UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

IS CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE A READING OF POSTCOLONIAL THEORY? A RE-READING OF PURPLE HIBISCUS AND AMERICANAH

EVELYN EWURADJOA BARTELS

2020

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

IS CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE A READING OF POSTCOLONIAL THEORY? A RE-READING OF PURPLE HIBISCUS AND AMERICANAH

BY

EVELYN EWURADJOA BARTELS

Thesis submitted to the Centre for African and International Studies of the Faculty of Arts, College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in African Studies

OCTOBER 2020

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature…… Date……

Name…….

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby acknowledge that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised by the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature…… Date…….

Name……

ABSTRACT

The study examines two of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel – *Purple Hibiscus and Americanah* within the context of postcolonial theory. The overall research purpose stressed on whether or not the two works (*Purple Hibiscus and Americanah*) are readings of postcolonial theory. This was because, Adichie herself, through her comments seems to reject the postcolonial theory. However, researchers and other academician argue that her novels fall within the purview of postcolonial theory. Therefore, the study sought to assess, how her works support or differ from the postcolonial theory. Additionally, the study examine how Adichie's feminism stance and TED talks are opposed to postcolonial theory The study, adopted the interpretivists approach where the content of Adichie's works were qualitatively analysed in comparison with postcolonial theory. The findings from re-reading of her works revealed that, Adichie does not pursue a postcolonial theoretical objective but one of women emancipation and gender parity. Furthermore, concerning Adichies' stance on feminism, the study revealed that the historical rifts between postcolonialism and (liberal) feminism gives rise to gender blindness of postcolonialism due to its unfettered anti-colonial focus and lack of attention to internal injustices. Adichie therefore believes that postcolonialism's suspicion of feminism implicate it in the activities of imperialism; hence Adichie's aversion to the postcolonial theory gains meaning. To help create clarity the study recommended that further studies should examine the inherent stylistic devices used in the *Purple Hibiscus and Americanah.*

KEY WORDS

Postcolonial theory

Postcolonialism

‘’The danger of a single story’’

Cystallisation of social thought

Feminism

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Asempasah Rogers for his encouragement, immeasurable guidance and constructive criticisms which have made this work a success. My sincere appreciation also goes to my brothers, Prof. Samuel Fiifi Bartels, Mr. Emmanuel Ebo Bartels and sisters, Adriana Narkwa-Anderson and Esther Bartels, as well as Mr. Matthew Alidzah, Mr Frederick Narkwa-Anderson, Dessouza Seraphim Mensah, Michael Korsah, Isaac Arhin, Ekua Ansah and all the staff of the Centre for African and International Studies whose names could not be mentioned. I thank you all for your concern, love and support towards me that have motivated me to complete this thesis.

To my mother (Mrs. Beatrice Evelyn Bartels) and my siblings, I am very much aware of the support and dedication you expressed towards me in the course of writing my thesis. I am most grateful for the roles you all have played in my life. God bless you all.

DEDICATION

To my beloved father of blessed memory, Mr. Joshua Daniel Bartels and my supportive mother, Mrs. Beatrice Evelyn Bartels.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, postcolonialism has gained traction in critical discourses within the humanities and has become the unit of analysis that cut-across diverse disciplinary fields. Postcolonial theory is an evolution of philosophical and cultural theories which examine the colonial past aiming to remedy the consequences of colonialism which still show in the current conditions of African societies in the postcolonial era (Yohannes, 2012). The term postcolonial literature has thus become a descriptive term for most of African Literature which is seen as addressing concerns arising from the colonial past from the unique standpoint of the African.

However, postcolonial theory has been critiqued for its undue focus on colonialism, a level of focus which seems to suggest colonialism as the most important episode in indigenous histories. Ghana's prolific writer, Ama Atta Aidoo, has cast doubt over the theory referring to it as "fiction". She notes that in terms of describing the situation of Africa, 'postcolonial' is not only just a fiction, but it is "a cover-up of a dangerous period in our people's lives" (Chachage, 2018, p. 45). Adichie, also a prolific writer, (sometimes classified as feminist), and the focus of this dissertation, by a comment made on postcolonial theory has, suggestively, distanced herself from the theory, thus bringing into question the postcolonial interpretation that has been given to her novels (Anyokwu, 2011; Ukande, 2016). The historical spat between postcolonialism and feminism that nurtures the schisms between both theories invite us to take a closer look into Adichie's texts within the context of her comments on postcolonial theory.

Background to the Study

In an interview with French Journalist, Caroline Broue at "*The Night of Ideas*" event which was themed "*Power to the Imagination*" Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the renowned and award winning third generation African author, upon a question from an audience who sought her opinion on postcolonial theory during a question and answer session, passed the following comment which has in part, given impetus to this study: "Postcolonial theory? I don't know what it means. I think it's something that professors made up because they needed to get jobs" (Adichie cited in Kiunguyu, 2018, p. 118)

Understandably, her comments generated controversy on some social media platforms, attracting commentary from academics, journalists, ardent postcolonial theorists as well as others who have expressed interest in her work. Although some have dismissed it simply as a quip, the influence of, and the connotations behind Adichie's works would mean that such a comment on postcolonial theory which has, according to Chachage (2018), been "the cornerstone of literary criticism in various contemporary comparative English Literature and even African Studies", does not get erased simply by calling it a quip. This is even more so when postcolonial theory has been applied to Adichie's own works (Ukande, 2016, p. 67) as an analytical tool. Indeed, Kiunguyu (2018, p. 77) advances that Adichie's comments which "insinuated" that postcolonial theory was "frivolous" amounts to "proving herself fallible" (Ukande, 2016. p. 47).

Shaija Patel (2018), the Kenyan poet and author of *Migritude*, on Twitter raised issues with the comments by Adichie while reiterating the significance of postcolonial theory. Patel (2018) mentions that the comments by Adichie

are'ironic', considering she is the "beneficiary of the space-clearing labour of generations of postcolonial theorists" (Kiunguyu, 2018, p. 55). In one of her tweets cited by Kiunguyu (2018), she writes:

> When you're a global thought leader whose every eminently quotable clap back makes headlines, but you erase whole bodies of African knowledge and African feminism outside your field, what Africa are you defending? A market? A brand? Kiunguyu (2018, p. 68)

The tweet by Patel (2018) brings to question the perceived moral responsibility on African authors to be defenders of the continent against negative narratives in the West. Adichie has on varied platforms, however, challenged these misconceptions and misrepresentations of the continent, clamping down on what she has famously termed the 'single story' (Adichie, 2009, p. 33). It is perhaps this background of Adichie that makes her comments on postcolonial theory problematic to some. Grace Musila, an Associate Professor at Stellenbosch University, joining the conversation, posits that Adichie was perhaps being humorous (Ogunyankin, 2019). However, she points out that "… humour is rarely innocent. Humour is to aggression what a half-slip is to a transparent skirt. It lends aggression decorum. Adichie's quip about postcolonial theory is revealing about her low regard for academics" (Musila, 2018, p. 22). She thus goes ahead to mount a defense of postcolonial theory.

On the other hand, Chachage (2018), faults Adichie's critics for trying to impose on her a label (that of a postcolonial theorist) when she, clearly, has rejected that labelling. He writes: "Such a totalizing imposition of an otherwise 'post-totalizing' theory is, quite frankly, beyond irony" (Chachage, 2018, p. 40).

Finding problems with the theory himself, he defends Adichie's position and challenges the claims of postcolonial theory.

As mentioned earlier, the comments of Adichie have sparked controversy largely because of the perceived moral responsibility a writer is deemed to possess. Edward Said (1993) touches on how novels become tools of power and were, for instance, used in the colonial and imperial enterprise of Western colonialism. He argues that stories "become the method colonised people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history" (p. xii). Accordingly, this bestows moral responsibility on the shoulder of the African writer to represent the African people and culture as a response to the rampant stereotypical representations of Africa that the West holds (Harth, 2012; Michira, 2002; Palmberg, 2001) and on the back of Western colonisation of the continent. Ogunyankin (2019) indicated that postcolonial theory has been solicited as a means of challenging these negative narratives that breed inequalities. Musila (2018) who felt Adichie's comments undermined efforts of postcolonial theorists responds thus: "if we are to dismantle the inequalities that limit the possibilities of art and ideas from the postcolonial world, the lesson is clear: we should all embrace postcolonial thought." Musila (2018, p. 33)

do Espirito Santo (2016) has pointed out that postcolonial theory tries to"revise historical representations of former colonies in order to understand their present situation and possibly develop their cultural identity"(p.1) To him, it is a criticism that attempts to deconstruct a Western vision of postcolonial nations aiming to show its prejudice. He stresses that postcolonial theory aids colonised people to own their stories (do Espirito Santo, 2016). What postcolonial literature does is to allow people in postcolonial era to recreate

themselves and own their own stories. African literature has been examined from the standpoint of postcolonial and Adichie's work has particularly been so considered (Ukande, 2016) and used as a postcolonial tool for discussions and analysis. What Adichie's comments does therefore, is to call to question the basis of such analysis. It puts into purview the many criticisms that postcolonial theory has generated over the years and thus calls for a rereading of her works to consider if they undergird her comments. The question posed therefore is whether Adichie's work(s) transcend postcolonial framing within which it has been analyzed by researchers and enthusiasts like. Ogunyankin (2019)

Considering that Adichie has always stood as a feminist, the postcolonial lens that is adopted in examining her novels require further scrutiny when put against the historical tensions between postcolonialism and feminism. Put into broader and proper perspectives, postcolonial theory has held (liberal) feminism in suspicion and has implicated it in the business of Empire that is Western imperialism. Gandhi (1998) in Chapter Five under the sub heading "Postcolonialism and Feminism" reviews comprehensively the literature that expose the historical rift between the two theories. While it shows postcolonialism's aversion to liberal feminism, it also lends credence to why a writer like Adichie who normally writes on feminism would raise doubts about postcolonial theory.

It has been argued that Adichie's quest to challenge what she has described as the "danger of the single story" (Adichie, 2009, p. 44) is propelled by postcolonial theory she disregards (Kiunguyu, 2018; Musila, 2018). Villanova (2018, p. 86) points out that "Adichie's idea of re-telling the single story is also indebted to postcolonial writers' approach to the Western canon:

appropriation and rewriting of European genres through parody, pastiche, or personal ideology". Ogunyankin (2019) has mentioned that postcolonial theory is the force dismantling the single story Adichie speaks of. For those who consider the art of writing and storytelling forms of theorisation from which ideas are develop and knowledge enhanced (Erasga 2010).

Adichie's dismissal of postcolonial theory bespeaks of a dilemma between her works and postcolonial theory. Musila (2018) writing further about her agreement with the assertion that creative works can be tools of theorisation, indicates that to her, Adichie's writing as in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* are examples of theorisation. Here, theorisation refers to the use of theories for developing knowledge and, or contrasting existing ideas on a phenomenon (Boehmer, 2017). If this is so, the question this study posits is, (1) how different is postcolonial theory from the theorisation that the works of Adichie put forth? Is Adichie's re-telling of the single story the theoretical scope undergirding her works and if it is, does it not/ does it derive impetus from postcolonial theory? (2) Is she by her works and the influence of her comments on postcolonial theory pushing us to reconsider diverse ways of conceptualizing African literature besides the postcolonial theoretical narrative?

The controversy that Adichie's comment on postcolonial theory generated has stirred-up the need for a rereading of her works to consider them against postcolonial theory and the criticisms of same. This criticism is important to do considering that Adichie's work has been the subject of postcolonial theoretical analysis prior to her comments. In light of the recent commentaries from the author, is it still prudent to view her works from a

postcolonial frame or is there a different analytic scope by which they could be examined?

Statement of Problem

This dissertation argues that though postcolonial theory provides an ambit that aids to dismantle what Adichie frames as the single story, her works – particularly the two in focus for this study – *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*, also suggest a theorising of their own. It contends that Adichie's TED talks (2009; [2012, 2014]) provide the theoretical inkling and remits that undergird her novels which transcend the criticisms of postcolonial theory and thus cannot be unarguably labelled as postcolonial.

There seems to be a dilemma between Adichie's comments and the ethos of her works. On one hand, she says she does not know what postcolonial theory means and that it is an invention. On the other hand, a critical reading of her works has pointed to seeming suggestions of a theoretical underpinning of the postcolonial or its espousing (Ukande, 2016). More so, in the way she frames it, Adichie's popular "The danger of a single story" talk looks theoretically laced. Her comments, therefore, should not be taken on the bare face of it, neither should it be brushed aside. While Adichie's works have generated critical commentary, the implications of her dismissal of postcolonial theory for a reading of her novels have engendered little focus. There is the need, therefore, to juxtapose those comments alongside her works and more critically, pursue an analysis of the theory and the undertones her works reflect to consider if they pursue a common goal or if Adichie's works point to a different/ new trend. This study thus seeks to breach the perceived chasm through an analysis of two of her works – *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*.

Additionally, though postcolonial theory mobilizes against external imperialism, that is, Western colonialism, it does little to deal with similar injustices prevailing within the postcolony itself. For instance, the struggle for gender parity and the struggle against machoistic masculinities or intoxicating patriarchy, something that Adichie stands for, hardly finds space within the postcolonial theoretical fray

Purpose of the Study

This research puts in context the comments of Adichie on postcolonial theory. In relation to her feminist position the study examines *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah* to establish the extent Adichie transcends postcolonial theory. The study underscores the contributions of Adichie to literary theory.

Research Objectives

The following objectives were formulated to guide the study in achieving its stated purpose. These are to

1. Examine the extent to which Adichie's works (*Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*) support postcolonial theory.
2. Explore the relationship between Adichie's TED talks and postcolonial theory.
3. Assess the extent to which Adichie's feminist stance is theoretically opposed to postcolonial theory.
4. Examine how the *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah* suggest ways of confronting colonialism

Research Questions

On the basis of Adiche's comments on postcolonial theory and her works, this dissertation answers the following questions:

1. To what extent do Adichie's works (*Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*) support postcolonial theory.?
2. What is the relationship between Adichie's TED talks and postcolonial theory?
3. How is Adichie's feminist stance, theoretically opposed to postcolonial theory
4. How do *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah* suggest ways of confronting colonialism?

Method of Study

The present study adopted the interpretivism approach through a qualitative analysis of Adichie's novels – *Purple Hibiscus*, her first novel and *Americanah*. This approach was adopted because the study sought to reexamine Adichie's texts as postcolonial theory using two of Adichie's novels – *Purple Hibiscus*, her first novel and *Americanah*, her most recent novel. To achieve the stated objectives, the content or text in the two novels were examined in conjunction with related literature. These texts became the fundamental reference points to the examination of the claims that this dissertation makes. The conclusions arrived at, therefore, flow out of a critical reading of the two novels and through an examination of literary elements of setting, characterisation, tone, mood and other general styles of narration, towards this end, I read both novels twice as well as did select reading of critical portions in the course of writing the dissertation. I first did a cursory reading of both primary texts to get a general overview of the issues therein while taking a mental note of the plot structure, narrative progression, main characters and other relevant issues. My second full reading of both texts was more critical and

detailed. I marked relevant sections of the text that relate to the issues that concern this dissertation for easy identification and further took relevant notes for reflection and recollection. These noted areas were further categorised under specific thematic concerns.

Additionally, this study takes the position that Adichie's TED talks – "The Danger of a Single Story" (Adichie, 2009) and *We Should All Be Feminists* (Adichie, 2014) – are analytical frameworks that provide the ideation and philosophical stance of Adichie which influenced her novels. I therefore viewed the videos of these TED talks via YouTube and read the transcriptions in detail taking note of thematic areas and also mapped them to specific issues in the novels. I further did a textual and contextual analysis of these key thematic areas by listing the issues expressed in the TED encounters and marching them to how they are played out in the events of the novels to show the link between the TED talks and the novels; Adichie's thought processes and the thematic areas of the novels. I considered more specifically the attitude, words and behaviour of her major female characters. In writing, I relied on extensive quoting from the novels in illustrating of my argument

This research also relied on secondary sources, especially, on readings constituting and bordering on postcolonial theory and its criticisms in seeking a comprehensive understanding of the issues and in mapping out a conceptual framework to analyse the topic. These secondary sources included both published and unpublished works – books, journal articles, publications, newspaper articles, and unpublished master's and doctorate degree theses from multiple universities relating to the subject matter.

The use of materials from the sourced from the internet was a major source of secondary material which allowed me, therefore, to access online libraries and other publications that were on online databases. To obtain a more accurate understanding of secondary sources I relied on to make the argument rendered in this dissertation, I used the diversity in the secondary sources to help provide context to the arguments rendered and to triangulate the information gathered from diverse sources.

I made use of direct quotations from both texts in my analysis. This was to show evidence about knowledge of the texts and to foreground the empiricism of the study and also paraphrased narrations from both novels in support of the arguments made. In giving meaning to the comments that Adichie makes concerning postcolonial theory effectively distancing herself from it, and considering that Adichie has openly pledged support to feminism, this dissertation particularly notes the historical schisms between these two theories and analyse them in relation to Adichie's comments and the novels to contextualise the issues discussed. The analyses done, therefore, include considerations of the literary and stylistic perspectives as well as a interdisciplinary approach in which I subject the novels to feminist and postcolonial theoretical critiques.

Justification for Selecting the Novels

This study expressly relies on *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah* as primary texts for two main reasons. Firstly, both texts have different settings and are differently themed. While *Purple Hibiscus* is set in a military governed Nigeria and the issues in it are first-person-perspective narration related to domestic violence and gender injustices, *Americanah* is largely diasporic in

settings – Nigeria, America, and the UK and features issues chiefly about race and partly about gender concerns with a complex narrative structure that involves several cases of analepses and shifts in setting and focalisations. It adopts a third person narrative voice that however sometimes switches to other points of view, giving voice to both male and female characters in different socio-cultural scenarios. These differences give room for context and time variations in examining the issues at stake. For instance, it gives a broader perspective on gender disparity concerns at different times and in different settings. Secondly, both texts collectively draw attention to numerous gender and race injustices thus making it an appropriate fit in dealing with the postcolonial and feminist concerns. Both texts have been selected to allow for a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical banter that will make for good literary criticism.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a multidisciplinary theoretical approach which is postcolonial theory. Typically, the proponents of the theory examine the ways in which writers from colonized countries attempt to articulate and even celebrate their cultural identities and reclaim them from the colonizers McEwan, 2018). They also examine ways in which the literature of the colonial powers is used to justify colonialism through the perpetuation of images of the colonized as inferior. However, attempts at coming up with a single definition of postcolonial theory have proved controversial, and some writers have strongly critiqued the whole concept. It heavily relies on postcolonialism which seems most appropriate as it examines if Adichie is a reading of postcolonial theory. Yohannes (2012) states that like many other cultural theories,

postcolonial theory has proved very useful for the study of literature. The study also turns towards feminism in its analysis especially with Adichie declaring herself a feminist (Young, 2016). Feminism, according to Sadek (2014), describes the movement for the equality among both males and females in terms of the socio-political and economic spheres of life. An examination of Adichie's stance on postcolonial theory through her book is in consonance with as aspect of postcolonial theory which deals with resistance. This is because postcolonial theory is also built around the concept of resistance. Resistance as subversion, or opposition, or mimicry -- but with the haunting problem that resistance always inscribes the resisted into the texture of the resisting: it is a two-edged sword. As well, the concept of resistance carries with it or can carry with it ideas about human freedom, liberty, identity, individuality, etc., which ideas may not have been held, or held in the same way, in the colonized culture's view of humankind (Jazeel, 2019). Drawing from the works of Adichie, it could be observed that Adichie seeks to oppose the tenets of postcolonial theory by focusing on independence of both males and female. In Adichie's seeming opposition to postcolonial theory, she glides to feminism. Using both theories serve to counter check and counter balance the analysis of Adichie's selected works.

Scope of Study

The study limits itself to the analysis of only two novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, namely *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*. This is because in these two novels, Adichie provides the reader with an opportunity to relates family lives of individuals to postcolonial theory. It examines these texts in relation to Adichie's position on postcolonial theory vis-à-vis her stance on

feminism. It does so in relation to the literature that speaks to the disagreement and near antagonism between postcolonialism and feminism in making a determination if they espouse a postcolonial theoretical agenda. The study also considers Adichie's TED talks as a theoretical scope; Adichie's thought process which informs the nature of her novels. It therefore juxtaposes the TED talks with the two novels selected in checking the level of influence. The study will pursue a textual analysis and the styles that give impetus to its theorisation.

Significance of the Study

Considering the controversy that her comments generated and the arguments there in, this study adds significantly to the ensuing debates and the discussion surrounding the controversy, from her comments as well as content of her book that is, the significance of postcolonial theory or otherwise towards understanding of Adichie's works and by extension African literature. The study also shows very significantly, the points of convergence and the points of divergence between postcolonial theory and a varied form of theorising in Adichie's work. This is important considering that postcolonial theory has come under some criticisms and the author has distanced herself from it. The study brings a sense of closure, to some extent, over the controversy generated due to her comments on postcolonial theory through proper contextualization of same while at the same time encourage the expansion of the debate as it probes for a nuanced understanding of Adichie's works beside its reading as postcolonial theorisation. This study significantly shows the contributions of Adichie towards a broader and a more nuanced perspective of postcolonial theory or its criticisms.

The study contributes to ensuing debates within the context of postcolonial theory on how literary works by Adichie opens on how concepts of nationality and identity may be difficult to conceive or convey in the cultural traditions of people. Additionally, the findings from the study highlight how Adiche's works could be used as springboard to understanding postcolonial theory and how it relates to independent minded people like Adiche.

Synopsis of Purple Hibiscus

Purple Hibiscus is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's first novel published in 2003. The novel talks about Papa Eugene's family, which is made up of his wife, Beatrice Achike who is fondly called Mama; Kambili, his daughter and Chukwuka, a son who is also nicknamed Jaja. Papa Eugene is a wealthy businessman, who owns several factories, properties and the *Standard* newspaper, a paper that acts as a critic against the corrupt military government in power at the time in Nigeria. Papa Eugene's sister, Aunty Ifeoma is widowed and has two sons, Obiora and Chima, and a daughter, Amaka. The story of *Purple Hibiscus* points to a setting where *a* recent military coup has occurred, which leads to violence, lack of basic amenities and money, and public strikes.

The story from the *Purple Hibiscus* illustrates the experiences of the central character, Kambili Achike and her path to maturity amidst circumstances that lead to the degeneration of her family. Her family is marked by the violence and extreme religious zeal of Papa Eugene who dominates and maltreats his wife Beatrice, and Kambili, and Jaja for living below his religious standards. Beatrice endures the beatings and maltreatment from Eugene. Her swollen eye and the scar she has on her forehead all proved her suffering. Under such treatment, the children withdraw and grow quiet. Kambili and her brother stay

for a while at the house of Ifeoma, their paternal aunt where they experience a different atmosphere. Although Aunty Ifeoma is a Catholic like Eugene, her home is liberal much unlike Eugene's home.

In Aunty Ifeoma's home the children begin to find their voice and learn to speak their minds. Kambili gets interested or falls in love with Father Amadi, a young priest. Kambili begins to grow out of her withdrawn self and Jaja becomes more defiant. The family continues towards a breaking point till finally, the family fed up with Kambili' violence, Beatrice poisons her husband, Eugene. Jaja, her son, confesses that it was he rather that committed the offense and is thus sentenced to suffer time in prison. The story, however, ends on a hopeful note, in that, in the end, Aunty Ifeoma and her children relocate to the U.S. to work as a lecturer after being unfairly dismissed from her Lecturer job in Nigeria. Kambili, now 18, is more confident. A somewhat hardened Jaja is about to be released from prison. Their mother, Beatrice, having been mentally troubled for a while now gradually seems to be improving.

Synopsis of *Americanah*

Americanah, the latest novel from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, talks on issues like love, race, skin color and identity. The novel chronicles the experiences of Ifemelu, a woman who deals with a number of issues and challenges in her life after leaving Nigeria, her home country, to attend university in the United States. In Nigeria, Ifemelu and Obinze as teenage secondary school students had fallen in love while in a Lagos secondary school. Their love affair is however interrupted when Ifemelu moves to America for further studies on a scholarship. While abroad, Ifemelu begins to understand the difference in her being "black". She deals with issues of racism and racial

differentiation and goes through some unfulfilling jobs and relationships. She eventually breaks off contact with Obinze, her childhood sweetheart. Obinze tries to join her in America but he is denied a visa. He eventually goes to the UK where he becomes an illegal immigrant after the expiration of his visa.

Ifemelu through the help of Ginika, her friend, is employed as a babysitter for the wealthy Kimberly, a woman with whom Ifemelu later becomes friends. Ifemelu begins to date Curts, Kimberly's cousin who is a wealthy handsome Whiteman who eventually helps Ifemelu to get employed and obtain a green card. Later when the two break up, Ifemelu dates Blaine, a Black American University Lecturer. Years later, Obinze is repatriated to Nigeria but gets connected with Chief, a "Big man" in Nigeria, and becomes a successful real estate dealer. He marries the beautiful Kosi with whom he gives birth to a daughter. Ifemelu after over a decade in America quits her blog and moves back to Nigeria where she re-establishes contact with Obinze, after a long separation, and they become lovers again. Obinze after struggling with his thoughts finally takes the decision to divorce his wife, Kosi, to be with Ifemelu.

Profile of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

On 15 September 1977, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born to her parents in Nigeria, specifically in Enugu. She grew up however in Nsukka, in a house that Chinua Achebe is reported to have previously lived in. Her father was a statistics professor and her mother the first female registrar at the University of Nigeria. Adichie thus attended secondary school affiliated to the University. Afterwards, she went to the University of Nigeria where she read Medicine and Pharmacy for over a year. Around this same time, she served as the editor of a magazine, *The Compass*, which was published under the

leadership of Catholic students who read Medicine in the University. Like the protagonist of *Americanah*, Chimamanda also leaves Nigeria as a 19 year old on a scholarship to read a communication course at Drexel University, Philadelphia.

In 1997, Adichie published a collection of poems named *Decisions* and in 1998, she wrote her first play, *For love of Biafra*. In 2003, Adichie wrote her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, which got shortlisted for the Orange Fiction Prize in 2004 and won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for the Best First Book in 2005. She later published *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), a novel which dealt with the Biafran war in Nigeria. The novel won the Orange Prize for Fiction and the Ansfield-Wolf Book Award and was later adapted and released as a film in 2014. In 2009 again, Adichie published some collected short stories in *The Thing around Your Neck*, and in 2013, she published her latest novel, *Americanah*, which touches on the subject of race in America but also on love and migration. In 2013, the novel won Adichie the Chicago Tribune Heartland Prize as well as the National Book Critics Circle Award.

