

**FAMILY AND VIOLENCE: A STUDY OF CHIMAMANDA NGOZI
ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS* AND *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN***

Dissertation

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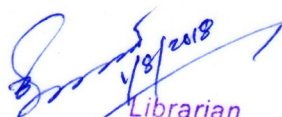
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Chapter 1

Introduction

My dissertation will be focussing on contemporary Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) with a special reference to the space of family and violence. My use of the term “family” denotes both the physical existence of it in terms of individuals and structure of a home, and as a discursive space. The study explores Adichie’s configuration of African family as conditioned during the wake of Nigerian freedom from European colonial domination. Similarly my appropriation of the word “violence” incorporates both the physical and psychic violence faced by the Nigerian civilians during the nation’s struggle as an entity after its independence from British rule; and the violence that is inscribed in the individual space of family in the transitional Igbo society in post-independent Nigeria.

In the postcolonial texts the image of the family has been stigmatised by the nation’s chequered history. Family has often been used as an agency to negotiate the nation in conflict which is visible in the texts produced in Third World countries. Though the aftermath of colonial enterprise and the political problems embarking on a new nation are two different things the bottom line implication have always been the traumatic experience of individuals with devastating impact on the family. In many third world countries after independence from the colonizers, the presentation of family have been aligned with the political problems of a nation. In other words, family plays a positioning role in telescoping the nation’s hopes and struggle to actualize it. Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981) and Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* (1988) are among such prominent postcolonial texts which deal with the family that explicates the reification of a struggling and surviving nation after independence. Ghosh’s text foregrounds the communal violence resulting from Bengal partition and critiques the notion

of border identity; though the juxtaposition of Indian and Nigerian internal violence in this context may resist a simplified generalisation, it can be concluded that the portrayal of family in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *The Shadow Lines* offers a peep into the internal configurations of the nation. Ghosh's novel devotes a sizeable part to Tridip's personality before engaging with the communal violence of Bengal partition. Family as an agency to chart the nation's history is implicated in the establishment of genealogy of a family which is clearly visible in Rushdie's mapping of family background as well in *Midnight's Children* through the birth-history of Saleem Sinai. Sinai's struggle with his identity becomes synonymous with the nation's ontological struggle with identity.

In fact the presentation of family in third world literatures have an intrinsic relation to the ethnic violence. The myth of happy family is contrasted against the vicissitudes of a new nation. This precipitation of family into national conflict is clearly visible in literary works produced in Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, India as well as in countries as distanced as Nigeria and Kenya. My thesis in postulating Adichie's projection of family as emblematic of the inscription of violence has also been contextualized along the theorization of a third world country, than merely as an African novel. Most of the characters around which the third world literature builds the narrative of ethnic violence or the nation in turmoil are either repressed or marginalized within the space of their own family. The exemplification of this marginal is manifest in Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1994) through Arjie; in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* through Saleem Sinai; through Amir in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003). The victimization to marginalization within family space can also be located in *Purple Hibiscus* as well through Jaja and Kambili when they fail to fit into the demarcated rules/space.

In much of African writings by earlier generations as seen in Chinua Achebe, Buchi Emecheta etc. the idea of a traditional family figures in a way which often clashes with the outsiders/Europeans. But in Adichie's writing 'family' as an agency enables a reading which straddles both inside and outside of the limiting domestic space. In this sense her writing is

more of a third world literature than an African one. Violence has been an intrinsic aspect in African literature which bears both symbolical and literal meaning in the text. The embeddedness of violence in the space of family serves as a strategic function to the literary register of transitional Nigerian society. The echoes of social unrest triggered in the 60s continues to haunt Nigeria throughout the 20th century. So what starts in *Half of a Yellow Sun* as civil war continues to be seen in *Purple Hibiscus* through the emergence of social unrest and coups. The Biafran War and the coups in the 1980s and 90s have been the telescoping agency for the third generation Nigerian Igbo or diasporic writers like Adichie, Dulue Mbachu, Uzodinma Iweala to negotiate with the contested space of Nigerian politics with problems of ethnic affiliation and sense of identity. The family-space that Adichie constructs in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus* reorients the functional agency of Igbo family as represented by the earlier writers.

A short overview of African literature have been offered below to facilitate my approach to Adichie's works.

Context of African Literature:

Africa, which is today remembered more for its colonial history, the sufferings of its people inflicted by the European colonizers is a multicultural land with many languages and ethnic groups. After years of domination and exploitation by the colonizers the African people are voicing their concerns through social, political writing and literature. While written literature in Africa is a much later phenomenon, the history of Africa shows how writing emerged with various form of arts. Alain Ricard extrapolates from other scholars that African rock paintings and engravings can also be seen as a form of language.¹ African literature has become as varied in nature as the continent due to its eclectic mode in writing, the chief factors of which can be traced in the individuality of the tribes, their languages and culture; the social transition during the colonial period. Tracing the tradition of writing Ricard notes:

In Africa only Egyptian, Nubian, Ge'ez, and Tamazight have, over the centuries, developed their own systems of full writing. A literature, a community of writers and readers were thus created. The Ethiopian syllabary (whether in Ge'ez or in Amharic) is the only syllabary still in practical use in Africa today. Other African languages have borrowed scripts, whether Arabic or Roman. (Ricard 11)

The Arabic script soon gave way to the Roman script as the continent saw more missionary activities advocating colonial and Christian education (Ricard 12). In fact the role of religion as an agency of change can be felt not only in the scripting of a language, but in the production of literature as well.²

To deal with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is to negotiate with the same inevitable problematics accompanying the notion of African literature as is the case with other literary giants in the field like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'O and Buchi Emecheta etc. While engagement with ethnicity, colonial resistance, assertion of traditional values have been key areas for many critics studying African writers, however with the growing numbers of novels in the field incorporating newer mode of 'representation' the task of pinning down a definition to African fiction is getting exacerbated. What characteristics makes a literary representation African is a perennial question embedded with the study of African literature. Regarding the complexity of demarcating the space of African literature Chinua Achebe notes in the article "English and the African Writer":

Was it literature produced in Africa, or about Africa? Could African literature be on any subject, or must it have an African theme? Should it embrace the whole continent, or south of the Sahara, or just Black Africa? And then the question of language. Should it be in indigenous African languages or should it

include Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Afrikaans, and so on? (Achebe, “English” 342)

Tanure Ojaide makes the same observation about the problematics emerging from the choice of a particular language:

... a people’s experience is so diverse that it is not limited to “authentic” or pristine features. The African reality is diverse and ever-changing and it is expansive enough to accommodate what Africans do in their own different ways. Hybridization inevitably occurs in the course of a people’s history, as that of Africans, and that is an integral aspect of the people’s experience. The African identity, therefore, is an ongoing process, like the African culture, and is not fixed on marble but is dynamic—it absorbs new features, even as it discards some of its own old ways. (Ojaide 6)

The genre of novel in Africa unlike the poetry and the drama made into the literary scene much later. Though there are many writings in Igbo, Hausa, Swahili and other African indigenous languages, it was only with Amos Tutuola’s *The Palm Wine Drinkard* (1952) that African writing was able to draw critical applause from the European societies. But it should not imply that novels written in English language only qualify as African literature as Ngugi wa Thiong’O offers a worthy retort to the question of language in his *Decolonising the Mind* that “the literature it produced in European languages was given the identity of African literature as if there had never been literature in African languages” (22). In fact Ngugi’s assertion to abandon English for the sake of Gikuyu suggests his conviction that writing in the indigenous languages only can one expect to free oneself from European centrality in the notion of the African. Ngugi acknowledges the “transformative role” (Ojaide 7) of African texts written in indigenous languages. Unlike Ngugi’s scathing attack upon the use of English language, francophone

writer Leopold Sedar Senghor bluntly regarded the language as a gift from the colonizers, where he observes:

Because we are cultural half-castes, because, although we feel as Africans, we express ourselves as Frenchmen, because French is a language with a universal vocation, because our message is addressed to the Frenchmen of France as well as to other men.... French has given us the gift of its abstract words, so rare in our mother tongues, by which tears turn into precious stones. (qtd. in Lindfors 23)

The assertion about the originality of African literature is found in Simon Gikandi's article "African Literature and the Colonial Factor":

African literature had, of course, been produced outside the institutions of colonialism: the existence of oral literature in all African languages and precolonial writing in Arabic, Amharic, Swahili, and other African languages is ample evidence of thriving literary tradition in precolonial Africa. (54)

African literary oeuvre can in fact be categorized along three aspects: "the traditional oral literature," "the new written literature in the African languages" and "the written literature in languages not indigenous to Africa" (Irele, *The African Imagination* 5). Adichie falls into the third one. Her use and influence of orality is evidenced by *Purple Hibiscus* through Papa-Nnukwu's story telling; the same is seen in *Half of a Yellow Sun* where her narrativization/retelling of Biafran war is attributable to what she had received from people about the war. However Obiajunwa Wali in "The Dead End of African Literature?" disavows, for the sake of native languages, the designation of African literature for any literary productions in French or English (282). The choice of a particular language for voicing one's thoughts demands an imperative to re-examine the representational problems in African context. The derivative understanding of African literature along a homogenized agency is one

of constructed textuality which facilitates a disciplinary study of the continent's literature.³

Regarding the social role of language in constructing meaning Homi K. Bhabha observes:

The linguistic difference that informs any cultural performance is dramatized in the common semiotic account of the disjuncture between the subject of a proposition ... and the subject of enunciation, which is not represented in the statement but which is the acknowledgement of its discursive embeddedness and address, its cultural positionality, its reference to a present time and a specific space. (Bhabha, *Location* 53)

The content or what is represented in African literature have often undergone many observations and re-orientation in the postcolonial site of literary criticism. Despite its preponderant production of some great novels, African novels continue to be viewed as a social documentary entailing more often than not the question of authenticity in the represented. About the theoretical orientation to the continent's literature in global scenario Madhu Krishnan notes that notions of Africa is "caught in a critical schism between authenticity and cosmopolitan detachment" (*Contemporary African* 4). In other words what a Nigerian or Kenyan writer portrays as authentic make way for the alignment of African writing with what the West perceive as ethno-writing. Madhu Krishnan in the essay "Negotiating Africa Now" problematizes the question of Africanness in literary representation:

A colonial invention, "Africa," as a unified entity, embodies the constant struggle of representation to find a moment of closure which is forever denied. Africa, that is to say, remains elusive; yet, it perpetually offers its spectral presence. In its simultaneous transparency and opacity, Africa stands as a paradox that speaks as much about us, its readers, as it does about the place and its people. What makes Africa African? Who has the authority to decide? Which

institutions and conventions mediate its appearance and its persistence in our collective imaginations? (Krishnan, “Negotiating” 15)

Politics and African Writing:

African literature cannot be studied without its colonial past which, as is the case with other colonial countries added a new chapter in the history. Simon Gikandi in “African Literature and the Colonial Factor” notes, “the political and cultural force of colonialism in Africa was so enduring that writers concerned with the nature of African society could not avoid the trauma and drama that accompanied the imposition of European rule on the continent” (55). In fact politics and literature are inextricable elements in the body of African texts. What is represented in the text often serves as a resistance formula seeking to re-examine and reconsider the past in a way which would facilitate an enquiry into the European epistemological production of Africa.

For the European colonizers Africa was a dark country with primitive people without history. About the dehumanization of African people by the colonizers, Jean-Paul Sartre notes: “Everything will be done to wipe out their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their culture without giving them ours” (Sartre 13). While European projection of Africans as inferior was part of a greater design of colonization, the colonizers’ notes on African society served to perpetuate the Western discourse of authorizing African inferiority. “Orientalism” operated “as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said, *Orientalism* 3). In an article named “Narrating the Past: Orality, History and the Production of Knowledge in the Works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie” Egbunike makes an observation how the colonial literature right from sixteenth century set Africans as subhuman beings which served to inspire other Europeans to perpetuate a similar misrepresentation (17-18). In fact the colonial narratives served as an impeding narrative which disavows any existence of African’s rich cultural history. As Said notes in *Culture and*

Imperialism, “The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them” (xvi).

The colonizers’ language and religion did not merely function as an epistemological strategy to dominate the African people, but at the same time its language was used by the Africans to initiate a political resistance to their regime. Hence literacy of African people brought about by colonialism helped rather in lodging an attack against the European cultures. Talking about the efficacy of African education in the first half of twentieth century John Iliffe notes, it helped “to foster social mobility than to entrench old privileged class” (240).⁴ The view circulating until the mid-twentieth century that Africans had no history of their own as projected by the Western discourse was challenged by the tremendous upsurge of national consciousness emerging from colonial resistance leading them to voice their roots which find expression in the literature of the time. Literature in colonizer’s languages was used as a political weapon to subvert the colonial domination. The francophone Negritude writers showed that blackness is not a curse, rather a cause they can feel pride in, which is evident in the writings of Leopold Sedar Senghor and Aime Cesaire. Negritude writers focussed like W.E.B. Du Bois did on the spiritual upliftment of black people. Abiola Irele notes, “The body of imaginative and ideological writings produced by the French-speaking black intellectuals represents an extensive exploration of the black condition in both its historical setting and in its direction towards an ultimate significance” (Irele, “What is Negritude?” 204). In fact, the francophone writings by writers like Mongo Beti (Cameroonian), Ferdinand Oyono (Cameroonian), Bernard Binlin Dadie (Ivorian) in their representation of the European and the native, were informed by the sense of Africanness effected by Negritude.⁵ The African writers like Okot p’Bitek (from Uganda) in Acholi, Mazisi Kunene in Zulu and many others in indigenous languages used literature, especially the structural elements of oral literature to generate the Pan-African consciousness in the minds of people as Ojaide notes: “Modern African literature has imbibed

many qualities of the oral tradition. Much of the writing is functional in the sense that the literary creations—poetry, fiction, and drama—aim at transforming society into a more human one” (7). English rendering of *Devil on the Cross* by Ngugi who affirmed the preference for indigenous languages in African literary production is informed by a sense of what Ojaide calls “transformative role” (7) of African texts.⁶ Most of the writings in indigenous languages either celebrated their rootedness as in Pita Nwana’s Igbo novel *Omenuko* (1933); or registered an indictment of the European culture which is evident in p’Bitek’s *Songs of Lawino* published in Acholi language which harshly criticises the absorption of European lifestyles. Though Negritude writers and the Anglophone writers were similar in their engagement in invigorating the traditional roots and history, yet their approach to representing the shades that Africa wears received an ambivalent reaction. “Senghor’s uncomfortable adoption of the early qualifications of Africans made by ethnographers” (Thompson 213) stands out as a determining factor in the revision of Africanness. What one perceives as the anti-colonial in the Negritude and Pan-African writers remained dominant until the arrival of independence in the 50s and 60s. After gaining freedom from the colonizers, the concerns of the writers became not much a clash between the colonizers and the once colonised subjects as much the vicissitudes of the politics of new nation-building. The colonial politics is fast replaced by the internal politics in nations like Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal etc. with the ramifications of civil war.⁷ Literary works produced after such political violence express a sensitivity to the concepts of national and individual self, notions of identity, ethnicity etc. Writers emerging in the second half of twentieth century falls into three political stages that Ngugi wa Thiong’O observes in “Writing Against Neo-Colonialism” namely “the age of the anti-colonial struggle; the age of independence; and the age of neo-colonialism” (157). Adichie falls into the third political stage where the legacy of the political, historical, linguistic or literary past in the site of Nigerian writings informs her negotiation of national politics.

Adichie and Postcolonial African Literature:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a contemporary Nigerian English writer, practices her writing in both fictions and non-fictional works. Her literary works demonstrate both the developments and complexities that African literature have witnessed over the years in its growing literary oeuvre. Adichie in her essay “African ‘Authenticity’ and the Biafran Experience” addresses the stereotypical portrayal of African people as “dehumanized Africans” (44). Her stand bears the influence of Achebe’s examination of racial injustice implicit in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.⁸ Adichie challenges the stereotypical positioning of African characters, “I do not accept the idea of monolithic authenticity. To insist that there is one thing that is authentically African is to diminish the African experience” (Adichie, “African ‘Authenticity’” 48). Like other African writers Adichie too attempts to accentuate the African society with all its challenges and hopes. The literary representation in Nigeria have triggered a global scenario largely due to the vicissitude of social, political issues in a newly formed nation; as well as the language it is addressed in. Compared with other literatures of Africa, Nigerian literature are endowed with a “seriousness” that is felt in its narration ever since the resistance literature from the pre-independent nation.⁹ Tracing the early developments of the West-African novels in English Lindfors notes:

it was a very different kind of novel. Writers there were more serious about their work and seldom cracked a smile. Like the earlier Negritude advocates, they sought to create a dignified image of the African past, but they were careful not to glorify the precolonial era as a Golden Age. (Lindfors 24)

This seriousness seems to be operating in Adichie’s enunciation of Igbo society and the sense of identity in Nigerian context. Her underscoring of Igbo sensitivity is couched in a “creative euphoria of self-invention” (Gandhi 5) the strategic exploration of which emanates from the Biafran concerns.

The centrality of Chinua Achebe in African study established through *Things Fall Apart*, labelled as the “founding myth” (Krishnan, “Negotiating” 12) has spawned many scholarship about Adichie’s works, especially her *Purple Hibiscus*. In Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer and many other first generation writers the concern of the novel was to encapsulate into the narrative the experiences of colonial encounter and the changes it effected. The experiences of the native African people encountering the Europeans for the first time and the resultant changes in the indigenous social norms were inscribed in the writings of Chinua Achebe, Nadine Gordimer, Flora Nwapa etc.¹⁰ For example Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* is often looked upon as a site of ethnographic study so much so that the novel became a kind of touchstone in the critique of any other subsequent African novels.¹¹ Here Achebe’s presentation of Igbo people and Okonkwo along with other Igbo people and the charting of Okonkwo’s life by the Directorate at the end of the novel have a structural purpose in synthesizing a dialogue between the colonial and the native. While they focused pre-eminently on the cultural conflict of Nigerian society, the contemporary literary fictions have witnessed a shift in literary focus which moves from outsiders to insiders. Such a shift evidenced by third generation Nigerian writers also enable us to re-examine the theoretical positioning of the African texts along the European “mechanisms of legitimation and validation” (Adesanmi and Dunton ix). In Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* it is not the colonizers and their culture affecting the Nigerian people, rather it is the menacing politics within the nation itself which is focalized. Nigeria is one such country from West Africa that has faced the many vicissitudes of a newly independent nations after its freedom from British rule in 1960 which manifested themselves in the form of political instability, Biafran war and military rule.

Adichie’s both the select novels are overwhelmingly informed by these delicate issues. However Adichie is not the first writer to attempt a literary negotiation with the Biafran war also known as Nigerian civil war. Many previous generation writers like Chukwuemeka Ike, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta and many others in both English and the indigenous language

have fictionalized this war.¹² In fact in the ‘Author’s Note’ to *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adichie herself acknowledges her debt to Ike’s *Sunset at Biafra*, Flora Nwapa’s *Never Again*, Christopher Okigbo’s *Labyrinths* and Alexander Madiebo’s *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*. Biafran narrative has been predominantly an Igbo genre with only a few non-Igbo writers—Wole Soyinka and Elechi Amadi (Hodges 2). Hence the Biafran fiction offers various contingencies for the negotiation with the “affiliative processes of ethnic and national identity” in a nation in crisis (Adesanmi and Dunton ix).

Unlike *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* does not engage with the political situation explicitly but it’s disturbing presence nonetheless influences the characters of the novel. The conflict between the new and the old generation; the indigenous traditions and Christianity and the resultant social attitude among the Indigenous tribes proved to be one of the striking engagements of writers like Achebe and Emecheta. Achebe in his three novels known as African trilogy traces the lives of three generations beginning with Ogbuefi Okonkwo in the precolonial Nigeria. The same legacy of registering the indigenous society in tradition during the colonial era is continued in Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood*. A careful observation of Adichie’s fictions will show how certain thematic concerns of Achebe, Emecheta and Ngugi get reinstated in the register of concerns around one’s own ethnic tensions. Themes of motherhood seen in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Emecheta’s *The Joys of Motherhood* also figure in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*; similarly Adichie’s engagement with ethnic violence in *Half of a Yellow Sun* can be located in Ngugi’s *A Grain of Wheat*. Like many postcolonial critics have suggested about African writing being a diasporic production, the same can be affirmed even in Adichie’s literary career.¹³ The tenor of Adichie’s texts can be located within the overlapping of these thematic concerns that her literary forefathers underscores. The language appropriated by Adichie suggests an influence of Achebe’s conviction to africanize the foreigner’s tongue. Achebe notes:

The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language so much that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning an English that is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience. (Achebe, “English” 347)

Purple Hibiscus is in fact permeated by an Igbo scent. Adichie’s writing seems to testify the observation made by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin about the generic difference that has crept into the use of English as the medium of writing in various colonized countries. For them there is a difference between the colonizer’s use of language and the one used by the colonized (Ashcroft et al. 8). While Igboness operates as forming identity, its larger implications is located in its deployment as an agency to give a peep into the Igbo family. Frantz Fanon observes in *Black Skin, White Masks*: “A man who possesses a language possesses as an indirect consequence the world expressed and implied by this language” (2).

With the globalisation reaching out to every country the writing and its resultant textuality have effected a new sway for both the writer and the people receiving the text. The recourse to modern technology to connect to the public especially through her TED talks and internet have had a foregrounding influence in Adichie’s position as a modern Nigerian writer. Adichie who like many other African writers like Mbachu, Iweala has transcended the national border to enter into the other one exhibits an awareness to project her country from a mind longing for homeland. Adichie’s literary career flourished mainly in America. Her *Purple Hibiscus* was published during her study in Connecticut and her projection of home is therefore very important to the understanding of imagined space constructed through memory. As she says *Purple Hibiscus* was produced when she was “intensely homesick” after her four years living there (Garner 4). Most of the third generation Nigerian/Nigerian born authors like Mbachu, Iweala, Cyprian Ekwensi reconstruct the home—the Igbo space—while staying overseas or in Nigerian towns, away from Igbo villages.¹⁴ This allows the compelling account

of Igbo family to be imbricated with the searing critique of globalised neo/postcolonial situation in Nigeria. Aijaz Ahmad notes:

The fundamental effect of constructing this globalised transhistoricity of colonialism is one of evacuating the very meaning of the word and dispersing that meaning so wide that we can no longer speak of determinate histories of determinate structures such as that of the postcolonial state (Ahmad 283)

Half of a Yellow Sun registers the complexity that has emerged from the intertwining postcolonial notions of identity, ethnicity and nationality as well as the continued presence of European intervention. In this sense Adichie's writing endorses what Abiola Irele argues in *The African Imagination*, "African literature exists and has meaning primarily in the context of a recognizable corpus of texts and works by Africans, situated in relation to a global experience that embraces both the precolonial and the modern frames of reference" (7). Adichie's works seems to be produced as a reaction to the western conceptualization of African society. Her first novel *Purple Hibiscus* critiques both the traditional Igbo society and the ideals of Christianity by underscoring the tension between the patriarchy and the Christian family as a methodical repression of the native bequeathed by the colonizers. Similar tension of global and the native can be found in *Half of a Yellow Sun* where Olanna and Kainene present a modern revisioning of the contrasting role of the European other. The European other in the text is foregrounded by the British role and the mediator Richard. Adichie's position as a woman writer is foregrounded by her speeches and writings advocating and demanding social, political, equality across gender roles. Her third novel *Americanah* published in 2013 negotiates the obnoxious presence of racism in a nation like America which supposedly always make room for liberty and equality. Unlike in her first two novels, in this one the indictment of western policy and racism is vehemently felt. The female protagonist Ifemelu in *Americanah* bluntly criticises racism through blogging in internet. Adichie's position in the novel is informed by the recent developments of global politics orienting modern notions of transnational identity. Her *We*

Should All Be Feminists and *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* establish her as an avowed feminist. The characters like Olanna and Kainene in *Half of a Yellow Sun*; and Kambili and Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus* serve to index Adichie's concern for women. Though Adichie's novels are rooted in Nigerian politics and society, affirming African concern has been her chief focus.

