the British soldier-merchant and his wife, so is Baby born of Amala and Odenigbo not from their own will but coerced by Odenigbo's mother. The independence of the Nigerian nation is captured in Half of a Yellow Sun, The World Was Silent When We Died' (115) to be written by Richard and we get the history of the modern nation and the frosty unfriendly merger between North (Hausa-Fulani axis) and the South (Igbo-nation) symbolised by Kainene and Olanna respectively.

This symbolism is visible because Kainene and Olanna have always looked at things differently although they are twins. This compares well with the Northern and Southern Nigeria who have different aspirations though the country is a British child (born from colonial experience). The twin sisters have drifted apart even though it is said that there was no major quarrel. The North is said to have been favoured by the colonialists and Britain fixed the pre-independence constitution in favour of the North, thus giving it control of the central government. Kainene's soft spot for white boyfriends is captured when Olanna observes that, 'She had never liked any of Kainene's boyfriends and never liked that Kainene dated so many white men in England' (36). Such aspect of Kainene

falling for white men represent the fact that the Northern communities of the country do not trust Southerners and the North would better hire a white man than give a technical job to a fellow from the Southern side. Britain created and perpetuated oppressive myths about different tribes and encouraged tribal divisions through prejudices as the narrator observes about Susan:

She spoke with authority about Nigeria and Nigerians... She told him the Hausa in the North were a dignified lot, the Igbo are surly and money-loving, and Yoruba were rather jolly, even if they were first-rate lickspittles (55).

This informs us about the way Britain treated the inhabitants of different regions during the colonial period and after independence.

From the start the Southern block (Biafra) symbolised by Olanna is not friendly to Britain like the Northern side which is identified with Kainene. The evils which are characteristic of the neocolonial leadership like corruption, tribalism, and fast amassing of wealth characterise Kainene. She is always talking to the people in government or in the army to win this tender or that. The desire of the West to exploit the African resources is captured by Richard who comes to Africa due to the allure of the Igbo-Ukwu art. Once in Africa, Richard is attracted to another African gem (Kainene) and discards the Igbo-Ukwu art project.

Olanna is a revolutionary and does not cohabit with the exploiter and so she is against her parents' ideas and their choice of Chief Okonji. Chief Okonji, like Olanna's parents is a corrupt and ruthless exploiter. Olanna values other people's humanity and that is the reason she discounts how her parents and politicians treat those less endowed or engage in pilfering the national resources. The choicelessness of the citizens as it concerns

national identity is captured through her and Odenigbo. The two are pushed by parents to pick a choice the parents think fit. Olanna severally refuses to take partners suggested by her parents and instead goes for her choice; Odenigbo. This refusal symbolises the desire of the Igbos to pick Biafra as their postcolonial identity and not Nigeria. The parents declare her a rebel just as General Gowon declares of those in Biafra who had seceded. Adichie seems to suggest that there is some power in people choosing their destiny. The commitment to the course of Biafra is a pointer to this fact.

The relationship of the twin sisters is the relationship of Nigeria and Biafra and no wonder at the end of the story, as the war ends, Kainene travels away never to come home again. This shows how life will always be for those who were briefly Biafrans and were beaten back to the federation against their wish. Although Adichie suggests that the two need each other and should cultivate sisterhood their differences have been so cemented that there is no possibility of living comfortably with one another. Kainene is rough, belligerent and pushy and domineering like the North and that is why she wants the sister to attack Odenigbo over Alice and help in the fight in case Odenigbo retaliates. She violently confronts Father Marcel after it emerges that he exploits underage refugee girl. She harbours the feelings similar to those of the North towards anyone who threatens her interests.

The male characters betray their spouses, girlfriends or fiancés at different times. This maps well with how the leaders betray the citizens. Security and basic utilities like water, electricity and fuel are lacking yet the leaders linger in power. Betrayal of women by men

is explored through Odenigbo, Ugwu, Father Marcel, Chief Ozobia and Chief Okonji among others. The analysis of how male characters betray their women maps with how postcolonial leadership in Nigeria is a let down to the people they purport to serve.

We can argue that men who rape women are tropes of political establishments that impoverish the masses in the name of serving them. The Biafra army which is supposed to protect the people is involved in the evil of raping innocent women. It is the same women who supply the army with food and other essentials. Women who are poor commit themselves to serving the army in their win-the-war efforts but what they get in return is the humiliation of rape. General Ojukwu imprisons a man accusing him of being a saboteur simply because he wants his wife and so the political class uses their power to disadvantage the masses. Adichie suggests that whether Nigerian or Biafran, political leaders just like men are not dedicated to the citizens they serve. Whatever Ojukwu does is not different from the action of Ugwu and other soldiers who commandeer a civilian car and molest the man when in essence they should provide him with security. The author questions the Biafra revolution in that if it is drawn as unkind to women (and citizens) and disruptive to the familial order how would the attendant republic give birth to national life full of hope to its people?

Adichie also highlights the negative impact of religious fundamentalism on the masses through Eugene's family. Eugene is a religious fanatic, a strict adherent of the Catholic dogma, madly obsessed with it to the point of disregarding those for whom he is

supposed to care. Religion has a special place in the politics of Nigeria as Ouma (2007)

notes:

The history of religion in the Nigerian post colonial space is interesting. While Nigeria has clear ethnic differences that contribute to the turbulent past, the presence of religion has come to be recognised as a major determinant alongside tribal identities (28).

This resonates well with the studies of Toyin (1998) in his book Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies who identifies religion as a major element in identity formation in the Nigerian body politic. Toyin explores how religious fundamentalism has grown since independence. This fundamentalism is explored by Adichie through the characters of Eugene, Mohamed Abdulmalik and Mohamed's mother. These are characters who can do anything in the name of religion. While Falola explores religious over-determinism at the national level, Adichie fictionalizes the same at the domestic level. Toyin figures out the causes of fundamentalism and concludes that religious revivalism and rigorous worship is a kind of religious reordering of society that endeavors to fight opposition at the socio-political front.

The differences in the practice of worship and commitment as found in Enugu and Nsukka point to differing world views and possible 'othering' which is the greatest source of fanaticism and exclusion. There happens also to be an issue of missionaries who teach people to disregard their local customs as is the case with Father Benedict through whose influence Eugene has rejected his aging father and labeled him a pagan.

Kambili observes:

Father Benedict had changed things in the parish, such as insisting that the credo and kyrie be recited only in Latin; Igbo was unacceptable. Also, hand clapping was to be kept at a minimum, lest the solemnity of mass be compromised. But he allowed offertory songs in Igbo; he called them native songs (4).

Such rigid orders push religion away from the people giving it very uncompromising features which can be abused by the fundamentalists to control, isolate and oppress other people. Papa Eugene is always condemning others and that way becomes isolated from his immediate relatives and family members. Father Benedict represents those missionaries who think that Africans are not religious enough. He holds the racial view that African practices can compromise the purity of the mass. He thus deters clapping, and Igbo songs in his sermons which make him prejudiced. The two men Papa Eugene and Father Benedict represent the authority of the church and the state power just like Ibrahim Babangida (Nigeria military ruler) led Nigeria to participate fully in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1986 and that way mingled religion, politics and violence.

These historical events make us conclude that Purple Hibiscus is set in the late 1980's or early 1990's during the reigns of Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. As a result then, this novel cannot escape the socio-political motifs of the time because of the author's consciousness.

3.2 Romantic Relationships, Marital Infidelity and the Post-Colonial Condition in the Nigerian Nation

Shirlita (2008) identifies Eros as the power that connects people sexually. She explores how romantic power relations engender the modern nation. Shirlita further argues that it is only when love is expressed and sex intimated that national consolidation becomes imaginable and thus a birth of national allegory in romantic novels. Adichie appears to

centre her narratives on love and romantic relationships, but behind these issues is her big scheme to analyse the Nigerian socio-political situation.

When Olanna and Odenigbo become lovers it is a relationship that from the onset is healthy, but Odenigbo's mother comes and through Amala makes the son betray Olanna. Olanna on her part sleeps with Richard who is her sister's boyfriend. Olanna's action of sleeping with Richard is aimed at revenge on Odenigbo but then it widens the distance between her and the sister Kainene. Olanna's action is similar to the action of the West supporting the two warring sides during the Biafra conflict. Odenigbo's act is symbolic of how the leaders of the new Nigeria betrayed the citizens by shifting their attention to other quarters and probably cohabiting with the imperialists. Independence to the Nigerians became a fraud since the benefits went to only a few individuals. Immediately the independence struggle was over and the new nation born, the leaders forgot the pre-independence nationalist goals. The ills of corruption, nepotism, religious intolerance and tribalism are what Adichie blames to have diverted the interests of the Nigerian leaders immediately after independence. During the first coup we realise that the problem the new nation goes through is due to failure of the national leadership:

My dear countrymen, the aim of the Revolutionary Council is to establish a nation free from corruption and internal strife. Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten percent, those that seek the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office, the tribalists, the nepotisms, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles, those that have corrupted our society (123).

When Odenigbo's mother makes the son sleep with Amala she becomes one of those people in low places who want to divide the new nation (that of Odenigbo and Olanna) completely so that she can remain in control. Odenigbo's mother is likened to the

colonial masters who want to be in control of Nigeria despite the fact that the colony has come of age and is ready to rule itself. External influences have always had negative effects on many African states just like the problems Olanna and Odenigbo go through due to Mama's intrusion. Adichie's writing therefore challenges her countrymen and women to seriously discover where the rain began to beat them, as Achebe would say.

