

## FEMINIST INCLINATIONS IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN AND PURPLE HIBISCUS*

Ogechukwu A. Ikediugwu

Academic Staff

Department of English and Literature,  
University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria

### Introduction

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie hails from Abba in Anambra State of Nigeria. She was born in Enugu but she grew up in the University town of Nsukka in southeastern Nigeria where her father was a professor of statistics and her mother a registrar of the University. She studied Medicine and Pharmacy briefly at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, before she moved to the United States of America to study communications and political science at Drexel University in Philadelphia. She transferred to Eastern Connecticut State University to live closer to her sister, who had a medical practice in Coventry. She received a bachelor's degree from Eastern, where she graduated *summa cum laude* in 2001. In 2003, she completed a Master's degree in creative writing at John Hopkins University. In 2008, she received a Master of Arts in African Studies from Yale University

*Purple Hibiscus* won the commonwealth writers' Prize and the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award. It was also short-listed for the Orange Prize and the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize and long-listed for the Booker Prize. Her short fiction has appeared in *Granta*, *Prospect* and *The Iowa Review* among other literary journals. She received an O. Henry Prize in 2003. She was a 2005-2006 Hodder Fellow at Princeton, where she taught Introductory Fiction. She divides her time between the United States and Nigeria

### Theoretical Background and Review of Literature

Feminism is a movement that champions the cause of women. According to *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, feminism is a collection of movements and ideologies aimed at defining, establishing and defending equal political, economic and social rights for women. This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment. This source records that Charles Fourier, the Utopian Socialist and French philosopher, is credited to have originated the word "feminism" in 1837. The words – "feminism" and "feminist" – first appeared in France and the Netherlands in 1872, Great Britain in the 1890s, and the United States in 1910. Feminist theory emerges from these feminist movements and the aims are to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women's social roles and experiences. Feminist activists campaign for women's rights – such as in contract law, property, and voting – while also promoting bodily integrity, autonomy, and reproductive rights for women. According to this source, feminist campaigns have changed societies, particularly in the West, by achieving women's suffrage, gender neutrality in English, equal pay for women, reproductive rights for women, and the right to enter into contracts and own property. Feminists have worked to protect women and girls from domestic violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault. They have also advocated for workplace rights, including maternity leave, and against any forms of discrimination against women.

Feminism is mainly focused on women's issues, but because feminism seeks for gender equality, Bell Hooks has argued that men's liberation is a necessary part of feminism and that men are also harmed by sexism and gender roles.

Another source, conservapedia online, posits that feminism is an expression used by suffragettes – who were predominantly pro-life-to obtain the right for women to vote in the early 1900s in the United States and the United Kingdom. By the 1970s, liberals had changed the meaning to represent people who favoured abortion and identical roles or quotas for women in the military and in society as a whole. It also records that a modern feminist downplays differences between men and women, opposes the encouragement of home-making and child-rearing for women, and seeks to participate in predominantly male activities. Most modern feminists view marriage as unacceptably patriarchal which implies female servitude when it is in fact a mutual bond.

B.E. Nwaneri writes that the second-wave of feminism began in the early 1960s and continued through the late 1980s. It has existed continuously since then, and continues to coexist with the Third Wave Feminism. The movement encourages women to understand some aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and reflective of a sexist structure of power and it is largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as the end to discrimination. He posits that feminist theory and activism of the 1960 was informed and fueled by the social, cultural and political climate of that decade, as more women were gaining entry into higher education, the establishment of academic women's studies, courses and departments and feminist thinking in many other related fields such as politics, sociology and history. All these theories cited are relevant to this essay since its focus is on the activities of the male characters as opposed to the principles of feminism and the counter reactions of female characters to assert their rights and positions as individuals in the society.

Many scholars have written essays on *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*. Ogechukwu Ikediugwu has an essay on *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In the essay, she posits that Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* has psychological dimension. She notes that the author has ears for interesting details and through vivid descriptions and analysis, the novel explores specific situations within each event and exposes the characters' anxieties, apprehensions, sufferings, losses both in humanity and property and how these have generally affected the lives of the people. The essay also traces the remote cause of the Nigerian/Biafran war from the colonial masters' selfish interest in Nigeria which is evident in the ways they nurture, encourage and sustain the war for three years. The essay also establishes that the immediate cause of the war is the 1966 pogrom of the Igbos in Northern Nigeria which triggers them to secede from Nigeria and Gwon to declare a total war on the Igbos in 1967.

Bernard Dickson has an essay on *Purple Hibiscus*. In the essay, he contrasts the lives of Eugene Achike and his sister, Aunty Ifeoma. He notes that Eugene, because of his Catholicism and Western education, cannot let his own father come to his house either in the village or in the city, but Aunty Ifeoma delightfully visits him (the father) and carries him in her car to her house at Nsukka. The father eventually dies in Ifeoma's house at Nsukka. Dickson sees this as a reversal of roles: Aunty Ifeoma assumes role of the man, the first son, as her father dies in her house while her brother Eugene is alive. He notes that Ifeoma is a respectable trade unionist and a fearless one at that. He tells how Ifeoma, at the height of the riots on the campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka refuses the security men to invade her home for a search unless they produce their search warrant for her to see. He concludes by saying that Ifeoma is a character to be reckoned with.

