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History, Memory and Trauma in Contemporary Nigerian Novel

Diplomski rad

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Summary

This paper discusses history, memory and trauma of the Nigerian people that has influenced on and shaped the contemporary Nigerian novel. It analyzes the novels *The Bride Price* (1978) and *Destination Biafra* (1983) by Buchi Emecheta and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It discusses critical theories by Jane Bryce, Ann Adams, A.O.Amoko, Ziad Bentahar and Vivian Yenika-Agbaw on post-colonialism, the Nigerian nation, the Biafran War and the position of women. The first part discusses the history of colonialism and its consequences, and explains colonialism's influence on modern Nigerian politics, economy and society. It also analyzes the question of the Nigerian nation and its internal ethnic conflict and division. This chapter also discusses the Nigerian collective memory and the consequences of transition from colonialism to independence, the Civil War and the post-colonial period. It compares and contrasts Nigerian society and Western world, but it also contrasts the division and polarities within Nigerian society based on religion, education, race, gender and economic status. The second part discusses the Biafran War for Independence as a constant motif in the works of Nigerian authors. It explains the role of men and women in the war and examines the authors' description of both male and female concepts of war and conflict. Additionally, it analyses the technique the authors use to give voice to ordinary people. It describes the position of women in the colonial and post-colonial era. Analyzing the rise of female protagonists and female writers in contemporary Nigerian literature, this paper explains the trope of "Mother Africa" and describes the emerging female coming-of-age novel. Furthermore, it compares and contrasts the "Mother Africa" trope to a new notion of womanhood emerging in the works of the third-generation Nigerian writers.

Keywords: Post-colonialism, war, religion, tradition, position of women, Nigerian novel, Buchi Emecheta, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Destination Biafra*, *The Bride Price*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Purple Hibiscus*

Contents

Introduction **4**

1. History **6**

1.1. Colonialism and Its Consequences 6

1.2. What It Means to Be Nigerian? 13

1.3. The Question of English 20

2. Trauma 24

2.1. Women's War 24

2.2. The Voice of the People 28

2.3. The Failure of Male Leadership 33

3. Memory **38**

3.1. Old Gods and New Gods 38

3.2. The Coming-of-Age Novel 44

3.3. The Position of Women 47

3.4."Mother Africa" 53

3.5. The New Woman 58

Conclusion 61

Works Cited 63

Introduction

Over the period of about fifty years, post-colonial literature has been emerging, becoming recognized and started gaining influence. Along with social changes, former colonies have experienced political and economic changes since the end of the colonial period. These changes have inevitably led to many wars, especially in African countries. This paper discusses one of those wars, the Biafran War, its causes, motifs, and consequences, as well as the post-war life. In this paper the Biafran War and its consequences are discussed through the novels *Destination Biafra* (1983) by Buchi Emecheta and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The novels and critical theories by A.O.Amoko and Ziad Bentahar have provided a foundation for the analysis of the impact of colonialism and post-colonialism on the Biafran War, on shaping the Nigerian sovereignty and modern Nigerian nation itself. Many years of colonialism have also brought social and gender stratification and differences. They have influenced both the way modern Nigerian society was created and the distribution of wealth, power and, most importantly, education. The colonization brought Christianity which, polarized the nation and altered the traditional customs and cultural practices. Besides, it also degraded African women and forced different people to live in one state and be one nation. On the other hand, the colonizers also brought education, modern technologies and challenges of multiculturalism. The Biafran War represents the culmination of the conflict between the new and the imposed versus traditional culture. The war was a rite of passage for both Nigeria and Nigerian writers as it marked the beginning of a new era. This new era has brought with it new wounds inflicted not just by Britain or Europe, but also by the Nigerian people themselves and, in addition to that, the new era has brought new challenges to the Nigerian ground. Multiculturalism in a state where one culture committed genocide against the other has been a particularly hard challenge to meet. However, the past few decades of change since the Biafran War have brought more equality, creating new opportunities and opening Nigeria to both good and bad foreign influence. They have also helped create a place for women in Nigerian society, bringing them to the center stage and raising issues concerning female rights. The question of women and the clash of modernity and tradition, as well as numerous accompanying changes, are dealt with in the novels *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and *The Bride Price* (1978) by Buchi Emecheta, as well as in the critical works of Jane Bryce, Ann Adams and Vivian Yenika-Agbaw. All of these changes have influenced Nigerian literature profoundly and

helped create many dynamic novels whose primary concern is to describe the polarization and diversities of the Nigerian society. Contemporary Nigerian authors are voices that introduce both Nigeria to the world and the world to Nigeria; they are a forefront of the Nigerian struggle to combine the modernity with tradition without losing its essence. This time, the voice of the people will be heard.