Other notable non-fiction works from Ngozi Adichie include her viral TEDx talk, "The Danger of a Single Story", and her essay titled *We Should All Be Feminists* which was given at the occasion of the TEDxEuston conference in December 2012. Interestingly, Beyoncé in her 2013 song *Flawless* sampled some lines of Adichie's talk, *we should all be feminists*. Adichie also recently in 2017 wrote *Dear Ijeawale*, or *A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions.*

Organisation of Work

The dissertation is in five (5) chapters. Chapter one is an introduction of the entire study and presents the focus for all subsequent chapters. It comprises

the background and rationale of the study. It presents the problem and research questions the study attempts to deal with, as well as the significance of the study, the method of study, a synopsis of both novels, a brief profile of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the organization of the work. The second chapter covers a review of literature related to the present discussion to provide an appropriate context for this work by pointing out the knowledge gaps in previous research and show how this study proposes to contribute to the growth of that knowledge. The third chapter of this dissertation discusses the art of writing as theorising and how Adichie's TED Talks, the "Danger of the single story" and *We should all be feminists,* provide a theorising scope for the two primary texts. The fourth Chapter then presents the analysis of the two novels while the fifth or final chapter concludes the dissertation by summarizing the research findings and making recommendations that could prove useful for other research in future.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews related literature and provides an appropriate context for this work by detailing what already pertains on the subject matter and pointing out the knowledge gaps in the previous researches and show how this study proposes to contribute to the growth of that knowledge. The literature on postcolonialism and its criticism, and previous works on Adichie's novels are reviewed.

Interrogating the Postcolonial Discourse

Questions on the postcolonial discourse perforates this dissertation on all fronts. Therefore, addressing the trajectory of postcolonialism, and the theory that it inspires is not only integral to understanding this research but more so, expedient to laying the basis for the argument that this dissertation makes. In this part of the literature review, the discussions and debates that undergird postcolonialism are considered.

Postcolonial theory, in its current form, was developed late in the twentieth century Boehmer, (2017). There is, however, little unanimity with regards to its onset. Yohannes (2012) reports that it emerged about a decade after majority of previously colonised countries had gained political independence from imperial powers through freedom movements; a comprehensive process of decolonisation of the terrains under imperial rule swept across the world at the closing stages of World War II, starting from the independence of India in 1947. It is towards this fight for liberation from imperialism that the postcolonial criticism was birthed. Boehmer, (2017) will,

therefore, date the actual rise of postcolonial thinking back to the very inception of anticolonial resistances. He argues that the theory springs from both the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist resistances as well as from the philosophy and other knowledge systems from the West (Boehmer, 2017). Habib (2005) makes the point that the struggles of many nations within the tricontinent, that is, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and in other places for freedom from the rule of the colonial masters, both during and after, gave rise to Postcolonial literature and criticism. Noting some of the works that marked this period, Habib, (2005) cites, as "seminal texts of postcolonialism" (Habib, 2005, p. 37), *Discours sur le colonialism* (Aimé Césaire), *Black Skin, White Masks* (Frantz Fanon) as well as *Things Fall Apart* (Chinua Achebe), *The Pleasures of Exile* (George Lamming) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (Frantz Fanon).

These works were critical of the colonial regime. Young (2001), on the other hand, believes the origin of postcolonial theory can be traced to the launch of the *Tricontinental* journal by the Havan Tricontinental of 1966, which ended up calling into being "the first global alliance of the peoples of the three continents against imperialism" (p.5). *Orientalism* by Edward Said in 1978 cannot escape mentioning with regard to its influence on postcolonialism. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) and Gayatri Spivak's *the Post-Colonial Critic* (1990), as well as other seminal works by Homi Bhabha, Abdul Jan Mohamed, Kwame Anthony Appiah and Benita Parry are readings that mark the postcolonial territory. Though the particular period for its beginnings is quite unclear, the point that it rose amidst the colonial struggle is evident (Jazeel, 2019).

Habib (2005, p. 137) correctly, thus, characterizes Postcolonialism as a complex phenomenon ingrained in the history of imperialism which treads the corridors of not only military domination but permeates economic and cultural spheres – political ideals, cultural values and language conditions. Young (2001) argues that postcolonialism springs from the struggles that sought to resist colonialism. Young (2001) posits that the marked features typically allied with postcolonialism which include "diaspora, transnational migration and internationalism" (Young 2001:2) have associations with the anticolonial era. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989) assign the term postcolonialism "to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day," on account of the "continuity of preoccupations" between the colonial and postcolonial periods (p.2). Ashcroft et al. (1989) seem to be suggesting the continuing process of imperialism. Indeed, Habib (2005) makes the point that colonial struggle is hardly dead and continues in other parts of the world. In fact, though the official occupation of previously colonised territories by the colonial administration has been achieved, the argument that these nations are largely, overtly and covertly in some cases, being controlled by the West is very rife.

Postcolonialism is an academic critique of the whole episode of colonization (Jazeel, 2019). Yohannes (2012, p. 6) makes the point that postcolonial theory is projected as "an organized body of inquiry into the colonial past" aimed at critically deconstructing the legacies of western imperialism by revisiting and reflecting upon, among other things, its ambivalence and other discourses it generated, and chart a way forward. The

postcolonial criticism, as Young (2001) contends, intends to "reexamine colonial histories from the unique perspective of the colonized" (p. 11).

Evidently, with regard to those it suggests to speak for, it concerns itself with those colonisation and imperialism defines as "the secondary, the minor and the subaltern peoples" (Yohannes, 2012:8). The Postcolonial theoretical discourse thrives very much on the experience of domination, or what Gandhi (1998) notes as a 'historical condition' which he termed 'postcoloniality' which is the condition of having been colonised. The features of this condition are a history which involves all forms of domination by the colonial powers as expressed through discourse and culture. Within such a purview then, it may suggest like Ahmad (1996) argues, that the condition of postcoloniality is applicable to 'non-white, not-Europe'. It has been argued by other mainstream proponents of the postcolonial, however, that such a view could amount to over simplifying the argument noting that the condition of postcoloniality denotes greater complexity, advancing that the symptoms can only be accentuated and dealt with through a close scrutiny of the past (Yohannes, 2012:8-9). Young (2001) and Habib (2005) lend credence to this nuance in their argument.

Offering support to Young's (2001) argument that the phenomenon of colonialism played out within the imperial nations themselves as well as their quests to expand beyond their territories of influence (pp.8-9) since workers were exploited in Western countries just as in the areas under imperial subjugation, with colonialism just benefiting a small fraction of the population of imperial nations, Habib (2005) makes the argument that one should not make the danger of regarding any people, either the west or the third world continents as homogeneous. Habib makes the point that any opposition to this fact fails to

notice that divisions and oppressions in terms of gender as well as class are at work in the West as well as in colonised domains. Habib (2005) thus fits the discourse about the postcolonial within a broader and a more encompassing spectrum; positing that it includes discourses that confront and defy the main streams of Western discourse.

Habib makes the point that the approaches to the postcolonial projects vary relative to the variations in constituencies, however, there is a sense of shared relatedness based on "multiculturalism" when it hinges on the critiquing and reassessment of the literary and cultural canon within Western institutions (Habib, 2005, p.139).

Postcolonialism, Gandhi (1998) has argued deals with the condition of postcoloniality. Gandhi (1998) contends that postcoloniality is a situation that is brought about when a formerly colonized people suppress or forget the memory of the colonial experience. Referring to the suppression as a "self-willed historical amnesia" (p.7), Gandhi argues that it was a mechanism the colonised used in checking the persistence of mental colonisation after independence. Those who study the post colonial are thus those who according to Yohannes (2012:6) have taken a "step away from this amnesiac generation" and are btter positioned to bring out the causes of the "persisting marginalized states of colonised people and similarly, holds the key to recovery".

Generally, postcolonial theory has been considered as providing a voice for non-European or non-Western people to declare their humanness following years and years of been dominated and subjugated (Yohannes, 2012). What this mean is that through prolonged colonization by Europeans nations on some other countries (including Africa), some of these colonized countries lost their

culture. Postcolonial theory there presents the situation where cultural identity of colonized nations could be advocated for, and enhanced (Jazeel, 2019). The tendency to misconstrue that the singular appeal in Postcolonial thinking is merely to be a counter force by victims of colonization seems glaring, but Yohannes (2012, p 10) notes that it is also preoccupied with transforming the society and crating positive change. The reading from Mbembe (1992) for instance, seems to characterize the postcolonial as a creative force, a tool to somewhat recalibrate and necessarily redefine humanity in a new light, denoting postcolonial theory as "humanity-in-the making" According to Mbembe(1992), this humanity will only eventually show up in the absence of colonial symbols that represent "the inhuman and of racial difference" (p. 2). Mbembe (1992) argues that "postcolonial thinking, the critique of European humanism and universalism, is not an end in itself" (p. 8).

Postcolonial thinking has as its purpose, the creating of a space attempting create re-identification of dominated or marginalised people as "fellow−creature" which will simultaneously create equality without any one race being heralded above others. Mbembe by this seems to be advocating for the postcolonial to be seen beyond its present bound which is a necessary process to achieving the objective of sweeping away racial difference.

Postcolonial theory has indeed been integral in renewing matters of colony and empire over the years. That notwithstanding, it is not peculiar in its academic interest which borders on imperialism. Habib (2005) avers that localized critiques of imperialist powers as espoused from the standpoint of Marxism also provide the foundational framework of postcolonial thoughts. Gandhi (1998), likewise, admits that the postcolonial discourse owes a

genealogical debt to Marxist traditions though it rarely acknowledges this especially since its engagement with the Marxist theory is overtly hostile and also has linkages with poststructuralism. Gandhi (1998) argues that Edward Said's concept of *Orientalism* which is linked to the origin story of postcolonial theory "emerged out of a distinctly poststructuralist climate" (p.25). Making this argument, Gandhi (1998) argues that postcolonialism derives much of what it constitutes from poststructuralism and postmodernism and their interplay with Marxism Marxism. These linkages are perceived by some as troubling as they blur understanding and the scope of postcolonial theory, thus, creating ambiguities in its relevance and purpose.

From Gandhi (1998) and Habib (2005) view on postcolonial theory, it could be argued that postcolonialism as derived from postcolonial theory in its proper sense is yet to be realised. To achieve the proper meaning of postcolonialism from the Marxist perspective, it is important for colonized states to fully weaned themselves off imperialism. This is because, the continues existence of imperialism or neocolonialism defeats the original tenets of postcolonial theory.

Challenges and Criticisms with the Postcolonial Discourse

The postcolonial discourse has come under some barrage of criticisms and has been discounted in some circles. Chennells (1999) takes note of the controversiality of postcolonialism as a theoretical category, admitting that since its formulation, it has been massively challenged with some conceiving its theoretical value as "unprofitable" and "dangerous" (p.109). Perhaps, the most popular criticism against the term is what some consider as an inordinate focus on colonialism; that postcolonialism highlights the colonial episode over

other episodes in the histories of indigenous people. The idea that it makes colonialism the single most important episode in African history is considered problematic. Indeed, as McClintock (1992) argues, the extent of the spotlight put on colonialism makes that remnant of European history the center of world history. The danger in this, as Chennells (1999:109) points out, is that considering the culture of a particular people as postcolonial makes the imperial center's culture the most potent determining factor in the life and culture of that group of people. Even at the same time as a theory of resistance to colonialism is coming together, Lyotard (1994) warns against privileging of metropolitan culture. He explains that colonial powers do not manifests in the same way across different cultural settings. Thus, looking for a unified colonial theory must be done while we consider that colonial resistances or resistance to imperial power materializes always "at the level of the local" Lyotard (1994. p. 31). Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993) will, for instance, note the perpetuating danger this carries when he considers how literature from the tricontinent is marginally viewed or seen as being outside the main category of literature by universities in America. He notes that often attention given to them must be legitimized using pacifying titles like "ethnic studies" and "minority discourses" (p.10). What wa Thiong'o suggests then is that there is an almost apologetic stance that must always accompany academic enquiry into literature from the third world

Ashcroft (2002) has, however, countered the suggestions that postcolonialism expressly focuses on colonialism's power, noting that the preoccupied of postcolonialism is not only with the after effects of colonialism but actually starts from the beginning of colonialism. Chennells (1999) gives further detail about what Ashcroft's objection to the criticism against

postcolonialism means. Firstly, the focus of postcolonialism is "with the worlds which colonialism in its multiple manifestations, confused, disfigured and distorted, reconfigured and finally transformed" (Chennells, 1999:110). Chennells notes that on the issue of colonialism covers the ways in which societies bore and adapted to the burden of the colonial which has been largely "demeaning and impoverishing" (Chennells, 1999:110). Chennells (1999) makes the claim the continents of Africa and Asia for instance, fashioned out of the colonial language itself, discourses of resistance against the imperial power (p.110). Secondly, Ashcroft's claim that "post-colonialism *exists"* is used as a basis why the postcolonial discourse is even more imperative. The argument rendered in this regard is that the control by the West of the Third World economically and culturally, is evident in multiple facets of African lives. Postcolonial theory therefore, addresses the fact that we live with syncretism (Chennells, 1999:110).

Another criticism leveled against postcolonial theory is the ambiguity about the publics it addresses. In the preface of his book *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Gandhi questions the constituency of postcolonialism, that is, the "cultural audience for whom its theoretical disquisitions are most meaningful" (p.ix). Adducing an answer to this, Gandhi writes:

> In my reading of this field, there is little doubt that in its current mood postcolonial theory principally addresses the needs of the Western academy. It attempts to reform the intellectual and epistemological exclusions of this academy, and enables non-Western critics located in the

> West to present their cultural inheritance as knowledge (Gandhi, 1998, p. 9).

The question which emerges from here is that if its concentration is on the non-West in the West, how does it, therefore, address the non-West at home if it does at all? Although Gandhi reckons that the project is worthwhile, she points out that postcolonialism fails to recognize that the knowledge produced is deemed as 'marginal' by the Western academy but same is held as "central and foundational in the non-West" (p. 9). In spite of the efforts of the postcolonial discourse, knowledge produced by the non-West is still peripheral. Gandhi points out this inadequacy of postcolonialism; that is, its inability to deal quite frontally, with the image of the non-Western world as the 'other'. She writes:

> Despite its good intentions, then, postcolonialism continues to render non-Western knowledge and culture as 'other' in relation to the normative 'self' of Western epistemology and rationality. (pp. ix-x)

This view, perhaps, speaks to the difficulty some have, thus registering their dissatisfaction and consequently, disassociation with postcolonial theory; its self-insufficiency with the global south. One may likely argue that postcolonial theory seems to give a false sense of transcending the barriers that limit the tricontinent of which Africa is a part, while those barriers still remain. It has not shaded off the idea of Africa and other parts of the global south as the quintessential 'Other' of the West except that the Western academy offers it a space that makes it presume to be, thus dangerously assuming a false sense of triumph. To anchor this point, Yohannes (2012) cites the criticisms of Gayatri Spivak, a postcolonial theorist herself, who makes the point that postcolonialism

in attempting to understand the third world from lens of the first world could effectively be reasserting the fact that the first world is at the center of history and knowledge while the third world is on the periphery, marginalized. Spivak avers that such subaltern studies as spring from the West at the 'center' must not be considered as benevolent or sympathetic towards the third world but they must be seen as they really are – as attempts by the West to objectify and further marginalize the third world (Gayatri Spivak cited in Yohannes, 2012:13).

There is no gainsaying the fact that the subject of postcolonialism along with the theory it inspires, postcolonial theory, is quite a contested field and hugely controversial. Gandhi (1998) describes it as a battleground for different disciplines and theories (p.3). This is partly due to how diffuse and nebulous the term is and its seeming lack of 'originary moment' or a coherent methodology, (Gandhi 1998: viii). In part as well, its nebulousness has courted some of the criticisms that it has received. Ahmad (1996) argues that postcoloniality is overly homogenizing as it is used to label all societies that have ever had a history of been colonized. He contends that it is not being subject to colonisation that makes one 'postcolonial' but what qualifies one to be postcolonial is one's subjugation to any form of imperialist hegemony. Though it has allowed for intricate interdisciplinary dialogue within the humanities, its intellectual history, according to Gandhi, straps between Marxism and poststructuralism/postmodernism, theories which are mutually antagonistic, which muddles the waters in terms of uniformity in their approach resulting, therefore, in the lack of consensus relating to content, scope and its relevance (1998: viii; 3).

However, the idea that this lack of consensus devalues its objectives does not exactly hold much ground, some may contend. Gandhi (1998) argues that Postcolonialism is an effort to take on or grapple with the historical condition of postcoloniality. Notwithstanding the debate it woops up, Gandhi (1998) avers that in judging its value one must consider its ability ‘’to conceptualise the complex condition which attends the aftermath of colonial occupation’’ (p.4). Within that light, postcolonialism becomes a resistance, theoretically, “to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath” dedicated to “revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past” (Gandhi, 1998: 4). This exposes a sour relationship between coloniser and colonised that is mutually antagonistic, and it is the unfolding of these episodes that one could begin to disambiguate ‘’the ambivalent prehistory of the postcolonial condition’’ (Gandhi, 1998: 4).

The postcolonial project takes upon itself a daunting task of coming to terms with the colonial past on one hand and creating a transition on the other which is challenging. Gandhi’s (1998) argues that there is an onus for postcolonialism to both recognize its linkages with the colonial antecedent as well as an imperative to chart a new path away from the colonial past. She makes the point thus:

> Thus, its [*postcoloniality’s*] actual moment of arrival— into independence— is predicated upon its ability to successfully imagine and execute a decisive departure from the colonial past. (Gandhi, 1998:6: emphasis added)

This postcolonial aim of discontinuity with the colonial past, according to Gandhi, is susceptible to its very clouded past which is unresolved. This leads

Gandhi (1998) to describe *postcoloniality* as "a condition troubled by the consequences of a self-willed historical amnesia" while observing, therefore, that ''the theoretical value of *postcolonialism* should be seen in "its ability to elaborate the forgotten memories of this condition''(p. 7). Gandhi (1998) suggests again that its focus on the colonial aftermath demands from it "an ameliorative and therapeutic theory which is responsive to the task of remembering and recalling the colonial past" (p. 8).

Gandhi, therefore, compares the value of postcolonial theory to Lyotard's (1992:93) description of psychoanalytic procedure of *anamnesis*, arguing that like Lyotard describes, the theory could complicate current problems to the extent that insignificant details are linked with past situations to expose hidden meanings. To the extent that postcolonial theory parades this line, Gandhi avers that it takes up the task of historical and psychological 'recovery' (p.8). Gandhi thus posits:

> If its scholarly task inheres in the carefully researched retrieval of historical detail, it has an equally compelling political obligation to assist the subjects of postcoloniality to live with the gaps and fissures of their condition, and thereby learn to proceed with self-understanding. (Gandhi, 1998:8)

Hallward (2001) in another important critic of postcolonial theory. His book, *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing between the Singular and the Specific* (2001) approaches the postcolonial discourse from a completely unique viewpoint, and descends quite heavily on most postcolonial projects challenging their usefulness. Focusing rather closely at four major postcolonial writers –

Mohammed Did, Edward Glissant, Charles Johnson and Severo Sarduy – who often are neglected, he mounts a subtle but still scathing criticism against the direction in which postcolonial studies and discourse is heading, accusing current postcolonial thought as possessing an "apparent resistance to distinction and classification" (p. xi).

Hallward (2001) defines the singular as that which is made up of itself, and which expresses its own self. The singular "creates the medium of its existence" and "is not specific to external criteria or frames of reference" (Hallward, 2001, p.3). The singular as Hallward describes it is obsessed with placelessness, and deterritorialization, that is, the rejection of territory and its effect on literary production. While Hallward considers the singular individual in terms of a "creator-God" (Hallward, 2001, p.1) who transcends all relations, a specific individual, according to Hallward, is "one that exists as part of a relationship to an environment and to others" (p.1). The specific, thus, implies an attention to a history and a context. Basically then, the specific is "relational" while the singular is "non-relational".

Surveying the tenets of postcolonial theory as espoused by proponents like Mbembe, Bhabha, Glissant and Wilson Harris, Hallward (2001) argue that, though these tenets were differently formulated, the arguments that all these proponents put forward reveals a move towards a definition of the postcolonial as that which transcends specific locations and has no relations with any other entity or history. To Hallward, these authors among others "move beyond the colonial divide towards an absolute mechanism of transcendence and such "absolutely postcolonial orientation tends towards the (ultimately unattainable) pole of a totally singular configuration of reality." (p.xviii). He argues that

postcolonial is mostly singular or singularizing, pointing out that a lot of what presently is considered specific in postcolonial discourse should rather be taken to be "singular or singularizing" (Hallward, 2001, p. 1). Being highly critical of most postcolonial writings, Hallward makes the point that despite being seemingly pre-occupied with "an interest in difference and hybridity or the other", "their singular conception of reality effectively absorbs or undermines the whole dimension of relations-with-others" (p. 2).

Doubting the current state of most postcolonial works to make any meaningful impact, Hallward avers that the ability to interpret or represent reality is lost in the singular. Consequently, a postcolonial text that cannot represent the true state of the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser does not have much use for anybody, he points out. Such a text, according to him, would refer to nothing at all and cannot capture the voice and articulations of, for example, the oppressed black African, Cuban or Caribbean.

In pitting the singular and the specific against each other, he opines that without an active and direct tension between these two distinct and extreme terms, it is impossible to derive a useful theory that is applicable to the realities of the world. While it is good that postcolonial critics "harp on about the dangers of postcolonial theory being a globalizing international force that wipes out local differences and concerns" (p.39), that alone is not enough. There must also be equal vigilance and appreciation of the real dangers of over-contextualization. In effect, the singular and the specific, which are two extreme poles are both impractical and thus undesirable as theoretical frameworks. None of deterritorialization and over-contextualization is a good option.

Hallward proposes a redefinition of the postcolonial as one which, though specific to various colonial contexts and histories, is not specified by them. The point "that everything exists as specific to a situation does not mean that its significance and complexity is (*entirely*) reducible (*and limited*) to a function of …that situation (Hallward, 2001:39 emphasis added). Thus, for Hallward (2001), while postcolonial literature needs not exclude the history of colonialism, it should also not be limited by the intricacies of colonialism.

Analysis of the criticisms of postcolonial theory is relevant to the current study since, the theory is juxtaposed with Adichie's literary works. Therefore, to examine the extent to which Adichie's works support the theory, it is important to assess how critics view the theory so that any analysis with of postcolonial theory with Adichie's works could be put into proper perspective. The general propositions of postcolonial theory in comparison with critical assessment from other researchers (Hallward, 2001) illustrates that, it does not cover enough on postcolonialism for which Adichie's work comes to fill.

The issues raised against the theory are definitive and calls to question its aptness as a formidable frame. This study takes these criticisms into consideration in analyzing Adichie's texts as a postcolonial reading or otherwise.

Postcolonial Literature and African Literature

Chinua Achebe has been one of the key figures who has contributed tremendously to postcolonial theory in Africa. His novels like *Things Fall Apart* and *Anthills of the Savannah* chronicle, among other things, present the history and identity of Africa from the perspective of an African. In contrast to postcolonial authors like Joseph Conrad, in his Heart of Darkness, who write

from the lens of the colonizer, Chinua Achebe writes from the lens of the colonized (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2003). In his stories, Achebe strives to make Africans know that "their past with all its imperfections was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans, acting on God's behalf, delivered them" (Achebe, 1975, p. 45). As a teacher of sorts, he thus teaches the history of Africa in response to Eurocentric assumptions that Africa has no history.

Chinua Achebe also highlights and condemns the traumatic effects of colonialism on Africa. His works represent thus what Laishram (2010) and Tiffin (1987) will call a "counter discourse" (p. 75) to Western hegemony. Achebe's Things Fall Apart novel is a critique of the "narratives of colonialist writers" Laishram (2010, p. 60) who try to dehumanize Africans by showing them as a people who have no culture, history and are primitive (Osei-Nyame, 1999, p.149). He has also been quick to critique the works of other writers on the subject of Africa and its representations. Particularly, Achebe criticizes Joseph Conrad's novel, *Heart of Darkness*. To Achebe (1977), Conrad's book, which is heralded by many as a groundbreaking critique of imperialism and colonialism, is largely racist in its negative portrayal of Africa.

Achebe has also inspired many other postcolonial writers and theorists. It is public knowledge for example that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie claims in her 2009 TED talk to have been inspired by reading Achebe. Usman (2012) tags works like Achebe's writings as "fictionalized theory" and "theorised fiction" (p. 249). These refer to writings or stories that can be used to theorize. Achebe's writings. as stories that can theorize, have been used to demonstrate, explain postcolonial theory, suggests new dimensions to postcolonial theory (Beer,

2016; Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2003). Through his writing, Achebe is thus a key postcolonial voice in Africa and around the world.

The implication is that since Achebe is widely known with his postcolonial writings and haven influence Adichie's writing, it is prudent to assess how Adichie's writings also falls within the context of postcolonial theory.

The relationship between postcolonial literature and African literature is a symbiotic one. In recent decades, postcolonial theory has become the preferred prism of analysis for most African literary texts (Chachage, 2018). Illustratively, therefore, the term postcolonial literature has become a descriptive term for most of African literature which is seen as addressing concerns arising from the aftermath of colonialism from the African's perspective. For instance, Achebe's first work, *Things Fall Apart*, which paints a picture of a named African society before it was rudely interrupted by the whites, is a direct response to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* which presented the Africa as sinister continent full of gloom. With postcolonial discourse seen as giving voice to the colonised to take control of their own narrative, by attempting to examine Eurocentric narratives about third world nations in order to expose their "prejudice" (do Espirito Santo, 2016:2), African literature seems to be shouldering that task of narrative shaping well enough. To Jha (2016), "Postcolonial literature is an attempt of the colonised to reshape and restructure their clan identity once again and relive their customs and traditions in their narratives" (p.5).

Indeed, Ato Quayson (2000) has argued that through literature, writers provoke a reassessment of and a challenge to the authority that colonial powers seem to have. This dissertation, for instance, puts two of Adichie's texts under study within the scope of questioning held assumptions, beliefs and things thought to be established status quos. Quayson views the postcolonial more as a process and not a period of time, thus preferring the term "postcolonializing" which he describes it as a "process of a culture coming into being" (2000: 9). On postcolonial literature, Bonnycastle (2002) posits that the core of postcolonial writing is "to create a living culture which responds to the current reality facing the native population" (p. 210).