Maya Jaggi, in an essay on *Half of a Yellow Sun*, submits that Adichie's powerful focus on war's impact on civilian life, and the trauma beyond the trenches, earn this novel a place alongside such works

as Pat Barker's *Regeneration Trilogy* and Helen Dunmore's depiction of the Leningrad blockade, the *Seige*. According to her, the novel first develops its characters in a period of peace. She describes Odenigbo as a radical mathematics lecturer at the University of Nsukka which is the secessionist Igbo land. She projects ethnicity as the major cause of the 1966 pogrom of the Igbos in Northern Nigeria. The problems of the refugees, Nigerian blockades, the characters' grief, resilience and fragmenting relationships are also discussed. Odenigbo, the revolutionary freedom fighter, succumbs to drink and despair while the seemingly compliant Olanna draws on profound strengths. She also comments on the structure of the novel.

This essay analyzes the feminist inclinations of Chimamanda Adichie in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*. The essay highlights the main characters in the texts and assesses the author's presentations of the female characters in contrast with the male characters. The sharp contrasts that exist in the developments of both sexes make the essay conclude that Adichie is a feminist and that her feminism does not deviate from the African point of view.

Chimamanda Adichie presents and develops female characters that can stand firmly and take decisions on their own. Olanna Ozobia, one of the main characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun* refuses to be influenced by her rich parents in her choice of a husband. They prefer her to work in Lagos and marry either Igwe Okagbue's son or late Chief Okoro's son just because of their status and high financial positions. Rather than do as the parents wish her to do, she chooses to work at Nsukka to enable her marry Odenigbo, a senior lecturer in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She fails to heed her parents' advice that "Odenigbo was crazy and wrong for her, one of those hot-headed university people who talked and talked until everybody had a headache and nobody understood what had been said" (38). Although university lecturers are fond of speaking *big oyibo grammar*, what bothers the parents is not that Odenigbo is a talkative person or that he talks *nonsense*. It is non of these. Their concern is actually how much money enters into his pocket after blowing the *big oyibo grammar*. Is it this grammar that their daughter, Olanna, will eat? They cannot understand anything that does not attract millions of naira, dollars or pounds. Mr. and Mrs. Ozobia are virtually illiterates. Both are in business and have made billions of money in it. Their yardstick for measuring a good husband is the amount of money that flows into his pocket monthly or yearly as the case may be. That Odenigbo has a Ph.D or that he speaks the English language fluently does not impress them. In a traditional Igbo family, parents choose husbands for their daughters and the daughters have no choice than to marry the husbands chosen for them by their parents. By rejecting the suitors selected for her by the parents, Olanna has rejected the old patriarchal order that authorizes the father to choose husbands for his daughters and she embraces the modern civilized order of marriage which gives young people the prerogative of choosing their own spouses.

What Mr. and Mrs. Ozobia want is money and little do they consider what one does to earn the money. Olanna has earlier refused to sleep with Chief Okonjo, the man that gives contracts to her father. Her parents want her to yield to the Chief's love overture but she rejects it even when the Chief says to her: "...I can appoint you to a board, any board you want, and I will furnish a flat for you wherever you want"(33). Even the mum wants to lure her into the amorous relationship with the "Chief's latest lace from Europe" (33). It is the low image of women in the patriarchal society that makes Chief Okonjo use money as a bait to make her quickly succumb to his amorous advances. He makes the whole rubbish look legal by involving Olanna's parents because he believes that once he has the parents' approval, the whole thing is easier for him since the patriarchal society demands a complete obedience and submission of girls to their parents, especially their fathers. By standing firmly on her feet and having her way in the two instances, Olanna is able to scorn the patriarchal order and teach the men that women have rights of

independent existence; they are not objects which men transfer from one hand to another to actualize their selfish interests. This is what feminism is all about. For feminism to succeed, Ibekwe Ezeakolam reiterates “the need for self-assertion as a first step to female self-reclamation. All barriers to women liberation and self fulfillment need to be dismantled by women themselves” (77). In support of Ezeakolam, Uche Azikiwe has cited Adeleye as having said that the “Nigerian woman no longer takes ‘yes’ for an answer. She is now facing the challenges of the time. She is... fast liberating herself from the man’s yoke and is plunging into what used to be man’s world” (71). Chimamanda Adichie endorses Olanna’s actions in the two instances. She is subtle in her feminist inclinations and this assertion reflects in Olanna’s non application of aggression in her resistance of her father and Chief Okonjo. This is so because Adichie is a good African feminist. Carole Boyce describes the feminism that is African and which supports the African female consciousness in literature as “...not antagonistic to ... men, but challenges them to be aware of certain salient aspects of woman subjugation” (8-9).

Kainene, the twin sister of Olanna, is another firm and highly independent character in the novel. She takes decisions independently and is ready to defend her actions without fear or favour. We see an example of this assertion in the scene where Major Udodi expresses his reservations about the love relationships between Richard, a Briton, and Kainene. Without mincing words, Kainene tells Udodi to his face that “My choice of lovers is none of your business” (80). The Major talks about poor black women being sexually exploited by the whites and deserting them at the long last with little or no gain at all. He does not see what Kainene, “a Big Man’s daughter,” (81) is doing with Richard. Kainene ignores these remarks but Major Madu saves the situation by taking Major Udodi away. Here, the author portrays Udodi as a person that lacks discretion. Kainene’s reaction on the issue makes him look foolish and embarrassed. The society is patriarchal where men castigate women in public and they shy away humiliated. The Major’s intention to humiliate Kainene publicly backfires because he succeeds in humiliating himself and exposing his lack of discretion. The point the author makes here is that women have freedom of association: they have the freedom to choose who they should move with just like men. The decision is theirs and theirs alone. Adichie wants men to take a proper note of this and to make sure they adhere to it strictly. Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie submits that the African female writer is committed “...to the corrections of these images of the woman in Africa. To do this, she herself must know the reality of the African woman: [she] must know the truth about African woman and womanhood” (10). Adichie understands the truth about the African woman and womanhood: none of her main female characters is riotous in asserting the rights of women. They know that Africa believes in communal life and that there is need to accommodate men and the extended family relations which form the essence of existence in Africa.

