

**GENDER VIOLENCE IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S
*PURPLE HIBISCUS AND HALF OF A YELLOW SUN***

BY

FASHAKIN, FOLASHADE YEMISI

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES
FACULTY OF ARTS,
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA NIGERIA.**

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MA/ARTS/02080/2008-2009

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES.
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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES
FACULTY OF ARTS,
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA**

JUNE, 2015

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts degree in Literature, at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university. All quotations and information used and their sources are acknowledged by means of references.

FASHAKIN YEMISI FOLASHADE

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Name of Student

.....

Signature

.....

Date

CERTIFICATION

This Study titled **Gender Violence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*** by Fashakin, Folashade Yemisi MA/ARTS/02080/2008-2009 of the Department of English and Literary Studies has been carefully examined and approved by the committee of supervisors under whose auspices, was carried as meeting the regulations governing the Award of a Master Degree in Literature of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

.....
Professor Tanimu Abubakar
Chairman, Supervisory Committee

.....
Date

.....
Professor Sani Abba
Member, Supervisory Committee

.....
Date

.....
Dr. Abubakar A Liman
Head of Department

.....
Date

.....
Professor Hassan Zoaka
Dean School of Postgraduate Studies
School of Post-Graduate Studies

.....
Date

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DEDICATION

To God Almighty for His mercies, and all that believed in me.

ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence is not a new problem in the Nigerian society or other societies of the world. Violence against an individual on the basis of his /her gender is common place and is becoming endemic. Various studies have been carried out on what fosters gender violence and what makes it thrive with a view to putting an end to the problem. This has opened up various arguments as to how the problem can best be tackled. This study looks at the analyses of gender violence in the Nigerian novel and how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie presents this problem in her novels; *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006). This research interrogates how Adichie presents gender violence in these novels and how it affects the female gender. This study demonstrates that the texts selected by its thematic preoccupation and character delineation show culture and tradition as strong factors in sex differentiation, creation of gender identities and power sharing. It also shows that socially constructed roles and identities contribute to domestic and social violence in patriarchal societies. The study examines the themes, metaphors and symbolic representation of characters through the feminist perspective and Max Weber's power theory. This is because the analyses of gender relations must take into cognizance theories of a person's biological sex and gender identity and how it affects power sharing and the role of tradition, laws and the dominant ideology in the perpetuation of gender-based violence. Adichie's writings portray a strong call against gender violence and the treatment of women as commodities.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sex, Gender and Violence.

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to women writing in Africa. Consequently, gender studies dominated the literary scene and the representation of women in male authored works precipitated many critical debates. In other words, there has been more interest in examining the ways in which men behave, particularly in relation to women. Consequently, a literary canon was developed in which women writers give a re-presentation of the female experience by depicting a different image of women in their works in variance with the earlier works by male authors.

In furtherance of the argument on the importance of women writing about the female experience in literary texts, 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”. Many female writers try to bring into focus their femaleness/femininity and personal experiences in their narratives and in doing so highlight power differences between men and women. As a result, women scholars and activists have pioneered a literary canon built on sexual politics aimed at stamping gender and feminism into both criticism and theory. This is with the aim of replacing a tradition that is viewed as masculine and domineering by female critics like Showalter (1985). She 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 in their narratives attempt to recast women in more positive roles away from their marginal position(s). As a result, their texts are described by Nfah-Abbenyi (1997) as “spaces of strength within and between which they

fluctuate". Concurring, D'Almeida (1994) considers writing by women as a "weapon to destroy the ideas that perpetuate subjugation and inequality". Many literary scholars on 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.

It is not surprising therefore, that African scholars have now begun to include the concepts of sex, gender and violence in gender studies in order to understand how they play out in gender relations (Lindsay & Miescher 2003:1-3). Consequently, in the analyses of women authored work, amongst other themes, there is the need to explore gender-based violence and its portraiture in these works. This is because gender -based violence is a serious problem in many societies today and a new area of investigation in literary criticism. This study therefore interrogates the depiction of gender-based violence in the Nigerian novel with reference to fiction by women in general and to Adichie's novels in particular and the role of gender in the propagation of violence. The study explores how the gender of a person contributes to inter /intra-gender violence in the selected novels.

Gender issues in every discourse are often divisive because of its sensitive nature and because the term 'gender' is often used interchangeably with 'sex'. There is a clear dichotomy between both terms and scholars have since established the difference between them. While the term sex is the "biological characteristics that define humans as female or male", gender is the "economic, political and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female" (USAID, 2007). Gender is therefore socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. While sex and its associated biological functions are programmed genetically, gender roles and the

power relations they reflect are a social construct ,they vary across cultures and through time, and thus are open to to change. While sex refers to the anatomical difference between man and woman, in contrast, gender refers to the “social aspect of differences and hierarchies between male and female” (John Macionis & Ken Plummer, 2005:309).

Thus, gender-based violence is violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender. It therefore constitutes a breach of fundamental right to life, liberty, security, dignity, equality between women and men. Gender-based violence occurs in many parts of the world, within a home or wider community in general and it affects women and girls disproportionately (Bloom 2008:p.14). Although there are different types of violence like punching, bullying physical fights etc, gender-based violence includes domestic violence, rape, sexual violence during conflict, harmful customary or traditional practices such as forced marriages, genital mutilation etc.

A report by the British council titled ‘Gender in Nigeria in 2012’, concludes that violence against women is not a new problem in Nigeria. Rather, it is found to be deeply rooted in many cultural and traditional values which is regarded as normal behaviour or remains hidden or tacitly condoned (Nnadi, 2012; Zimmerman, 1997). Hence, violence against women is perceived as the most pervasive violation of human rights (United Nation Secretary General, 2009; Heise et al., 2002)). In 1998 The Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), raised concerns about the prevalence of violence against women and girls “including domestic violence and sexual harassment in the workplace”. It is also important to state that gender -based violence is practiced against everyone, but it affects mainly women and girls (Jekayinfa, 2011; USAID, 2008).

Consequently, this research focuses on the depiction of violence in the writings of Chimamanda Adichie because various sociological studies have shown that women, more than men, are often the recipients of various forms of violence. But this problem has not been

foregrounded in the literary sphere and this is what this study sets out to find in the works of Chimamanda Adichie. World Bank data shows that up to seventy percent of women experience violence in their lifetime and concludes its findings by saying that the root of all violence against women lie in persistent discrimination against women and girls (World Bank Data:2014). There is a close relationship between gender equality and violence and studies have shown that gender inequalities increase the risk of gender- based violence (World Health Organization: 2009). Consequently, this study is based on the assumption that a discussion on violence is an integral part of gender discourse and focuses on how Adichie presents these acts of violence in her novels *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Although the issue of women's oppression and empowerment has been one major theme in African literature and research in the last few decades, little attention has been paid to gender-based violence as a form of oppression against women in these writings.

Despite the disparity in the ideological standpoints of male and female writers, female writers still continue to write and produce works which portray the female gender in more positive and active roles. In these writings, gender politics is interrogated and the contributions of both genders to conflict and power sharing, but in all these, emphasis is on the protagonist's experiences, thoughts and feelings. Hence in her writings, Chimamanda Adichie centres on the dynamics of gender relations and other issues affecting the socio-economic life of the society. Her work incorporates themes of political and domestic violence, tolerance, loyalty, family, national identity, self-realization, and the effects of colonialism on the collective consciousness and individuals. In *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* for example, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie depicts contemporary issues affecting the Nigerian society through the eyes of female characters.

As a social advocate for the oppressed female in a society suffering from a myriad of problems which include bad leadership, poverty and unemployment, Adichie emphasizes the

role of the female in society and the problems she faces in her works. Her writings portray gender conflict as a vital aspect of social experience and the struggle for power. Her works shows a feminist position which strongly argues that male to female violence cannot be separated from patriarchal ideology, normative foundations and institutional arrangements in society (Dobash and Dobash, 1992). Consequently, in her novels, Adichie portrays that freedom and individual rights are ideals the women should not compromise for they are essential in being a voice in the social context of development.

Although literatures abound on various forms of gender-based violence in Nigeria and the world in general (Greig, A with Edstrom,J 2012, Jekayinfa,2012) , there is a dearth of critical works exploring gender-based violence in Nigeria women writing and specically in Adichie's fiction despite the large body of works on her novels. Literary critics like Ogwude (2010), Ouma (2011) and Corneliussen (2012) among others, have concentrated on the issues of religious ideology, gender conflict, use of symbolic figures and images, influence of colonialism on African women's fight for emancipation, racism, sexual oppression, religious fanaticism and cultural alienation in post colonial Africa in Adichie's novels but there is an absence of works interrogating gender violence as a central theme.

The above mentioned works look at different facets of Adichie's fiction and even mentioned some aspects of domestic violence in her novels but none specifically dwells on gender-based violence as a serious and predominant theme in her novels. Thus, a careful re-evaluation of gender violence is made using the Radical Feminist theory and Max Weber's theory of power as analytical framework for the novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Gender discourse is an important area of literary criticism with wide spread implications for gender equality and human development across sectors. Increasing attention is being accorded the negotiation of gender relations in contemporary African literature.

However, there has been a limited account of the nature and historiography of gender-based violence in the fiction by women writers in Nigeria. This form of violence has been an under researched issue in gender studies in many societies and often analysed alongside other issues affecting gender relations. Despite the growing body of works on Adichie's novels, there is an absence of an analytical framework for analysing violence as a tool of oppression and the role of power in perpetuating gender-based violence. Consequently, this study investigates the depiction of gender violence in the Nigerian novel and the different forms of gender-based violence and how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie treats this phenomenon in her novels: *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The study is thus premised on the following propositions:

- Gendered hegemony is more or less mentally integrated in a vast majority of both men and women, commonly allowing patriarchy to remain unchallenged, and even defended by both sexes.
- The gender of a person affects power-sharing and decision-making and this is manifested in men's control in families and public offices.
- The radical feminist theory and Max Weber's Power theory posit that sex/gender difference is socially constructed and shaped by relations of power, as a result, violence is often against the female gender and it is a by product of patriarchy.
- Little attention has been given to the analysis of women's writing with the tools that theories of Max Weber and Radical Feminism provide.

1.3 Aim and objectives of study

The aim of this research is to portray the existence of gender violence in the Nigerian novel and its depiction in Chimamanda Adichie's writing. This research is premised on the fact that literature is a chronicler of society through which societal issues are analysed with a view to making the society better. Gender-based violence is an endemic problem in the

Nigerian society but under represented in many literary works about women despite the fact that it impedes the growth and psychological well being of the female who most women writers are preoccupied with in their works. Therefore, this research interrogates how this problem is depicted in the two selected novels of Chimamanda Adichie and necessitated the impetus for this study which captures the essence of gender discourse. Therefore, these research objectives will show that:

- In women writing, the female gender is often a victim of various forms of violence.
- The texts selected for this study by the thematic preoccupation and character delineation show culture and tradition as strong factors in sex differentiation and the creation of gender identities.
- Socially constructed roles and identities contribute to domestic and social violence in patriarchal societies.
- The dialectics of gender- based violence can be better understood when approached from the theoretical perspectives of Max Weber's Power and Radical Feminist theories.

1.4 Significance of Study

Gender violence is a serious problem confronting many societies of the world today and it is a problem that is almost as old as mankind itself. Also, studies have shown that in most societies where violence happens there is a code of silence involving the victim and perpetrator(s) when it is perpetrated (Walby: 1990). There are diverse reasons why gender-based violence continues to thrive and these include unequal power relations between men and women, biological differences between males and females, negative traditional and cultural practices etc. But despite the increase in the number of victims of gender-based violence, no conclusive findings have been made concerning this problem (WHO: 2015).

Furthermore, in literary criticism, the area of gender violence has not received much attention in the Nigerian novel. Therefore, this study takes a close look at Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* as they depict various forms of gender-based violence and how they occur. It seeks to show the dialectics of gender relations and how gender-based violence is portrayed through the eyes of a female writer. The work specifically seeks to interrogate the issue of violence as it affects the female. Although there are diverse scholarly works by many African writers on issues affecting the African continent like bad leadership, crime, poverty, illiteracy, urbanization etc, not much has been said about the festering problem of gender violence in the works of Nigerian female writers

Therefore, the choice of the novels of Chimamanda Adichie is premised on the fact that her novels capture many issues of gender conflict and violence hence the justification for this study. Also, her works provide an insight into the world of violence as suffered by women in the midst of other issues threatening the growth of the Nigerian female. Since there is a dearth of publications which interrogate gender violence in the novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as the researcher's findings show, there is the need for this study since little attention has been given to the analysis of women's writing with the tools that the multi-theories of Max Weber on Power and the Radical Feminism provide. The study will show the literary tools, devices and strategies Chimamanda Adichie use in the portrayal of gender violence and how these techniques and devices shape the representations of power relations between men and women in the novels. This study therefore contributes to a more balanced field of gender criticism in Nigeria.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of Study

Although Chimamanda Adichie's works can be interpreted from different perspectives, this research interrogates the nature of gender-based violence as depicted in her two novels; *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The study cross examines Adichie's

treatment of gender relations and violence in these novels. Furthermore, the research explores how Adichie uses characterization and other literary devices to depict some of the social ills facing the society. The two novels treat different dimensions of violence in the private and public sphere and they form the primary texts that will be used for analysis; also articles and journals with related contents to the study will be analysed. Consequently, the radical feminist theory and Max Weber's theory of power will be used as analytical framework because issues affecting the female gender often have to do with conflicts over domination and suppression.

1.6 Methodology

This research follows a textual and descriptive method based on a combination of traditional library research and textual analysis. The primary sources include Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* while secondary sources include several academic articles, E-books, journals and books related to feminist and power theories. The novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's form the basic material for this research. In addition, an interdisciplinary approach was used while drawing from the fields of Literature, Philosophy, History and Sociology. The analytical framework for this study is the Radical Feminist literary criticism and Max Weber's Power theory.

1.7 Background to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born in 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria. She studied medicine and pharmacy at the University of Nigeria then moved to the US to study communications and political science at Eastern Connecticut State University. She gained a Master of Arts Degree in Creative Writing from John Hopkins University, Baltimore. After initially writing poetry and one play, *For Love of Biafra* (1998), she had several short stories published in literary journals, winning various competition prizes. Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, was published in 2003 and is set in the political turmoil of 1990s Nigeria. This

book won the 2005 Commonwealth Writers Prize (Overall Winner, Best Book), and was shortlisted for the 2004 Orange Prize for Fiction. Her second novel is *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), set before and during the Biafran War. It won the 2007 Orange Broad band Prize for Fiction. She also has a collection of short stories: *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009), shortlisted for the 2009 John Llewellyn-Rhys Memorial Prize and the 2010 Commonwealth Writers Prize (Africa Region, Best Book). Her latest work is her third novel, *Americana* and was published in 2013.

Adichie's writings cover the three genres of Literature; drama, prose and poetry. Like many African writers, she shows great commitment to happenings in her society. She represents fictional reality through true to type characterization and graphic use of language. Osofisan describes her thus on the back cover of her novel *Purple Hibiscus*; 'she beautifully manipulates syntax and trope, as well as controls irony and suspense' to achieve great aesthetics and heighten effects. Her ability to manipulate language and apt analysis of her environment calls scholarly attention to her work. Her first two novels set in Nigeria discuss many issues affecting the Society and in *Purple Hibiscus* takes a look at an intricate family life with events happening in Nigeria under the ruler ship of a military president as a backdrop. Using a fifteen year old girl, Kambili as the narrator, she discusses the strained relationship between Eugene and his family members. The depiction of domestic violence a tyrannical father exhibited against his children and spouse allows for some criticism of both British colonialism and traditional patriarchal powers for their influences on the oppression of marginalized groups including women and children.