1. History

1.1. Colonialism and Its Consequences

Colonialism has been one of the greatest injustices in the history of mankind. Former colonial powers have maintained their power and position in today's world, leaving their colonies marked as Third World countries, which usually means that these countries are corrupt, impoverished and struggling to make ends meet. Today's global politics and division of power was created in the eighteenth century, though the forming of colonies had started even earlier. The colonized countries helped their "mother" countries to obtain the power they now have by giving them usually free or underpaid labor force, richness of land in food, raw material and minerals. This form of colonialism is alive even today because the Third World countries depend on the developed countries to buy their raw material, which is later sold back to them as lucrative finished products and commodities. Buchi Emecheta exemplifies this process by describing the production of soap in her novel *The Bride Price*:

> She would go to the town of Ogwashi to buy the kernels, have them bagged and sent to Ibuza via the one and only lorry which made that trip. On Nkwo market the bags were transported to Asaba, and Ma would follow on foot; she sold the kernels to eastern [1]Ibo traders, who would have them reprocessed and exported to England to be used in the manufacture of famous brand name soaps. The cakes of soap would then be reimported to Nigeria, and women like Ma Blackie would buy them. The kernels, thus, made a completely circular journey. (73 – 74)

It seems that even today former colonies in Africa still maintain their dependence on their former rulers. For Nigeria that is Britain. Britain even created the Commonwealth to make their former colonies dependent. That was all done under the mask of mobility of people and goods, but in reality the only people that have been able to move freely are the British (Emecheta, *The Bride Price* 70). Like many African authors, Buchi Emecheta writes about Nigerian dependence on Britain, exposing the fact that when it comes to goods, everything gets easily exported to Britain, making all other countries mostly dependent on the

[1] „Ibo" is the English version of the Nigerian word "Igbo". Buchi Emecheta uses the word "Ibo" while C.N. Adichie use "Igbo":

Western superpower. In her paper “Destination Biafra”, Adams describes Emecheta’s view on Britain’s role in Nigerian upheaval:

> Although Emecheta clearly charts the various internal fissures and schisms within Nigeria and the recently formulated Biafra, she nonetheless highlights the ways in which foreign intervention exacerbated these tensions. It is quite telling that Emecheta begins her novel about the civil war before independence, opening with a scene in the governor-general's residence. What this "beginning" effectively shows is that formal independence was not "independent" at all. (288)

In her novel *Destination Biafra*, Emecheta tries to explain the role of colonialism and its consequences on modern politics in Africa. The independence that was gained after Britain was forced to leave Nigeria has resulted in a mock democracy. British government had been pulling the strings and deciding on Nigerian future and its leaders. After realizing that, the Nigerian people overthrew the puppet government and the Nigerian military seized control. Yet, the problem with Britain has remained:

> As Emecheta's work shows, when the "natives" do finally realize how much control Britain still has, they decide to overthrow the corrupt government and institute a "military respite"; yet the original coup, which was meant to rid the nation of the puppet regime, does not stymie British attempts to control the government for long. Despite the fact that the British have to deal with men who imposed martial law (rather than having to talk with their hand-picked successors), they still continue to dabble in Nigerian politics as well as siphon the wealth of the nation. In the midst of the turmoil, the former colonial power (which does not have to *directly* bloody its hands) may seem much more benevolent and understanding than either of the opposing sides, but it too has an agenda that it propagates through the war. This agenda, for Emecheta, is embodied in the figure of Alan Grey. The son of a former governor-general and the occasional lover of Debbie Ogedemgbe (the two met in college in England), Alan Grey

> represents the "friendly" face of British interests in the post-independence era. (Adams 288)

British representatives in *Destination Biafra*see see nothing wrong with Britain ruling Nigeria vicariously through the appointed head of state. They think of it as their duty for two reasons. The first reason is economical, because they want to make sure that Nigeria "offers the least resistance to the British trade" (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 2), as Governor Macdonald describes his mission, and the second reason is to ensure peace and stability by creating a false sense of democratic elections, so that people accept their new government. Exactly the way it did in real life, Britain in Emecheta's novel decides to give the ruling power to the Hausa people, a Muslim tribe from the north, thinking Hausas will not cause them any problems when they start to extract oil and steal bronze and ivory jewelry and works of art because the Hausa people are religiously oriented and are not ambitious, whereas the Yoruba and the Igbo people will demand their share of the money. The only thing Britain does not want is intelligent and educated people, like Igbo Dr. Ozimba, to win because they would try to do what is best for Nigeria and that would clash with what is best for Britain. Emecheta's novel, thus, shows that throughout their imperial occupation of Nigeria Britain never believed that Nigerian people could have democracy and a fair government; but saw Nigerians as savages whom British explorers discovered centuries ago, ergo unintelligent, wild and easy to manipulate. What they did not see is that before the British Empire came and forced their ways on various tribes of Nigeria, some of those tribes had had their own political systems and some of them, like Igbo tribe, had had republics and the council of elders who would rule the tribe and its land. Adichie describes this system of governance in her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*:

> Papa said he thought you were among the white people who know something. He said the people of Igboland do not know what king is. We have priests and elders…It is because the white man gave us warrant chiefs that these foolish men are calling themselves kings today. Richard apologized. He did know that the Igbo were said to have been a republican tribe for thousands of years. (90)

The British Empire could not understand their ways so they invented chiefs in order to collect money and taxes more easily from the tribes. They also had help from the Church because they began to Christianize indigenous people and in that way the ones who knew

English and declared themselves Christians gained higher positions as the colony grew, regardless of their intellectual or any other skills (Emecheta, *The Bride Price* 83).