Adichie portrays the male characters as people who are not firm and reliable in their relationships with the opposite sex. Chief Ozobia’s infidelity is evident in the novel. While his wife is briefly away in London, he keeps and maintains a Yoruba mistress who he always branches off to see on his way home from work. Not only that he has extra marital affairs with this mistress of his, he has bought her a house “in a neighbourhood where Lagos socialites lived” (218). Chief Ozobia’s wife’s friends live in the same vicinity and they see the Chief pack his car there on daily basis and report same to his wife accordingly. What bothers the associates of Mrs. Ozobia is that the mistress is not in any way comparable with their friend, Mrs. Ozobia: “she is old and ugly” (218). What then is the Chief’s attraction? According to the novel, what gives Mrs. Ozobia a great concern is not actually that her husband has a mistress but because he keeps the mistress in the neighbourhood where her friends live. The implication here is that Ozobia’s wife is used to her husband keeping mistresses; that is why it no longer disturbs her but she does not want

to celebrate it either. She does not want her friends to know about her husband's infidelity as this will lower her prestige before them. But Chief Ozobia does not care a bit because we live in a patriarchal society where wives are properties of their respective husbands: they own them and what they have and, as such, they do not have right to ask questions or to investigate their husbands' actions on anything at all. But Olanna tells her father:

it is disrespectful that you have a relationship with this woman and that you have bought her a house where my mother's friends live.... You go there from work and your driver packs outside and you don't seem to care that people see you. It's a slap to my mother's face.... I am not going to tell you what to do about it, but you *have* to do something. My mother isn't happy (218).

Here the author projects Olanna as a sensible girl. Not only that she is more sensible than Chief Ozobia, her speech establishes her as her father's superior both in morality and otherwise. She bluntly tells her father what he does and its implications. To still reserve her respect for her father, she does not go on dictating to him what he should do but subtly makes it obvious to him that he has to do something to ratify the anomaly because her mother is not happy. Her priority here is that her mother is sad and she wants what keeps her sad ratified. Her subdued tone gives her words some weight which implicitly makes her speech a command. With this incident, the author makes the point that wives deserve respect from their husbands just as husbands deserve from the wives and unless this is done, there will be no peace in the home. The novel also reveals that Ozobia's mistress is not a woman of worth: she is a loose Yoruba woman who has had "two children from two different men" (218). The mistress is old and ugly and, above all, morally loose; what criterion does Chief Ozobia follow in selecting his mistresses? From all indications, it is evident that Chief Ozobia, though rich, does not belong to any class as far as sexual intercourse is concerned. In other words, he is a shameless opportunist; no wonder then that he uses his daughter, Olanna, as a sexual bait to attract contracts for himself without any reflections on the implications of his actions for his daughter. His lack of formal education must have also contributed to some of his questionable actions. The novel has it that "Chief Ozobia owns half of Lagos but there is something terribly *nouveau riche* about him. He doesn't have much of a formal education, ... and neither has his wife.... That's is what makes him *obvious*" (59). This indicates that Chief Ozobia would have been more rational in his actions if he has had a formal education.

Odenigbo is another male character that is also morally lax. Though he is an academic giant, he does not belong to a class when sexual immorality comes into play. He is genuinely in love with Olanna who is herself a polished graduate of a London University. They live together and promise to marry each other. But when Olanna is briefly away in London for three weeks, Odenigbo sleeps with Amala, a timid girl his mother brought from the village. By going in to a timid illiterate village girl, Amala, the author presents him as an indecent character who is not focused in his choice of bedmates. Amala does not compare in any way with Olanna: Olanna is far more elegant, naturally intelligent, wealthy and, above all, far more academically giant than Amala. What then is Odenigbo's attraction in Amala? Auntie Ifeka has an answer to the above question. She says to Olanna: "Odenigbo has done what all men do and has inserted his penis in the first hole he could find when you were away. Does that mean somebody died?" (226). Here Adichie portrays men as a group of people that lack self control and that is why they enter any *holes* they see when their genuine partners are not around, their education backgrounds notwithstanding. The authenticity of Auntie Ifeka's stance is further proved when, later in the novel, Odenigbo has a sexual affair with Alice when Olanna is away in Orlu to spend a week with Kainene, her

twin sister. Nature has not been very benevolent to Alice: “She was small-boned, petite, and Olanna felt gawkily over-grown just looking at her; there was something childlike about her light-skinned, almost translucent complexion and tiny hands” (328). What then is the attraction in Alice that makes Odenigbo betray Olanna’s trust in him? This is a man who withdraws into himself since the death of his mother; resorts to drinking *kai kai* at the Tanzania Bar; returns home late and fails to perform his conjugal obligations with his elegant, polished and beautiful Olanna. This is ironical indeed. The very day Olanna leaves for Orlu with Baby, the novel has it that

Master [Odenigbo] came home from work earlier than usual and did not go to the Tanzania Bar. Ugwu hoped that their [Baby and Olanna’s] absence had pulled him out of the ditch he sunk into when his mother died. He sat on the veranda listening to the radio. Ugwu was surprised to see Alice stop by on her way to the bathroom. He assumed Master would give her his distant yes-and-no and she would go back to her piano. But they spoke in low tones, most of which Ugwu did not hear... The next day, she was sitting on the bench beside Master. Then she stayed until the whole yard was asleep. Then Ugwu came around from the backyard, days later, and found the veranda empty and the room door firmly shut (353).