In her second novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, she discusses the Nigerian civil war and the attendant violence associated with war. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is set in the 1960s. The title refers to the Biafran flag of independence and the narrative is divided into four main parts. It is written in the third person and each of the 37 chapters gives the reader the perspective of

one of the main characters: Ugwu, Richard or Olanna. In this novel, Adichie claims to write about women as the true heroes of war about whom nobody writes books, especially the Biafra women who showed remarkable bravery in keeping families together. The critical paradigms of this work stem from the postcolonial conditions that define African women's lives today. Adichie's postcolonial writing about Nigeria demonstrates a capacity to look at the public sphere with equal regard. Her fiction asks questions about the roles played by colonialism and present day corruption in the conflicts of the land of her birth, and she refuses to simplify the problems or solutions. She also interrogates salient issues like rape, Infidelity, loss of personal freedom and so on.

1.8 The Novel and Gender Discourse in Nigeria

Some Critics (Johnson 2000, Gray 1987, and Connell 2000) opposed the traditional view of foregrounding gender differences on social hierarchies between men and women by questioning the conventional assumption that gender differences (and subordination) are rooted in biological differences between women and men. Rather, they claimed that all the characteristics associated with masculinity such as rationality, aggression, domination and public life, are a result of social construction as well as the characteristics associated with femininity such as weakness, vulnerability, submission and privacy. The characteristics associated with masculinity are attributed a meaning which is desirable while in contrast, qualities associated with femininity such as weakness and submission becomes values which are undesirable. Therefore, feminization of someone or something is defined as subordination of "that person, political entity, or idea, because values perceived as feminine are lower on the social hierarchy than values perceived as neutral or masculine" (Connell: 2005). In that context, gender is seen as a reflection of cultural as against biological differences and the interpretation of sex differences is linked with social construction of meanings attributed among people.

In spite of the various theories on gender, this study is based on the assumption that gender is the culturally constructed social roles assigned to men and women in the African society. It means that notwithstanding the biological differences between males and females, it is the culture of a society that exerts more influence in the creation of masculine and feminine behaviour. Though the sex of a person can cause him/her to behave differently from the other sex, this can be overridden by cultural factors that determine appropriate behaviour. Among most Africans, men have been culturally constructed as natural born leaders and head of the families while the woman is seen as the 'other' sex, the subordinate one in the relationship. These constructions are produced by the patriarchal culture prevalent in most African societies. Patriarchy itself is a social system based on male domination over women. It is a culture that promotes a sexist ideology, which designates women as inferior beings and men as superior beings. Johnson (2005) explains that patriarchy is simply another term for male domination. He posits that it does not mean that all men are powerful or all women are powerless but that the most powerful roles in most sectors are held predominantly by men and the least powerful roles are held predominantly by women. But for Gray (1987) patriarchy is a culture "that is slanted so that men are valued a lot and women are valued less, or in which man's prestige is up and woman's prestige is down." This can be easily seen in many African societies where decision making and headship is naturally assigned to the man without recourse to intellectual ability or any other requirement to carry out the assignment.

In contrast to the male, based on gender the female has been made to face many acts that are against her fundamental human rights such, as girl-child discrimination, forced marriage, widowhood purification rites, genital mutilation, rape and sexual abuse, wife battering, lack of right to inheritance, leadership discrimination, physical abuse, marginalization in education. The African man, like the African woman, is also a victim of different forms of oppression; dictatorship, poverty, ethnicity and neo-colonialism among

others, but few men suffer violence on account of their gender. In their works therefore, the argument of some female writers like Buchi Emecheta and Ifeoma Okoye is that, in male authored works, gender issues are subsumed under social concerns with little or no mention of how these problems affect the female. But for some other women writers, apart from the little or no role the ‘muted female’ play in nation building, there is the general issue of the collapse of the societal structure.

Consequently, in their writings Nigerian women convey an active desire to change the woman’s position as the second sex in the society. Omolara Ogundipe- Leslie illustrates this when she talks about the commitment of the African woman writer with regards to their art; she declares that women issues border on social ones. She expands on the specific implications of commitment to their womanhood. She says that; ‘it would mean delineating the experiences of women. Women telling what it is to be a woman, destroying male stereotypes of women (Omolara: 1987). Omolara Ogundipe- Leslie makes this call because she believes that African male writers have long dominated the literary scene in Africa and have not clearly depicted the female experience. Ogundipe-Leslie believes there should be a female literary tradition where women actively taken part as canon makers – either as critics or writers. As a literary critic, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi in her article titled *Women and Nigerian Literature* in ‘The Guardian’ of 25 May, 1985 , criticised Nigerian Literature as being ‘phallic’ dominated with male writers and critics dealing almost exclusively with male characters and concerns naturally aimed at a predominantly male audience. In a similar vein, Mabel Segun in an article in ‘*The literary Contribution of the Nigerian female*’ decried the lack of publicity given to Nigerian female writers. To correct this imbalance she called for studies that would enhance the image of the Nigerian female writers in order to bring them to the limelight of the Nigerian literary Scene.

Consequently, the need to give voice to the woman experience gave prominence to female authored novels in Nigeria .In these writings; emphasis is on the protagonist's experiences, thoughts and feelings. The protagonist does not conform to masculine ideologies but allows herself to have her own experiences .One of the basic intentions of women writing is to recreate the image of women as opposed to the one in male authored work which the female writers claim is non-representational of the true female experience. The works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie also focus on the female protagonist and how she carries out her role first as a female and secondly as a member of the society. In *Purple Hibiscus*, she talks about the abuses of a father turned cruel by a fanatical brand of Catholicism and how he uses the church as a tool of oppression against his wife and children. Adichie also explores the abuses of a military regime against the Nigerian citizenry. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, she recounts the political events that led to the Nigerian civil war and the role of women in that difficult period. She also illustrates the nature of violence in war time and how it affects women differently from men. In her novels Adichie looks at different issues confronting society like violence, unemployment, poverty, and lack of press freedom and so forth and how they affect women in the society. Therefore, the two texts of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie under study interrogate the various faces of violence as it affects the female and society in general.

In response to assertions made by writers like Omotola Ogundipe-Leslie about the invisibility of women writers on the Nigerian literary scene, Helen Chukwuma (2000:101) explains that:'' the men wrote about themselves, their wives, homes, their ideals aspirations and conflicts, their confrontation with the white man and his ways, in sum, their society at large. They were the masters and the traditionally accepted mouthpiece of their women folk. But did they say it all? Can any being overtake the place of another? Can a male writer feel the depth of a woman's consciousness, sensibilities, femininity, impulses and indeed her

weaknesses? ”. Chukwuma sees many male authored works as having an unbalanced view of society and one sided in their narration. Therefore, for a literary work to be authentic and realistic for a woman writer, she should be able to identify with her characters from a new perspective different from how they have been portrayed in male authored works which many female writers have claimed to be chauvinistic. Many female critics of male authored works tacitly agree that there is an inaccurate portrayal of the image of womanhood in literary works by men. Therefore women writers try to give a balanced view of the female experience. As a result, Ketu H. Katrak states that;

Women writers’ use of oral traditions and their revisions of Western literary forms are integrally and dialectically related to the kinds of content and the themes they treat. Women writers’ stance, particularly with regard to glorifying/denigrating traditions, vary as dictated by their own class backgrounds, levels of education, political awareness and commitment, and their search for alternatives to existing levels of oppression often inscribed within the most revered traditions. Their texts deal with, and often challenge, their dual-oppression-patriarchy that preceded and continues after colonialism and that inscribes the concepts of womanhood, motherhood, traditions such as dowry, bride-price, polygamy and a worsened predicament within a capitalist economic system introduced by the colonizers. Women writers deal with the burdens of female roles in urban environments (instituted by colonialism), the rise of prostitution in cities, women marginalization in actual political participation (2006: 240).

Some women writers have already gained high visibility as a result of the kind of critical attention they have gained so far from writing about the oppressions of women on the continent. Writers like Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Bessie Head, Nawal el Sadaawi, Nobel laureate-Nardine Gordimer and new entrants to the literary scene like Seffi Attah, Chimamanda Adiche and Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo. These female writers have among other issues in their novels; discussed the gender problem through the eyes of a woman with a view of depicting problems they can easily relate to based on their gender.

This makes Emecheta (2010) to opine that: “Being a woman, and African born, I see things through an African woman’s eyes. I chronicle the little happenings in the lives of the

African women I know''. In her works which include, *Second Class Citizen* and *Joys of Motherhood* she talks about the female experience in a society dominated by patriarchal views and how women coped in the harsh environments they found themselves. Buchi Emecheta in *Joys of Motherhood* (1994), traces gender inequality in the Igbo society as hinging on the tenets of the gender socialization process, customary and traditional practices. For instance, Oshia the son of Nnu Ego refuses to fetch water for his step mother emphasizing that he is a boy "why should I help in cooking? That is a woman's job". In that society, it was the norm for girls to be forced into early marriage and the bride price used in educating the boy child. Another illustration in the novel is where Adankwo, the widow inherited by Nnaife declares that Oshia is equal the worth of five girls put together. The patriarchal nature of many African societies foster the belief of the male child as superior to the female hence the relegation of the females to the background.

The patriarchal nature of the African tradition is also visible in the marital institution. The importance attached to marriage in the sociology of African life both in real life and fiction, is perhaps, the most defining factor in the existence of an African woman. A woman is seen to be incomplete until she is married to a man. Marriage is meant to confer on the woman a shroud of respectability. Now, since the man is to pay a bride price for the intended wife, she becomes his property, bought and paid for. Thus, marriage becomes an avenue for violence and a plethora of injustice in this kind of society where the woman is seen as belonging to her husband. In the novels of Buchi Emecheta, there are many illustrations of this when in *Second Class Citizen* Adah's hope of fulfilment as a woman revolved round making a life with Francis who later turned her into a punch bag. NnuEgo fared no better in Amatogwu's hand who beats her for breast feeding the child of his younger wife and made Nnuego to work on the farm because of her inability to bear children. In this novel, Buchi Emecheta breaks the myth of motherhood when her valued male children turned out as

disappointments. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) one of Okonkwo's wives Ekwefi, was battered for not serving his food on time and he displayed his total disregard for the Week of peace by flogging his youngest wife Ojiugo. In this novel, women are viewed mainly as child bearers and helpmates for their husbands. This is due to the phallogocentric notion that it is only a fertile woman who is able to bear many children especially males and she will be valued within her cultural milieu. Ekwefi is thus considered a cursed woman because after ten live births, only one child-a daughter-survives (Strong-Leek 2001). Against this backdrop, Anowa in Ama Aidoo's play *Anowa*, is "worried of not seeing signs of a baby yet" (p.25) and considers herself a 'wayfarer' without any belongings and family. Her sense of void and emptiness is re-emphasized by Kofi Ako who states "women who have children can always see themselves in the future" (p.36)

Buchi Emecheta in her novels describes how the Igbo traditional culture exploits women through a system that reduces the woman to nothing. Chimamanda Adichie also treads this path when she pits the character of Beatrice a diminutive woman against the brutish and domineering figure of her husband Eugene, who violently attacks her and their children at every opportunity. The under representation of positive females in past narratives by male authors like Chinua Achebe, Cyprain Ekwensi, Elechi Amadi etc highlighted the need for a re-examination of how the image of the female is represented in literary works. The need to study texts which border on gender conflict gave rise to a woman based literary canon known as Feminist Criticism.

A critic, Carole Davies (2007:565-567) observes that African feminist criticism grapples with the politics of male literary domination, as both textual and contextual criticism. She describes it as textual in the sense that it engages "close reading of texts using the literary establishment's critical tools" and it is contextual in the sense that it locates the text in "the world with which it has a material relationship". She sees the text as having a social value

because no writer creates from a vacuum. Besides, she submits that African feminist critical activities is developing a canon of African women writers, examining stereotypical images of women in African literature, studying African women writers and the development of an African female aesthetics, and examining women in oral traditional literatures which leads to gender identity, role and performance (Kehinde Amore, Gabriel Bamgbose & Abisola Lawani, 2011:204). This is because the African male writer is accused of writing from a culture that is biased against the female gender. Concurring, Jaggar (1983) asserts that ‘Culture is male...what it does mean (among things) is that the society we live in, like all other historical societies is a patriarchy and patriarchies imagine or picture themselves from the male point of view’. She opines that, there is a female culture, but it is underground, unofficial or a minor culture occupying a small corner of the human experience. According to her, culture is conceived from a single point of view; the male. But writing as a self-conscious male critic, Biodun Jeyifo (1993), called on women writers and critics to “delegitimize the under-textualization” of the stories of these foremothers of women’s creativity by male writers and critics.

This desire to recreate the woman’s experience through fiction has led to a proliferation of literatures on women by different writers, especially women writers . Therefore, women writing about women is not a new phenomenon on the Nigerian literary scene, in fact as far back as the seventies ,many writings like Flora Nwapa’s *Once is not Enough* ,Buchi Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* all addressed issues affecting females in patriarchal societies. In a typical writing by a female, there is often a flaw in the portraiture of both female and male characters. Male characters are often depicted as brutes and villains who relegate the female to the background .Characters such as Francis in Buchi Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* ,Moudou Fall in Mariama Ba *So long a letter* ,Habu Adams in Zaynab Alkali’s *The Stillborn* are few in this category of writing. In contrast, female characters are

often over glorified and portrayed as long suffering and patient, willing to bear any sacrifices and play the second fiddle. This nature of writing is subjective and paints an exaggerated picture of reality. In some situations some males can be described as effeminate because of their physical stature, so also are some females described as masculine because of their physique. While some women can thus be bullies and villains at home, so also are men given to being at the receiving end of domestic violence. Paradoxically Chimamanda Adichie treads the path of the old generation of female writers in her negative portrayal of male characters like Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus*.

In her novel *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie talks about a violent father Eugene, who has turned cruel by practicing an extreme brand of Catholicism and the parallel abuses of a military government on its citizenry; while in *Half of a Yellow Sun* she recounts the political events that led to the Nigerian civil war and the role of women in that difficult period. In her novels, Adichie looks at the different issues confronting society like, unemployment, poverty, lack of press freedom, violence etc and how they affect women in the society. The character of Beatrice and Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* are contrasted to show women asserting their positions in their societies and challenging patriarchy with its several manifestations through different methods. According to Weber, (1947) most oppressive systems draw much of their strengths from the compliance of victims, who accept their image and get paralyzed by a sense of helplessness.

Adichie in her novels, create positive female characters that are not submissive to exploitation but active in an effort to revolutionize their situation. In *Purple Hibiscus* Adichie analyses the concept of power in the hands of a figure of authority, Eugene. She illustrates how he enforces dominance by using violence on his wife and children to bend them to his will. This is in concordance with Max Weber's theory on power where he linked power with concepts of authority and rule. He defined power as the probability that an actor within a

social relationship would be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance to it. The activation of power is dependent on a person's will, even in opposition to someone else's (Weber: 1947). Weber was interested in power as a factor of domination, based on economic or authoritarian interests. This means that Eugene, who wields economic power as the bread winner of his family, an employer of labour and a respected leader in his church, was able to bend the will of members of his family by not just using force, but by sheer power of his economic might and social position. In contrast, his wife Beatrice for a long time allowed herself to be victimised by her husband, until she took matters into her own hands for change to come. In her second novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie talks about sexual violence. This aspect of sexual violence against women is often a taboo subject in many literary works and Adichie exposes this ugly aspect in her work as one of the forms of oppression against women.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

The aim of this study has been carried out using a multi-theoretical dimension related to structural violence. Max Weber's first theory of power was used by means of the structure of traditional authority and the Radical feminist theory. Although feminists have often used a variety of terms to refer to this kind of relation, including 'oppression', 'patriarchy', and 'subjection' etc, the common thread in these analyses is an understanding of power not only as power-over, but as a specific kind of power-over relation, namely, one that is unjust or illegitimate. Therefore, this thesis takes on a postmodern approach to knowledge where focus lies within the context that knowledge is produced and that truth itself is flexible and something that undergoes continuous productions.