Adichie attacks those leaders fond of shifting blame for the national failings and that is why Olanna informs Odenigbo that 'it's you not your mother. It happened because you let it happen. 'You must take responsibility (240).' African leaders, through the ugly scene of Odenigbo are being chided to stop shifting blame and instead take responsibility since it is upon them that the mandate of running state affairs is entrusted. Olanna thinks that Odenigbo has no right to harass Richard. The narrator points out that:

They sat on the sofa in the living room. He had no right to harass Richard, to direct his anger at Richard, and yet she understood why he had.
' I never blamed Amala, she said, it was to you that I had given my trust and the only way a stranger could tamper with that trust was with your permission. I blamed only you' (246).

Adichie wants the national leaders to accept blame and take responsibility for their actions and failures. When Odenigbo requests Olanna that they marry so that Mama would leave them alone she instead informs him that she slept with Richard. Olanna wants Odenigbo to accept and take responsibility for all his actions. She is able to accept the fact that what happened between her and Richard took two and no party should be blamed in isolation. Her acceptance serves to bring about healing on the part of Richard who thinks he is to blame. It also shows that Olanna is a strong woman able to identify and accept her past mistakes. Adichie challenges African leaders through her allegories to map the destiny of their nations. Adichie calls upon the leaders to take charge of the

destiny of their countries since African leaders have normally blamed history for the problems that bedevil the continent.

Disappointment of political subjects by political leaders is shown to continue to occur in the nation through the allegory of *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This is symbolised by Odenigbo's sexual intercourse with Amala and Alice and the tensions such actions bring to his relationship with Olanna. Mr. Ozobia's extra-marital relationship can also be interpreted as a metaphor with national significance. Domestic betrayals are emblematic of the betrayal at the national scene where men who hold political positions have failed in leadership. The psychological agony experienced by Olanna, Kainene and their mother is equivalent to the sense of betrayal, hopelessness and pain experienced by the people who are let down by their leaders.

Alice undergoes similar emotional bafflement after being hoodwinked by an army colonel to a marriage that never was. The dream of the new nation is symbolised by Alice's child who dies before Enugu falls to federal forces. Nsukka is a place where the greatness of independent Africa is explored by intellectuals who converge at Odenigbo's house. Its fall can be compared to the death of Alice's child which marks the death of a great dream of independent Africa. In *Purple Hibiscus* Nsukka is a place of little peace, comfort and freedom at the domestic level. The death of Alice's child indicates the dead hopes of the citizens due to the continued failure of national leadership. Through Alice, Adichie holds responsible both the leader and led since Alice's suffering and humiliation results from her scuttling affairs with married men. The author's comment here is simple

in that the people should reject anything that is likely to put anyone into any form of suffering. Adichie is challenging us to examine ourselves and how we have made others uncomfortable by our own actions before we start to blame others. Alice's act where she sleeps with Odenigbo becomes a source of frustration to others. She has let circumstances take control of her destiny just like the way the citizens are complicit in the failures of the leaders. This parallel well with Chief Ozobia and the Nigerian middle class who are drawn into corrupt deals and similarly encouraging the leaders to engage in the malpractices likely to destroy the nation.

The fact that citizens have a fair share of blame in their suffering is highlighted through the character of special Julius who takes to bed five girls at a go. These are the 'young-young girls that crawl around looking for sugar daddies' (278). The citizens symbolised by these girls indicate how they participate in degrading themselves. This is quite similar to what happens with the white mercenary commander who throws girls on their backs in the open where the men can see him. He engages in sex with the girls holding his bag of money. Material desire and self-enrichment are critiqued since it can make citizens do odd and demeaning things. The men who watch the white mercenary when he sleeps with the girls are symbolic of the emasculated and powerless citizens who are unable to condemn degrading acts at the national level.

Eberechi's predicament with the soldier is an emblem of how people abuse their lot by conspiring to deny others their rights. Eberechi, an abused citizen is aware of the abuse yet she has no control over her situation. The soldier is a source of authority and power

and thus he is bribed to put the brother in employment. This is similar to cases where citizens are used as pawns by those who are in control. Corruption is seen to manifest itself in several forms and those who are powerless can bribe their way to get jobs from those in power by giving sex or giving out their daughters. Eberechi is used as sex bait just like Olanna whom the parents wanted to use to get a contract from the Finance Minister. Adichie's novels critique corruption and specifically situations where citizens become complicit and perpetrate the worst using women as commodities. Those in power, more so men, are attacked for abuse and misuse of the weak and the vulnerable. Ugwu's sloppy sex encounters with Chinyere and Eberechi is symbolic of the casualness with which the leaders in the Nigerian nation engage with the masses.

The white man Richard and the double-dealing that he has between Kainene and Olanna represent the deceitful relationship between the West, Biafra and Nigeria. Nigeria and Biafra involve Britain and other Western governments in their conflicts. Kainene who has an upper hand in the relationship with Richard accepts Olanna's transgressing and forgives her without her apologising. This is the same way Nigeria treats Biafra after the civil war. On the other hand the sisters have come to realise their sisterhood despite personal differences just like the Northerners and the Southerners and Nigerian nationhood. Olanna needs the sister's fearlessness, courage and masculine nature and should accept her inadequacies and accommodate her. The ugly and almost frosty relationship between the sisters is symbolic of the problems between Nigeria and Biafra (Gowon/Ojukwu) and just as Ojukwu goes away one of the sisters is lost and the other is left behind after the war. The disappearance of Kainene signifies the disappearance of the

ideals of nationhood which have never been realised in Nigeria due to ethnicity and other forms of negative regional nationalisms.

Olanna and Kainene's differences become sites for the exploration of national differences between the North (Hausa-Fulani axis) and the South Eastern (Igbo axis). The differences can only be solved through communication by engaging constructively as Olanna engages Kainene:

‘Why don't we talk anymore, Kainene?’
‘What a question’ Kainene sounded amused and Olanna imagined that mocking smile pulling up on one side of her mouth (103).

There is a deeply entrenched mistrust between the two sisters since what Olanna could imagine is mockery from the twin sister. Similar feelings characterise the relationship of Northern Nigeria and South-eastern Nigeria. The need for communication is read through Arize, who advises the cousin that:

You and sister Kainene should talk. What happened in the past is the past.
‘You can only talk to the person who wants to talk to you,’ Olanna said. She wanted to change the subject. She always wanted to change the subject when Kainene came up (129).

The differences between the North and the South are rarely a subject of public debate and Biafra history and secession is never a part of Nigerian national discourse as Adichie highlights in one of her interviews with Kimber (2006). In Half of a Yellow Sun and Purple Hibiscus Adichie creates a micro-discourse where the larger picture of post colonial Nigeria and its history are explored. For purposes of national healing, Adichie suggests, the North should engage with the South so that a peaceful and harmonious co-existence can be realised. The past should very much be linked to the present and future and therefore the statement made by Arize that ‘whatever happened in the past should be

left to the past' (129) needs deconstruction. It is out of looking at the past that Nigeria will understand its historical blunders and work to realise true and lasting peace.

When Kainene and Richard fail to have a satisfying sexual intercourse, Kainene suggests that there are other ways of probably achieving satisfaction. Richard is quite weakened by his failure to satisfy Kainene and wishes to get fertility/potency herbs. Such incident can be read as the failure of the West and Africa to realise a fulfillment in their relationships. Adichie creates the metaphor to explore how the West exploits Third World countries. The relationship between the West and Africa is never fulfilling as is suggested by the several failures of Richard in Kainene's bed. The purpose of Richards's journey to Africa is to make sense of the Igbo-Ukwu art. Richard represents the West's ideology that Africa never had such knowledge at the time of Viking raids. Such racial trivialization and marginalization of black people is what Adichie undermine in her writing.

Through Richard and Kainene, (white man and black woman) the imperialists and the neo-colonial Nigeria are imagined. Richard fails Kainene even during the Biafra conflict since he does not write to influence the opinion of the western countries toward Biafra. He strongly feels that this is not his war. Much of his time is spent analyzing his past (betrayal of sleeping with Olanna) representational of the West and Africa historical moments. He writes stories which are unlikely to manipulate opinion in the West. His people, the British government help Gowon to vanquish the Biafran. What we read from such occurrence is that no matter how close Africa is to the west, not much will be gained by Africa from the west. Although Richard depends on Kainene for his upkeep, his

devotion to her cause is not absolute, suggesting that the affiliation between blacks and whites will never be reciprocative.

3.3 Rape as a Political Metaphor

Rape is an expression of power and authority. It is a form of violence and most of the perpetrators of the crime are men. Men desire to rape women in order to assert their authority over them. Rape can even be a symptom of inequality and the desire on the part of those who wield power to assert it on the powerless. It is an action rooted in masculine behaviour that serves to perpetuate patriarchal order.

The basic argument here is that in Adichie's novels rape has a deeper political significance than just men forcing themselves on women sexually. The several episodes of rape identified by Adichie serve to communicate the plunder, misuse and destruction characteristic of the ruling class. It is the men who are depicted as powerful and they rape women who are seemingly powerless.