In that environment, Nigerian people were forced to learn how to cope with the new situation. They started to implement their tradition into the modern way of living. A good example of that is nepotism. Buchi Emecheta writes about nepotism in *Destination Biafra*, *"*As a responsible person in Nigeria, one did not just go into politics to introduce reforms but to get what one could of the national cake and to use part of it to help one's vast extended family, the village of one's origin and if possible the whole tribe" (16). Nepotism has its roots in the tribal way of living; in the beginning it was a means of survival since all the members of a community shared their wealth with each other. In the modern world nepotism is marked as something undesirable since individual work and job positions are assigned according to merit and not family affiliation.

However, nepotism is not the only problem. In her book, *Destination Biafra*, Emecheta describes how people were pushed into democracy without knowing what democracy was. Britain forced democracy on Nigeria and then expected people to hold the same view of democracy as that of the British and the rest of Europe (18-19). That is not possible because European countries have spent centuries building their democracies and educating their people. African countries, on the other hand, have not had that much time and because of that mistakes are bound to happen. In *Destination Biafra,* Emecheta also describes the voting process, how Nigerian people are forced to vote, even though the majority of them do not know who they are voting for, so they vote for whatever party brings them to the polls (20). In the novel Britain uses all kinds of devious techniques to persuade Nigerians to vote for the party that collaborates with Britain, for instance they hire airplanes with big banners, knowing that Hausa people will perceive the airborne banners as a message from Allah (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 13). Ignorance about democracy and Britain's meddling brings disaster. Politicians who tried to be as fair as possible and not to use devious tricks feel betrayed, politicians who used the tricks, but lost the elections, also feel betrayed because they wasted a lot of money on failed campaigns (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 31-40).

In *Destination Biafra* Emecheta describes Britain's happiness because a Hausa man is the prime minister and has all the power. Dr. Ozimba, an Igbo, has the role of a puppet president with no power and, Odumosu, a Yoruba, is the leader of the opposition. Igbo people are enraged because they feel Britain set up the elections. Ozimba asks them not to make any excesses. Yet, people are not the only problem. Odumosu realizes that with the new position, the old opportunities are gone. He was the leader of the West and therefore took provision of

every business deal made with the foreign companies. However, when the time came to let go of the old ways, Odumosu was not man enough to do it (31-39).

The third biggest problem in Nigeria is that almost every Nigerian politician is greedy and steals the state's money in some way. The gap between the rich minority and the poor majority is bigger than ever. In *Destination Biafra,* Emecheta describes that gap:: "'I think you need a drink', Alan said taking a glass of champagne from waiter who wore a white tailored jacket and black velvet trousers yet walked barefoot'" (40). The contrast between the rich and the poor represents the misery of the Nigerian people who are robbed of everything and forced to pretend to be happy with the chunks that the rich people decide to give them.

However, the British choose to be oblivious of the gap and inequalities and remains indifferent. By doing that, they show how little they think of the Nigerian people. After the elections Britain sends its army to the North and West in case of an Igbo rebellion. British politicians are aware of their wrongdoings, as their main agenda are to preserve their trade and business without the Igbos causing disruption (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 1-10). The Nigerian army sees its chance for political domination in the newly formed chaotic circumstances. After seizing power, the army begins executions of all corrupt politicians for an ultimately higher cause and the liberation of Nigeria. Some of the politicians try to bribe their way out, like Debbie's father Samuel Ogedemgbe. However, the army is merciless. For the duration of the events, British representatives just stand by and watch people slaughter each other because of Britain's atrocities. Even though everyone realizes Britain's actions, nobody acts against them or even tries to cut off the trading deals. Money is the language everybody speaks and because of that the Europeans are protected. Emecheta describes that through Alan Grey's attitude in *Destination Biafra, "*So you think you are being taken for spies, eh? You have to be treated like everybody else. But we are not Nigerians, we are English" (138).