1.9.1 Radical Feminism as Theoretical Framework

Many theories have been developed concerning gender inequality but this thesis is concerned with the theory of the radical feminists. Hydén & Månsson (2007, p. 267) explains that the radical feminist theory is based on an analyses of society's power structure. The theory argues that the existing power in place is a polarised patriarchy which means that women get subordinated because societal's structure is patriarchal. Furthermore, the authors explain that men's oppression of women is the primary form of oppression. According to Valerie Bryson (1999), radical feminists see women as 'an oppressed group who had to struggle for their own liberation against the oppressors; that is against men'. Pamela Abbott, Claire Wallace and Melissa Tyler (2005) argue that radical feminism is 'concerned with women rights rather than gender inequality'. That is why radical feminists wish to challenge the prevailing gender power structure and overturn it, the authors conclude.

1.9.2 The Emergence of the Theory

There are many theories on feminism which try to explain the woman experience and how women can overcome the problems they face in society. Some of these theories include; social and Marxist feminism which see capitalism rather than patriarchy as the source of women's oppression and capitalists as the main beneficiaries. Although they agree that women suffer exploitation, but this exploitation is attributed to lack of ownership to the means of production and economic dependence. They believe that women's unpaid work as housewives and mothers are some of the ways women are exploited. They see the inferior position of women as linked to class based capitalistic system and family structure within the system. They want to see a society where the means of production will be communally owned.

Another type of feminism is Liberal Feminism which takes a liberal stance on the gender issue. First, it posits that all people are created equal and that culture and attitudes of

individuals are responsible for promoting gender conflict and nobody benefits from making one gender subordinate to the other. Rather there should be the creation of equal opportunities to both male and females in all spheres of life. It sees education as a means of change. Critics view liberal feminism as failing to properly situate problems of exploitation of women into structural sources of inequality. The radical feminist theory which is the analytical framework for this thesis, posits that women's oppression is the fundamental oppression at the root of all other societal problems. It sees sexism as the core of patriarchy especially in the family and it focuses on violence against women in form of rape, sexual harassment, incest, domestic violence etc.

Other strands of the radical feminist theory include, the 'female Supremacists theory' which argues that women are not just equal but are actually morally superior to men. They wish to see patriarchy replaced by matriarchy (male rule replaced by female rule). From such perspectives, men are blamed for most of the problems of the world and seen as stumbling blocks to the wheel of progress of the female. Some radical feminist groups call themselves 'Separatist feminists' and they argue that women should organize independently of men outside the male dominated society. But the argument of this group can be faulted on the premise that no man is an island for no sex can live in isolation of the other due to the complex nature of society.

A different school of thought of the radical feminist is the radical cultural feminists who believe in the superiority of the feminine. They believe that it is better to be a woman and feminine than be a man and masculine. Therefore, femininity and characteristics associated with it like emotion, sharing, interdependence is glorified while traits associated with masculinity like independence, intellect, domination are treated with hostility. This school of thought is subjective in the sense that there must be a harmonization of both traits for any individual to function well in any society.

Gemzöe (2002) explains that the radical feminist theory grew out of the radical feminist movement that was formed in the 1960s in the U.S., Europe and Australia. The theory argues that women are oppressed due to their sex and that women's oppression is the most widespread fundamental form of oppression. Radical feminist theory is a theory of women's position in the world, designed and made by women for women. The oppression manifests itself as men's control of women in families, sexual oppression within and outside the family, violence against women and contempt for women. Gemzo further clarifies that according to radical feminism, all women are exposed to oppression by just being a woman, and thus, it comes natural for a common movement. But also a common enemy which is known as "the patriarchy", a social system based on male domination over women. Radical feminism questions why women must adopt certain other roles based on their sex. It attempts to draw lines between biologically determined behaviour and culturally determined behaviour in order to free both men and women as much as possible from their previous narrow gender roles.

Radical feminists believe that women have always been exploited and that only revolutionary changes can create a lasting solution to the oppression. But there has been diverse criticisms of the radical feminist theory and these include the generalization of the woman experience without taking cognizance of the variations of women experience in terms of race, religion, class and ethnic background. Bryson (1999) also observed that radical feminism has a blind view of the women experience. It focuses only on negative experiences of women and deny other relationships between females and males like happy marriages, motherhood etc. Also, there is also the over glorification of the innate goodness of the female while the male is often painted negatively and this gives a picture of the male and female forever at war, which is an untrue representation of life. Some see radical feminism as promoting a male hating ideology which invariably leads to tension between the sexes. While

most of the observations about radical feminism are true, it is also pertinent to note that the theory puts women at the centre of focus.

Another positive aspect of the Radical feminist theory is that it addresses the issue of gender- based violence as product of existing patriarchies. Also, radical feminism strives for recognition of the rights of women and emphasizes that the core of women problems lie at socially constructed constraints against women based on their sex and that if these barriers are removed, the growth of the female will be accelerated. Oakley (2002) argues that a summation of the different theories of feminism ends on the same note; the claiming of rights and opportunities on a non gendered, non discriminatory basis. Therefore, this study is premised on the theory that gender-based violence occurs because of the unequal power relationship that exists between men and the women. Although as Mohanty (2006:244) observes, ‘male violence must be theorized and interpreted within specific societies, in order to effectively organize to change it’. Mohanty thus opines that male violence may vary from society to society; therefore critics and writers need to respond to and interpret this issue in their own ways in order to effectively work towards change. In this regard, Mohanty further asserts that sisterhood cannot be assumed on the basis of gender; it must be formed in concrete, “historical and political practice and analysis” (244). Consequently since the primary focus of this work is gender violence, the radical feminist theory will be applied as an analytical framework.

1.9.3 Max Weber’s Power Theory

Many theories of power abound in modern industrial societies and two basic forms of power have been distinguished; authority and coercion. Authority has been defined as that form of power which is accepted as legitimate and obeyed on that basis e.g. the legislature. The second form of power is by coercion and this is not legitimate but obtained by force. Michel Foucault's highly influential analysis presupposes that power is a kind of power-over;

and he puts it, “if we speak of the structures or the mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others” (1983, 217). It is noteworthy that there are two salient features of this definition of power: power is understood in terms of power-over relations, and it is defined in terms of its actual exercise.

Lukes (2006) defines power thus; ‘A’ exercises power over ‘B’ in a manner contrary to ‘B’s interest’. In other words, Lukes argues that power is exercised over those who are harmed by its use, whether they are aware they are being harmed or not. According to Marx (1974) power is concentrated in the hands of those who have economic control within a society. In social and political theory, power is often regarded as an essentially contested concept (Lukes 1974 and 2005, and Connolly 1983). Although this claim is itself contested (Haugaard 2010; Morriss 2002,199 -206 and Wartenberg 1990, 12–17), there is no doubt that the literature on power is marked by deep, widespread, and seemingly intractable disagreements over how the term power should be understood.

One such disagreement pits those who define power as getting someone else to do what you want them to do, that is, as an exercise of power-over, against those who define it as an ability or a capacity to act, that is, as a power-to do something. Accordingly, Weber (1947) defines power as an individual’s or group’s ability to enforce its own interests in situations characterized by resistance. The power is about to subdue and force obedience, and it is a zero sum game where you get power by reducing someone else’s. In other words, it means the ability to enforce your own way despite the opposition. Weber believes dominance arises when people choose to submit to it. Those who get exposed and are vulnerable to domination accept this supremacy. Weber believes people may be willing to accept inferiority when the person concerned believes in achieving his/her goal. Thus, the power does not arise by a superior force crushing an inferior force, but by people choosing to become subject of the power.

According to Weber (1983) the concept “authority” stands for legitimate forms of domination, which is accepted and seen as natural by those governed by the same. Max Weber divides the authority into three different types. The first one is known as “traditional authority” and this type of dominance has a historical culturally defined structure. In this case, authority is invested in the belief of the ‘rightness’ of established customs and traditions. Those in authority command obedience on the basis of their traditional status which is usually inherited. The power structures are created and maintained by myths and other cultural symbols, thus, is seen as a natural part of the social system. Weber explains how systems, such as monarchies or a religious organizations, cannot question the authority without the whole system getting questionable. This is a way to create and maintain inequalities in societies, and this shape prevents changes and development in societies, thus, prevents emergence of other modern forms. “Charismatic authority” is the second type of dominance where authority is based on unique existing or attributed characteristics of a specific individual, making people want to follow the person concerned. This person already has an informal leader role, thus, automatically gets authority (Börjesson & Rehn 2009).

Weber (1983) presents the third type of dominance “legal authority” which does not rely in a person, but in a system. Max Weber argues that cultural development leads to an increasing of power stipulating, making structures and institutions. Moreover, Max Weber argues that in modern societies the power is in bureaucratic structures, making behaviours, processes and thus, the power is separated from the people but on transparent regulations, and the power relies in a legal system rather than individual leaders. The idea is everything should be the same for everyone, concludes the author.

This research therefore adopts Weber’s theory of “traditional authority” which establishes that dominance over people has to do with authority invested in the belief of the ‘rightness’ of established customs and traditions. The analyses of the relationship between

power and gender-based violence have been done using Max Weber's theory of power as analytical tool.

1.9.4 Radical Feminist Theory and Max Weber's Power Theory

In analysing the theme of gender violence in Chimamanda Adichie's novels, Max Weber's power theory and Radical Feminist theory will be applied since they both examine people's ability to enforce their will in social relations, even if other people are resisting. Max Weber's power theory creates interesting analyses since it argues that all power differences need to be justified and gain legitimacy in order to persist (Engelstad, 2006). But since power may appear in different forms and operate in different directions (Hydén & Månsson, 2007, p. 267). Furthermore, the radical feminist theory provides a women-centred critical perspective and bringing a deeper understanding of the gendered implications. The theoretical involvements with gender violence are mainly found within gender and feminist research. This is why this study is using the radical feminist theory as one of its analytical tools. This will illustrate why violence occurs and what enables such violence to occur, and how it takes its gendered form; why most, but not all, perpetrators are men and victims are women.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Review of related literature

Fiction coming out of Nigeria during the 21st century is marked by attempts to depict social realities through literary representation of events and true to life characters. The literary artist is perceived as a revolutionary thinker whose preoccupation is to change the world, channel the mind and consciousness of his people towards new sets of values and higher awareness of reality. The essence of literature therefore is to condition the mind of people to certain values, attitudes, tastes, feelings, emotional reactions and patterns of behaviour. According to Adeyanju (1999), “the power of art in transforming society lies in its potential by exposing a bad situation, the writer or artist suggests ideas that could correct such situations and leaves the final decision to the reader”.

Therefore, the influence of art can only be an indirect one. Consequently, if man is to change society through art, it means it must address the hopes and aspirations of the people. It must contain a message shared by the audience and can also inspire in them a desire for change. By delineating social problems through scenic representations in art forms like the novel, the artist is able to create a channel to get the reader's empathy to engineer social change. According to Meyer (2003:98), “The illusion of reality is the magic that allows us to move beyond the circumstances of our own lives into a writer's fictional world, where we can encounter everyone from royalty to paupers murderers, lovers, cheats, martyrs, artists ,destroyers and nearly some parts of ourselves”. Thus, through the use of recognizable symbols, the artist has the power to create new realities. This ability to recreate believable characters and events that people can empathise and relate with, emboldens the writer who through his penmanship is able to affect society and eventually can cause a ripple of social reengineering. Thus a committed writer according to Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1978) should, “...respond with his total personality to a social environment which changes with time. Being

a kind of sensitive needle, he registers with varying degrees of accuracy and success the conflicts and tensions in his changing society... for the writer himself lives in and is shaped by history”.

In her writings, Chimamanda Adichie portrays a new and positive image of women that is different from the pictures presented in male authored novels that are modelled along cultural ideals which define women as marriage-oriented and dependent on men for their survival and protection (Selden, 1989; Birkett & Harvey, 1991). Feminist writers like Chimamanda Adichie in their works depict that some of the cultural values which oppress women are clearly visible in marital institutions. As Oriaku (1996) notes, married life, both in real life and in fiction, is perhaps the most circumscribing factor in the life of an African woman.

With the rise of the female liberation movement in Africa and the world over in the seventies and eighties, there have been different writings about women and how they are oppressed by many repressive cultures and traditions with the view of raising the consciousness of the female to self empowerment and to rise out of obscurity. Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough*, Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* are some of the few examples.

In the criticism of women writing in Nigeria, there is often a one dimensional approach in trying to create a female literary canon. Frequently, there is a repetitive approach to the analyses of gender conflict along the lines of male oppression of the female rather than looking at the wider picture of other societal issues. This has made Shigali (2008) to approach the study of African women writers from the perspective of empowerment and try to provide an alternative interpretative 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 does not

address the contemporary challenges of the African people like gender-based violence, corruption, misrule, ethnic tension, and religious fundamentalism. These are issues which remarkably stand out in the discussion of Adichie's two novels.

Chimamanda Adichie, the author under review, writes about issues affecting the nation and the role of the female in surmounting problems. She also explores a salient issue that is often not a central theme in Nigerian female authored novels; the concept of gender-based violence. Adichie explores this theme as major issues affecting women in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Chimamanda Adichie's exploration of the subject of gender violence is because women and girls in Nigeria are still subjected to various culturally based forms of abuse, exploitation and discrimination. The most common forms of these abuse are, wife battering, rape and other forms of sexual violence during wars and conflict situations, female genital mutilation, trafficking in women, and inhuman widowhood practices and these various acts are identified indices mitigating against the growth of the female in the society.

Although, literature on gender is widespread but it is important to observe that data on violence are particularly unreliable because much of the literature on reports of violence captures only a fraction of the actual number of cases. Victims are unwilling to report certain types of violence, such as rape, because of shame and social stigma, so that very few cases are brought to court in Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2006). The threat and exercise of violence underpin and enforce the gender subordination and unequal gender relations that result in the poor outcomes experienced by girls and women in Nigeria (WRAPA, 2004; Mahdi, 2011). Up to a third of women in Nigeria report that they have been subjected to some form of violence, including battering and verbal abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, marital rape, sexual exploitation, or harassment within the home (Nigeria NGO Coalition, 2008: 66).

A review of the literature on gender violence in Nigeria suggests a conspiracy of silence and conceals the nature and extent of the problem. Recent studies show that there are basically two forms of gender violence in Nigeria: structural violence and institutionalised violence (Amnesty International, 2006). A lot of structurally induced gender violence against women was reported to stem from social norms which define what constitutes abuse of women in both domestic and public contexts. The literature suggests an acceptance of cultural practices that condone and even encourage certain forms of violence. Chapter 8 of the NBS Profile of Women and Men in Nigeria (2009) presents data on violence, which includes trafficking, labour and sexual exploitation, and also female circumcision. Other examples of structural violence against women are harmful traditional practices like widowhood rites (Nwadinobi 2008) and rape (Amnesty International's Annual reports, "Rape: The Silent Weapon" 2010).

The British Council's report on 'Gender in Nigeria' identifies avenues through which institutionalised violence get perpetuated, and these include statutory, religious and customary laws in Nigeria that permit violence against women. The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition report (2008), for example, identifies the penal code (section 55(4)), applicable in the Northern regions, that legalises 'corrective' beating of a child, pupil, servant or wife, as long as this does not cause grievous hurt. For some, this is the root cause of violence against women. Much of the blame is placed on plural legal systems. The law as currently constituted does not offer women and girls adequate protection from violence (Mahdi, 2011; Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition, 2008).

Consequently, Chimamanda NAdichie in her two main novels *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* therefore, presents different forms of violence against women. Her novels deal with societal and gender issues and have received many critical acclaims both in Nigeria and outside its shores. Chinua Achebe acknowledges: "we do not usually associate wisdom

with beginners, but here is a new writer endowed with the gift of ancient storytellers...Adichie came almost fully made” (cover of *Half of a Yellow Sun*). Chimamanda Adichie is one of most widely read authors amongst the new generation of writers in Nigeria with no less than 604 entries made up of 1 book, 54 essays, 9 Encyclopedia entries, 2 Study Guides, 9 Dissertations (5 MA and 4 PhD), 99 profiles, 68 news clips, 1 review each of *For Love of Biafra* and *Decisions*, 105 reviews of *Purple Hibiscus*, 129 reviews of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, 108 reviews of *The Thing around Your Neck* and 18 miscellaneous comments.