Jha (2016, p.6) also explains that a reader of a postcolonial text should encounter a reinforced "negated" past and identity, but should at the same time encounter such things that allow him to have "a hope for the future". James (2010) agrees with Quayson (2000) and Lyotard (1979) that understanding the context of knowledge production is critical to bringing clarity on the authority of colonial knowledge. They note that Nigerian postcolonial writers have aimed their work at this by tackling the space within which colonial knowledges replaced indigenous ones (p.7). The trilogy of Chinua Achebe for instance – *Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease* and *The Arrow of God* presents a closer look at Igbo traditions in an interplay within the pre-colonial and colonial era, conveying the idea that Nigeria as a thriving society became the victims of the dominating colonisers (Jha, 2016:5).

The Characteristics of Postcolonial Literature

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989) view postcolonial literatures as those that reject, and appropriate the canon of Western literature. They define

the postcolonial as "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1989: 2). McLeod (2000:32) make the point that "postcolonial in part involves the challenge to colonial ways of knowing, 'writing back' in opposition to such views". According to Ashcroft et. al. (1989), however, early postcolonial literatures were unable to fully express their anti-imperialistic stance. This was because they were encumbered by their own dependence on Western support in terms of discourse and material to publish (Ashcroft et. al., 1989).

Yohannes (2012), however, contends that current 'postcolonial' writers are still dependent on the west in terms of discourse and material assistance to publish. Ashcroft et.al (1989) outline the definite methods through which English is appropriated in writings by postcolonial authors. Ashcroftet.al. contend that it is this appropriation of language in the bid to as the goal of the abrogation of colonial power through literature that makes modern postcolonial literature stand out. One wonders, however, if the language debate in African literature has lived up to this. How Adichie plays the language game in her works will be considered in this study (Jha 2016).

Marx (2004) points out that postcolonial literature brings back ancient conventions and customs in order to write against canonical works; secondly, they also assess critically canonical works and may even rewrite some of them as is seen in the rewriting of *Heart of Darkness;* and thirdly, that postcolonial literatures attempt to knock down western canon as it is perceived while recreating a novel multicultural canon that better represents the wide scope of what can be considered as Literature. Marx (2004, p. 85) contends that "instead

of opposition or revising it from outside, postcolonial literature increasingly defines a new sort of canon from an established position inside its boundaries."

The concerns of African writers or the issues that have engaged the subjects of their writing have shifted over time. Issues that engaged the first generation of African writers, the likes of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ama Ataa Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, Mongo Beti and many more who Jha (2016) notes "have produced literary works which present an overview of the condition of African people within and outside the milieu of their clan fraternity" (p.6), do not exactly strike the same chord with the current generation of African writers who are often located outside the continent. With reference to the works of third generation of African writers and the subjects of their writing, Lee (2014) writes that their writings may be set in Africa while at the same time chronicling experiences which refer to other cultures and settings outside Africa and which are recognizable by audiences from the West. Contrasting former generations of African authors with the current generation, Babatunde (2014) points out that the previous generation focused on specific themes like colonialism and dictatorship while the new generation writers do not have a concrete, unified style or set of pre-defined themes.

Adichie, who is part of the current group of African writers, adapts a conventional Western approach and English, the language of the coloniser to tell her stories. According to (do Espirito Santo, 2016:4), these represent two approaches Western colonisers employed dominate and establish legitimacy for the "'supposed European superiority'." Adichie's mastery over these creates a reverse of the status quo, creating a moment by which, as do Espirito (2016)

notes, "she takes ownership of them, as an outsider, and place her characters in the West to precisely criticize Western ignorance about the East (p. 4).

Previous Analysis of Adichie's Novels

Previous readings of Adichie, mainly before she made her famous and now controversial comments about her knowledge of postcolonial theory (Chachage, 2018), have analysed her works using the postcolonial theoretical frame (Krishnan, 2010; Ouma, 2007; Dawson & Larrivée, 2010; Anyokwu, 2011; Ukande, 2016). These have dwelt on specific aspects of her work, such as hybridity and language politics. Krishnan (2010) examined *Half of a Yellow Sun* and argues that, in line with what seems to be a feature of postcolonial literary works, the novel does not give a sense of closure which thus gives backing to "the instability and uncertainty of existence in the postcolony" today (Krishnan, 2010:189).

Krishnan (2010) argues that "by forcing the text to remain open and unsolvable, questions of history, identity and community asked in the text remain in a constant state of negotiation" (p.190) and "by refusing the narrative compulsion of closure and tidy endings, these narratives and their representation of individuals and conflicts highlight the importance of continued negotiation and interrogation necessary in the postcolonial condition" (p.194). Ouma (2007) examines symbolism in Adichie's text, *Purple Hibiscus*, and contends that the silence that permeates the home of Eugene is a demonstration of national silence in the postcolony. His contention is that Papa Eugene's family is an 'alternative site for discourse of marginality and can give a …critique of the post-colony' (Ouma, 2007: ii) and that the implied statement Adichie makes is: "if things fell apart in the traditional Igbo kingdom, … they still fall apart decades later in

post-colonial Nigeria" (p.10). While both of these works look at ways in which Adichie's works meet the postcolonial mark, they fail to consider ways by which her works transcend the postcolonial labeling, something implied in Adichie's quip or comments about the theory. It is this gap that this study fills.

Dawson and Larrivée's (2010) study touch on an issue that speaks partly to this work. Dealing with language politics, they aver that Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* goes beyond the confines of the postcolonial, evidenced through her employing of Nigerian English and Igbo words. They thus declare her "post-postcolonial". Anyokwu (2011) lends support to Dawson and Larrivée (2010). Noting the 'Igboization' of Nigerian Literature, he argues that "the Adichian aesthetics points the way to the future of literature in Africa" (Anyokwu, 2011, p. 80). Though these works allude to Adichie's work transcending the postcolonial frame, the predication of that transcendence is limited to her use of language in her works. What this study seeks to do is to propose further features in Adichie's work that goes beyond the postcolonial. Ukande (2016) examines postcolonial practices in *Purple Hibiscus* and pursues a textual analysis that considers the use of abrogation, appropriation, untranslated words, as well as Adichie's discussion of the idea of hybridity and affiliation. Ukande (2016) argues that the gamut of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is for culture and identity of the African to be respected by non-African.

In her 2015 study, Ibeku Ijeoma Ann argues that based on her writing in *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie novels belong to the category of liberal feminism. Per Ann (2015), Adichie presents a liberal African feminism which is considered as tolerant towards men, as well as a more radical feminism that when provoked involves the use of violence in order to gain freedom.

According to Ann (2015), Adichie presented Aunty Ifeoma as the ideal woman. In the beginning, Aunty Ifeoma is a foil to Mama. Adichie presents her as a radical feminist. Ibeku Ijeoma Ann notes that Ifeoma radically stands up for herself whereas Mama initially was liberal but later when she feels highly threatened after more violence from her husband and her second miscarriage, she goes radical and poisons Eugene, her husband.

Akpome (2017) is another study which considers Adichie's writings with a feminist lens. Akpome examines how Adichie constructs a feminist critique against the structures in societies that favour men and perpetrate the domination of men over women through the female protagonists in her novels, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007) and *Americanah* (2013). Akpome (2017) suggests that Adichie's novels are a welcome change from the "mainly masculinist perspectives on the idea of the postcolonial nation" propagated by the male writers who have in the past always dominated literary anti-colonial activism (p. 9854).

Villanova, (2018) also attempts an analysis of Chimamanda's *Americanah* in her "Deconstructing the 'single story': Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah". To Villanova, *Americanah* represents a reinterpretation of the Western Romance and Bildungsroman genre from a postcolonial and anti-patriarchal perspective.

Villanova, (2018) analyses the formative processes that Adichie uses to grow her characters. She notes that through the bildung of the female character (Ifemelu), Adichie reveals issues of resistance and empowerment of the female. According to Villanova, Adichie's feminist stance shows through her characters', particularly Ifemelu and Obinze, distinct ways of resist Nigerian

and Western patriarchal norms. Villanova explains that *Americanah* stands out as a female coming-of-age story because it is rather the female figure's growth that the novel is focused on. Villanova avers that this is an interesting subversion of the western Bildungsroman genre which usually focuses on the male.

Ifemelu as crafted by Adichie, "grows" to become a female who does not allow society to pressure her to conform to traditional gender roles and prescribed and "demanded by the Nigerian and American societies" (Villanova, 2018, p. 91). In the United States and back home in Nigeria, Ifemelu oscillates between adaptation and resistance to expectations. Obinze also finally, as his form of resistance, abandons his conservative wife and success to reunite with Ifemelu (2018, p. 95).

In all, Villanova's study puts a spotlight on fresh attempts by African writers to create strands of genres that speak specifically to the African condition and tries to resist Eurocentric traditions of literary writing.

Badmus (2019) also examines Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* alongside Lola Shoneyin's *the Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* as Bildungsroman. Through a comparative analysis, it outlines the ways in which Adichie and Shoneyin as novelists, create portraits of emerging Nigerian young women who struggle to define themselves and have a voice in a highly patriarchal African society. Badmus (2019) reveals that the two novelists represent the transformative processes that lead to the coming of age of the young female characters. Each book, through the writer's Bildungsroman, shows how the female grows to become African woman who, after discovering herself and the dominant social patriarchal norms of society, refuse to be limited by such gender roles and norms. The use of the Bildungsroma n in Adichie's book however follows a

path that makes them more in line with the African version of feminism which focuses on the complementary roles played by women as well as men in feminist movements and in the fight for women. Badmus (2019) cites Ogunyemi's concept of womanism as a more fitting variant of feminism for Africa, distinct from Western feminism. He notes that in *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, "female characters are not the only ones portrayed as being active agents of change, but men as well are presented as being promoters of female empowerment" (Badmus: 2019, p. 99). Badmus (2019) shows how the roles of Kambili and Jaja in *Purple Hibiscus* complement each other for the uplifting of the female and the feminist's cause.

Badmus (2019) concludes that the "Nigerian alternative of the Bildungsroman offers a model of resistance to women's subjugation by demonstrating that it is possible – whether successfully or unsuccessfully – to claim their rights and assert their position within society". Badmus (2019) study is similar to Isabella Villanova's work which also brings out the use of a distinct African variant of the Bildungsroman in Adichie's work.

In another study of Adichie's novels, Harsh (2017) asserts that the prejudice, social degeneration, tyranny, hatred and chauvinism that accompany patriarchy can be traced to religion. This paper, therefore, shows how Western religion as a by-product of Europe's colonial enterprise in Africa has impacted patriarchy in the fibre of society.

Harsh (2017) argues that, in *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie shows the effect of religion and religious dogmatism through the character of the "hypocritical, dictatorial and patriarchal" tendencies of Eugene (p. 106). Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus* is characterized as "an autocratic patriarch who compels his family

members to follow his faith and carry the identity of Roman Catholic (p. 109-110). To Eugene, God is "White like Father Benedict" since being white represents all things good and sacred to him, and he makes sure his family believes this same thing (Harsh, 2017, p. 105-106). He refuses to support Ifeoma who is his widowed sister with three children because he considers her blunt and laidback nature as offensive (Harsh, 2017, p. 104). Harsh (2017) thus sees Adichie's writing in *Purple Hibiscus* as one that illustrates the continuing effects of western religion which is associated to the colonial machinery of the West.

In another breadth, Olusola (2015) attempts to reveal the interconnectedness between Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). The study also sought to measure to what extent the assertion can be made that Adichie is Achebe's literary daughter can validly be made. In a comparative analysis, Olusola (2015) reveals that the Achebe and Adichie in their two novels share many similar linguistic and stylistic features, but they differ a little in terms of ideological stance, especially on the matter of the female gender. She explains that while Chinua Achebe deployed a patriarchy-enforcing outlook in *Anthills of the Savannah*, Adichie's writing in *Purple Hibiscus* is feminist and highlights women's resistance and rise.

Adichie's novels have also been noted to highlight with the challenges of racism, patriarchy and sexism Africans, especially women, while outside Africa, face. For instance, her novel, *Americanah,* offers a look into the lives of protagonists like Ifemelu and Obinze, Nigerian-born characters, who spend most of their time in the United States and the England respectively. Relying on

theoretical concepts like mimicry, difference and silence as espoused by Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, Onyango (2019) shows that in Adichie's writings is a portrait of how the African migrant negotiates a new identity through cross-cultural interactions. Onyango (2019) argues that in *Purple Hibiscus*, while Kambili and her brother do not leave the country, they were displaced when they leave their home to temporarily stay at their aunt's home due to a clash between their parents (p. 200). In *Americanah*, however Ifemelu and Obinze and others leave their country for various reasons and all face different facets of life as an African in the west, even in the postcolonial era.

Omotayo (2019) attempts to examine the relationship and dynamic between the use of global as well as local or African settings as is seen in Adichie's *Americanah*. She asserts that Adichie explores how the local situations and global realities affect the outlook of her stories. Omotayo (2019) posits that Adichie uses both global and local settings in *Americanah* instigates the construction and formation of new identities for her migrant African characters. Omotayo (2019) explains that character whose identities straddle both the local and global settings become "Afropolitan", a label, owed to Taiye Selasi"s concept of "Afropolitanism", which refers the contemporary black migrant who is not confined to the "dictates of the local environment where cultural norms hold sway" (p.19).

In a related study, Ori and Njoku (2020) conceptualizes this same "Afropolitanism" as a type of "African feminism that deals with the story of African women in the West trying to assume the status of world citizens to de-emphasize their origins" (p. 151). Ori and Njoku (2020) thus describe

afropolitan feminism as the "portrayal of African feminist characters born in the Diaspora or who have left the homeland to the imperial centre in search of a better life" as (p. 151). As the study shows, Ifemelu fits the description of "an afropolitan feminist". The study concludes that it is becoming trendier to have individuals now who exhibit both afropolitan tendencies while strongly advocating gender equality and women empowerment as feminists (Ori and Njoku (2020).

Omotayo (2019) reveals that in *Americanah*, the interplay between the local and global is seen in terms of characters and language. As she notes, the novel features characters of the local origin such as Ifemelu, Obinze, Aunty Uju and Emenike while showing global figures like Kimberly, Laura, Curt and Blaine. Omotayo notes that the Adichie casts the interplay between characters to show how African "inferiority" plays out in the new reality of the African migrant in the postcolonial era.

The interplay between the global and local locations as used in *Americanah* is also evident in Adichie's use of language. As Omotayo (2019) points out, the novel novels make use of Standard as well as Nigerian English, Pidgin and some Igbo expressions which may be explained or left as they are. This results in a hybrid text that captures both local and global tendencies that affect the African migrant.

Omotayo adds that due to the phenomenon of globalization, many new texts on Africa are on stories that happen sometimes in areas outside Africa. Due to her findings, Omotayo (2019) proposes that African literature should be redefined to take into consideration settings of stories that are not in Africa. She suggests that if a text pivots around African and issues related to them, it can

still be considered as African Literature, even if its setting is not locally placed on the African continent.

Ranjana Das Sarkhel's "*Many Stories Matter*": Narrations beyond the Boundaries of the "Postcolonial" in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Short Stories (2015)" article questions the need to focus on writing exclusively on the theme of colonization as if it should be the lone preoccupation of the postcolonial writer. Sarkhel (2015) suggests that it is not inappropriate to dwell on themes that may not necessarily only recount colonization but that effectively capture the changing state of affairs in the "post" colonial era.

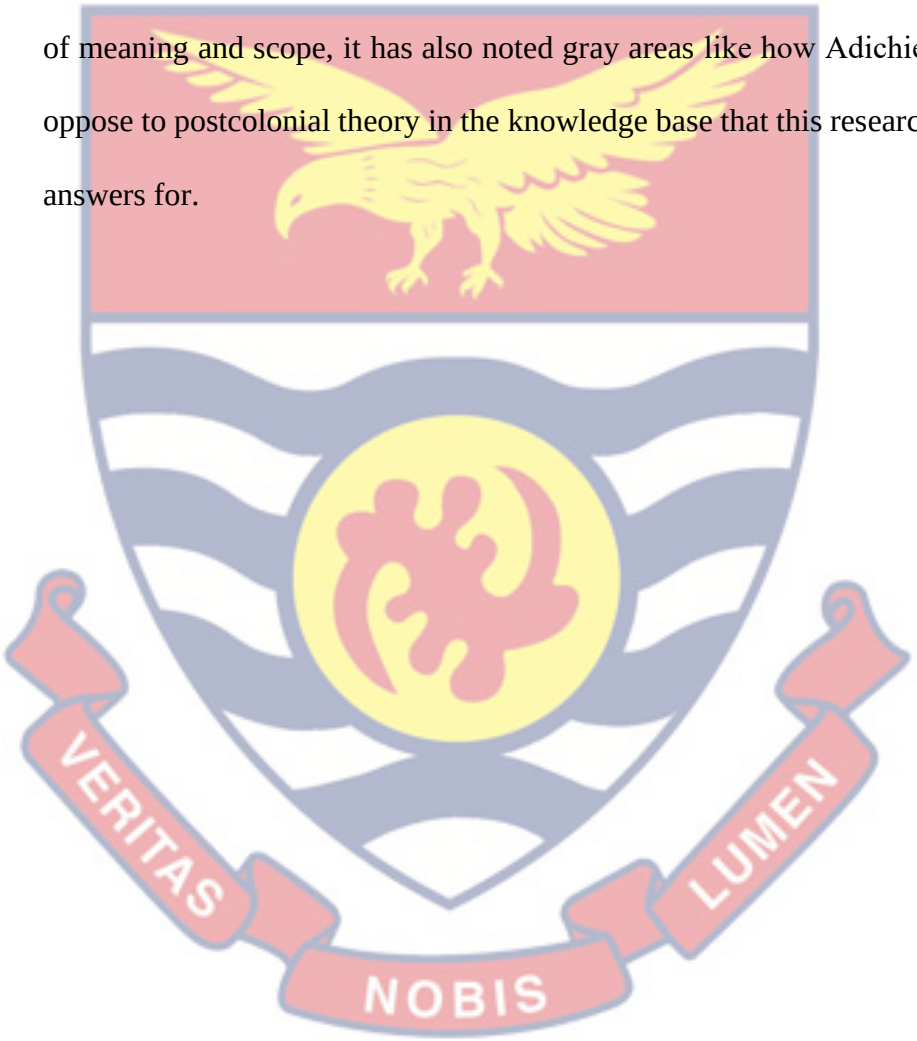
Sarkhel avers that Adichie dwells on themes that are beyond "the parameters of postcolonial theory" (p. 764). Adichie's stories, as Sarkhel notes, are centred on everyday themes that are not necessarily postcolonial in the traditional sense. According to him, Adichie through her stories describes Africa in a portrait honours African traditions "while recognising the demands of a cosmopolitan, international audience" (Sarkhel, p. 765). It is based on this that Sarkhel thus concludes that Adichie's works require a reading that goes beyond the current scope of postcolonial literature.

Of all the reviewed literature, it is Sarkhel (2015) that is most similar to the present study. He attempts to answer a question that the present study also seeks to answer: Does Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's writings transcend the postcolonial cannon? Unlike the study by Sarkhel (2015) which sought to answer this question based on Adichie's short stories, the present study will consider if her novels *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah* novels suggest a transcending of the postcolonial. Research works by other scholars like Omotayo (2019) and Homi et al (2019) have reasoned on Adichie's works from

the perspective of language and beliefs. However, the current study sought to juxtapose it with postcolonial theory

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed related literature on postcolonialism, postcolonial literature and the previous analyses of Adichie's works. While it lays the context for this dissertation in grounding the subject matter in respect of meaning and scope, it has also noted gray areas like how Adichie's work is oppose to postcolonial theory in the knowledge base that this research provides answers for.



CHAPTER THREE

THE ALTERNATIVE PRISM: ADICHIE AS A SOCIAL THINKER

Introduction

When Adichie made the comment – "Postcolonial theory? I don't know what it means. I think it's something that professors made up because they needed to get jobs" (Adichie cited in Kiunguyu, 2018) – it took others aback. However, Adichie's comments could be understood as an invitation to vary the lenses of interpretation and to vary the mode of looking at African literature and especially her work. This chapter of the dissertation argues for that alternative viewpoint. I rely on Adichie's TED talks – "The Danger of a Single Story" *(Adichie, 2009*) and *We Should All Be Feminists* (Adichie, 2014) as analytical frameworks to understand her novels; arguing that they provide the reasoning that inspires the texts *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah.* Adichie (2009; 2014), I argue, are critical magnifying lenses that illuminate Adichie's fictional worlds which reflect larger social events and practices.

This chapter anchors its argument on the standpoint that stories have epistemological value and that Adichie cultivates a sense of theorisation within her works that somewhat differ from the postcolonial theoretical framing. In stepping back from associating with postcolonial theory, therefore, Adichie allows her works to be examined in their own right rather than subsuming them under a contested label. This chapter also interrogates the ideations constructed by Adichie with regards to the issues of stereotypes and feminism both expressed in Adichie (2009; 2014) which provide impetus in articulating theoretical paradigms that account for the constructive power of her texts as instruments of understanding society.

Stories as Tools for Theorisations

Adichie's novels – *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah* – make critical social, cultural and political statements that question established societal protocols and challenge what is usually held to be the norm. They give affirmation to the epistemological character of stories and literary texts in general. Without seeking to romanticize the role such narratives play, their ability to revolutionize thinking must also not be underestimated. Said (1993) emphasizes this when he points out how novels became tools of power for the colonial and imperial project stating that "stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world, they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history" (p. xii). Stories reflect society; its culture and history and encapsulate achievements and shortcomings – both personal and corporate – becoming points of reference and reflection, thus, greatly impact thinking. They assume a penchant to assimilate desires and the ability to shape public discourses.

Young, (2016, p. 108) recounts that fiction represented a means of knowing oneself for the West during the 19th century. McEwan (2018) also contends that the novelists are involved in a political venture of sorts, as through their writing and portrayals, they bring "relations of power within the family, between the sexes, between classes" into a closer view (p. 177). Basically, this is what literature does and Adichie follows that same trajectory in her novels using it as a medium of instruction.

In literature and in stories specifically, fragments of experiences are woven coherently and meaningfully into a plot thus allowing both the reader and the story teller to "navigate the social world" (Jameson, 1984; Erasga, 2010:22-23). Storytelling, thus, to Erasga (2010), is a method of "narrative thinking" and "become poignant materials of and vehicles for sociological theorising" (p.23). The teller in this case becomes a shaper of opinions and worldviews.

Nelson (2018) points to the development of Narrative Theory and how it aids in adult learning noting that the link between narratives and human development only started to receive attention over the past few decades. Although McAdams (2008) traces it back to Freud's dream narratives, Jung's explanation of universal myths, Adler's examination of earliest memories, and Murray's exploration of autobiographical accounts, he posits that the explicit imagination of people as storytellers and their stories which need telling came later (Nelson, 2018, p. 2-3). McAdams proposed a "life-story model" of identity in which he suggested that young people should view their lives as "evolving stories that integrate the reconstructed past and the anticipated future in order to provide life with some semblance of unity and purpose" (p. 243). A reading of Adichie, a storyteller, evokes her constructive and reconstructive acumen; a deliberateness to tilt social thinking and understanding. In her TED Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009) which becomes a reflection of her thought process as a social thinker, she recognizes her role as a storyteller and her capacity to define the narrative that influences views and perceptions as well as breakdown stereotypes.

Mahmud (2018) views narratives as "a way of organizing, coping with, and even acting on the world" adding that "Stories carry power because they have the ability to convey truths," "represent experience and introduce alternative imaginaries" (p.617). Mahmud (2018, p. 617) argues that storytelling "gives voice to untapped reservoirs of memory". This connotes a process of (re)construction and (re)discovery which could unearth something new or something hitherto loat. Mahmud thus makes the point that:

> A story can touch what has never been touched; it can bring into relief what never come into the field of vision; and, it can oppose what never has been opposed. A story can be resistive, subversive and transformative, especially when it weaves a counter-narrative to settled understandings, interpretations and worldviews. This potential spawn the transformative political dimension of storytelling. (Mahmud, 2018:617-618)

Adichie's rendition of events in her novels align with Mahmud's views. Not only does she weave a counter-narrative about the positioning of women within the African worldview but recalibrates the place of men in it. She deflates the idea of the attested cultural superiority of men by for instance allowing her female characters like Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* to perform tasks that are traditionally reserved for men such in holding the funeral for her father, Papa-Nnukwu, when Eugene the male refuses to do so. She suggests by this counter narrative that the female is capable and the cultural handicaps put in her path unjustified. In their study of 40 digital community stories, Gregori-Signes and Alcantud-Diaz (2016) come to the conclusion that storytelling become tools for

the criticism of social welfare and socio-political issues and to explore social understandings of particular issues. Narratives are interrogative of the social and cultural to the extent that they are self-reflective processes (Riessman, 2008), a means of framing and situating the self and others in either mutual or private social practices (Bamberg, 1997: 90).

Stories are reflections of societies' experiences and power structures that exist therein. McAdams' work captures this view when he points out that:

> It is painfully clear that life stories echo gender and class constructions in society and reflect, in one way or another, prevailing patterns of hegemony in economic, political, and cultural contexts wherein human lives are situated. Power elites' privilege certain life stories over others. (McAdams, 2008, p. 247).

What Adichie does with her novels is therefore to construct a different narrative that challenges that which is preexisting, and offers a space to that which has been suppressed. Cihodariu (2012) notes that narratives are the social constructions of reality and products of our experiences and are "the only way through which we can express this experience and make it intelligible" (p.31). Bell (2003) rightly elevates stories to the ideological plane in that they represent specific social positions and power dynamics. Bell (2003) avers that they "reflect and reproduce existing social relations … communicate cultural assumptions and habits of thinking that transcend the individual and idiosyncratic … bridge between individual experience and systemic social patterns" (p. 4). Stories, therefore, have an implied motive (Bell, 2003:6) – be they hegemonic narratives of dominant powers or counter-narratives of people

on the margins – they are geared at specific interests. Adichie also uses her novels to pursue the interests of unpacking what she terms the "single story" and challenge the seemingly entrenched notions of the subordination of women as held particularly within Africa and outlines these in two of her TED talks.