Not only that Odenigbo’s actions are disgraceful and insulting to Olanna, he dares have a sexual affair on his matrimonial bed with Olanna’s friend. These actions of Odenigbo portray him as a beast who is incapable of controlling his sexual urges and, therefore, fails to keep his marital vows. This is astonishingly ridiculous!

However, this should not surprise us so much when we realize that we live in a patriarchal society where men are in control and, as such, can do anything and get away with it. They do not have any apologies for their wives because their wives are their properties which they can use as they wish and discard when they are no longer useful to them, marital vow notwithstanding. That is for *Oyibo* people and it is not significant for Africans. M. Toma-Ikomi posits that “husband is socially superior as compared with that of wife’s status in African traditional marriage relationship. The African woman must serve, respect and honour her husband” (17). In support of Toma-Ikomi, Omolara Daniel writes that “... in the patriarchal society, the male is expected to always be in control. Thus, power is exercised in this sort of social relation to maintain the existing pattern of social inequality...” (124). Under this type of setting, women are expected to be silent, obedient and submissive to their husbands. But this is entirely against the principles of feminism. S.O. Eyeh has quoted Dale Spender as having said that “one of the basic principles of feminism is that society has been constructed with a bias which favours male; one of the basic principles of feminists who are concerned with language is that this bias can be located in language” (119). The bias is not only located in language, it is glaringly evident in virtually all the actions of men. But women empowerment should mean something different and which is in consonance with what Lloyd describes as “the ability to control one’s destiny rather than have it determined by others” (11). Omolara further says that

determining one’s fate by one’s self and expressing it in a forceful way to be noticed should be what true empowerment is all about. This is why power is all about being able to assert oneself in all ramifications. It suggests the ability to maintain one’s dignity in the face of factors that seek to undermine it... Power is asserting and occupying one’s own space without having to concede it because one is made to see it as illegality. It is

being oneself, and without feeling apologetic about it. Assertiveness of the self is consequently the measure of woman empowerment in a patriarchal social context (124).

Omolara's submission summarizes what Adichie does with her female characters: she makes them stand firmly on their feet; exist as individuals; measure up with men and look at them directly in their faces; tell them the things they do wrongly and assert their rights as human beings. The author, however, realizes that no one is an island unto one's self. Both men and women need one another and that is why she is subtle in her feminist inclinations. She, in the words of Daniel Udo, "recognizes that the women cannot realize their lofty goals in isolation but in mutual relationship with the men" (244) and never in men's superiority over women.

Richard, another male character in the novel, is a Briton. He is in love with Kainene and virtually lives in her house. She protects, supports and accommodates him. But Richard betrays Kainene's trust in him when he has a sexual affair with her twin sister, Olanna. Though he is actually lured into the intercourse by Olanna herself to pay Odenigbo back for sleeping with Amala, Richard would have tried to resist her, bearing in mind that she is Kainene's sister. By succumbing to Olanna, the author indicates that men generally behave like beasts when it comes to sexuality: they cannot control themselves and, therefore, lack focus in that regard. Adichie also presents Richard as a character that lacks courage. He lacks the boldness to ask Kainene her relationship with Major Madu. As the novel puts it: "He wondered why he could simply not ask if she found Madu attractive and if she had ever been involved with him. He was afraid" (80). Why is he afraid? He is simply afraid of Kainene's reactions. Richard is emotional. This is evident in his reaction when Kainene fails to return to the house towards the end of the novel. He searches frantically for her and when his efforts are not yielding the anticipated result, he cries like a baby. According to the novel: "Richard's tears blinded him. He veered off the road and the car screeched as it ran into the thick undergrowth of the bush" (408). When this happens, Olanna shouts at him to stop. "He stopped and she took the key from him and went around and opened his door. As she drove them home, she hummed steadily under her breath" (408). Here, Adichie showcases men as weaklings who cannot control their emotions and flaunts women as firm and strong characters. Although Richard's actions portray the deep love he has for Kainene, they equally reflect his dependence on her. Adichie also projects Richard as a character who is aggressively jealous. He hates Major Madu because he feels Madu is unduly close to Kainene. He does not want to share Kainene with anybody and that is why when Madu says: "I don't understand how we have found out nothing about Kainene..." (429), Richard does not like the sound of *we* and he "did not know who Madu included in it." By implication, he does not want Major Madu to be part of the *we*. This necessitates his prompt questionings of Madu: "You love her, don't you? ... Did you ever touch her?... Did you ever touch her?... Did you ever touch her?" (429-30) Madu accepts that he loves Kainene but fails to answer whether he had ever touched her or not. The novel has it that, "Richard reached out and grasped his arm. Come back, he wanted to say, come back here and tell me if you ever laid your filthy black hand on her. Madu shrugged Richard's hand off. Richard hit him across the face and felt his hand begin to throb" (430). Here again, Adichie presents men as a set of people that lacks discretion. Even if Madu has been having affairs with Kainene or that he is responsible for her disappearance as Richard seriously suspects, is it fighting that will ratify the situation? This, however, helps to worsen his situation and he pays dearly for it: not only that Madu gives him a blow that knocks him down and leaves him bleeding through the nose, he knows he has lost Kainene forever. As the novel puts it, "Darkness descended on him, and when it lifted, he knew that he would never see Kainene again and that his life would always be like a candle lit room; he would see things only in shadow, only in half