The contribution of national politics and violence to the shattering of family and home is undeniable. In a third world country like Nigeria where the context of violence often gets branded in Western media as a concomitant result of tribalism, Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* in fact serves as a retort to this image of Nigeria. But Adichie notes in the essay about African authenticity that "I wanted to avoid making Biafra a *utopia-in-retrospect*, which would have been disingenuous—it would have sullied the memories of all those who died" ("African 'Authenticity'" 50). She does not mean to portray the civil war in its naked documentary style, which has been a chief tenor in the novels of the previous Biafran writers.¹⁵ The tendency for factuality is replaced by her focalizations of family issues and foregrounding of the private. The political vs social aspects of characters are conflated in ways that allow the private space to problematize and cut across the generic differences of ethnicity and nationality. Due to the predominance of three major ethnic groups namely Igbo, Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba the literary negotiation with Nigeria without the play of the three becomes problematic. "Before the civil war, novels tended to reflect a Nigerian national consciousness, but through a single ethnic national framework" (Omotoso 146). Though Adichie too privileges one perspective just like Kola Akinlade in *Sangbo Fo!* through Yoruba and Achebe in *A Man of the People* do as suggested in the essay, Adichie's has enough room for the play of plurality due to her configuration of Igbo family in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Many critics suggest that African writers and their works have been directed in a particular way by the influence of the expectation of the Western readership and critics. Wendy Griswold sees this western influence as a subversive factor resulting in the misleading

representation of the Nigerian community (721). “This imagining is the result of an intertwined set of external forces, including the popular acceptance of evolutionary dichotomies formerly held in the social sciences and the aesthetic assumptions and market concerns of British publishers” (Griswold 721). Such a trajectory in critiquing Adichie’s depiction of family is important in the conception of Igbo community which forms a discursive role in interacting with the outsider/insider interpellation of social identity. Adichie uses the Igbo particularity to reciprocate the problematics of Nigerian nationhood aligned with ethnic concerns, through the resuscitation of Biafran context.

Review Literature on Adichie:

This part seeks to highlight the important areas that critics have explored in Adichie’s works. Since the publication of *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) criticisms on Adichie’s writings have grown in volume, most of which are directed to the examination of her narrative technique; genealogy of her writing; Igbo society; representation of Nigerian politics and Biafran war. The formidable portrayal of Nigerian society with its political and religious clash along the domestic space of an Igbo family has spawned many literary critiques around *Purple Hibiscus*. A common misunderstanding in the theoretical approach to African writing is that critics tend to privilege only the sociological or ethnographical aspects of the text. Postcolonial critics like Madhu Krishnan and Simon Gikandi also observes how African writings run the risk of being viewed as the sociological site in postcolonial criticism. The result is a totalization in the approach. Krishnan notes, “this theoretical separation of the aesthetic and the political has resulted in critical readings which demand the elevation of a single discourse within the text and a repression of its alternate and multiple valuations” (*Contemporary African* 5).

Cynthia R. Wallace in “Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and the Paradoxes of Postcolonial Redemption” critiques Adichie’s indictment of multifaceted issues like colonialism, Christianity, Igbo culture, family etc. and approaches *Purple Hibiscus* from a

“neo-colonialist feminist” perspective (467). Wallace in this essay does not resort to accentuating the clash between the tradition and modernity in Igbo society, rather explores how Adichie in her presentation of “conservative Catholicism,” “rule of the father” maintains a kind of “dynamic process of critique and embrace” (467). The essay offers a new perspective into the presence of extremist Catholicism in the novel in terms of a “colonial Christianity” (Wallace 472). A similar critique of religion, politics and Igbo Culture can be seen in Cheryl Stobie’s study of *Purple Hibiscus* where the novel is seen as endorsing an “African virgin Mary” in Kambili (432).

Adichie’s fictional and nonfictional works are informed by an awareness of the past history— both literary and political; and the spread of globalisation in Nigerian society. The fact that Biafran war has already been portrayed many a times by both Igbo and non-Igbo writers has prompted the critics to look for the newness or the ingenuity with which Adichie’s text reconstruct the war. Nigerian politics and the precarious position of the new government in the beginning of the nation and the incommensurable demands of the society from the nation have become a dominant salient aspect in Adichie’s inscription of Nigerian identity alongside the political developments.

Heather Hewett discusses the influence of literary tradition in third generation Nigerian writing and the desired outcome as well as the nature of their writing in his essay (73-97). The essay examines Adichie’s construction of the multi-generic voice in *Purple Hibiscus* that draws over authorship, function of body and female voice (Hewett 81-88).

John Marx makes some important observation about the linkage of a state in political turmoil and the resultant literary production where he sees a “genealogy of literary interest in state crisis” (Marx 524). Marx suggests Adichie’s privileging of the local when he talks about Adichie’s representation of “private life” that facilitates in “recognizing the local particularity of state crises” (Marx 526). The essay offers an insightful understanding of the structural

functions of ‘The Book’ written within *Half of a Yellow Sun*: “one chapter takes the form of political history, another appears as journalistic reportage, a third employs poetic apostrophe” (Marx 526). Aghogho Akpome also foregrounds the importance of ‘The Book’ in focalizing and rehistoricizing the Nigerian politics and civil war (Akpome, “Focalisation” 23-35; “Narrating” 22-38).

Susan Z. Andrade in the essay “Adichie’s Genealogies: National and Feminine Novels” traces the narratological and intertextual elements of Adichie’s writings to other African works produced by Nwapa, Emecheta, Mariama Ba, Tsitsi Dangarembga as well as male writers like Achebe and Chris Abani. About Adichie’s appropriation of Achebe’s phrase in *Purple Hibiscus* Andrade notes:

That the novel’s title takes up only the first of the two clauses in that sentence, that the story Adichie tells is not limited by the reference to her predecessor-author, should alert us to the fact that she will take things in new and interesting directions. (Andrade 92)

Andrade suggests that other female writers like Emecheta and Ba through their creative venture helped Adichie take the lead in constructing the fictional representation of Nigerian political situation and the female experience; and sees the similarity of *Purple Hibiscus* with *Nervous Conditions* as a “dialogue or elaboration” (Andrade 96). The essay also briefly glosses over “the interpenetration of public and private” (Andrade 94) in *Purple Hibiscus*. Suggesting Adichie’s inventive appropriation of the tradition of political writings Andrade notes:

Unlike Chris Abani in *GraceLand* for whom *Things Fall Apart* is a touchstone novel, Adichie does not merely echo Achebe’s phrases or character names. She reconfigures some of Achebe’s structural fillips, revealing her indebtedness and the greater importance Achebe has for the substance of her creative work. (Andrade 93)

For Andrade *Purple Hibiscus* marks a difference despite bearing some similarity with other works by Africans as “it names a relation between national and familial politics –and it organizes that relation around a developed female character, Kambili” (94).

In the essay “Biafra as Heritage and Symbol: Adichie, Mbachue, Iweala” John C. Hawley talks about the fictionalization of Biafran war by various war writers with special reference to Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Mbachue’s *War Games* and Iweala’s *Beast of No Nation*. The essay offers an insight into the representation of war in the current generation, focussing on the new directions of Nigerian writings which are turning “suffering and commitment into art” (Hawley 18). The essay recognizes that “Adichie does a masterly job of orchestrating these various lives and showing their interconnectedness during the mounting violence” (Hawley 21).

Hugh Hodges in his essay “Writing Biafra: Adichie, Emecheta and the Dilemmas of Biafran War Fiction” examines the tradition of writing Biafra in the works produced before Adichie. Hodges observes a difference in *Half of a Yellow Sun* from other Biafran narratives as it “dramatizes its own incompleteness, its inability to fully comprehend ... the Biafran War, it negotiates the dilemmas implicit in fictionalizing war more successfully than most of its predecessors” (3). Most of the narratives on Biafran war either portrayed a romanticized version of it much like “pulp fiction and Hollywood B-movies” (Hodges 8) without depicting the politics related to Biafra or pressed too much on the factuality of events (8). Hodges suggests that the potential of Adichie’s “representation of the real world” is in “human scale” (8).

The essay “Narrating a New Nationalism: Rehistoricization and Political Apologia in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” studies the “creative interplay of fact and fiction” (Akpome 26). Akpome in this essay uses the 1966 military coup to analyse the fictional representation of Biafran war in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and focusses on the foregrounding and marginalisation of certain political events/facts around Biafran war and the different ethnic

groups in the text. The article studies the issue of oil and the voices of the minority non-Igbo ethnic groups in Biafran war which Adichie silences in the text (Akpome, “Narrating” 31).

Another essay by Aghogho Akpome named “Focalisation and Polyvocality in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*” studies Adichie’s strategy of focalization in the entailment of “unified and coherent narrative” (25). The essay negotiates the complex nature of focalization and narration through the focalization of Ugwu and his metatext in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Zoe Norridge makes a comparative assessment of Adichie and Animotta Forna while referencing other African writers to understand the manifold functions of sexual images in their respective novel. Norridge notes that both the novelists value “personal cost of conflict” (19) and “they focus on the individual, the civilian, and the ways in which the long-term threat of violence, alongside physical and emotional wounding, reconfigures the daily lives of their characters” (Norridge 19). The essay poses a serious question regarding the literary representation of the violence of war and sexual images in the text by suggesting “other dynamics at work—dynamic that do not merely offer sex as an antidote to conflict” (Norridge 19).

The essay “‘Dancing Masquerades:’ Narrating Postcolonial Personhood in Three Novels” makes a comparative study of *Half of a Yellow Sun*; Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sigh* and Achmat Dangor’s *Kafka’s Curse* exploring the hybridization of history and fiction in these novels and observes that despite having similarities with Salman Rushdie and Dangor in terms of portrayal of social, historical and political issues, Adichie unlike them does not show an explicit connection between her personal life and her text (Akpome 155). Neither does she tend to advocate “the affirmation of hybridity and syncreticism as determining factors of self-definition” (Akpome, “Dancing” 155). However this view by Akpome can be contested in the

sense that the relationship of Richard and Kainene seems to provide some ground for the reading of hybridized identity.

The problem of accommodating Bhabha, Spivak in theoretical approach to African literature has also been touched by Madhu Krishnan's study *Contemporary African Literature in English: Global Locations, Postcolonial Identifications*. The key debate of notion of Africa and its representational problem forms a major part of Madhu Krishnan's argument in her various studies. The essay "Negotiating Africa Now" relates this aspect to hybridized sense of cultural reproduction; and diasporic tenor in Adichie's texts (Krishnan 19-22).

Postcolonial studies have a tendency to see any third world text in terms of its relation to the European past. The violence and instabilities accompanying a third world country in postcolonial era spawns a narrative which is seen as representing the so called return to the European self. Such a critique is made in the essay "Who Speaks? Who Listens?: The Problem of Address in Two Nigerian Trauma Novels" where Amy Novak asserts in the context of African novels how the trauma theories show "the traumatic relationship between the western knowing consciousness and the silent, unknowable African Other" (Novak 32). Richard and Ugwu is seen as foregrounding a "binary between a knowing Western Subject and an impossible traumatic Otherness" (Novak 40). Novak links the war and the Igbo massacre to "the lingering effects of colonialism" (34) where one sees "no end to colonialism, only a transformation of US and European policies and methods" (Novak 35).

The essay named "Embodies Genealogies and Gendered Violence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Writing" by Tony Simoes da Silva also talks about the explicit political violence as portrayed in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

Akin Adesokan studies the commodification in postcolonial African literature, his argument is built around narrative permeated by the religious aspects in *Purple Hibiscus* which he sees as an agency of Adichie's "formal realism" (Adesokan 3).

Ernest Emenyonu edited *A Companion to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie* published in 2017 is a collection of essays. The book offers an insight into the recent scholarship in Adichie's works. The essays written by eminent African scholars, covering all three novels *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*; and *The Thing around Your Neck* foray into some of the interesting areas of critical inquiry like production of knowledge; rehistoricization of Biafran war; shifting identity of motherhood, voice of women etc.

Phillips in the PhD dissertation deals with the kitchen space in *Purple Hibiscus* (Phillips 145-52). Thus a mapping of critiques on Adichie reveals that critics have mainly explored Adichie's position as an African writer in terms of her literary genealogy/legacy—be it the tradition of other African writers or women writers or the Biafran narrative. Though some studies have touched upon the intermingling of politics and family;¹⁶ and explored the violence of religiosity and patriarchy, they do not see family as a subversive agency in Adichie's methodical critique of violence both inside/outside of a particular specificity/space. The violence Adichie presents in her texts exercises an overarching impact upon the construction of identity along particularity. The complexity of inscribing a sense of identity in an individual lend to Adichie's texts a wider interpretation which unfolds the third world orientation to the global imperialism.

Objective of the Study and Chapter Division:

The study will explore Adichie's engagement with specificity in terms of the space of family, especially the Igbo family, and the operating violence within it; and examine how it goes beyond the Igbo domesticity to interact with the wider implication of epistemic violence of European centrality. The study makes an attempt to examine Adichie's re/construction of Igbo family in fostering the discursive textual meaning that synthesizes and addresses the relationships endorsed by familial, national and transnational positioning of an African individual. By examining Adichie's configurations of relationships within the Igbo family and

her various strategic voicing and structuring of familial conditions, the study will try to extrapolate that family is what forms for Adichie a potent agency and strategy to move beyond the familial to converse with the discursive operations of national and global conditioning of African people that draw over the conditions of postcoloniality, African womanhood, role of neocolonialism etc. The study is corroborated by both African and non-African postcolonial critics and writers. The views of Ato Quayson, Simon Gikandi, Abiola Irele etc., and those of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'O, Wole Soyinka, Fanon, Said have been approached along with other non-African canonical postcolonial critics like Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Paul Gilroy, Aijaz Ahmad etc.

The political as well as the religious and domestic violence operating in the space of family in both the select novels are critically examined in the dissertation. The multitudinous ramifications of newly independent nation resulting from socio-political ideological beliefs are seen as maintaining a discursive conversation between family and violence.

This dissertation contains five chapters. The first chapter, "Introduction" which forms this one, gives an overview of the area that the study is supposed to deal with, and discusses the African literary context in relation to Adichie's postcolonial stand in her works. The chapter also provides a short mapping on the scholarship of Adichie to inform and direct my study.

The second chapter "Family and Nation in Transition" deals with the centrality of family in Adichie's espousal of social, political critiques. It explores the various social positions in the text that register the change in Adichie's construction of family. The chapter deals with the various crises entailed by social, religious, and political transitions within the family that reorients the family relationships and attempts an analysis of the family from various theoretical positions that render the text as a site of national representation and operations.

The third chapter is "Postcolonial Nigeria and Violence". It analyses the novel's evocation of religious violence and the family violence and sees how the state violence are

inserted to jostle together as a reification of decolonizing process. This chapter deals with the Biafran violence and the resultant change in the family, and how Adichie achieves more than a war narrative through her engagements with the privileging of human emotions, the informal nature of historical sources, as well as through the focalizing of an Igbo family. It is an exploration of how the violence in both the novel entails a mutation in the configurations of various relationships—interpersonal as well as social relationships entailing a revision of the discursive nature of human relationships shaped by violence and how the violence itself becomes a foregrounding instrument in forging their somewhat subversive take on life. The chapter examines Adichie’s strategic construction of Igbo family as an enabling device for her to coalesce the human aspect and the critique of social menace in the operating sites of violence.

The fourth chapter is titled “Situating Women in Decolonizing Nigeria”. It deals with Adichie’s investment of contrasting roles in African women characters and how they help Adichie explore the individual voices of women in a nuclear family. The chapter also explores the victimization of women in Adichie’s formulation of radical women where she reorients the production of African womanhood in terms of their resistance against violence. The chapter deals with the configurations of women’s space throughout their subjection to male violence.

The concluding chapter seeks to summarise the important findings to postulate my observation that it is the reconstructed Igbo family that Adichie uses as a textual agency to achieve the discursive meaning in both the novels.

Notes:

1. See Alain Ricard, "Africa and Writing", pp. 7-10, where Ricard makes an insightful analysis of the emergence of various written scripts in Africa including Roman, French, Arabic; and its subsequent circumstances leading to the increasing tendencies of romanization of scripts in African languages.
2. F. Abiola Irele in *The Cambridge Companion to the African Novel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), pp. 23-24. He talks about the influence of Bible and Quran on African novels.
3. See F. Abiola Irele, *The African Imagination*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001). pp. 5-6. Irele observes the possibilities and limits of reading African texts as a homogenized, unitary entity.
4. Iliffe talks about English literacy in effecting change in the society, see the chapter "Colonial Society and African Nationalism," pp. 228-66; in *Africans: The History of a Continent*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2017).
5. Like Achebe, Mongo Beti's novels are rooted in the portrayal of the colonial encounter between the native and the colonising Europeans and some of his novels like *Mission terminée* or *Mission to Kala* also portray the changes in the native young people made by the western education. Bernard Dadie's "I Thank You God" is an extraordinary exploration of 'blackness'.
6. See, F. Abiola Irele, *The African Imagination*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001). pp. 7.
7. Such as Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love* (2010); Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966), Uzodinma Iweala's *Beast of No Nation* (2005) and Dulue Mbachu's *War Games* (2005) deal with the civil war in Sierra Leone and Nigeria.
8. See Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa".
9. See Bernth Lindfors, pp. 24, which explores the difference in thematic presentation between the Negritude writers and the West African writers. For Lindfors West African

literature in English were more focussed on their immediate events unlike many francophone writers whose writings were much rooted in the depiction of colonizer's impact upon native society.

10. The precolonial Africa figures in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), whereas clear presentation of the colonial encounter of native people with the Europeans and the slow but steady change in the society are captured in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God*, Nwapa's *Efuru* as well as *Women at War* etc.
11. The tendency to look African novel as an expression of indigenous culture became current after Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952).
12. Chinua Achebe's *Girls at War and Other Stories* (1972); Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra* (1973), Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1976); Nwapa's *Wives at War and Other Stories* (1980) and *Never Again* (1975); Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* (1982) are some of the Biafran texts that deal with the hopes and sufferings of the Biafran people and social turmoil in Nigeria.
13. Tanure Ojaide, in *Contemporary African Literature: New Approaches* (Durham: Carolina Academic P, 2012) talks about the diasporic writers like JM Coetzee, Nega Mezlekia, Zakes Mda, Chimalum Nwanko etc.
14. See, Kole Omotoso, pp. 147.
15. See, Hugh Hodges where he talks of a spate of Biafran texts which focus too much on factuality.
16. For this aspect, see Aghogho Akpome's both the essays, "Focalisation" and "Narrating"; and Susan Z. Andrade, pp. 94-96.

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Chapter 2

Family and Nation in Transition

Like many other societies in Africa, the social scenario in Nigeria as well changed drastically following the intrusion of European colonial culture into the country. The modern Nigeria is an amalgamation of tradition and (post)colonial modernity. The changes in the structure of the traditional family was entailed especially by the British administration in Nigeria proliferating the number of educated young men through promising education policies which was aligned with the policies of Christian conversion; and by the role of educated generation in the independent Nigeria. Igbos in Nigeria are one of the three majority tribes, other two being Hausa and Yoruba, its social structure has a connotative value to understanding the dynamism of postcolonial Nigeria. Chinua Achebe's literary oeuvre is imbued with the changes in Igbo society and family through colonial encounter which he projects as a reflection of the Nigerian history and politics. His memoir *There Was a Country* is a penetrative exploration of Igbo hopes and social problems embedded with Biafran cause in relation to the promulgation of new social ethics in transitional Nigerian politics.

In literature the presence of the space of family, whether foregrounded or marginalized is undeniable which accords the narrative an agency to textualize the social experiences. The concept of family in a modern nation, much like home—somewhat more nuanced and spacious in its postcolonial theoretical underpinning than the former has emerged equally plural and dynamic in nature. Since the late 20th century with hybridity and plurality becoming a privileged instrument for the marginalized and the dislocated, a writer's approach to the imaging of familial space has also been informed and in some way determined by both politics of nation and the reign of social theories about nation and identities. The concept of family in postcolonial countries has undergone a vast change over the course of its decolonization. The national

politics has often ended up in an instability that shatters family. The construct of national values does not merely include the strivings of its citizens, but also the catastrophic outcomes of various nation building operations involved with the sense of identity and belongingness. The family portrayed by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* is informed by both traditionality and modernity; and demonstrates the changes in Nigerian society set against the political upheavals in the society after independence.

The changes in Igbo family system can be attributed largely to the “colonialism and missionary work, industrialization and urbanization” (Mere 158). Igbo society has been one of the culturally rich societies with their own ethnic customs. Though Igbo families—both polygamous and monogamous—have been male centred society investing more value upon the male children than the female ones, the construct of familial space allows both sexes their cohesive role for working harmoniously in the family. This “patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal” (Mere 156) nature of Igbo family rather served to spawn various familial relationships within a traditional extended family. Adichie in both the novel privileges, within the families the internal conflicts and resultant changes in the relationships to accentuate her percipient take on the problematics emerging from European colonization and othering of Africa.

Family in Transition:

After Nigeria’s independence in 1960, its people treated once as colonized subjects had experienced a social transition from the colonial subjects to the members of sovereign Nigeria. The political transition marked a shift not only in the inscription of the nation’s history but also in the social structures within the families of various ethnic groups. The transitional aspect in a family can be better understood by the change of traditions and by the way it is accommodated into the modern/present society. This change in traditional values—beliefs and ideas also leads to the change in relationships within the family. With the coming of Christianity rooted into the

mind of the colonized the pattern of Igbo families have also changed. Herskovits and Bascom observe that:

There is no African culture which has not been affected in some way by European contact, and there is none which has entirely given way before it. The cultures of Africa have been modified by contacts with Europe.... Elements from outside, accepted generations ago, have been adapted to traditional African patterns.... European legal principles and procedures, whatever their degree of acceptance, have not displaced the sanctions of traditional law—though in many cases both have been modified in the course of adaptation. Monogamy has been sanctioned in law without prohibiting polygyny when marriage is by “native law and custom.” (3)

Before independence, among the Igbos, the extended family had a particular lore to them, it was regarded as “the ideal family culture with a varying range of value characteristics and ideological patterns exhibited by societies in which this institution is a cherished value” (Uchendu 184). But it soon gave way under the colonial regime and their culture. It should be noted that Igbo’s response to the western culture have been more predominant than any other ethnic groups in West Africa which is somewhat similar to the situation of the Kikuyu in Kenya as “Both have reacted to direct European contact by migration to urban areas, rapid assimilation into jobs under Europeans, strong demands for education and political freedom, and so on” (Ottenberg 136).

Half of a Yellow Sun and *Purple Hibiscus* present the internal configurations of Igbo family which is on the throes of modifications and changes precipitated by the clash between tradition and modernity; family and the state politics. *Half of a Yellow Sun* deals with the families of Olanna and Odenigbo in the 1960s during the Biafran war whereas *Purple Hibiscus* seems to be set around 1990s during the preponderance of coups. The two families that are

foregrounded in *Purple Hibiscus* are of Eugene Achike and his widow sister Ifeoma. Eugene Achike's family comprises Beatrice, his wife; Jaja, his son and his daughter Kambili. The family of Eugene Achike in *Purple Hibiscus* negotiates with the changes that take place in Igbo society especially as a result of colonial enterprise in the form of proselytization and the missionary motto "marry the alphabet".¹ The Igbo Christianity is a nativized and acculturated Christianity but in Eugene's case it leads to the reification of familial conflicts. His disregard and disrespect to anything Igbo tradition as pagan serves as a typology of difference within his own family and his relatives. Though Eugene's attitude may not be considered as a mimicry of the colonizers as such, as Homi K. Bhabha might have it, an observation of the relation between his sense of respect and adherence to Catholic rituals may however help us understand the patterns of changes in the space of Eugene's family.

Eugene is the residue of the missionary education that was a result of the power/instrumentation of missionary education that could overcome the Igbo spirits in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* where Igbo gods and culture are sidelined by Christianity. In Eugene one can find the subtlety of a colonizer's religion and naivety of a colonized. Eugene is a man who cannot see through what creates a division between him and his father and his ancestors. Eugene's household is a space which breathes in and out only the values of Catholicism. Thanking God for everything and attending the Church regularly is what constitute the daily chores of Eugene's family. The T-shirt that Beatrice wears bears "GOD IS LOVE written on the front" (Adichie, *Purple* 34). Simon Ottenberg notes, "Ibo have accepted Christianity without rejecting all their traditional religious beliefs. The whole pattern of culture contact by its very nature introduces new cultural alternatives" (139). While this assertion is corroborated by the social milieu that Adichie conceives in *Half of a Yellow Sun* through Olanna and Odenigbo's family; in *Purple Hibiscus* Eugene's family comes as a sharp contrast to Ottenberg's observation. He does not allow his children to go to "the home of a heathen" (Adichie, *Purple* 62).

Among the Igbos respecting the elders forms one of the ideals of extended family. That Eugene has no respect for Papa-Nnukwu for his so-called pagan rituals shows the cultural shift in the family. Papa-Nnukwu laments: “The father and the son are equal? *Tufia!* Do you not see? That is why Eugene can disregard me, because he thinks we are equal” (Adichie, *Purple* 84). Eugene’s way of life is determined by an exaggerated dedication to religious chores which reforms, refabricates his social relationship with people. His act of charity to the poor—half naked children and the man needing school fees—is propelled by his religious imperatives than a sense of moral duty. The binary of converts and non-converts forms a caricature in Eugene’s personality which is manifest even in his ambivalent reaction to Papa-Nnukwu and Beatrice’s father, a convert—whom he holds high before his children.