African Literature as Social Thinking

Adebanwi's (2014) article "The writer as social thinker" foregrounds and underpins the argument rendered in this present chapter. The need to examine Adichie's novels in light of her social philosophical persuasions which is accentuated in the "*The danger of a single story*" and *We should all be feminists'* rests on the premise that the writer is a social thinker. One could say that Adichie's works corroborate postcolonial theory. This is especially because there are overlapping considerations/ features/ characteristics, between Adichie's works and postcolonial theory. However, the examination of Adichie in light of her own thinking offers that alternate viewpoint other than a postcolonial framing of her texts, especially proving that such thinking does not necessarily emanate from postcolonial theoretical foundations and considerations in light of her comments over same. Hughes (1958) has argued that both the social sciences and 'imaginative literature' have taken on the philosophical problems of knowledge acquisition and of understanding society and continue to adduce answers to complex questions of knowledge production and social life. Nonetheless, Adebanwi (2014) states that Africa is yet to make a connection between both in articulating African social thought. To such end, Adebanwi suggests that writing offers a means to renegotiate between the past, present and future by allowing for reflections that can reveal existing social reality while, at the same time, "creating new maps of existence through ideas

that not only generate, but also transcend existing possibilities and ways of apprehending those possibilities". (Adebanwi, 2014, p. 406-407)

Adebanwi (2014) notes that texts of African writers are not merely a mirror or mere reflection of social thought, but they contain instances where the literary writers engage with issues and produce knowledge as though they were social thinkers themselves. It is in this vein that I approach the work of Adichie and evaluate her opinion on postcolonial theory.

Rather than simply use Adichie as proof of the truth of postcolonial theory, this study takes a different tangent and opine that Adichie pursues a trajectory of her own made clear in her TED encounters, albeit its tenets may somewhat overlap and elide the features of postcolonial theory. I align with Boehmer, (2017) when he states that literature has in itself some "elements of social and political theory" (p.3). Diamond's (1989) as quoted in Ogunyankin, (2019) essay on "*Fiction as Political Thought*" stresses the epistemological value of literature, arguing that in specific contexts, a society fiction sheds greater light on "customs, conflicts, stresses, changes, and transformations than does all the formal scholarship of historians and social scientists" (p.435). Mbembe corroborates Diamond's assertion, disclosing that "From Sony Labou Tansi, for instance, I have learnt more about power than I could have from any political science treatise" (Mbembe and Oboe as cited in Adebanwi, 2014, p. 200).

Adebanwi (2014) rightly places contemporary African writers among the "finest social thinkers" on the continent. He mentions that theorizing and discussions African writers provoke is indispensable in any bid to comprehend the reality and position of the African in the world. As Diamond (1989)

establishes, these characteristics ground the novelist as a political philosopher. Abiola Irele cited in Young, (2016) indicates how value of African literature is in "the comprehensive testimony it offers of the turns and patterns of an unfolding drama of existence in which [Africans] have been and continue to be involved" (Irele, 1981, p. 1 emphasis is original).

Quayson (2003 p. 15) provides support for the need to 'embrace the ideological notion of using the literary as a means toward social enlightenment'. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2012) concerning the novel (*Fiction as Political Thought*) writes that it "gives a view of society from its contemplation of social life, reflecting it, mirror-like, but also reflecting upon it, simultaneously" (p.16). He vehemently contends that fiction writers were foundational in theorising the colonial situation in Africa. In making the argument, wa Thiong'o visits the etymology of the word theory in Greek which is *theoria* which denotes 'a view' or 'contemplation'. wa Thiong'o (2012) points out that fiction is a way of writing theory, and concludes that 'fiction is the original poor theory' (p.15). This view of wa Thiong'o, Adebanwi (2014) notes, adumbrates the "original dynamics of modern fiction in Africa both in its contemporary stories and its retrospective attempts to tell the stories of the African distant past" (Adebanwi, 2014, p.411). For Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, the novel mirrors the creation of the world from chaos as it "helps organise and make sense of the chaos of history, social experience, and personal inner lives. (wa Thiong'o, 2012, p. 16–17)

Adebanwi (2014) stresses that thoughts that writers bring out in their stories have an influence on the society. To him, the "(Literary)-Social thought", which denotes the aligning of literary and social sciences, can become a "material

force" (p.411). The novels of Adichie that this dissertation examines are reflexive of this.

The Counter Claims

The ability of stories to make epistemological claims has been challenged creating a tension between the disciplines of Sociology and Literature with some considering theorising a sole domain of the former. The argument against seeing fiction as theorisation has been that it does not relate to reality. Erasga (2010) counters this objection pointing out that fiction draws from the core of human experience with the events rearranged to achieve a stylistic effect. He contends that "what keeps the story from being used as legitimate materials for formal theorizing is stylistic expression, rather than epistemological rigor and content" (Erasga, 2010. P 29). Erasga makes the point that the value of narrative fiction (poetry, novels among others) should not simply be measured based on their impact on readers' social behavior "but how their portrayal of human experiences becomes "a metaphor of the human social condition" (Erasga, 2010, p. 29). Erasga challenges the sole claim of sociology as epistemological authority about the social and thus avers:

> I appreciate the power of literature to *transubstantiate* situated social experiences of both the teller and the listeners; and in the process, to lend sociological truths to such literary expressions. (Erasga, 2010, p. 22)

To Erasga (2010), literature has a part to play in contributing immensely to social thought which is not a reserve for only sociologists. What Adichie does, therefore, with her novels is to provoke thinking and alter interpretations. Like Erasga expresses, she challenges the status quo and reimagines the social

structure in order to elicit change. Adebanwi (2014) ignores the differences between sociology and literature and contends that both sociologists and poets alike are motivated by similar epistemological ethos which is to understand people in society albeit by varied empirical tools: the sociologists using paradigms, theories, conceptual frameworks while the poets use literary pieces such as novels, essays and poems. By this she places theories and literary works on the same epistemological pedestal pointing out that the work of poetry increases the understanding of social relations. Adebanwi (2014) for instance, calls the "English Romantic poets" "theorists of society" (p. 17).

Cihodariu (2012) holds the view that narratives are too subjective and should not be seen as scientific data on which assumptions or hypotheses about social life are based. Cihodariu argues that the interpretation of our social construction of reality and experiences undercuts the excessive subjectivity of the narrative. This is however, a slanted view of narratives. Cihodariu's argument plugs out the context within which narratives thrive thus ignoring the point that what a story symbolizes extends beyond itself (Rothenbeuhler, 1989:26) especially when one considers their role in bringing about change and stability in the social order (Coonfield, 2009, p.181; Cottle, 2004; Turner, 1973).

Gergen and Gergen (1988) for instance have observed that the narrative accomplishment concerns itself with a self which is not individually singular but it focuses on relations to the world and others who view, interpret and re-interpret the narrative in divergent and non-stereotypical ways. They firmly note that stories require "social environment" for intelligibility or a "cultural locus" as (Denzin, 2004, p.18) puts it, which gives significance to the narratives

and render them intelligible. Coonfield (2009) has noted that varied disciplines within the social sciences consider “narrative as both a phenomenon worthy of sustained and critical scholarly attention and as an epistemological alternative to "scientistic" explanations of social life” (p.177).

African Literature as a Knowledge Source on Women – the Fictional Reality

African literature holds a wealth of knowledge about the past and present realities of African women as well as their struggles with patriarchal notions (Anyidoho et al., 2016) and other mechanisms that inhibit the exploration of their maximum potential across time, their capabilities and abilities and how they are perceived and valued within the society. A review of the African literary works reveals the lived realities and experiences of African women and lends credence to wa Thiong’O who makes the point that “literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social and economic forces in a particular society” (wa Thiongo’O, 1982, p.15). African literature, a purview of Adichie’s texts, thus adequately qualifies as a knowledge source on the realities of the African woman and in some cases the universal woman (Anyidoho et al., 2016).

The portraiture of women in African literature has been steeply stereotypical, mostly limiting them to traditional roles. Ann (2015) posits that female characters in African novels are mostly depicted as inferior people who must serve the interests of men. While some argue that such literary portrayal of women basically reflects social outcomes, some have contended that the dominance of men within the literary space in Africa has led to such phallic lopsided interpretations and portrayals. Chinua Achebe has, for instance, been

accused of exhibiting a machoistic masculinity of the African past (Fonchingong, 2006, p.137). The lower status of females in Africa seems inherent in the African culture. Frank (1987, p. 15) posits that there is a "historically established and culturally sanctioned sexism of African society". Wosu (2017) concurs, stating that before the coming of the Europeans, gender inequality had already been part of the fabric of story of patriarchy in Africa and adds that some elements of rites and rituals (kinship rites, succession and inheritance rites, initiation, etc.) act as intentional avenues used to preclude women's participation in order to emphasise their inferiority to men (p.55).

These viewpoints are, however, countered by historical works (Arhin, 1983; Hagan, 1983; Aidoo, 1985; Sudarkasa, 1986) as cited by Anyidoho et al. (2016) which make the point that in the period before the european's arrival to Ghana, previously called the Gold Coast, for instance, gender roles were complementary. The roles played by men and women were not the same but they were equal. Thus, these researchers blame the unequal gender relations on colonial ideas and practices (Anyidoho et al., 2016, p. 5). Some like Bakare-Yusuf (2003) have argued that colonisation in British West Africa rather than create these inequalities merely reinforced them. They contend that policies were created that required women to live in a manner to fit prescribed norms. The colonial state in the Gold Coast shoehorned women into exclusively domestic roles. Women seldom received formal education and the few that had that opportunity were given inferior education that stressed on domestic instead of technical skills thus eliminating women from accessing the mushrooming formal sector (Graham, 1971 cited in Anyidoho et al., 2016). Even with the few that got into salaried positions, Tsikata and Darkwah (2013) mention that they

were compelled to resign from whatever job they had when they married or conceived. It is these realities of the African woman that are fictionalised in African literature.

Fwangyil (2011) posits that the African woman occupies a "second class" status with their role revolving around giving birth, assimilating quietly into what is domain of men, and getting "brainwashed into accepting their slavish status" (Fonchingong 2006, p. 136). Though these claims may somewhat be overstretched in the sense that it dwarfs the enterprise and agency of women in Africa, it speaks to the many inhibitions that in some respects incapacitate the role of women to the development of Africa. It also captures the manner in which women have been portrayed in most works of African literature. Acholonu (1988, p.217) paints the African woman as "trapped in the claws of the taboos and the restrictions that only help to propel male chauvinism."

The position of Fwangyil (2011) is similar to Kolawole (1997), Jick and Nkweteyim (2016) and Wosu (2017) have made the point that African literature had until recently, been largely male dominated with women marginalized. Chinua Achebe's world, for instance, was "one of male heroism and female defeatism, male audacity and female timidity" (Jick & Nkweteyim, 2016, p.15), a point that Kolawole (2000) also shares. Chukukere (1995) establishes also that for male authors, the typical female character will be in the traditional roles of "wife" and "mother". Ambanasom (2003, p. 63) argues that with the exception a few notable works where women play prominent roles, women are often presented by male writers in limited contexts – motherhood and domestic related activities while the male characters feature in the great events.

This is supported by Ngara (1989) who argues that most African literary novels of the early period almost inevitably feature heroes who are male and members of the African intelligentsia - Camara in *The African Child*, Waiyaki in *The River Between*, Obi in *No Longer at Ease*, Odili in *A Man of the People* among others while women play secondary roles in societal affairs and portrayed as adjuncts to the main male character at best (p.34-35). Ngara argues that "female characters are not introduced as individuals in their own right, but are part of the array of devices used to portray and develop the male hero" (Jazeel, 2019, p. 35). He further states that in these novels' women are subordinate and are consequently absent in important matters of state and decisions concerning their own children as those decisions are seen as the preserve of elders who are all men (Jazeel, 2019).

Also, what African literature clearly reveals is that the value of the woman was weighed on account of her ability to adapt properly to her traditional roles as wife and mother. For instance, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) Okonkwo, to celebrate, slays a goat in honour of one of his wives who births 3 male children consecutively, as opposed to Madume a character in Elechi Amadi's *the Concubine* (1966) who is dispirited by his wife's incapacity. While the former receives praise because she produces male heirs, the latter, a barren woman, is treated as social misfit scorned by family and society. Concerning the portrayal of the female persona, Jazeel, (2019) makes the point that women have been reduced to stereotyped objects.

The institution of marriage is a recurring feature in African literature and often becomes a prism of stereotyping the African woman with traditionally prescribed roles. On this, Oriaku (1996) posits that in reality and fiction,

marriage represents the most defining factor in the life of "an African woman". According to Fonchingong (2006), marriage represents the setting for brutality and unfair treatment of women. Badua, in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* (1970), states that traditionally, African woman has her roles as: "marry a man, tend a farm and be happy to see her peppers and her onions grow. A woman…should bear children many children so she can afford to have one or two die" (p.12) while also adding that "a good woman has no mouth and brain". This belief emboldens Kofi Ako who during an argument barks at his wife Anowa these words: "who are you to tell me what I must do or not do?" (p.29). "We all know you are a woman and I am the man" (p.30).

Nevertheless, it is not an absolute negative image of women. Anyidoho et al. (2016) indicates that "women's experiences are not uniformly of oppression, marginalization and vulnerability but also of joy, pleasure, power and creativity", adding that "women's lives are a complex mix of joy and pain, of power and vulnerability" (p.5). Jazeel, (2019) makes reference to Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* which gives a very positive image of African women with several female characters depicted as playing critical roles in the struggle of the African people in achieving true independence and cultural integrity such as the prophetess Anoa who is the first to advise the wayward people to return to 'the way' of authentic African values. However, in view of the degree of entrenchment of the seared image that the African woman has endured, female protagonists have consequently found themselves engaged in attempts to give women the deserved recognition and equal treatment they deserve. The literary works of female writers try to examine and highlight the struggles of the woman in the male dominated African society in a bid to tilt a

culturally scripted male hegemony. In the *Joys of Motherhood*, Buchi Emecheta also challenges and refutes the falsely held notion that becoming a mother is the same as being self-actualized as a woman. Female writers who try to project female characters/ protagonists present them as assertive in the face of oppressive systems.

In the *Second Class Citizen* (1974) Adah seeks to rid herself of the discrimination that is often meted out to the female. She does not mind the treatment she would receive when she decides to set aside some money meant for keeping the home in order to pay the registration for her examinations. Udumukwu (2007, p. 5) confirms that there has been in this century an increase in the "volume of literature written by women and for women". Udumukwu (2007) argues that in much of African writing, many descriptions of women have come in the form of stereotypical roles mothers, children, goddesses or as sex objects. These representations of women have thus reinforced the perception of women as inferior to men (Udumukwu, 2007, p. 5).

Female writers on the continent thus, adopt a feminist outlook as a way of subverting the debilitating image of the female and offer a different narrative. Adichie's novels under consideration in this dissertation champions a feminist cause. A number of texts have also plaited a feminist stance and their epistemological value with regard to feminism lends credence to the theoretical value of stories. These works, like that of Adichie's, belong to the group of literary creations that can be branded as "fictionalized theory" and "theorized fiction" (Usman 2012, p.249). They advance a feminist frontier.

Smith's description as cited by Jick and Nkewetetim (2016) shows feminism as a theory and practice that strives to liberate women from all walks of life from all forms of discrimination. Usman 2012) also defines feminism as "a belief in sexual equality combined with a commitment to eradicate sexist domination and to transform society" (p.2). Feminism is directed at altering the state of women in society and to shift the belief that they are unequal to men and are of lesser value in comparison. The influence of feminism, as Robinson (1993) captures it, will mean that women no longer have to see motherhood, heterosexuality and marriage as the only possible lifestyle (p. 222). It is thus a social theory created as a response to women's pursuit of equality with men (Jick & Nkweteyim, 2016, p. 17). Azuike (2002) who is cited by Fwangyil (2011, p. 263) says, "feminism is a proposal for social transformation as well as a movement that strives to end the oppression of women."

Ann (2015) has said that feminism as a literary movement is one which is preoccupied with the mission of changing how women are treated in the society. In pursuing feminism, Fwangyil (2011, p. 263) sees female writers as people preoccupied the improvement of the lives of women that comes through the transformation of the various facets of society which limit women. In her essay, "Placing Women's History in History", Elizabeth Fox-Genovese contends that feminism seeks to relocate the woman back to the "center of history" by "recognizing their peculiar roles and contribution in the shaping of history" (Fox-Genovese, 1982, p. 29).

Feminism, some have argued, could pass as an anathema within the African discourse (Jick & Nkweteyim, 2016). Fwangyil (2011) tells us that feminism has faced some resistance in Africa as there are people who have

refused to accept the concept. It has been considered as antithetical to African norms and traditions while women who are associated with it are associated with radicality. Adichie (2014) shares similar viewpoints recounting personal encounters where people had connoted feminism with negative bearings and perceived anti-African cultural stance. The term as it relates to Africa, carries a lot of baggage. Consequently, some have canvased varied derivatives of the term to fit a particular context and scope. A type of feminism that agrees with Africa has thus been sought, one that responds to the needs of black/African women.

Such feminism, as has been said, should be "free of the shackles of Western romantic illusions" (Amartey, 2013, p. 7). It also "tends to be much more pragmatic" (Buchi Emecheta, 2007, p. 554). According to Goredema (2010) African women's inequality differs from that of other people due to the combined effect of different experiences, be they political, cultural, socio-economic, as well as the history of oppression women face. Davies (2007, p. 561) has thus defined an African feminism as an "abnegation of male protection and a determination to be resourceful and reliant". Usman (2012) defines same as an ideology that advocates liberation from oppression that springs the biased racial, cultural, sexual and class tendencies. She refers to African feminism as "humanistic feminism" because it has as its focus the end that humanity is totally liberated.

There are some who find the term feminism problematic. Villanova (2018). takes issue with the gender power relational struggles that feminism awakens. She views feminism as a movement that "smacks of rebelliousness, fearlessness, political awareness of sexism and an unpardonable (from the male

view point) drive for equality and equity between sexes (Villanova, 2018, p. 61). To Villanova, feminism is an exciting venture for many women while at the same time, a scary prospect for men. She notes that the radical feminist for instance can go all lengths, even eschewing "the macho male", "to enjoy her liberty". Villanova. would rather use the term "womanism".

Stating the difference between womanism and feminism, Villanova, (2018) makes the point that "Womanism is black centered, it is accommodationist (p. 65). Villanova's Womanism is focused on seeking the liberation of women but does not have a radical orientation. As Oguneymi notes, contrary to radical feminism, womanism seeks to achieve a "meaningful union between black women and black men and black children and will see to it that men begin to change from their sexist stand (Villanova 2018, p. 65). These somewhat feed into the 'feminism is antithetical to African cultural norms' mindset in terms of feminism's radicality and absolute contestation of male authority. This aligns with Walker (1984) who defines womanism as "a black feminist or feminist of colour…committed to survival and wholesomeness of entire people, male and female" (Walker, 1984: xi-xii).

Nnaemeka (1991) cited in Ann (2015) shows further nuance in the feminism nomenclature calling her brand of feminism "Nego-feminism". To her, nego-feminsism is premised on a negotiation between both the female and male gender for gender equality to be achieved.

Ann (2015) touches on the compatibility of feminism to African norms, making the point that African feminism strives for its objectives "through negotiations and compromise" (p. 377). She adds that African feminism "knows when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines" (Ann 2015, p. 378).

Acholonu finds "Motherism" as a more useful term to describe the African form of feminism (Villanova 2018, p. 653), explaining that it has a humanist and environmentalist alignments –and it "respects the interconnectedness of all life, the ecosystem and the entire human race" (Villanova 2018, p. 65). There is an attempt to find a brand of feminism for Africa that speaks to African realities and addresses the concerns of women on the continent and not simply an easy and whole-sale borrowing of a Westernised version. To that end, Ogundipe-Leslie holds the views that African feminism puts a required spotlight on the African woman, her body, family, nation and continent as well as external social, economic and political conditions that surround and affect her (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1984).

Adichie's novels under discussion both speak to the concerns of Ogundipe-Leslie (1984) and yet go beyond the scope of Africa. Adichie uses *Americanah* to make a cross continental appeal to the feminist cause and not just limiting it to Africa. In relating her work to America, the world's superpower, she makes a global statement. Ogundipe-Leslie now has refuted any support for the concept of "feminism" and now rather shows her preference for the concept of STIWANISM, an acronym which means Social Transformation Including Women in Africa. To her, STIWANISM "is about the inclusion of African women in the contemporary social and political transformation in Africa" (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1984:230).

Adichie unapologetically, announces herself as feminist and her works speak to that intent rather than a postcolonial theory advocate. In *We Should All Be Feminists* (2014), Adichie recounts how she, in order not to be caught up in the stereotypical misconceptions that are associated with feminism, had had to

constantly redefine her feminism by adding adjectives to the word "feminist" so that according to her "At some point, I was a Happy African Feminist Who Does Not Hate Men and Who Likes to Wear Lip Gloss and High Heels for Herself and Not for Men". Having dealt with the "negative baggage" that the word feminist connotes, she proudly embraces the representation of who a feminist is. "I looked the word up in the dictionary, it said: *Feminist: a person who believes in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes*" (Adichie, 2014),

Adichie makes the point that feminism is not only a female thing and that it includes males, and recognises his brother as the best feminist she knows. This view reflects in her novels, in a character like Obinze in *Americanah* who is not swayed by mainstream views about gender but welcomes an independent minded woman. Adichie does not wade in to the different nomenclature surrounding the term but opines thus: "My own definition of a feminist is a man or a woman who says, 'Yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better.'" (Adichie, 2014).

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the art storytelling as theorising and has argued that Adichie's storytelling through her novels can be viewed through a theorising frame. It has foregrounded African literature as a social tool for theorising, a remit within which Adichie's work falls thus holding up Adichie as a social thinker. It also foregrounds the theoretical angle of the argument that this dissertation makes that Adichie follows a theoretical path of her own different from that of postcolonial theory.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF *PURPLE HIBISCUS AND AMERICANAH*

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the two texts of Adichie selected for this dissertation – *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah* – broadly in terms of their attachment or detachment from a postcolonial theoretical leaning in light of the comments passed by Adichie on postcolonial theory. The chapter is put into two parts – Interrogating Adichie's Thought Process and Postcolonialism and Feminism: The Adichie between.

In the first part, I show, through a textual analysis, how Adichie's ideations, as evident in her TED encounters, are modelled by her novels – *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*. This evidences Adichie as a social thinker with a theoretical path of her own (not necessarily postcolonial theory in intent); one of female emancipation and a challenge of stereotypes.

I weave a nexus between Adichie's observational realities as reflected in her TED talks on the one hand, and her fictional world on the other hand, connecting how the narratives in both novels solidify thinking patterns and ideas. The narrative style, the plot, the characterisation and the themes of both texts reflect forms of knowledge formations and advocacy for specific ideations as well as an alteration of previously established thinking and beliefs. This is traced through the five stages of crystallisation of social thought as advanced in John Dewey (1910).

The second part of this chapter confronts the struggle between Adichie's seeming aversion to postcolonial theory implied in her comments about same and feminism which Adichie supports fully. I argue that the variations in interests of both theories fuel schisms in their focus and this informs Adichie's comments.

Interrogating Adichie's Thought Process: Aligning Her Novels with Her TED Talks (2009; [2012, 2014])

In reference to counter stories, Mahmud (2018, p. 619) has argued that "Story-telling, by the outsider, the other, the marginalized, is loaded with transformative potential." It is this transformative power of creating narratives and telling stories that is encapsulated in Adichie's TED talks which feeds directly into her novels. To this end, she announces in Adichie (2009) "*The Danger of a Single Story*": "I'm a storyteller" right from the beginning of her talk. Storytelling, however, does not exist in a vacuum. What she does is to provide a counter narrative, and in *We should all be feminists* (2014) she identifies herself as a feminist in offering that counter narrative.

In posing as a feminist storyteller, Adichie cultivates the power that stories hold, which according to Mahmud (2018, p. 617) "have the ability to convey truths", to attack society's view about the independence of men as opposed to women's dependence on men. Adichie (2009) indicates that "Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person" (p. 67). Being a storyteller and a feminist, therefore, she uses the vehicle of the novel in engendering a discourse on gender injustices among other things in her works and these come through very sharply in her texts.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie finds a storyteller in Kambili, the book's autodiegetic narrator, a 15-year-old girl. In using the first-person narrative style, Adichie imbues Kambili with the power to tell her own story and does not relinquish that important responsibility to another person. This feeds into Adichie's agenda for women's right and gender parity. Kambili matures as the novel progresses. Adichie by this offers the African woman a voice within a patriarchal society, and also by this, makes the female an active shaper of her own trajectory and growth. Kambili's narrative is an account of sights and sounds from the mouth of silent witnesses like Mama, Aunty Ifeoma, Jaja and Ade Coker. Adichie also uses a 'shift in perspective' technique by which Kambili broadens her focus beyond her family house to the broader society. Kambili, therefore, relates to the events as she deems fit and because she wields that power, is not under compulsion to satisfy a particular interest but hers. As already established in the previous chapter, the voices of women in African literature have been late in coming, being often spoken for by men while their portraiture have almost always been subservient to the male within the narrative space (Udumukwu, 2007; Boehmer, 2017).

Adichie reverses this phenomenon, and in the spirit of unpacking the 'single story', introduces a different perspective where the woman directs how the story is shaped. So, although Eugene, a powerful and wealthy man, plays a major role in the novel, he is viewed from the perspective of the 15-year-old narrator. In *Americanah*, something similar, but markedly different happens. The narrative technique used is an omniscient one that applies a third person perspective. Instructively, though, the narrative emphasis is on a woman, Ifemelu, the central character, as the story is told mainly through her eyes but

also partly through a man, Obinze, who is shaped as progressive in his views concerning women. Mahmud (2018) has argued that "storytelling makes decolonization of imaginaries possible, and, thus, opens the path towards the decolonization of imagination" (p.620). In giving voice to the woman, Adichie is using stories to facilitate the decolonisation of women.

Stories theorise and *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah* evince a theoretic verve. Erasga (2010) draws three parallels between storytelling and theorising. First, he notes that stories are about life "the teller, using his/her experience as a narrative palimpsest, is allowed to imagine how life looks like and what possible facets such complexities may have." Evidently, in both of Adichie's TED talks, one finds traces of how the personal stories she has encountered become a sort of template to her novels and how her reflections of the society and the nature of being help form ideas around the issues of stereotypes and feminism which are concretised in her novels – structural gender inequalities, the normalcy of gender discriminations and the disregard for diversity which leads to the dangers inherent in the myopic framing of people especially Africans.