It is not only Emecheta's protagonist Alan who behaves as if the Civil War did not concern him because he is white and British. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adichie describes the behavior of English people living in Enugu, "I rang the British council in Enugu and I can't believe our people there are still going off to play water polo and have cocktails at the Hotel Presidental!" (228). They mock the war and the people involved. However, they do not stop there. Once the war has started, Europeans start profiting on it by selling arms. They sell their First World War arms to Nigeria because they need to dispose of them and also because aiding Nigeria now will bring lucrative business deals later:

> Momoh signed away the greater percentage of the oilwells to some Western powers on the condition that they settle the Biafran question quickly … colleagues in Foreign Office were pleased. They agreed that a quick kill would be the best solution for Biafran crisis; it was worth investing in arms and giving aid to Nigeria in this time of trouble, now that it looked as if there were more oil in the country that they had imagined. It was decided that Alan should go to the surplus section of the Ministry of Defence and to buy up the old unwanted ammunition that so much had been spent on during the First World War. (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 154 – 156)

According to Emecheta, when historical Biafra was created, the general premise was that this land would be free from foreign influence and Nigerian sufferings. For the West that was unacceptable, so the war began (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 82-83) In *Destination Biafra* nobody cares about the lives of innocent people. Once again, Africa is seen as uncivilized and unready for ruling, whereas Britain is seen as a peace maker and helper. In addition to that, peace-making does not stop Alan and other Britons to take native art and make fortune on it. Local people no longer want those native art works because now they are Christians and they burn pagan art. Alan sees an opportunity with art and begins collecting it and selling it in Europe:

> As far as the old chief Nwoloko, now a staunch Christian, was concerned they were losing nothing, in fact they could now reclaim the part of the compound that the hideous thing had occupied. What was more, "onye ocha" paid, a pound to this head, ten schillings to that, a twist of tobacco to another one. Everybody was happy. The really good thing was coming to Western Igbos at last. (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 141)

Emecheta explains how they are robbing people who are just following the rules of the religion the British Empire imposed on them. By trying to show what good Christians they are, they discard their tradition and past and by doing that, they also discard themselves.

There is also a problem of Africa's image in the West. Africa's dictators represent the image Westerners have of African people. Those leaders are only interested in acquiring wealth for themselves and their families, a collection of army medals on their chest and

power. They are not the politicians and leaders Africa needs. However, the West needs them because with a little flattering and money they close multibillion dollar deals and make profit for themselves, while Africa stays poor and unprotected (Emecheta, *Destiation Biafra* 118)

Why Nigeria remains dependent on Britain is a multilayered and difficult question. One has to consider many factors when answering this question. The first group of factors is the tradition and well-known ways of trade that bind these two countries together. The second one is the language as it is always easier to trade and make business partners in one's own language or at least in a language that one is very familiar with[2]. The third and perhaps the most important reasons closely tied to the aforementioned ones are history and the colonial past. In a way, Nigeria has no choice but to maintain the trade liaisons with Britain since Britain owns a significant portion of major Nigerian companies. These companies were established during the colonial years and it has been easy for the British government to maintain economical dependence of Nigeria through those companies (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 1-10) If the political dependence fails, the economical one will remain being that the future of the Nigerian people and their livelihood depends on the salaries which they receive working for British companies. This economical dependency is known as neo-colonialism.

However, Britain is not the only global player. During the period of the last fifty years America has began to emerge as a global power. American politics recognized the animosity of Nigerian people towards Britain and began to exploit it. Today, Americans are winning Nigeria over with educational possibilities, business investments and the introduction of their democracy (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 15-20). Slowly but surely, America will take over Nigeria and other African countries and proceed with the politics of neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism.

[2] English is still the official language in Nigeria, whereas Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba are recognised national languages.

1.2. What It Means to Be Nigerian?

The question of Nigeria and Nigerian people is very complex. First of all, one has to understand that Nigeria is an artificially created entity. The creation of Nigeria is described in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun.* Adichie describes the division of Africa that happened at the Berlin conference of 1884. Africa was divided to satisfy all colonial forces, so that each country could gain their desired piece. France and Britain were the greatest colonial powers; therefore they had the largest territory and they fought each other for even more, especially in the area around the River Niger. Britain ultimately gained control over the territory - the North and the South of today's Nigeria. The North was inhabited by Hausa Muslims who lived in feudal communities, easy to rule over. The Southern inhabitans were Igbo and Yoruba. The Igbo lived in republican communities, which did not suit the British, so they gave them warrant chiefs. This is how the British rule began. In 1914 the British amalgamated these tribes into one entity called Nigeria. Ironically, these different peoples, who were forced to live in one common country, did not even have the right to choose its name. The wife of the British governor-general picked the name Nigeria and wrote the national anthem. British people preferred the Hausas because they thought of them as more civilized than Igbo and Yoruba. Consequently, they gave them better and higher positions in the army, government and civil service. They were also keen on promoting stereotypes about Igbo people as ambitious, cheap and deceitful (146-147).

Before they were forced to live in one state, the northern and southern tribes did not attack each other, but traded with each other instead. All was well as long as each of them had their own territory (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun,* 209). Yet, as Nigeria was being created, the Hausas refused to live in the same state as the infidel and educated southern tribes. As the British did not want the collapse of Nigeria, they set up elections and secured their supremacy in the central government. The southern tribes were too eager for independence and accepted everything. The Republic of Nigeria was created and with it the nationality, Nigerian. (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 195).