Half of a Yellow Sun's main character, Ugwu, has always held the desire to rape the cousin Nnesinachi. He wants to purchase tear gas so that he can use it on her because he overhears that it can make one to pass out. Ugwu's thoughts are symbolic of how the desire to have power comes with another desire to misuse the same power especially on the powerless. Olanna argues that her father and political friends are always robbing the nation and do not suffer the indignity that is suffered by one of the mother's domestic servants who steals less than a kilogram of rice. The stealing from the public and the

plunder of national resources is a form of rape. Rape then can be seen as a trope Adichie uses to comment on the national decay in Nigeria.

The indignity suffered by the bar-tender as she is raped by Ugwu and High-tech is the same indignity the masses suffer when those in power exploit them. The ruling class whether in Nigeria or in Biafra is able to rob and dispossess the nation thus impoverishing the masses. The bar-tender rape incident where the soldiers hold the girl on the floor and rape her in turns epitomises the behaviour of the post colonial political leaders who are guilty of misusing and stealing of state resources. The bar-tender is powerless before the soldiers, just like the citizens are before the state power machinery. The horror of this scene comes when the soldiers applaud as Ugwu and High-tech rape the small helpless girl. The narration of the rape episode is similar to what we are treated to at Ozobia's house where Chief Okonji the Finance Minister is overly extolled by the Ozobia's as he engages in shoddy dealings. Adichie's suggestion is that those who rape are as bad as those who do nothing to stop it.

The broadcast over radio Kaduna that all Igbo women should be raped can be read as suggesting that Igbo land or Biafra should be conquered and suppressed since they want to rebel against the powerful North. Rape is thus symbolic of total domination of the Igbo nation of Biafra. The military power employed in the bid to defeat Biafra corresponds to the phallic power of rape. When Special Julius narrates what the Nigerian soldiers are doing at Enugu it is paralleled with looting of everything they can land their hands on:

'We will recapture Enugu,' Prof. Ekwenugo said.
'How can we recapture Enugu when the vandals have occupied it?' Special Julius said. 'They are even looting toilet seats! A man who escaped from Udi told

me. And they choose the best houses and force people's wives and daughters to spread their legs for them and cook for them' (285).

Adichie therefore figures stealing of public resources as equivalent to the rape of the Nigerian nation.

The raping of Anulika by the federal forces can further be interpreted as the desire to dominate and control the state of Biafra by Nigeria. Nnesinachi narrates:

'They forced themselves on her. Five of them.' ...
They said the first one that climbed on top of her, she bit him on the arm and drew blood. They nearly beat her to death. One of her eyes has refused to open well since (421).

This scene symbolises the attack on Biafra and the deadly war that ensues between them and Nigeria. Anulika's action to resist rape is metaphorical of Biafra's battle for self-determination. Biafra was nearly vanquished and that is why Nnesinachi observes that 'they nearly beat her to death' (421). Rape in this scene symbolises a complex relationship of victim (citizens) and the rapist (Nigerian leadership) where the victim can easily get killed for any slight resistance.

Rape in this text therefore serves to highlight destruction, looting and stealing from the leaders, as well as domination and oppression and abuse of the citizenry by the state. The soldiers represent the state apparatus of power and through them rape is effected on the weak (women) citizens.

3.4 Connotations of Death and Maternal Miscarriage

Adichie's novels seem to carry a meaning above the literal level. The stormy weather which mark every tragedy, the death of the characters, harmattan winds, and different

colours of the flowers in the family garden are all symbolic. In Purple Hibiscus for instance everything is set to fall apart by forces that the characters are not able to control. The falling apart signifies a total shift, a new vision, a new hope and complete disregard of the old order. This is so because Adichie's writing should herald a voice and a uniquely powerful voice capable of canceling out other dominating forces.

Death and miscarriages is a recurrent feature in the two novels. Adichie uses the symbol to connote an end of optimism occasioned by dictatorship and thwarted vision. In this study we consider death and miscarriage as a metaphor of dashed hopes on the part of citizens as they struggle to realise true nationhood.

Mama has several miscarriages in Purple Hibiscus which point to the dashed hopes of realizing her womanhood. She has no control over the miscarriages because they mainly emanate from Eugene's assaults. Such miscarriages point to thwarted democracy, disillusionment and hopelessness that characterise Nigeria and its people. In as much as the masses conceive hope of renewed governance their leaders immediately stimulate a miscarriage in either a form of massive corruption or despotism. The leadership kills the hope of masses by being intolerant, gagging the press and encroaching on people's private lives and individual spaces. The citizens understand that, 'what we Nigerian needed was not soldiers ruling us, what we needed was renewed democracy' (25). The people need democracy and not coups and so their hopes or such is miscarried every time because of the soldiers and leaders who are power hungry and who instigate coups. When

the papers ask lots of questions and people go out to agitate for change Kambili comes to a realisation:

But nothing changed at home. Jaja and I still followed out schedules ... The only change was Mama's belly: It started to bulge, softly and subtly. At first it looked like a deflated football ... (28).

Mama's bulging stomach and the expectations she and her children have indicates the hope there is among the people to have a change in national leadership. The hope becomes despair when Mama miscarries and she announces, 'there was an accident, the baby is gone' (34). Such finality indicates the end of great expectations. When Mama miscarries it is paralleled with a national miscarriage of democracy and freedom realised from failed leadership. Mama miscarries after Papa assaults her while Jaja and Kambili are in Nsukka and what follows is the death of the head of state (Big Oga) atop a prostitute and thereafter the death of Papa in the hands of Mama. The two deaths are symbolic of the desire in the masses to end tyranny by whatever means.

Death in Adichie's Purple Hibiscus symbolises an end to undemocratic and oppressive systems. The death of the Big Oga indicate the death of dictatorship, misrule, oppression and all those manifestations of state power which continuously decentre the interests of the majority. The author suggests that such an ending is inevitable for those leaders who exploit the masses since the people will always rebel against oppression. The death of the Big Oga dies atop a prostitute captures the reality in Africa where leaders are life presidents against the will of their people. They always want to die in power, at the helm of things. The death of the Big Oga is thus symbolic of the end of self-declared life presidents and possible accommodation of other voice(s) since Big Oga has completely silenced opposition by killing Ade Cocker and Nwankiti Ogechi who parallel Dele Giwa,

a journalist with News Watch who died from a letter bomb bearing the government seal during Ibrahim Babangida's regime and Ken Saro-Wiwa, a people's activist from the Niger Delta, executed by and Sani Abacha's government. The two are representatives of the silenced masses and those who agitate for the rights of the majority.

Soyinka (2007) in his memoir You Must Set forth at Dawn captures several years of silenced national space where uttering the word 'democracy' was enough to earn one a detention. He captures coups and civil killings that rocked Nigeria since independence and challenges the leaders to take charge of the fate of the nation. On the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight companions Soyinka writes that it 'signaled the futility, indeed the death of dialogue' (419). He, like Adichie calls for compromise and tolerance as we tackle both national and domestic challenges.

Papa's death is also a pointer to the end of tyranny at the domestic level. Papa symbolises that phallocratic authority of the state and so his death is the wish of the masses and it also means that such authority is completely subverted. The two main symbols of the male power and control, Big Oga and Eugene, die in the hands of women which is a pointer to the fact that real change will come from the people. The novels serve as a freedom creed calling the people to rise and challenge all oppressive practices. In Papa's murder Adichie appears to suggest that a bloody revolution at the national level is inevitable when leadership is untenable with people's aspirations.

Papa Nnukwu represents those traditional cultures which oppress women and prop the patriarchal order. He is of the mind that women do not count in his society. He upholds the paternal traditions which accord inheritance and even naming to males and disregard women. His death therefore is symbolic of the end of such oppressive and retrogressive customs. In Half of a Yellow Sun the death of Odenigbo's mother can be understood in the same way as that of Papa Nnukwu. Odenigbo's mother is also the champion of those oppressive cultural practices which are built on inequality and serve to perpetuate patriarchal order.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter surveys the allegory of the Nigeria nation that is inherent in the two narratives. The two narratives have extensively used female protagonists and women who taken up central roles which are symbolic of the citizens and their relationship with the phallocratic state power in the post colonial Nigeria.

We explored how the family serves as a microcosm of the state and the authority of the father parallels that of the head of state. Women's struggle to subvert the patriarchal social order is mapped to illustrate the citizens' struggle to achieve their rights and true democracy. The twin sisters Kainene and Olanna in Half of a Yellow Sun are symbolic of the North (Federal Nigeria) and the South-Eastern (Biafra). Kainene's inclination to the West was identified as parallel to the Northern Nigerian ties with the former colonial masters. Olanna's leaning to revolutionary and freedom ideas symbolise the desire of identity that characterised the Biafrans immediately after Nigeria got independence.

Marital problems and romantic relationships have been identified and allegorically analysed in terms of Eros and Polis. Finally death was identified as connotation to an end of oppressive structures at both domestic and national levels.

The next Chapter proceeds to reveal Adichie's gender vision in line with the recurrent social and political motifs in her novels.

CHAPTER FOUR

Adichie's Gender Vision

4.0 General Introduction

The chapter investigates Adichie's vision on gender found in her two novels. All literary artistic works encompass a vision since the author creates something from the way she perceives things whether real or metaphysical. Mugubi (1994) argues that an author moulds a work of art from his/her perception of reality and all truth underlying that reality. He further contends that a writer uses the facts of reality to conjure up a vision of the future. Mugubi further affirms that the writer's vision can be deduced from the issues he/she explores and how he/she explores them. Mugubi's observation on author's vision is insightful as we unravel the gender vision in Adichie's two novels. Adichie engages herself with special concerns on how society can be transformed for the betterment of humanity. She presents her arguments valorizing the positive and life enhancing attitudes and qualities while at the same time castigating all the features likely to demean human beings. Tied to her gender issues are other issues of concern to her society and Africa.