Purple Hibiscus, her first novel has received serious critical attention since its publication in 2003. The book has been critically reviewed in both Newspapers and academic journals and, recently scholarly readings have provided clear insight into some of the narrative’s prominent themes and motifs. For instance, critics have highlighted the connections that Adichie establishes between the violent atmosphere that pervades the home of the novel’s fifteen-year- old narrator, Kambili Achike, and the climate of fear maintained by the ruthless Nigerian military regimes of the late twentieth century, when the events of *Purple Hibiscus* unfold (Beilke 2006,Hewett 2004,Okuyade 2005). Other commentators, writing from a feminist perspective, have examined the alternatives to patriarchal oppression found in the narrative (Bryce 2008:58, Lopez 2008:89-92). Some articles have also focused on the metaphor of food, which is linked with abuse and emancipation in Adichie’s story (Highfield,2006 “Refusing”) or on the symbol of the purple hibiscus which, appropriately enough, represents the heroine’s and her brother’s blossoming and embodies the sense of serenity that the two adolescents acquire away from the paternal home (Highfield, “Blood”; Cooper 124-29).

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 find her voice within tyrannous temperament of her father’s home. African

women have explored the aspect of silencing as a constituent of female oppression in literature. 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”. Implicit from Uwakweh’s point of view, silence of the female characters is a trope that cannot be excluded or underrated in trying to understand the African female novel.

Despite their divergent concerns, critics like .(Beilke 2006,Okuyade 2009,Hewett 2004) recognize that one of *Purple Hibiscus*’s most convincing features lies in its nuanced treatment of the notions of freedom and tyranny. *Purple Hibiscus* is a novel that x-rays the issue of violence both at the domestic and societal levels as a problem bedevilling the Nigerian society. Chimamnda Adichie looks at how violence leads to all sorts psychological and physiological trauma. Her narrator, Kambili; in *Purple Hibiscus* takes the reader into the world of her family. She describes a world which revolves around her tyrant father Eugene who controls his family with iron fists. His control of the family breaks down all sorts of personal freedom of the individual members of the family. Mrs Beatrice Achike is described as not having any opinion of her own and ‘speaks in little amounts as birds eat’. Kambili does not know how to talk in public because she has been brought up not to speak at all unless spoken to .In *Purple Hibiscus*, the socialization of daughters produces passive, submissive and tame characters due to the oppressive and very patriarchal environment they grow up in. To Papa, Kambili should be God fearing and a ‘backyard snob’ (p.42) 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 (2009) 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.

At the societal level, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie describes a military regime that treated its citizenry like second class citizens. People's rights were trampled upon and silence suddenly becomes a virtue. Silence in Eugene's house is a rule but there is a lot of talk, laughter, singing and exchange at Aunty Ifeoma's house. In overlaying the two environments Adichie promotes the way Ifeoma brings up her children, where girls are not discriminated from boys and domestic chores are shared equally regardless of gender.

In this novel, people like Ade Coker 'The Standard Newspaper' editor was killed via a parcel bomb reminiscent of the bomb that killed the Nigerian journalist Dele Giwa in the nineties, Another character in the novel Nwakiti Ogechi, was killed and his body dumped in the forest and this also resounds like the Nigerian Activist Ken Saro Wiwa, that was hung by the Nigerian Military government in power in the nineties. All were killed for speaking out against the government. Ironically, Eugene's Newspaper, 'The Standard' is a medium to air people's view against the oppression by the government but in his private sphere, Eugene abhors any form of challenge against his tyranny and so enforces silence from his victims through the use of excessive force. *Purple Hibiscus* looks at a facet of violence that is more psychological than physical with power domiciled in the hands of a rich tyrant Eugene Achike while *Half of a Yellow Sun* does the exact opposite. The novel takes on the concept of violence more as a diatribe against the Biafran people, the Igbos of eastern Nigeria and the violence that ensued in the civil war. Although apart from the horrors of war, Adichie portrays some other themes like human brutality, betrayal of love, trust, friendship and country; and child soldiering, amongst other themes. But *Half of a Yellow Sun* is unmistakably about the Biafran War.

As a writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie comes across as prejudiced in her narration especially with her second novel; *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This is because in reading her novel, her prejudices come alive through her narration. She comes across as telling the story from a

subjective position as an Igbo whose ancestors experienced the war and came out vanquished. In her own account she admits that she could not have written the book without her parents, who “wanted [her] to know... that what is important is not what they went through [in the Biafran War] but that they survived”. In response to a question posed at Guardian Book Club event (2008), Adichie affirms that she had no concerns with balance whilst writing the novel. It means that her resolution to write about the Nigerian civil war was borne out of the need to give her own version of the war as told by her parents and other sources biased or not.

Despite the argument about the authenticity of her account of the war, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie believes that the Nigerian Civil war was a dark patch in Nigerian history, a civil war fraught with lessons which the average Nigerian is yet to learn. She belongs to the Chinua Achebe school of thought which posits that the events which preceded and led to the Nigeria Civil war is still a problem in Nigeria. This can be inferred from Achebe’s comment in the preface to *Morning Yet on Creation Day* in which, reacting to the prevailing sentiment of the time that the events of the Nigerian civil war was best forgotten, he said:

I do not agree. I believe that in our situation the greater danger lies not in remembering but in forgetting, in pretending that slogans are the same as truth; and that Nigeria, always prone to self-deception, stands in great need of reminders.... I believe that if we are to survive as a nation we need to grasp the meaning of our tragedy. One way to do it is to remind ourselves constantly of the things that happened and how we felt when they were happening. (xiii)

Emphasizing this point, Ayorinde (2007) quotes Chimamanda as saying (on the occasion of *Half of a Yellow Sun* winning the Orange Broadband Prize for fiction) that: “This book is my refusal to forget”. Adichie’s success in part, likely stems from her distance from the event in time, having been born seven years after the end of the war. One of the functions of a committed writer is his/her ability to portray reality through fiction.

Adichie heralds her interest in writing about the Nigeria civil War in some of her short stories like ‘May Massacre’, ‘To my fatherland now and then’ in her collection of Poetry ‘

Decisions'(1997). She advances the theme of war in her play titled '*For Love of Biafra*' (1998) This dogged interest in a war that happened over two decades ago in Nigeria reaffirms Chidi Amuta's concern about the overreaching effect of the civil war when he says that "despite the geographical re-assembling of the Nigerian nation in 1970, the social and political behaviour that caused the war is still very much with us" ("Evolution" 89). Amuta posits that to be familiar with Nigerian literature in the period between 1970 and the present is to be conversant with one dominant and recurrent area of social concern; the Nigerian civil war (1967-70). The dominance is so pronounced that it can safely be said that in the growing body of Nigerian national literature, works, directly based on or indirectly deriving from the war experience constitute the largest number of literary products on any single aspect of Nigerian history to date.

The Nigerian civil war has garnered much interest in history and literary discourses. Omotosho (1981) argues that "since the Nigerian revolution, the civil war has been the most important theme in Nigerian letters". Before now, war novels were largely written by male authors like Wole Soyinka, Cyprian Ekwensi, Festus Iyayi, Isidore Okpewho, Eddie Iroh, Kalu Uka and Chinua Achebe, yet Umeh (1987) posits that "without the female voice, no complete picture of the Nigerian civil war (1967-70) will be recorded in Nigerian literary history". This can be attributed to the fact that during the war, women and children suffered great hardships, violence, and torture, physical and psychological trauma. Umeh argues that "African women writers have not been treated as major contributors to the general output of war literature ...this trend point of the dominant male tradition in Nigerian letters and the phallic criticism which continue to repudiate the validity and complexity of the female". But with time, this assertion has changed with female writers adding their voices to war literature. Writers in this category include Flora Nwapa, Rose Njoku, Pauline Onwubiko and Buchi Emecheta, Adichie, Ezeigbo etc have joined other writers in Nigeria to write on the Nigerian

civil war. This according to Umeh is because African women writers are challenging patriarchal roles which impede the development and growth of women in the literary sphere and even in society.

Chinua Achebe praises Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as an accomplished historical/ War novelist with her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In that same vein, Joyce Carol Oates describes the novel as a major successor to such twentieth century classics as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Adichie in turn, acknowledges the use of more than thirty books that "helped in [her] research", every one of them very much concerned with the Biafran experience. The majority are histories or political studies, but the list also includes almost a dozen works of fiction: Chinua Achebe's *Girls at War and Other Stories* (1972), Flora Nwapa's *Never Again* (1975), Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1976), Cyprian Ekwensi's *Divided We Stand* (1980), Elechi Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* (1982), Eddy Iroh's *The Siren in the Night* (1982), Kalu Okpi's *Biafra Testament* (1982), Ossie Enekwe's *Come Thunder* (1984), Nwapa's *Wives at War* (1984) and Anthonia Kalu's *Broken Lives and Other Stories* (2003). The juxtaposition of this list with the note about Adichie's parents acknowledges both the novel's debt to a literary tradition heavily invested in accounting for what happened in Biafra, and a desire to redirect that investment. So, it invites a re-reading of the novels Adichie lists, to find out how much *Half of a Yellow Sun* owes them and what major contribution the novel makes on the growing war literature in Nigeria .

Critics like (Hodges, 2009) have observed that at first glance it might also seem odd that all of the novels Adichie cites are by Igbo writers. However, the fact is that Biafran War fiction has been a largely Igbo tradition. It is clearly this Igbo tradition Adichie is acknowledging and responding to in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Hodges also observes that there are a few specific things that Adichie probably owes to her literary precursors. The experiences of Meka, a fifteen year old soldier in *Come Thunder*, might have inspired some

details of Ugwu's experiences in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The British diplomat Alan Grey, in *Destination Biafra*, may have suggested Adichie's Richard Churchill. Similarly, some details of Olanna's and Ugwu's experiences in *Half of a Yellow Sun* may owe something to Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* and Flora Nwapa's *Wives at War*. Olanna at one point grieves for the things left behind in Nsukka, "her tablecloths with the silver embroidery, her car" a detail reminiscent of Emeka Ezenwa's wife in *Sunset at Dawn*, a woman whose only concern is with her possessions abandoned in Nsukka. And in Nwapa's "*Daddy, Don't Strike the Match*" Ndidi Okeke restricts his fifteen year old son to their home because "[i]f he wandered about the village, he might be conscripted into the army"; this is precisely Ugwu's situation in Umuahia. Further examples might be drawn from most of the fiction in Adichie's bibliography.

More fascinating are *Half of a Yellow Sun*'s less easily-defined literary debts critics have noted that it is difficult to assess exactly how much *Half of a Yellow Sun* owes to *Destination Biafra*, the latter's documentation of "portions of the war that other narratives only gloss or allude to" as Ann Marie Adams puts it, particularly its depictions of rape seems an important precedent 'I think, Emecheta's attempt to redress the gendered bias of discourse on the war (Adams ;2009;288), can be seen as a source of inspiration for of a *Half Yellow Sun*. Adichie herself acknowledges a similar debt of inspiration to Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* and Nwapa's *Never Again*, which she calls "indispensable in creating the mood of middle-class Biafra" . More than that, the way Adichie juxtaposes the dramatic realities of living through a war with the realities of ordinary people caught in the middle of events they [do] not fully understand" (Hodges). This, Hodges argues, is both one of *Half of a Yellow Sun*'s most significant points of contact with its antecedents. It begins to distinguish itself from them. That is, precisely because *Half of a Yellow Sun* dramatizes its own incompleteness, its inability to fully comprehend (in both senses of the word) the Biafran War, it negotiates the

dilemmas implicit in fictionalizing war more successfully than most of its predecessors. Chidi Amuta puts it thus, “although the raw, immediate experience of horror does lend itself to journalistic reflection, the literary enterprise requires fictional mediation of social experience”. But according to Chinyere Nwahunanya in her article on the aesthetics of Biafran war fiction, there is always a negotiation between historicism and “imaginative creation”. However, in instances where there is something at stake in the history— and forty years later this is still the case with the history of Biafra—there is going to be anxiety about the slippage between fictionalization and falsification.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* has been widely criticized and interpreted by various critics since its publication. Knopf (2007) focuses on the partition of Nigeria most notably the impact of war’s brutalities through the humanist perspective. Knopf focuses on the impact of war and its damages at different levels. The horror and savagery of war is foregrounded with history of haunting intimacy. Knopf further writes:

[. . .] Adichie tells her profoundly gripping story primarily through the eyes and lives of Ugwu, a 13-year-old peasant houseboy who survives conscription into the raggedy Biafran army, and twin sisters Olanna and Kanene, who are from a wealthy and well-connected family. Tumultuous politics, power plot, and several sections are harrowing, particularly passages depicting the savage butchering of Olanna and Kanene’s relative. [. . .] This is a transcendental novel of many descriptive triumphs, most notably its depiction of the war’s brutalities on peasants and intellectuals alike. (1)

For Knopf, the novel is all about the savagery of the war which is shown through the variety in narration. According to Knopf, the most traumatic events due to ethnic conflict is shown vividly; like the butchering of Olanna and Kanene’s relatives and Ugwu’s pathetic condition when he is conscripted into the Biafran army to fight the ethnic riot of secession. Commenting on the novel, John (2007) argues that the novel is not standard war account but it does not excel the horrors. She sees hope, future, unity and love out of such conflict in Nigeria. She further writes, “[. . .] Adichie insists on accountability and then forgiveness as

the only option for redemption: “What will you do with the misery you have chosen? Will you eat misery?” By the end, after breaking our hearts, she uses her last sentence to blindside us with a gift. She offers hope in the future, which is what we imagine”. Thus, John sees forgiveness hope and love as Adichie’s message. But a different reading of Adichie’s description of the psychological horror caused by the civil war suggests a negation of one ethnic group as against another. Regarding all these issues and commentaries, it is clear that Adichie’s novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* can be analyzed from various perspectives, but this study specifically analyses the novel as foregrounding gender violence in Nigeria.

CHAPTER THREE: *Purple Hibiscus*

3.1 Introduction: The Reconstruction of childhood Personae in *Purple*

Hibiscus

‘And the first step... is always what matters most, particularly when we are dealing with the young and tender. This is the time when they are taking shape and when any impression we choose to make leaves a permanent mark’

(Plato (428-348BC: cited in Clarke and Clarke, 2000, p 11).

The term, ‘childhood’ is generally recognized as a socially constructed phenomenon. The construction of childhood identity is thus dependent on culturally determined behavior of a given society. Therefore, it is inevitable that the socialization of the girl-child will be marked by the existence of distinct gender roles. This is because the role which is often seen as ideal for the girl ,is a being whose purpose is derived from the existence of another, whether husband, father or extended family and whose locus is the home or household. Often, this is done with the objective of turning the girl into a good wife/ mother as the hallmark of a successful woman. Consequently, she becomes unassertive, dependent, controlled and subservient to the male.

Hence In feminist writings, there is a deliberate attempt to deconstruct literary representations of femininity and girlhood. This is a result of the sex- role stereotyping of children into specific modes of behavior deemed acceptable. For instance, in many short stories, it is the tradition to cast boys in the roles of heroes and protagonists while the girls are often cast in domestic roles. It can be seen therefore, that patriarchal values still dominate many literary genres about childhood. Trites (2010) defines the ideal feminist children’s novel as one in which;

the main character is empowered regardless of gender”: “[I]n a feminist children’s novel, the child’s sex does not provide a permanent obstacle to her development. Although s/he will likely experience some gender- related conflicts, s/he ultimately triumphs over them...a

successful feminist children's novel, will feature a protagonist who recognizes her or his agency and voice, and embraces a more androgynous expression of gender, thus incorporating "both stereotypically masculine and feminine characteristics into a balanced whole.

The aim of a feminist children's novel is a transcendence of social hierarchy; Trites explains that "any time a character in Children's literature triumphs over the social institutions that have tried to hold her down, she helps to destroy the traditions that have so long forced females to occupy the position of Other", and when the protagonist triumphs, the child reader becomes, to some extent, more aware of the forces that seek to control her: Above all else, feminist children's novels...call the reader to awaken herself and to reject the role of passivity. Therefore, in reading Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, it is imperative to understand the gender dynamics of using a girl-child protagonist as the narrator in the novel.