The typology of family relationship that affects the individuals in the family can be viewed in terms of the “additive,” “selective” and “substitutive” character of one’s experiencing acculturation (Herskovits and Bascom 6). For Eugene Christianity does not have an additive effect, it simply substitutes the traditional roots. If we look at Ifeoma and her children then the function of Christianity in their family serves an additive value without jeopardizing the reciprocation of familial concerns. Unlike Eugene, Ifeoma is a woman who does not ascribe inhibition on her children’s socialising with the non-converts or their watching or participating in Igbo festivals. Unlike Kambili, Amaka and her sister Chima can wear lipstick and play games, participate in elder’s discussions which is never allowed in Eugene’s family. The TV and the music system serve merely as a decorative presence in Eugene’s home, a symbol of his status. The Biblical sin is deep rooted into the psyche of Eugene which entails in him an obsessive attachment to one’s purgation of sin which he would attempt to accomplish even after the death of Papa-Nnukwu. Ifeoma’s blunt disavowal of Eugene’s idea to “arrange a Catholic funeral” (Adichie, *Purple* 189) highlights the tension caused by the acculturation of Igbos. The dynamic nature in the triangular relationship built around Papa-Nnukwu, Eugene and Ifeoma can be explicated through the “alternatives” as Igbo society “provides alternatives which the

individual must decide upon in terms of his own skill and knowledge” (Ottenberg 138). Eugene’s obsessive orthodoxy of religious dogmas underscores the alternative available to an Igbo. Affirming this alternative Papa-Nnukwu chooses to remain a traditionalist which invests in him a sense of respect. The inextricability of Igbo values in Papa-Nnukwu’s life can be located in his seeing his father in Jaja and later in Amaka due to their skills; and in the story he tells.

Adichie was deeply influenced by Achebe’s characterisation and depiction of Igbo culture which works as stimulus for her confident penning down of Igbo family. As pointed out by Madhu Krishnan and Simon Gikandi, Achebe’s texts have a great contribution to the western conceptualization of African texts as a sociological site.² Though contrasting images prevail in Adichie’s texts, unlike the typical engagements with the rural and poor people, her focussed subjects are the rich and the bourgeoisie, her characters are rich and English educated. Adichie asserts that she wants to “combat and challenge and complicate stereotypes” (Adichie, “African ‘Authenticity’” 46). *Purple Hibiscus* is peopled by characters from all social hierarchies at the top of which resides Eugene. He represents in every respects the new bourgeoisie. Eugene and his family in *Purple Hibiscus* roam in costly car—Peugeot 505. He has a personal driver, Kevin to pick and drop any one of his family:

Kevin brought her in the Peugeot 505 with the factory name emblazoned on the passenger door, the one that often took us to and from school. Jaja and I stood waiting by the front door, close enough for our shoulders to touch, and we opened the door before she got to it. (Adichie, *Purple* 34).

Similarly even in *Half of a Yellow Sun* Peugeot or Ford is a daily-mention. The owning of a costly car suggests the social rise of the middleclass. In Nigeria among the Igbos the concern and value of wealth have always been felt. The role of economic status to the Igbo society in postcolonial Nigeria can be better illuminated in this observation by Ottenberg.

A number of alternative paths lead to success and prestige. A successful man may be a wealthy farmer or trader, in some cases a fisherman, an influential priest, or an important secular leader. He may—though he need not—combine two or more of these social positions.... There is room for the achievement of prestige in leadership for ... different personality types. (Ottenberg 138)

Olanna's father Chief Ozobia who "owns half of Lagos" (Adichie, *Half* 59) represents the new upper class people. Ozobia is a man of business for whom daughters are merely a pawn in business. Olanna serves for him as an enticement to others in earning him contract. He seems as much hypocrite as he can be without any attachments with the society. The family of Ozobia with his wife and twin daughters—Olanna and Kainene have no room for familial talks. The space of family is simply occupied by concerns of money just like Eugene's is by strict adherence to Catholic rituals. First thing that Chief Ozobia asks Richard is about business (Adichie, *Half* 64). The senselessness of the upper class people like Chief Ozobia is well delineated in Kainene's words: "The new Nigerian upper class is a collection of illiterates who read nothing and eat food they dislike at overpriced Lebanese restaurants and have social conversations around one subject: 'How's the new car behaving?'" (Adichie, *Half* 64).

Eugene who runs a food factory and also publishes a newspaper *Standard*, in other words is a social leader, the so-called ideal man for the Igbo, so much so that people are ready to offer their daughters to bear his blood outside marriage. Eugene is considered by the society a good man mainly because he is a wealthy educated Igbo with religious uprightness which enables him help the poor and the needy Igbo people. Though Eugene is not a typical mimic man, his helping the poor by paying school fees or throwing money to the poor children suggests rather his exaction of sense of superiority and social status which is aligned with his catholic values. His help is showered only to those who are Christian converts. He does not want to help Papa-Nnukwu for following Igbo rituals. Eugene's religious tyranny which denies other talks to enter his household regularly talks of his business. Expressions such as "Our

wafers lead the market now and this should join them” (Adichie, *Purple* 40) find frequent mention in the dining table.

Ottenberg notes that Igbo “culture is itself a changing one, and it is particularly adapted to certain aspects of European culture. The Ibo have had constant contact with Europe, first indirectly and then directly, for over three hundred years ...” (142). One noticeable change proliferating after Nigeria’s independence was the transition of Igbo family from extended family to the nuclear ones. The turn to nuclear family have been the determining factor for the readjustments of various social, ethical changes within the family. One such factor is the decline in the practice of polygyny. In *Purple Hibiscus* the relationship of Eugene and Beatrice explicate the changed perspective of an Igbo wife. Beatrice’s disapproval of another wife in their family is clearly visible in her grieving before Ifeoma. A same trajectory can be replicated in Olanna’s anger at Odenigbo’s illicit relationship. The shift to monogamous marriage that was proliferating after 1950s is underlined in *Half of Yellow Sun*. Odenigbo’s continuing his relationship with Olanna despite her barrenness affirms this trait. The novel not only marks a shift to nuclear family but also espouses the concomitant changes in Igbo livelihood beginning with the fast vanishing superstitions to the live-in relationship that was gaining social validity in Nigeria. Olanna’s living with Odenigbo at his Nsukka home signifies both her affirmation of modernity and preference of live-in relationship. “They were too happy, precariously so, and she wanted to guard that bond; she feared that marriage would flatten it to a prosaic partnership” (Adichie, *Half* 52). The relationship of Olanna and Kainene as a twin can offer an understanding of the dynamics of Igbo society. That Ozobia has only Olanna and Kainene—the twin daughters and has no son can be seen as a register of the changing patterns of nuclear family. One such aspect is visible in the fact that Olanna and Kainene have not been neglected by their parents despite the traditional misconception among the Igbos that “twins were considered a sign of evil and were thrown into the evil bush” (Soyinka, *Of Africa* 174). But it should not evade our observation that their position as a daughter was nothing more than a mercenary need. However

Adichie's privileging of contrasting images to build a cohesive critique of the social lives of the era can be seen in Amala's rejection of her girl-child born outside marriage. While Igbo have always been liberal about the concerns of sexuality in both sexes the relationship between a white and a native was something of an unthought of possibility for the Igbo in pre-independent Nigeria. The sexual relationship of Kainene and Richard in *Half of a Yellow Sun* demands a revision of the relation between the European and its other. Kainene's character has enough room for the accommodation of cultural hybridity that was having its root entrenched in Igbo society. The ambivalence in the perspective of Olanna and Kainene is linked to the African conception of Europe and the resultant attitude which often in Olanna and particularly in Odenigbo becomes what Benita Parry sees as a danger of the radicality of "anti-racist racism" (88). However Eugene who leads a nuclear family with his two children and wife has chosen to construct a barrier between the parent-children relationship due to his so-called Catholic values which bars him from having any relation with his father Papa-Nnukwu. In this regard Papa-Nnukwu's lamentation of his son's indifference to him holds a picture of changing values in Eugene's family. Between the relationship of Papa-Nnukwu and Eugene operates a binary of difference which is directed not only to the clash of old and the new but also to the hegemonic role of Christianity and thereby imperialism. In this sense the critique of Igbo family becomes coterminous with the critique of colonialism. Adichie's writings are methodically lodged against the critique of European/Imperial values.³ The failure of Eugene to create a happy family despite his rigorous accommodation of Catholic values also becomes a critique of the failures of Western values which seems to be incoherent in the Igbo family. The happy family of Ifeoma with her three children Amaka, despite her meagre earnings from University teaching serves as an antithesis to Eugene's family.

The contrasting images of traditionality and the modern bourgeois ideals, the conflicting images of women's self being subjected to the social and individual vulnerabilities; their relationships flood Adichie's texts which negotiate with the intersection of public and private

spaces and the resultant change in the family. If *Purple Hibiscus* is about religion determined values encroaching upon familial happiness then *Half of a Yellow Sun* is about politics determined families. The latter shows how the Biafran war inverts the whole conceptualization of human relationships among the Igbos.

Family in Crisis:

“Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally” (Fanon, *Wretched* 28). Frantz Fanon’s observation on the problematics related to a new nation underscores the functioning of the new bourgeoisie. While the political corruption in the state finds prime importance in Fanon’s concern for building a nation, Adichie’s presentation of the same serves to conceive of a troubled space of family embroiled in the process of decolonization and political situation of Nigeria.

The social situation of Nigeria during the early years of its nationhood had confronted its people with the inevitable consequences of decolonization like military coups and frequent strikes facing Nigeria. In such a situation crisis in the family follows the crisis in the nation. The change in the patterns of emotional relations within family members attends the individuals who have been unable to recuperate themselves to the dynamism entailed by postcolonial scenario. Fracture in the familial relationship as portrayed in *Purple Hibiscus* results from the deteriorating relationship in family, the origin of which can be located in Eugene’s colonized/ritualized mind. Conception of nationalist operations in Adichie’s text has a cogent relationship with the individual functioning of family in private space. The conflict within family can be worked out as an index to understand the nuanced reification of Nigerian politics. Nigeria as a newly formed nation was still grappling with the fundamental problems related to the nation’s economy, politics, transitional society etc. which is accompanied simultaneously by its citizens’ ideological confrontation with Nigeria’s past and present. The crisis in Eugene’s family follows from his inability to negotiate with the past and the present, entailing a failure

to the process of decolonization. The attribution of positive qualities to the European/non-native agents and negative ones to the native ones suggests a castration of Eugene's original self by the colonial discourse. The study, here tries to explore the various crises—ideological, political and social—within family in both the texts. Re/construction of family in both the texts, privileges dual or multiple spaces where the conflation of the rural and the city is part of Adichie's strategy to accommodate the plurality through specificity. While village scape in West African novels to some critics is a “natural response to European cultural imperialism,” for others it is a “heuristic invention that does not depict the historical reality of West African villages” (Osinubi 133). Adichie's novels though depict the families in the villages as exemplified by Papa-Nnukwu's family in *Purple Hibiscus* and Aunty Ifeka's in *Half of a Yellow Sun* they cannot be well accommodated into the mythic structure of village novels where one can locate “traditional order,” “disturbance from outside,” “attempted restoration,” “climax” and “disintegration” (Griswold 717). Adichie's novels are inherently about the disintegration or dislocation but this disintegration/fragmentation in family cannot be attributed so much to the outsider/foreigner as is seen in *Things Fall Apart*, as to the internal dynamics within the family members. In Adichie presence of order or disruption of order remain intertwined where it serves to inform the symbiotic relationship of the family with the society/outside-family. The plurality in Adichie's negotiation with family is what configures family as an enabling agency to straddle between the private and the public as exemplified by political operations and families. This study negotiates with the crises within families—caused by religion, political upheavals, deteriorating family relationships etc. which can be aligned with the larger discourse of the nation in socio-political change.

In *Purple Hibiscus* Eugene's dissociation from the traditional roots and privileging of the non-native configures a disfiguration in the web of family relationship which encompasses at least five sets of relationships.

1)Father-Children: As seen in Papa-Nnukwu and his son Eugen; the same pattern is replicated by Eugene-Jaja relationship.

2)Husband-Wife: Eugene's relationship with his wife Beatrice brings forth a relationship which follows a repressive pattern (in Eugene's affirming supremacy) and a dynamic one in Beatrice.

3)Brother-Sister: This is explicated through the clash between Eugene and Ifeoma; and later through the growth of Kambili-Jaja relationship.

4)Mother-Children: This is particularly seen in Beatrice and her children.

5)Papa-Nnukwu and Grandchildren: The distancing of Papa-Nnukwu and his grandchildren Jaja and Kambili is caused by Papa/Eugene's prohibition on their socialization.

Such a typology of relationship built on the causative relationship of Eugene with his family members can offer a potential reading of the family in crisis. Eugene is at the heart of all conflicting issues both within and outside his family. It is not the Igbo patriarchy that accrue to Eugene the right to subject his family to any punishments, rather the powerful administration of Catholicism that allows him to regulate every aspect of his wife and children. The investment of supremacy in the European culture and people as is seen in his preference for Father Benedict to the native priest Father Amadi, helps Adichie convey the epistemic violence of colonialism in family. The following passage can help explore the crisis in Eugene's family:

Papa closed the Bible. "Kambili and Jaja, you will go this afternoon to your grandfather's house and greet him. Kevin will take you. Remember, don't touch any food, don't drink anything. And, as usual, you will stay not longer than fifteen minutes. Fifteen minutes."

"Yes, Papa." We had heard this every Christmas for the past few years, ever since we had started to visit Papa-Nnukwu. Papa-Nnukwu had called an

umunna meeting to complain to the extended family that he did not know his grandchildren and that we did not know him. Papa-Nnukwu had told Jaja and me this, as Papa did not tell us such things. Papa-Nnukwu had told the umunna how Papa had offered to build him a house, buy him a car, and hire him a driver, as long as he converted and threw away the chi in the thatch shrine in his yard. Papa-Nnukwu laughed and said he simply wanted to see his grandchildren when he could.... Papa himself never greeted Papa-Nnukwu, never visited him, but he sent slim wads of naira through Kevin or through one of our umunna members, slimmer wads than he gave Kevin as a Christmas bonus. (Adichie, *Purple* 61-62)

The passage clearly demarcates the fissure in the father children relationship which in turn effects an interpersonal alienation in the family. Eugene's prohibition on Papa-Nnukwu's visit to his home affects Eugene's relationship with Ifeoma. The reorientation of Jaja/Kambili and Papa-Nnukwu relationship is clearly visible in the complacency on both ends of the relationship. To Jaja's kind rejection of food, Papa-Nnukwu responds: "You have spoken well, my son. You are my father, Ogbuefi Oloke, come back. He spoke with wisdom" (Adichie, *Purple* 66).

The fragmentation in the familial relationship can be attributed to Eugene's inability to completely dissociate himself from colonial ideology which comes from Christian education. John Iliffe notes about African family that "education gave them access to a larger world than their parents" (247). While the desire for education is regarded as "a response to a need which can be satisfied without inducing cultural conflict" (Herskovits and Bascom 6) Eugene's conception of education inevitably deteriorates his relationship with Kambili. His severe physical punishment meted out to Jaja and Kambili saps their freedom.

Madhu Krishnan notes that “The resulting internalization of externally-produced discourse repeats and perpetuates dominance and oppression with devastating psycho-social effects on the colonized subject” (*Contemporary African* 12). The operation of colonial discourse in Eugene’s conception of values causes many silences as far as the individuality of Jaja, Kambili and Beatrice are concerned. A family is important in the sense that it accrues to its members a sense of freedom and emotional support, a space where one accords value to others attached by complimentary relationship. But in Eugene’s home there is no room for emotional support. The socialising of Jaja, Kambili and Beatrice is confined to attending communion in Church, talking to the priest etc. where cousins don’t recognise each other (Adichie, *Purple* 77). “The family is where we experience our most important attachments and relationships, a realm not of rationality but of emotion and intimacy, a sphere of commitment and self-sacrifice” (Brighthouse and Swift 6). Such an observation seems to claim a cohesive understanding of Eugene’s family. The father (Eugene) exerts severe methods of physical punishments for Jaja, Kambili and Beatrice for not fitting into his “rule” as they “walk into sin” (Adichie, *Purple* 102). Eugene’s administration of family through obsessive rituals is devoid of emotional context which recognises no values of sacrifice. On the contrary the other members that do understand rather ends up exacerbating the problem. The situation where Beatrice sacrifices her husband by taking his life to free her children from Eugene’s extreme punishments is followed by another sacrifice by Jaja who takes the blame upon himself—both of the sacrifices however lead to even greater crisis in the family instead of alleviating the problem.

The novel in fact under the strategic metaphor of religious violence explores the parent-children relationship. “Eugene subverts the positive care-taking parental role into abuse” (Nabutanyi 79). *Purple Hibiscus* indexes a social context that leads to the crisis in a family. The Crisis in Eugene’s family follows a systematic effacing out of individual selves. The family is reduced to a rigorously institutionalised space where they speak with a “purpose” (Adichie,

Purple 120). That Kambili's ability to voice has been silenced is perceptible in her surprise that Amaka can participate in Eugene's discussions (Adichie, *Purple* 99). The crisis in Adichie's re/constructed family is an escalation of the African body politics. Madhu Krishnan in "Negotiating Africa Now" notes:

This Africa is a place of Christian fundamentalism, a re-invention of tradition in the name of contemporary inclusion, domestic abuse, first loves, and familial intimacy, a place where political assassinations and government coups stand in equal measure with the intimacies of adolescent sexual awakening and intellectual enlightenment. (19-20)

Such an observation can explicate a cogent relation of the family to the state apparatuses in Adichie's texts. The mundanity of a family with which *Half of a Yellow Sun* begins is undercut by the political conflicts. Unlike *Purple Hibiscus* the shattering of family in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is predominantly and ostensibly due to the internal politics of Nigeria. However a situation of re-emergence of military dictatorship with the surfacing of coups in Nigerian politics is certainly at work in the dislocation of Auntie Ifeoma's home in the former novel as well. It is during this period that the actual crisis takes place with the death of Papa-Nnukwu and Ade Coker followed by Eugene's. Intrusion of politics and corruption into the Nsukka University aligns the fall of Eugene's and Ifeoma's family with the inhibition of normal living in Nsukka. Mary Cuadrado and Louis Lieberman note that "the less the intrusion of society and social control on the individual family, the better off will be all families and society" (6). The crisis in Ifeoma's family is not related to religious tyranny as is the case with Eugene's family rather to the reification of the evils of political corruption and conflicts in a young nation like Nigeria. The disorientation in the family in both the novels follows a pattern of the displacement of family where the shift of individuals to another family in terms of the physical space of home works as a catalyst for the individuals and as a destructive agent for the home they leave behind.

Half of a Yellow Sun presents a searing critique of the new upper class and bourgeois people in Nigeria. Family, used to focalize the subjective understanding of the Biafran war is also used to address the vulnerability of relationship interposed between political conflict and the corruption among the business doers. Olanna's relationship with her family underscores a fragility that is interpellated by bourgeois ethics. Mother's disapproval to her acts and father Ozobia's use of her as "sex bait" for business (Adichie, *Half* 35) creates a fissure in Olanna's relationship with them. The chasm rooted between Olanna and Kainene is clearly visible in these lines:

They used to be friends. She wondered when it all changed. Before they went to England, for sure, since they didn't even have the same friends in London. Perhaps it was during their secondary-school years at Heathgrove. Perhaps even before. Nothing had happened — no momentous quarrel, no significant incident — rather, they had simply drifted apart, but it was Kainene who now anchored herself firmly in a distant place so that they could not drift back together.
(Adichie, *Half* 37)

The distancing silence that Olanna senses about her sister Kainene seems to be rooted in the moral corruption in the bourgeois ethics surfacing through Chief Ozobia's business deals. This fragmentation is clearly visible in Kainene's assertion: "The benefit of being the ugly daughter is that nobody uses you as sex bait" (Adichie, *Half* 35). In fact Ozobia's inability to see business and family as disparate entity seems to be responsible for Olanna's shift to Odenigbo's home. Adichie, as said earlier attempts to create something out of the blending of contrasting images. In Adichie figuration of sexual acts serves many function. The outsider Richard is liked by Kainene but not by Olanna. The role for Richard assigned by Adichie is that of an agency that binds her character both externally and internally in family-nation relationships. In Adichie the intrusion of outsider into one's family carries out the process of crisis. In *Purple Hibiscus* it was Ifeoma, but in this novel it is Richard whose role in the narrative serves to both shatter and

cement relationship. His place in the Olanna-Kainene family disrupts the life of three individuals—Olanna, Kainene and Odenigbo. Richard's sex with Olanna brings out a turning point especially in Olanna's life where her relationship with Kainene becomes somewhat strained. "You're the good one and the favourite and the beauty and the Africanist revolutionary who doesn't like white men, and you simply did not need to fuck him. So why did you?" (Adichie, *Half* 254).

The casualness of family life—lovemaking, kitchen work, discussion at Odenigbo's home—is suddenly inverted by the larger problems of nation and sense of belongingness that traverse the private and the social aspect of relationships. The impact of Biafran War in fact reorients the very conceptualization of human relationship in terms of a unitary and monolithic belongingness. The devastation wreaked upon the family by the war surfaces through the deaths of many loved ones. The crisis caused in Olanna's life was not through the infidelity of Odenigbo rather the deaths of Arize and Aunty Ifeka's family during Biafran violence.

Odenigbo raised his arm as he spoke, and Olanna thought how awkwardly twisted Aunty Ifeka's arm had looked, as she lay on the ground.... Perhaps Aunty Ifeka could see this rally now, and all the people here, or perhaps not, if death was a silent opaqueness. (Adichie, *Half* 163)

The presence of Aunty Ifeka and Arize in Olanna's life was such that they had become a part of her consciousness. Olanna's inability to have sex with Odenigbo due to the thoughts on Arize's death also testifies how her family life is shattered by Biafran War. A similar scene is caught in Odenigbo's life through the death her mother. The disruption in Odenigbo's normal life is evident in this lines: "But he no longer went into the interior with the Agitator Corps, no longer returned with lit up eyes. Instead, he went to Tanzania Bar every day and came back with a taciturn set to his mouth" (Adichie, *Half* 322).

In both the novels Adichie in foregrounding the family in crisis uses the “alternative” space of family which reciprocates the “realistic and recognizable conflicts, crises, and pressures” (McCarthy 3), and conveys two different social attitudes in a family. The physical positioning of a family in a different location also marks a shift in the social behaviour of the individuals. Dislocation in individual self leads to the disfiguration and dislocation of family values as well. In *Purple Hibiscus* it is the Auntie Ifeoma’s home at Nsukka that serves as the alternative family for both Jaja and Kambili.

The place *Nsukka* in both the novels serves as a place for mental transformation for the characters where they come to terms with their direction of life. Kambili reveals: “Nsukka started it all; Auntie Ifeoma’s little garden next to the verandah of her flat in Nsukka began to lift the silence” (Adichie, *Purple* 16). In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Olanna’s residing with Odenigbo at his home in Nsukka frees her from her parents’ bourgeois ethics. Similarly the moving of Jaja and Kambili from their home in Enugu to Auntie Ifeoma’s home in Nsukka not only introduces them to a freedom which is a lack in Eugene’s home, but also confronts them with the realities of life. In other words the place itself becomes a symbol of emancipation where they can free themselves from the shackles of confinement and family repression. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Nsukka allows Olanna to affirm her individuality through her choosing the opportunity of holding a university job. Olanna, though a daughter to Chief Ozobia, the rich man in Lagos, in this sense resembles Auntie Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* who despite her meagre earnings from Nsukka University lives with dignity. The alternative space in Adichie is imbued with a duality that it is both emancipatory and destructive in the reformulation of human relationship. In *Purple Hibiscus* Auntie Ifeoma’s home rids Kambili and Jaja of family violence but at the same it also tells of the hardship caused by poverty. Adichie contrasts the rich and the poor through the economic problems. While the first space conveys the silences and the passivity/inaction of the characters, the second/alternative space marks their active participation in social events. In *Purple Hibiscus* Jaja’s rebelling against Eugene’s tyrannical repression

begins to bloom in Aunty Ifeoma's home much like the symbolical hibiscus. Similarly Kambili's experiences of her woman self begins there through her uncomfortable experiences with Amaka. Ifeoma's home represents the freedom that respects the voice of all. The protest of Jaja against Papa becomes coterminous with Beatrices's poisoning of her husband both of which seems to be in some way an extension of Ifeoma's values. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Odenigbo's home represents the cradle house of revolutionary ideas. Olanna's living at his home marks Aunty Ifeoma's home resembles both Papa-Nnukwu's and Aunty Ifeoma's home in *Purple Hibiscus*. A home which gives Olanna emotional support during her breakdown. The construction of dual space in Adichie's texts, which can also be regarded as alternative family serves to blend together contrasting values. The notion of the outsider and the insider in the family helps to produce a dynamic identity. Desmond F. McCarthy notes, "no one can ever be fully outside the family or completely 'other'" (109-10). It is easily perceptible that Olanna in Odenigbo's house and Jaja/Kambili in Aunty Ifeoma's house are only the outsiders. It is in the second space that they feel more comfortable than their own family. So in other words the second space not only serves as an alternative space but completely dislocates the original one. So is the case with Richard, a European who is regarded as an outsider by Pan-Africanist Odenigbo, his stay at Igbo land displaces his conception of home in terms of geographical boundary. Adichie's presentation of "life within an alternative family" (McCarthy 133) helps us examine the larger discourse of the nation/family relationship. Though the initial arrival of the outsiders is repulsed as is seen in Amaka towards Kambili and in Odenigbo towards Richard, it is the outsiders that compliment and fulfil the symbiotic relationship among them.