glimpses” (430). Richard’s condition is hopeless and pathetic too. Bifrans have succeeded in using him to reach-out to the outside world and they have discarded him at the end of the war. The object of his stay in Biafra has eluded him and he sees a kind of connivance in the whole thing because nobody seems to be seriously disturbed by Kainene’s disappearance. Madu’s blow on his nose symbolizes rejection.

Father Marcel is another character in the text. He works with Kainene in Orlu Refugee Camp. He has impregnated Urenwa, a small girl in the camp. According to Kainene’s report to Olanna: “I’ve been blind; she is not the only one.... He fucks most of them before he gives them the crayfish that I slave to get here!” (398). Even Father Jude sees this and does not say anything. Here, Adichie wants to establish the fact that all men are the same, their religious status notwithstanding.

Kainene is a character to be reckoned with. The author showcases her as fearless, strong, courageous and seriously minded. She takes over her father’s business and is really determined to make her father’s factories grow and to do better than he has done. Her business precedes over anything else. She runs around, gets and executes contracts independently. Olanna reports that Kainene is “the sort of person who did not need to lean on others” (103). She is loving, very supportive and accommodating. These are apparent in the ways she loves, protects, supports and accommodates Richard, a Briton, in her house. She is foresighted. She foresees the fall of Port Harcourt and quickly buys a piece of land at Orlu in which she builds a house. At the fall of Port Harcourt, she and Richard move into the house at Orlu. She takes charge of the Refugee Camp there and makes sure the refugees are looked after to the best of her ability. When Umuahia falls, she invites Olanna and her family to come and live in her house at Orlu. She provides food for all the inmates of her house. When her suppliers can no longer supply her enough food for the refugees, “Kainene launched a Plant Our Own Food movement” (389). She does not only encourage and make the refugees produce foods for themselves, she too joins in producing the foods. According to the novel, “When she joined the men and women and children in making ridges, Olanna wondered where she had learned to hold a hoe” (389). There are no dull moments around her. If things do not happen, she makes them happen and, in this way, she contributes her quota to the war efforts. She does not condone immorality and oppression; no wonder she chases Reverend Fathers Marcel and Jude away from the Refugee Camp when she realizes that Marcel exploits the starving girls sexually before he gives them food stuffs. She does not forgive easily: she finds it problematic to forgive Richard, her lover, when she finds out that he had a sexual affair with Olanna, her twin sister. She tells Richard, “It would be forgivable if it were somebody else. Not my sister” (256). In her anger, she takes Richard’s manuscript from the study and burns it. This burning of the manuscript is symbolic. It symbolizes the severance of their relationship and foreshadows Kainene’s disappearance toward the end of the novel. Although Kainene forgives Olanna, it takes her much time to do so. In Kainene, Adichie has shown that women are highly dependable, courageous, creative and the most responsible set of living things. They are not weaklings and inferior beings as men portray them. Daniel Eluke concurs when he says that “the contemporary woman, unlike her sister in the traditional era, believes she is the provider and not the consumer of wealth which patriarchy portrays” (113). Kainene is able to do things efficiently because she is naturally intelligent and well learned. E.C. Nwodo has quoted UNESCO as having said that

... education will enable women to improve their families, health and diet, increase their productive ability, improve their socio-cultural status as well as enable them to discharge their responsibilities as mothers, wives and members of the society effectively (98).

Kainene's education is not a waste of precious time and money. Her education is not only beneficial to her as an individual, her family, relatives, friends and the society benefit from her education. The author's exposure to education has proved Bernard Dickson and Frank right. Frank, according to Dickson, says:

Education gives women a vision of human experience beyond the narrow confines of their own lives, it bestows a kind of imaginative power and awareness of beauty, dreams, possibility. Even if they cannot literally escape the imprisoning restraints of their patriarchal world, they can imaginatively transcend them through the means of books (253).

Adichie's two novels are just wonderfully written. Any careful reader that reads through the novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, will agree that Kainene is a heroine indeed.