Adichie's novel shows that, first of all, the people of Nigeria did not know what a nation was. The construct of a nation was forced onto the people of Nigeria by the Westerners. Furthermore, Nigerian people were forced to disregard their tradition, social structure and politics to become Nigerians. Adichie's protagonist Odenigbo discusses the idea of a nation in *A Half of the Yellow Sun*: "'…my point is that the only authentic identity for the

African people is the tribe,' Master said. 'I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am black because the white man constructed *black* to be as different as possible from his *white*. But I was Igbo before the white man came.'" (25)

Colonialism not only creates and imposes the construct of the nation on the colonized, but it also forces on them the construct of race. One does not become aware one's race until one sees somebody of a different race. Both Emecheta and Adichie describe how white colonialists thought that they could impose their social and political order on their subjects. They considered the indigenous people wild and with no past and therefore no future. Colonizers did not consider the past of the African tribes to be valid just because it was not similar to European events of that time.

Other Nigerian authors also dwell upon the construct of the nation. In her essay on *Destination Biafra* Adams writes:

> In order to understand how the nation is positively figured in Emecheta's work, it might be fruitful to explore some of the arguments against nations and nationalism in the African context. Elie Kedourie, in both *Nationalism* and *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, claims that national ideology is strictly a European export transposed (uneasily) onto "native" soil. As a result, he contends that there never can be "national liberation" (in Fanon's sense of the term) because the form of the nation itself (and the nationalism that goes along with it) makes sure that former colonies remain indebted and in thrall to Western forms of thought. Looking less at philosophy and more at the material conditions of African nation-states themselves, Basil Davidson contends that the arbitrary consolidation of nations under colonial rule has only furthered ethnic conflict and hobbled the continent (leaving it rife for neo-colonization). According to both critics, African nations symbolize the continued subservience of Africa to the West. (290)

The artificially created nation of Nigeria has brought its peoples only trouble. The biggest reason why the idea of one nation has been so problematic in the Nigerian context is the difference in social and religious background of its people. This goes far beyond Nigeria. Africa iself is divided by the Sahara in two major parts - the Muslim North and the Christian

South. Northern Africans are considered more Arabic than other Africans since their religion and culture brings them closer to the Arabic peninsula. Therefore, they are not accepted in the grand idea of a united Africa. In his essay "Continental Drift: The Disjunction of North and Sub-Saharan Africa" Bentahar explains:

> It is possible to observe that current notions of North Africa's racial, cultural, and literary ties to the rest of the continent may in some ways reflect factors such as movements of decolonization and national independence throughout Africa, fluctuating inclinations of pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism, and conflicts in the Middle East. There were also distinctions made between North and sub-Saharan Africa predating the beginning of European colonialism, and going back much earlier….. The products of research and popular imaginative views of Africa in the last few decades have tended to leave out the northern region, even when speaking of the continent as a whole. "Africa" now ostensibly stands for sub-Saharan Africa, whereas North Africa is considered in many academic disciplines to be part of the Middle East instead. There is hardly any consensus on the issue, and some do, in fact, deem North and sub-Saharan Africa to belong to the same area. (2-5)

In modern time, the gap between two Africas is growing even bigger. Recent events concerning terrorism and counterterrorism are dividing the world into Muslim and Christian blocks. In Africa the border is the Sahara, whereas countries like Nigeria are divided within. Religious polarization, along with diverse tribal taboos and norms, are the main reasons for such a division. Interreligious marriages are a good example for that. An orthodox Muslim family would never accept a Christian son or daughter-in-law and vice versa. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* Adichie describes the former relationship between Mohammed, a Muslim, and his Igbo girlfriend Olanna:

> "I am no longer the Igbo woman you wanted to marry who would taint the lineage with infidel blood," Olanna said, as they climbed into Mohammed's red Porsche. "So I am a friend now."

> "I would have married you anyhow, and she knew it. Her preference did not matter."
>
> "Maybe not at first, but what about later? What about when we had been married for ten years?"
>
> "Your parents felt the same way as she did." Mohammed turned to look at her." (57)

Mohammed and Olanna are young and educated, the future of Nigeria and its multiculturalism, but not even they can break away from tradition and norms.

Even geography divides Nigeria. Adichie describes the geography of the South and the North in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, "…how different was North as a whole from the South. Here, the sand was fine, gray, and sun-seared, nothing like the clumpy red earth back home; the trees were tame, unlike the bursting greenness that sprang up and cast shadows on the road to Ummunachi" (46).

However, the difference and hate between tribes come to its fullest before and during the Biafran War. Before the war started, soldiers had made a pact of killing all prominent politicians, regardless of their tribe, so that every group of soldiers was going to kill a politician that belonged to a different tribe. Emecheta describes this in *Destination Biafra*, "I wouldn't want this to look like an Igbo affair. So, Nwokolo, you take care of Sarduna. You have lived in the North and know the people there. Momoh, you delegate the regiment to deal with the leaders in Lagos; Odalapo, the West…And Abosi, see that the Eastern ministers are properly taken care of" (61).