Writing Nation through Family:

Desmond F. McCarthy notes, "all writers and all nations operate as children do of families whom they love and hate and try to distinguish themselves from and somehow reform at the same time" (110). McCarthy's observation is both challenging and subversive in the production of political play in Nigeria. The family represented by Eugene-Ifeoma and Olanna-Odenigbo

in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* respectively becomes a charting of Nigeria's political interiority. Oftentimes politics of the state intrudes into the space of the family in its attempt to bring people close to the so-called notion of national order, at times at the cost of disfiguration in familial values. The state apparatuses and the family remain intertwined through the production of and dependence upon its human resources. Adichie accentuates the Biafran war in *Half of Yellow Sun*; and in *Purple Hibiscus* the ongoing social instabilities though various subsequent coups that remain embedded in the Nigerian politics.

Two incidents from Nigeria's collective past give the impression that there is a Nigerian will to stay together to pursue a common program into the future. One is the civil war fought between the Eastern Region, which had declared itself the Republic of Biafra, and the rest of the Nigerian federation.... The second incident took place in April 1990. There was an attempted coup d'état against the government of General Ibrahim B. Babangida. (Omotoso 148-49)

In *Purple Hibiscus* the state politics surfaces through the insides of Eugene's family. It is through Kambili that we have the knowledge of the operations of postcolonial vices like corruption and coups in Nigeria. The novel is an engagement with the social impacts of coups and pervasive coup attempts that dilutes and affects the social integrity. Achike household is sensitised by the operation of Nigerian politics in the 1980s and 1990s. The novel portrays how coups after coups was crippling Nigerian economy and social mobility. The whispers of Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice become enshrouded with the secret whispers of the sensitive politics of the state. It is only the *Standard*—the crusader secret newspaper published by Eugene which bares the dirty state politics bravely. Eugene's home becomes a political hub with corruption issues to discuss for the underground publishing. The permeation of politics into family is clearly visible in Kambili's wondering: "Did he get a letter bomb? Was it a letter bomb?.... I had never considered the possibility that Papa would die, that Papa could die" (Adichie, *Purple* 287). In the conversations of educated characters like Ifeoma, family talks remain inextricable

from the corruptions and social movements in the state. Adichie uses the liberating voice of Ifeoma to convey the social impacts like decisions of marriage by university girls due to the lack of jobs and frequent strikes in University caused by the coups in decolonizing Nigeria. Her discussions of marriage suddenly takes a turn to the politics:

It is what they think they want. But how can I blame them? Look what this military tyrant is doing to our country.... We have not had fuel for three months in Nsukka. I spent the night in the petrol station last week, waiting for fuel. And at the end, the fuel did not come. Some people left their cars in the station because they did not have enough fuel to drive back home. If you could see the mosquitoes that bit me that night, eh, the bumps on my skin were as big as cashew nuts. (Adichie, *Purple* 75-76)

The national politics that frequently becomes a part of family discussion and the political tensions surfacing through Adichie's passing descriptions like the market place convey the evils of coups affecting the nation. The impact of military coups is seen through Adichie's conceiving of small details in family life that borders on their private life, yet it takes on a national significance due to the social imperatives felt by characters like Ifeoma, Eugene and Ade Coker in a decolonizing Nigeria. On the one hand the state corruption surfaces through Kambili's overhearing of Eugene's talk, on the other her stay in Ifeoma's house reveals the corruption in the university. It is in Ifeoma's house that the action of coups begins to impact the society with shortage of food and oil etc. Eugene and Ifeoma's family serve to underscore the contrasting family of a capitalist and a commoner. The novel though confined to Eugene's delimited space makes room for the accommodation of social problems like poverty which surfaces through the trip of Kambili and Eugene in their Peugeot. "The depiction of urban poverty and deprivation in the Nigerian novel has become the major expression of the common nationality of the peoples, especially the masses of Nigerians" (Omotoso 151). The critique of social lives of Nigeria is rendered compelling even within the limited space of Igbo domesticity by Adichie's

insertion of miniscule details like flushing the toilet only once during the shortage of water or sucking the oil when the town suffered the results of military coups etc. The binary of public and private spaces becomes ostensibly acute through the nationalist movements and politics.

The construction of national ethos, however does not simply build on Adichie's glossing over the palpable realities like coups and strikes, it is also to be seen in her configurations of characterization in both the novels. Adichie seems to disavow the construct of extended family in delimiting the possibilities for political transitions in the nation. Family in both the novels elicits great possibilities to show the national level operations within family. The radical change in the web of relationship maintained by Eugene-Ifeoma families and Olanna-Odenigbo families explicates what violence can add up to. The internal destruction of family forms a symbiotic relationship with the state in political crisis. The social gesture of Eugene's family in *Purple Hibiscus* showing the terrible and sudden death of Ade Coker operates in parallel with the state witnessing the triumphant advance of military rule and coups.

The dynamic relationship within the family can be seen as reflecting the wider discourses of the nation. The problems associated with the negotiation of one's colonial past find an interesting dimension in Dipesh Chakrabarty's urge to return a colonial gaze where one's inscription of social history would not be deterred by the European totalizing discourses (225). "The desire for order and discipline in the domestic sphere," for him, "may be seen as having been a correlate of the nationalist, modernizing desire for a similar discipline in the public sphere, that is for a rule of law enforced by the state" (Chakrabarty 234). This observation can offer an understanding of the relationship of the state and the family in crisis as seen in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. Eugene's obsessive determination to bring a religious harmony in his family through the Christian values is coterminous with his fight against the corrupt officers in the State. In this sense his family becomes a microcosm of the State which he conceives in terms of a lack—a lack of order.

It should be noted that Adichie's works do not simply speak from a decentered postcoloniality, as her novels though anchored in Igbo family makes a systematic critique of the neo-colonialism and consistent emergence of imperialism. My contention is that contextualizing her works only in African social context may limit the play of her social critique. In *Purple Hibiscus* it surfaces towards the end through Ifeoma's facing problems to get visa to get into America. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the discussion imbued with the emotive words of Odenigbo which is charged with the political radicalism of Pan-Africanist consciousness renders his home as a site of national discourse. Furthermore his frequent assertion of idealistic view of the nation expresses the situation of the intellectuals in the nation. He asserts: "The real tragedy of our postcolonial world is not that the majority of people had no say in whether or not they wanted this new world; rather, it is that the majority have not been given the tools to *negotiate* this new world" (Adichie, *Half* 101).

Adichie inscribes the national politics and violence into the ontological body of family. The relationship of Kainene/Olanna and Richard can also be seen as a transmuting relationship developing in postcolonial Nigeria. In the discussion of Elleke Boehmer's negotiation with nationalist representations, Benita Parry notes that "images of the female body were used to embody ideals of the wholeness of subjectivity, history and the state" (90). It is possible to suggest that Olanna's seduction of Richard straddles the theoretical site what postcolonial critics call "seductions of colonial power" (Gandhi 4). The desire for controlling the colonizer epitomised by Olanna's seduction parallels the Pan-Africanist mottos of Odenigbo striving for a social change in the nation.

The political seriousness of Biafran situation is pitted against the backdrop of mundane family life filled with gossiping of women, love-sex etc. Unlike *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* does not portray apparent subjugation within family space, the violence is here more subtle and nuanced lending itself to discursive play of identity and individuality. Chief Ozbobia's use of Olanna's sexuality for business; Olanna's preference of live-in-relationship to marriage;

and sexual infidelity by Odenigbo, Olanna and Richard suggest not simply a moral degeneracy or running away from the conventional ethos of family but also a symbolic individualization of self, an affirmation of selfhood and transnational identity during post-independent Nigeria. The characters' indeterminacy is pivotal to the understanding of ethos of relationships in post-independent Nigeria. About the accommodation of sexual context into Adichie and Aminatta Forna's texts Zoe Norridge notes:

But is the quest to create sympathetic and changing characters the only reason Forna and Adichie include such graphic descriptions of sexual encounters in their work? Or are there other dynamics at work—dynamics that do not merely offer sex as an antidote to conflict, something that continues in the face of adversity, but instead suggest fundamental links between the literary representation of civil violence and sensual touching? (19)

In nationalist literature sexual underpinning accrues some symbolic significance to the discursive function of nationhood. Adichie in this context seems to endorse Tejumola Olaniyan's view about African studies that, "There are other areas worthy of investigation and they need not be 'obviously political' to be considered relevant" (Olaniyan 642). The construction of family ethos and concomitant relationships in *Half of a Yellow Sun* foregrounding the post-independent Nigerian political unrest is comparable to the narrative of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) in its negotiation with the communal violence and the formation of nationalism. Both the novels employ sexual infidelity and impotency to accommodate a revisionist understanding of historicization of national consciousness. In Adichie's novel we find Richard asking Jomo for a herb to cure his impotency: "By the way, would you know of any herbs for men? For men who have problems with ... with being with a woman?" (Adichie, *Half* 74). It may be argued that impotency for men seen in Richard or barrenness of Olanna forms a same discursive strategy in synthesizing nation and family as that of Nadir Khan in Rushdie through which nation interpellates the family. The completeness of

family through inclusion of an illegitimate child into one's family in both Rushdie and Adichie cannot be discounted merely as a social anomaly, rather registers a postcolonial conditioning of family which warrants a revisionist negotiation with identity. In Rushdie's novel *Aadam Sinai* is an illegitimate child just like Baby is in Adichie. The son borne out of Shiva and Parvati and later being adopted by Saleem Sinai; and Olanna's adoption of the girl borne of Odenigbo and Amala—the girl brought by his mother serve as a metaphoric acceptance of viable nationalist violence and the attendant consequences. It may be contended that the notion of outsider/insider within family fosters a problematized view of identity in terms of homogeneity. Richard and Saleem Sinai are both reminders of colonial evils whereas the latter represents the hybridized identity in terms of blood relations, the former's position as a Biafran inverts the colonized/colonizer relationship. As Bhabha observes in the introductory essay in *Nation and Narration*:

The 'locality' of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen simply as 'other' in relation to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new 'people' in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation. (4)

For Adichie narrating the Nigerian social violence during Biafran war is just not possible without a negotiation with the sexual designs in the text. Hence the predominance of lovemaking in Adichie's novel does in fact have a significant role in conveying the susceptibilities and subjectivities of human relationships during Biafran war. The sexual experience of characters can enhance "self-awareness and a sense of (imperfect) connection with other cultures" (Norridge 22). Almost all the major characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are coming-of-age characters who grow in experiences over time. Maybe it is Richard's long term

sexual relationship with Kainene which accounts for his calling himself a Biafran; and maybe for this reason unlike Susan he cares for the massacres of Igbo people. This dynamic relationship constructed around Richard-Kainene in *Half of a Yellow Sun* endorses the view that “sexual promiscuity can lead to meaningful intimacy or lasting community” (McCarthy 130).

Though *Half of a Yellow Sun* schematizes the Biafran cause from Igbo perspective there seems to be something which is beyond the unitary negotiation with the war. Meenakshi Mukherjee notes:

The idealism and absolute dichotomies of the early twentieth century cannot sustain a writer who lives in a more ambiguous and tentative world. To accommodate our changed sense of selves the stories become more protean.... Narratives shape our culture as culture shapes our narratives and the relationship is so intricate that it is difficult to separate the two acts. (Mukherjee 148)

It is possible to propose that in Adichie the formation of identity along ethnic specificity, belongingness becomes subverted through Kainene’s conception of cultural hybridity. That she chooses Richard over “revolutionary lover” (Adichie, *Half* 36) like Odenigbo expresses the ambivalences in the operations of Pan-African ideals in post-colonial Nigeria. Kainene seems to resist “ethnic absolutism” (Gilroy 262) which reigns high in Odenigbo and Olanna. Gilroy’s observation can help us understand the relationship of Richard and Kainene. The relationship of Richard and Kainene is in a way “bounded by historical circumstances and determined in struggle” (Gilroy 248). The disavowal of racial underpinning in Richard-Kainene relationship seems to endorse the view that “dreams of racism actually have their origin in ideologies of class rather than in those of nation” (Anderson 149). The imbrication of third-world national politics in the focalizing of Kainene-Richard relationship during Biafran war problematizes and intensifies the critique of imperialism/nationhood. Richard’s inclusion into the family of

Odenigbo and Olanna refabricates the given variables of negotiating with a nation such as the idea of homogeneity, sense of belonging etc. which problematizes the holistic formation of identity.

Notes:

1. The phrase has been taken from John Iliffe, *Africans: History of a Continent*. pp. 239, Iliffe sees the causal relationship of religion and education in the entailment of political change in Africa.
2. See, Madhu Krishnan's essay, pp.13; and Simon Gikandi, pp. 5.
3. See, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "African 'Authenticity' and the Biafran Experience". Her subversive stand against the evils of European culture and her defence against the same are reified in the essay.

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Chapter 3

Postcolonial Nigeria and Violence

Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men. (Fanon, *Wretched* 28)

Nigeria has been one of the most politically challenged nations in West Africa. After its independence from the British in 1960, 1st October, the country has undergone through a phase of social, political unrest with ramifications of civil war and military coups which has become consistently the shadow of the country.

In the 32 years since its independence, Nigeria has survived one civil war (triggered by the secession of Biafra in the late 1960s), five successful and several unsuccessful military coups, and two failed republics. It is currently involved in a painstaking transition, orchestrated by the Babangida military regime, to a Third Republic. It is far and away the largest African nation, with perhaps twice the population of the next largest nation (Egypt), and thanks to oil, it is also one of the wealthiest. (Griswold 712)

Such a context is necessary for understanding Adichie's construction of political context. Whether it is for a common cause of the nation or for re-examining various socio-political position of the country, the Biafran war situation and military coups—have become for

Nigerian authors a fertile ground for multitudinous literary negotiation. Adichie is one among many such authors who has penned these events. Both these incidents are accommodated into Adichie's texts not only as a fostering of political rehistoricization but also as an engagement with the polymorphous site of Nigerian literature. They offer Adichie the tools to interact with her past—the voice of the collective memory, and problematize the Igbo family. This chapter with various instances will extrapolate that Adichie uses—the Igbo milieu and their individual spaces, in other words the private space which can be regarded as the family—to traverse the space of family and sense of nationality. Though Adichie projects both the novel as a social critique of the Igbo and Nigerian politics, Adichie's positioning of the Igbo family in the narrative through two timeline is informed by her knowledge of global politics.

Nigerian politics has had its own share of the repercussions of third world politics with its exacerbation resultant in civil war and several military coups in 1980s and 90s. The evils of military coups and its disorienting impact upon the public is foregrounded in *Purple Hibiscus*. The novel describes the crusader like Eugene and Ade Coker in a society embroiled in military coups.

Purple Hibiscus is set in the 1990s when the nation is caught under coup after coup. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is set at the backdrop of Nigerian Civil war, also known as the Biafran War which lasted from 1967-1970. The novel set in the late sixties presents basically the Igbo social milieu. Adichie's novel though foregrounds the familial space replete with gossips and sex etc. it does not however serve to deflate the political underpinning of the text. The novel is not an emotional outpouring of Adichie, but a baring of the disquieting political space of Nigeria. The narrative of the text is tinged with Biafran violence taking place between the Nigerian government and the secessionist Biafrans, the people of southeastern Nigeria. Adichie's rehistoricization does not attempt to produce a totalizing narrative. She explores the human aspect during the wartime situation. In *Purple Hibiscus* family serves as an operative site of both political and private negotiation. What ends in *Half of a Yellow Sun* with bloody

war, it continues to haunt the society through the re-emergence of coup attempts. The fall of Nsukka city which once again gives way to a social sterility under the force of political brutes takes place in parallel with the fall of Eugene's home. The political violence and family violence begin to, in other words feed off each other in this novel.

Violence emanates in the novel from two aspects of oppression—one from the head of the family and the other one from the operation of nationalist movements. In both the cases it is the wielder of power or authority whose actions have an overarching psychological impact upon the subject that receives it. A range of African novels have had a figuration of family violence as a social imperative in dealing with the African family. In the novels of Chinua Achebe or Buchi Emecheta violence has surfaced through the traditional family structures with manifestations in thrashing of wives, killing of twins etc.¹ In Adichie, violence is both political and family-related where the personal becomes political; and the political personal one. The violence that figures in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* can be attributed to the ramification of decolonizing process. Violence operates through its impact upon family and its devastation. Post-colonial Nigeria after its independence from British rule in 1960 involved the problem of negotiating not just with the foreigners (reification of neocolonialism) but also within their own varied socio-cultural space which was more exacerbated due to the peoples' mind being subjected to the colonizer's ideology and the repercussions of British policy as well.²

Decolonization and Violence in *Purple Hibiscus*:

The formation of modern state has also led to the growing production of a spate of nationalist literature with various "signifying practices" (During 138). In *Purple Hibiscus* Adichie uses the coups of the eighties of the last century to blend violence operating in family and Nigerian politics. The very beginning of *Purple Hibiscus* draws over political situation: "A general with a strong Hausa accent came on and announced that there had been a coup and that we had a

new government. We would be told shortly who our new head of state was” (Adichie, *Purple* 24). The metaphoric conflation of political and family violence in *Purple Hibiscus* becomes literally connected in the end. The novel inheres a systematic exploration of violence—which straddles the various sites of violence—Christian religiosity, domestic violence, political transition in Nigeria and colonial ideology. Eugene’s perpetration of violence can be related to his “personal dignity” which is based on his “personal identity” (Lange 19). This sense of Eugene’s dignity is related with his Catholic rituals. Christianity and Islamic religion did not only divide Nigeria in two but also served to effect “enslavement of the indigenes” and “systematic assault on African spirituality in their contest for religious hegemony” (Soyinka, *Of Africa* xi).³ Adichie produces a satirical undertone in the appropriation of Catholic values in an Igbo home. Eugene’s tyranny in his family becomes aligned with the European’s tyranny in Africa in terms of their use of Christianity as instruments of domination. Eugene embodies a menacing face of the failures of decolonizing process in the nation. He is representative of what Ifeoma calls “too much of a colonial product” (Adichie, *Purple* 13). The epistemic violence of Christianity is visible in Eugene’s punishment of Kambili for staying with Papa-Nnukwu, whom he regards as a pagan:

He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it toward my feet. He poured the hot water on 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 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. (Adichie, *Half* 194)

Edger Fred Nabutanyi relates Eugene’s punishment to the parts that betrays him as expressive of Jesus’ act of washing his disciples’ feet (77). Eugene’s character seems to be a caricature of the evils of Christian missionary education. Though living in an independent Nigeria, Eugene’s mind does not stop considering the whites and their cultures as superior which is evidenced by

his preference of Father Benedict. Though a good man in the eyes of the community, his dignity simply hides the religious brute inherent in him. People just don't have any knowledge of how Eugene behaves towards his family. During Kambili's hospitalization her classmates only know that she had "survived an accident" (Adichie, *Purple* 215). The severe physical punishment meted out to Jaja and Kambili can also be seen as a testimony to the continued operations of colonial violence through religion even after the end of British rule.

The novel is splashed with the unsettling symbolism of violence. Violence is inscribed in both the human body and the body of the text. Adichie exploits the narrativization from a fifteen year old Kambili in a way that enables a merging of the physical violence with the textual. It is not the hibiscus alone that Adichie uses to register and combine the political and domestic violence. In other words the human-constructed nature is what she is using as an objective correlative of violence. This is clearly visible in the following lines:

Everything came tumbling down after Palm Sunday. Howling winds came with an angry rain, uprooting frangipani trees in the front yard. They lay on the lawn ... their roots waving lumpy soil in the air. The satellite dish on top of the garage came crashing down.... The door of my wardrobe dislodged completely. Sisi broke a full set of Mama's china.

Even the silence that descended on the house was sudden, as though the old silence had broken and left us with the sharp pieces. (Adichie, *Purple* 257)

The disorientation in the family caused by Eugene's colonized self becomes equated with the greater force of nature's violence. The trauma of violence is palpable in Kambili through Adichie's investment of psychological narration. Kambili reveals: "The words in my textbooks kept turning into blood each time I read them" (Adichie, *Purple* 37) and then "I still saw the print in my textbooks as a red blur, still saw my baby brother's spirit strung together by narrow lines of blood" (Adichie, *Purple* 52). The letters embodying violence for Kambili become a

metaphoric expression for Adichie to address how letters themselves are instruments of infliction for Eugene. Adichie in other words critiquing the colonial conception of education and its pathetic failure in postcolonial Nigeria. Adichie constructs Eugene's colonized self as a subject to condition her critique of changed Igbo ethos like value of children in a decolonizing Nigeria. The novel inscribes the language of violence in the physical body as well—Jaja's "deformed finger"; Mama's eye as "the black-purple shade of an overripe avocado" (Adichie, *Purple* 209, 190). Eugene's kicking of Kambili is compared with "bites from giant mosquitoes" (Adichie, *Purple* 210). Such symbolism serves to magnify the subjective conception of the trauma and accentuates the silences in the narrative to explore the nuances of violence in a more subtle way. We are not given outright the reason of how or why those incidents happened. Kambili says: "Years ago, before I understood, I used to wonder why she polished them each time I heard the sounds from their room, like something being banged against the door" (Adichie, *Purple* 10). In Adichie these silences invested upon the characters serve to accentuate the gradual change of the characters. Adichie explores violence through signification. Kambili utters: "His seventeen-year-old face had grown lines; they zigzagged across his forehead, and inside each line a dark tension had crawled in" (Adichie, *Purple* 11). The violence depicted in the novel is so subtle that it resists easy generalisation on a simple ground of understanding. Eugene represents "a figure for the novel's unnamed political tyrant who stages a coup and takes over the country" (Hewett 89).

Eugene's physical oppression renders the voice of his wife and children mute. Their individual selves are simply effaced out. The silence of Kambili in the school, her being called "backyard snob" (Adichie, *Purple* 51) and the distance that she perceives between Jaja and her; Beatrice's unprotested complicity in Eugene's action and then Kambili's revelation speaking "more with our spirits than with our lips" (Adichie, *Purple* 16) express the psychological damage caused by Eugene's rigorous disciplining of them. Eugene's acts has its origin in his well-entrenched beliefs of Catholicism that has been hammered into his colonized self. His

obsession with the fear of sin is what spawns a crisis in the family. Adichie presents the unvoiced failures of missionary education among the natives which instead of contributing a harmonious family leads to a dysfunctional one which is explicit in Eugene's conception of Catholicism. Kambili's breaking of the Eucharist fast by having food results in the violation of Eugene's protocol which prompts him to take recourse to violence.

The use of silence in *Purple Hibiscus* as a strategic structuring of violence is explicative of the epistemic nature of violence. Eugene's family never indulges in family talks among themselves. Their home is literally filled with engulfing silences. Eugene's administration of physical violence renders all of their vocal function ineffectual. This is conveyed by Mama and Kambili who "talk in whispers" (Adichie, *Purple* 117). Therefore it is no surprise for readers to respond to Kambili being surprised by her Mama's slightly louder than whisper voice over the phone (Adichie, *Purple* 123). The whisper suggests their silenced selves, it carries the burden of violence, where they feel more comfortable in silence. Kambili says, "The silence he left was heavy but comfortable" (69) and then "silence was delicate" (Adichie, *Purple* 165). Their silence is not a sign of abnormality as Amaka conceives (Adichie, *Purple* 141), but emblematic of their failure to fit into Eugene's demarcated space.