Adichie also presents Olanna as a heroine who is magnanimous in victory. Though she is so shocked that Odenigbo will descend so low as to sleep with Amala, she prevails on Odenigbo to take a full responsibility of his action. This is done when a message gets to them that Amala is pregnant. Not only that she urges Odenigbo to take the girl to hospital when she is sick, she takes him to Enugu when Amala is delivered of a baby girl. Odenigbo's mother and Amala refuse to accept the baby because it is a baby girl. But Olanna carries the baby and willingly accepts to take care of her. She does this in spite of her people's strong oppositions. Her mother advises her: "it is not right for you to raise the child he had with a village girl he impregnated as soon as you travelled. Raising a child is a very serious thing to undertake, my daughter, but in this case it is not the right thing" (251). In spite of all the oppositions, she still takes the baby home and takes a very good care of her, far more than her biological mother will do. As part of her war effort, she organizes private lessons for children along with Mrs. Muokelu and Ugwu, her houseboy. They teach mathematics, English and civics everyday. She does not collect money from the children. She is very supportive and generous: whenever she is supplied with foods from her relatives or friends, she shares them with her neighbours. She treats Ugwu as her own brother. When he is conscripted into the army, she uses her last money to bring him out. She says to Ugwu: "I bribed that soldier with all the money I have. Now you will produce what I will feed my child" (252). When Odenigbo starts to withdraw into himself after the death of his mother, Olanna is completely in charge of the family. She feeds the family and takes major decisions. She is foresighted. For instance, she decides to put fuel in the car so that if it becomes pertinent that they should leave Umuahia, the family will not be stranded. As it is in the novel, "Olanna changed what was left of her British pounds and bought petrol from a man who led her into a dank outhouse with creamy-fat maggots..." (381). Odenigbo refuses to give her money. When Umuahia finally falls to the Nigerian army, she packs her family and moves to live with her twin sister at Orlu. While at Orlu, she runs around with Kainene to make both ends meet.

With the activities of Olanna and Kainene in the text, John Mbiti is right to record that "Not only does a woman bear life, she nurses, cherishes and gives warmth and care for life because all human life passes through her own body to become" (71). Olanna and Kainene have proved that they are motherists. Christine Odi has quoted Acholonu as having said that motherists are people who have the following attributes:

defender and protector of family values, seeker of truth and true knowledge, courageous yet humble, loving, tolerant, powerful yet down to earth.... A motherist is one who is willing to protect the natural and cohesive essence of the family, the child, the society and the environment (51).

Reading through the text, one will definitely agree that the twin sisters are not just motherists, but excellent ones at that. No wonder then that Amartya *et al* submit that the emancipation and empowerment of women is “an integral part of social progress, not just a woman’s issue” (282). B. Rogers and Esther Boserup are also in agreement. Rogers writes that “the issue is not so much that women needed development but [that] development needed women” (252). All these citations indicate that women are indispensable as far as development is concerned. Adichie is not a radical feminist: she approaches feminism from the African point of view. She understands that Africans live and cherish communal life, while the reverse is the case in the western societies. Any form of feminism that tampers with the African communality is not acceptable to Africans while it is acceptable in America and U.K. Odi notes that “Most western societies encourage the nuclear life-style while the essence of the African community is communality. The African woman is identified by her relationship with others in the society” (44). The author’s main female characters, Olanna and Kainene, are very accommodating and, as such, they live in harmony with their relatives, friends, neighbours and the community they find themselves. A clear example is Olanna’s acceptance of Amala’s baby girl which her husband begets illegally. Dickson warns that: “Nigerian female novelist should not see men as the perpetual enemy in their works. They should create female characters whose existence and success do not depend solely on their defiance of male dominance and victimization” (257). Adichie is not also deficient in this regard. Her female characters support, protect and accommodate the men in their lives.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie presents Eugene as a foolish man who cannot reason beyond his nose and, as such, becomes a burden both to his immediate and extended family members. He is unduly autocratic, fanatical, rigid, lacks discretion and a good sense of direction. The above stance is clearly discernible in the way he rules his family which makes his children and wife live in perpetual fear of him. He prevails on his immediate family members to share his own identity instead of having their own individual identities; they must live and do things as Eugene wishes. Eugene, popularly known as Papa, flings “his heavy missal” (33) at Jaja because Jaja fails to receive a holy communion on Sunday. This is because he himself receives holy communion every Sunday and, if Jaja fails to follow suit, people will think that Jaja is a sinner. For Papa, the sin that prevents one from receiving the Holy Communion is usually fornication or adultery. So, Papa does not want the congregation to feel that his son is a fornicator. To Papa, the implication of this feeling or thinking is that he has failed in his duty as a father to direct his children to the right part. But his missal misses Jaja and breaks the figurine on the “*étagère*” (3). Eugene must report any church member who fails to receive holy communion to Father Benedict. As the novel reveals,

after Papa took holy communion, he sat back and watched the congregation walk to the altar and, after mass, reported to Father Benedict, with concern, when a person missed communion for two successive Sundays. He always encouraged Father Benedict to call and win that person back into the fold; nothing but moral sin would keep a person away from communion two Sundays in a row (8).

From this extract, it is clearly visible that Eugene is *more holy* than the Rev. Father himself and, as such, dictates to him how he should be doing his works. To Eugene, anybody that does not receive the holy communion is heading for destruction. In his words to Jaja: “You cannot stop receiving the body of our Lord. It is death, you know that” (8). It is good to note the sarcasm in the tone of the narrator and which makes Eugene look stupid.