3.1.2 "Gender and Genre": A Feminist Exploration of the Bildungsroman in *Purple Hibiscus*

There are many definitions of the literary genre Bildungsroman. It can be defined as "a novel whose principal subject is the moral, psychological, and intellectual development of a usually youthful main character" (The Free Dictionary) or as "the novel of personal development or of education" (The Literary Encyclopaedia). Novels that are characteristic of the Bildungsroman genre describe a young protagonist's developmental trajectory, or overall development, from childhood to maturity. The original model for the protagonist of the Bildungsroman is the male hero as the genre has been male dominated and females often neglected. The Bildungsroman has produced criticism from feminist quarters. In 1983 Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland published *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, a collection of essays on the female novel of development. Their anthology was a reaction to the neglect of women authors in general, and in particular, the female protagonists, in the Bildungsroman genre. The authors state "...even the broadest

definitions of the Bildungsroman presuppose a range of social options available only to men”; thus, women could not occupy a site within the traditional genre as narrowly defined. As social constraints work differently for men and women, female development was not characterized by the possibility to explore a social environment.

Feminist criticism predominantly focuses on the developmental processes of female protagonists in the Bildungsroman and how the authors bring in the gender perspective into their discussion, rendering their anthology a pioneering critical work of the genre. The male Bildungsroman usually begins in childhood, whereas fictions of female development (with a few exceptions) begin when the protagonist is older and is already married and perhaps given birth; her self-development is then motivated by her feeling frustrated with her life as it is. Secondly, unlike the young boy, most female protagonists do not receive formal schooling. Critics contend that “even those directly involved in formal education ... do not significantly expand their options, but learn instead to consolidate their female nurturing roles rather than to take a more active part in the shaping of society” (Abel et al). Consequently, there is a marked gender difference as regards formal education and position in society: the heroine’s place is still in the home. Thirdly, the male hero has the possibility to leave his home in quest for an independent life in the city, an option usually not available to the female heroine. However, if she does have the chance to leave home, her aim is still not to explore or to learn how to be independent, like her male counterpart.

Lastly, when the male hero’s reaches the end of his spiritual and psychological journey he is a mature man; by then he has made the resolution to accommodate to the world, or alternately to withdraw from it or rebel against it. In contrast, the female protagonist does not have the same choices, as her only option is to concentrate on her internal world rather than engaging with society. Moreover, the price she might have to pay for psychological development is a loss of social life or other worse consequence.

Although there are common themes in the male and female Bildungsroman, such as relationships to family and friends, formal/informal education, sexuality/love and the overall goal of self-development, there is a marked gender difference between the aims of the spiritual and psychological quest of the male hero and female heroine respectively, which needs to be recognized and realized in a proper (re)definition of the Bildungsroman genre.

A major difference between the male and the female Bildungsroman concerns the issue of gender and sexual inequality. Labovitz (1986) highlights the fact that patriarchy plays a rather significant role in the female Bildungsroman, as well as the heroines' negation of male power. Consequently, "... the theme of equality between sexes is one sharply raised in the female Bildungsroman, alone" (251). Whereas gender equality is a major concern in the female novel of development exclusively, the male hero, in contrast, will "grapple with social equality"; by means of his vocation the male protagonist starts to climb the social ladder, while his female counterpart rebels against the structure of society and its injustices.

Chimamanda Adichie uses a female protagonist, Kambili rather than her brother Jaja to tell the story in *Purple Hibiscus*. This is deliberate because the traditional model for a Bildungsroman is a boy whose voice carries on the narration throughout the novel. Furthermore, in a typical novel by women writers, the stories told about women often starts when the woman is an adult and married or about to be married and her self-development is then motivated by her frustrations with her life and her problems often tied to a controlling husband in a failed marriage. But for the young female protagonist Kambili, the author allows her development to be shaped by events around her. Her family, school and interaction with other members of the society (although limited) shapes her world view and how she reacts to events. Her father, Eugene puts pressure on his daughter Kambili to be submissive and without her own voice. He refuses to allow her develop an independent mind in order not to question his authority and decisions. In his house, schedules are prepared for her and her

brother Jaja and nothing is done without his permission. Not even a simple action like turning on the television or stereo.

Adichie in depicting a girl-child as the protagonist gives room for the character to develop with her different experiences in the novel. This is done with aim of helping her find a voice at the end of the story. This is unlike the experiences of her mother; Beatrice and other weak female characters in early women writing like Nnuego in Buchi Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood* who are seen as full grown women who have internalized the patriarchal ideals of African women ; meek, unassertive and repressed. Adichie also makes a strong case for girl-education. Kambili is depicted as not just intelligent but top of her class. Also, unlike what is obtainable in many conventional African societies, Kambili is allowed to have her first crush as a teenager. Adichie allows the reader to go through her intimate moments as a young woman coming to terms with her inner feelings. Kambili falls in love with a priest, Father Amadi. Even as young as she was, the author demonstrates the right of a girl to express her sexuality (in a controlled way) and not be repressed on account of her gender.

Consequently, the rise of African feminist literary criticism has however brought significant attention to the idea of 'girlhood' in literary childhood studies, thus postulating that childhood's gendered dimensions are therefore crucial in the development of feminist criticism.

3.2 The Weight of Religion in *Purple Hibiscus*

Responding to a question from the audience during an interview with Forna, Adichie expresses her deep worry about "modern religion" as well as "the state of the world" (56).

She says:

We have to engage with religion because it's a huge force. I think it is shocking in debates that go on to invoke God in spaces where really God has no business of being invoked. There's a problem with people telling you constantly how "born again" they are, how close to their pastor they are when actually we should be talking about why pensions aren't being paid etc. I believe religion can be a force for incredible

good but I have a problem with the brand of religion that seems to be exploding in Nigeria now. In Lagos there's a church in everybody's backyard and poor people are giving their money to pastors who then buy private jets ... Nobody sees the horror of it, because it's all in God's name, covered if you like by God. I think that is very worrying and it's something we should talk about more in Nigeria rather than covering up this kind of corruption in Jesus' name. (56)

While financial "corruption in Jesus' name" is not a major issue in *Purple Hibiscus*, Papa's appropriation of Catholicism, which leads to a corruption of his family home, warrants the kind of concern expressed by Adichie above. According Ike (2003),

Religion is such a huge force, so easily corruptible and yet so of doing Incredible good. The streak of intolerance I see masquerading itself as faith and the way we create an image of God that suits us, are things I am interested in questioning. I am also interested in colonized religion, how people like me can profess and preach an aspect of their indigenous culture and yet cling so tenaciously to a religion that considers most that indigenous culture evil'. Religion in this novel is seen to have evolved from man's relationship with his God, to a tool for violence.

Toyin (1998) in his book, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies* identify 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 in *Purple Hibiscus*, Mohamed Abdulmalik and Mohamed's mother in her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Purple Hibiscus begins with Jaja's rebellion against his devout Catholic father when he deliberately did not partake in communion on Palm Sunday, an important Christian religious holiday. The chapters that follow detail the events that culminate in Jaja's rebellion. The events are narrated by Kambili three years after this incident. Since she has been stunted by the severe punishments of her father, Kambili hardly talks. Her narration is striking because it can be concluded that she finds her own voice throughout this ordeal. In describing violence outbursts by her father, Kambili uses indirect, euphemisms. The severe beatings carried out by her father are described as 'sounds' which is ignored by the narrator. Other

examples include Beatrice's ritualized polishing of the figurines on the etagere is an indication of the frequency with which she is beaten by her husband, Eugene (Pp.10, 192).

Mr. Eugene Achike, Kambili's father is well loved within and outside his community. He is seen as an exemplary man who others should emulate. In fact, in his community back home he is titled 'Omelora' by the people, meaning 'One who does for all' because of his philanthropy to the villagers. Father Benedict the priest at the Catholic Church he attends in his sermons usually referred to the Pope, Papa, and Jesus, in that order. He uses Eugene to illustrate the gospels, His faithfulness to the church which he shows by making huge donations to the church. He was even given a human rights award by 'World Amnesty' for speaking the truth against the unjust government in power.

Eugene's understanding of true religion revolves round his fanatical belief in the Catholic Church and sees other religions as a contravention of God's purpose. His brand of Catholicism negates everything African and sees every European as good. This is depicted in the contrast between Father Amadi and Father Benedict, a Priest at Papa's beloved St. Agnes. Father Benedict is a white man from England who conducts his masses according to European custom. Papa adheres to Father Benedict's style, negating every trace of his own Nigerian heritage. Papa uses his faith to justify abusing his children. When Amadi an Igbo priest comes to say the mass while on a visit and broke into an Igbo song in the course of praying, Eugene was scandalized and likens him to 'people like him bring trouble to the church. We must remember to pray for him' (P. 29). Amadi, on the other hand, is an African priest who blends Catholicism with Igbo traditions. He believes that faith is both simpler and more complex than what Father Benedict preaches. Eugene disowns his father Papa-Nnukwu for not being a Catholic. He allows his father to live in penury despite his wealth because of his hypocrisy.

Although Ifeoma received the same missionary education as her brother Eugene, the difference between the two could not have been more glaring. A devout and tyrannical Catholic patriarch, has managed to abuse emotionally and physically his middle-class family in his attempt to grapple with his own cultural, emotional, and ideological demons. His Catholicism amounts to a devotion to a Western colonial order that he has concluded to be far superior to the traditional belief system of his family. He is determined that his wife and children will adhere to Catholic ideas and teachings, even as he uses his notable wealth and power to repress those in his family who hold onto traditional values. On one occasion, when Kambili and Jaja didn't tell him about their grandfather's visit to aunt Ifeoma's House while on vacation there, his reaction was swift when he found out. He resorted to violence as a corrective measure. He summons his daughter Kamibili to his room and asked her to get into the bathroom. With a kettle filled with hot water, he invites kambili to step into the bath-tub in the bathroom;

‘Kambili, you are precious’. His voice quavered now, like someone speaking at a funeral, choked with emotion. ‘You should strive for perfection. You should not see sin and walk right into it’. He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it toward my feet, slowly as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen. He was crying now, tears streaming down his face. I saw the moist steam before I saw the water. I watched the water leave the kettle, flowing almost in slow motion in an arc to my feet. The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding; I felt nothing for a second, and then I screamed. (p.194)

Kambili's silent fear and pain of her father's torture is heart breaking, leaving the reader with a desperate hope of rescue in the last moment. The only person Kambili could possibly rely on is her mother Beatrice who is too terror- stricken to do anything than quietly observing her daughter's agony. Having been beaten and controlled by Eugene for years Beatrice has lost her own voice and is helplessly witnessing her children's suffering. Kambili likens her mother to a bird ‘She did not usually say so much at one time, she spoke the way a

bird eats , in small amounts’(p.21) .Kambili herself accepts the inevitable without questioning the ethics of her father’s decisions. Her up- bringing has taught her to tolerate Eugene’s revengeful God without critical objections leaving her to believe she has deserved the torture to which she is exposed. Until the last beating when she is so seriously wounded that she almost dies. Kambili stands out as a passive victim to her father and close society. Her only role model has been Beatrice who endures the same pain and helplessness as her children.

The unspoken issues are relegated into a complacent silence that defines the ironies of the existence of fundamental Catholicism and violence. This complacent silence from a young helpless female like Kambili is what Adichie hopes to break through the character of Beatrice, a mature woman. Nonetheless, Beatrice turns out to be a disappointment because she could neither help herself nor save her children from their violent father. Her slowness in reacting to the oppressive situation caused by husband led to her act of murdering her husband when she could not think of any other way of finding freedom for her children or herself. Another violent outburst from Eugene happened when he discovers a portrait of his father in the hands of his daughter; kambili. He went ballistic at seeing the picture of a ‘heathen ‘under his puritan roof;

He started to kick me. The metal buckles on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitoes. He talked nonstop, out of control, in a mix of Igbo and English, like soft meat and thorny bones. Godlessness. Heathen worship. Hellfire. The kicking increased in tempo and... I curled around myself tighter, around the pieces of painting....Kicking. Kicking. Kicking.... More stings. More slaps. A salty wetness warmed my mouth. I closed my eyes and slipped away into quiet... (210-11).

Eugene’s brutal beating of kambili and Jaja is not only routine, but his way of setting them on the path of ‘righteousness’. As a devout Catholic, he believes he is being a good Christian and father when he punishes them. In the novel, religion is used to perpetuate faith-based violence. Eugene as head of his family psychologically manipulates and harms his wife and children. Using the teachings and doctrines of the Catholic church like ‘hell fire’ he

intimidates his family and beats them into submission .He is successful in carrying out these acts of violence against his wife Beatrice and children, Kamibili and Jaja who lack the capacity to question or challenge his decisions or actions being the head of the family. Also Father Benedict, the head of the Church where the family worships, actively backs Eugene's acts of terrorism against his family.

This legitimate form of power Eugene wields (as head of family and employer of labour) is what enables him to carry out his own will over his family (Weber; 1978). According to Foucault (1983) '...the mechanisms of power enables certain persons to exercise powers over others'. Hence, emphasis is on Beatrice, his wife, who become accustomed to his violent outburst and is powerless to resist. When Eugene attacks Kambili with kicks and blows, Mama stands aside and pleads '...please biko!'(211). Mama's ineffectual attempts at stopping 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. 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.

Through the relationship between Eugene and his wife and children, Adichie is able to show the relationship between oppression and power. Thus, Feminists see any form of

violence as an expression of power over women (Walby: 2000). They see the use of violence and the threat of violence as a mechanism to help keep women 'in place' and discourage them from challenging patriarchy. According to Walby (2002) 'It is not only men that are violent, but evidence suggests that men commit almost 90 percent of all violence against women.' Oakley claims that there is a 'global picture of violence against women; including genital mutilation, violence associated with prostitution and pornography; sexual abuse of females...' Oakley does not claim that men are inherently violent; rather she sees violence as resulting from what men learn about being masculine, and from attempts to maintain patriarchy as a system. Eugene Achike's violent treatment of his family is a reflection of how often some men as heads of the family often resort to violence as means of enforcing obedience from their family. Eugene's self delusion as custodian of his family's eternal spiritual wellbeing makes him abuse his family violently with or without provocation. He is an epitome of many male headed households who resort to violence to enforce their wills when their decisions are thwarted.

3.3 Violence as a Metaphor for Silence in *Purple Hibiscus*

The narrative in *Purple Hibiscus* introduces the central conflict right at the beginning. Eugene, who sees himself as a devout catholic sets a standard in his house that does not allow for any flexibility. Rules on appropriate behaviour at home and outside the home are set. When a routine is violated contrary to his instructions, Eugene reacts by acts of violence in which his wife is the principal recipient. An instance in the novel is when his wife is reluctant to visit the priest after mass because of her pregnant status, beats her up, oblivious of her pregnant status. Kambili describes the scene thus:

I was in my room after lunch, reading James chapter five, when I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parent's hand-carved bedroom door. I imagined the door had gotten stuck and Papa was trying to open it. If I imagined it hard enough, then it would be true. 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. I

was at nineteen when the sounds stopped. I heard the door open. Papa gait on the stairs sounded heavier, more awkward than usual [...] Mama was slung over his shoulder like the jute sacks of rice his factory workers bought in bulk at the Seme border. (32-33)

Kambili gives vivid description of what transpires when she continues, “We cleaned up the trickle of blood, which trailed away as if someone had carried a leaking jar of red watercolour all the way downstairs. Jaja scrubbed while I wiped” (33). Afterwards Eugene asked the children to recite sixteen different novenas for Mama’s forgiveness. Kambili’s narration of the violence that goes on in their home is imbued with a sort of naivety consistent with a child her age and portrays her daily life which entails a constant witnessing and experience of psycho-physical violence: “Counting made it seem not that long, made it seem not that bad. Sometimes it was over before I even got to twenty” (33). Eugene’s house is a like a luxurious concentration camp where all the trappings of wealth couldn’t mask the constant battery and various acts of violence that take place. His wife, Beatrice’s polishing of the étagère was her way of containing her emotional and psychological turmoil after each physical assault. Not even the pregnancy of a much-awaited child is enough to persuade Eugene against executing God’s imagined justice on his hapless and long-suffering wife whose physical demands as a result of early pregnancy could not be tolerated. This is how Beatrice recounts her experiences to Aunty Ifeoma, her sister in-law, who lives in Nsukka:

I got back from the hospital today. The doctor told me to rest but I took Eugene’s money and asked Kevin to take me to the Park. I hired a taxi and came here... You know that small table where we keep the family Bible? [Eugene] broke it on my belly. My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes [Hospital]. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save [the pregnancy]... (248).