Kolawale (1997) argues that much of the African women literature has been concerned with change either overtly or covertly. Change according to her is heralded by the process of literary creativity. She says:

Many of the writers have confessed that they are motivated to write by the impulse to change the status quo, interrogate patriarchy, imperialism and Western Feminism. This is closely related to the desire to liberate African women, change their consciousness and create a positive self perception to enhance progress (153).

We then affirm that the act of writing, for Adichie, is out of a desire to liberate women and African society from the yoke of patriarchy, imperialism, misrule, religious fundamentalism, negative ethnicity and more so to create a positive self-perception. The characters who populate her stories are not only carriers of culture but agents of socio-political change. She calls for a transformation on the way we treat our fellow human beings regardless of race, tribe or social class, change on even the way we perceive ourselves. This is the change that (in)form the vision of Adichie in her two novels. Her thrust is informed by the impulse to liberate, search for self-respect and dignity and a new quest for self definition for both African women and African people.

In a text that Adichie quotes in Half of a Yellow Sun written by Fredrick Douglas: Life and Times of Fredrick Douglas: An American Slave Narrative Written by Himself (1892), critics observe that women's rights was one of the agenda items for Douglas' devotion in freedom struggle. Douglas is believed to have looked at the liberation of the black man and its connection with women suffrage and resistance. It is believed that he found the argument for Women Rights a perfect vehicle to build his case for the black emancipation. This is the same way in which the neo-colonial struggle in Africa, as we have argued in Chapter three, is linked to the struggle of women in the two novels. The struggle informs Adichie's vision and her world view is enriched by her personal experiences as a woman and a Third World person.

Ogundipe-Leslie's assertions in the 'Female Writer and Her Commitment' inform this study since she emphasizes that the female writer:

Should be committed to her third world reality and... Being aware of oneself as a third world person implies being politically conscious, offering reader's perspectives on and perceptions of colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism as they affect and shape our lives and historical destinies... But any true intelligence in Africa must note the circumscription of our lives here by the reality of imperialism and neo-colonialism (11).

And for this assertion, Adichie grapples with several problems, non-gender, that manifests in Africa and tries to recommend solutions within the larger global milieu of imperialism and neo-colonialism. She looks at corruption, misrule, ethnic tensions, tribal conflicts and the imperial influence on Africa and proposes a way out. Adichie is therefore a committed Third World writer because African Literature cannot afford to thrive in the luxury of art for arts' sake since the continent reels under suffocating and devastating social problems that writers should confront and possibly propose solutions to. Kolawale insists that African women are so much plagued by problems of survival to engage in male-chauvinism struggles alone.

In the larger sense therefore, African Women writers are Womanists. Womanists are traditionally universalists, a metaphor invoked by the garden, where there is room for all flowers to flourish equally and differently. This is captured by Adichie in Purple Hibiscus where Ifeoma's garden is symbolic of freedom of the oppressed Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice. Kolawale (1997) and Ogunyemi (1995) affirm that, Womanists are committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people male and female. Womanism, unlike feminism engages productively and effectively with male oppression. Womanism also explores gender oppression and female exploitation and suggests ways of confronting them.

Shigali (2008) in her analysis of Ogunjipe's six levels of oppression for women notably: colonialism, neo-colonialism, traditional structure backwardness, racial inferiority, man and negative self image, asserts that five of these are experienced by both African men and women. She calls for a multi-centred approach to pro-actively tackle the oppression of the African people. She asserts that for women and society to be totally emancipated, a holistic approach is necessary since for women, male is not the other but part of the human same. Each gender constitutes the critical half that goes ahead to make human whole. In regard to Shigali's perception, Adichie elaborates a society that does not discriminate one on gender basis. She explores women exploitation emanating from patriarchy and other foundations of human suffering in her Nigerian society eventually proposing possible solutions.

In this chapter, we argue that Adichie calls for complementation, compromise and negotiation as women struggle to have a voice in oppressive circumstances. Adichie uses her novels to project a gender vision of the Nigerian society by way of subversion of patriarchy, re-examination of post independence evils and the Biafra war (1967 – 1970), regarded as one of the worst historical tragedies to afflict Nigerian socio-political space. In her aspiration for change, Adichie attempts a re-ordering of society and goes further to suggest a better society for the oppressed Nigerian women and the marginalized Third World people. In reading her novels, we thus employ the womanist lens where we enter the texts seeking avenues of communication rather than justification of misunderstandings. We explore her ideas and attitudes toward gender complementarity,

regard for religion, culture and traditions, her political commitment to the ideals of her people and regard for marginalized groups including women.

Ogunyemi (1985) in her discussion of womanist approaches to reading the African novel in English suggests ways of tackling women oppression but calls for complementarity with men. According to her, the text should be community-centred rather than self-oriented or woman-centred. We thus proceed to discuss gender in the midst of other socio-political concerns in order to divulge Adichie's vision on gender in her works.

4.1 Gender Complementation

Ogunyemi (1996) urges African women to light 'friendly fire' (4), to have a discourse with men while remaining true to womanhood. She encourages complementarity rather than the disruptive notion of equality. This is the strand that we pursue as we read Adichie's two novels. Women oppression and subjugation is real and women writers whether womanist or otherwise do agree to this fact. African women writers challenge patriarchy but at the same time discourage confrontation and disruption of social life.

Adichie's Purple Hibiscus is built around the lives of Beatrice, Ifeoma and Kambili among others. These female characters portray one quality which is uniquely womanist. They are conscious of the male-engineered exploitation and prepared to confront patriarchy in all its manifestations. Beatrice is most oppressed and suffers most amongst all the female characters in Purple Hibiscus. Her husband Eugene is a domestic bully and an inconsiderate patriarch out to exert his crude masculine authority at the slightest provocation. Beatrice, however, remains steadfast and does not dissolve her marriage

even when things are not working. She cannot afford to be labeled a divorcee and wants to keep the family despite the odds that dog her efforts. She does not draw the children away from their father and commends Eugene for not taking a second wife as Mr.Ezendu did. This one great compliment toward Eugene captures Adichie's feeling on polygamy. It is simply unnecessary, exploitative and a retrogressive practice that needs to be urgently dealt with and discarded.

In Beatrice, we see a character who honestly plays her social responsibilities well even though she is brutally abused by her husband. She remains in the marriage for the sake of her children. She serves her husband and children diligently and dutifully as a wife and a mother. Kambili observes that she always plaited her hair on Sundays. In one episode the narrator observes:

I was at my study desk when Mama came into my room, my school uniforms piled on the crook of her arm. She placed them on my bed. She had brought them in from the lines in the backyard, where I had hung them to dry that morning...

'Thank you, Mama, I was about to bring them in,' I said, getting up to fold the clothes. It was not proper to let an older person do your chores, but Mama did not mind; there was so much that she did not mind (19).

Mama does not mind anything as much as it brings happiness and comfort to her children. She is ready to do these things even when they attract rebuke and assault from her husband as long as they bring solace to her children. She is even punished together with her children when Kambili takes Cornflakes before Eucharist feast because she has stomach cramps and should take Panadols, but she does not mind about it. She tries against all odds to keep her household intact. Adichie uses Beatrice to show the centrality of the African family and the role of women in promoting that institution. The world of

Beatrice feels complemented by her husband and the exchange she has with Ifeoma attests to that:

‘Stop it, stop being grateful. If Eugene had done that, he would have been the loser, not you.’
‘So you say. A woman with children and no husband what is that?’
‘Me.’
Mama shook her head. ‘You have come again Ifeoma. You know what I mean. How can a Woman live like that?’ Mama’s eyes had grown round, taking up more space on her face (75).

This discussion point to the feelings of Beatrice towards what we can call a complete family. The seriousness of the discussion between Ifeoma and Beatrice is indicated by the lighted face of the latter. A husband is necessary to make one complete and so Papa Nnukwu is obliged to pray for his daughter Ifeoma so that she finds a lovely man to marry her and probably make her happy. This indicates the centrality of family and husband to the African family. According to Shigali (2008) the husband is not other but half that complements the woman to make her whole. Ifeoma commends positively about her late husband. She says how much she loved him and this brings about the feelings of loss and want in the life she is living at the moment.

Ifeoma is progressive and feels that the husband and wife relation should not be marked by brutality of whatever magnitude. She advocates for concern of one another in the marriage arrangement thus she tells the sister-in-law that ‘Ifediora and I had nothing eh! Yet he never raised a hand to me’ (250). Adichie discredits situations where material things are used as the justification for women to remain permanently cooped in abusive marriages. Through Ifeoma and her house we witness love at the family and the bloom of diverse ideas in her house just like the flowers in her garden. Ifeoma’s family members’ diversity becomes a source of strength. As they prepare to go out of the

country there are those who are opposed to the same. All the divergences are accommodated. Adichie is building a vision whereby diversity should be encouraged and opposition accommodated at both national and domestic levels. Her thinking is that encouraging diversity would build enduring democracy and forbearance of others views in our societies.

Ifeoma's children are quite accommodative and do not even rebuke their uncle Eugene.