The disturbing fact brought to light by Emecheta's novel is that the bloodshed brings the army together. However, this kind of alliance cannot survive. The army officials even want to make British people go away, but later realize that the British have the most profitable companies and without them the country would be in chaos. After that the army officials begin to act like politicians. Later the officials realize that they cannot build a democratic state on coup d'état. Emecheta writes how after the coup, people feel relief at first, but later the problems emerge and differences turn into slaughter. Nigeria is now divided more than ever and nobody feels Nigerian. There are even rumors about the separation of the West and the East; Odomoso even openly suggests that to Abosi. Only people like Debbie, who belong to the minority tribe, can feel Nigerian. Even though the army kills her father, she still believes in the greater good, she still believes in Nigeria. However, nobody else believes in one Nigeria:

> "I am not on anyone's side. I'm on the side of Nigeria. I want Nigeria to be one as we have always been."
>
> This was greeted by another derisive laugh. "You are wrong, young lady from England. Nigeria has not always been one."
>
> Debbie knew what he meant: Nigeria was only one nation as a result of administrative balkanization by the British and French powers. (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 175)

Debbie loses her faith little by little as she goes through the devastated areas, and especially after the death of the little baby Biafra, whom she took care of after the death of his parents. His death is a premonition of the death of Biafra as a state, but also the death of people, equality, happiness and ultimately pride in one's own nation, the pride of being Nigerian. Later events, when she sees soldiers raping and killing nuns and babies, only enhance Debbie's disappointment. Her travel companion Dorothy has a nervous breakdown and refuses to believe the soldiers of her country are capable of doing these monstrosities:

> "No, they did not kill her, she just bled to death. They killed the young nuns and many others, but they did not kill Mother Francesca," Dorothy insisted, in a vain effort to wash away the sins of the men of her race who wore borrowed army uniforms, promoting an equally borrowed culture. A culture that did not respect the old.
>
> "She just bled to death. They would never rape the old woman, never…she just bled to death," she continued, accepting the death of her child, but not able to understand the abuse of the helpless old. (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 225)

In war nobody has pity and nobody is protected. There is also the problem of English interference. Just like they created Nigeria, the English also cause the creation of Biafra. They try to stop it, but when they realize they can make money on the war, they start selling arms to both sides. Even though Biafra has been created as a state free from Western influence, later on the Biafran army accepts Western arms and goods, proving that they cannot survive without their help. Igbos also want a Biafra where Western businessmen can invest and make deals. One can presume that those deals would not be different from the deals Nigeria made

with the West. As a result, once again people will suffer while a small number of politicians and businessmen will make money.

The rift between the North and the South is not the only problem. Even if one shares religious beliefs and tribal alliance, it is still not enough for a project like Nigeria to succeed. The main storyline in Emecheta's *The Bride Price* is a good example of that. After her father's death, a young girl Aku-nna moves to her hometown Ibuza with her mother and brother. There she meets and falls in love with a teacher Chike, but they cannot marry because he is a descendant of a slave. He is good, intelligent, well-educated and rich, but all that is not enough. Aku-nna disapproves of that and they continue their relationship. The community disapproves of slaves' descendants not just because of their heritage but also because they are now rich and powerful. Their ancestors were sent as servants to the white missionaries and they taught the slaves how to read and write. Most them continued their education and gained high positions because they are educated and Christian and thus considered "civilized".

Favoritism of white people amongst black Africans is another legacy of colonialism, described in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun, "*You miserable ignoramus! You see a white person and he looks better than your own people! You must apologize to everybody in this line!" (35). This is Odenigbo's reaction after the ticket seller asks the white man to cut the line, so that he does not have to wait. This kind of racism is the worst because the white colonists succeed not only in ruling the black people but also in making them feel that they should be ruled over.

On the other hand, some people, like Richard from Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* – an Englishman who symphatizes with the Nigerians and supports the Biafran cause - are laughed at when they say out loud that they feel like Nigerians because they are white. No matter how hard they try to prove their loyalty to the African nation, they will always be mistrusted because of their skin color. Richard gets credibility when he starts telling people that he has an Igbo wife. Because of everything, Richard has to believe in Biafra; that is his only chance to be truly African. He was there when the nation was created, so he has a right to call himself a Biafran. When Biafra fails, Richard loses his Biafran citizenship and he also loses Kainene, who disappeares without a trace while trying to cross the Nigerian–Biafran border. All of his ties to Africa are thus gone. Nevertheless, he chooses to stay in Nigeria and by doing that proves his intention to be African.

Being Nigerian is a complicated issue because too much history and bloodshed divides the people of Nigeria. Emecheta and Adichie believe that Nigeria has to accept all of its

different peoples, regardless of race, origin or tribe because all of them are now one nation and as long as they refuse to do that, they will be exploited and robbed.