In this incident, Eugene beats his pregnant wife to the point of miscarriage over a domestic dispute. Her inability to bear more children in the marriage she attributes to the constant beating and subsequent miscarriages that follows each beating by her husband. After her

discharge from the hospital, Eugene invites the priest to his house for him to cleanse the house from all unrighteousness and pray for the forgiveness of his wife's sin of disobedience.

The irony in the novel is shown here when Eugene request of the priest, holy water to cleanse the family from the mother's sinful act of refusing to visit the priest after mass, despite the miscarriage caused by the beatings. Kambili's case is confounded by her reliving the pain of an inner journey through the traumatic event, and by her inability to "witness," as she listens to the pounding in her parents' bedroom which she "safely" ascribes to the idea that her father was finding it difficult to open the door. Later, in one of the significant moments of self-reflection, Kambili concludes, "I did not think, I did not even think to think, what Mama needed to be forgiven for" (36). In these moments, Adichie shows how the practice of religious ritual, a part of this particular family's daily ritual is fraught with anomalies whenever it is appropriated, as can be implied in a patriarchal locus of power and control that Papa Eugene represents. Eugene uses power over his wife and children to whip them into fearful submission. The wife's subordinate position as a full time house wife with no educational background or money of her own makes it easy for her husband to perpetuate violence against her and their children without her making any effort to stop the violence or report it for fear of losing her marriage and her source of dependence.

Physical and psychological violence is experienced in Eugene's home as well as acts of resistance as found at the beginning of the novel. The dinner table is where the order of ritual, including the "invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm, 1983) is enacted through Papa Eugene symbolically presiding over prayers and novenas, some lasting for up to twenty minutes. Kambili describes a normal activity at meal time by Papa. For twenty minutes he asked God to bless the food. Afterwards, he intoned the blessed Virgin in several different titles...' (P.11). A religious etiquette illustrated in an obsessive compulsion to pray before and after

meals, as well as during the meal, epitomises the pervasion of ritual activity in this household. These activities also depict the functioning of patriarchal power.

Hence, one can read the ironies that Kambili suggests of “stability” at home, in the face of gun-carrying soldiers outside. The everyday consists of a domesticated spectacle of violence and a connotative undertone of silence on the narrator’s part. She cannot, in light of a pervasive fear and awe of “The Father,” speak out. She chokes several times in unsuccessful attempts to speak, as her body becomes part of a spectacle of violence and silence and therefore itself a narrative of trauma. Hewett (2005) has argued that Kambili’s body is a site of critical silence made visible by the constant choking and inadvertent inability to speak at crucial moments. Her ordinary life is illuminated through the subtexts of violence, silence and wounded bodies that depict a long-suffering and traumatised existence. Scars, left behind by inflictions of torturous punishments, like Jaja’s crooked finger and Mama’s awkward limp, remain taboo subjects and residual marks to be read as texts threat of violence in this household. Father’s expectations demand absolute perfection and anything less provokes his unpredictable rage and cruel punishments. Kambili summarizes their everyday existence as;

Our steps on the stairs were as measured and as silent as our Sundays: the silence of waiting until Papa was done with his siesta so we could have lunch; the silence of reflection time, when Papa gave us a scripture passage or book by one of the early church fathers to read and meditate on; the silence of the evening rosary; the silence of driving to the church for benediction afterward. (P.31)

From the beginning of her marriage to Eugene, Beatrice learnt to suffer in silence as defence mechanism against further violence from her husband. Instead, she polishes the figurines in the living room to grieve. In the words of Kambili, ‘Years before I understood, I used to wonder why she polish them each time I heard the sounds from their room, like something being banged against the door...There were never tears on her face. The last time, only two

weeks ago, when her swollen eye was still the black-purple colour of an overripe avocado, she had rearranged them after she polished them' (PH, 10).

Of all the accounts of marital violence recorded in the African novel, none as been described as brutal or as sadistic as Chimamanda Adichie's in *Purple Hibiscus*, especially because of its realistic and matter-of-fact narrative point of view. The dynamics of gender - based violence is treated as the main preoccupation of this text. The oppression faced by Beatrice, (Eugene's wife) is manifested in the iron clad control her husband has over her, the contemptuous way he treats her, the eventual violence meted out on her and the children and her inability to do anything about it. Through the Achike's family, Adichie portrays the problem of domestic and spousal violence as it happens in the Nigerian Society. She also gives an insight into why it thrives using the character of Beatrice, Eugene's wife. According to a tradition amongst the Igbo speaking people of Nigeria, the family's status is equivalent to the number of children, and particularly sons in a family. With only two children, Eugene is in a position where he could take a second wife in order to secure his order of succession. Paradoxically Beatrice is thankful to Eugene that he never contemplated marrying a second wife, which "might have borne many sons and taken over our home and driven us out, like Mr. Ezendu's second wife did." Her point of view about marriage as the most important in her life becomes very clear in a discussion with Ifeoma, her sister- in -law who pleads Beatrice to leave Eugene before it is too late: "This cannot go on, nwunye m," Aunty Ifeoma said," When a house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on your head." (PH: 213) Despite her husband's violence against her and the children, Jaja and Kambili, Beatrice refuses to leave, clinging to her conviction of marriage as sacred and her only way of existence. In a conversation with Aunty Ifeoma, she says 'A husband crowns a woman's life' (PH: 75). Her definition of a complete woman is she who is married with children to a husband.

Marriage for the radical feminist is not the answer to women's problem, rather they advocate self empowerment. Women who see marriage as the crowning point of a women's achievement come under criticism. For example, Ifeoma's student keeps calling the fiancée "dim, my husband" with so much awe that one wonders if she had achieved some great feat in finding a husband. 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.

Also apart from the over glorification of the marriage institution that the radical feminists argue about, is the issue of widowhood rites. Using the character of Auntie Ifeoma; a widow and single parent of three, who despite all odds brings up three children on her own and also takes care of an aged father as a university lecturer. Ifeoma refuses to bow to family pressures to observe some widowhood rites on the chance that she is guilty of the death of her husband. She told her in-laws to their face that she couldn't have killed the husband she loved and cannot condescend as a literate woman, to observing some barbaric rites. She was able to get away with standing up to her in-laws because she already was financially independent and educated enough not to depend on whatever hand outs the in-laws might want to give her to sustain herself and the children. In contrast her sister –in-law, Beatrice is weak, without a voice and unable to protect herself from an abusive husband or protect her children from their abusive father because she does not have any financial independence and unable to question certain culturally accepted norms either. Being illiterate and without skills she depends on her husband for basic necessities and cannot survive on her own hence her resolution to remain in an abusive marriage.

Violence against women who are too cowed to speak out for reasons ranging from strong adherence to patriarchal cultures or financial dependency on the abuser is one of the areas

feminist criticisms address with a view to changing perceptions and behavioural patterns of women in such situations. Beatrice and her sister-in-law, Aunty Ifeoma, work together in the novel to create a dynamic and complex representation of the postcolonial Nigerian woman. The women are essentially opposing models of postcolonial feminism. Beatrice is docile and traditional, yet finds the strength to quietly rebel against the power of her husband. Ifeoma is zealous, strong and vocal about her disapproval of the current gender relations in Nigeria.

3.4 The Good Wife in *Purple Hibiscus*

Various scholars of African studies argue that African women were not originally born under the yoke of patriarchy. They maintain that a complementarity between male and female roles existed in pre-colonial African societies. For instance, Steady (1987) supports this idea when she says:

African women had definite social, political and economic roles that induced them to achieve a measure of independence...through participation in production and reproduction...women held executive positions as chiefs, paramount chiefs and monarchs (cited in Hendricks and Lewis, 1997: 68).

However, Margaret Jean Hay and Sharon Stitchter (1984) maintain that, the situation began changing as a result of colonization (cited in Fonchingong: 135). Women have suffered especially from this time onwards. Notwithstanding this, authors like Obbo (1981) counters their claims by describing how gender oppression formed a distinctive feature of pre-colonial, colonial and neo-colonial African society (Hendricks and Lewis, 1997: 68). Nonetheless, the fact that certain women occupied a position of power in pre-colonial Africa cannot be dismissed, as it is true that women could exercise sovereignty in some parts of Africa. But, the changes brought by colonialism which include the creation of many patriarchal systems of leadership contributed to the undermining and denigration of women and many African societies.

Women suffer especially because of oppressive cultural traditions, many of which still persist in modern African societies like Nigeria. Ogundipe-Leslie identifies traditional structures as mountains on the back of African women (cited in Carole Boyce Davies and Anne Adams Graves: 7). the oppressive aspects include, but are not limited to, patriarchy, polygamy, arranged early marriages, sacrificial marriages for the benefit of male children and general subordination of women. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Beatrice in many ways personifies the stereotyped image of many African women as subdued and victimized without a voice of their own. By introducing Ifeoma and Amaka, Adichie offers a more nuanced and complex picture of contemporary African women. Eugene's younger sister Ifeoma and her daughter Amaka represent Beatrice's and Kambili's opposites. Where the latter is suppressed and silent, Ifeoma stands out as a modern, strong, outspoken and independent woman. With her independence and courage, Ifeoma contributes to demystifying the patriarchal and despotic establishment she is a part of. Beatrice's up-bringing and marriage has made her a woman of few words, quietly accepting the mental and physical cruelties committed by a fanatic father and her present husband. She nurtures and serves her husband in all possible ways and becomes a shadow in her own life without her own voice and opinions. Eugene seems to believe that Beatrice rids him of all evil intentions and thus make her the catalyst of his frustrations. The typical thinking of a traditional male stereotype is also seen in Buchi Emecheta's novel, *Joys of Motherhood* during an argument Nnaife commands NnuEgo not to question his manhood, and when Nnu Ego answers him back, he quickly reminds her:

[W]hat did you say? Did I not pay your bride price? Am I not your owner? You know the airs you put on are getting rather boring. I know you are the daughter of Agbadi, pity he didn't marry you himself and keep you by his side forever. If you are going to be my wife, you must accept my work, my way of life (50).

Although Nnaife acknowledges that Nnu Ego is important in her father's family, he insists that she has to be submissive now that he has married her and 'owns' her. Nnaife's

emphasis of 'my' and use of 'owner' is offensive and dismissive. In the society depicted in the novel, it is clear that gender determines the way women are treated, and this also prescribes the way women ought to behave. One dimension of this is the exaggerated importance of the male child, whilst the female child is regarded as inferior. In *Purple Hibiscus*, The economic benefits of being married to Eugene represent a security Beatrice in her position is not able to change for her personal freedom and integrity. She is brought up in a time where women's place was at home and has accepted her role as mother and nurturer. "A woman with children and no husband, what is that? (P. 75) Being Eugene's wife seems more important to Beatrice than the sufferings the marriage implicates. Even when Eugene almost beats her to death and she loses her long- desired unborn child, Beatrice still acts as the loyal and devoted wife: She wore the same white t-shirt with GOD IS LOVE written on the front. Her green wrapper hung lower than usual on her waist; it had been knotted with a lazy effort on the side. Her eyes were vacant, like the eyes of those mad people who wandered around the roadside garbage dumps in town, pulling grimy, torn canvas bags with their life fragments inside. "There was an accident, the baby is gone, she said" (34), having suffered years of battering from Eugene she seems to have lost her sense of self.

Despite her husband's violence against Kambili, Beatrice refuses to leave, clinging to her conviction of marriage as sacred and her only way of existence. Eventually Beatrice is the character that is more surprising, silently poisoning Eugene slowly to death in order to save herself and the children. The name Beatrice, meaning "the bringer of joy" or "the blessed" gets a deeper meaning to the reader when she finally finds the courage to save her children. Her actions reveal a deeper strength than expected of a woman who is oppressed to an extent almost unthinkable, leaving her to be the true heroine in Kambili's story. Although she is the self- appointed martyr throughout, she impresses with her final and most important decision made in her life: she craves and takes back the liberty on behalf of the family. Her personal

outcome is not happy but she manages to save her children from a life of entrapment and violence, which is similarly brave and admirable taken her extremely difficult position.

In addition, 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 sympathizes away. But Mama told him, we wish 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, 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.

CHAPTER FOUR: *Half of a Yellow Sun*

4.1 The Nigerian Civil War and the Redefined image of Women in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

In this novel, Adichie, chronicles the history of the Nigerian civil war and tries to give her own version of what transpired during the war. For according to Achebe in *Anthills of the Savannah* “to some of us the Owner of the World has apportioned the gift to tell their fellows that the time to get up has finally come....And then there are those others whose part is to wait and when the struggle is ended, to take over and recount its story. (Anthills: 113). And it is in the recounting that history is preserved and passed on from one generation to the other, for according to him “it is only the story [that] can continue beyond the war and the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sound of war-drums and the exploits of brave war and the Fighters. It is the story, not the others, that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort; without it, we are blind.”(Anthills, 114).

Adichie thus, explores the horror of war by correlating the story of a woman caressing a calabash containing her daughter’s head with similar instances in other wars. In the novel the woman with the calabash nudged her, then motioned to some other people close by;

‘Bianu, come,’ she said. ‘Come and take a look.’ She opened the calabash. ‘Take a look,’ she said again. Olanna looked into the bowl. She saw the little girl’s head with the ashy-grey skin and plaited hair and rolled-back eyes and open mouth. She stared at it for a while before she looked away. Somebody screamed. The woman closed the calabash. ‘Do you know,’ she said, ‘it took me so long to plait this hair? She had such thick hair,’ (Adichie; 2009:149)

Adichie shows the universal brutality of all wars through drawing parallels of repulsion from other wars. She mentioned: “the German women who fled Hamburg with the charred bodies of their children stuffed in suitcases, the Rwandan women, who pocketed tiny parts of their mauled babies.” Her comment that parallels shouldn’t be drawn only heightens these

comparisons. Richard's witnessing of the mindless 'butchery' of Nnaemeka and other Igbo people at Kano airport further amplifies the bestiality of man insituations of wars .

Nnaemeka turned to go back to his desk. Richard picked up his briefcase. The side entrance burst open and three men ran in holding up long rifles. They were wearing green army uniforms, and Richard wondered why soldiers would make such a spectacle of themselves, dashing in like that, until he saw how red and wildly glassy their eyes were. The first soldier waved his gun around, Ina nyamiri!' Where are the Igbo people? Who is Igbo here? Where are the infidels? ... 'You are Igbo,' the second soldier said to Nnaemeka...The soldier walked over to him, 'Say Allahu Akbar!'He would not say Allahu Akbar because his accent would give him away. Richard willed him to say the words, anyway, to try; he willed something, anything, to happen in the stifling silence and as if in answer to his thoughts, the rifle went off and Nnaemeka's chest blew open, a splattering red mass, and Richard dropped the note in his hand...The soldiers ran out to the tarmac and into the aeroplane and pulled out Igbo people who had already boarded and lined them up and shot them and left them lying there, their bright clothes splashes of colour on the dusty black stretch".(152-153)

Adichie's personality sketches bring her characters to life. All the main characters, Odenigbo, Ugwu, Olanna, Kainene, and Richard, develop as the story progresses. Ugwu, in particular, develops from the clumsy little village boy, unsure of himself and who sleeps with pieces of chicken in his pocket, to a resourceful "teacher" and "child soldier" able to distinguish himself in battle situations. Adichie using various characters demonstrates the bestiality of war where friends and foe are indistinguishable in the crossfire. For instance in the friendship that existed between Abdulmalik, a Hausa, and the Mbaezi family who are Igbos is evidenced by the fact that:

... when Uncle Mbaezi came home. He called out Olanna to come and greet his friend Abdulmalik. Olanna had met the Hausa man once before, he sold leather slippers close to Uncle Mbaezi's stall in the market....'Well done,' Abdulmalik said. He opened his bag and brought out a pair slippers and held them out to her, his narrow face creased in a smile.... She took the slippers with both hands. 'Thank you, Abdulmalik. Thank you.' Abdulmalik pointed at the ripe gourdlike pods on the kuka tree and said, 'You come my house. My wife cook very sweet kuka soup 'Oh, I will come, next time, Olanna said.... he sat with Uncle Mbaezi on the

veranda,' with a bucket of sugar cane in front of them. They gnawed off the hard, green peels and chewed the juicy, white pulp, speaking Hausa and laughing. (40)

The brutality and bestiality shown by Abdulmalik in massacring the Mbaezi family despite the relationship that exists between him and the family could only be rationalized within the context of "war": "Uncle Mbaezi lay face down in an ungainly twist, legs splayed. Something creamy- white oozed through the large gash on the back of his head. Auntie Ifeka lay on the veranda. The cuts on her body were smaller, dotting her arms like parted red lips.... We finished the whole family. It was Allah's will! The man was familiar. It was Abdulmalik". (147-8). While this rendition of what happened to Uncle Mbaezi may bear a close semblance to what Igbos went through in the north during the Biafran war, it is also possible that Hausas trapped in the East went through the same experience but with none to tell their own side of the story. But it is also note worthy that Olanna was able to escape the Kano massacre by virtue of the kindness of her friend Mohammed who coincidentally is Hausa and risk his life to get her to safety.