Amaka instead observes:

'Uncle Eugene is not a bad man, really,' Amaka said. 'People have problems, People make mistakes' ...

'I mean some people can't deal with stress,' ...

'He paid for Papa-Nnukwu's funeral after all' (251).

Ifeoma's children are understanding and considerate of other people's feelings and they believe that their uncle should be assisted to overcome his problems. They blame his religiosity, brutality, masculinity and violence but do not blame the man. They are humane enough to see some positive elements in their uncle and so Adichie suggests that we should not look at the negative elements of the human façade always since there is a positive side of every one of us.

Ifeoma complements the brother and takes care of the aging father without any diffidence. Eugene rejects the old man but then the sister behaves differently and helps Papa Nnukwu when he has become frail due to old age. It is also through Ifeoma that her brothers' children discover the truth about their grandfather and realise the freedom in her house and the world. It is at Nsukka (Ifeoma's) where the vision of freedom is realised through the little family garden of flowers and Aokpe apparitions. It becomes very clear

to them that a different world away from the oppressive air of Enugu is possible. This is a world without stringent controls where we can do the best for ourselves and still regard the humanity of others.

Father Amadi reveals how human beings have their own dignity as he interacts with the boys at the football stadium. He also promotes humanity in the way he interacts with the troubled Kambili. He does not take advantage of her situation even when Kambili tells him that she loves him. Father Amadi interacts with Ifeoma's family very well and the children whose father is dead regard him as their religious father. He advises and admonishes when and where necessary.

Adichie's writing is therefore a proposal aimed at healing the division and conflicts between genders. The hostility of men towards women does not always yield positive results. It is the battering and abuse that push Beatrice to poison her husband. Her case can be taken as a radical feminist decision but it is an action that happens out of total desperation. Adichie draws a situation where the woman is in a terrible bind but has to do anything to redeem herself. For Beatrice the poisoning is the only way to save herself than to commit suicide. Beatrice's case is unique because she deals with a husband who has gone berserk due to religion and one who is inured in the African patriarchy that condones wife beating. Eugene is crazy and has absolutely gone wild and the only thing left is to remove him from the centre of things. He is a symbol of masculine violence and patriarchal authority which cannot negotiate a compromise or accommodate and so his death is suggestive of a new order of things. His death opens up new gender relations

and for once Jaja takes the crimes of the mother and willingly suffers for them, probably to act as a pay back to Mama's suffering. Papa's death suggests an end of the old, brutal order whereas Jaja's action signals a new mode of thinking in gender relations. Adichie is simply suggesting that violence that constricts women should be eliminated but those men who regard and respect women should be projected positively as she does with Jaja. Jaja's sacrifice marks the process of bridging the gender divide and partly the healing process of the strained gender relations. Jaja becomes the redeemer and for once realises:

'I should have taken care of Mama' ... God works in mysterious ways' ...
Look what He did to his faithful servant Job, even to his own son. But have you ever wondered why? Why did he have to murder His own son so we would be saved? Why didn't he just go ahead and save us? (289).

This episode is about sacrifice that has to be made for the sake of freedom and so the death of Papa is that sacrifice. The selflessness of Jaja is symbolic of the concern that we should have for those who have suffered most in society.

Yewande Cocker feels very incomplete when the husband is killed by a letter bomb. She wonders how she will care for the children alone. Yewande treasures the husband. This is a hint that Adichie wishes to place men and women in equal and mutually helpful relationship at both the family and social levels.

While family care by mothers should be complemented by love of fathers so as to build a joyous family, Beatrice's effort to care for the husband and children is paid by molestation from her husband. Lack of appreciation means lack of love for the wife and children and so Eugene fails in his role as a husband. Ifeoma gives the love and concern and her family is a lovely haven full of happiness. To Adichie the re-birth of the family

is essential since freedom at the family level means freedom at the national level. When Adichie presents her last chapter and calls it 'a different silence' she is suggesting that men are essential in the lives of women and vice versa. The silence in that final section in Purple Hibiscus is occasioned by the absence of Jaja and Papa. It is the silence where the diverse voices of both men and women are lacking. Adichie advocates for the need of men, but she also suggests doing away with those who cause suffering for women. She is propagating her dream of gender harmony realised through the complementation of gender roles.

When Papa cries as he punishes and assaults his family members Adichie wants to suggest that Papa loathes whatever he does. His extreme forms of violence are castigated but his generosity is extolled. He provides for his family very well and when his family does not miss the basics we as readers admire him but then we hate his brutality towards the wife and children. Adichie appears to laud Eugene's positive qualities so as to direct the society to achieve similar virtues. She however harshly castigates the retrogressive practices and makes the sinner cry while committing those human debasing actions so as to deter society from moving towards that direction. Violence becomes more wicked and painful to the perpetrator than it hurts the victim.

In Half of a Yellow Sun Adichie's vision is that of health relationships despite class, racial, ethnic and gender differences. In this novel which captures the revolution after independence, several issues are discussed but prime is the Biafra War of self-determination. Women occupy very central positions so as to prop the gender agenda in

this war novel. Much of war literature is a reserve of what Stratton (1994) would call masculine tradition but Adichie goes against the norms and writes a war novel. Her writing exercise is a subversion of the established order. She calls for fairness and a revision of meaningless gender divisions.

At Odenigbo's house professionals meet every evening and one of the voices which is spectacular, acute and critical of various national blunders happens to be that of Miss Adebayo. She candidly stands out determined to shape the future of the Nigerian society. Ugwu realises that Adebayo is loud and labeled the male colleagues sophists when they did not concur with her views. The men captured by the author in this narrative do not discriminate or belittle women. They regard their opinions in most discussions and that way narrow the gender chasm. Adebayo is later joined by Olanna and female voices become more pronounced.

Adichie through Olanna bring forth womanist ideals in a very novel sense. Despite the various betrayals and near collapse of her relationship she forgives and forges ahead with her fiancée Odenigbo. The scuffle between Olanna and Odenigbo's mother is one marked spectacle in the sense that Olanna does not answer her mother despite the insults and derogative labels. She does not even blame her for whatever happens between Amala and Odenigbo. Olanna is able to forgive even when Odenigbo informs her that Amala is pregnant. Although Olanna is hurt she still goes ahead to compromise and rarely seeks revenge. She forgives her parents when they try to push her to chief Okonji and other men who want to marry her. She does not question Alice for the rumors that

she slept with Odenigbo. Through Olanna Adichie maps an alternative society where unnecessary conflicts can be avoided.

The action of Olanna helping to edit Odenigbo's articles before publishing serve to project the idea that mutual support from ones wife or husband is essential and fulfilling. It is also realised at Nnankwanze's house where Nnankwanze takes care of his wife Arize after she becomes pregnant. He advises Arize to reduce her sewing and he does more overtime at the railway to sustain his family. Nnankwanze admonishes his mother to stop coming to his house since she oppresses Arize. He is a protective husband and does not entertain any form of oppression to women. These are few episodes which Adichie highlights to convey her ideals of a better and equal society.

Olanna is not as uncompromising as the sister Kainene who does not give a damn over anyone crossing her territory. Kainene is ruthless in every sense but Adichie uses her to pass the message that the rights of women, minorities and children should not be tumbled by anyone. Through her, Adichie's vision of self-respect and respect for others is revealed. She is able to confront Udodi and warn him not to interfere with her choice of partners. Udodi questions Kainene's relationship with Richard, a Whiteman and we can argue that he is being used to attack the racial prejudice inherent in his attitude. Richard depends on Kainene for his survival and much of whatever he does is as per what Kainene directs. This is highly against the widely held notion that Women depend on men for their survival or African depend so much on the west.

Adichie uses Kainene in Half of a Yellow Sun to completely subvert the unfair gender relationships visible in the characters of Eugene and Beatrice in Purple Hibiscus, a tactic used by African women writers. Kainene stirs the sister to attack Odenigbo and extract the truth about his affair with Alice but Olanna does not do it because of the love she has for Odenigbo. Olanna understands what she and her husband are going through and realises that it would be of no use to create a domestic conflict whereas the country is burning.

Olanna is committed to the survival of all: men, women and children. When Olanna comes to Odenigbo's house the first time and finds Ugwu she treats him as a family member and helps him in a variety of ways. Ugwu realises that he is not like the other houseboys from the other houses. He has been accorded a special position and his work is appreciated. Olanna always identifies where and when to come in and aid fellow beings to realise their potentials. We read:

‘Let me help you with that.’ She pointed at the bed sheet he was rinsing, and slowly he took the dripping sheet out she held one end and moved back. ‘Turn yours that way’ she said.
He twisted his end of the sheet to his right while she twisted to the right, and they watched as the water squeezed out. The sheet was slippery (24).

Whatever is being done in the episode above is emblematic of complementation that is expected in human relations. Adichie uses Olanna to prod the society to look at humanity first before switching to other divisive considerations. When Olanna gets supplies from friends during the war she shares with fellow suffering women. There are women who also help her in times of difficulties thus promoting humanity.