Second, Erasga (2010) points out that "storytelling uses the story as a form of heuristic devise similar to models and ideal-types used by sociologist." Third, that "storytelling seems to have identified core themes in the many stories so far being identified: joy, anger, betrayal, success, fear, triumph, revenge, etc. Sociological theories have also identified the same major fibers of our social life embodied in the core assumptions of familiar theories" (Erasga (2010) p. 33-34). *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah* become tools that emphasise feminine ability which the reader comes to appreciate.

Adichie's Novels as Reflections of Social Thought

John Dewey (1910) states that for a social thought to be valid, it has to go through five stages. In using Adichie's TED encounters as a reflection of her thought processes, these stages are identified and more notably, they find space in Adichie's novels. The first stage Dewey (1910) identifies involves identifying a problem while the second stage is defining and locating the problem. The problematic issues, as Adichie identifies them, are stereotyping as evident in "The danger of a single story" (2009) and the problem of gender inequalities evidenced in *We Should All Be Feminists* (2014).

Adichie, clearly, identifies the issue of the endemic subjection of women in Africa and how it receives some level of cultural backing. In *We should all be feminists,* Adichie recounts a childhood incident of suffering discrimination on the basis of her gender. At age nine, she wanted to be a class monitor. After meeting the single criterion, that is, scoring the highest on a test set by the teacher, however, she is robbed of the position since, according to the teacher, the class monitor must be a boy. An incident which has etched itself in Adichie's memory. She does not become a class monitor not because she is unqualified for it but simply because she is female. This speaks to the belief in an inherent male leadership and the seeming socio-cultural endorsement of the opposition to female leadership.

This is a reality that Anyidoho et al. (2016) speak of, mentioning how female leadership is lacking in various sectors of the Ghanaian socio-political structure because there are numerous handicaps that bar them from ascending to leadership. Women have been robbed, many a time, of their leadership

positions simply because of the assumption that leaders should always be males. In Adichie's novels, these gender biases come to play and at the base of this is the relegated status of the female.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, for instance, Papa-Nnukwu, Eugene and Ifeoma's father, tells Ifeoma: "But you are a woman. You do not count" (p.83), when complaining bitterly about his neglect by the son. A seclusion on the basis of being female is culturally endorsed. Even when it relates to masquerades, believed to be spirits, women masquerades are of a lower status. Papa-Nnukwu referring to one such spirit says: "This is a woman spirit, and the women *mmuo* are harmless. They do not even go near the big ones at the festival" (p.85). Similarly, there are some *mmuo* that women are not supposed to look at.

These cultural anecdotes operate against women and alienate them from critical roles and discourses. Such a view of women is captured by Helen Chukwuma (1990), noting thus:

> The female character in African fiction hitherto, is a facile lack-lustre human being, the quiet member of a household, content only to bear children, unfulfilled if she does not, and handicapped if she bears only daughters (Chukwuma 1990, p. 133).

The folk story about why the tortoise got a crack in its shell that Papa-Nnukwu recounts further endorses the cultural preclusion of women from leadership and the decision-making processes. In that story, it is only the male animals that are invited to the decision-making table; the only ones present at a meeting to decide what is to be done when the animals are faced with famine (p.157-161). These folk stories speak a lot about the nature of the societies that crafts and own them.

Erasga (2010) actually, links the subservient position of women in Africa to ideas contained in African creation and origin myths. Even in situations where the women seem more interested and qualified, the uninterested man becomes first choice.

Adichie takes on the issue of power and wealth seen as belonging to men, even when women own it and dispense it, an issue she recognised in Lagos-Nigeria, America and evident in different places the world over. Women are treated with less respect and in some cases disregarded all together. For instance, Adichie (2014) recounts that though she had tipped a man after he had rendered her a service in Lagos-Nigeria, the man rather thanked her male counterpart, Louis, who was accompanying her because in Adichie's words, "The man believed that whatever money I had ultimately came from Louis. Because Louis is a man." Wealth is considered in masculine terms; something that accrues to and is distributed by the man. It, therefore, becomes somewhat uneasy for a man, in some instances, to appreciate or receive assistance from a woman. In *Americanah*, when Aunty Uju decides to help her brother, Ifemelu's father, after he lost his job and faced financial difficulty, she hands him "a plastic bag swollen with cash" but Aunty Uju has to do so with an "embarrassed casualness" (p.79) in order not to harm his ego.

Also, a sense of male entitlement is created and the reader comes across such encounters in *Americanah*. Bartholomew, Aunty Uju's husband, for instance, does little to prove his worthiness and yet expects a kingly treatment from Aunty Uju because he is male. Aunty Uju shares her frustration with Ifemelu:

> Both of us work. Both of us come home at the same time and do you know what Bartholomew does? He just sits in the living room and turns on the TV and asks me what we are eating for dinner … He wants me to give him my salary. Imagine! He said that it is how marriages are since he is the head of the family, that I should not send money home to Brother without his permission, that we should make his car payments from my salary. … All he wants is for me to hand over my salary to him and cook peppered gizzard for him on Saturdays while he watches European League on satellite (Adichie, 2013:217).

These issues Aunty Uju complains about will later cause her to leave that marriage. Masculinity is displayed and mostly interpreted as dominance; a show of power over the female. When a woman questions a man, therefore, the man feels his masculinity is being challenged. Adichie problematises this sense of male entitlement which finds expression in her novels. In *Americanah*, Obinze's mother is slapped by a male professor because she dares to accuse him publicly of misusing funds; "he could not take a woman talking to him like that" (p.59). Obinze's mother, however, does not leave the issue to rest but forces an apology from the male professor and goes ahead to pursue an advocacy that champions the full humanity of the woman through writing circulars and articles. The problem, as Adichie (2014) identifies it, is not isolated. In fact, a number of studies conducted on the African continent have corroborated same (*The State of African Women Report*, 2018; Ngubane, 2010; Anyidoho et al., 2016). "Even when a man and a woman are doing the same job, with the same

qualifications, the man is paid more because he is a man", Adichie (2014) claims.

Adichie also bemoans the issue of women's access into certain establishments. There are spaces women are barred from entering or only enter via the access of a man. Adichie (2014) states for instance that in Nigeria a female who walks into a hotel alone is automatically presumed to be a sex worker while a man going to the same hotel will be believed to be there for legitimate business. This situation makes women ever dependent upon a man even when she is self-sufficient for a particular task. Similarly, in *Purple Hibiscus*, the folktale about the tortoise shows how women are barred from decision making spaces as it is only the male animals that meet to take decisions. Women are also not allowed to see certain types of masquerades. These become cultural endorsements of male superiority.

These acts of discrimination, name calling and tagging fuel men's ego and entrench their presumed superiority. Many reputable clubs and bars in Lagos, Adichie (2014) claims, do not let in women alone unless they are accompanied by men. Men, therefore, become keys to certain places in the society and determine if women gain access to such spaces or not. Such privileges for men put women at men's mercy, enforcing the idea that men are more important than women. Adichie greets these issues of gender disparity with "anger", positing that "Gender as it functions today is a grave injustice" (Adichie, 2014). Society has been wired to conceive of the man as more important than the woman which leads to women being ignored and invisible in some contexts. Visibility is very important. According to Adichie (2014), "Each time they ignore me, I feel invisible. I feel upset. I want to tell them that I am

just as human as the man, just as worthy of acknowledgement." The feeling that a woman does not count or counts for less within the social performance is palpably reflected in *Purple Hibiscus* where Mama plays less critical roles in the Achike household while Eugene practically, take all decisions. Even when it comes to mundane activities like picking the fabric for the curtains, Mama after picking some samples would have to revert to Eugene to make the final decision.

The Manipulative Nature of Marriage against Women

Adichie in her TED talk also problematises the conversation around marriage. She worries that marriage is used as a tool against a woman than against a man, that "society teaches a woman at a certain age who is unmarried to see it as a deep personal failure" (Adichie, 2014, p. 50). Marriage becomes another context where inequality against women is exacted. Even before a female enters into marriage, because she is expected to aspire to it, she is supposed to make it the most important rubric in her life and her choices throughout life must thus reflect that. Adichie (2014) admits that "marriage can be a good thing" but questions why girls are taught to aspire to marriage as an ambition and not boys and thus in consequence, marriage becomes a manipulative tool against the woman. In *Americanah*, Ifemelu comes under pressure to get married. Her mother asks if she has a marriage prospect but Ifemelu responds in the negative saying "I have been very busy with work" (p.301) to which her mother responds: "Work is good, Ifem. But you should also keep your eyes open. Remember that a woman is like a flower. Our time passes quickly" (p.301). Marriage becomes prioritized above other aspects of the woman's development.

In view of the societal notion of marriage which sees the unmarried woman as disadvantaged, Ifemelu at a reunion with old friends lies about being in a serious relationship with Blaine, her former boyfriend when "the subject of marriage came up, a waspish tone in the voices of the unmarried, a smugness in those of the married" (p.398). This clamour to get married leads some into fasting towards it or offer spiritual interpretation for the lack of it. Referring to Esther, the receptionist at ZOE MAGAZINE Zemaye says: "She will fast and fast until God gives her a husband" (p.416). Esther, who is religious, spiritually diagnoses Ifemelu's problem when Ifemelu gets into a quarrel at the office: "Ma? I think you have the spirit of husband-repelling. You are too hard, ma, you will not find a husband. But my pastor can destroy that spirit." (p.419). This same pressure from society for women to marry causes Aunty Uju to force herself into a marriage with Bartholomew, a man who according to Ifemelu, is not worthy of Aunty Uju: "In Nigeria, a man like him would not even have the courage to talk to you" (p.118). But Aunty Uju still goes ahead with it on the basis that "I'm not getting any younger" (p. 118; 142), a marriage she later gets out of because the man is excessively chauvinistic.

Adichie also touches on the language which accompanies the enterprise of marriage, making the point that "[T]he language of marriage is often a language of ownership, not a language of partnership" (Adichie, 2014), a view evident in her novels. Both genders are viewed differently.

Purple Hibiscus features a very informal (chatty) conversation among the women of Eugene's village while preparing food for the Christmas celebrations. Their reference to Jaja as heir, shows the privilege accorded the male in the society. They say of Jaja, *"Nekene,* see the boy that will inherit his father's

riches!*"* (p.91). While Jaja, the male child, is seen as an heir to his father's wealth, the female child, Kambili, is only spoken of as a candidate for marriage. One of the women thus passes this comment: *"*The girl is a ripe *agbogho!* Very soon a strong young man will bring us palm wine!" (p. 91-92).

Inherent in the comment is the perceived frailty of the woman who is cast as being in need of a strong man to care for and protect her. Physical strength is made the primary asset of the man. Even in this marriage ideas or conversation, the woman is conceived of as passive within the whole process, simply waiting for a man to come along. The denotation of the girl as "ripe *agbogbo*", a fruit ready for plucking, completely ignores her agency in that enterprise. Again, such an assertion is deepened by one of the women who relishes the thought of having Jaja as an in-law in view of the wealth that will accrue to him as heir to Eugene's wealth: *"*If we did not have the same blood in our veins, I would sell you my daughter*"* (p.91). Marriage is spoken of in transactional terms and not as a partnership; a situation where the man becomes the purchaser, and the woman becomes the commodity which is sold by the family.

The language of monetisation of the female with regard to the marriage contract feeds into the abuses that women endure in marriages. Consequently, Mama stays in her marriage despite the abuses not only against herself, but also against her children – Jaja and Kambili; she is unable to contemplate leaving the marriage. Even when the abuses become life threatening, leading to her miscarriage of two pregnancies and landing Kambili in the hospital in critical condition, she finds excuses for her husband's misconduct. When Ifeoma advices that she leaves Eugene because the abuses are worsening: "This cannot

go on*, nwunye m,"* ... "When a house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on your head" (p.213), Mama responds in defence of Eugene: "It has never happened like this before. He has never punished her like this before," (p.214), apparently afraid of the stark realities or the disadvantages that a separation would mean to her. Mama, therefore, questions: "Where would I go if I leave Eugene's house? Tell me, where would I go?" … "Do you know how many mothers pushed their daughters at him? Do you know how many asked him to impregnate them, even, and not to bother paying a bride price?" (p.250). Marriage seems designed to exert undue control over the female and set limitations on her capabilities intended to accentuate instead, the superiority of the man and a justification for male control.

There is a heavy socio-cultural clout around marriage that creates a disincentive for unmarried women. The opportunity to marry thus is relished. In *Purple Hibiscus*, one of the students of Aunty Ifeoma comes with a chicken to formally announce to Ifeoma that she is getting married (p.233). According to the student, the fiancé says he can no longer wait until she graduates especially with the indeterminacy of university teacher's strikes and university closures. The excitement of the student is evident in her utterance, "[S]he did not call him by his name, she called him "dim," "my husband," with the proud tone of someone who had won a prize" (p.234). Ifeoma's student willingly sacrifices her education for her marriage, noting that "I'm not sure I will come back to school when we reopen. I want to have a baby first. I don't want "dim" to think that he married me to have an empty home," she said, with a high, girlish laugh" (p.234).

This feeds directly into the issues that Adichie (2014) points out, the sacrifices that marriages force women to make, that "[W]hen women say 'I did it for peace in my marriage,' it is usually because they have given up a job, a career goal, a dream." This speaks to the extent women would go to in ensuring their marriage prospects and what they are willing to sacrifice. Ifeoma, clearly worried about the phenomenon, takes consolation in the idea that, "[S]he was never particularly bright, so I shouldn't be sad," (p.234). The point is made that the conversation around marriage is couched in terms that make women think they must be ready to sacrifice anything or everything to get into it because it is a favour done them by men. Contrarily, Adichie (2014) notes that, when men speak about sacrifices, they have to make in marriage, it is usually something they should not be doing anyway. The conversation created around it, and the language adopted disadvantages the woman; it becomes a case of the female caressing male ego. Marriage is presented as an honour done to the woman by the man and not something that is mutually beneficial. Within such contexts, therefore, even in abusive homes, the woman is made to endure such abuses in silence because a divorce would wreck her honour.

Linked to marriage is the issue of child bearing, a responsibility which is entirely placed on the woman. The inability of a couple to have children at all or have the expected number of children is blamed on the woman. There is also an undue pressure on the woman to bear male children, so in situations where she gives birth to girls, irrespective of how numerous, her marriage is threatened. Adichie identifies this as one of the injustices women faces. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Mama reveals to Kambili the pressure she receives from

Eugene's family to have more children and how this threatens her marriage and the stability of the family:

> The members of our *umunna* even sent people to your father to urge him to have children with someone else… They might have borne many sons and taken over our home and driven us out, like Mr. Ezendu's second wife did. But your father stayed with me, with us. (Adichie, 2003, p. 20)

In mentioning that "But your father stayed with me, with us", Mama creates justification for the pressures from Eugene's family on her to give birth to more children, unfortunately. What is also problematic is that, the woman views the action of the man as something heroic when it is simply his duty and right to do. Such things cement the perceived inferiority of women and the superiority and entitlement of men. Adichie touches on sexuality pointing out how variedly girls are judged for doing the same things that boys do, noting that "We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way boys are" adding that while girls are praised for their virginity boys are not (Adichie, 2014). Adichie also mentions that the way girls are raised encourages silence in them, "And so girls grow up to be women who cannot say they have desire … Who cannot say what they truly think. Who have turned pretence into an art form" (Adichie, 2014).

The challenge with stereotypes

In "The danger of a single story" (2009), Adichie points out that stories are a power-hub with huge influences on the individual and society as a whole as they form and shape opinions and perceptions. She identifies the issue about

the one-sided story about Africa fueled by Western literature and media – an Africa only of death and diseases, senseless wars, beautiful landscapes, and beautiful animals. The lack of "many stories" that show diversity, she points out, "creates stereotypes". As raised by Adichie, the issue finds space in the novels. In *Purple Hibiscus*, after Ifeoma and her children have relocated to America, they write letters often to Kambili, Mama or Jaja. In one of Amaka's letters to Jaja which Kambili reads, Amaka notes "how Aokpe had been covered in a secular American magazine; the writer had sounded pessimistic that the Blessed Virgin Mary could be appearing at all, especially in Nigeria: all that corruption and all that heat." (p.300).

In effect, Nigeria has been cast in a singular frame, as corruption and heat stricken, and that becomes a justification for the American magazine to downplay the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Aokpe. Adichie's (2009) TED encounter notes some of these racial stereotyping and injustice. Father Amadi also writes about "the old German lady who refuses to shake his hand because she does not think a black man should be her priest" (p.303). These opinions stem from the caricaturing of the black man that has been perpetrated overtime. Adichie (2009) traces the imagery of Africa in Western media and literature to the actions of ancient travelers like John Locke, a British merchant who in 1561 sailed to West Africa, who in his travel writings presented negative descriptions of Africans as primitives and inferior people thus, starting a culture in which African stories are told in the negative light by people of the West, creating a single story which is reaffirmed and entrenched through constant and continuous repetition. She links this to power and how it has been used to reconstruct Africa in a negative light, opining that "Power is the ability not just

to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person" (Adichie, 2009).

In *Americanah*, these issues of stereotyping become more pronounced in view of the setting of the novel which spans Nigeria, America and the United Kingdom. Ginika in advising Ifemelu, who is having difficulty securing a job, on how to navigate through her job interviews as she goes about job searching in America during her early periods tells her jokingly: "You could have just said Ngozi is your tribal name and Ifemelu is your jungle name and throw in one more as your spiritual name. They'll believe all kinds of shit about Africa." (p.131). Ginika's satirical comments reveal how negatively Africa is held in Western memory; pictured as a strange place. In one of such interviews, when Ifemelu mentions that she comes from Nigeria, the interviewer presumes it's a place of war: "Nigeria. Isn't there a war going on there?" (p.130).

At the African Students Association's meeting, some of these encounters with stereotypes, the negative views about Africa that Americans show is mimicked: "You speak such good English. How bad is AIDS in your country? It's so sad that people live on less than a dollar a day in Africa." (p.139). Associated with the stereotyping of Africa is the condescendence that greets it. When Ifemelu introduces herself to Kimberly, Kimberly tells her: "… I love multicultural names because they have such wonderful meanings, from wonderful rich cultures" when she would not think that Norway had a "rich culture"" (p.146). Binyavanga Wainaina has famously penned a satirical article, "How to write about Africa", which catalogues a litany of the stereotypes that are employed in various writings about Africa. Wainaina (2009) epitomizes the single story told about the continent of Africa. He adopts a satirical tone in

pointing out the negative stereotypical stories that have defined Africa to the Western world – Africa as pristine and exotic, one of suffering and vulnerability.

The very definition of singleness is in the perception of Africa as a country, despite its vastness, diversity and having 54 different countries. Africa is presented as a place "to be pitied, worshipped or dominated" (Wainaina, 2009), doomed and constantly in need of Western intervention and saving. These vestiges are clearly fully present in *Americanah*. The conception of Africa as a charity case for instance is duly noted. Kimberly notes that she is involved in a good charity in Malawi with the husband, Don, and makes the point that "We really should plan a trip to visit. It's an orphanage. We've never been to Africa. I would love to do something with my charity in Africa." (p.150). In cases where there is an encouraging news of a sort, they are laced in stereotypes. Although Laura, Kimberly's friend, discloses to Ifemelu that "… I read on the Internet that Nigerians are the most educated immigrant group in this country" her emphasis is drifted to something that is disparaging. She continues: "Of course, it says nothing about the millions who live on less than a dollar a day back in your country, but when I met the doctor, I thought of that article and of you and other privileged Africans who are here in this country" (pp.167-168). Her conception of Africa as a place of poverty, though not the focus of the article she claims to have come across, becomes the filter through which she approaches the positive news.

The interpretation that is offered in writings about Africa is largely informed by a stereotypical mindset. Kelsey, an aggressively friendly woman who comes to get her hair braided in Mariama's salon epitomizes this in

Americanah. Coming into Mariama's salon and seeing a lot of DVDs, presuming they are Nigerian films for sale, tells Mariama: "I can't watch that stuff. I guess I'm biased. In my country, South Africa, Nigerians are known for stealing credit cards and doing drugs and all kinds of crazy stuff. I guess the films are kind of like that too." (p.187). By a broad stroke, she tags every Nigerian a thief and does not leave room for any other consideration; the other side of the story. These misconceptions sometimes stem from Africans themselves. An Ethiopian taxi driver in America, for instance, says to Ifemelu after she tells him she is Nigerian: "Nigerian? You don't look African at all." His reason for that judgement is "Because your blouse is too tight" (p.206). Such interpretations of what or who the African is, are borne out of the 'single story' phenomenon that Adichie (2009) speaks against. These stereotypes become grounds for subjugation and colonial justification.

Consequently also, they become grounds for racial profiling. Aunty Uju who is worried about such concerns takes issue with his son, Dike, who refuses to wear to church a particular shirt she has bought for him. She complains to Ifemelu on the phone: "You know that if he does not dress properly, they will find something to say about us. If they are shabby, it's not a problem, but if we are, it is another thing" (p.215). The problem as Adichie (2009) identifies is that "the single story creates stereotypes. The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." Essentially, Adichie's concept of the single story is about stereotypical representations. Adichie explains that the single story which can be inferred to be stereotypical makes it "impossible" for one to see another as anything else but what that story describes the people as.

Adichie posits that the stereotypical "single story of Africa" ultimately comes from Western literature. Writers like Rudyard Kipling and John Locke and other Eurocentric writers and artists (Adichie, 2009: p. 13)." have propagated images of "Sub-Saharan Africa as a place of (*only*) negatives, of (*only*) difference, of (*only*) darkness". (Adichie, 2009: p. 14: emphasis mine). Congolese philosopher Valentin-Yves Mudimbe also in his *Invention of Africa* presents information which corroborate with the works of Adichie that the image of Africa is an invention of the West. He notes that deliberate and neglectful attempts of European ethnocentrism allow for the rather negative and stereotypical depictions of Africa as backward, and the African as savage and without original knowledge and art.

Although Adichie's critique of the single story has gained currency, she is clearly is not the only one who has criticized the single story or the matter of stereotypical representations of people. Cultural critic and theorist, Edward Said also in his seminal work in *Orientalism* (1978) shows how European power and control is exerted over the Orient through the single story or stereotypical representations of the Orient.

Said's *Orientalism* represents a critique and analysis of centuries of Western writings about the Orient. Said shows that through art, literature, television, films and other media resources, stereotypes about the orient have been propagated and again reinforced. According to Said, Orientalism is a "single story" that provided a rationale or raison d'etre for European colonialism as "the West propagated images of "the East" as extremely different and inferior, and therefore in need of Western intervention or 'rescue'" (Azam, 2014, p. 425).

Apart from Said, writers such as, Chinua Achebe in his *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) and Achilles Mbembe in *On the Postcolony* (2001) among others have critiqued and satirised the racial and ethnic stereotypes that saturate colonial or imperialist discourses especially from the West. Homi Bhabha in his discussions in "The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse" writes extensively on stereotypes. Stereotypes according to Bhabha is crucial to the colonial discourse which seeks to imperative "to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 70).

When Adichie (2009) avers that the single story shows "a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become", her statement echoes Homi Bhabha's explanation that stereotypes must be repeated over and over again to retain their validity. In discussing what he calls "ambivalence", Bhabha (1994) shows that stereotypes, and the discrimination, domination or violence that it can instigate, are created by a paradoxical simultaneous acceptance and disavowal of difference. Thus, for a people to be stereotyped and discriminated against, they must be seen as different from another group. But for the stereotype to work, this recognition and acceptance of difference must be complemented by a disavowal of difference that says that in the specific group, all members are the same, with no difference at all. As Bhabha espouses, stereotypical representations about a people, say Africa, are based on viewing Africans as other and different (recognition of difference) while at the same time viewing all Africans as the same without a possibility of difference.

On another note, per Mbembe (2001) for instance, stereotypes fuelled the need for White intervention and colonialism in Africa. He suggests that Africans were viewed as lazy, savage, and as people who were unable to self-govern themselves. He notes that colonialism by the West was an extension of a helping hand to Africa as it was the only way to "cure Africans of their supposed laziness, protecting them from need whether or not they wanted such protection (Mbembe, 2001, p. 113)

One of post colonialism's key tenets has thus been to respond to the stereotypical presentations of colonized people by the colonial powers, especially Eurocentric writers and scholars. In *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin attempt to demonstrate how a wide range of postcolonial literatures form a literary or textual resistance to colonial discourses. The book chronicles how different postcolonial literatures are a form of "writing back" to colonial powers and representations which existed in the past, and which exist till date. *The Empire Writes Back* cautions against focusing on literary assumptions tagged as "universal, which when deeply looked at however often are more European than anything else.

Helen Tiffin in *Postcolonial Literatures and Counter Discourse* (1987), also for example presents the idea of counter canonical discourse as a strategy to resist the representation created and propagated about colonized people. The counter canonical discourse represents a form of postcolonial textual resistance to stereotypical representations from the West. As the book notes, this form of writing back or rejection of the "single story" is what Chinua Achebe does in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) which both presented a counter view to what European literature said about Africa, as noted

by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back.* The book thus stands out as a ground breaking work that proves how different postcolonial texts resist and critique Eurocentric assumptions about language and literary work. It is clearly realized now that Adichie indeed stands on the shoulders of other postcolonial writers and theorist in her rejection of the "single story of Africa".

Addressing the challenges

In John Dewey's (1910) crystalisation of social thought the third stage is suggesting ways of solving the problem and the fourth stage is drawing conclusion on how valid the possible solutions are. In this regard, Adichie proposes the rejection of the single story and a recognition that places habour multiple stories and not singular ones. She recognises the importance of stories and the value of "many stories" stating that "Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign" (Adichie, 2009) Africa, Africans and others, and makes the suggestion that it can be reversed and used to empower and to humanize. By this she makes clear the need to rehabilitate the human dignity of the African that has been shuttered through colonial and imperial systems.

Her novels pursue the agenda to disarm the single story; bringing nuance to the construction of identities and of places. Consequently, Ifemelu in *Americanah*, decides to come back to Nigeria after many years of living in America despite discouragement from persons like Aunty Uju. Despite the negative picture painted about Nigeria and all its challenges, Ifemelu sees in Nigeria an opportunity. After returning and joining a magazine company, ZOE MAGAZINE, she later resigns and starts her own online blog in Nigeria. By this, Adichie varies the narrative which positions Nigeria-Africa as a place to

run away from, countering it with the idea that it is also a place to come back to. Her novels present Nigeria-Africa as nuanced; she does not romanticize Nigeria but presents it as a place where one can find opportunity despite its challenges.