Despite the success of *Half of a Yellow Sun* there are some shortcomings in the novel. For instance, the concentration on the domestic lives of the characters undermined their credibility as members of an intellectual elite and rendered them two (or perhaps even one) dimensional. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie carefully tells the reader that Odenigbo is a mathematician and in love with his subject. He covets his personal library, which he loses in the war and then has replaced by a benefactor. But throughout the novel there is no particular incident where Odenigbo is seen discussing his work passionately .Rather he avoids all mention of personal academic interests in social settings. Of Odenigbo's academic character nothing is said. Why he is therefore endowed with knowledge and interest that is never explored? Perhaps he only exists as a character to interact with the twin sisters. Eventually there is also the continued exaltation of Ojukwu. His Excellency is portrayed as a hero and

absolved of all wrong doing, instead his followers seem unable to mention a criticism of an historical character that eventually fled to Ivory Coast to save his skin and live his life in relative comfort after leaving millions of his own people dead. A good writer would never have left his role unquestioned. There is also an extensive use of Igbo words when they seemed to offer no extra flavour, meaning or understanding. There is no problem with the use of local terms to enhance a feeling of place and sound, but their overuse tends to complicate the flow of narration. But despite all these shortcomings, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a well written story that captures the brutality of a civil life and its devastating effects on the lives of the people.

In this novel, the dialectics of feminism is played out through Adichie's choice of a protagonist; a female. She chooses to place Olanna at the forefront of action where every other incident in the novel is built around her. Adichie makes no pretence about her feminist stance and inclinations and her works strongly promote women rights and empowerment. One of the feminist approaches has been for women writers to project women characters in strong roles as against what it is believed many male writers have either been unwilling to do, or have been incapable of doing (Ogwude, 2011). In Ogwude's opinion, the novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* celebrates "bold and successful full-bodied women with no restraints". Characters like Kainene, Olanna, their mum, the visiting black American lecturer, Edna Whaler, Auntie Ifeka, and Miss Adebayo – and their worldview show strong, and independent females able to hold their own anywhere.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie portrays females in powerful roles. For instance, Olanna's mother, a traditional African woman, disapproves of her two daughters independent spirits. One of them, Olanna is depicted as strong willed and very independent. An example is when she chose two week's suspension rather than apologise to her Heath-grove form mistress for insisting that the lessons on Pax Britannica were contradictory. Another example

is when she joined the Students' Movement for Independence in Ibadan. This is also seen when she refused to marry Igwe Okagbue's son, and later, Chief Okaro's son. (Sun, 36). Her twin sister, Kainene is devoid of sentiments and is even more wilful. It was she who "used to say their mother's breasts did not dry up at all, that their mother had given them to a nursing aunt only to save her own breasts from drooping" (Sun, 40). Expectedly, like her twin sister, Kainene, she makes her choices and stands by them. In Olanna's time of crises, help comes from unexpected quarters. Her presumed uneducated Aunt Ifeka, helps her to stand on her feet and fight instead of running to Kano as an escape route:

“ No [...] You will go back to Nsukka. [...] I am not asking you to go back to his house. I said you will go back to Nsukka. Do you not have your own flat and your own job? [...] You must never behave as if your life belongs to a man. Do you hear me? Your life belongs to you and you alone. (230).

According to Ogwude, the striking aspects of the exposition and resolution of the crises between Odenigbo, Olanna and Amala, on the one hand, and Olanna, Richard, Kainene, and Madu on the other hand, are many. With Olanna and Odenigbo, as with Kainene and Richard, Adichie presents couples whose values and lives testify to the dynamic African spirit. Significantly, issues like motherhood, as well as childlessness are made quite inconsequential. In this novel, problematic issues of bride-price and the pursuit for acceptance by the larger family as blueprint for a successful marriage are all jettisoned. Olanna, the obvious victim of Odenigbo's unfaithfulness rightly detects the actual victim in Amala, "who did not have a voice" and who "was so helpless" (Sun, 256, 258) (Ogwude, 2011).

Olanna for instance, initially opts to live with Odenigbo, rather than accept to get married to him. As she puts it, she wanted to guard the bond of their happiness, and feared that "marriage would flatten it to a prosaic partnership". Though such ideas were generally uncommon in that era that saw most females (from age sixteen) being given out in marriages,

one could relate Olanna's views to her western education and influences which are alien concepts in most African societies. Kainene also does not seek marriage. For some unknown reason, she prefers to be in relationships with white men, probably because of the patriarchal characteristics of African men. Back in Nigeria after school in the U.K., Kainene maintains an affair with Richard, a British reporter/writer who has come to carry out some research. Both girls turn deaf ears to their mother's endless pleas for them to get married and settle down properly. Perhaps Adichie deliberately aims to debunk the idea that a female necessarily needs to be in a marriage in order to 'settle down' after school. Olanna is happy enough living with Odenigbo and working in the university, while Kainene confidently and successfully carries on her father's businesses. Even when Olanna did not become pregnant, the author manipulates events in such a way that a baby is placed in Olanna's arms. She is called 'Baby' by everyone and perhaps Adichie seeks to show that a woman could enjoy 'motherhood' by adopting a child who may not be biologically hers. In Olanna's case, the situation is more salient, as 'Baby' was delivered for Odenigbo by Amala, a village girl foisted on him by his mother. She was hoping that the birth of a baby will cause a breakup between Odenigbo and the educated 'witch' (her perception of Olanna), but Mama was disappointed. The couple survived the uproar of the period; despite the emotional pains caused by Mama's pre-emptive action and even a redemptive act of revenge (Olanna sleeps with Richard, her sister's lover). This also goes to illustrate that in a relationship within or outside marriage, both partners are equally committed to being faithful and unfaithfulness is not the sole prerogative of the male.

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 patriarchal 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 is depicted 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 their childless state. This is the world that Adichie proposes whereby women are less burdened by their biological duties of mothering.

Adichie posits that women should not be passive but should be active team players. These words from Olanna's aunty in Kano re-affirm the writer's convictions that a woman ought to take her destiny in her own hands:

When your uncle first married me, I worried because I thought those women outside would come and displace me from my home. I know now that nothing he does will make my life change. My life will change only if I want it to change. "You must not behave as if your life belongs to a man... (P.226).

Olanna realised therefore that 'she could be a woman taking charge of her own life' (227-228). She goes back to Odenigbo, but decides to marry him only when it suited her, at some point during the war. Consequently, Adichie in these two novels illustrate that despite

all odds women can still reengineer their own lives and not allow themselves to be victims of customs or norms detrimental to their individual growth.

4.2 The role of Women in the Nigerian Civil War in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

The Nigerian civil war, popularly known all over the world as the "Biafran War" was fought from 2 July 1967 to 15 January 1970. The war was between the then Eastern Region of Nigeria and the rest of the country. The Eastern Region declared itself an independent state which was regarded as an act of secession by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria. The war was the culmination of an uneasy peace and stability that had plagued the Nation from independence in 1960. This situation had its genesis in the geography, history, culture and demography of Nigeria. The immediate cause of the civil war itself may be identified as the coup and the counter coup of 1966 which altered the political equation and destroyed the fragile trust existing among the major ethnic groups. As a means of holding the country together in the last result, the country was divided into twelve states from the original four regions in May 1967. The former Eastern Region under Lt. Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu saw the act of the creation of states by decree "without consultation" as the last straw, and declared the Region an independent state of "Biafra". The Federal Government in Lagos saw this as an act of secession and illegal. Several meetings were held to resolve the issue peacefully without success. To avoid disintegration of the country, the central government was left with only one choice of bringing back the Region to the main fold by force.

The Federal side expected a quick victory while the Biafrans saw the war as that of survival and were ready to fight to the last man. By August 1967, the war had been extended to the Mid - Western Region by the Biafrans with the aim to mount pressure on the northern front and to threaten the Federal Capital, Lagos. Both sides employed Political, Diplomatic, Psychological and Military strategies to prosecute the war. By the end of April 1969, after

almost two years of bloody and destructive war, the envisioned quick victory had eluded the Federal side, the rebel enclave had been drastically reduced in size but the Biafrans were still holding on. More peace conferences were held but none achieved a cease - fire and an end to the war. The Federals embarked on a strategic envelopment of the remaining Biafran enclave. By the Christmas of 1969, it was obvious that the end of the civil war was near. The self - acclaimed Head of State of Biafra, Lt. Col. Ojukwu, realizing the hopelessness of the situation fled the enclave with his immediate family members on the 10th of January 1970. The Commander of the Biafran Army who took over the administration of the remaining enclave surrendered to the Federal Government on 14th January 1970 bringing an end to the war, secessionist attempt and bloodshed.

This war is the subject of Adichie's second novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This novel has been described as an evocative tale which captures the impact and immediacy of the Nigeria-Biafra war through the lives of the characters (Ojinmah; 2012). In addition, Wainaina (2006) remarks that in this novel we "find out that nobility of purpose has no currency in this contest." Continuing, she says that in it we also see "how powerfully we can love; how easily we can kill; how human we can be when a war dedicates itself to stripping our humanity from us" (blurb). Chimamanda Adichie following in the steps of many first generation writers writes about the Nigerian civil war as a period in Nigerian history that has continued to cast a shadow on the relationship between the Igbo speaking tribes and other parts of Nigeria.

The Civil war has become a part of the history of Nigeria that has fostered mistrust between people with blames and recriminations being traded between lines Achebe had stirred the hornet's nest in his civil war memoir, "There Was A Country", when among others, he accused wartime Head of State, Gen. Yakubu Gowon and the then Finance Minister, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, of carrying out a genocide against the Igbo. The claim

has generated considerable controversy, with many commentators accusing Achebe of re-writing history. Soyinka (2012), however, justified the secession bid and described Biafrans as “people who’d been abused, who’d undergone genocide, and who felt completely rejected by the rest of the community, and therefore decided to break away and form a nation its of its own.” But for Chimamanda Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a journey back in time to recapture the pains and violence experienced during the Nigerian Civil war. According to her, “this is a book I had to write because it’s my way of looking at this history that defines me and making sense of it. The writing took four years, but I’ve been thinking about this book my whole life.” Talking about the ethnic divisions that were largely responsible for the war and that have persisted in Nigeria to this day, she added: “Of course we can bloody well live together. Nigeria was really set up to fail. The extent of that failure is what we have to accept responsibility for, but we weren’t set up for success.” Earlier in her response to the talks about the significance of the Biafran encounter in history and literature, Adichie volunteers as follows;

It frustrates me that we choose, in Nigeria, to ignore our recent history. I am often asked why I wrote about the Biafra, as though it is something I have to justify. Imagine asking somebody to justify writing about the Holocaust. We do not just risk repeating history if we sweep it under the carpet, we also risk being myopic about our present. I was never taught about the war when I was in primary or secondary school...(“I Connect” 19)

By 1970 when the war ended, an estimated three (3 million) lives had been lost. In this way, the memory of Biafra takes on a traumatic dimension and the discourses of “victims and victors” begin to take on the dimensions of communal trauma, and therefore the idea of shared or collective trauma, through collective memory. Biafran literature therefore shares with Holocaust literature the characteristic of literatures of trauma or literatures of memory.

As Caruth (1995:8) points out;

The historical power of trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all. And it is this inherent latency of the event that paradoxically explains the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness, of historical experience: since the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place and in another time.

Adichie, who reveals, how she had always known she would write a novel about Biafra, expresses it thus:

... because I wanted to write about love and war, because I grew up in the shadow of Biafra, because I lost both Grandfathers in the Nigeria – Biafra war, because I wanted to engage with my history in order to make sense of my present, many of the issues that led to the war remain unresolved in Nigeria today ... because the brutal bequests of colonialism make me angry, because the thought of the egos and indifference of men leading to the unnecessary deaths of men and women enrages me...

“Half of a Yellow Sun” (Fourth Estate), which Janet Maslin in her review in ‘The New York Times’ called “instantly enthralling,” is based on real events and is bigger and looser in structure than its predecessor *Purple Hibiscus*. The title *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a textual translation of the symbol of the Biafran flag which had the image of a half of a yellow sun engraved on it. It is told mostly from three points of view: those of Ugwu, a houseboy from the village who comes to work in the household of a radical, slogan-spouting Lecturer; Olanna, the, London-educated girlfriend of Odenigbo; and Richard, a white man and boyfriend of Olanna’s twin Kainene. The book begins on a light note as a kind of social comedy and doesn’t darken until the war breaks out. The depiction of these various characters by Adichie shows a mundane society who before the outbreak of the war lived normal lives before being catapulted into the tumult of war.

A reading of this text also conveys the impression that Adichie appears to be one sided in her presentation of the civil war. Although most of her pro- Biafran sentiments are

significantly submerged in an overwhelming portrayal of accounts which seek to present war horrors, as well as the major roles played by the two sectors. The work does not appear to label either sector culpable. Rather, it lays bare the genuine grievances and passions of both the sectionalizing Biafra and the defending Nigerian side. An unbiased reader would thus apprehend the underlying factors behind each group's action. For Adichie, whether there are real, imagined or even clearly justifiable reasons for a war, her detailed presentation of the ravages and devastations of the war leave no one in doubt that wars could and should be avoided. Here also Adichie is careful to show that there were reprisal killings in the North and South of the country, before the war actually broke out. As soon as Major Nzeogwu announce the coup on Radio and the aftermath of the coup, many Northerners were grisly murdered especially those in government (p. 125). Although the actual site of the war was the eastern part, the text describes in detail the gory massacre of people even in the North. There were reprisals and many Igbo officers serving in the North killed too.' Many Igbo officers were dead. The killings were organised...' (p. 129).

Stories of whole villages being wiped out abound and people eating grass to survive the harsh realities of the war. Terrible news filters of people killing one another and all sorts of atrocities being committed. For instance they repeated the news of the killings in Maiduguri until Ugwu wanted to throw the radio out of the window and the next afternoon, after the men had left, a solemn voice on ENBC Radio Enugu recounted eyewitness accounts from the North: teachers hacked down in Zaria, a full Catholic church in Sokoto set on fire, a pregnant woman split open in Kano. The newscaster paused.' 'Some of our people are coming back now. The lucky ones are coming back. The railway stations are full of our people. If you have tea and bread to spare, please take it to the stations. Help a brother in need' '. (144) . The war was replete with people taking arms against one another all across the country and hundreds of thousands of people dying in the war.