Adichie surveys armed conflicts and effects of the war where families break and women suffer indignity of widowhood. The suffering of people who dig bunkers and others who are amputated present a discourse which is meant to picture the negative effects of war. Mothers are concerned about their children welfare despite the odds of Kwashiorkor and the death that pervades every household. Adichie draws up the ugly side of war on families so as to discourage people from engaging in any form of conflict. Adichie's novels therefore represent human beings making statements about life, about men and women and about their humanity. Those who do not promote humanity are disparaged to induce a sense of guilt; their conscience pricked and challenged to reflect upon their relationships with others. Men who do not hold women with regard women are described in the most horrible images and made contemptuous to the readers. One such character is Eugene Achike. Kainene's ruthlessness is also attacked and ridiculed. Conciliation is encouraged since although women are oppressed at the domestic level they are not totally defeated. With all the pain and suffering, deprivation and violence women struggle to climb out of such despair to a better world without getting adversarial. They work towards a world where they live happily with men.

In her desire for social justice and gender inclusive spaces, Adichie speaks for complex gender relationships in a complex way. The trajectory in her writing follows the humanist strand of womanism which is a kind of renaissance in the African women writing and calls for more fulfilling and health relationships despite gender differences. This is what Ogunyemi calls the determination to accept, live and work with men while calling for an end to the unfair treatment of women.

Adichie places the African family at the centre despite other problems that men and women may have. The centrality of the family and position of motherhood reveal her ideological inclination giving her vision as that of complementation of men and women in all human endeavors.

4.2 Regard for Religion, Culture and Traditions

In an effort to disapprove Western feminism and promote womanism Kolawole (1997) affirms her belief that western feminism does not comprehend the peculiarities of African culture. She thinks that women fight for their rights in different ways and for different reasons. Kolawole confirms that, ‘any African woman who has the consciousness to situate the struggle within African cultural realities by working for a total and robust self-retrieval of the African Woman is an African Womanist’ (34). Kolawole keeps on talking about cultural identity as an important feature as African women struggle for the freedom of women and subsequent end of oppression. It is within the African culture that critics should understand the real location of the African woman.

In Adichie’s novels culture and traditions have a special place in regard to oppression and subjection of women. According to Odetola (1983) in his book Man and Society in Africa: Introduction to Sociology, culture is defined as:

A man’s entire social heritage – all knowledge, beliefs, customs and skills acquired as a member of a society. Thus people become distinctively human by acquisition of culture. Culture presumes the existence of a human society and provides the skills for making the society work. Culture is therefore a larger part of what is transmitted in the process of socialization. It is through the acquisition of culture that groups, however simple have solved the problems of group life in their own way. Culture can be material or non-material. Material culture includes clothing, utensils, work of art. Non-material culture includes ideas, languages, norms, mores and beliefs (1).

In our study we survey the non-material aspects of culture and how some cultural practices have been challenged for the freedom of the vulnerable, more so women. Adichie has a word for those cultural practices which do not ensure fairness in her two novels.

Tradition on the other hand is the process of passing cultural artifacts from a generation to the next. The way things are done is described as the tradition of a people. Culture and tradition guide actions and knowledge. It can be said to be what Ojo-Ade (1983) calls the 'established order and the exogenesis of the present' (159). Adichie accords African Culture and tradition the place and respect it deserves but at the same time challenges those norms which are oppressive and misogynist.

The traditions of the Catholic Church and its rigid manifestations are challenged by presenting it as an outrageously anti-woman institution. Catholic faith in Purple Hibiscus does not include women in its leadership hierarchy. Such a failure subjugates women and does not conform to what Adichie proposes for the future of African society. Adichie seems to propose liberalism in things like dressing and observation of church traditions as is the case at Nsukka. She does not in any way suggest that we follow the teachings of Father Benedict and all there is at St. Agnes. Adichie calls for a fair degree of flexibility and proposes that characters like Eugene who are overly rigid should be isolated. According to her religion should not be oppressive but should instead be a source of freedom. She suggests that religion should not enslave its adherents like it has done to the members of the Eugene family.

African songs, clapping and even names should be incorporated to the Judeo-Christian faith. The people should own the faith and not the faith owning the people as is the case with Papa Eugene and Father Benedict. Adichie uses father Amadi to pass the message of true liberation without the kind of inhibitions found at St. Agnes Catholic Church. Amadi's St. Peter's Catholic Church in Nsukka allows lots of practices which are considered to 'compromise' the solemnity of the holy mass at Enugu. Adichie highlights the two environments so as to fault those who use religion to exploit and oppress others.

African cultural practices are also explored in the two novels. Respect for elders, for instance, is realised in the way children are socialized and when Ifeoma bows before 'Igwe' Kambili in Purple Hibiscus observes:

I watched Aunty Ifeoma sink to one knee and say, '*Igwe*' [*sic*] in the raised voice of a respectful salute, watched him pat her back. The gold sequins that covered his tunic glittered in the afternoon sunlight. Amaka bowed deeply before him... (94).

Some of these cultures are held as a great part of the heritage of the people and Adichie has a vision in that they should be respected. It is replayed in Half of a Yellow Sun where Olanna is called at Aunt Ifeka's to explain what she saw regarding to the death of Aunty Ifeka and the family during the massacres. The procedure the elders take follows an organized system of doing things. Her prompt response is also an indication to the respect one has for elders. What Adichie calls for is respect for African people, culture and traditions.

Those traditions which encourage polygamy or deny women personal choice are drawn in a negative light so as to attract the reader's contempt. The narration of activities of

women who mistreat their co-wives in polygamous set-ups makes them and the practice abhorable. Practices which strain women like the desire of babies and the value attached to boys are also challenged by imagination of happy families who do not have sons. According to Adichie motherhood can also be realised through adoption and as such childless marriages should not be looked down upon. Adichie emphasizes a holistic vision where cultures should not be used to sustain and support a particular gender and degrade another.

Some cultural practices like the titles of '*Omelora*' put men at special positions in the society and at the same time deny women similar chances. Such a practice is discriminative and Adichie suggests that it should be abolished from the Igbo society. It is quite similar to the ritual where boys are initiated through the '*ima mmuo*' whereas girls have no similar initiation process. These cultural practices belittle girls and women and they grow up with feelings of lesser beings. This subsequently cements a sense of inequality.

The case of Eugene condemning and rejecting old Papa Nnukwu is contemptuous and against the traditions. A bigger role for daughters is highlighted when Ifeoma takes care of their aging father. In caring for his old father, Ifeoma complements the failures of her brother and as a result their father does not suffer a sense of rejection. Papa Nnukwu observes, 'I joke with you *nwa m*. where would I be today if my *chi* had not given me a daughter?' (83). Such assertions by Papa Nnukwu can be read as Adichie's own voicing of her suggested place for the female figure in the Igbo society. Ifeoma's act elevates

daughters to the same level as sons who traditionally are supposed to inherit both the wealth and responsibilities of aging parents.

In addition, Adichie attacks the practice of wife beating and the socialization of boys within a biased environment which portray men as superior to women. When Papa Nnukwu pronounces that Ifeoma is a woman and does not count we immediately realise the inequality in the Igbo traditions and culture. Adichie attacks the practice of gender segregation since as the children watch the *mmuo* festival aggression is associated with the male spirits since they are the ones who chase women. Papa Nnukwu informs the grand children that female *mmuos* are harmless thus there is more joy in watching the female *mmuos* than the male ones.

Adichie's appropriation of Igbo language to fit in her English writing is a confirmation that language is an important element of culture that cannot be ignored in African Literature. In the use of Igbo words and phrases, Adichie stresses the importance of complementation of languages and cultures and lexical borrowing where necessary. It is the language of her people that confirms the compatibility of humanity. Richard learns and uses Igbo freely just like the locals and as such he completes the tenor of human experience and interaction. Richards learning of Igbo language creates the complex threads of human relations without the delimitations occasioned by racism. It can therefore be argued that Adichie's version of acquiring of African language by a western English speaker refutes the notions of colonial writers like Conrad who through his main character Marlow, in Heart of Darkness (1994) says that Africans had no language but

uttered unintelligible ‘violent babbles of uncouth sounds’ (27). Adichie disavows Conrad’s notion through the character of Richard who identifies with Igbo language and learns it.

Adichie’s vision of culture, religion and tradition is humanistic and geared toward elimination of practices, attitudes and values that appear degrading and oppressive. Her vision fits well with the vision statement of the NGO forum on women in Beijing (1995).

The Beijing statement states:

This means that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between men and women at home, in the work place and in the wider national and international communities. Equality between men and women is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and it is necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between men and women is a condition for people centred sustainable development. A sustained long term commitment is essential so that women and men can work together for themselves, for their children and for society to meet the challenges of the 21st century (17).

Such a vision links well with the womanist ideals immediately it recognises men as partners in the struggle towards achieving human development.

Adichie criticises unfair gender treatment occasioned by culture, religion and traditions. She tries to subvert those prejudices, attitudes and biases in the particular social institution and their perceived perpetuation of gender imbalance.

Mariama Ba in her works So Long a Letter (1980) and Scarlet Song (1981) express a disapproval of certain glaring abuses which are occasioned by traditions cum cultural practices. Mariama Ba suggests that culture and tradition should be progressive and accord women a choice. She affirms that a healthy family will always result to a healthy

nation. This resonates well with what Adichie is advocating for in her two novels. Adichie subverts and challenges the practices which stand on the way of women as they try to march in the direction of self actualization. She asserts her unflinching belief in the freedom of choice through the characters of Olanna, Arize, Kainene and Odenigbo in Half of a Yellow Sun.