The novel presents a spate of graphic violence within the family which operates parallel to the state ones. The lynching of the drugs traffickers (Adichie, *Purple* 33) is soon accompanied by Eugene's beating of his wife and children. Kambili says:

He unbuckled his belt slowly.... Papa was like a Fulani nomad—although he did not have their spare, tall body—as he swung his belt at Mama, Jaja, and me, muttering that the devil would not win. (Adichie, *Purple* 102)

For Eugene his Catholic values becomes only an instrument of inflicting sufferance. It is surprising to know that Adichie uses all the possibilities to critique the Christianity through family violence. Eugene would not only throw the missal at Jaja but would also use the table

where Bible is put to inflict pain in Beatrice. Thus it can be argued that Eugene's Christianity as repressing and pain inflicting instrument is discernible not only in the dogmas of Christianity but also in Adichie's use of very physicality like missal through which the religion becomes entrenched in the mind. Adichie uses the young narrator Kambili's perspective to convey the internal violence of Igbo family, and in wider sense the African family affected by the postcolonial problems of the nation. Eugene is a highly educated person revered by all for his charity and dignity he has achieved by his sense of Christian values. The operation of violence is more subtle and eclectic than one can see it in terms of religiosity. Eugene's dignity is clearly related with his colonial concept of discipline. He uses physical coercion to bring his family into his delimited rule.

The novel presents both metaphoric and symbolic violence. Eugene's tearing of the painting of Papa-Nnukwu suggests a symbolic violence perpetrated by Eugene towards his father. His tearing of the painting suggests a tearing of the values fostered by his father and forefathers. In other words Christianity robs him of his father. The painting drawn by Amaka becomes a socially obtrusive work, Eugene's reaction to the painting is comparable to the one depicted in Robert Browning's poem "Fra Lippo Lippi" where painting on physicality or life is despised by his community. The sheltering of a heathen's painting makes Eugene purge them of the sin through violence. Adichie seems to study the extent to which a family violence can extend to. Kambili too, much like Eugene remains veneered under a goodness with which Eugene seems to be justifying his punishment until his ruthless kicking. Only when, she is severely kicked until she fainted, is she able to unfurl her mind towards the true nature of her father (Adichie, *Purple* 210). Eugene's cruelty causes Kambili to dislike her home, Eugene's home. Kambili reveals: "I did not want to talk to him; I wanted to leave with Father Amadi, or with Auntie Ifeoma, and never come back" (Adichie, *Purple* 268). Adichie's story seems to follow the same trajectory of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* where Nwoye finds solace in the hymn of the church after Ikemefuna's death. In the same way it is Eugene's violence that is

responsible for Kambili's getting drawn to Father Amadi's "musical voice" (Adichie, *Purple* 195), his unpretentious mildness towards her. Adichie's construct of the emotional affinity between Kambili and Father Amadi resists a simple relegation to the heterosexual love. Amadi is an embodiment of what lacks in Eugene and his home. Kambili finds solace and security in Amadi as against the oppression and pain in Eugene.

The crude violence perpetrated within the family operates in tandem with the national violence. Adichie uses the space of Achike family from the beginning of the novel to juxtapose political and familial negotiation. The brewing of social instability following the coups that runs rampant due to the corruption in the state are projected as a simultaneous operation of the internal devastation of Achike family. Jaja's deformed finger, Beatrice's injured eye which resembles an "overripe avocado" (Adichie, *Purple* 190), and Kambili's legs over which Eugene pours hot water—all these physical marks of violence serve to construct the metaphorical blemish of national violence. This marks of family violence becomes imbricated with the narrativization of national violence. Beatrice's revelation of her miscarriage due to Eugene's beating invokes a robust brutality of Eugene's punishment. "My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it" (Adichie, *Purple* 248). The miscarriage that Beatrice suffers after Eugene's brutalisation of her belly suggests the miscarriage that the nation suffers. That the incubation of a new social orientation that crusaders like the editor Ade Coker dreams of are brutally extinguished, suggests the failure of the national federalism. The death of Ade Coker, who speaks against the corruption of the state politics, is sharply contrasted against the simultaneous operation of family violence. The mere description of the brutalization of Ade Coker can invoke the atrocities of the then politics: "They put out so many cigarettes on his back" (Adichie, *Purple* 42).

The violence has its roots in corruption—social and political—that have crept into the Nigerian society following colonial departure. Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth* observes

how the new bourgeoisie and the rich nationals helped tremendously in fueling ethnic as well as national violence (128). “The nationals of these rich regions look upon the others with hatred, and find in them envy and covetousness, and homicidal impulses. Old rivalries which were there before colonialism, old inter-racial hatred come to the surface” (Fanon, *Wretched* 128). Nigeria during decolonization was crumbling down under the nefarious corruption in the federalism resulting in civil war and several coups. Edward Said notes in *Culture and Imperialism*: “decolonization is a very complex battle over the course of different political destinies, different histories and geographies, and it is replete with works of the imagination, scholarship and counter-scholarship” (281).

In other words corruption is what Adichie explores in both the novels. Both *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* projects crusaders like Eugene and Ade Coker; and Odenigbo respectively where their fight against the state apparatus is not motivated by individual gains as by the imperative to protest the corruption. “The party is objectively, sometimes subjectively, the accomplice of the merchant bourgeoisie” (Fanon, *Wretched* 138). The complicity of the state politician and the capitalist in corruption is evidenced by Okonjie and Chief Ozobia’s relationship in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. After independence many political leaders had become ineffective in leading the nation effectively which accounts for the difference between the nationalism and national consciousness as Fanon puts it.⁴ *Purple Hibiscus* explores the political violence resulting from corruption:

Of course ... the politicians were corrupt, and the *Standard* had written many stories about the cabinet ministers who stashed money in foreign bank accounts, money meant for paying teachers’ salaries and building roads. (Adichie, *Purple* 24)

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the radio announces: “Our enemies are the political profiteers” (Adichie, *Half* 123). The political context of the sixties are negotiated in Adichie’s text through the internal operations of the family.

Nigerian Federalism and Violence:

The political situation of independent Nigeria during its initial years of struggle as a nation reaffirms the troubled space that Fanon outlines as the problematics in postcolonial African nations. Ahmad Aijaz’s observation may offer an insight into the study of Adichie’s presentation of the Igbo society.

Within Asia and Africa, the past decades have witnessed not the decline of the nation-state form but its further consolidation, as a mechanism for regulating markets and revenues, as a site for the production of national bourgeoisies and as an agent in local and regional wars. (Ahmad 284)

Dele Olowu notes that “reasoned discussion of Nigerian federalism predate the formal adoption of a federal constitution in 1954” (155). This fact is crucial to understanding the Nigerian nationalist operations as produced in literature in terms of its negotiation with various ethnic groups. Nigeria being a nation with diverse ethnicity and languages over 300 and with a religious division creating the Christian south and the Islamic north naturally entails a complex political site.⁵ Since the colonial era the national politics is chiefly dominated by the three majority ethnic groups—Hausa or Fulani in the north, Igbo in the East and Yoruba in the South region of Nigeria. Hence any negotiation with the Nigerian politics invites the triangular relationship of these three ethnic groups.

For many years the Ibo have been in the forefront of the nationalist movement in Nigeria and the most active ethnic group in national politics; they have been largely instrumental in the formation and success of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, long a major Nigerian political party. In recent years

other peoples, notably the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria, have rivaled their prominence in political and nationalistic affairs, yet their position is still crucial. Ibo politicians tend to be anticolonial but not pro-traditional or antagonistic to western European culture.... (Ottenberg 131)

Approaching the role of Igbos in Nigerian politics along other ethnic groups can provide a better understanding of the Biafran war and resultant production of the dialectics of violence. It is often proposed that Igbos have been dominating in the Nigerian politics and other fields which is seen as the justified cause for the Biafran War.⁶ This inevitably marginalizes other contingencies related to the precolonial and colonial social milieu of the Igbos. Chinua Achebe in his *There Was a Country* makes an observation how the literary productions contributed to holding up a false, misrepresented image of the Igbos (74) while maintaining that:

The rise of the Igbo in Nigerian affairs was due to the self-confidence engendered by their open society and their belief that one man is as good as another, that no condition is permanent. (75)

The historical past of the Igbos and the misrepresentation of the Igbos and their Biafran cause informs Adichie's reconstruction of an Igbo family that telescopes the war. The juxtaposition of the Igbo courage during the British rule and their subsequent rise into the politics finds prime importance in her accentuation of wartime attitudes in characters like Odenigbo and his mother. In the novel Adichie's privileging of Igbo perspective does not exclude the role of other tribes like Hausa, Yoruba etc. Adichie's rehistoricization of the war serves as a multitudinous enterprise in producing a critique of the various operating sites like memory and the social imperative of Biafran cause among the present generation Igbos; the role of other tribes, Western understanding of the war, representation of Africa in Western media, neocolonialism, imperialism etc.

Igbos are generally “highly individualistic people” which is responsible for their success in both political and social scenario in the nation (Ottenberg 136). While indirect rule of the British government had its success in other parts of Nigeria inhibited by Yoruba, Hausa and other groups; it failed among the Igbos, in other words the British was not able to exert their control in terms of centralization of power in the traditional way.⁷ The inscription of the Igbo past, which is why becomes very important in the study of their political role in a literary text.

Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* vindicates this Igbo individualism through her rehistoricization of the Biafran war. Adichie registers the deemed significance of the war through the social lives of Igbos. The violence of the war, till date, has been a gateway to understand both their social context and their position in Nigerian society. This chapter explores how Adichie reconstructs the Igbo family in recuperating the past. Regarding the question of the imperative of Biafran negotiation Adichie notes:

The war is still talked about, still a potent political issue. But I find that it is mostly talked about in uninformed and unimaginative ways. People repeat the same things they have been told without having a full grasp of the complex nature of the war, or they hold militant positions lacking in nuance. It also remains, to my surprise, very ethically divisive: the (brave enough) Igbo talk about it and the non-Igbo think the Igbo should get over it. (Adichie, “Stories of Africa” 3)

What Adichie calls unimaginative or uninformed can be linked to her attempt to convey something that is not to be found in the record of formal texts. She uses the informal sources to register the violence and its repercussions upon the Igbos. For example Colonel Madu in the novel says: “The foreigners say that one million died” (Adichie, *Half* 429). As Hugh Hodges points out that most of the earlier Biafran narratives produced the violence in an insipid

documentary style, stuffed with facts, and statistical gloss over the numbers of Biafran victimization (8).

Ngugi wa Thiong'O notes in *Decolonising the Mind*, "The study of the African realities has for too long been seen in terms of tribes" (1). Adichie's focus on the Biafran violence seeks to counter this tribalism in the foreigner's attitude which serves to obliterate all possibilities of registering human feelings. Adichie notes: "When I write about war, I think: Will this only perpetuate stereotypes of Africa as a place of war?" (Adichie, "African 'Authenticity'" 47).

Half of a Yellow Sun is a creative response to the traumatic effects of Biafran War through the perspective of common people. Adichie privileges the family over the community in exploring and showing the nuances of the war. The Biafran War is filtered through the narrative structured around three characters Ugwu, Olanna and Richard. They belong to three different social hierarchies—Olanna is a daughter of rich Igbo parents; Ugwu, a young boy working in Odenigbo's household as a cook; and Richard, a young aspiring writer from England. The choice of different social milieu in terms of character positioning accrues to Adichie's text three different narratorial positions that can register the conceptualization of the effects of war at various scale. Adichie uses the space of family, not the political documents to show the intrusion of war into family. It is through the interlinked web of familial relationship focalized mainly by Olanna, Odenigbo, Richard, Kainene and Ugwu—that Adichie builds her account of the ravages of the Biafran War.

The novel does not foster a first person account of gory violence between the Biafrans and the Nigerian armies, rather privileges the third person contexts in invoking the social devastation of the war. The novel uses the family as a body politic to accommodate the textualization of the historical events through a fictional lens. The representation of war and its intrusion into the space of family surfaces through Adichie's problematization of the question of representation in a historical novel. Adichie's imaging of the Biafran violence is negotiated

through the subjective perceiving of it which in other words can be seen as Adichie's exploitation of what Hayden White calls "practical past" (14). Hayden White notes:

This was "the practical past" ... a past which, unlike that of the historians, has been lived by all of us more or less individually and more or less collectively and which serves as the basis for the kinds of perceptions of situations, solutions of problems, and judgements of value and worth that we must make in every situations of the kind never experienced by the "heroes" of history. (White 14-15)

Adichie positions her characters in both the village-scape and townscape to facilitate her easy traversing across political and private space. Love between Olanna and Odenigbo; Kaninne and Richard; Ugwu and his imagined beloved and later Eberechi, their scuttling between village and town form the pre-Biafran situation. Olanna and Odenigbo's individual family relationships help us see the operations of politics in family before the war. The daily chores of their life before the war—meeting up people, discussing high thoughts in Odenigbo's household, gossips of women serve to create a division between the normalcy before the war and disruption of it later. Adichie uses the family of Pan-Africanist Odenigbo and Olanna as a focalizing of the whole devastation of the war. The familial relationship of Olanna with her uncle Mbaezi and aunty Ifeka and cousin Arize which describe her spending quality time with relatives help Adichie deal with the war violence with a human touch. It shows how a war can destroy a close relationship and accentuates the grief of losing one's own.

Adichie reconstructs the Igbo family to accommodate the collective memory of the Biafran people where their personal lives become overshadowed by war. Adichie, born in 1977 could not see the war unfurl but the stories live through the remembering and retelling, and Adichie's novel is informed by the painful experiences of the war, and the stories she heard from the Biafrans (Adichie, "Stories of Africa" 3). The recollection of the Biafran violence can

still disorient the relatives of those who suffered the loss and trauma. Homi K. Bhabha notes in *The Location of Culture*: “Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membling, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (90).

Adichie integrates the trauma of the past memory through the construction of Igbo social milieu. Adichie’s imaging of family in both towns and villages; from working class people like Ugwu, middle class intellectuals like Odenigbo, to upper class bourgeoisie like Chief Ozobia, Olanna etc.—help to inscribe the impact of war from varying subject positions. It should not evade our attention that Adichie encapsulates only the Igbo spaces into the narrative to delimit the war. Wendy Griswold observes:

... most Nigerian novelists self-consciously downplay ethnic exclusivity. Romances deal with love between members of different ethnic groups despite parental disapproval; crime novels have gangs whose members faithfully represent a variety of ethnic backgrounds; and in a series of thrillers, one diamond-in-the-rough hero curses in Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo. Village novels, on the other hand, by their nature, express and contribute to local pride and particularist sentiments. (722)

Though *Half of a Yellow Sun* is not a typical village novel, it does focus on Igbo exclusivity which is evidenced not only by Adichie’s choice of an Igbo household for approaching the Biafran past but also by the investment of the dialogues privileging the Igbo cause. Odenigbo, his mother and Chief Ozobia’s wife are some of the characters that focalizes the Igbo tribalism. Odenigbo asserts: “Can’t you see that we are not all alike except to white eyes?” (Adichie, *Half* 20). Odenigbo’s mother says: “But I do not want a *Wawa* woman, and none of those Imo or Aro women, of course; their dialects are so strange I wonder who told them that we are all the same Igbo people” (Adichie, *Half* 98). Other non-Igbo characters do occur but only as an

intersection with the families of Olanna and Odenigbo's; their private spaces do not find any manifestation in terms of their conception of the war. Mohammed is one such non-Igbo character who is also a lover of Olanna. His role serves to negotiate the contested role of the non-Igbos during the brewing of communal violence. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is littered with the deaths of many loved ones, friends as well as the strangers. It is the family people that informs the narration of the violence. That Adichie privileges the secondary person to accentuate the violence is reified in the whole novel. The narration of the violence does not take place through an omniscient narrator, it is the suffering of the common people and their witness of murder through which the violence speaks itself. But it does come through one focalizing family—the family of Odenigbo and Olanna. The novel has only three live narration of violence—the scene where Richard watches the Hausa soldiers killing the Igbos in Airport; the one in Kano where Olanna is rescued by Mohammed, and the death of Ikejide during air raid. Other deaths or wartime violence are only mentioned; all provisions to know how the deaths took place are rigorously silenced in the narrative. The fact that the detailed imaging of their deaths remain effaced out even in the knowledge of other characters is a part of Adichie's strategy to negotiate with the war's "practical past" (White 14). Adichie deals with how and why the Biafran war forms an inextricable part of the Igbos and why the Biafran cause still makes sense. Much like as it would have been in the lived past of the war time, the narrative simply undercuts the knowledge of the deaths of peoples that never reach the relatives of the dead. Adichie does not allow the detailing of many such graphic violence in such circumstances but the mere signification of such violence is enough to convey the disorienting impact of the Biafran violence. The death of Odenigbo's mother in the village Abba, and pregnant Arize are two incidents that explicate Adichie's strategy to negotiate with the impact of Biafran violence. Olanna notes: "Can you imagine what must have happened to Arize? They raped pregnant women before they cut them up!" (Adichie, *Half* 191).

Odenigbo's grief which is triggered by his inability to see the death body of his mother also seems to border on the same mental trauma exacerbated by the lack of knowledge of how one died. Adichie does not simply render the figuration of deaths as a totalizing negotiation; rather the foregrounding of the devastation within the space of family renders her engagement with the Nigerian civil war far more practical and subjective, which in turn lends to her narrative a multidimensionality that is rarely witnessed in other Biafran narratives.⁸ Adichie's negotiation with the "practical past" (White 14) also surfaces through her incorporation of rumours during the war. Death of Colonel Madu and Ugwu are two instances of Adichie's strategy to deal with the Biafran traumas caused by false news. The grief of Olanna and Odenigbo; and the reaction of Eberechi to Ugwu's death inform Adichie's conception of war time trauma. The novel presents:

She did not cry. The only time she cried was after she went to Eberechi's house to tell her that Ugwu had died and Eberechi screamed and called her a liar; at nights those screams rang in Olanna's head. Odenigbo sent word to Ugwu's people through three different women who went across enemy lines to trade. (Adichie, *Half* 382).

Adichie's delimiting of the Biafran violence becomes ostensible only through the behavioral change that the individuals register in the family throughout the course of the war. The thriving past and the postwar trauma that befall the characters can be seen as oscillating between "the polarities of hope and despair" (Soyinka, *Of Africa* 4). For Adichie, negotiation with the violence of the war necessitates the gloss over the internal operations of individual families. The past and the present situation of the two families—Olanna and Odenigbo help Adichie explore the nuanced impact of violence upon individuals. Olanna reveals: "I want this war to end so that he can come back. He has become somebody else" (Adichie, *Half* 388).

Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth* notes how war violence can psychologically affect a person. *Half of a Yellow Sun* presents how the private moments of Olanna and Odenigbo is affected by the trauma of the Biafran war:

‘Touch me.’ She knew he didn’t want to, that he touched her breasts because he would do whatever she wanted, whatever would make her better. She caressed his neck, buried her fingers in his dense hair, and when he slid into her, she thought about Arize’s pregnant belly, how easily it must have broken, skin stretched that taut. She started to cry.

‘*Nkem*, don’t cry.’ Odenigbo had stopped, ... waited for the strange stillness they brought. (Adichie, *Half* 160)

This scene visibly contrasts with the experience of sex during the pre-war situation, and explicates the impact of war in family life. That death becomes a part of Olanna’s psyche can be observed in these lines: “Olanna looked into the bowl. She saw the little girl’s head with the ashy-grey skin and the plaited hair and rolled-back eyes and open mouth. She stared at it for a while before she looked away” (Adichie, *Half* 149). Odenigbo’s hand reminds her of the hands of killed Uncle Mbaezi. Olanna ponders: “It was often difficult to visualize anything concrete that was not dulled by memories of Arize and Auntie Ifeka and Uncle Mbaezi that did not feel like life being lived on suspended time” (Adichie, *Half* 185).

Adichie uses the historical past of the Igbos to map the operation of violence. This is clearly visible in Odenigbo’s assertion: “Abba has never been defeated by anyone. I said that Abba has never been defeated” (Adichie, *Half* 190). Adichie mixes the Igbo individualism in both Odenigbo and his mother unwilling to leave the village. Her character affirms the Igbo courage. The same individualism is perceptible in the first half of the novel in Odenigbo. The warm discussion at his home expresses this: “This nationalism that means we should aspire to

indifference about our own individual cultures is stupid” (Adichie, *Half* 109). *Half of a Yellow Sun* presents the Igbo individuation of African tribalism:

‘The pan-Igbo idea existed long before the white man!’ Master shouted. ‘Go and ask the elders in your village about your history.’

‘The problem is that Odenigbo is a hopeless tribalist, we need to keep him quiet,’ Miss Adebayo said. (Adichie, *Half* 21)

Such a raging political attitude that Odenigbo exudes in the beginning slowly subsides with violence of the war intruding into the family and finally culminating in the inclusion of an outsider/European like Richard. Hugh Hodges notes:

The more the Biafran War becomes a moment in political history, the less important either politics or history become to Odenigbo, Olanna, Ugwu and the other Biafrans whose lives have been reduced to the permanent present of mere survival. (Hodges 9)

Adichie delimits the operation of Biafran context through the incorporation of various characters who project their own remarks. One of the reason of political instability Fanon observes lies within the discourses of nationalism which pushes one “to ultra-nationalism, to chauvinism, and finally to racism” (Fanon, *Wretched* 125). The view of Odenigbo and his mother can be seen as an exemplification of such an observation. For identity along specificity is what constitutes the construct of new nation. For Odenigbo “the only authentic identity for the African is the tribe” (Adichie, *Half* 20). Adichie uses the ultra-ethnic particularity and territoriality during descriptions of violence. Olanna’s mother reveals to Richard that they cannot trust Chief Ajuah: “They are Igbo, but they are Western Igbo.... Who knows? They will sell other Igbo people for a tarnished penny” (Adichie, *Half* 135).

Adichie throughout the narrativization of violence values the victims and their personal lives over the politics. Adichie attempts to portray her characters as “fully human” (“African ‘Authenticity’” 44). The marriage of Olanna and Odenigbo which has to end halfway due to air raids brings this human concern of Adichie to its full potential in evoking the violence among the common Biafrans. The death of Ikejide by decapitation during air raid becomes a part of the memory of marriage. His death conveys how the hapless common people are killed.

All historical figures and political events in Adichie are marginalized. The name of Balewa or Gowon or Ojukwu or Danjuma appear but only through the admiration or curse of soldiers and common people. Pastor Ambrose says: “Jehovah destroy Gowon and Adekunle” (Adichie, *Half* 338). The possibilities of establishing a political vantage point are predicated upon the view of commoners on the politicians and Army chiefs or Odenigbo’s comment on Balewa, the then prime minister which helps Adichie address the menaces of the pack between the native leader and the British diplomats. While historical figures do not figure as characters in the novel, Adichie’s engagement with human notes is achieved through the comments on Gowon or Balewa or Danjuma by the commoners. Adichie’s radicalism in the rehistoricization lies in her juxtaposition of reconstructed Igbo family privileging a fictional space and the incorporation of Ugwu’s meta text where each chapter of the book serves to complete what lacks in the fictionalized war. After the Radio, it is Ugwu’s book in the novel that becomes an enabling postmodern agency for Adichie to make a subversive critique of the European roles on the war. Ugwu’s book is a schematization of the dialectics of political violence. For Adichie Biafran war forms not simply a site of violence, rather also a space to straddle the possibilities of human relationships in Africa which she privileges over the political. The devotion of a sizable part to the lives in the refugee camp is explicative of the changing patterns in life even during war. This allows Adichie to attempt to revert back to the Nsukka milieu though it gets completely blighted by lack of food, disease, unwanted pregnancy among the refugees. The

camp serves to contextualize the Biafran war from the perspective of refugees while deflecting the objectification of political concerns of the war. Aghogho Akpome observes:

the novel makes no reference at all to the violent February 1966 secessionist attempt by minority militias in the Eastern Region to form a Niger Delta Republic. This rebellion resulted from serious grievances over the perceived misuse of oil revenues and the marginalization of minorities. (Akpome, “Narrating” 31)

Adichie’s narrative simply focuses on hardships faced by the family of Odenigbo, Adichie’s silencing of certain facts can be regarded as a part of the strategy in privileging the sensitive memory of the Igbos. Hugh Hodges notes, “like *Destination Biafra* it elides the attacks on non-Igbos in Biafra” (6). Such silences in Adichie serve to accentuate the inherent anarchy of the text. As Humayun Kabir argues:

An element of anarchy must be there in the writer, anarchy both in terms of the assertion of his individuality, and also in terms of the fact that he is seeking to maintain an attitude of non-commitment in the midst of different conceptual interpretations of the world. A writer is involved, and must be involved because a writer would not be a writer unless he had sensitivity and sensitivity makes him involved; he is involved but he is not committed. (Radhakrishnan et al. 110-11)

The above assertion can throw some light in understanding Adichie’s privileging of Igbo exclusivity and yet its subsequent collapse. S. E. Orobator notes:

At the outset the Government and the governed were rather cautious in their relationship with one another. While the Ibos were, in general, excited at the situation, the non-Ibo Mid-Westerners were surprised and upset and, since they

were not armed, they appeared to resort to a watch-and-see tactic, hoping to be redeemed by the Federal Government. (Orobator 377)

In the text however this context is simply evaded when some of the non-Igbo minorities are just dismissed as helping the Government. The whole violence is narrated by the Igbo basically but intrusion of Richard forms another key moment in the text in the narration of Biafran violence. He watches the massacre of Igbo, the fear howling in them, the fact that his life is not threatened allows him to experience the death vicariously. *Half of a Yellow Sun* presents Richard's reaction in this way:

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. (Adichie, *Half* 152-53)

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Susan's reaction to the outbreak of Biafran violence forms Adichie's critique of the complacent attitude taken by the non-Igbo especially the Europeans. As Paul Anber writes:

With unparalleled rapidity, the Igbo advanced fastest in the shortest period of time of all Nigeria's ethnic groups. Like the Jews, to whom they have frequently been likened, they progress despite being a minority in the country, filling the ranks of the nation's educated, prosperous upper classes. (qtd. in Achebe, *There Was a Country* 74)

Family as constructed in *Half of a Yellow Sun* affirms Adichie's disavowal of an objective understanding of both violence and the Biafran War. As Adichie notes: "I have a lot of research notes that I did not end up using because I did not want to be stifled by fact, did not want the political events to overwhelm the human story" (Adichie, "Stories of Africa" 3). Adichie's silencing of the political events and talks in the novel is complimented by her fictional

reconstruction of an Igbo family. As said earlier, Adichie privileges third person in relating to the violence. Eberechi's death is told by her aunt to Odenigbo which Odenigbo decides not to reveal to Ugwu. Poet Okeoma's death is revealed to Odenigbo and others through Dr. Nwala. One man says, "They are killing us like ants" (Adichie, *Half* 144). Colonel Madu's description forms another narrative of the Biafran violence. Madu informs: "They searched every single vehicle ... they shot all the Igbo soldiers they discovered there and threw the bodies over. Many of the soldiers wore disguises, but they used their boots to find them" (Adichie, *Half* 140).