1.3. The Question of English

Post-colonial writers struggle with the question of whether they should write in English. English is a stepping stone for emerging post-colonial literatures. If post-colonial writers choose to write in English, their works become westernized, written in the language of the oppressor. On the other hand, their works are only valued if they fit the European standards. One must also consider the question whether these writers can convey their messages in English as well as they can in their native language. Do African writers betray their language by writing in English and do they contribute to the Anglo Saxon art and culture while leaving their native culture behind? The English language gives them a possibility to have a broader audience that cannot read in Igbo, Yoruba, Swahili or Afrikaans.

There is also another problem. African literary tradition is grounded in oral literature. Like many African and Nigerian writers, both Adichie and Emecheta use the elements of folk tales in their novels. Through the tales they want to make a connection with their past and tradition and to transmit their ideas to the readers. Ogundele comments:

> By the time the smoke of the actual intervention cleared, the Africans who experienced it had lost their voice and power. Dismissing precolonial Africa as primitive and unworthy of all but anthropological interests, Christianity, in combination with Western education, embarked on producing new Africans indoctrinated to look at their own world rather like the way one looks at other planets through a telescope, the lenses of which are the empowering acquisition of Western languages and other politico-cultural matrices. All the radical discontinuities are incarnated in the simultaneous displacement of orality by literacy, and of African languages by European ones as the new vectors of power, knowledge, and civilization. In sum, colonialism was and remains a thick wall separating the "dark" African past from the "enlightened" present; or a multilayered veil through which whatever of the past filters is bound to be seen darkly and distortedly. As such, it remains the original and originary obstacle to any robust and long-distance historical imagination. (125-126)

All folk songs and oral tradition means nothing and Africa is regarded as a continent with no literary tradition. Furthermore, African writers have to express themselves in a form of an imported genre – a novel. Midiohouan explains:

> Senghor's theses of Negritude, according to which the "black soul" is essentially sensitivity and emotivity, only served to consolidate this disabling prejudice, and one can rightly believe that they largely inspired Kesteloot's work, which arrived at an historically false conclusion by affirming the primacy of poetry in the genesis of African literature, an idea that a good many African critics took up, as for example Iyay Kimony, for whom African literature naturally passed "from poetry to the novel…"the novelistic genre [that] was to inaugurate the adulthood of African literature" .(182)

African novelists are considered only suitable to write poetry because of the oral culture, tradition and the motifs that appear in the tales. It is a widespread belief that novels are the means of the expression of the serious writers that usually come from Europe and are white, which is not true.

One also has to understand that African literature is as much African as European literature is European. That means that within European literature there are divisions into national literatures. The same applies to African literature. Every tribe, and later every nation, has had its own literature and culture. However, the problem runs deeper. According to Adejunmobi:

> As is well known to a restricted company of specialists in the English-speaking world, there are and have been for centuries, writers from the Indian Ocean world. There exist and have existed in the past significant literary movements and major authors. Nonetheless, I remain intrigued by the fact that the category of Indian Ocean literature has never quite achieved the kind of prominence enjoyed by say, Caribbean literature, to consider just one other example of a corpus of texts associated with mainly coastal and island-based communities, sharing in common similar experiences of slavery, indentured labor, colonialism, and other deprivations of political and economic

> rights. Efforts to project the Indian Ocean world as a zone of distinctiveness and coherence have not yet borne much fruit in the literary field. In universities in the English-speaking world, there are courses on African literature, on Caribbean literature, on Black literature, on Asian literature, but few courses I would suggest on Indian Ocean literature. The fault is of course partially ours as scholars, but it may also reflect a deeper malaise on the part of the communities whose texts we are seeking to systematize. (1247)

Hence, postcolonial literature must differentiate between different literatures. Although they have similar themes and motifs, they must be recognized as different literatures and be valued as such.

According to Eze, postcolonial literature, and with it African literature, has a burden of the colonial past and in addition to that, it became recognized only after certain changes in the concept and understanding of European literature and literature in general occurred in the second half of the twentieth century. The change is called deconstruction and it enabled feminist and postcolonial literatures to emerge. Eze explains that only when literature and society are deconstructed, a path is cleared for a new view on history (26).