4.3 The Writer's Socio-Political Commitment

Ogunyemi (1985) elaborates how gender struggles in the African context should incorporate other issues like racial, national, economic, ethnic and political considerations. She identifies the fact that colonialism and imperialism have made the African man impotent and as such he should be empowered just like the African woman. She further contents that sex struggles alone would not end the problems that stand on the way of Africans. Construction of identity has been taken as a critical issue as women confront multiple levels of 'otherness,' racial, cultural, regional, religious, third world and post-colonial. The ideas of Ogunyemi resonate with those of Ogundipe (1987), Nfah-Abbenyi (1997), Kolawale (1997), Badejo (1999) and Shigali (2008), who have converge onto the conclusion that gender in Africa should be discussed together with other urgent and serious problems bedeviling the African people.

In this study therefore, we argue that Adichie focuses on women situation and that of the African people. Her thematic concerns in the two novels incorporate the traditional values as well as the modern, local versus universal and individual cum collective where women and human predicament is explored. Being an Igbo her vision transcends a local commitment to explain the universality of the condition of African people. This makes

her committed at the various levels identified by Ogundipe-Leslie (1987) in her article 'The Female Writer and Her Commitment.'

Adichie reveals herself as a mouthpiece of women and other groups on the periphery of human existence taken to where they are by class, politics and religious oppression. She examines the evils of tribalism, religious intolerance, imperialism, corruption, civil war, leaders' wastefulness and colonialism among others. The problems that bedevil her people as a result of the things mentioned above makes the central subject in her novels. Adichie's characters are the socio-political rebels and the downtrodden. Women, by the fact of being the most oppressed, form the majority of those calling for change in the world of Adichie's texts. Women launch penchant attacks on society where inequality, oppression, exploration, intolerance and general disregard of humanity is a matter of fact.

Adichie's novels emerge from several issues of socio-political concern whereby gender form the foundation for her arguments. Adichie creates her stories from several fronts taking aesthetic appeal from birthing of both Nigeria and Biafra nations. Her narratives present a kind of disguised social consciousness in which the real connection with others and society can be looked or even ratified. She becomes a mid-wife of the 'national soul' by looking at the past and projecting her vision of a future she anticipates for the Nigerian nation and Africans. Through detailed domestic challenges and love sagas the nation is explored and message is passed onto the readers about her vision. Adichie presents her truth exemplifying a unity of vision, wholeness of experience, immanent and universal

values, irony of tone and action, complexity of form likely to be found in works of experienced writers.

In the presentation of the political situation in Nigeria Adichie explores the tensions between the North and the South through diverse characters and episodes. She takes a historical look and through authorial intrusion, the readers can trace the challenges facing modern Nigeria from the history of colonialism. In the imaginary book 'The world Was Silent When We Died' yet to be written by the Richard captured in Half of a Yellow Sun and also running parallel to the plot of the main narrative we come into contact with colonial administration and their thinking which is the cause of the modern divisions between the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria. Colonialism is blamed for problems in Congo as observed by Odenigbo:

'You know really who killed Lumumba?' Master said. 'It was the Americans and Belgians. It had nothing to do with Katanga' ...
'This is our world, although the people who drew this map decided to put their own land on top of ours. There is not top or bottom, you see' (10).

Master is concerned about the oppression and continued degradation of the African people by the imperialists. Although he confesses that education is a priority for Africans, for them to understand and fight their exploitation, he goes further to highlight the fallacies inherent in the colonial education that Africa has inherited. Adichie seems to give credence to our traditional education that solved the common problems of humanity like the impotence that Richard is going through. The education that Ugwu received from the grandmother especially about African herbs is useful since it serves to solve the basic problems for mankind. Jomo, the gardener informs Richard that fertility herbs worked and the experience of his Brother whose wife could not get pregnant after

years of marriage qualifies the argument. The copying of all things European that is exhibited by Harrison is detestable. Through Harrison Adichie attacks aping of the west characteristic of some Africans.

Odenigbo celebrates those moments that have a shred of freedom. He attacks elements of oppression and at a point he calls for recognition of the black American who led in the University of Mississippi, Ceylon's world first woman Prime Minister and praises Cuba for beating the American and ending American domination. He is simply the voice against the excesses of the west that disregards humanity epitomized by the American society.

Through the character of Odenigbo Adichie is able to attack colonialism, imperialism and racism. She suggests a world where people complement others as human beings and not the mistrust that characterise races, tribes or class. The race relations and Hegelian studies on race where Africans were considered children are answered in Adichie's novels and the way forward is suggested when the black woman Kainene marries a white man. Such a relationship is supposed to minimize the racial stereotyping and to bring humanity closer. Kainene is against Udodi and his racially sentimental talk. Richard is unhappy wherever the Igbo's do not accept him as one of their own even when he can speak their language. Although they harbor racial mistrust Adichie uses Richard to collapse those divisions that deny the humanity of others.

The treatment of blacks by whites mostly the former colonial administrators and expatriates is a possible source of othering and an avenue for trouble. It is similar to the treatment the war victims receive from the two American journalists. They keep referring to the refugees as Niggers. They carry the prejudices and the feelings characteristic of Elizabeth and other whites living in Nigeria. Richard decries lack of world concern for thousands of Biafrans but then a concern for one dead white man. Probably this is why Adichie thinks that the world was silent when Biafrans died.

The Biafra conflict is started and exacerbated by the imperial powers. The British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC) celebrates every fall of an Igbo town and as the mouthpiece of the West we get to understand the feelings of the West towards Igbo nation and succession. It is very clear to everyone that BBC is supportive of the North's dominance in Nigeria politics. Such support influences the opinion of the World powers and the extermination of the Igbo continues without the world intervening to stop a human catastrophe. When planes carrying relief food cannot fly into Biafra the people result to eating rodents and unripe corn to survive. The Biafrans eventually nickname Kwashiorkor as 'Harold Wilson Syndrome' because the Prime Minister supports Gowon Administration in the extermination of Igbo's during the war. Adichie critiques the inhumanity that characterises this conflict through this ridiculing of the British Prime Minister. She blames the Western powers for their complicity in exterminating the Igbo community.

In drawing the state as grave as it is, Adichie wants our conscience to be pierced so hard so that we can re-examine where we went wrong. She is condemning what appears to have been a historical mistake where the west fuelled the conflict and thereafter failed to take control of the humanitarian crisis. Adichie also slams at the likes of Ojukwu and Gowon for failing to realise how the west manipulated them and for doing nothing to save Nigeria. Adichie is anti-violence especially the violence associated with war and the suffering that comes with it: starvation, disease, despair, rape, killings (bombings), forced conscription and destruction of property among others. Her vision is geared towards the society trying to lessen suffering which result directly from avoidable artificial creations like war, racism, colonialism, imperialism, oppression, exploitation, gender bias and political misfortune visible in most African states.

Adichie critiques racial prejudices and calls for change of attitude through re-examining the stereotypes held by the white people living in Nigeria who are drawn as morally inferior to the blacks. Two journalists named Charles (chuck) believe that there is a lot of free sex in Biafra whereas expatriate whites have sex with one another's wives and husbands, 'illicit couplings' (237) that are more a way of passing heat blanching time in the tropics than they are genuine expressions of passion. In an effort to challenge racism, Adichie highlights the story of the immoral expatriates so as to attack the self-righteousness characterising those whites left in Nigeria after independence.

Sexual immorality cannot be a characteristic of blacks but is a failing of human beings. Father Marcel, a white man serving the white God impregnates an underage girl and

suffers a humiliation similar to that of Ugwu who rapes a bar attendant. Adichie sees and recognises people's humanity first. She is of the idea that racial oppression and stereotypes should be discarded so as to lessen human suffering and squarely blames the West for the Nigeria-Biafra war since 'the white expatriates encouraged rioters to kill Igbo people' (p. 174). Historically, the Igbo massacre in 1945 was precipitated by the British colonial government who encouraged anti-Igbo sentiments (166). Adichie attacks the colonialists for pitting one tribe against the other in their policy of divide and rule. The suffering during Biafra war is a wake-up call for all leadership in Africa to get back to what Acholonu (1995) calls the mother essence and to nurture life.

Animosity perpetuated by regional leanings and ethnicity is being blamed for the troubles in the new nation. Tribal conflicts and segregation as is the case with Nigeria where children from the South (Igbo) areas could not be admitted to the Northern (Hausa/Fulani) schools has no place in the 21st century and Adichie calls for the realisation of people's humanity since like Olanna and Kainene in Half of a Yellow Sun are children of one father (God) no matter the differences. Adichie purposely attacks the leaders for perpetrating the tribal problem and blaming it on history. She charges the leaders to be responsible. Her vision is anchored on the fact that human suffering can be alleviated by tackling the racial and ethnic problem through encouraging diversity and accommodating others. Adichie's writing echoes Achebe (1983) The Trouble with Nigeria on the problem of tribalism who observes that:

Nothing in Nigeria's political history captures her problem of national integration more graphically than the chequered fortune of the word *tribe* [*sic*] in her vocabulary. *Tribes* [*sic*] has been accepted at one time as a friend, rejected as an enemy at another, and finally smuggled in through the back-door as an accomplice (5).

Achebe identifies tribalism as one of the big problems that Nigeria has to grapple with. He blames it for most of the problems that inhibit the progress of his motherland. In his book he captures a directive that appear in the application form of one of his students seeking admission at University of Pittsburgh, (U.S.A) which reads, ‘please make no statement which would indicate the applicant’s race, creed or national origin’ (8). This is the vision that Adichie wishes to see propagated in her country and Africa. She calls on her people and readers to avert bias occasioned by ethnicity, race and religion so that energies can be concentrated on improving humanity.