Addressing gender disparities

To deal with gender injustices towards women – the view that women do not count –, Adichie advocates for gender equality admitting that feminism is "something I feel strongly about" and hope to "start a necessary conversation" on (Adichie, 2014). In advancing gender equality and advocating for women, therefore, she features females as principal and central characters who have strong convictions about the woman's place in society in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*. To counter the repression that women suffer within society for being women, Adichie creates a counter-narrative by imbuing the woman with power, not one which emanates through sexual intercourse and its control, what is referred to as "bottom power" (Adichie, 2014), but such as flows directly from the woman's decisiveness and strength without the need to sacrifice her femininity.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Ifeoma becomes a model of a woman who is fearless and principled; one who refuses to kowtow to the dictates of men or submit to their manipulations and parochial interests. Mama Joe, a hair stylist working in Ogige market, refers to Ifeoma as "A strong woman" (p.237). Kambili is awed by Aunty Ifeoma's bearing and says of her, "It was the fearlessness about her, about the way she gestured as she spoke, the way she smiled to show that wide gap" (p.76). Kambili wonders how anyone can speak to her father who wields a lot of power, the way Aunty Ifeoma does; "Every time Aunty Ifeoma spoke to

Papa, my heart stopped, then started again in a hurry. It was the flippant tone; she did not seem to recognize that it was Papa, that he was different, special" (p.77). Ifeoma does not speak with the condescendence that people usually accorded Eugene because of his wealth and control but as a coequal. She does not allow her brother, Eugene, to have his way since she is able to stand her ground. She speaks to Eugene like no one else would. She rejects her brother's move to have a Catholic Church funeral for their father, Papa-Nnukwu, and does not kowtow to Eugene notwithstanding his wealth, power and masculinity. Although she is female, she takes up the responsibility of burying their father, (something culturally deemed as a male role), because Eugene refuses to take part in 'heathen' activities.

Although African culture refuses to acknowledge the full capacity of women, Adichie by this advances that, the woman is capable of filling the vacuum left by the man's neglect of responsibility. When Papa-Nnukwu in appreciation to Ifeoma for taking care of him wished for her a husband: "Where would I be today if my chi had not given me a daughter?" … "My spirit will intercede for you, so that Chukwu will send a good man to take care of you and the children." (p.83), Ifeoma opts instead for career advancement: "Let your spirit ask Chukwu to hasten my promotion to senior lecturer, that is all I ask," (p.83). Ifeoma by this indicates that she does not require a man to be successful and that her professional growth is more important to her. This speaks to Adichie's belief in the need for women to pursue career growths.

Moreover, in projecting female power, Adichie does not downplay those characteristics of the woman that are often interpreted as weakness but uses the perceived frailty to demonstrate the woman's power. In creating a powerful

female character, therefore, Adichie cloths women with feminine attributes. In various parts of *Purple Hibiscus*, the look of Ifeoma and Amaka is emphasised. Kambili notes this narrating that: "Aunty Ifeoma said they had gone to the early Mass and they would see us at lunchtime. She looked taller, even more fearless, in a red wrapper and high heels. Amaka wore the same bright red lipstick as her mother; it made her teeth seem whiter when she smiled and said, "Merry Christmas" (p.89). Importantly, these feminine features are not projected in fragile terms, or as weakness, but rather they accentuate the woman's strength. The appearance of these characters clearly fits into Adichie's personal philosophical thought sequences as revealed through her TED encounter as follows:

> I have chosen to no longer be apologetic for my femininity. And I want to be respected in all my femaleness. Because I deserve to be. … I am girly. I am happily girly. I like high heels and trying on lipsticks. … I often wear clothes that men don't like or don't 'understand'. I wear them because I like them and because I feel good in them. (Adichie, 2014).

Consequently, Ifeoma does not shrink herself in her 'girliness', even "[H]er whisper was like her—tall, exuberant, fearless, loud, larger than life" (p.95) modelling a character in essence that fits the female projection that Adichie conceives of. Amaka's femininity also comes through her appearance: "She was wearing lipstick, a different shade that was more red than brown, and her dress was molded to her lean body" (p.116). This expression of her femaleness does not take away from her boldness. Amaka builds the confidence

that enables her to offer Eugene, a constructive critique of a bottled juice that Eugene's factory makes, when Jaja and Kambili are unable to express such independent minded critiques. At a Christmas lunch, upon tasting the drink, Amaka gives a verdict on it in a polite and normal everyday conversational tone: "It's a little too sweet. It would be nicer if you reduced the sugar in it" (p.98). While the femininity of women has been linked to their fragileness, Adichie uses that same feminine character to project the strength of the female in *Purple Hibiscus*. By this, Adichie counters the idea that a woman should have to dress in a particular way in order to be taken seriously. Sharing her experience on how she had to battle between wearing the cloths she wants at the expense of being undermined and putting on something she is not comfortable with in order for people to take her seriously, Adichie in *We should all be feminists* makes the following point:

> I knew that because I was female, I would automatically have to *prove* my worth. And I was worried that if I looked too feminine, I would not be taken seriously. I really wanted to wear my shiny lip gloss and my girly skirt, but I decided not to. I wore a very serious, very manly and very ugly suit. (Adichie, 2014)

Adichie advocates for a deconstruction of masculinity, one which does not "stifle the humanity of boys", a shift away from one where "We teach boys to be afraid of fear, of weakness, of vulnerability. We teach them to mask their true selves, because they have to be, in Nigerian-speak, a *hard man*." A move away from defining "masculinity in a very narrow way." To that end, in *Americanah*, Adichie presents a model of a healthy masculinity in the character

of Obinze, that is not threatening to gender equality. Obinze does not find the personality of Ifeoma intimidating contrary to what boys like Kayode think, that she is too much trouble. He appreciates an independent minded woman and a strong-willed woman. More so, Adichie (2014) critiques the tendency of teaching girls to 'shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller' or be less ambitious and less successful in order not to appear as a threat to the man or to 'emasculate him.' There is often a tendency to clump down on the abilities of women in order to contain the egos of men. In the two novels, Adichie instead, allows her female characters to grow and to discover and embrace their full potential without seeing themselves as threatening men. Kambili for instance, grows from being naïve, a person who would hardly question his father's abuses and dictatorial actions, to being critical and a manager of his father's assets after he dies.

Dealing with cultural handicaps against women

From a cultural standpoint, women are held as subordinate to men. Adichie (2014) challenges this view noting that "culture is constantly changing." She makes the point that "Culture functions ultimately to ensure the preservation and continuity of a people." (p.215) She touches on issues of exclusion of females in some traditional matters and gives the example of a personal experience, recounting that though she shows greater interest in those matters as against her brother who is lax on the matter, her brother gets invited to the table while she is denied a say because she is female. Such incidences find space in her novels. She calls for the paradigm to be altered; the paradigm of privileging men over women and dismisses the idea that the subordination of women to men is a cultural standpoint or that feminism is antithetical to African

culture noting that culture changes and that its ultimate function is the safeguarding the continuity of a people. She posits: "Culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture" (Adichie, 2014, p. 67). Culture seems designed to exert undue control over the female and set limitations on her capabilities intended to accentuate instead the superiority of the man and a justification for male control. She takes up this task of remaking culture in her novels and begins to challenge the thinking of society and to show that there is more to the woman than what culture has assigned. It is within this worldview or against this background that she pursues a narrative that makes the woman the focal point and shows her ability despite the handicap the culture and society has placed upon her.

Consequently, her novels, in some instances, lampoons the socio-cultural restrictions placed on the woman by showing the falsity of those limitations and restrictions. For instance, although in the folk story about why the tortoise has a crack in its shell as told by Papa-Nnukwu female animals are not feature in the deliberations when decisions are to be made, it is the mothers who "did not mind being sacrificed" (p.158) as food sources to save the rest. Even in the case of Dog, who deceives the rest of the animals concerning his food source, it is *Nne*, Mother, who lets down rope from the sky to feed him. The female, even within such a context, is projected as saviour, able to make provision for a famished community despite being denied a stake in leadership and decision-making. Also, women are told to turn their eyes away from looking at particular masquerades simply because "women cannot look …" (p.86) "Aunty Ifeoma looked amused, but she turned her head away. "Don't look, girls.

Let's humour, your grandfather," she said in English." (p.86). The irony though, as Kambili narrates, is that she "had looked at it very briefly" (p.86). The consequences attached to the seeing is therefore, put to question and perhaps exposed as nothing but a design that serves men's ego and mystifies their supposed superiority. Adichie by this offers a cultural critique of how women are perceived and treated under the guise of cultural and religious infractions.

Indicatively, Adichie (2014) points out that "A man is as likely as a woman to be intelligent, innovative, creative" averring that "If we do something over and over again, it becomes normal" (Adichie, 2014, p. 66). She, therefore, positions her novels as a counter-narrative to alter that which has been held to be normal. Delgado (1989) mentions that the aim of "counter storytelling" is to "shatter complacency and challenge the status quo". Mahmud (2018) also records that "Counter stories aim to "subvert the dominant ideology … challenge and expose the hierarchical and patriarchal order that exists within the legal academy and pervades the larger society" (pp.621-622). Adichie's works become the counter story against patriarchy in Africa and the sidelining of women in Africa. Adichie challenges the uncritical acceptance of tradition and male authority. When Mama starts feeling appreciative of Eugene because Eugene does not heed the advice of his family with regards to taking another wife, Ifeoma retorts: "Stop it, stop being grateful. If Eugene had done that, he would have been the loser, not you" (p.75). By this, Ifeoma attempts to turn the old narrative of male providence on its head by recognizing how critical the role of the woman to the home is.

Contrary to the predominant idea that divorce affects the woman, she introduces another angle into the conversation that has often escaped attention, that is, the effects on the man as well. The role of the woman has been downplayed especially because their place in the home has been taken for granted and their upkeep have been seen as a male responsibility. The converse is what Ifeoma voices, that while a termination of marriage could mean a lot of things to the woman, the effects on the man shouldn't be understated.

The endemic nature of the status quo makes the assertion of independence by the woman challenging. The realities and the difficulties of the aftermath could be staggering. Aware of the challenges that a divorced woman faces, Mama asks, "A woman with children and no husband, what is that?" "How can a woman live like that?" (p.75). But Ifeoma makes an alternate proposition: "*Nwunye m*, sometimes life begins when marriage ends" (p.75). Though Mama questions the practicality of Ifeoma's proposition, referring to it as "university talk" (p.75), Ifeoma's answer creates the room for an alternative and devalues the status quo of husbands owning their wives. Responding to Mama's assertion that "A husband crowns a woman's life", and that it is what women want, Ifeoma retorts, "It is what they think they want" (p.75). Ifeoma shows how normalized certain behaviours and practices have become such that they almost become invariant and block alternatives.

Regarding leadership, Adichie addresses the issue of male leadership versus female leadership frontally in her texts. She does this by putting both versions of leadership on display within similar contexts and allows the trajectory of the plot to make the judgement of who offers a more appropriate leadership form. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie juxtaposes these contrasting

leadership types via two families. One headed by a man, Eugene who is head of his family with Mama (his wife) and Jaja and Kambili (his two children) and the other headed by a woman, Ifeoma who is head of her family with Amanda, Obiora and Chima (her three children). While Eugene's family is not enthused about his style of leadership, finding it so suffocating to the extent that Mama would opt poisoning him at the end with Jaja willingly taking the fall for and being imprisoned for same, Ifeoma's leadership and handling of her family is greeted with frequent joyous laughter which even draws Jaja and Kambili to her side. In the face of this, the point being made is that it is not a given for male leadership to succeed and that the female is capable of doing a better job than the man, thus, challenging the normalization of male headship/ leadership.

Tilting the gender imbalance: The upbringing options

The upbringing process according to Adichie is critical to tackling the gender disparities which matters, not only in Africa, but "everywhere in the world". Adichie (2014) proposes that "we must raise our daughters differently. We must also raise our sons differently." This suggestion of raising children is reflected in the manner that Ifeoma raises her children in *Purple Hibiscus*. Adichie (2014) questions for instance, why "women in general are more likely to do household work than men – cooking and cleaning."

Using the family of Ifeoma, Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus*, symbolically blends the duties of both male and female characters in demystifying the idea that women or girls should be those doing household work. Ifeoma includes all her children in the house chore duties –such as fetching water from the tap (p.126), and does not treat her daughter, Amaka separately from the way she treats the sons, Obiora and Chima. In fact, when Jaja and Kambili visit, she

grafts them into the household work: ""Today we'll treat Kambili and Jaja as guests, but from tomorrow they will be family and join in the work," she said" (p.119). Marketplaces are largely female environments around Africa. Most people who engage in transaction within the markets are female. When Ifeoma decides to go to the market, she however, takes Obiora, her male son along: "Aunty Ifeoma came out, dressed in a blue wrapper and blouse. She was going to the market with Obiora who she said figured out change faster than a trader with a calculator" (p.169). This feeds directly into the options that Adichie (2014) proposes for gender parity. She notes that there should be a change of attitude and mindset and a focus on a person's ability and interests not gender. This is because to Adichie, "The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we should be rather than recognizing how we are" (Adichie, 2014, p. 78) thus advocates for the doing away with "the weight of gender expectations" (Adichie, 2014, p. 78).

In *Americanah*, Adichie presents a male character, Obinze, who holds a progressive view on masculinity and gender differences. Obinze does not feel threatened by Ifemelu; by her wildness. This perhaps stems from the example he has of her mother, a strong-willed woman. Although Kayode tells Obinze that 'Ifemelu is a fine babe but she is too much trouble. She can argue. She can talk. She never agrees." (p.60) as against Ginika described as "just a sweet girl" (p.60), Obinze still opts for Ifemelu. He notes that, "I'm not interested in girls that are too nice." (p.60). Obinze by this contrasts with Kayode who has a typical traditional male mindset about how women should be and behave. He departs from the mainstream traditional male views of what a woman should be and behave like. Obinze tells Ifemelu: "You look like the kind of person who

will do something because you want to, and not because everyone else is doing it" (p.61) and that influences his choice of her. He shares in the idea of an independent minded woman. This reflects in his relationship with the wife, Kosi, and would inform his separation from her to be with Ifemelu.

The atmosphere in Obinze's home, reflecting the upbringing process, is credited with Obinze's attitude. Obinze's mother makes that possible; she is different, "not like any other mother Ifemelu knew" (p.70). The narrative voice evinces how he relates with his mother: "Their fluid, bantering rapport made Ifemelu uncomfortable. It was free of restraint, free of the fear of consequences; it did not take the familiar shape of a relationship with a parent" (p. 69). Also, the typical traditional gender roles segregation is absent; "They cooked together, his mother stirring the soup, Obinze making the garri," (p.69). Quite unusually, while Obinze cooks and even makes soups, Ifemelu admits that "I don't like cooking" (p.71). Adichie by this upsets the strict definition of gender roles, a point similarly expressed in her TED talk.

Also, while Ifemelu cannot tell her parents about her relationship with Obinze, Obinze's mother who is aware is fine with her son's relationship. In this case, Adichie gives us an example of a progressive family. Obinze's mother is thus able to advise Obinze and Ifemelu on sex and contraceptive usage. She tells the couple:

> Ifemelu, you too. It is not my concern if you are embarrassed. You should go into the pharmacy and buy them. You should never ever let the boy be in charge of your own protection. If he does not want to use it, then he

> does not care enough about you and you should not be there. (Adichie, 2013, p. 97).

She makes clear the point that the woman should take charge of her body and should not relinquish that responsibility to the man. Although she gives room to her son and her son's girlfriend to be independent, she still steps in to play her motherly role without being unnecessarily overbearing. Ifemelu, while in America, will say of her when she hears of her death from Obinze: "I am crying as I write this. Do you know how often I wished that she was my mother? She was the only adult—except for Aunty Uju—who treated me like a person with an opinion that mattered. You were so fortunate to be raised by her. She was everything I wanted to be" (p.371).

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie serves us a contrast between two households, giving us the resultant effect of different modules adopted in child upbringing in either household – Eugene's and Ifeoma's. While the former is excessively controlling and exceptionally dictatorial without allowing the slightest room for dissent, the latter encourages individual expressions of opinion while maintaining respect for others. In view of Eugene's method of raising his children, which includes using fear and punishment to coerce compliance, they have not developed self-confidence and have to rely heavily and almost entirely on their father's dictum. The apprehension and fear that handicaps Jaja and Kambili is evident in their interaction with others. Kambili is for instance, unable to interact with schoolmates and classmates. Ade Coker, editor of Eugene's *Standard* newspaper, makes this observation about Jaja and Kambili: "They are always so quiet … So quiet.'' (p.57).

There is a deliberateness to this and Eugene confirms why it is the case noting that: "They are not like those loud children's people are raising these days, with no home training and no fear of God," (p.58). While Eugene seems to be extolling the silence that has encumbered his children instilled by him, Ade Coker, jokingly, reminds him of the dangers that silencing creates: "Imagine what the *Standard* would be if we were all quiet" (p.58). Ade Coker's remarks ties up the relationship that exists between the state and its citizenry with the relationship that exists between Eugene and the rest of his household. This relationship is explored in detail in the next part of this chapter.

An avenue that accentuates the manner of upbringing adopted by the two households is the mood at table. Kambili contrasts the mood at table in Ifeoma's household with that in her father's:

> Laughter floated over my head. Words spurted from everyone, often not seeking and not getting any response. We always spoke with a purpose back home, especially at the table, but my cousins seemed to simply speak and speak and speak. (Adichie, 2003, p.100).

Ifeoma has created an atmosphere in the home where the children can adequately express themselves without feeling victimized – the cloud of fear and apprehension that hovers over Eugene's household is non-existent in Ifeoma's household. Kambili thus narrates: "I had felt as if I were not there, that I was just observing a table where you could say anything at any time to anyone, where the air was free for you to breathe as you wished" (p.120). Describing Aunty Ifeoma's child raising prowess, Kambili says "She looked like a football coach who had done a good job with her team and was satisfied to stand next to

the eighteen-yard box and watch (p.120-121). This statement from Kambili has a direct impact on their confidence level and their ability to express independent opinions. Obiora at age fourteen is able to express personal opinion on important issues unhinged. Kambili who is shocked at it will often turn to watch him when Obiora expresses his views independently and confidently, "imagining myself at fourteen, imagining myself now" (p.132). Contrasting Obiora to herself, Kambili again adds that "He was a bold, male version of what I could never have been at fourteen, what I still was not" (p.138). The confidence that Ifeoma's children exude stems from the environment that Ifeoma provides at home. Kambili testifies of Ifeoma's upbringing technique:

> It was what Aunty Ifeoma did to my cousins, I realized then, setting higher and higher jumps for them in the way she talked to them, in what she expected of them. She did it all the time believing they would scale the rod. And they did. It was different for Jaja and me. We did not scale the rod because we believed we could, we scaled it because we were terrified that we couldn't. (Adichie, 2003, p. 226).

But far from Ifeoma being lax in her upbringing skills and just allowing her children to do whatever they please devoid of any standards, she shows quite contrarily, that she can discipline her children when they go overboard. When Obiora interrupts rudely into a conversation that Ifeoma is having with her colleague, Chiaku, describing her opinion as "unrealistic pep-rally nonsense" (p.245), Ifeoma takes exception to his actions and punishes him by beating him. Even with this, she clarifies the reason for the punishment and tells Obiora:

> I do not quarrel with your disagreeing with my friend. I quarrel with how you have disagreed. I do not raise disrespectful children in this house, do you hear me? You are not the only child who has skipped a class in school. I will not tolerate this rubbish from you! I *na-anu*?" (Adichie, 2003, p. 245).

Ifeoma shows by this that there is a way of raising children without crushing their spirit. She shows, contrary to Eugene's method, that punishments can be measured and that though they have room to proffer their own opinion, it must be measured. Amaka discloses to Kambili how her mother, Ifeoma, punishes her, "I always got the sticks on my palm" (p.245). Despite these forms of discipline, Ifeoma's children are outspoken.

Assessing the solution

In Dewey's (1910) crystalisation of social thought, the final stage involves "arriving at a conclusion through the acceptance or rejection of the solution contemplated by the thinker" (cf. Otite, 1978:2). Novelists are social thinkers and their novels shed light on the individual and collective experiences that assume theoretical meaning. To this end, the proposal that is put forward with regards to a cultural make over in which the woman is considered important and her independent characteristics appreciated is endorsed by Obinze. In *Americanah*, Obinze chooses Ifemelu – a woman described as having a "natural proclivity towards provocation" (p.52), of whom Kayode tells Obinze "If you misbehave, she will flog you" (p.56), who is too much trouble, argues and never agrees (p.60), who is described as having "the spirit of husband-repelling" (p.419) therefore, does not meet the behavioural traditional

expectations of a female or a wife – over Kosi who in every respect meets that behavioural traditional criteria of a female or wife – submissive and agreeing. Obinze says of Kosi, his wife that "She has really basic, mainstream ideas of what a wife should be and she thought my wanting to cook was an indictment of her, which I found silly … There's a lot of pretending in my marriage" (p.450-451).

By this, Adichie shows that it is possible to nuance the conversation about gender and make it traditionally acceptable, that a woman would not need to shrink herself to accommodate the ego of the man once the upbringing and the mindset is changed. By successfully creating a character who is not toxically masculine in his thinking, Adichie shows how workable gender equality is. As a result of Obinze's positive posturing about gender equality, he takes issue against Kosi who hangs on to the mainstream concepts of gender:

> He hung up and thought about the day their baby, slippery, curly-haired Buchi, was born at the Woodlands Hospital in Houston, how Kosi had turned to him while he was still fiddling with his latex gloves and said, with something like apology, "Darling, we'll have a boy next time." He had recoiled. He realized then that she did not know him. She did not know him at all. She did not know he was indifferent about the gender of their child. And he felt a gentle contempt towards her, for wanting a boy because they were supposed to want a boy, and for being able to say, fresh from birthing their first child, those words "we'll have a boy next time. (Adichie, 2013, p. 458)

Obinze thus leaves Kosi, his wife to be with Ifemelu. Significantly, this represents a rejection of the mainstream views about gender and an accommodation of a more progressive view of the matter. In the case of Mama in *Purple Hibiscus*, she poison's Eugene in registering her rejection of the abusive domestic treatment she and her children suffer. In so doing, she breaks away from the mainstream idea about woman's submissiveness to the man and asserts her humanity and dignity. The radicality of Mama's action, however, becomes a double-edged sword as it proves to be immediately costly as her son Jaja is incarcerated after he takes the fall for it and Mama herself becomes mentally unstable in the aftermath. These actions also evidence the fact that issues about gender are endemic and as such require more efforts to pursue. Adichie (2014), indeed, admits that a conversation about gender is a difficult one to have especially because the idea of changing the status quo makes people uncomfortable but nevertheless, it is one she is willing to start.

All these stages of crystallisation of social thought advanced by postcolonial theory, as I have shown, are evidently present in Adichie's novels and cements her as a social thinker. Adichie's novels are a reflection of social processes. These novels are evidently staked by social and personal experiences which she expresses in the TED talks and rather than projective of postcolonial theory, the novels among other things, question the single-story narrative and challenges male dominancy and female subservience. Adichie's counter narrative does not arise in a vacuum. They come against an established system of patriarchy, nourished and kept through socio-cultural formations as well as against stereotypical ideas anchored by hegemonic ideological systems as her experiences shared through the TED encounters reveal. Adichie's narratives are

nurtured by the society based on contemplations about group life and human progress which she restructures into a plot to challenge the normal or rather the abnormal. She theorises female emancipation; that the cultural set-up should not be designed to limit the woman and the recognition of diversity. Through her personal experiences, reflections and encounters, she formulates her narratives of the social; thinking about society and the nature of being. She identifies the problem, defines and locates it, suggests a solution to the issues, assesses its possible validity and arrives at a conclusion thus meeting the five stages that John Dewey (1910) identifies. In making out the problem of stereotypes she postulates that "the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story" (Adichie, 2009). Adichie affirms that she "believes in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes" as the dictionary defines feminism to be but also points out the need for all to recognize that "Yes, there's a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it, we must do better" (Adichie, 2014).

Postcolonialism and Feminism: The Adichie between

The debate awakened by Adichie's comments on postcolonial theory raises questions about how to interpret Adichie's novels and forces us to take another look at them. In this part of the chapter, I consider how the historical schisms between postcolonialism and feminism help in appreciating the comments of Adichie and influence the meaning we give to the novels under study. It is argued that the emphasis tilts towards a feminist reading than a postcolonial theoretical leaning. I argue that the postcolonial theoretical inference is for the basis of stressing irony, that although postcolonial theory is a voice against the marginality of constituents of 'postcoloniality' as Gandhi

(1998) argues and defines it, the seeming limited concerns to the marginality of women is telling.

The gender blindness of postcolonialism

Adichie has through the medium of her writings and other public engagements such as the TED talks made open her feminist stance. Her comments about postcolonial theory read within the framework of her feminist association and the interest that drives the discourse on postcolonial theory lend credence to her disassociation from postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory is mainly anti-colonial in focus, aiming to deconstruct a Western vision of postcolonial nations and to show its prejudice and thus rarely focuses on internal injustices, one of which is gender inequalities which Adichie champions. Said (1993) suggests that anti-colonial resistance differs from anti-colonial critique. He argues that the culture of resistance that greeted the Western imperial enterprise finds its limits, theoretically and politically, in the chauvinist precincts of the postcolonial nation-State itself, a condition which he interprets as a replication of the old colonial divisions of racial consciousness. In other words, though postcolonial theory mobilizes against external imperialism, that is, Western colonialism, it does little to deal with similar injustices prevailing within the postcolony itself. For instance, the struggle for gender parity and the struggle against machoistic masculinities or intoxicating patriarchy, something that Adichie stands for, hardly finds space within the postcolonial theoretical fray. Adichie's distancing from postcolonial theory is thus in line with her feminist stance which frowns upon patriarchal systems within the postcolonial State. Adichie, consequently, points to these injustices in her novels.