The discussions at Odenigbo's home gives the sense of what was happening in the society before the war. Odenigbo's home can be formulated as the determining space, which draws a line between the normalcy and the devastating impact of violence. The shifting of Odenigbo and Olanna's home from one place to another after the advance of vandals sharply accentuate the impact of violence in family. The warm discussions held with Miss Adebayo, Ezeka etc. are replaced by Odenigbo's disillusionment towards the end. Olanna laments: "Instead, he went to Tanzania Bar every day and came back with a taciturn set to his mouth" (Adichie, *Half* 322). The change in the political situation entails change in the minds of the characters as well. The hope of first part is simply replaced and made to change into something different by the confrontation with the Biafran war. The novel presents the devastation through the change—physical and mental. The fact that Ugwu's mind was occupied by Eberechi's thought in the beginning of the text serves only as a caricature of war when finally it is revealed what war has done to her. The death of Eberechi by shelling (Adichie, *Half* 428) and Ugwu's taking her names in delirium and his inability to forget the rape shows the trauma of the war.

Adichie in the focalization of Olanna's and Odenigbo's family uses historical elements one or two but not to the effect of spoiling the human experience. The affia attack during the war is mentioned and linked to the narrative. The trauma of Olanna, Odenigbo and Richard caused by Kainene's disappearance becomes coterminous with the man's revelation: "My wife went on *affia attack* some days before the war ended, and we have not seen her since" (Adichie,

Half 428). That the novel silences any knowledge of what happens to Kainene and the continued search by Olanna and Richard till the novel's end underscore Adichie's inversion of western conception of Africa. Richard forms, for Adichie a catalyst to reshape the Afro-European subjecthood.

What McCarthy observes about the American fictions suggests a cogent understanding of Adichie's fictions as well:

These writers also deconstruct traditional notions of masculinity and address societal evils such as sexual abuse, rape, and racism, which, their novels seem to suggest, originate in rigidly paternalistic families. Social change must begin at home; the family is a microcosm of society. (McCarthy 129)

Half of a Yellow Sun deals with the war time menace like rape, unwanted pregnancy etc. The description of High-Tech and his Biafran group in the bar entails a raw description of rape. The pregnancy of Urenwa due to father Marcel's taking advantage of the war are such examples (Adichie, *Half* 398). But what makes Adichie's inscription of sexual violence a potent agency is the examination of the possibilities to foreground the mental changes in both the perpetrator and the victims. The dialectic of violence that Adichie invokes through the rape of the bar girl does not simply draw over the sexual victimization, it is also mired in the social contingencies of the war that is responsible for the discernible lack in understanding the true essence of Biafran cause. Adichie explores how the forced conscription of the teenagers like Ugwu or High-Tech corrupts the true idealism of Biafran cause. Ugwu's participation in the rape indexes more an upsurge of showing the manliness before the Biafran soldiers than any lustful precipitation: "Who is afraid? ... I just like to eat before others, that is all" (Adichie, *Half* 365). Through the code-named soldiers like High-Tech or Target Destroyer Adichie attempts to dig the unrecognized events of dehumanizing war. The conflation of intellectuals like Odenigbo,

Inatimi and uneducated refugees and soldiers like High-Tech helps to encapsulate the frailties in the sacred cause of Biafran war in a nuanced shade.

The psychological devastation and trauma of rape surfaces in the text not through the sufferer but through the perpetrators like Ugwu. The deformed face of Anulika that Ugwu sees is a reminder of the violence the soldiers perpetrated upon the Biafrans. The psychological impact of the rape is clearly visible in Ugwu in the haunting images of the rape: “He would give himself time to atone for what he had done” (Adichie, *Half* 397). The novel through the evocation that war is a total evil, problematizes the given variables of trauma. Ugwu’s trauma is visible in how the bar girl’s face becomes replaced by Eberechi’s. In the novel sexual violence is perpetrated by the Biafrans upon the Biafrans. The trauma affects both the victimized and the tormentor. Nnesinachi’s narration of Anulika’s rape forms one of the sad accounts of Biafran survivors:

They said the first one that climbed on top her, she bit him on the arm and drew blood. They nearly beat her to death. One of her eyes has refused to open well since.

Later, Ugwu took a walk around the village, and when he got to the stream, he remembered the line of women going to fetch water in the mornings, and he sat down on a rock and sobbed. (Adichie, *Half* 421)

Violence and Mutation of Relationship: Within Family and Beyond Boundary:

Adichie’s imaging of Igbo family in both the novels, especially through the violence, entails some inversion in the traditional roles of identity, ethnicity, societal role etc. Adichie’s accommodation of national ethos into the foregrounding of an Igbo family synthesizes the local, national and transnational experiences. Aijaz Ahmad observes that “contemporary dialectic of imperialist capital” (289) carries on a “profound penetration of all available global spaces” (289) and

proliferation of the nation-state form, with contradictory effects in the fields of culture and ideology, in a situation where rapid realignments of political hegemony on the global scale are producing among the professional intelligentsia a characteristic loss of historical depth and perspective. (Ahmad 289)

Such observation may offer some viable loopholes in Adichie's seeming preference of human aspects in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. My contention is that Adichie's reconstruction of human relationship helps to re-examine and review in a present time, the variables of social imperative in a war narrative. Salman Rushdie notes in *Imaginary Homelands*:

Literature is not in the business of copyrighting certain themes for certain groups. And as for risk: the real risks of any artist are taken in the work, in pushing the work to the limits of what is possible, in the attempt to increase the sum of what it is possible to think. Books become good when they go to this edge and risk falling over it—when they endanger the artist by reason of what he has, or has not, *artistically* dared. (15)

Adichie's insertion of Richard's character can be understood as a strategic agency to interact with the larger discourses of Nigerian postcoloniality. Richard in the novel is an outsider to the Igbos, coming from England. The positioning of Richard in Odenigbo's home allows Adichie to show the play of racism. Odenigbo's outright disrespect to a European pervades the beginning of the text when he is talking of pan-Africanism, decolonization. Odenigbo's behaviour towards him can be aligned with the register of a response to "humiliations of colonialism" (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 268). Adichie in the novel switches the colonized/colonizer role into a native/outsider one. He is submissive and Richard remains an outsider, a European coming to write a book on "Igbo-Ukwu art" (Adichie, *Half* 53), until his participation in the Biafran cause. His role might remind of the District

Commissioner in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. But Richard's role conveys something that goes beyond the immediacy of a colonizer's role. In the novel Richard is not the so-called colonizer, in another words he is denied by Adichie his agency as a writer of history. His character serves as a negotiation with the collective role of colonizers. He is relegated to an ineffectuality both in terms of affirming his individuality and failure to fit into a *writer*. He is the seduced and the one with impotency. Before the war his desire for sexual potency is substituted by his consistent struggle to assert or prove his Bifranness. His constant engagement to write about the Igbo and the Biafran violence indexes the European gaze in him. Adichie in her writing proposes to invert and challenge stereotypes. Richard evidences this aspect. It is the Biafran cause—the severe social transition through violence—that leads to the changes in the individuals as well.

That Adichie invests more focus in the humanizing tenor of her narrative is evidenced by Richard. His character is a reorientation of the colonizer/colonized relationship and problematizes the concepts of racism or identity along specificity/homogenized identity. Richard and Kainene's relationship accentuates Adichie's advocacy of fluid identity in the reorganization of Afro-European relation. She does not portray Richard in a traditional way, casting him as a distanced individual in Igbo land, a common European. Richard's passivity in the war does not change until his relationship with Kainene deepens. Igbo killed in the war is only a part of his day with no potential to affect him and impress upon his writer-self. Adichie privileges only the Igbo sentiments affected by the war; Richard's character is also a part of her sense of belongingness. "The politics of 'race'" are destabilised "by conceptions of national belonging and homogeneity which not only blur the distinction between 'race' and nation, but rely on that very ambiguity for their effect" (Gilroy 250). Throughout the course of the novel Richard is cast as a European, it is only Kainene who feels a bond with him.

Richard's assertion "I am a Biafran" (Adichie, *Half* 181) speaks of transnational identity, a disavowal of unitary belongingness. The Biafran violence becomes an eye opener for Richard that his true vocation is not in writing about the Igbo art or the Biafran war or the

colonized other. This is not his “cause” as Madu puts it (Adichie, *Half* 305). Through the violence Adichie inverts the colonizing self of Richard into an assertive agency writing the truth of the Biafran violence to the British government. Adichie is in another word effecting a *writing-back* to the centre.

Adichie observes in “The Stories of Africa”: “I wanted to write characters who are driven by impulses that they may not always be consciously aware of, which I think is true for us human beings” (4). Richard’s character is informed by such understanding where the line between outsider and insider collapses. That Richard wants to “guard Port Harcourt” (Adichie, *Half* 309) underscores how through the war Adichie undercuts the traditional role invested upon a European. It is the war violence that changes Richard from a lover of Kainene to a Biafran just like an Igbo, writing for the Biafran to his native country. His being Biafran also seems to relegate him to the kind of commonality of a Biafran that the imperialists endorse in media. His words about the Biafran truth are simply dismissed by the British on the grounds of unreality.

The novel says: “Ugwu was no longer just Ugwu, he was now one of ‘our boys’; he had fought for the cause” (Adichie, *Half* 399). Ugwu’s transformation from a servant boy to a writer attributable to the uncomfortable experiencing of Biafran violence enables a straddling between the Biafran particularity and the discursive body of Euro-centrality. The recalcitrant memories of the rape he committed make him feel “stained and unworthy” (Adichie, *Half* 398) and later give birth to his writer-self qualifying him as a Biafran writer. The incorporation of Ugwu’s book forms a subversive critique of the internal violence among the Biafrans and undercuts the Euro-centrality; that explicates the switch of centre/periphery role during the war. Adichie very cleverly employs the metatext of Ugwu named “The World Was Silent When We Died” (Adichie, *Half* 82) which exerts a multilevel reading of the relation of Igbos and the Nigerian, native and the European etc. Ugwu’s book is informed by Adichie’s deployment of postmodern narratorial agency to approach the contested site of African *other* vs Western body of knowledge. Ugwu’s book is suggestive of not just a text written by a native, but a history of

Biafra, written by a Biafran. It suggests a symbolical taking over of Richard's colonial agency, the rise of a servant boy to a native historian. Ugwu's text problematizes the self-validating concept in the European. Ugwu is a disavowal of stereotype. Bhabha argues in *The Location of Culture*:

The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference ... constitutes a problem for the *representation* of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations. (107)

Adichie seems to endorse Bhabha's view when she asserts, "I do not accept the idea of monolithic authenticity. To insist that there is one thing that is authentically African is to diminish the African experience" (Adichie, "African 'Authenticity'" 48). That the very authenticating tenor in the produced characters in an African novel is problematized by Adichie in her postmodern deployment of a metatext like Ugwu's as well as in the reconstruction of social configurations of relationships. For Adichie, single story "robes people of dignity" (Adichie, "Danger"). Apart from Ugwu's text, the encapsulation of the Richard-Kainene relationship; narratorial affinity with the female characters and their sexual acts constitute Adichie's textual agency to invert the monolithic conception of African society along a single story. Ugwu's book contrasts Richard's promising book *The Basket of Hands* that underlines a European idealism. Richard in other words forms Adichie's chief tool to dismember the colonial past. Olanna urges Richard: "You really must write about the horrible things the British did in Kenya ... Didn't they cut off testicles?" (Adichie, *Half* 233). Richard's inability to write about Igbo Ukwu art or the Biafran war is an enabling structuring of a postcolonial agency that will foster Adichie's writing back to the empire. Ugwu's book is a response to the European gaze that Dipesh Chakrabarty invokes.

The everyday paradox of third-world social science is that *we* find these theories, in spite of their inherent ignorance of ‘us,’ eminently useful in understanding our societies. What allowed the modern European sages to develop such clairvoyance with regard to societies of which they were empirically ignorant? Why cannot we, once again, return the gaze? (Chakrabarty 225)

Each part of the Book drawing over Biafrans makes a categorical denigration of European neocolonial attitudes that served to exacerbate the war with the misrepresentation of the Biafran cause.

Adichie through the metatext of Ugwu, is blurring the binarism between the colonized and the colonizer; European and its other. This blurring in postcolonial relationships between a European and Nigerian builds on a pattern of relationship what can be related to the concept of semi-periphery.⁹ Ugwu’s metatext becomes a radical textualization of Biafran history as well as a vindictive but also a systematic undermining of Western centrality. The metatext in fact maintains a discursive conversation with the problematics of resistance to the centre negotiated by Stephen Slemon.

Do literary resistances escape the constitutive purchase of genre, and trope, and figure, and mode, which operate elsewhere as a contract between text and reader and thus a set of centralizing codes, or are literary resistances in fact necessarily *embedded* in the representational technologies of those literary and social ‘texts’ whose structures and whose referential codes they seek to oppose? (Slemon 73)

Slemon notes that resistance is something which is “never *purely* resistance, never *simply* there in the text or the interpretive community, but is always *necessarily* complicit in the apparatus it seeks to transgress” (Slemon 78). The observation might suggest that Ugwu’s narrative forms a cohesive foregrounding of a Nigerian’s take on Nigerian political turmoil which inevitably includes the plight of the native rather than simply privileging a European directive dismissal

of Biafran cause as situation of tribalism. Nationalist operations are directed by the “imperialist tradition” and “resistance tradition” (Thiong’O, *Decolonising the Mind* 2). The continuation of imperialist tradition functions through the stereotypical production of Africa in western media like BBC. In Adichie’s text this is what makes the Biafran cause belittled by the role taken by countries like Russia or Egyptians. The novel, through the insertion of mundane talks, explores their roles in helping the federal Nigeria against the Biafrans. Ugwu’s book inscribes a resistance to that misrepresentation of the Biafran history and its cause; the sparking of violence by the First World nations like Britain or Russia while the Biafrans lay in sufferance.

Half of a Yellow Sun engages with the changes in relationship that the war brings to them. Adichie does not simply focus only on the larger transformative values of Ugwu or Richard that entails a reading beyond-nation relationships, but also draws over the configurations of changed family relationship unfurling after war which serves to construct a polarity in the typology of relations. Nnesinachi’s having a child by an enemy—Hausa soldier is one such event taking place during the war. Anulika’s changed behaviour due to her body being ravaged by rape conveys the typical yet forceful critique of war. In Adichie all relationship—national or familial—undergoes a subversive change. Biafran violence, especially Ugwu’s contribution to the Biafran army is what make him grow as a writer. It is the Biafran violence that make him drawn to the home of his Odenigbo, it is the violence that changes him from a servant to a teacher in the refugee camp; a family member in Odenigbo’s household. Similarly the war makes Richard from a European to a Biafran, a part of Olanna’s family, one who constantly searches for lost Kainene. It can be posited that Adichie’s reconstruction of familial relationships is what renders her enunciation of Biafran violence a multidimensional narrative which transcends the familial, despite its apparent narratorial gloss on family. As Adichie observes in “In the Shadow of Biafra,” that “If fiction is indeed the soul of history, then I was equally committed to the fiction and the history, equally keen to be true to the spirit of the time as well as to my artistic vision of it” (11). The spate of family

relationships that Adichie constructs around Richard and Ugwu is implicated in Adichie's formulation of the possibilities in the fictionalization of Biafran violence and the imperative to voice African postcoloniality.

In *Purple Hibiscus* the family violence is what leads to a terrible mutation of family relationship. Eugene as a Catholic brute puts his family under stringent rules where they cannot move out of his demarcated rules. Years of physical oppression to which Beatrice, Jaja and Kambili are subjected leads to the changes in the configurations of relationship. Beatrice's character epitomises the staunch attitude of a woman, who must imbibe such nature because she has to, in a situation like Eugene's. She is submissive and never dares or think it worthwhile to assert her view before Eugene. Her voice comes to the narrative only through her order to the children for study. She wears clothes with God's name written. But what comes as a surprise is her subversive step towards the end of the novel—her killing of Eugene. Her act of killing is not only a mutant nature of motherhood as put by Iniobong I. Uko (Uko 66). It is an assertion of life against death, of action against silence. Her shocking revelation that she started to put poison in Eugene's tea affirms the revitalization of her submerged agency to act on her own. The change in Beatrice does not merely take place in her mental perspective, it also exudes through her bodily reaction. Adichie in the novel very cleverly uses the physical changes as an approach to violence. Kambili notes: "Mama's eyes were still glazed, but she looked like a different woman from the one who had come out of the taxi that morning. She looked possessed by a different demon" (Adichie, *Purple* 250).

It is the brutal violence of Eugene in other words that brings out not only the destructiveness but also the sacrifice for another being. This is peculiarly visible in Jaja's sacrifice for his mother. And later on Kambili's sacrifice of her youth which she dedicates to Jaja's freedom from jail. Eugene's violence functions at the centrality of the whole typology of relationship. The characters undergo a process of three phases—repression, emancipation and then again self-repression. Jaja's character is also a testimony to that. His seventeen year old

face that grows line (Adichie, *Purple* 11) is a symbol of repression which is followed by his resurgence of youthful resistance after being exposed to Auntie Ifeoma's emancipative household. This freedom however soon gets blighted, silenced by the subsequent violence. The violence of Mama causes an equally devastating impact upon the family which again draws him to the claws of repression. The violence in the end operates not through the second person in terms of physicality, but through one's own action. My contention however, is that, it is not Beatrice's act of poisoning that puts the whole family in the continuing crises in the family, it is the mental change that Eugene's violence forges upon them and deflects other self-obsession. In other words, they are never able to come out of Eugene's violence which is actually responsible for the self-destructive change in their behaviour.

Dismemberment of domestic violence in Adichie allows an exploration of the extent to which a family can shatter and reshape human relationship. That Jaja and Kambili grows wiser much like Ugwu in the previous novel due to their exposure to the cruelties that society houses becomes a mapping of the socially conditioned vulnerabilities that young generation in decolonizing Nigeria are trapped in. The subsequent intimacies between Father Amadi and Kambili results not from her physical attraction rather from the negligence and severe punishment that she receives from Eugene. Adichie constructs a symbiotic relationship between the perpetration of violence and the resistance against the same. The outcomes of resisting against Eugene's violence remains inextricably mired in the family's present struggle to rehabilitate itself through Jaja's freedom. The skilful avoidance from the talks of freedom from jail addresses the changed perspective of Jaja for whom jail becomes a home forever. Kambili transforms from an inactive silent girl to one of abled sister who never gives up much like Olanna in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Her life changes from a so-called subjugated girl to one of affirming girl, fighting for her brother. Eugene's violence and his resultant death help Adichie explore something which despite being innately familial surpasses the relative operation of familial through the narrative's imbrication in political dialectics of coup-infested Nigeria.

Adichie's potential lies in her yoking together the political resistance of Eugene against corrupt officers and the rebelling attitude of Jaja and Beatrice against his tyranny. Adichie in the novel underscores the pitiable condition of Nigerian politics and the societies during its decolonization. The changes in the configuration of relationship due to the domestic violence becomes intertwined with the nation's one. That Jaja's acquittal from jail by the new government's possibility that Eugene's murder becomes mixed with the opponent party's action help Adichie structure the social formation of decolonizing Nigeria. Jaja's life as a prisoner drawing over his fights with other inmates, beating from polices, the bribes given by Kambili and her mother, the continued delay of his freedom help us see the internal operations of Nigerian politics and judicial system. Adichie's focalizing of prisoners' life through Jaja underscores the victimization of commoners in the continued privileging of coup attempts. The correspondence that Kambili maintains with Canada moving Father Amadi or America based Auntie Ifeoma and her children leaving under the social pressure of the outcomes of coups and strikes—allows a fostering of narratorial dialogue between the national and transnational politics and family. They all live in a place they seek happiness but they all end up feeling stranded only, distanced from each other. Adichie underscores the diasporic experience through the letter of Amaka—where they lack nothing but they have forgotten to smile and maintain the old familial intimacies. What Adichie maintains in her structuring of resistance against violence is the growth of characters' life, the growing intimacies despite their lesser exchange of words. This is seen in Father Amadi's letters that never asks of Jaja or Eugene or in Auntie Ifeoma's use of voice tapes that Jaja asks Kambili to play sometimes. Amadi's letters show an emotional intimacy that foregrounds the mutual understanding of Kambili and him. Adichie in the novel does not focus on the manifest political tone but it gets inevitably underpinned by what happens within the Achike family.

Notes:

1. It is obvious in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* where Okonkwo beats his wives and kills his endearingly brought up adopted son Ikemefuna. It is also seen in *The Joys of Motherhood* by Buchi Emecheta where Nnu Ego is severely beaten by her first husband.
2. By this I mean the ethnic tensions that have existed among the various ethnic groups since colonial era which is linked with their religious divisions and territorial concerns.
3. Also see, Simon Ottenberg, pp. 135; Frantz Fanon, pp. 129. And see John Iliffe, pp. 242-44.
4. See, Frantz Fanon, pp. 134-136.
5. See, Wendy Griswold, pp. 712.
6. See, Chinua Achebe, *There Was a Country*, pp. 77, where Achebe talks about western representation of Igbos.
7. See, Simon Ottenberg, pp. 133-34.
8. See, Hugh Hodges, pp. 1-13, to know more about other Biafran narrative.
9. See, Stephen Slemon, pp. 76. Here he talks about the unsettling of colonial/settler writing in postcolonial theory through ambivalent or ambiguous materials.

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Chapter 4

Situating Women in Decolonizing Nigeria

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's works registering an affinity with female characters engages with the reification of women's social position in modern Nigeria. That the norms of the Western women or feminism cannot be replicated in African societies have been a contested issue in theoretical approach to African works. "Western feminist scholarship on the third world must be seen and examined precisely in terms of its inscription in these particular relations of power and struggle" (Mohanty 174). However in a writer like Buchi Emecheta, African womanhood is inextricably embedded with the concept of motherhood and Igbo family.¹ Adichie uses familial relationship to approach the discursive function of violence. Adichie in *We Should All Be Feminist* offers a radical presentation of women's position in modern Nigeria where her critique of African society cuts across given gender roles for both sexes (16-25). The select novels foreground the shifting position of Nigerian women in modern Nigeria that continues to alienate women from active participation in society as well as their subsequent overpowering attitude to the male counterparts. Adichie in the select works is trying to debunk the homogenization of African women that is rooted in the body of western knowledge, by her presentation of women who traverse the operating sites of politics, religion and family. The female characters are appropriated as a textual strategy in Adichie to critique the larger bodies of European imperialism and the repercussions of decolonizing process in Nigeria. Kainene and Ifeoma in the two novels serve as a focalizing characters in foregrounding the women's position in global politics. In Adichie encapsulation of global positioning of women emerges through the vulnerabilities of third world politics in Western nations. Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* shows how the unemployability in Nsukka following the coups causes Ifeoma to go to America. The visa problems faced by Ifeoma forms a severe denouncement of American policies that sees

third world people as a threat to their economy. Adichie appropriates the decolonizing process and impact upon women as a textual strategy to explore the conditioning of Nigerian women in global scenario. Adichie's women struggle in every possible way to steer clear of the confinement imposed upon them by religion, society and politics.