In each meal, he prays for 20 minutes asking God to bless the food. Papa, though an Igbo man, forbids his children from speaking the Igbo language, especially in public. Kambili, his daughter, puts it

thus: “He [Papa] hardly spoke Igbo, and although Jaja and I spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak it in public. We had to sound civilized in public, he told us; we had to speak English” (13). From the above citation, speaking English is a symbol of civilization. The implication of this stance is that anybody that speaks his or her native language in public is uncivilized and, therefore, *Igbotic*. He does not want his children to be labeled *Igbotic*. It is on this background that his sister, Aunty Ifeoma, says that Eugene “was too much of a colonial product” (13). Here, Ifeoma is only being sarcastic: she does not believe in what she says. How many colonial products behave as Eugene does or even a half as he behaves? The fact is that Papa is simply unrealistic: his acquisition of colonial education has completely alienated him from his cultures and this makes him look stupid. Ifeoma herself is a Catholic and has also acquired the colonial education but she is not alienated from her Igbo background: she is very realistic and behaves reasonably well. Papa does not speak Igbo: any time he speaks the Igbo language, his wife and children know that danger is imminent. Even to sing in Igbo is being uncivilized and, therefore, not right. That is why he condemns the young visiting priest who sings Igbo songs in-between his sermon. Thus he says: “That young priest, singing in the sermon like a Godless leader of one of those Pentecostal churches that spring up everywhere like mushrooms. People like him bring trouble to the church. We must remember to pray for him” (29).

Eugene rules his household with a rigid hand: he likes order and everything in the house has a schedule and must be followed as such. Failure to do so attracts reprimands and serious beatings. This makes his wife, Beatrice, and children, Kambili and Jaja live in perpetual fear of him. Papa does not allow his children to mix-up with other children because they are sinners and their sins can infect them. They do not socialize even with their relatives. Eugene himself neither visits his own father, Papa-Nnukwu, nor allows him to visit his house because he is a *pagan*: he refuses to be converted to the Catholic faith. He even debar his children from eating in Papa-Nnukwu’s house or even to drink water. Unless he agrees to be converted, Eugene will not build him a befitting house, buy him a car or even give him money for feeding. But he identifies well with his father-in-law because he is a Christian: he knows Latin and speaks English. He takes adequate care of him. This is ironical indeed. Eugene bans all non-Christians from coming to his house. It is only the intervention of the *Umunna* that makes Eugene to allow Kambili and Jaja to visit Papa-Nnukwu but they must not stay there for more than fifteen minutes; no eating or drinking in his house. It is based on Eugene’s attitudes towards *pagans* that Anikwenwa tells him “*Ifukwa gi!* You are like a fly blindly following a corpse into the grave!” (70). Anikwenwa’s reprimand is rooted in the Igbo proverb which says that a fly that does not listen to advice often follows a corpse into its grave. The implication of his statement is that if Eugene refuses to retrace his steps, he will end up tragically. This statement is prophetic for it foreshadows Eugene’s tragic end towards the end of the novel.

Eugene inflicts pains on the members of his household: he flugs his wife, Jaja and Kambili. Kambili has cramps owing to a painful menstruation and the mother gives her food to enable her take panadol which will stop the cramps. Eugene is alarmed that she eats “ten minutes before mass? Ten minutes before mass?” (101) He gives Beatrice, Jaja and Kambili severe beatings with his belt and on the ground that they “desecrate the Eucharistic fast” (101). Papa cuts off Jaja’s “little finger” (144) because Jaja has missed two questions on his catechism test and is not named “the best in his First Holy Communion Class” (144). Eugene pours boiling water on Kambili and Jaja’s feet because they sleep in the same house with Papa-Nnukwu in Aunty Ifeoma’s house at Nsukka. He says to Kambili,

you knew your grandfather was coming to Nsukka, didn’t you?... You knew you would be sleeping in the same house with a heathen? So you saw the sin clearly and walked

right into it? ... He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it towards my feet. He poured the hot water on my feet, slowly.... The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding.... That is what you do to yourself when you walk into sin. You burn your feet (191-192).

Papa has nearly killed his children with kicks for bringing Papa Nnukwu's painting into his house. In the process of these kickings, Kambili loses consciousness and she is immediately rushed to hospital. She has to take her examinations in a sick bed. Eugene is reckless: he breaks a table on his wife's belly thereby causing her to lose a sixth week pregnancy. She loses a lot of blood and she is rushed to St. Agnes Hospital.

From the above review, it is clearly obvious that Eugene does not distinguish between his wife and the children; he treats them alike because wives are to be treated as children in a patriarchal society. They do not deserve respects from their husbands. They do not have brains and, as such, cannot do things right. It is the duty of their husbands to teach them lessons, guide and direct them accordingly. And wives are to be silent, submissive and obedient to their husbands. Etop Akwang posits that this domineering attitude of the men over the women is called patriarchy. Walby defines patriarchy as a "system of social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (20). According to Mabel Evwierhoma: "Man is the king, ruler and husband. He makes the rules and the woman is subject in all cases, and must submit and obey without asking questions or else she faces the wrath of the ancestral gods" (vii). Men make rules to suit their selfish interests and when these rules persist for a long time, they become traditions. Women are prevailed upon to keep these traditions or else face the wrath of the gods. This is simply to instill fear in them. Yetunde Akorede asserts that "the subjugation of women is prevalent in all areas of Africa as the men hide under the transparent canopy of religion and culture to suppress women" (196). So, women subjugation is not only peculiar in Nigeria, it is also obtainable in all African countries. Pauline Denise also concurs with the above stance when she says that "African marriage systems have often been condemned on the grounds that they debase women; the submissive attitude a wife must adopt towards her husband; the generally acknowledged right of a man to beat his wife..." (4). It is good to note that in all the violent actions of Eugene in the house, the wife, Beatrice, is silent and submissive. This is understandable because that is what the society requires woman to do. According to Kola Eke "... violence is part of the patriarchal order; women are to be treated as the men consider appropriate" (52). The death of Eugene symbolizes the end of fanaticism, oppressions and suppressions.