The apparent disavowal of postcolonial theory by Adichie who has thrown her weight behind feminism is reflective of its conflictual claims of nationalism and feminism or its lack of attention to women's liberationist activities considering the injustices that women endure within the postcolony. *Purple Hibiscus*, details the obscenities women are placed under. The Achike home which Eugene is the head of, is the abode of such abuses. It becomes a microcosm of the wider national disorder and the silenced citizenry. Mama, Eugene's wife, suffers beating from Eugene whenever she does something Eugene finds punishable. Mama is sometimes "banged against the door" (p.10), or gets a "swollen eye" (p.10) or jagged scar on her forehead (p.15). Papa Eugene's anger is described as "bulldoglike" (p.14). Mama's cleaning of "The étagère [which] had three shelves of delicate glass, and each one held beige ballet-dancing figurines" (p.35) becomes a by-product of the abuse she suffers from Eugene, the husband; whenever she suffers a beating from Eugene, she polishes the étagère. After suffering one such beatings, "Swift, heavy thuds" (p.32), Mama is rushed to the hospital resulting in a miscarriage of pregnancy. On another occasion Mama confesses to the abuses of Eugene after she leaves the hospital to Aunty Ifeoma's place in Nsukka. Asked by Ifeoma why she was at a hospital, she responds looking at Kambili: "You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, *nne*? Your father broke it on my belly." "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." (p.248) having been six weeks pregnant. Jaja at age ten suffers a gnarled finger caused by his father because he missed two questions on his catechism test and was not named the best in his First Holy Communion class (p.145). Eugene coerces his family into silence

such that dissent from any of them is seen as a challenge to his authority and Eugene uses punishments as a means of crushing disagreements. At the point when after Mass, Eugene directs his family to pay a visit to Father Benedict, Beatrice wanted to remain in the car because she was feeling nauseous (p. 29). This outrages Eugene as he feels her actions challenge his authority. Although finally Beatrice follows them, she is receiving more battering when they return home. It is this that leads to her miscarriage. These injustices within the postcolonial state attract less attention from postcolonial theory.

These case of injustices – the domestic violence, child abuse, are not however isolated. There are also instances of state sponsored thuggery against women; a situation where the state security, and soldiers, attack market women. Kambili describes the torturous scenes at the market:

> Soldiers were milling around. Market women were shouting, and many had both hands placed on their heads, in the way that people do to show despair or shock. …As we hurried past, I saw a woman spit at a soldier, I saw the soldier raise a whip in the air. The whip was long. It curled in the air before it landed on the woman's shoulder (Adichie, 2003, p. 44).

These injustices within the postcolonial state do not seem to find an utterance within postcolonial theory, an issue that Said (1993) raises. Kambili identifies with the suffering of one of the women, her "helplessness" and "despair" and relates it with her own suffering that which she endures domestically. She narrates: "I thought about the woman lying in the dirt as we drove home. I had not seen her face, but I felt that I knew her, that I had always known her" (p.44). Kambili's connection with the 'helplessness' and 'despair' is profound since she suffers a similar fate from her father – she, along with her

mother and Jaja, is beaten with a leather belt when she breaks the Eucharistic fast (p.101-102), hot water is poured over her feet while she stands in a bath tub screaming (p.194), and she is kicked severally and severely and ends up being hospitalized for weeks (pp. 210-211).

The *Standard* newspaper also records human right violations such as the story about Nwankiti Ogechi on its cover. "Soldiers shot Nwankiti Ogechi in a bush in Minna. And then they poured acid on his body to melt his flesh off his bones, to kill him even when he was already dead" (p.200-201) leading to Nigeria being suspended from the Commonwealth and Canada and Holland recalling their ambassadors in protest (p.201).

The double standard of postcolonial theory is epitomized by Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus*. Much as postcolonial theory displays double standards in its recognition of imperialism against the postcolonial state while turning a blind eye to injustices within the postcolony, Eugene does the same in his recognition of which injustice he advocates for. While Eugene is a champion of human liberties in public, standing up to the state, in his family, he is a despot. Ade Coker describes Papa Eugene as "a man of integrity, the bravest man I know" (p.42). This view of him corresponds with Eugene's public image as he is engaged in a lot of philanthropic activities and an openly pious man, very religious. Father Benedict speaking of Brother Eugene states that "he used the *Standard* to speak the truth even though it meant the paper lost advertising" (p.5). In public, therefore, he is seen as fighting for freedom, contrary to what pertains in his household where his family feels stifled. His fidelity to the church is zealous. He makes the "biggest donations to Peter's pence and St. Vincent de Paul", "paying for the cartons of communion wine (p.5). He receives a human

rights award from Amnesty World (pp. 5, 137) and very critical of the military regime in Nigeria. Back at the village, where Eugene goes with the family to spend Christmas, his title is "Omelora … The One Who Does for the Community" (p.56). Haruna, the gate man of Eugene's mansion in the village of Abba whose "Hausa-accented English reversed P and F" testifies of Eugene's goodness mentioning to Jaja and Kambili that "our pather was the best Big Man he had ever seen, the best emfloyer he had ever had. Did we know our pather faid his children's school pees? Did we know our pather had helfed his wipe get the messenger job at the Local Government oppice? We were lucky to have such a pather" (p.103). Even after his death, Kambili and Mama discover that "Papa had anonymously donated to the children's hospitals and motherless babies' homes and disabled veterans from the civil war" (p.297). But this version of Eugene is lost on us when we cast him as a family man. Eugene's abusive home becomes a stark reflection of the contradictory stance of the postcolonial state with respect to its unfettered antagonism to colonial injustices and marginality yet a seeming tacit condoning of injustices against women. While Eugene owns and funds a newspaper, the *Standard*, that is critical of government's anti-human right actions and its oppression of the citizenry, he is an abuser at home; beating his wife which causes her to have a pregnancy miscarriage, beating Kambili, the daughter, which causes her to be hospitalized for weeks and stifling dissent and being dictatorial. The contradictory nature of Eugene between his public image and home character must be viewed in the light of postcolonial theory's posturing on anti-colonial injustices on one hand and injustices within the postcolonial state on another hand.

Purple Hibiscus plays out a direct reflection of Said's (1993) view that the postcolonial state can in fact replicate old colonial divisions of racial consciousness. These sentiments are evident in the posturing of society towards women; their sidelining and subordination to men. As Papa-Nnukwu succinctly puts it in *Purple Hibiscus*, "But you are a woman. You do not count." (p.83) thus, evincing how the culture of exclusion of women has been entrenched as traditional believes. The discrimination against women within the postcolonial state though an afront to the struggle against marginality that postcolonial theory pursues, does not find an outlet in the theory. Adichie contends, therefore, that "It is not possible to advocate independence for the African continent without also believing that African women must have the best that the environment can offer. For some of us, this is the crucial element in our feminism" (Adichie, 2007, p. 47 cited in Ann, 2015, p. 429). To the extent that Adichie questions the gender myopia of postcolonial theory, its analytical remit in relation to her novels is also limited. In postcolonialism's sole anti-Western emphasis, Edward Said contends that the postcolonial state's anti-colonial nationalism trajectory glosses over inner conventions and unfairness while making the point that "the nation can become a panacea for *not* dealing with economic disparities, social injustice, and the capture of the newly independent state by a nationalist elite" (Said, 1993, p. 262).

Adichie uses *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah* to mount a vitriolic onslaught against the postcolonial state for its marginalisation of women and other socio-economic injustices by an elite few which has led to the dysfunction of the state. In *Purple Hibiscus* for instance, students hold riots against management of the University of Nsukka accusing them of mismanagement

because among other things, there has been "no light and water for a month" (p.131). Amaka noting that the situation must change says "If I were the V.C., the students would not riot. They would have water and light." (p.132). Obiora properly places the discrepancy within context and blames it on the elites pointing out that "If some Big Man in Abuja has stolen the money, is the V.C. supposed to vomit money for Nsukka?" (p.132), and by this accuses the elitist few that control the levers of the postcolonial state, collectively referring to them as the "Big Man", for fueling the socio-economic injustices of the state. These elites also feature in *Americanah*, "Big Men and Big Women" who are described as not talking to people but "talked at people" (p.24). There is need, therefore, Said (1993, p. 262) argues, for the colonised societies not to only consider the dismantling of colonial hierarchies and structures but a need to also engage in reforming culture. Adichie's comments about postcolonial theory speaks then to how skewed the focus of the theory can be against what she advocates for. Feminism is thus proposed as a point of departure.

Adichie thus creates a narrative that challenges a masculinist cultural view of society. In *Purple Hibiscus* Ifeoma takes up traditionally male considered roles. Even though she is told: "But you are a woman. You do not count" (p.83), she becomes the one that steps up to bury the father, Papa-Nnukwu, when he dies since Eugene, the male, decides to disassociate himself from it. In *Americanah*, Aunty Uju becomes the one who gives the name to her child, something that ordinarily a man should do. These narratives create room for discourse towards reform. For the anti-colonial intellectualization to make more meaning, Said contends that the postcolonial state must be increasingly "critical of itself" especially in paying heed "to the abused rights of all

oppressed classes" (1993, p. 264). By this, postcolonialism is being urged to graft into its aura other movements for emancipation like women's feminist movements within the colonised setting. Said (1993) notes thus, "Students of postcolonial politics have not . . . looked enough at ideas that minimise orthodoxy and authoritarian or patriarchal thought that take a severe view of the coercive nature of identity politics' (p.264). Gandhi (1998) avers that postcolonialism has been derelict in detaching its loyalties from anti-colonial nationalism, notwithstanding Said's admonition and, therefore, has been conflicted by claims of nationalism and feminism (p.82). It is this discordance that informs Adichie's pronouncement on postcolonial theory and reflects in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*.

Just like the 'Othering' of colonised people by the imperial epoch, women become the 'othered' within a patriarchal postcolonial state. Ashcroft (2000) has written of imperialism and patriarchy as two forms of dominance seen over those each view as lesser. Noting "the binary of logic of imperialism" (Ashcroft, 2000, p. 19) inaugurated by colonialist discourse, Ashcroft argues that the imperial colonial structure of binary oppositions facilitates gender inequality among colonised peoples, and patriarchy seeks to perpetuate it in "a violent hierarchy, in which one term of the opposition is always dominant" (2000, p. 19). Wosu (2017) notes how extremist both patriarchy and imperialism are. He indicates that "patriarchy, just like imperialism sets in play circumstances under which the one considered *other* always loses and is subjugated (Wosu, 2017). Sekoni (2008:15) has defined patriarchy as "the appropriation of social power by men to the exclusion of women and the inferiorization of women by men as a way of justifying the subordination of

women." It becomes somewhat hypocritical, therefore, for postcolonialism to be derelict of patriarchy's injustices against women within Africa. While imperialism instigated the desecration of Africa in the colonial past, contemporary African societies are seeing a fundamental form of dominance in the shape of patriarchy. Adichie takes a stance against this by her comments and her narrative emphasis. Some of these comments include her comment on marriage where Adichie emphasised the power of women which should be respected

The female suspicion

It is worth noting that postcolonialism and feminism dwell within the remit of studying and defending marginalized "Others" under repression and domination and therefore, they seem to tread on what Ashcroft et al. (1995: 249) refer to as 'a path of convergent evolution', that is, similar theoretical trajectory, aimed at reversing existing gender/cultural/race disparities and inequalities. Nevertheless, there is a history of documented schisms that challenge the easy harmonization of these two theoretical traditions – postcolonialism and feminism. These schisms help align Adichie's comments on postcolonial theory vis-à-vis her position as a feminist and help to properly interpret the objectives of her novels. Already, some scholars have adopted postcolonial theory as an analytical frame in appreciating Adichie's novels (Yohannes, 2012; Dawson & Larrivée, 2010; Ukande, 2016). This has been done along the features of hybridity, interlanguage, the lack of closure among others. Dawson and Larrivée's (2010) have indeed stated that Adichie's work transcends the postcolonial declaring her "post-postcolonial". What Adichie's comment does is to push us to question these interpretations. Gandhi (1998) notes that a

partnership is being fostered between these theories (postcolonialism and feminism) but points out that it is "at best, a very volatile and tenuous partnership" (p.83). The relationship between the two disciplines according to Gandhi (1998) is hinged on "a mutual suspicion, wherein each discourse constantly confronts its limits and exclusions in the other". Gandhi again mentions three areas that hamper their likely harmony: firstly, "the debate surrounding the figure of the 'third-world woman'; secondly, "the problematic history of the 'feminist-as-imperialist'"; and lastly, the colonialist deployment of 'feminist criteria' to bolster the appeal of the 'civilising mission'" (Gandhi, 1998, p. 83). These areas give postcolonial theory somewhat a justification for its gender blindness. In the novels, however, Adichie does not present the female as an opposition to the anti-colonial/ anti-imperial front. She instead, puts the woman at the forefront as the one who corrects and stands up against the single story that inspire the negative stereotypes about Africa. This is done within the context of championing gender parity rather than a pursuit of a postcolonial theoretical interest. Adichie, therefore, does not divorce an anti-colonial urge from the need to recognize gender parity and inclusivity. The comments of Adichie with regard to postcolonial theory, must thus, be understood in the context of these cleavages between both theories which must feed into how her novels are also analysed.

Postcolonial theory has had cause to suspect the use of feminism as a surreptitious colonial tool and have thus maintained a certain level of suspicion and aversion to it (Spivak, 1985; Gandhi, 1998:83). Concerning the orient, Said makes this pronouncement: 'The Orient that appears in *Orientalism*, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient

into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire' (Said 1991 [1978]: 202–203). Postcolonial theory sees liberal feminism in a similar fashion, a way of grafting the third-world woman into Western learning. Liberal feminism, Talpade Mohanty argues, alludes to colonial references in its postulation of the 'third-world woman' (Talpade Mohanty, 1994). She writes:

> Without the overdetermined discourse that creates the 'third world', there would be no (singular and privileged) first world. Without the 'third-world woman', the particular self-presentation of western women . . . would be problematical . . . the definition of 'the third-world woman' as a monolith might well tie into the larger economic and ideological praxis of 'disinterested' scientific inquiry and pluralism which are the surface manifestations of a latent economic and cultural colonisation of the 'non-western' world (Talpade Mohanty 1994. p. 215–216).

Like colonialism, the liberal feminist presents the third-world woman as the 'Other' of their Western counterpart. In *Americanah*, we see a glimpse of this 'othering' of the 'third world woman' play out. Kelsey, described as an 'aggressively friendly' woman who comes into Mariama's salon, Mariama African Hair Braiding, to get her hair braided, carries herself as a superior woman to Mariama and the staff of the salon in Trenton, America. She proceeds to inquire "where Mariama was from, how long she had been in America, if she had children, how her business was doing" (p.189) with the air of superiority

that accompanies people who feel they are better than others. The following dialogue thus ensues:

> ''Business is up and down but we try," Mariama said
>
> "But you couldn't even have this business back in your country, right? Isn't it wonderful that you get to come to the U.S. and now your kids can have a better life?" Mariama looked surprised. "Yes." "Are women allowed to vote in your country?" Kelsey asked. A longer pause from Mariama. "Yes''. (Adichie, 2013:189)

Kelsey, evidently, presents herself as a more politically matured woman as opposed to the perceived political immaturity of the African women that operate the salon. This view directly aligns with the argument Trinh T. Minh-ha makes in her book *Woman, Native, Other* (1989) in which she ascribes the emergence of the 'third-world woman' to the excursion of Western/liberal feminism. Gandhi (1998, p. 85) notes that Trinh presents her argument by fictionalizing "the paternalistic and self-congratulatory tokenism which sustains 'Special Third World Women's' readings, workshops, meetings and seminars". According to Trinh, these seemingly cross-cultural events and encounters obfuscate an irksome ideology of separatism which expects the 'native woman' to be a showcase of difference from the Western feminist. As she puts it, 'It is as if everywhere we go, we become Someone's private zoo' (Trinh, 1989, p. 82). The tone of Kelsey's questioning of Mariama suggests she has an eccentric view of women in Africa and is therefore expecting Mariama to confirm such pristine versions of the African woman she has in mind. Consequently, a tacit culturalist hierarchy is foisted wherein the 'native woman' and not the Western

counterpart suffers through the awareness of difference. Trinh contends that the Western feminist ascribes to herself the privilege of a way farer, 'preparing the way for one's more "unfortunate" sisters' thus establishing a division between 'I-who-have-made-it and You-who-cannot-make-it' (Trinh, 1989:86), and elevating the first world woman over the third-world woman, a sentiment implied in Kelsey's questioning-conversation with Mariama. Talpade Mohanty (1994, p. 196) has argued that the "Third World Woman" as a singular monolithic subject in some recent (Western) feminist texts' has colonial underpinnings because, among other considerations, the composite 'Othering' of the 'third-world woman' becomes a self-consolidating project for Western feminism" (Gandhi, 1998, p. 85). But contrary to presenting the woman as a discovery of the West, or its 'Other', Adichie puts her forth as one who is politically matured and culturally conscious, who knows her intrinsic worth and ready to fight for what she believes. Ifemelu becomes that politically aware woman who starts an online blog about race in America. Rather than the third-world woman being a subject of eccentric voyeurism for the west, her commentary on the racial and socio-political stratifications of America attracts attention and commentary. Adichie also presents the woman as a co-player in tilting the obfuscated Western driven narrative about Africa. When Kelsey divulges that she is going to Africa and opines an ill-informed knowledge of Africa based on an interpretation of a book read:

> I've been reading books to get ready. Everybody recommended *Things Fall Apart*, which I read in high school. It's very good but sort of quaint, right? I mean like it didn't help me understand modern Africa. I've just read

> this great book, *A Bend in the River*. It made me truly understand how modern Africa works." … "It's just so honest, the most honest book I've read about Africa," (Adichie, 2013, p. 189-190)

Ifemelu becomes the counter voice that deflates Kelsey's flawed knowing. Ifemelu, though is disinterested in having a conversation with her, is pushed to make a comment on the back of Kelsey's (mis)interpretation of *A Bend in the River* of which she holds a contrary view of. Ifemelu leans back on her seat and says in measured tone:

> It was about Europe, or the longing for Europe, about the battered self-image of an Indian man born in Africa, who felt so wounded, so diminished, by not having been born European, a member of a race which he had elevated for their ability to create, that he turned his imagined personal insufficiencies into an impatient contempt for Africa; in his knowing haughty attitude to the African, he could become, even if only fleetingly, a European. (Adichie, 2013, p. 190)

Kelsey, finding the unexpected response startling said kindly, "Oh, well, I see why you would read the novel like that." And Ifemelu in turn responds, "And I see why you would read it like you did," (p.190). Ifemelu deals with the misconception, becoming that counter force that dismantles stereotypical and imperialist ideas about Africa.

Although the gender blindness of postcolonial theory has been critiqued, the alignment of Western feminism to the imperial epoch which makes it complicit to the imperialist project has been used as a justification for the opprobrium that postcolonial theory attached to liberal feminism. Sharpe's (1993) *Allegories of Empire* unveils the female imperialist, thus showing women as role-players in the practice of empire. The figure of the 'feminist imperialist' disturbs the probable concordance between postcolonialism and feminism. Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* will use Aunty Ifeoma to project a positive narrative about women's role in the cultural emancipation process. Feminists have also often invoked what they term the double colonisation of the 'third-world woman' to denote her suffering under patriarchy and western colonialism. Mohanty(1994) evinces that the narrative of 'double colonisation' of the third-world woman is so easily invoked by feminist as a way of juxtaposing the political immaturity of third-world women with the progressiveness of Western feminism such that in comparison with their Western counterparts who represent themselves "as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and "sexualities", and the "freedom" to make their own decisions', the third world woman is perceived as "ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domesticated, family-oriented, victimised" (p. 200), thus giving credence to the opportunistic salvific ideological stance of the Western feminism. The major female characters of Adichie's novels are not portrayed in these sordid forms as Western feminists paint 'third-world women' to be. Characters like Ifeoma and Amaka in *Purple Hibiscus* and Ifemelu in *Americanah* are independent minded, educated, and politically matured women and critical in their actions and do not become the 'other' of the Western

woman. Through these characters, Adichie justifies the inclusivity of the female in the role of cultural emancipation.

Positioning the feminist angle within the discourse of decolonisation

The face of cultural emancipation has largely been male. Feminism has been projected as anti-African and the campaign for gender equality has been perceived as a threat to the decolonisation agenda (Fanon, 1965). In *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*, Adichie puts the cause of women in focus. Rather than pursue a postcolonial theoretical objective, as some have interpreted her work to mean, she anchors her stance on the right of women, the recognition of feminine efforts within the decolonisation process and her advocacy for gender parity. Adichie's novels are an attempt to change that machoistic narrative within the cultural emancipation discourse, offering the opportunity to nuance the conversation and challenge long held perspectives that hold gender parity advocates in suspicion with respect to this course.

Postcolonialism has not fully resolved the conflictual matter of 'feminist emancipation' and 'cultural emancipation' (Gandhi, 2019) According to Kirsten Holst Petersen, postcolonialism is unable to decide 'which is the more important, which comes first, the fight for female equality or the fight against Western cultural imperialism?' (Holst Peterson in Gandhi, 2019, p. 252). To the extent that the interests and focus of postcolonialism still vary from those that Adichie expressly advocates for, her comments on postcolonial theory serves to register her disinterest. Postcolonialism has evidently favoured nationalist interest over gender concerns and has opposed anything that it deems threatening to its anti-colonial interest, even a feminist agenda.

In Frantz Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism*, we see this rift between feminist concerns and nationalist concerns playout as Fanon uses the 'veiled Algerian woman' to exhibit colonial and anti-colonial contentions. Criticism against Algerian patriarchy was interpreted as an attempt to divide the united frontiers of national revolution. Fanon posits that the coloniser destabilises Algerian society via its women:

> If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and, in the houses, where the men keep them out of sight. (Fanon 1965:57–58)

By this, Fanon makes Algerian women the tool that can be used to foil nationalism or used to derail an anti-colonial pursuit. Fanon thus politicises the veil (*haik*) and reconstitutes colonialism as a project of 'unveiling Algeria' thus construing the feminine *haik* as a metaphor for political elusiveness. It reveals a nationalist anxiety; a situation in which feminism is fronted as an afront to nationalism. The veiled Algerian woman, according to Fanon, therefore, 'in imposing such a restriction on herself, in choosing a form of existence limited in scope, was deepening her consciousness of struggle and preparing for combat' (Fanon, 1965, p. 66). Feminist readers find Fanon's representation of Algerian women problematic and wonder if nationalist discourse is about women not speaking as Villanova, (2018) argues. According to Gandhi, (2019, p. 94-95), these terms betray postcolonial theory's "own uneasy complicity with nationalist discourses whenever it announces itself as the only legitimate mouthpiece for native women". Adichie's comments on postcolonial theory

must be framed within these remits of an express rift between postcolonialism and feminism. Gandhi, (2019) puts it succinctly when she mentions that these nationalist anxieties reveal "the historical origins of the postcolonial animosity toward liberal feminism" (Gandhi, (2019, p. 97). Adichie's work interpreted in a strict postcolonial theoretical sense, therefore, would seem problematic.

While Fanon (1965) seems to view the female as a tool that white/ liberal feminists or imperialists could use to mount an anti-nationalism pursuit, Adichie portrays the female as a role player in the decolonisation process without sacrificing her liberties. Adichie as a feminist is not silent on colonialism. In fact, with *Purple Hibiscus*, she questions the uncritical acceptance of Western claims to cultural superiority through the church, and the English language, which abode the rejection of local tradition and culture. In doing so, however, she does not divorce it from the need for gender parity and inclusion of women. Aunty Ifeoma in one of her letters to Kambili while in America notes:

> There are people, … who think that we cannot rule ourselves because the few times we tried, we failed, as if all the others who rule themselves today got it right the first time. It is like telling a crawling baby who tries to walk, and then falls back on his buttocks, to stay there. As if the adults walking past him did not all crawl, once.
>
> (Adichie, 2003, p. 301)

Aunty Ifeoma is not only cast as a depatriarchalizing figure, but in this case, she is also characterized as a decolonising figure. The African woman (third-world woman) in her assertiveness is not made an accomplice to colonialism. Ifeoma, though stands up to the patriarchal establishment and the

injustices against women within the postcolonial state – asserting her place and standing up against Eugene, advising Mama to leave Eugene because of his abuses, questioning why women should not count and questioning mainstream ideas about marriage that disadvantages the woman – she still challenges the view that Africa cannot rule itself. She questions the basis of that assertion noting strongly how a setback in the exercise of self-governance is not a warranty of failure. With the character of Ifeoma, Adichie puts the woman at the forefront of defending Africa's independence and managerial integrity. While Fanon (1965) speaks about nationalism in exclusive terms where a critique of patriarchy was interpreted as an attack on national revolution, Adichie complicates the narrative in which case the critique of colonialism is not exclusive and unthreatened by the gender equality concerns.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Amaka, who is Aunty Ifeoma's daughter and a cousin to Kambili, also defies the establishment, refusing to kowtow to the demands of the church to take an English name in relation to her baptism, "I told you I am not taking an English name, Father," (p.271). She does not cave-in to the social pressures impressed upon her and questions the status quo. She calls for a reexamination of principles.

Eugene is clearly a colonial creation. His alignment to what is western undergirds his relationship with his family and community. Aunty Ifeoma says of him that he is "too much of a colonial product" (p.13) which holds true concerning his aversion to indigenous things. For instance, "He hardly spoke Igbo" (p.13) and dislikes his children speaking Igbo in public. He describes traditional festivals as "heathen festivals" and prevents his children from associating with them or anything he considers heathen resulting in his sour

relationship with his father, Papa-Nnukwu, because Papa-Nnukwu would not convert to Christianity. His negative attitude towards his father is an influence of the church. The church in this situation becomes a colonial reference and its position becomes the fulcrum around which Eugene's world revolves. However, in relating to his father in-law who "was very light-skinned, almost albino," liked by the missionaries, determinedly spoke English, always, in a heavy Igbo accent, "knew Latin, too, often quoted the articles of Vatican I, and spent most of his time at St. Paul's, where he had been the first catechist" (pp.67-68), his attitude is different. Eugene is proud of his father in-law because, according to him, "He did things the right way, the way the white people did, not what our people do now!" (p.68). Eugene's comment is an endorsement of "white" rulership over self-rule since in essence he points out that the white people were doing things right and his kind, the people of the Nigerian society, and by extrapolation Africans, are doing things the wrong way. While he willingly downplays the capabilities of his people to manage their own affairs and chides their ways in favour of the way of the white people, Ifeoma, in the letter to Kambili, rejects such proposition and considers the Nigerian – African people capable of self-rule. Adichie makes the woman lead the charge for Africa's self-assertiveness, self-actualisation and capability for self-rule. Adichie in essence questions the system that privileges men over women in matters of countering imperialism and Western colonisation. Eugene on the contrary, by his attitude and wholesale acceptance of the church rejects African culture. Papa-Nnukwu makes the point that "it was the missionaries that misled my son" (p.84), evincing the disruptiveness of Western colonisation and influence.