Adichie's female characters maintain a discursive conversation with the Western feminism and African reaction to it. Her works does not disavow what Emecheta pronounces about the accommodation of African womanhood in her novels. Emecheta seeks to define African womanhood by incorporating the African family concept and role of motherhood, as she says:

But if I am now a feminist then I am an African feminist with a small f. In my books I write about families because I still believe in families. I write about women who try very hard to hold their family together until it becomes absolutely impossible. (Emecheta, "Feminism" 553)

Adichie's works do not situate women as completely embroiled in patriarchal domination, they do get trapped but they do voice as well. They assert their mind, sometimes though lately, but producing a subversiveness that women can resist against male. Adichie's characterization of women encapsulates both the complexities and the challenges that face women in their embrace of various possibilities in decolonizing Nigeria. Adichie does not simply rout her female characters as defined by patriarchy. The characters define themselves through their actions and resistance. The women characters in Adichie affirm their individuality not much by their resistance, as by their retaliation to the actions of male counterparts. The discursive function of their action against the male/patriarchy resists the essentialization of African women under the societal norms. Adichie values female intimacies as part of her strategy to accommodate a careful teasing out of African feminist concern in decolonizing Nigeria. Unlike novels by earlier forerunners in African scenario, Adichie's literary works constructs a symbiotic relationship

between female characters, through which the female voices so far dominated in the novels of previous generations begin to emerge. The female characters allow Adichie to incorporate the African context in a subtle way that does not seem to in any way eschew the observations made by Carole Boyce Davies on African feminism that:

Firstly, it recognizes a common struggle with African men for the removal of the yokes of foreign domination and European/American exploitation. It is not antagonistic to African men but it challenges them to be aware of certain salient aspects of women's subjugation which differ from the generalized oppression of all African peoples.

Secondly, an African feminist consciousness recognizes that certain iniquities and limitations existed/ exist in traditional societies and that colonialism reinforced them and introduced others. As such, it acknowledges its affinities with international feminism, but delineates a specific African feminism with certain specific needs and goals arising out of the concrete realities of women's lives in African societies. (Davies 563)

In Adichie the historical social gesture of Igbo women is pitted against the transitional roles of Igbo women in the decolonizing Nigeria. Adichie uses the Igbo conception of womanhood to cut across the eclectic position of African women. The new women in Nigeria and the claws of traditionality and the socio-religious tensions in post-colonial Nigeria form Adichie's chief tools to dissect the problematic situation of womanhood.

Igbo Women in Nuclear Family and the Question of Individualism:

In many African literature the mother figure is a great story teller, who makes one wonder that she is "inspired by some spirits" (Emecheta, "Feminism" 552).² In Adichie this traditional role of mother becomes sharply contrasted against the silence of Beatrice. In *Purple Hibiscus* Beatrice's natural agency is denied by the imposition of rigorous Catholic rules. However a

contrasting image can be located in the household of Ifeoma who advocates the voicing of all individuals in the family. It is in her home that freedom of voice is used to contradict and accentuate the female agency bound in extreme Catholic rules and the one in a liberal home like Ifeoma's. Both houses reinforce the changing roles of womanhood. Ifeoma values the freedom, and assertion of individuality which is one of her chief traits in the conception of family lives.

Understanding the role of women in Adichie cannot be understood without taking into consideration the Igbo nuclear family during decolonizing Nigeria. Ato Quayson observes in the essay "Feminism, Postcolonialism and the Contradictory Orders of Modernity," that "The companionate nuclear marriage in Africa is itself a legacy of Christianity" (588). Adichie's construction of Igbo family seeks to negotiate with the incommensurable conditions of women in a Christian nuclear family which, for better or worse seems to put some women into an oscillation between the traditional role and the one facing change due to the economic and social conditions. The juxtaposition of frailties and assertive nature of woman vindicates the dichotomies of women's freedom in modern Nigeria. Before moving into Adichie's negotiation with female characters in a nuclear family, an observation of Ato Quayson's view on African family can be illuminating for us:

Apart from the fact that spouses are supposed to have equal access to each other's property, perhaps the other key defining factor is the issue of conjugal privacy, where the spouses are supposed to build up their nuclear family together with as little interference as possible from the extended family system or, indeed, from any outside intrusion. Secondly, the Christian nuclear family arrangement is the joining of individuals in love and companionship, rather than the joining of lineages; but it is rare that the nuclear family arrangements is not entangled in other realities that constantly challenge and undermine it. (Quayson 588)

In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Olanna-Odenigbo couple presents the transitional role of Igbo woman in Christian nuclear family. The marriage of Odenigbo and Olanna in the novel is one such aspect that does not force a recognition of their relationship by their family members. The tension between Odenigbo and Olanna becomes sharper with his mother's insults of Olanna and bringing a girl like Amala. Mama's insults of Olanna underscores changing role of modern Igbo women as well as the gender expectation of an Igbo wife. Odenigbo's mother asserts:

And on top of it, her parents sent her to university. Why? Too much schooling ruins a woman; everyone knows that. It gives a woman a big head and she will start to insult her husband. What kind of wife will that be? ... These girls that go to university follow men around until their bodies are useless. Nobody knows if she can have children. Do you know? Does anyone know? (Adichie, *Half* 98)

Adichie uses the traditional Igbo system of family where wife is supposed to be submissive to the husband. Olanna and Kainene represent how women transcend the social expectations about women in the first decade after Nigeria's independence.

However *Purple Hibiscus* presents a complete different picturization of women in a nuclear family. Here Beatrice and Kambili stand in complete opposition to other traditional Igbo women. Both of them represents the silenced self which is not a given for an Igbo women, rather a constructed one—constructed through the extremist Catholic values imposed by Eugene. The freedom that accrues to a traditional Igbo women is not visible in them. The frankness that the Igbo women register about the concerns of marriage and motherhood is simply absent in Kambili and Beatrice. The comments of other Igbo women of *umunna* about Jaja and Kambili's worthiness in entering a marriage constructs a social gesture about the position of women in a Christian nuclear family:

"*Nekene*, see the boy that will inherit his father's riches!" one woman said, hooting even more loudly, her mouth shaped like a narrow tunnel.

“If we did not have the same blood in our veins, I would sell you my daughter,” another said to Jaja. She was squatting near the fire, arranging the firewood underneath the tripod. The others laughed.

“The girl is a ripe *agbogho*! Very soon a strong young man will bring us palm wine!” another said. (Adichie, *Purple* 91-92)

Adichie cleverly presents how Eugene’s Christian home takes away all traditional roles in Beatrice and Kambili. The silence in Kambili’s reaction conveys in other words, how she is not raised with the traditional value of a daughter. Lauretta Ngcobo observes about the traditional role of a daughter in these words:

She is aware that somehow she is on her way out.... In short, from earliest childhood she is an outsider who is being prepared for the central role that she will play at her in-laws. Many young girls will be forgiven for their eager anticipation of their marriage and a place where they will finally belong. (Ngcobo 534)

The outspoken nature of the women of *umunna* about marriage is not entertained in Eugene’s home. Jaja, Kambili and Beatrice never indulge in talks that involve marriage or sexuality. This is clearly seen in Kambili’s embarrassment in having a look at Amaka undressing. *Purple Hibiscus* deals with the confinement of women in an Igbo household. However this imposition of confinement only serves to bring out the radicalness of woman-self which is exemplified by the action of Beatrice in killing her husband. In Adichie the female characters bear the potential to invert traditional role of a woman. The silences of womanhood in Beatrice and Kambili in the beginning of the novel becomes a kind of catalyst for the reification of their woman selfhood. Class consciousness is one typology with which Adichie frames the different gender roles across families. In Eugene’s home they have servants as helping hand even in the woman space. Sisi in the kitchen space fabricates the ambivalent treatment of an Igbo wife. Beatrice

seems to be well taken care of by Eugene's arrangement of Sisi, the cook but yet her position as wife does not entitle her to the equal participation within Eugene's constructed family space. It should be noted that Eugene's space follows the European construct of a nuclear family, but what is lacking is the intimacy and reciprocation between husband and a wife. However in African context defining the private space of Beatrice as against the public lives of Eugene may problematize any easy generalization of Igbo conception of womanhood. Among the Igbos, the traditional role of a women were limited to the function of bearing children. Her life is not much determined by her being a wife to Eugene as by her motherhood. Oyeronke Oyewumi's observation on the position of African women may throw some light in the approach to Beatrice's position as a wife:

Wifehood tends to function more as a role than as a deeply felt identity, and it is usually deployed strategically. Across Africa, the category generally translated as *wife* is not gender specific but symbolizes relations of subordination between any two people. Consequently, in the African conceptual scheme it is difficult to conflate woman and wife and articulate it as one category. (Oyewumi, "Family Bonds" 1096)

In the novel, Ifeoma calling Beatrice as *my wife*, therefore cannot be regarded as an invalidation of the identity formed around wifehood, rather an extension of the relationship of Beatrice and Eugene. In Eugene's home Beatrice's function is more of a woman bearing children rather than one complimenting the family. Eugene's home disavow the recognition of Beatrice as a traditional Igbo wife. But neither is she able to fit into the concept of European wifehood. That Beatrice's agency to speak for herself or somebody else has been relegated to an undermined self exemplifies the dismissing of any presence of Beatrice as wife. Ngcobo notes, "Under matriarchy women have more rights than under patriarchy" (535). It is possible to say that Ifeoma's blunt disavowal of Eugene's words and her courage to stand against him has been due to the female agency which is revered in matriarchy, which also suggests that Beatrice's

continued unprotested stand may be a result of her position in patriarchy and especially in monogamous society. Emecheta sees polygamy as liberating for educated women if not for all (“Feminism” 555).

What Adichie is foregrounding is not the silenced selves of the women, or their victimization rather their emergence out of the den of suffering, how they can turn over the gender stereotypes in modern Nigeria. Adichie’s female characters are a take on how women are pushed to their limits and vulnerabilities, which surfaces through Adichie’s reconstruction of an Igbo domesticity. She uses the very concept of motherhood as an explicative device to denote the transitional roles of women and the resultant reification of their being conditioned to African society. As far as affirming the woman self is concerned, Ifeoma’s character in *Purple Hibiscus* resembles Olanna and Kainene in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. They value their individual selves over the expectation of family or community.

Though Ifeoma is a widow the narrative does not offer any clue to understanding the situation of her widowhood in her husband’s home. Instead of glossing over her life in husband’s home, Adichie deflates this aspect by foregrounding Ifeoma’s assertiveness and her hard living in Nsukka. All considerations of family negotiations with the property after Ifediora’s death is simply marginalized. Adichie’s undermining of Igbo patriarchy and their rules can be regarded as a take on the private lives of Nigerian widows and their struggles to run a family. The novel foregrounds the hard living of Ifeoma with her meagre income from university job. While in most cases polygyny seems to offer a greater control and freedom on the part of the elder wife, in Ifeoma absence of husband does not form any void in the social orientation of her life. Ifeoma’s perspective indexes her modern self that resists any normalization of female self by the patriarchy. Adichie’s forte inheres in her consistent use of contrasting images. Ifeoma’s character represents the qualities that are missing in Beatrice and Kambili. She exudes an imposing nature in both her physicality and her mental attitudes towards Eugene. As against Beatrice’s small body and whispers she is described as “tall,

exuberant, fearless, loud, larger than life” (Adichie, *Purple* 95). Ifeoma’s *loudness* and *fierceness* underlines her confident approach to the issues that needs protest. Ifeoma’s attitude exemplifies the attitude of a modern Igbo, who is educated but resists any radical change in traditional norms which is clearly visible in her contradicting against Eugene’s views on Papa-Nnukwu. For Ifeoma Papa-Nnukwu is a traditionalist and not a pagan (Adichie, *Purple* 81).

About the traditional roles of Igbo women Ada A. Mere observes:

In the family, the woman maintains a high degree of economic independence. She provides the food, bears and rears the children, farms, trades, and disburses the proceeds from her sale and trades. The man provides protection for the family, carries out masculine aspect of farm work ... makes a living. (Mere 157)

Adichie’s portrayal of Ifeoma seems to be informed by such historical context of Igbo women. Ifeoma’s character is one of the most powerful woman characters in the novel. She performs the role of both a mother and a father. It can also be postulated that traditional Igbo women who have not been subjected to the extremist attitude of Christianity have been able to maintain their relative dignity and the freedom of Igbo woman during the process of decolonization. Ifeoma represents the womanhood that celebrates the root of one’s culture, her blunt protest to Eugene and outspoken behaviour towards Jaja and Kambili foregrounds this aspect of her character. Adichie’s unpretentious presentation of social gesture is what render her female characters more powerful than the male ones. Ifeoma says to Kambili: “‘You have grown so much. Look at you, look at you.’ She reached out and pulled my left breast. ‘Look how fast these are growing!’” (Adichie, *Purple* 72).

What Ifeoma is to Beatrice, Amaka is to Kambili. In the novel it is only Amaka who questions Kambili about Eugene’s punishing her. The physical suffering that Kambili and Beatrice bear due to Eugene’s disciplining causes them to submerge this aspect of woman’s individuality. For them Eugene is an embodiment of an unprotestable authority. While Ifeoma can hardly

voice her mind in Eugene's presence, Ifeoma can talk back to Eugene in a loudness that bespeaks her protest and Eugene's faults:

Aunty Ifeoma narrowed her eyes. "Have you ever picked up the phone and called me to ask me that question, eh, Eugene? Will your hands wither away if you pick up the phone one day and call your sister, *gbo*?" Her Igbo words had a teasing lilt, but the steeliness in her tone created a knot in my throat.

"I did call you, Ifeoma."

"How long ago was that? I ask you — how long ago was that?" Aunty Ifeoma put her fork down. She sat still for a long, tense moment, as still as Papa was, as still as we all were. (Adichie, *Purple* 98)

Adichie observes in *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions*:

Never speak of marriage as an achievement. Find ways to make clear to her that marriage is not an achievement, nor is it what she should aspire to. A marriage can be happy or unhappy, but it is not an achievement. (Adichie, *Dear* 30)

Ifeoma's observation on the university girls getting married at an earlier age conveys her rebelling attitude to sensitize the girls about the value of education and a girl's life. For Ifeoma husband is not what supplements a woman's life, it is the celebration of womanhood that produces a meaningful life. Ifeoma's talks with Beatrice reveals her valuing of girl's education over husband:

"Seriously, yes. But they marry earlier and earlier these days. What is the use of a degree, they ask me, when we cannot find a job after graduation?"

"At least somebody will take care of them when they marry."

"I don't know who will take care of whom. Six girls in my first-year seminar class are married, their husbands visit in Mercedes and Lexus cars every

weekend, their husbands buy them stereos and textbooks and refrigerators, and when they graduate, the husbands own them and their degrees. Don't you see?"

(Adichie, *Purple* 75)

The assertion of Ifeoma underlines that women does not become a possession of their husbands after marriage. Ifeoma also recognizes that education empowers a woman and in any case it will be the educated women who will require to *take care* of their rich husbands. It is perceivable that husband for Ifeoma in all considerations only seems to encroach upon the freedom and individuality of woman's self. It is not for nothing that she asserts: "sometimes life begins when marriage ends" (Adichie, *Purple* 75). *Half of a Yellow Sun* explores Adichie's affirmation of new woman. While marriage is not a determining factor in Olanna, the importance of motherhood is clearly underscored. The character of Olanna resists the traditional roles of Igbo women where she resembles more a European woman in her leading life with Odenigbo. Positioning Olanna and Kainene in a global footing in terms of their educational status and social living, serves to bring in a cohesive understanding of African women. Adichie's narrative can be termed as a gendered/female narrative, because in both the novels, women though initially may prove to be a hapless, unthinking male counterparts, in the end it is the female characters whose actions invert the whole functioning of the earlier narrative.

However Olanna's sexual liberalness does not seem to undermine the traditional veneration for motherhood. In fact it is her barrenness that Adichie uses to bring a multidimensionality to the critique of Igbo women, and in larger context the African one. It is the motherhood that the African women value more than anything in family. Beatrice's lamentation over her barrenness and subsequent adoption of Baby by Olanna typifies the urge for motherhood in an African woman. However the adoption can also be seen simultaneously as a debunking of the sense of African motherhood which builds on the blood relations of a mother and a child. Nwapa in the essay "Women and Creative Writing in Africa" talks about the importance of motherhood among Africans in these words:

The pain is great if she is denied this function and this is why the theme of barrenness is explored by many African writers, particularly the female ones. A wife is more often than not betrayed and abandoned by her husband if she does not have a child. Therefore, the desire to be pregnant, to procreate is an overpowering one in the life of the woman. She is ready to do anything to have a child, be she single or married.

.... So in African societies, when this unique function is denied a woman, she is devastated. But should this be so, all the time, in this day and age? Does this handicap, this childlessness make a woman less woman, less human? (Nwapa 531)

Adichie's projection of Olanna seems to respond to such complexities of womanhood. Olanna's character explicate the duality—African woman and a new Nigerian woman. Among the traditional woman in Africa, whose sexual agency is limited to the function of motherhood alone excluding any sexual intimacy with the husband, it makes very little room for perceiving sex as enjoyable.³ “The rationale is that she has got what she wanted and throughout her pregnancy and lactation she will no longer need the husband” (Ngcobo 535). Olanna's character seems to debunk the typical role of African women. Unlike them Olanna enjoys sex, and child is not a concern for her while having a physical relationship with Odenigbo. A similar context can be located in Kainene's character, her sexual relationship with Richard suggests the changed attitudes of new Nigerian women towards sex and motherhood. Kainene's proud posing for the Nigerian newspaper suggests her confidence and attitude towards the new citizens of Nigeria. Kainene asserts:

‘The necklace will be featured in tomorrow's *Lagos Life*. I suppose that would be my way of contributing to our newly independent country. I am giving fellow

Nigerians something to covet, an incentive to work hard,' she said, coming back to stand beside him. (Adichie, *Half* 58)

Kainene and Olanna are portrayed as women capable of any enterprise. Olanna leaves her home that seems to encroach upon her personal ideals and expectations. Their characters convey the women's selves as conditioned in the transitional era of decolonizing Nigeria, which endorses what Adichie calls "Happy African Feminist" (Adichie, *We* 10). Women in Adichie assert their individual selves. It is not the man that seduces, rather woman like Olanna who does. Adichie shows the potential of women through Olanna's act of teaching during the Biafran War which explicates the contribution made by women for Biafra. Kainene is one of Adichie's complex and yet original character that expresses many possibilities of African women. Her interest in father Ozobia's business and later on her driving into the enemy line for business transform her from a stereotypical African woman to someone who performs her responsibility by procuring food for the Biafran people.

Though Adichie does not seem to subvert completely the African conception of womanhood, her characters like Olanna, Kainene, Ifeoma bear every potential to counter any generalization of African women. Adichie's women characters are not bound by societal gender inhibitions. They are university educated, drive cars, do job, reside in restaurants. In Adichie, sexual binary does not inhibit any social behaviour on the part of the women. Olanna enjoys as much freedom as Odenigbo. They are both university educated new Nigerian. The typology of discrimination is constructed not through any gender roles of the society rather through the invested social status accrued from a university degree. That Olanna did her masters in Social Science is what creates a difference in the intellectual friends' zone of Odenigbo. It can be postulated that university education is what enable Olanna, Kainene and Ifeoma in the select novels to voice their resistance.

Violence and Resistance of Women:

Purple Hibiscus and *Half of a Yellow Sun* address the subjugation of women and their resultant resistance. Adichie's portrayal of women characters seems to respond to the problematics of representation of women that Flora Nwapa observes about women produced in African literature:

The question I would like to ask is why these women become assertive and aggressive only after they have been brutalized or betrayed by their men. Are there no women in Africa today who can hold their own without waiting to be brutalized or betrayed? (Nwapa 530)

Adichie's female characters bear the ability to voice and react against their mistreatment—social, political, religious as well as familial violence. Adichie being an African feminist explores the suffering of women as conditioned in African society—as a reification of political and social transition in decolonizing Nigeria. Ifeoma is one such assertive woman who would not retreat to voice her own mind. Unlike Beatrice she does not fear or hesitate to speak against Eugene. One can extrapolate in other words from the vindication of Ifeoma's individualism, Adichie's formulation of African feminism. The *loudness* and *fierceness* that Adichie invests upon Ifeoma shows that Adichie's women can be assertive even before their being exploited. Ifeoma's voice is the only voice in Eugene's home that can retort to him and speak for others. Ifeoma privileges "free expression and the exchange of ideas" (Duran 49). When Eugene does not allow his children to visit Ifeoma's home, her retort is clear-cut in giving a blow to Eugene's argument that hides his tyrannical attitude to his family:

"Maybe the next time they are on holiday," Papa said, firmly. He expected Aunty Ifeoma to let it go.

"Eugene, *biko*, let the children come and spend one week with us. They do not resume school until late January. Let your driver bring them to Nsukka."

"*Ngwanu*, we will see," Papa said. (Adichie, *Purple* 97)

Ifeoma knows how to handle a situation before Eugene, when Eugene is persistent in his stand, she uses the religious context of pilgrimage to take Jaja and Kambili. Adichie shows Ifeoma's outspokenness and assertive nature when Eugene does not want his children to stay more than two days in her house in these words: "A week, Eugene, they will stay a week. I do not have monsters that eat human heads in my house!" (Adichie, *Purple* 99). Ifeoma's every stand against Eugene is explicative of her individuality. Her ostensibly louder voice in her protests against injustice in family matters suggests the moral imperative to voice against the equally louder nature of Eugene's tyranny and social injustice. That Ifeoma does not care the patriarchy or what the other people says about her is a register of her courage and imperviousness to patriarchal norms. One passing comment by Ifeoma is enough to evidence her courage to challenge patriarchy:

They eat more and more shit every year. The people in his *umunna* said he left money somewhere and I have been hiding it. Last Christmas, one of the women from their compound even told me I had killed him. I wanted to stuff sand in her mouth. Then I thought that I should sit her down, eh, and explain that you do not kill a husband you love, that you do not orchestrate a car accident in which a trailer rams into your husband's car, but again, why waste my time? They all have the brains of guinea fowls. (Adichie, *Purple* 74)

Adichie explores what is lacking in the production of women in African literary works. The abundance of female space and voices in both the novels registers the dichotomies and possibilities of the African women that attend to a third generation women writers. Adichie seems to take Ifeoma as an archetype to show how registering one's voice is important in life. When Amaka behaves rudely towards Kambili Ifeoma does not stop Amaka but she wants Kambili to speak against her: "Kambili, have you no mouth? Talk back to her!" (Adichie, *Purple* 170). Ifeoma does not limit life to the society or community engendered gender roles, she advocates independence in speech and in living one's life. She voices against the corruption

in the university. Her action or reaction is not entailed by any obsession to assert the female agency all the time, rather by the situation that necessitates one to voice against what one feels as not suiting to one, if not completely by the injustice. Ifeoma is a modern woman who does not take the colonial culture as her own which surfaces through her protest against Eugene. Adichie uses the female agency to examine the African dynamics that conditions the actions of a victimized woman. It is possible to attribute the unfurling of Kambili's and Beatrice's true potential of womanhood to Ifeoma's assertive nature that revitalizes the female voice in them. Ifeoma and Eugene can be seen as a metaphoric presentation of binary oppositions within the family space—voice/silence, freedom/repression, intimacy/alienation etc. Ifeoma's home fosters what one can project as a home of democratic ideals and Eugene's is one of autocratic. Ifeoma's character is not presented as a disjunction from the traditional norms but as someone who despite being positioned in social, political transitions maintains the tenacity to carry on life. Her wifhood when Ifediora was alive or her subsequent widowhood despite the derogatory remarks from the society regarding the death of Ifediora cannot pose a determining thrust in entailing any inhibition in her social life.