In the North-South divide she also criticises religion and the fundamentalism that comes with it since it is one of the recipes for the chaos that led to Biafra conflict. Adichie suggests that religion should give other people space for their own choices since it constricts and denies people their liberties. She calls for understanding and accepting of multiplicity since diversity breeds strength. Oppression, resulting from religious affiliation is attacked since it leads to human suffering like the killings witnessed in the Northern Nigeria before the outbreak of the Biafra civil war.

Corruption and general plunder of national resources triggers the first coup. In Half of a Yellow Sun Major Nzeogwu takes over and makes the speech thus:

The constitution is suspended and the regional government and elected assemblies are hereby dissolved. My dear countrymen, the aim of the Revolutionary Council is to establish a nation free from corruption and internal strife. Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that take bribes and demand ten per cent those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office the tribalists, the nepotists, ... Those that have corrupted our society (123).

Achebe affirms that in Nigeria corruption is no longer alarming but fatal since, 'keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is like keeping a goat from eating a yam' (38). This attests to the magnitude of the problem. We can therefore argue that it is by design that Adichie castigates the perpetrators of the evil in her works so as to save her society. Although several issues are to blame for the coup captured in the extract above in Half of a Yellow Sun corruption and stealing of public resources stand out as key destroyers of the nation. Adichie interrogates the evils of corruption by dissecting the facts and how they are likely to destroy the African nations and put the people to suffer. Eugene in Purple Hibiscus presents the voice of Adichie where he informs the children that:

Coups begat coups, he said, telling us about the bloody coups of the sixties, which ended up in civil war just after he left Nigeria to study in England. A Coup always began a vicious cycle. Military men ... were all power drunk. Of course Papa told us, the politicians were corrupt... But what we Nigerians needed was not soldiers ruling us, what we needed was renewed democracy. (24-5)

Adichie uses the voice of Papa and the Standard to condemn coups. It is the coups that are blamed for the civil wars and the subsequent massacre and suffering of the Biafrans. She criticises the politicians and the soldiers for committing several evils on the nation and against the citizens.

Half of a Yellow Sun reads like a historical manifesto but at the back of it, it serves to attack the colonialists and highlight the problem the West created in Africa and elsewhere during colonial rule. Adichie rebukes imperialism and also draws our attention to the inhumanity in racism and insensitivity instituted by neo-colonialism. She attacks the imperial West for doing nothing to stop the Biafra genocide (1967-70), an occurrence Soyinka (2007) thinks, 'divided the Nigeria nation more sharply than any other event'

(99). In revisiting those negative elements of Nigeria's history Adichie calls upon fellow Nigerians to understand their past so as to prevent a similar tragedy from occurring. Her exercise serves to keep the heart of a nation-of a people- beating since in revisiting history a process of healing is began.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter we have identified that Adichie's novels reveal a Womanist vision. In her vision she condemns those activities by the politicians and military juntas, which bring about human suffering. She looks into the problems of corruption, tribalism, nepotism, power-thirsty leaders, colonialism, imperialism and race relations and how such issues bring about trouble and suffering. She calls for collaboration of people of different religious affiliations, close working of different tribes and races, an end to corruption, tribalism, racism and practices likely to make humanity drift apart. The realisation of our humanity should come before everything else.

Adichie has a holistic vision that aspires to see an end to oppression, exploitation degradation and suffering of human beings. In her vision, the unfair treatment of women is condemned and she suggests a balanced treatment of everyone in society. Those patriarchal practices like polygamy and domestic violence, which are retrogressive and unfriendly to women, should be discarded. She also suggests that African men suffer other problems that emasculate them and demean their personalities and thus she proposes a collaboration and association between men and women as they fight both gender wars and other forms of oppression that muzzle African people and their dignity.

Adichie calls for realisation of humanity regardless of gender, class, tribe, race, region or political affiliation. She calls for negotiation, compromise and accommodation when dealing with human beings. She values humanity more than anything else.

The final part of this study sums up the issues that emerged during the analysis of the two novels. The section also serves as the conclusion and gives suggestions for further research.

Finally, we explore the key features of the study that emerged in chapters two, three and four. We also suggest possible areas that require further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings and Conclusion

5.0 Summary of Findings

‘The Female Voice and the Future of Gender Relationships in the Nigerian Nation’ has emerged from the analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun. In this final section of the study, we recapitulate the major arguments advanced during the study and make recommendations for further research.

The study reveals that Adichie and her female characters form the progressive voice(s) calling for change in the way society treats women and the marginalized. Adichie’s writing is identified as a contemporary voice from the margins which requires serious consideration as the African society grapples with gender, class, ethnic and other social inequalities. It is thus a voice of agency that seeks to challenge the already established structures of the oppressive male order at both domestic and national levels.

We argue that Adichie and her female characters are (in)formed by personal experiences and/or historical truths. Although her texts are not biographies, she is a voice against oppression and exploitation. She criticises different forms of oppression and exploitation that muzzle the human spirit and demean the soul. In the two novels, Adichie examines women oppression and indignity suffered by women and African people in the postcolonial dispensation. The study discusses how she imagines the predicament of African woman vis-à-vis that of the nation. The two novels therefore can be read as allegories of the national situation. We realised that the marital failings, romantic relationships, maternal miscarriages and death have a symbolic meaning in the two

novels. The study notes that Adichie's characters are inscribed in a complex sphere of meaning whereby their personal stories become allegories of the Nigerian situation.

This study argues that Nigerian women in particular and African women in general are still oppressed, exploited and degraded by a mix of traditional cultures and the modern forms of patriarchy. The women suffer what Stratton (1994) would call 'a patriarchal order, sexist as well as racist in its ideology and practice' (17). Violence against women and children, desire for sons, in-law problems, polygamy, traditions, illiteracy, complacency and religious intolerance are isolated as core challenges that still burden the African women. Adichie challenges women to have a voice so as to confront their oppression. Silence in Purple Hibiscus, for instance, is to blame for the suffering that Beatrice and her children go through. In the two novels Adichie chides women to talk back to their oppressor(s) so that their condition may be redeemed.

This study affirms that women employ several strategies to battle with the patriarchal order in their societies. In confronting the patriarchy, women are not adversarial but work tirelessly to keep their households intact. This is achieved through the lives of the various female characters. Adichie does not destroy her male characters despite their weaknesses and in doing so she advances the Womanist idea of complementation. Women literacy, adoption, female solidarity, voicing oppression, strong women characters and challenging oppressive traditional practices are sampled as strategies that give women the capacity to fight oppression and exploitation. Adichie has also uses male characters that are weak and morally inferior so as to plead the case for oppressed women.

Female characters in her texts are tolerant to the failings of their men, an aspect which serve to help in our conclusion that Adichie is an African womanist. For instance, it is notable that Beatrice, in Purple Hibiscus, goes through hell and not for once, does she think or attempt to divorce Eugene. Ifeoma is also determined to safeguard the honour of her husband even when he is dead. She has a lot of positive feelings about him. Olanna in Half of a Yellow sun sticks to Odenigbo despite several trying situations of betrayal. Olanna's radical sister Kainene braves her to attack Odenigbo over his alleged affair with Alice. Olanna does not attack Odenigbo because their suffering as refugees in the Biafra conflict is out of the failure to accommodate and forgive others in the bigger Nigeria. Both male and female characters that populate the pages of the two novels share a sense of compromise, accommodation, negotiation and cooperation. Adichie's ideals are those espoused in the womanist world view as theorized by Ogunyemi (1985) and Kolawole (1997) which calls for collective efforts of both men and women as they tackle oppression and minimalisation of the African people.

Chapter three explored how the female narrative parallels the historical growth of Nigerian nation. In this chapter the novels are studied as allegories of the nation guided by the assertions of Fredrick Jameson. Adichie's characters are symbolic of the Third World people as they tackle the odds of colonialism, neocolonialism, misrule, ethnic strife, religious fundamentalism and other oppressive forces. The novels can be said to fit well in the Nigerian historical situation in that the Biafra war, Aburi declaration and deaths like that of Sani Abacha which is captured by that of Big Oga who dies on top of a

prostitute. These identifiable historical moments in Nigerian history make the novels partly factual and partly fictional.

The fourth chapter investigates the author's gender vision as projected in her two novels. In this chapter, the concerns of the author are interrogated and integrated to reveal her vision on gender. It surfaces that Adichie advocates for the gender struggle to be linked with other efforts undertaken against problems which cripple Third World people. Adichie identifies racism, colonialism, neocolonialism, misrule, dictatorship, ethnicity, civil conflicts, poverty and religious fundamentalism as bad practices in the African context as is patriarchy. She however calls for understanding, complementation, conciliation, collaboration and constructive gender engagement as men and women deal with dehumanizing problems affecting people in the Third World countries.

5.1 Suggestions for Further Research

This study limited itself to the two novels and we therefore recommend research on Adichie's short stories and poems. The research likely to be done on her other works will shed more light on her ideological disposition. We have done the current study using the womanist lens and as such future studies on Adichie's novels can be projected to other theoretical scales so as to enrich the tradition of criticism of the African literature.

Other contemporary African female novels can also be analysed with a view of exploring how African women confront individual and communal problems in the 21st century. Such a research will enrich and expand scholarship of African literature since the current study was limited to only one writer.

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