Aunty Ifeoma, Eugene's younger sister, is in sharp contrast with her brother: she is accommodating, realistic and reasonable and she believes in democracy even in running her own family. Because of this, her children are socialites and freely air their views on issues concerning them. Though she is a Catholic, she does not discriminate against her father, Papa Nnukwu, because he is not a Christian. She takes a very good care of him and provides his needs to the best of her capability. Beatrice says that "Aunty Ifeoma stopped speaking to Papa after he baned Papa-Nnukwu from coming to his house, and a few years passed before they finally started speaking to each other" (65). She cherishes communal life, hence she calls Beatrice her wife, "the idea that it was the family and not the man alone that married a wife" (73). Aunty Ifeoma is a strong believer in Igbo cultures. She takes Kambili and Jaja to Abagana for the Aro Festival... to look at the *mmuo* [masquerade]" (74). She is not ashamed of speaking the Igbo language. While Eugene speaks English to her, she replies in Igbo. She does not believe that Papa-Nnukwu is a pagan, "he is a traditionalist" (81). Because of her tender cares for Papa-Nnukwu, he appreciates her so much: "Where would I be today if my *chi* had not given me a daughter?" (83) This

is ironical because the Igbos value male children more than daughters. Ifeoma is independent and assertive: Eugene wants her to stop wearing make-ups, join the knights of St. John and send Amaka, her daughter, to convent school so that he will buy her a car but Ifeoma refuses the conditions and goes on with her lifestyle. She positively influences the lives of Kambili and Jaja: it is from her house that they learn how to socialize with people and air their opinions on certain issues. Kambili learns how to peel yam and wash plates in her house. When Papa-Nnukwu is sick, she goes to Abba and brings him to her house in Nsukka and takes him to the “University Medical Centre” (154) and makes sure he takes all his drugs. When Ifeoma asks Eugene about the funeral of Papa-Nnukwu, he says: “I cannot participate in a pagan funeral, but we can discuss with the parish priest and arrange a Catholic funeral” (186). Ifeoma ignores him and goes ahead with a befitting traditional burial for Papa-Nnukwu.

Adichie presents Aunty Ifeoma as a character that is stable, firm, focused, reasonable and realistic. She is not alienated like her brother. She has succeeded where a man has failed and this is because she follows her Igbo traditions and cultures. A.C. Adeniranye warns: “...practicing ideologies that will destroy the very essence of one’s culture to favour the continued existence of another culture right on native soil will amount to cultural suicide” (174). And Akpabot defines culture as “a way of thinking, feeling and behaving in any given society resulting in a behavioural pattern which gives that society a distinctive identity” (91). From the citations above, it is apparent that Eugene has not only committed cultural suicide, he has lost his cultural identity. P.O. Odogbor submits: “To bring about peace, harmony, and growth of society, the individuals are expected to identify with the cultural values, beliefs, norms, mores, ... of the society” (150).

Beatrice, Eugene’s wife, is gentle, soothing and speaks with calm voice: “she stared at the figurine pieces on the floor and then knelt and started to pick them up with her bare hands... *nne, ngwa*. Go and change, Mama said to me, startling me although her Igbo words were low and calming” (3-4). She is unduly calm and respects her husband so much, no wonder she does not challenge him in any way. She takes good care of Jaja and Kambili whenever they are sick: she is their only source of solace at home and tells them soothing words. According to the novel, “she did not usually say so much at one time. She spoke the way a bird eats, in small amounts” (20). She sings praises in Igbo and always waits at the front door on the last day of school to receive her children, happily singing Igbo praises and caressing their report cards in her hands. She does not see anything wrong with the Igbo tradition, hence she supports Aunty Ifeoma to take Jaja and Kambili to watch masquerades during the Aro Festival. She tells Ifeoma: “Eugene will not let the children go to a heathen festival.” She encourages Jaja and Kambili to socialize with their cousins. Beatrice, though a Catholic, is not a fanatic like her husband, hence she does not see anything wrong in Kambili taking panadol ten minutes before mass. She is unduly submissive: she receives her husband’s beatings without complaints. She has fellow-feelings and loves her children dearly. She cries bitterly the day Eugene pours hot water on the children’s feet: “Tears were running down her face. Her nose was running too” (192). She takes Kambili to her room and gives her panadol. She is glad that her husband eventually releases money for Papa-Nnukwu’s burial and funeral. She bottles up so much and this may be why she poisons the husband at the end of the novel.

Beatrice is not the kind of character feminists want. They want women who will stand up to their responsibilities and assert their rights from men. Her actions negate the principles of feminism. African feminism never encourages women to murder their husbands, but to tell them the things they do wrongly and to demand for their ratification. African feminists cherish vibrant women who will square up with men and tell them what they feel about them, without fear or favour. Aunty Ifeoma is a good example.

When some security men go to search her house at Nsukka, she demands for a search warrant which they show her before she allows them access into her house.

### Conclusion

Through a contrastive analysis of the characters in the texts, the essay establishes that Chimamanda Adichie is a feminist writer. Her feminism is not too radical because she approaches it from the African perspective. Her female characters recognize the communal spirit of Africans and try to respect it in all their endeavours. They are accommodating, loving, supportive and protective while at the same time assertive of their rights whenever the situation demands for it. Adichie has never created a female character whose success solely depends on her defiance of the male characters. The author recognizes the fact that no one is an island unto him or herself. To succeed in life, both sexes need the co-operation and support of one another.

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