Unlike many African novels Adichie makes enough room for female characters and they do not act in the background, their voice and action come to the full play in the narrative. The novels' affinity with female characters cannot be discounted as a deflection of the main narrative, for it is a schematization of Adichie's conception of African social dynamisms through the female agency in a 21st century African narrative. The female voices in Adichie can be seen as a reordering, relocating attempt to accommodate the African condition of womanhood where their life is inextricable from both family lives and the contiguities of national politics. The question that is worth addressing in Adichie's writing is — Does Adichie propose a gender neutral narrative? Does she present gender inequalities as relative to the gendered violence only? *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* underpin the social imperatives of women's position in African family while traversing the dialogues between male

and female power politics. A careful investigation of Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus*; and Olanna and Kainene in *Half of a Yellow Sun* will show that Adichie is effecting a reactionary attitude in them, they are sensitive to what encroaches upon their private lives; and not necessarily to men's world alone. Such orientation in their outlook can be seen as disavowal of gender stereotypes, a retort to what one can perceive as the socially sanctioned attitudes that repress the women's selves in both family and socio-political fields. Ifeoma does not submit to Eugene's suggestion that Papa-Nnukwu should be cremated following Catholic rituals:

Aunty Ifeoma got up and started to shout. Her voice was unsteady. "I will put my dead husband's grave up for sale, Eugene, before I give our father a Catholic funeral. Do you hear me? I said I will sell Ifediora's grave first! Was our father a Catholic? I ask you, Eugene, was he a Catholic? *Uchu gba gi!*" Aunty Ifeoma snapped her fingers at Papa; she was throwing a curse at him. (Adichie, *Purple* 189)

Ifeoma can outmanoeuvre and contradict Eugene unlike Beatrice. Her reactionary attitude marks her as a woman who can counter situational problems which also accounts for her not being victimized like Beatrice and Kambili.

Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* presents Olanna and Kainene as extension of Ifeoma's individuality. It should be noted that Adichie conceives African women as representing polarities—they are epitomes of toleration as well as retaliation. The sexuality in the novel forms a consistent strategy in showing the gender politics and the dynamics of relationships. Olanna's reaction to Odenigbo's infidelity marks her as a woman who privileges equality, respect on both ends in a relationship, and not simply the sexual gratification. But Adichie is interested in showing that African women do not pose themselves as devoid of radicalness that can produce a catastrophic as well as emotionally strengthening effect upon the typology of relationship. This is why, the change in women is as much a product of their own subsequent

actions as they are of male violence. The resistance that Olanna and Beatrice in the two novels affirm through their female agency repeats the actions of their husbands through violence characteristic of same degree in devastation. Susan Bordo argues:

The pathologies of female protest function, paradoxically, as if in collusion with the cultural conditions that produce them, reproducing rather than transforming precisely that which is being protested. (2249)

That Olanna's seduction of Richard is solely triggered by Odenigbo's act, and not by any attraction for Richard surfaces through what Olanna thinks before and after her seduction of Richard: "She felt light, as if it were much easier to carry her own weight, but she was clear-headed; she knew what she wanted to do and what she was doing" (Adichie, *Half* 234). Then, we have, after her sexual act: "They had both wanted it to happen and they both wished it had not; what mattered now was that nobody else should ever know" (Adichie, *Half* 244). Adichie foregrounds the subjective understanding in the characters where they privilege individuality rather than the very often expected and posited woman roles where they disregard the mistakes of their men. Olanna wants to protect her relationship much like the female characters that Emecheta proposes; but not at the expense of the display of her potential to reproduce what men have done to them. This aspect seems to differentiate Adichie's women from other African writers. Unlike Odenigbo, it is Olanna who herself reveals her infidelity before him. Her undaunted revelation to Odenigbo marks her as one who recognizes the helplessness on the part of the betraying husband. Olanna's sexual relationship with Richard is not directed simply at taking revenge or at hurting Odenigbo, it serves to reaffirm the possibilities of her asserting self. Her infidelity is in other words a self-uplifting act that can free her from the inhibitions that Odenigbo's infidelity imposes upon her. Olanna thinks that:

She should not have told him about Richard. Or she should have told him more: that she regretted betraying Kainene and him but did not regret the act itself. She

should have said that it was not a crude revenge, or a score keeping, but took on a redemptive significance for her. She should have said the selfishness had liberated her. (Adichie, *Half* 244)

For Adichie exploration of family problems necessitates to underpin the emotional functions of sexual relationship. Sexual acts, therefore, in the novel can be regarded as forming one of her key strategies to negotiate the dynamic nature of women in a family. Adichie uses sex not merely as a cause of strife in relationship, but also as an antidote which serves to remove the very chasm between characters caused by sex. Olanna's sexual advances for Odenigbo and the resultant forgiving of each other's betrayal testifies to the emotional bonding emboldened by sex. But it should not evade the fact that Adichie uses family as a strategic exploration of various socio-political and religious tensions where one action becomes intertwined with the other. Olanna's sex with Richard does not simply impact Odenigbo, it also serves to distance Olanna from her sister Kainene.

If Odenigbo's infidelity causes Olanna to reproduce the same act in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, then in *Purple Hibiscus* Eugene's excessive physical punishments meted out to his family causes his wife Beatrice to take up something equally disorienting for her husband. That Beatrice, Jaja and Kambili were subjected to Eugene's physical torturing is conceivable in their mental suffocation and the scars in their bodies. Eugene does not see any limits in using the instruments of punishments for he punishes with whatever things he finds handy. He kicks Kambili's belly with boots, breaks table on Mama's belly, throws the missal on Jaja etc. Mama's eye resembling "black-purple color of an overripe avocado" (Adichie, *Purple* 11), Jaja's finger—they all bear scars caused by Eugene's behaviour. Beatrice's killing of her husband by poison embodies the angst of a mother and a woman brutalized by a husband's cruelty; and the coldness of a murderer. In other words Eugene transforms her from a loving, submissive woman to a murderer:

Her movements were calm and slow. When she spoke, her voice was just as calm and slow. “I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor.” (Adichie, *Purple* 290)

Adichie indexes polarities in Beatrice, she is submissive yet rebelling in mind. That Beatrice’s action is equally or even more inflicting than Eugene, is seen in the physical transformations that the poisoning causes in him. “They were like tiny pimples, each with whitish pus at the tips, and they covered the whole of his face, even his eyelids. His face looked swollen, oily, discolored” (Adichie, *Purple* 252). While an Igbo wife killing the husband is not a radical appropriation by Adichie, Beatrice admitting of her murder in the novel is simply dismissed by society as a mental imbalance caused by Eugene’s death. Beatrice’s action serves to debunk the stereotyped role of womanhood. The retaliation by Adichie’s female characters against their male counterparts is often accompanied by the admission of their counter-acts that they have committed. That Adichie’s characters bear potential to retaliate against the betrayals of men is seen in Alice’s assertion as well: “I don’t want to know. If I see that man again, *ezi okwu m*, I will kill him with my own hands” (Adichie, *Half* 335). Many critics suggest that “the identity struggle of community can serve as a model for other resistant discourses” (Parry 87). It might be possible to argue that Beatrice’s killing of her husband becomes a kind of affirmation of her female agency. Her resistance/retaliation against Eugene operates in tandem with his resistance against the state corruptions.

The resistance of women can be linked to Adichie’s foregrounding of emotional intimacies between female characters. This is evidenced by both her novels and short stories. These intimacies serve as an engagement with the private space of women as well as their psyche from the perspective of a woman writer. That Adichie’s narrative accommodates the reciprocation of feelings between women cannot be relegated to inconsequential negotiation in Adichie’s strategic construction of women characters. In *Purple Hibiscus* we see these intimacies in Kambili, Amaka, Ifeoma and Beatrice; and in *Half of a Yellow Sun* it is seen in

Olanna's relation with Kainene and other women. In Adichie female characters have dual functions, they become each other's friends, invigorating a female bond and at the same time they serve as each other's catalysts for the web of relationships. Female bonds are not projected merely as one which foregrounds cementing quality of an emotional bond but also the precariousness in their relationship that becomes vehement from the betrayal by the same sexes.

Purple Hibiscus presents a woman's space through Ifeoma's talking with Beatrice about one's position in a marriage. Adichie's incorporation of discussions between female characters can be seen as an undermining of the male dominance in the family as constructed in the novel as well as the textual space. The function of female talks as is seen between Ifeoma and Beatrice accentuates how women construct their view about their husbands. The privileging of female voice explicates Adichie's understanding of how women becomes subjugated, victimized by their husbands and lovers. While in many cases presence of male, as in Beatrice's case, suggests the silencing of women, the presence of women denotes how they voice their silenced selves of women's world in relation with their husbands' one. Beatrice's individuality which becomes marginalized and submerged in Eugene's demarcated space, begins to claim agency through violence itself. Ifeoma in other words suggests a power that lets loose Beatrice's emotion as against Eugene's silencing of Beatrice. That her role in fostering the need to voice against injustice is not confined to the empowering words to Beatrice alone, as testified by Jaja, affirms Adichie's conception of Ifeoma as a powerful catalyst in the novel. Ifeoma's exemplification of defiance through the oral narrative "Jaja of Opobo" that "Being defiant can be a good thing sometimes ... Defiance is like marijuana—it is not a bad thing when it is used right" (Adichie, *Purple* 144) seems to engender in Jaja the rebelling attitude against Eugene's tyranny.

Adichie encapsulates through the women-talks the transitional conception of husband-wife relationship. In *Purple Hibiscus* it is seen in Ifeoma and Beatrice; and in *Half of a Yellow Sun* it is between Olanna and others—Kainene, Auntie Ifeka, Arize, Edna etc. The talks between women allows Adichie to create a vantage point in registering the tension between husband-

wife or man-woman relationship as well as to bring in the humanizing aspect in a war narrative as seen in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Alice and Olanna's discussion about their men incorporates the sexual behaviour of their men (Adichie, *Half* 336). In *Purple Hibiscus*, Amaka's conversation with Kambili about Father Amadi towards the end of the novel also testifies to Adichie's conceiving of a female space. Adichie's arrangement of female talks entails a schematization of the relative relation between a husband and a wife; a man and a woman which is otherwise silenced in the narrative of African novels. The discussion between Ifeoma and Beatrice gives the contrasting view of womanhood and wifehood, while in Beatrice it does not make much of a difference, in Ifeoma individuality is valued for a woman married or not. Adichie's incorporation of women-talks in other words are an inscription of African feminist ethics, which is evident in Ifeoma's responses to Beatrice:

“Did our own *umunna* not tell Eugene to take another wife because a man of his stature cannot have just two children? If people like you had not been on my side then ...”

“Stop it, stop being grateful. If Eugene had done that, he would have been the loser, not you.” (Adichie, *Purple* 75)

In both the novel women provide emotional support for each other. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* the role of Arize and aunt Ifeka is significant in supporting Olanna during her mental break down after Odenigbo's act of infidelity. Arize's anger soothes Olanna: “Wild animal from Abba. His rotten penis will fall off soon. Doesn't he know he should wake up every morning and kneel down and thank his God that you looked at him at all?” (Adichie, *Half* 225). Then we have Aunt Ifeka saying to Olanna about her disregard of husband:

When your uncle first married me, I worried because I thought those women outside would come and displace me from my home. I now know that nothing he does will make my life change. My life will change only if I want it to

change.... He is very careful now, since he realized that I am no longer afraid. I have told him that if he brings disgrace to me in any way, I will cut off that snake between his legs. (Adichie, *Half* 226)

Auntie Ifeka's assertion is not simply a consolation, it underscores the worth of one's self in a relationship. How women empower each other is also seen in Adichie's story "The Arrangers of Marriage". The story while foregrounding the betrayal of Chinaza by both her family and westernized husband Dave makes a critique of the changing roles of Nigerian women where they continue to suffer in the hands of society and family. The female intimacies between Nia and Chinaza is not limited to the kitchen space alone, it is embroiled in the oscillating situation that an outsider like Chinaza in America finds herself and is compelled to take help from a woman who is also implicated in her betrayal in some way. The story does not disavow Adichie's conviction that African women face a need to be portrayed as an asserting and outspoken women. One can index a similarity between the acts of Beatrice or Olanna in the two novels and Chinaza who renounces everything given by Dave—clothes and home for hiding the knowledge of his first marriage and stays in Nia's home who is all ready to help Chinaza. Nia's revelation to Chinaza of sexual relationship with Dave resembles Olanna in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

As told earlier Adichie uses the women as catalyst for each other and not simply as an empowerment to carry on life in a time ravaged by their husbands or men. While motherhood is well-entrenched in the African conception of womanhood, Adichie postulates an in-between route for them whenever they are tested by men or husbands to their limits. One can extrapolate from the conception of womanhood of Auntie Ifeka (*Half of a Yellow Sun*) and Auntie Ifeoma (*Purple Hibiscus*) that for them, having a husband is not the only attribute that can complete the circle of a woman's life. Their actions allow Adichie a vantage point to negotiate with the women's space in a family. It is possible to project that their (Ifeka and Ifeoma) assertion act as catalyst for the subsequent actions taken by Olanna and Beatrice.

Olanna's act of seduction can be seen as a resultant of Auntie Ifeka's assertion about life: "You must never behave as if your life belongs to a man. Do you hear me? ... Your life belongs to you and you alone, *soso gi*" (Adichie, *Half* 226). Adichie uses the web of relationships—both family and friendship in her novels to accommodate the problems all aligned with womanhood. That Olanna finds a "redemptive significance" (Adichie, *Half* 244) in her act of infidelity can also be attributed to what Edna speaks to her as consolation:

You think he's spending his day crying like you are? When that bastard left me in Montgomery, I tried to kill myself and you know what he was doing? He had gone off and was playing in a band in Louisiana! (Adichie, *Half* 232)

Olanna's infidelity can be seen as being triggered by the consolatory remarks of Auntie Ifeka, Arize and Edna—which serve to inspire Olanna into action that will retaliate against Odenigbo's infidelity.

Similarly in *Purple Hibiscus*, Beatrice's killing of Eugene can transcend the generalized view of the act as a simple counteract against Eugene's oppression. Beatrice and Kambili form some of the most nuanced and powerful woman characters in the whole of African literature. The sufferance of Beatrice and her act of murder can be related to her emancipatory zeal awakened by the self-asserting words of Ifeoma. Her conception of life and wifehood that: "sometimes life begins when marriage ends" (Adichie, *Purple* 75) seems to be implicated in Beatrice's act of ending Eugene's life.

Despite Adichie's powerful portrayal of new women in Nigeria, the bottom line remains that those who are uneducated are more prone to be victimized by the society and specially during wartime developments. *Half of a Yellow Sun* portrays how young girls like Anulika becomes sexual victims during the Biafran War. The rape of Anulika and the bar girl by the soldiers functions in parallel to the act of people like Father Marcel's sexual exploitation of the young girls in the Biafran refugee camps. Unlike those victims, it is only Kainene who has the

audacity to challenge and disrespect Father Marcel for his conduct. The incorporation of female characters as women who can take responsibility for family and the community enable Adichie to take a vantage point to subvert the conventional roles invested upon women as represented in earlier literature of the continent. Beatrice does not commit herself to suffer in husband's home like Nnu Ego in *Joys of Motherhood*, or Okonkwo's wives in *Things Fall Apart*. Olanna, Kainene, Ifeoma, Beatrice or Kambili are the voices of the hitherto unvoiced women in African literatures. In Adichie, the story of her women does not end with the story rather it helps to initiate a new journey where they are doomed to take responsibility for family. Kambili dedicates her life for Jaja's acquisition from jail and Olanna dedicates hers to finding Kainene. Adichie seems to invert the typology of African women through the characters like Ifeoma, Olanna and Kainene where they can, without support from men, make into the real world. Adichie's women like Olanna, Kambili or Ifeoma, in other words seem to resist the "malady of Afro pessimism" (Gikandi, "Foreword" 9).

Notes:

1. See, Buchi Emecheta's essay on "Feminism", pp. 553-54.
2. Also see, Obioma Nnaemeka, pp. 143.
3. See, Laurretta Ngcobo, pp. 535. Ngcobo explores the function of motherhood in African society.

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Chapter 5

Conclusion

The dissertation began with the exploration of how Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie uses the space of family as a strategic space to interact with the larger bodies of discursive presentation of African society vis-à-vis the western knowledge. Adichie's presentation of Igbo family registers a synthetization of the African literary tradition, including the oral tradition; and the imperative of accommodating a dynamic negotiation with the social, political situation of modern Nigeria. Adichie's use of Igbo family and the changing relationship does not limit itself to the register of Nigerian politics alone, her characters specially the female ones often allow Adichie to interact with the western bodies of knowledge. Adichie uses the sufferance of family and the changing behaviour of family members to lend a multidimensionality in her dynamic African approach to postcolonial Nigerian situation. In my second chapter, I have demonstrated how Adichie makes a severe critique of colonizer's knowledge/religion in *Purple Hibiscus* through Eugene's family. The chapter examined Adichie's configuration of contrasting images, dual spaces and the typology of relationships that registers the crises within the family. The conflation of family and violence in both the novels becomes a motif which have enabled Adichie to critique not only the Nigerian society and politics but also the European imperialism and the epistemic violence of colonialism. Adichie in her characterization disavows what she calls a "single story" of African people.¹ Adichie's presentation of social transition is a vindication of the dynamism in Igbo/Nigerian culture as well as a subversion and indictment of Western reproduction of African people in media. The second chapter has shown how the national discourse comes into play through the Igbo domesticity/family especially through the formulation of family relationships in decolonizing Nigeria. The third chapter on violence dealt with the various entailments of domestic violence and political violence which

go beyond the immediacy of particularity of Igbo domesticity. Adichie endorses the human aspects of characters, which serves to condense the whole narrative into the subjective understanding of violence and its effect. While the main narrative of Biafran War is not completely deflected even in the end but the transition of the narratorial focus from political to the family is easily visible. For Adichie the individual reaction to the violence becomes more important than the collective, which is why she focalizes the Biafran War through the family of Olanna and Odenigbo. It is also possible to say that Adichie perceives more possibilities in individuals, especially the family and its members than the collective community. Family for Adichie is a telescoping agency to conflate different social attitudes and to challenge and undermine the dominant ones. However family for Adichie is not a limiting space, the chapter inscribes a testimony to Adichie's debunking of Western historiographic role on the construct of third world sociological knowledge. Adichie's investment of historiographic role upon a servant boy like Ugwu endorses both the postmodern attitude as well as the dynamism that have built onto the third generation Nigerian literature. In Adichie family gets torn by violence and rehabilitated by violence which serves to enunciate the inhibition of the ordinariness of leading life that the characters held themselves to in the beginning. The mundane family life is what Adichie takes as a focalizing space to register how violence transforms them all. Adichie in other words uses violence as a categorical method to implicate the transformation within the family and relate it to the wider sites of national discourse and western hegemonic roles on third world countries like Nigeria.

It should also be noted that Adichie is exploring the female characters in all its possible nuances. It is the women in postcolonial Nigeria who has to suffer more than the men. Women for Adichie is not only a resisting subject, their subjecthood becomes intertwined with the nation's subjecthood. Adichie has used the family to narrate the nation and the sexual underpinning of human relationships as seen in the Olanna-Odenigbo or Richard-Kainene in accommodating African postcoloniality. It is the women's space that allows Adichie to collate

into her Biafran narrative, the emotional touch and the dehumanizing impact of war. I have also shown throughout this study how in Adichie women have been focalized more often than the men in Adichie's formulation of social register of Nigerian politics and resultant violence as is seen in *Olanna*, *Kainene*, *Aunt Ifeoka*, *Arize* in her Biafran narrative. Similarly in *Purple Hibiscus* as well the impact of coups is to be observed in *Aunty Ifeoma*. Adichie's women rehearse/exemplify the power of female narrative which in all possible way can bear the possibility to negotiate the politics of the nation. Adichie uses the female victimhood as a strategic exploration of male violence and the impact of Biafran war. Thus, the fourth chapter on women shows Adichie's underscoring of the individual assertion in African women as an imperative of social equality and individual voicing against domestic violence. The women in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* are what enable Adichie to counter "malady of Afro pessimism" (Gikandi, "Foreword" 9). Especially the endings in both the novels produces a sense of hope despite the apparent problematics to restore the family in the earlier state. It can be extrapolated that the women like *Kainene* or *Ifeoma* underpin Adichie's juxtaposition of Nigerian situation vis-à-vis the western imperialism.

Adichie's narrative offers one of the most dynamic representation of the European vs African relationship through her incorporation of *Richard* in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. The novel helps Adichie project "alternative narratives of African identity in search of a hermeneutics of redemption" (Gikandi, "Foreword" 9). Adichie uses family as a discursive strategy in both the novels to inscribe the imperatives of contemporary Nigerian ethos—social and politics that do not exclude western hegemonic role and imperialism, while being rooted to the Igbo family. Though Adichie embarks on the same plane of affirming the insides of the Africa, the presentation of the internal conflict is more devastatingly felt than the ubiquitous idea of asserting a tradition. The insides of the family enables a discursive formation to approach what is outside the nation—the third world politics from an insider's view. Family as an agency allows Adichie to schematize the African dichotomies that are mired in the stereotypical

production of Africa. Adichie uses the Igbo consciousness to insert a sense of African humanism into her configured relationships to subvert the European backed idea of Africa that sees the African nations in terms of one singular story aligned with the ideas of perpetual war, tribalism, poverty etc. having no play for humanity or positivity.

The representation of Igbo family in the select novels is imbricated with the postmodern strategy in its entailment of an evolving approach to the postcolonial conditions of Nigeria. In the third chapter I argued how Ugwu's metatext as a postmodern appropriation of Biafran past allows Adichie to position her work in a larger discursive field of Western production of knowledge and discursive violence of imperialism; and the produced postcolonial disavowal/reversal of them by the metatext.

Though Adichie focusses on the political particularities of Nigeria, the universalism of African narratorial purpose does surface in the assertion of Pan-Africanism in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and through the dynamic nature of Igbo traditionalities in *Purple Hibiscus*. In this context Adichie is no different than other African writers whose works mediate between the affirmation of African past, in terms of colonial impact and the politically confusing present of struggling nations. But what marks Adichie's radicalism in her approach is the use of Igbo family and in particular the appropriation of women space. Her works are all women centred narratives, though it does allow us little provision to see any discriminated narratorial play on the male characters, her female characters emerge as in a more socially and emotionally underpinned position where they act as focalizers of both social and political dynamics. They serve Adichie's textual strategy to counter the view that Africa is place of continuous wars with no scope to incorporate the positive aspects of it. Tejumola Olaniyan notes that:

“Politics” or the “political” as such does not and cannot exhaust the meanings of Africa. There are other areas worthy of investigation and they need not be “obviously political” to be considered relevant. (Olaniyan 642)

Adichie's use of family as an agency is informed by such a context, which is why this study also explored how Adichie through sexual underpinning of the text and various typologies of relationships within family approaches the national discourse. The third chapter also explored how Adichie inverts the colonized/colonizer relationship and problematizes the sense of homogeneity, through Richard-Kainene's love and Ugwu's book. The study foregrounded Adichie's focalization of familial issues, her value of humanizing tenor in the narrative. In the chapter about women, that is why I talked about how Adichie incorporates the functions of female spaces—their intimacies, talks of sex and their men/husband. The exploitation of female voices surface in Adichie's presentation of Biafran violence—where her focus is mainly the female voices. Sometimes both the victimized and the impact of deaths and violence are concentrated on the female characters. The study has shown how Adichie's presentation of the Igbo family appropriates, if not essentializes the Igbo singularity as an approach to the multidimensional postcolonial narration of Nigerian politics vis-à-vis the global ones. The family for Adichie is a space allowing a play with the possibilities of producing textual meanings that is mired in the sites of many current debates in African literature and the reproduction of the postcoloniality in its ongoing decolonizing practices.

What I started with in the dissertation is the typology of relationships and the resultant changes made by modernity and decolonizing processes in Nigeria; and the study reveals how the register of the same focalized through an Igbo family lends to Adichie's works a multidimensionality in its constructing meaningful referents that does not confine itself to the critique of obnoxious relationship of Africa and the European intervention alone, rather bears a testimony to the possibilities of narrating the Nigerian modernity through an Igbo family that can move beyond the immediacy of European conditioning of an African text. In an age of globalization Adichie perceives the Igbo family as a discursive formation to negotiate with the sites of individual/communal; private/political and national/transnational. Adichie's accentuation of the African ethos in its increasing vulnerabilities to Western media and

sociological production of it, affirms a surviving ability in the portrayals of individual voices within the family. To explore the cultural and political dynamics—be it transitional Igbo family or the conception of violence—Adichie values individuals over the community; the subjective and emotional understanding of violence over the objective ones. The interiorizing of subjective voices in the family is what enables Adichie’s narrative to traverse the multidimensional space of African society. The study has thus attempted to map the nuances in Adichie’s projection of African postcoloniality through her perceived possibilities in the agency of family and subjective understanding of violence.

Note:

1. Consult Adichie's TED Talk video, titled "The Danger of a Single Story" where she talks about the undermining of possibilities in a single story about African people and society as often endorsed in Western production of Africa which for her, "robes people of dignity". Her speech encapsulates the story she lives as an African which is not housed in Western books.

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Annexure:

Annexure: I

Certificate of Paper Presentation in Seminar



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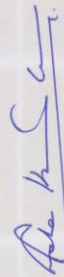
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Certificate

This is to certify that Jaydweep Rabha
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Chinamanda Ngozi Adichie's Half of a Yellow Sun

in the National Seminar on Text, Context & Interpretation organized by the Department of
English, Gauhati University, on 24-25 January, 2018.



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