Amaka tells Father Amadi, who is to go on missionary work in Europe, of the need to repackage Christianity. She says to him: "The white missionaries brought us their god, … Which was the same color as them, worshiped in their language and packaged in the boxes they made. Now that we take their god back to them, shouldn't we at least repackage it?" (p.267). By this, she touches on the need to define and interpret things to fit the local context or to put a signature to it. Rather than see women and feminism as a counteractive force that operates against cultural emancipation which is the focus of postcolonial theory, thus justifying the gender blindness of postcolonialism, Adichie stresses the criticality of the female and her role in ensuring cultural emancipation thus, challenging postcolonialism's gender neglect.

Conclusion

This chapter examined *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah* from two broad perspectives. It first looked at the novels as anchoring Adichie's philosophical stance as revealed in her TED talks by drawing a linkage between Adichie's experiences and thought processes and the two novels and walking them through Dewey's (1910) five stages of crystallisation of social thought. It submits that Adichie theorises female emancipation and challenges stereotypes. Second, the chapter examined how Adichie's novels tilt towards a feminist stance rather that pursue a postcolonial theoretical objective as her comments on postcolonial theory suggests. In doing so, she does not present the woman as an opposition to the agenda for cultural decolonisation but a partner and a forerunner without deviating from her stance on gender parity.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Introduction

The previous chapter analyzed the two texts of Adichie selected for this dissertation - *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*- largely based on how they are attached or detached from a postcolonial theoretical view in the light of Adichie's comments on postcolonial theory. The current chapter presents a summary of the findings of the research, some implications and conclusions drawn from the study, and some recommendations for further research.

Summary of the study

This study set out to find out whether in light of Adichie's rejection of postcolonial theory an alternate analytical viewpoint could be identified in Adichie own non-creative works. Consequently, it has examined Adichie as a social thinker and has used Adichie's TED talks as a theoretical prism in connecting her novels with the ideas that are raised in the TED talk. The study has argued that Adichie's pursuit of female emancipation and gender parity as well as her critique of stereotypes, what she refers to as "the single story", as raised in the TED encounters have underpinned the narrative in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*. Stories theorise and Adichie uses her storytelling to drive a feminist agenda; one that challenges patriarchy and female sidelining. She weaves a counter narrative about the positioning of women within the African worldview by making female characters the focus of the novels, questioning the motive of a culture that undermines women's role within the socio-cultural, economic and political space, of relegating women to the background and making them subservient to men without recourse to ability and talent. She also

recalibrates the place of men within the social space and challenges their place as cultural superiors to women by allowing her female characters like Aunty Ifeoma in Purple Hibiscus to perform tasks that are traditionally reserved for men such as holding the funeral for her father, Papa Nnukwu, when Eugene the male refuses to do so.

Adichie's theoretical focus is accentuated in her "The danger of a single story" and "We should all be feminists" – which show her social philosophical persuasions that come across in her novels. As a social thinker, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie does not merely reproduce existing postcolonial thought, but as the analysis done in this dissertation attests to, particularly the first part of chapter four, she establishes guiding patterns of thought made evident in the TED Talks, and invokes a conscious analysis that takes into cognizance the collective experiences of the African women as a social group. The TED talks lay out the ideas born through experiences and observations which feed into the novels reflecting a counter narrative of mainstream societal views on women through a contemplation of social life and its reflection.

Summary of key findings

From the first objective which sought to examine the extent to which Adichie's works (*Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*) support postcolonial theory, the study has shown that Adichie sought to do two main things by her novels. One, to challenge patriarchy and two, to engender nuance in stories towards challenging the single story. Adichie clearly navigates a cultural labyrinth of patriarchy and female sideling. She succeeds in creating independent minded female characters that assert themselves and make their voices count. She also nuanced the conversation about feminism.

Additionally, from the second and third objectives which examined the relationship between Adichie's TED talks and how Adichie's feminism stance, theoretically opposed to the postcolonial, it is was revealed that, Adichie makes the point that the advocacy of gender parity or the feminist agenda is not just about women but very gender inclusive. Consequently, she creates men like Jaja and Obiora in *Purple Hibiscus* and Obinze in *Americanah* that deviate in their views about women and hold progressive views on gender parity thus become role players in addressing concerns about women.

However, a couple of challenges arise from the novel. The creation of the progressive man feeds into another narrative, the idea that it takes the man to fight for the woman. Jaja after observing Obiora's activeness and role in the Ifeoma household feels derelict as a man and thus starts to act in a manner to assert dominance as male in his family. In so doing, Jaja tries to take the blame for his sister's action when Eugene notices the painting of Papa-Nnukwu with Kambili who says "O nkem. It's mine," (p.209) in a bid to suffer the punishment that should have gone to Kambili. However, in trying to assert his position as a man, he invariably makes the women look weak as being unable to stand up for themselves. In this case though, Kambili stands up for herself and claims ownership for the painting knowing fully well the repercussions (a punishment from the father) of that action. Obiora who believes the responsibility to protect the family rests on him by virtue of being male confronts the men who claim to be from the special security division in Port Harcourt that come to raid their home, but is quickly quieted by Ifeoma. Jaja feels pressured to do same and confesses: "I should have taken care of Mama. Look how Obiora balances Aunty Ifeoma's family on his head, and I am older than he is. I should have

taken care of Mama" (p.289). Consequently, he takes the fall for her mother's poisoning of his father by confessing to the police that he had poisoned the father to death with rat poison. Jaja takes over the male position when his father dies; he notifies his mother to tie her scarf well and her mother quickly complies (p.309) although Kambili had earlier told her to do so but she did not.

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined the connotations or implications of Adichie's comment and how it influences the reading of her novels. Based on the historical rifts between postcolonialism and (liberal) feminism – the gender blindness of postcolonialism due to its unfettered anti-colonial focus and lack of attention to internal injustices. and postcolonialism's suspicion of feminism implicating it in the activities of imperialism – Adichie's aversion to postcolonial theory gains meaning. The study submits that Adichie does not pursue a postcolonial theoretical objective but one of women emancipation and gender parity. Adichie does not present the female as opposed to cultural emancipation but does not divorce the need for gender parity from cultural emancipation

This dissertation has adequately examined the issues that connect Adichie's TED Talks and her novels, issues bordering on the social preference for male leadership over female leadership, the subservience of women, the manipulative nature of marriage against women and its associated issues of childbearing difficulties and divorce, the challenge with stereotypes, the nature of upbringing, and cultural handicaps against women. The study shows how Adichie proposes these issues be tackled and examines the results. It has also examined the postcolonial interpretations vis-à-vis Adichie's feminist stance

and submits that Adichie's works draw more to a feminist course rather that a postcolonial theoretical reading

Adichie's comments on postcolonial theory challenges us to take a relook at the interpretation we offer to her novels. Postcolonial theory although has served as an analytical tool in appreciating her novels, Adichie's seeming aversion to the theory belie these analyses; suggesting that Adichie might not have been influenced by postcolonial theoretical considerations. Although her comment does not devalue the connections that scholars have noted between her work and postcolonialism, at best it offers the need to consider an alternative analytical prism

Recommendations

Considering this study's findings, I wish to make the following recommendations for further research:

(1) Further studies may be done on the influence of male characters in order to know if they determine Adichie's quest of female emancipation and entrench male dominance. This is especially useful since the analysis in this study has focused mainly on female characters.

(2) Further studies may reveal more about the stylistic devices inherent in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah.* This will help to create clarity, imagery and emphasis within the two novels with the hope of engaging the reader.

(3) While this was not the focus, I recommend that the influence of the male characters be studied if they determine Adichie's quest of female emancipation and entrench male dominance

REFERENCES

Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann Publications, London, UK.

Achebe, C. (1975). *Morning yet on creation day: Essays*. Anchor Press.

Achebe, C. (1977). An Image of Africa. *The Massachusetts Review*, *18*(4), 782-794. The Bonn Press, Bonn Germany.

Achebe, C. (1987). *Anthills of the Savannah*. London: Heinemann. Heinemann Publications, London, UK.

Acholonu, C. (1988). *Buchi Emecheta Perspectives on Nigerian Literature 1700 to the Present*. Lagos: Yemi Ogunbuyi.

Acholonu, C. (1995). *Motherism: The Afro-Centric Alternative to Feminism*. Abuja: Afa Productions. Abuja, Nigeria.

Adebanwi, W. (2014). The writer as social thinker. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, *32*(4), 405-420.

Adesunmbo, O. E. (2019). The dynamic interplay of the global and local environments: A study of Chimamanda Adichies Americanah. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, *8*(1), 19-27.

Adichie, C. N. (2009). The Danger of a Single Story. Retrieved on March 17, 2020 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg.

Adichie, C. N. (2014). *We should all be feminists*. Vintage.

Aidoo, A. A. (1985). Women in the History and Culture of Ghana. *Research Review*, *1*(1), 14-51.

Akpome, A. (2017). Cultural criticism and feminist literary activism in the works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. *Gender and Behaviour*, *15*(4), 9847-9871.

Amartey, C. (2013). *Articulations of Womanism in Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and Emecheta's The Joys of Motherhood* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Ghana).

Ambanasom, S. A. (2003). *Education of the Deprived: A study of four Cameroonian Playwrights*. Yaounde Publishing House.

ANN, I. I. (2015). Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and the issue of feminism in African novel. *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, *5*(6), 426-437.

Anyidoho, N. A., et al. (2016). Roles, Representations and Perceptions of Women in Contemporary Ghana. ISSER Final Report for SLIG Project.

Anyokwu, C. (2011, June). Igbo rhetoric and the new Nigerian novel: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple hibiscus. In *The African Symposium* (Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 80-90).

Arhin, K. (1983). Political and military roles of Akan women. *Female and male in West Africa*, 91-98.

Ashcroft, B. (2002). Excess: Post-colonialism and the Verandahs of Meaning. In *De-scribing Empire* (pp. 45-56). Routledge.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2003). *The empire writes back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*. Routledge.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2003). *The empire writes back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*. Routledge.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (Eds.). (1995). *The post-colonial studies reader*. Psychology Press.

Azam, A. (2014). What is Orientalism?. *International Journal of English and Education*, *3*(3), 423-433.

Badmus, E. (2019). Nigerian Women Growing Up: Purple Hibiscus and The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives. *From The European South*, 5, 97-111.

Baker, P., Gabrielatos, C., Khosravinik, M., Krzyżanowski, M., McEnery, T., & Wodak, R. (2008). A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics to examine discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press. *Discourse & society*, *19*(3), 273-306.

Bamberg, M. (2012). A constructivist approach to narrative development. In *Narrative development* (pp. 103-146). Routledge.

Bell, L. A. (2003). Telling tales: What stories can teach us about racism. *Race, ethnicity and education*, *6*(1), 3-28.

Bhabha, H. (1994). The Other Question; Stereo-type, Discrimination and Discourse of Colonialism."In The Location of Culture. New York: Routledge.

Boehmer, E. (2017). differential Publics—reading (in) the Postcolonial Novel. *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, *4*(1), 11-25.

Bonnycastle, S. (2007). *In Search of Authority-: An Introductory Guide to Literary Theory*. Broadview Press.

Chachage, C. (2018). Is *Chimamanda Adichie a Postcolonial Theorist?* Africablooging. Retrieved on March 17, 2020, from http://www.africablogging.org/is-chimamanda-adichie-a-postcolonial-theorist.

Chatterjee, P. (1993). *The nation and its fragments: Colonial and postcolonial histories* (Vol. 4). Princeton University Press.

Chennells, A. (1999). Essential diversity: Post-colonial theory and African literature.

Chukukere, G. C. (1995). Gender voices and choices: Redefining women in contemporary African fiction.

Chukwuma, H. C. (1990). Voices and choices: The feminist dilemma in four African novels.

Cihodariu, M. (2012). Narratives as instrumental research and as attempts of fixing meaning. The uses and misuses of the concept of "narratives". *Journal of comparative research in anthropology and sociology*, *3*(02), 27-43.

Coonfield, G. (2009). Storytelling as communication and ritual: Addiction narrative through a blue lens. *Storytelling, Self, Society*, *5*(3), 176-192.

Cottle, S. (2006). Mediatized rituals: Beyond manufacturing consent. *Media, culture & society*, *28*(3), 411-432.

Davies, C. B. (2007). Some notes on African feminism. *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory. Eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing*, 561-569.

Dawson, E., & Larrivée, P. (2010). Attitudes to language in literary sources: Beyond post-colonialism in Nigerian literature. *English Studies*, *91*(8), 920-932.

Delgado, R. (1989). Storytelling for oppositionists and others: A plea for narrative. *Michigan Law Review*, *87*(8), 2411-2441.

Denzin, N. (2003). Foreword: narrative's moment. *Lines of narrative*, 11-13.

Dewey, J. (1910). How we think. boston: Dc Heath & co. *Teaching to Teach with Purpose and Passion*.

Diamond, L. (1989). Fiction as political thought.

do Espirito Santo, L. (2016). *If You Don't Like Their Story, Write Your Own: Chimamanda Adichie's Americanah and the New Postcolonial Literature* (Doctoral dissertation).

Eke, G. O., & Njoku, A. (2020). African women in search of global identity: An exploration of feminism and Afropolitanism in Chimamanda Adichie's works. *Journal of Gender and Power*, *13*(1), 151-169.

Erasga, D. S. (2010). When story becomes theory: Storytelling as sociological theorizing. *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*, *10*(1), 21-38.

Fanon, F. (2022). *A dying colonialism*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc..

Fonchingong, C. C. (2006). Unbending gender narratives in African literature. *Journal of International Women's studies*, *8*(1), 135-147.

Fox-Genovese, E. (1982). *Placing women's history in history* (pp. 5-29). New Left Review.

Frank, K. (1987). Women without men: The feminist novel in Africa. *African literature today*, (15), 14-34.

Fwangyil, G. A. (2011). A reformist-feminist approach to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus. *African Research Review*, *5*(3).

Gandhi, L. (1998). *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Columbia: Columbia University Press. Colombia, Australia

Gandhi, L. (2019). Postcolonial theory. In *Postcolonial Theory*. Columbia University Press.

Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. M. (1988). Narrative and the self as relationship. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 21, pp. 17-56). Academic Press.

Goredema, R. (2010). African feminism: the African woman's struggle for identity. *African Yearbook of Rhetoric*, *1*(1), 33-41.

Gregori-Signes, C., & Alcantud-Díaz, M. (2016). Digital community storytelling as a sociopolitical critical device. *Journal of Community Positive Practices*, (1), 19-36.

Griffiths, G., Ashcroft, H. T. B., Ashcroft, B., & Tiffin, H. (2000). *Post-colonial studies: The key concepts*. Psychology Press.

Habib, M. A. R. (2008). *A history of literary criticism: from Plato to the present*. John Wiley & Sons.

Hagan, G. P. (1983). Marriage, divorce and polygyny in Winneba. *Female and male in West Africa*, 192-203.

Hallward, P. (2001). *Absolutely postcolonial: Writing between the singular and the specific*. Manchester University Press.

Hallward, P. (2001). *Absolutely postcolonial: Writing between the singular and the specific*. Manchester University Press.

Harsh, R. (2017). Representation of Chauvinistic Model of Religion and Individualistic Nature of Faith in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus. *Global Colloquies: An International Journal of World Literatures and Cultures*, *3*, 98-112.

Harth, A. E. (2012). Representations of Africa in the Western news media: Reinforcing myths and stereotypes. *Department of Politics and Government, ISU*.

Hewitt, R. (1997). *The Possibilities of Society: Wordsworth, Coleridge and the Sociological Viewpoint of English Romanticism*. Indiana, IN: SUNY Press. Indiana, USA

Hountundji, P. J. (1983). *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*. Hutchinson: Hutchinson University Library for Africa. Hutchinson, UK

Hughes, S. H. (1958). *Consciousness and Society*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers. New Jersey, USA

Humm, M. (1992). Feminisms: a reader (Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf).

Irele, A. (1990). *The African experience in literature and ideology* (Vol. 569). Indiana University Press.

James, M. (2010). A Post Modern and Postcolonial analysis of Nigerian Literature. *and Nnamdi Ihuegbu,'Colonialism and Independence: Nigeria as a Case Study', quoted in Lucie Pojetová,'The Influence of British Colonization on Nigerian Literature: The Case Study of Chinua Achebe', op. cit*, 8.

Jameson, F. (1984). Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. *New Left Review*, 146, 53-92.

Jazeel, T. (2019). *Postcolonialism*. Routledge. Publications. London, UK

Jha, K. (2016). Fictional World of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: A Thematic Study of Selected Works. *PhD diss. Mohanlal Sukhadia University, India*.

Jick, H. K., & Nkweteyim, T. P. (2016). Alternative Vision of Gender in the New Literatures of Africa in English: An Appraisal of Bole Butake's Dramaturgy. *Journal of Education and Practice*, *7*(17), 13-22.

Kiunguyu, K. (February 12, 2018). *Postcolonial Theory is the Force Dismantling What Chimamanda Adichie Termed The "Single Story" Narrative*. Retrieved from http://thisisafrica.me/postcolonial-theory-chimamanda-adichie/

Kolawole, M. E. (1997). Womanism and African consciousness.

Kolawole, M. E. M. (2000). Feminine preoccupations in African literature: a theoretical appraisal. *Opata and Ohaegbu. Major Themes in African Literature. AP Express Publishers*.

Krishnan, M. (2010). Biafra and the aesthetics of closure in the third generation Nigerian novel. *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, *2*(2), 182-190.

Laishram, S. (2010). Impact of socio cultural crisis in the fiction of Chinua Achebe.

Lee, F. R. (2014). *New wave of African Writers with an Internationalist Bent*. The New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/30/arts/new-wave-of-african-writers-with-an-internationalist-bent.html>

Lyotard, J. F. (1979). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Minnesot, USA

Lyotard, J. F. (1992). The Postmodern Explained to Children: Correspondence 1982–1985, trans. *Don Barry, Bernadette Maher, Julian Pefanis, Virginia Spate and Morgan Thomas, London: Turnaround*.

Mahmud, T. (2018). What's Next: Counter-Stories and Theorizing Resistance (Foreword). *Seattle J. for Soc. Just.*, *16*(3), 607.

Marx, J. (2004). Postcolonial literature and the Western literary canon. *The Cambridge companion to postcolonial literary studies*, 83-96.

Mbembe, A. (1992). Provisional notes on the postcolony. *Africa*, *62*(1), 3-37.

Mbembe, A., and Annalisa Oboe. (n.d.) *Africa and the Night of Language (An Interview with Achille Mbembe)*. Salon 2. Retrieved on March 24, 2020 from http://jwtc.org.za/resources/docs/salon-volume-2/achillembembe_interview.pdf.

McAdams, D. P. (2008). Personal narratives and the life story. In John, Robins & Pervin (Eds.) *Handbook of personality: Theory and Research*. New York: Guilford Press. New York, UK

McClintock, A. (1992). The angel of progress: Pitfalls of the term" post-colonialism". *Social Text*, *31*, 1-15.

McEwan, C. (2018). *Postcolonialism, decoloniality and development*. Routledge.

McLeod, J. (2020). Beginning postcolonialism. In *Beginning postcolonialism (second edition)*. Manchester University Press.

Michira, J. N. (2002). Images of Africa in the western media.

Mohanty, C. T. (2015). □ Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. In *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory* (pp. 196-220). Routledge.

Mongia, P. (Ed.). (2021). *Contemporary postcolonial theory: A reader*. Routledge.

Musila, G. A. (2018). Chimamanda Adichie: The daughter of postcolonial theory. *Al Jazeera*, *5*.

Mutiso, G. C. M. (1974). *Socio-political thought in African literature: Weusi?*. London: Macmillan.

Nelson, D. (2018). *Narrative Theory and Adult Learning: A Review of the Literature*. ResearchGate. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326252185.

Ngara, E. (1989). The portrayal of women in African literature. *Kunapipi*, *11*(3), 10.

Ngubane, S. J. (2010). *Gender roles in the African culture: implications for the spread of HIV/AIDS* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch).

Ogundipe-Leslie, M. (1984). African Women, Culture and'Another Development'. *Journal of African Marxists*, (5), 77-92.

Ogunyankin, G. A. (2019). Postcolonial approaches to the study of African politics. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*.

Ogunyemi, C. O. (1985). Womanism: The dynamics of the contemporary black female novel in English. *Signs: Journal of women in Culture and Society*, *11*(1), 63-80.

Ogunyemi, C. O. (1988). Women and Nigerian literature.

Olaniyan, T., & Quayson, A. (Eds.). (2007). *African literature: An anthology of criticism and theory* (pp. 683-697). Blackwell Pub.

Olushola, L. M. (2015). The Interplay of Language, Style and Ideology in Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah and Adichie's Purple Hibiscus. *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities, 3*(1), 260-283.

Onyango, O. V. (2019). Negotiation of Cross-Cultural Complexities of New Worlds in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novels. *Mediterranean Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences, 3* (2), 180-202.

Oriaku, R. (1996). Buchi Emecheta is not a Feminist then What? In A. Adebayo (Ed). *Feminism and Black Women's Creative Writing. Theory, Practice, Criticism*, 72-90. Ibadan: AMD Publishers. Ibadan, Nigeria

Osei-Nyame, K. (1999). Chinua Achebe Writing Culture: Representations of Gender and Tradition in" Things Fall Apart". *Research in African Literatures, 30*(2), 148-164.

Osei-Nyame, K. (2010). Chinua Achebe Writing Culture: Representations of Gender and Tradition in Things Fall Apart. *Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart*.

Ouma, C. E. W. (2007). *Journeying out of Silenced Familial Spaces in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand).

Oyěwùmí, O. (1997). *The invention of women: Making an African sense of western gender discourses*. U of Minnesota Press.

Palmberg, M. (Ed.). (2001). *Encounter images in the meetings between Africa and Europe*. Nordic Africa Institute.

Quayson, A. (2000). *Postcolonialism: Theory, practice or process*. Polity.

Quayson, A. (2003). *Calibrations: Reading for the social* (Vol. 12). U of Minnesota Press.

Richardson, D. E., & Robinson, V. E. (1993). *Thinking feminist: Key concepts in Women's Studies*. Guilford Press.

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Sage.

Rothenbeuhler, E. (1989). *Ritual Communication: From Everyday Conversation to Mediated Ceremony*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. London, UK.

Ruthven, K. K., & Ruthven, K. K. (1990). *Feminist literary studies: an introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

Sadek, S. (2014). The struggle of African women in selected works by Ngugi Wa Thiongo. *European Scientific Journal*, *10*(5).

Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books. New York, USA

Said, E. W. (2012). *Culture and imperialism*. Vintage.

Sarkhel, R. D. (2015). "Many Stories Matter": Narrations beyond the Boundaries of the ''Postcolonial" in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie"s Short Stories. *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, *3*(4). 763-770.

Schipper, M. (1987). Mother Africa on a pedestal: the male heritage in African literature and criticism. *Women in African Literature Today. A Review*, (15), 35-54.

Sekoni, R. (2008) The semiotics of class struggle in pre-colonial narrative systems. In Darah, G. G. (ed.). *Radical Essays on Nigerian literatures*, 13-24. Lagos: Malthouse. Lagos, Nigeria

Sharpe, J. (1993). *Allegories of empire: The figure of woman in the colonial text*. U of Minnesota Press.

Spivak, G. C. (2014). Three women's texts and a critique of imperialism. In *Postcolonial criticism* (pp. 145-165). Routledge.

Steady, F. C. (1987). African feminism: A worldwide perspective.

Sudarkasa, N. (1986). " The Status of Women" in Indigenous African Societies. *Feminist Studies*, *12*(1), 91-103.

Tiffin, C., & Lawson, A. (Eds.). (1994). *De-scribing empire: post-colonialism and textuality*. Taylor & Francis.

Tiffin, H. (1987). Post-colonial literatures and counter-discourse. *Kunapipi*, *9*(3), 4.

Trinh, T. M. H., & Trinh, T. M. H. T. (1989). *Woman, native, other: Writing postcoloniality and feminism* (Vol. 503). Indiana University Press.

Tsikata, D. & Darkwah, A. (2013). "Employment". In *Ghana Social Development Outlook 2012, 205-234*. Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research. University press, Accra, Ghana

Turner, V. W. (1973). Symbols in African ritual. *Science*, *179*(4078), 1100-1105.

Udumukwu, O. (2007). Signature of women: The dialectics of action in African women's writing. *Owerri: Onii Publishing House*.

Ukande, C. K. (2016). Post-Colonial Practice in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus. *AFRREV LALIGENS: An International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies*, *5*(1), 51-66.

Umezurike, U. P. (2020). Self-publishing in the era of military rule in Nigeria, 1985–1999. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, *32*(2), 212-230.

Van Eerdewijk, A., & Lodenstein, E. (2018). The State of African Women Report. *IPPF African Region*.

Villanova, I. (2018). Deconstructing the 'Single Story': Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah. *From the European South*, *3*, 85-98.

Villanova, I. (2018). Deconstructing the 'Single Story': Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah. *From the European South*, *3*, 85-98.

Villanova, I. (2018). Deconstructing the 'Single Story': Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Americanah. *From the European South*, *3*, 85-98.

Wa Thiong'O, N. (1982). *Homecoming*. London: Heinemann. . London, UK

Wa Thiong'o, N. (1993). Moving the centre. *London: James Currey*.

wa Thiong'o, N. (2014). *Globalectics: Theory and the politics of knowing*. Columbia University Press.

Wainana, B. (2009). *How to write about Africa*. Granta 92. Retrieved on March 16, 2020, from https://www.granta.com/Archive/92/How-to-write-about-africa/page-1.

Walker, A. (1984). *In search of our mother's gardens: Womanist Prose*. London: The Women's Press.

Webb, I. (1981). *From custom to capital: The English novel and the industrial revolution*. Cornell University Press.

Wosu, K. (2017). Binary Constructs: Gender and Power Relations in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus. *Journal of Gender and Power*, *8*(2), 55-69.

Yohannes, L. (2012). A postcolonial look at African literature: Case study of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Works. *Unpublished MA Thesis: Addis Ababa University*.

Young, R. J. (2001). *Postcolonialism: An historical introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Young, R. J. (2016). *Postcolonialism: An historical introduction*. John Wiley & Sons.