The gross senselessness of war situations is graphically recreated as Adichie's descriptive abilities enable her to recapture and present graphic pictures of life in the Igbo towns, site of the war proper. Thus, whichever side a reader supports, he would nonetheless be horrified and troubled by images of children with bloated bellies, and arms like 'toothpicks', with patches all over their heads and bodies, with falling out discoloured hair and flies perpetually flying over their dripping sores. With images of decapitated and decimated dead bodies rotting and stinking all over the place. Terrible images of people dying from hunger, malnutrition and diseases. Men and women dismembered by war weapons bleeding and barely getting medical help. Descriptions of People eating lizards and rodents for survival, air-planes on raid dropping bombs on town, villages and markets, killing all in sight and reducing homes to piles of debris. Bloodied sights fill the refugee camps. Pregnant and ailing women die endlessly and young boys forcefully recruited into the army die unprepared, at war fronts. People flee from their towns with nothing and run toward unknown destinations and futures when their own towns come under attack. The list of war horrors is endless and as always better imagined than experienced. The war ends eventually in defeat of the Biafrans, and the survivors totally demoralized and disillusioned begin to trace the loose ends of their disjointed lives. Casualties were heavy, most losses irreparable. Odenigbo loses his mum. But perhaps, the worst pain for them all was Kainene's mysterious disappearance at the tail end of the war.

In this novel, the dialectics of feminism is played out through Adichie's choice of a protagonist; a female. She chooses to place Olanna at the forefront of action where every other incident in the novel is built around her. Like several young and emerging female writers in the country, she makes no pretence about her feminist stance and inclinations. Adichie's work continues to exhibit feminist traits. Adichie advocates that women should not be passive but should be active team players.

4.3 Sexual Violence in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Underlying many acts of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict-affected environments (and in peacetime) are beliefs about the subordinate status of women and girls, as well as expressions of dominance, power and aggression by men (Rehn & Sirleaf 2002, p. 10; Fulu et al. 2013, pp. 5, 6)

Violence they say begets violence. In this novel, all sorts of violence was perpetuated in the name of the war. There are several instances of soldiers hacking down innocent civilians to rape of women and vandalization of people's properties. Even Ugwu finds himself participating in the orgy of violence that was endemic during the Civil war when he participated in the gang rape of a bar girl an act he could never have foreseen he was capable of. Apart from this rape incident there are a number of similar incidents of sexual abuse in the novel. According to the World Health Organization, "Sexual violence is an aggressive act and the underlying factors in many sexually violent acts are power and control, not, as is widely perceived, a craving for sex. Rarely is it a crime of passion. It is rather a violent, aggressive and hostile act used as a means to degrade, dominate, humiliate, terrorize and control women" (WHO 2003). In this novel, many of the victims of this form of violence are vulnerable young women whose bodies are traded for favours from relief workers and Biafran soldiers and officials.

In the novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Eberechi, one of the girls Ugwu has feelings for, is given to an army officer by her parents in return for her brother being employed in the Essential Services Department of the army. Eberechi's body is sacrificed to family goals as she becomes an object of exchange to enable her brother to get a job and thereby avoid going to the battle front. In many societies including Nigeria, attitudes about the inferiority of women have been encouraged and constructed alongside ideals of hyper-masculinity, in which male aggression is natural and 'sexual conquest enviable' (Whitworth 2004; Kilmartin,

cited in Bruni 2013; Enloe 1989, 2000). Therefore, Eberechi seems indifferent about being used as a sex object and bargaining chip, most likely because she is powerless in the whole transaction. The detached tone with which she narrates the incident to Ugwu could be her way of coping with the trauma which the reader notices beneath the sense of humour with which she narrates her ordeal. 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.

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. Daughters are seen as having economic values in many societies when it comes to sexual favours unlike male children. 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 females. In this novel; *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie shows the forced coupling of Amala an under aged village girl with Odenigbo under his mother's manipulation with the aim of getting a son for Odenigbo. This instance shows how women who for long suffered under the yoke of patriarchy ,oppress other women Another example of a character in the novel who perpetuates sexual violence, is a commander, a family relation to one of Olanna's and Odenigbo's friends called "Special Julius". He takes advantage of "young-young girls that crawl around looking for sugar daddies" and "he takes five of them into his bedroom at the same time" (278). Okeoma, talks about a white mercenary who "throws girls on their backs in the open" in full view of everybody (323). Ugwu, (Odenigbo's houseboy) also sees several instances for himself

while serving in the army, girls entering the commander's compound and leaving a while later "with sheepish smiles" (360). He also learns after the war that his own sister Anulika was gang-raped by five men during the war in an incident that calls for counter-focalisation – for Ugwu and the reader to imagine rape from the victim's perspective. The most callous and premeditated incident of sexual abuse is perpetrated by a priest, Father Marcel, who impregnates one of the girls at a refugee camp where he works with Kainene. He molests little children before giving them relief materials. He takes advantage of starving young girls and "fucks most of them before he gives them crayfish" (398).

The author, through a character in the novel, Kainene, offers a critique of the sexism of nationalism and nationalist leaders, even Ojukwu the Biafran leader is implicated in sexual abuse when Kainene alleges that he imprisoned men whose wives he wanted (313). 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. Rape is an expression of power and authority. It is a form of violence and most of the perpetrators of the crime are men. Rape can 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.

4.4 Patriarchy and Marginalization of Women in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

This study also examines the extent of women's struggles to overcome marginalisation in a sexist and patriarchal society, the violation and the continuous subordination of women. Love, war, conflict and the persistent inequality between men and women are among the dominant themes in this novel. Adichie, however, projects womanhood in a positive light. She makes role models out of her female protagonists like making Olanna the central

character in this novel. She illustrates women's impassioned struggles to free themselves from the shackles of male brutality and dominance. Adichie remarkably dramatizes in her works, women's determination to survive in the face of violence, sexual assault, extreme starvation, senseless brutality and ceaseless threats to their lives and property. Through her main characters, Adichie reveals how the physical, psychological and mental abuse of women can have negative effects on their well-being. Characters like Olanna, her twin Kainene, are depicted as strong characters in their society making great impacts in their various fields of endeavour. For Kainene she is an astute business woman while Olanna is an outspoken University academic. They are a contrast to their mother who depends on their father for her upkeep. Even in the face of his infidelities she is willing to look the other way so as not to rock the boat unlike her cousin Mama Dozie who beat her husband once for leaving their sick child unattended to visit his mistress. She even threatened to cut off his penis first before strangling him.(192).Adichie uses the character of Mama Dozie to show that women are now more assertive in the running of their households and participate more in decision affecting their families.

Olanna and Kainene are part of an emerging middle-class group of women whose education sets them apart from other women both physically (they live in the city/town, and even travel abroad) and in how they see the world. Their class evidently determines how these women are affected by oppressive and traumatic historical moments in the narratives and how they react to these. Moreover, their middle-class status also influences how they relate to other people, especially fellow women who are considered "uneducated". Furthermore, both women remain childless which puts them in contravention of a definition of womanhood based on childbearing. As for Olanna and Kainene they "did not have that fabled female longing to give birth" something their mother finds "abnormal" (104). However, Olanna's attitude towards child bearing changes after a confrontation with

Odenigbo's mother, who infers that Olanna is not good enough for her son. A longing to carry Odenigbo's child suddenly comes upon Olanna: she felt "the longing in the lower part of her belly" for "the solid weight of a child" (104). Despite such a longing, Olanna still remains childless.

In this novel, Olanna's mother's powerlessness and voicelessness before her husband is also tantamount to being killed off in a narrative sense. Although the early lives Olanna and Kainene are shaped by their roles as daughters and by their fathers' expectations, these women also struggle for their own identity, freedom from being defined as daughters, and their political or ideological positions are very different from their fathers' views on political oppression and war. These daughters are raised in ways aimed at enhancing their fathers' interests, which are moulded by particular histories. Yet, these women eventually break away from their fathers' control. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Chief Ozobia's interests are shaped by the history of patriarchy which was enhanced by British control of Igboland from around the 1870s. British influence did not only place political power entirely in the hands of men but also initiated massive corruption especially following the introduction of warrant chiefs, most of whom "were simply ambitious, opportunistic young men who put themselves forward as friends of the conquerors" (Van Allen 172). It is suggested elsewhere in the novel that Chief Ozobia is an example of such men. Odenigbo's mother alleges that Chief Ozobia "came from a family of lazy beggars in Umuunnachi" and obtained his wealth through dubious means after "he got a job as a tax collector and stole from hard-working people" (97). While pursuing his separate agenda, Chief Ozobia brings these histories into his home which in turn make his daughters face the world in the home, thus blurring the "home" front and battle front. His daughters are raised in ways that are reflective of his aspiration and to further his business interests. Chief Ozobia sees his twin daughters as assets in his entrepreneurial advancement. Both Olanna and Kainene are sent to prestigious schools by their father, firstly to the

“iniquitous, expensive and secretive British secondary school” in Nigeria (61) and then to university in England. Chief Ozobia “was determined that [his daughters] be as European as possible” (61). Apart from their education, Chief Ozobia wants to exploit his daughters’ bodies to further his business interests. On the one hand, Olanna, who is described as “illogically pretty” and as “a water mermaid” (49), is useful to her father precisely because of her beauty which he tries to use as bait for prospective business partners. On the other hand, Kainene’s assertiveness and her “excellent eye for business” (31) makes her suitable to take care of some of his business interests. Kainene in fact marvels at the “benefit of being the ugly daughter” because “nobody uses you as sex bait” (35). According to her father, Kainene “is not just like a son, she is like two” (31). Kainene’s masculine attributes are confirmed by Richard who later in the novel becomes her lover. Apart from noting that “she was not pretty at all” Richard’s first impression of Kainene is that she looked “almost androgynous, her tight maxi outlining the boyishness of her hips” (57, 60). The names of the two twins also speak to what their father expects to gain from them. “Olanna” means “God’s Gold” (58) which connotes wealth, but wealth belonging to a male “God”. The possessive indicates that Chief Ozobia sees in his daughter God’s given wealth or him to exploit. Kainene’s name on the other hand means “Let’s watch and see what next God will bring” (58).

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adichie depicts daughters who reject to be used as 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? Olanna’s thoughts 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. 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. It is observed 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) 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.

Although Olanna's name carries with it a sense of attainment, Kainene's is marked with a sense of anticipation for something better. Through their names, Olanna and Kainene

are marked according to the entrepreneurial aspirations of their father. In the novel this is revealed as a trend in Igbo culture, as observed by Kainene who criticises socialism as unattainable among the Igbo people because Igbo people have become extremely capitalist and their ambitions are reflected in the names they give their children, especially girls. She cites the name “Ogbenyealu”, which means “Not to be married by a poor man” (69) as being tantamount to stamping parent’s capitalist interests on an innocent and unsuspecting child. “To stamp that on a child at birth” opines Kainene, “is capitalism at its best” (69). Her twin sister, as noted earlier, carries such a name which reflects their father’s capitalist ambitions. The sexism that Olanna and Kainene face in their father’s home is also what they face outside the home especially with the outbreak of war, the two women do not ultimately submit to their father’s aspirations.

Owing to their education, they become independent women whose perception of life differs not just from their fathers but from their fellow womenfolk as well. It is also important to note that their opinions about the political situations they are caught in differ from that of their father’s. Olanna’s and Kainene’s opinion about the Biafran war also differs from their father’s. Being the businessman that he is, Chief Ozobia is more concerned about his business empire than with Biafra’s sovereignty. When war breaks out, Chief Ozobia flees together with his wife to England and returns after the war. Unlike their father, both Olanna and Kainene decide to stay on in Biafra to help fight for Biafra’s independence. Notably, Olanna runs a school in her yard where together with Ugwu, they teach young children “pride in our young nation” (291) which Odenigbo calls “changing the face of the next generation of Biafrans with their Socratic pedagogy” (293). Kainene’s political commitment is shown mainly through the refugee camp she runs during the war. Despite identifying with the Biafra cause, Kainene is critical of the would-be Biafra nation, and especially of its leader, Ojukwu, whom she accuses of grabbing other people’s wives. She also accuses Ojukwu of using

ordinary people to fulfil his “ambition”. When Richard reasons that the war is “about a cause... not a man” she responds: “Yes, the cause of benign extortion” (182).

Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays 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. In this novel Adichie thus gives a completely different image of womanhood from the one portrayed in *Purple Hibiscus*. Looking at the characters of Beatrice and Olanna, one can say that women have finally found a voice in society.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study titled ‘Gender Violence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* examines the depiction of gender violence in the two novels. It has been established that since the post-colonial era in Nigeria, various voices of women expressing their concerns about the subjugation of women and other issues affecting the growth of the Nigerian female have been heard. Nonetheless, issues like gender-based violence, religious extremism, domestic abuse and violence are seldomly introduced in post-colonial literature in the works of first generation female writers, unlike the writings of the new generation of women writers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Through her writings, it is established that patriarchy is an ideology that seeks to show that a woman’s main purpose in life was to be a mother and a wife and this categorization affects different women regardless their educational status.

In *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie presents a complex rather than simplistic view of her characters. She effectively works to dismantle the image of African women as a homogenous group of hard-working, powerless and self-sacrificing victims complacent in their subordinate positions. In *Purple Hibiscus* through the character of Beatrice, she paints a picture of an African woman that is burdened by the double yoke of patriarchy and illiteracy. Unable to redefine herself or stand up for her rights, she finally resorts to murdering her husband, Eugene, to liberate herself and her victimized children. Her inability to stand up for herself early enough in the novel leads to the tragedy of her husband’s death, her son’s incarceration and the onset of her insanity. On the other hand, in her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie gives each character the opportunity to explain, or be explained, which gives the reader a better opportunity to understand their actions and choices. In both novels, she discusses violence against women in its different

forms and how it gains expression when the victim is often encumbered by various cultural or religious obligations which are often unchallenged because of the victim's educational or social status like Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus*. She illustrates that the only difference is that the Western educated women are able to free themselves from this abuse quickly because of their ability to stand on their rights and economic power as seen in the characters of Ifeoma, Olanna and Kainene. Therefore, women's education and economic viability are emphasized as means of women's empowerment and growth.

This study further argues that Nigerian women are oppressed, exploited and degraded by a mix of traditional cultures and the modern forms of patriarchy. Violence against women in both novels is one of the primary forms of oppression, desire for sons, in-law problems; polygamy, traditions, illiteracy, complacency and religious intolerance are isolated as core challenges that still burden the Nigerian women. Adichie challenges women to have a voice so as to confront their oppressors. Silence in *Purple Hibiscus*, for instance, is to blame for the suffering that Beatrice and her children go through. In the two novels Adichie advocates that women should shun submissiveness in the face of oppression so that their condition may be redeemed.

The theme of violence which is central to both novels shows that women are often victims because of their femininity. At the home front in form of domestic violence and in conflict situations in form of rape which is a weapon of terror. Adichie depicts the perpetuation of violence as a tool of female oppression and show of male power and dominance. Radical feminist theory posits that the oppression against women manifests itself in men's control of women in families, sexual oppression within and outside the family, violence against women and contempt for women. This oppression is further legitimized by "traditional authority", where authority is invested in the belief of the 'rightness' of established customs and traditions. In this case, Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus* believes that the

typical African male has the right to physically 'correct' his spouse or child when they err. She does not question the appropriateness of her husband's behaviour towards her because in the typical Nigerian tradition a 'good wife' does not challenge her husband. According to Weber (2003), power structures are created and maintained by myths and other cultural symbols. In reality, in many parts of Nigeria especially in the south, wife beating or domestic violence is not regarded as a serious crime. Rather, it is seen as just a dispute between two married couples with the man asserting his natural authority. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the treatment of violence was more sexually explicit. Here Adichie looks at the treatment of women as commodities. The image of Eberechi being traded for favours and Father Marcel (a priest) who sexually molests young children in exchange for food at the relief centre during the civil war. Adichie is able to illustrate that most of the victims of these forms of violence were females. So there is a call for a discontinuation of gender violence against women in the two novels studied.

The study also shows that Adichie and her female characters are progressive voices advocating for change in the way society treats women and the marginalized. As a writer, Adichie is a contemporary voice from a growing body of women writers who require serious consideration as the African society grapples with gender, violence, religious bigotry, tribalism and other social inequalities. Her works challenge the already established structures of the repressive male order at both domestic and national levels.

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