Because of the deconstruction and the past, most common motifs and themes in works of African novelists are connected to struggle, violence and discrimination because they believe it is their duty to address that. Their duty is also to educate the general population by showing them the wrongs that occur in their society. They are also reluctant to end a story with a happy ending. On the contrary, they usually end their stories with a realistic ending to show their readers that their protagonists are not detached from the harsh reality they live in. Violence and death make everybody equal regardless of money or origin. Violence is also a part of humanity. African writers use violence to heal the community. However, that can be unpopular in the West so many Western publishers dictate what is to be written and how to write it in order for a book to be published. African literature should be allowed to be different from European and not to be seen through the prism of European literature. Sullivan argues:

> In effect, the African novel offers a different read on the quest for identity. Based on the broadly accepted notion that social identity subsumes personal identity, the journey toward the self

> ultimately includes and/or represents the journey toward the heart of the community……finds the lead character's happiness dependent upon social acceptance, locating her own identity within the fold of the community's embrace….. These characters explicitly convey the seminal difference between African and Western notions of identity—that of connection to, versus fracture from, the society within which the individual lives. The African hero's quest for identity is the quest for his or her society's identity. (184)

Although African writers are the voice of their community, their voice is frequently questioned because they either come from a good family and do not live like the rest of the people or they live abroad either by choice or force because being the voice of the people can be dangerous in some parts of Africa. By living abroad, they become detached from the suffering of the people, so the question is how they can represent their people. On the other hand, can they put their lives in danger by staying in their countries? Consequently, they have a choice - either to tell the truth or to put food on the table, just like Ifeoma and Eugene in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* do. Adichie, who also divides her time between the USA and Nigeria, addresses the problem of emigrant writers. Her protagonist, like many others, chooses to leave Nigeria because of the promises of a better life abroad. Ifeoma and her family do find a better life, but it comes with aprice. They may live in another country, but they will always be Nigerian. No matter where he or she lives, according to Sullivan an "African author in particular functions as a teacher and social reformer. He uses his writings 'to explain the problems and to indicate . . . the social reforms he wishes us to see'" (184).

Writers have the power to change society and they must not use that power for trivial things. They have to be the ones to propose and demand changes realizing that they are the only path to a better society.

2. Trauma

2.1. Women's War

Many critics consider that contemporary Nigerian authors perceive the Biafran War as a women's war. According to Bryce:

> Adichie's second novel, *Yellow Sun*, fills in this gap, being an ambitious attempt at a fictionalization of the Civil War years, from the point of view of several characters living in Biafra….Though the "Biafran novel" has been something of a rite of passage for Nigerian writers of the two previous generations, Adichie is the first to approach it entirely as *historical* fiction. Buchi Emecheta, while not having experienced the Civil War first-hand, is old enough to remember it, and her *Destination Biafra* imagines an alternative and more conventionally "heroic" role for women in it. The world imagined by *Yellow Sun* is a smaller one, of incremental retreat, minute daily adaptations and personal accommodations that, taken together, spell a story of collective hardship and suffering. The novel's method is similar to those previously discussed in moving backwards and forwards between present and the recent past: the late and early '60s, and its shifting chronology is mirrored in shifting points of view. (58)

This definition best describes the world of women in the novels and the world of actual Nigerian women during the Biafran War. Their public sphere is represented through Debbie and Kainene, brave commando-like women who struggle through the horrors of the war. Their private sphere is portrayed through Olanna, who experiences a gradual loss of family, friends, money, house, commodities, but still preserves herself, her family and her common sense.

Emecheta is one of the first authors who raised the question of gender in war. War is generally considered a male thing, the proof of one's masculinity, strength and power. Women, like children, are either unable to evacuate war areas and become victims of war or are safely evacuated and are waiting for the return of their men. What is not publicly visible are the women living in the war stricken areas. They are forced to live and raise their children

in such bad conditions and they have to do it on a daily basis. There is omnipresent scarcity of food, clothing, water, peace. Men are at war; they only fight when the battle is on, but women fight all the time.

Some women like Debbie choose to fight alongside with men. She has a romantic notion about fighting for Nigeria and the unity, for principles and a better country. When she starts fighting side by side with men, she discovers bigotry, biases, corruption and hunger for power. Debbie does not mind taking on heavy duties, for example taking care of prisoners because she believes in a better, new Nigeria. The new Nigeria is the reason why she still supports men who killed her father. Debbie also sees a possibility for women at war. Women can prove themselves to men, prove themselves as equal and regain the position they have had in pre-colonial time. Yet, men only use that as an excuse to rape and torture them because now they are equal and they do not have to mind their manners and respect women.

Debbie goes on a trip, which later proves to be a heroic quest for the salvation of Nigeria. She decides to go to Biafra and talk to Abosi and convince him to end the war. Like in all other things, Debbie is very naïve. She believes that she can make a difference and talk reasonably with hot-headed men who, at this point, are only interested in proving their power. Reality comes crushing down on her after she is being pulled over by Nigerian soldiers. She and her mother are raped, whereas her driver and an Igbo family, for whom they stopped to help, are brutally killed. Soldiers not only rape a pregnant woman, but they also carve her unborn child from her womb saying: "Who knows, he might live to be another Abosi" (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 135). After this disillusion, Debbie wants to end the war even more. Now she understands that Momoh decided to send her on this trip to win the war, but now she takes her faith into her own hands and decides to proceed with her quest, but this time not for Momoh or Abosi but for the people of both Nigeria and Biafra.

Debbie goes through rummaged areas, sees children so used to being pulled over and asked so many questions that now they know the procedure by heart, women striping naked without shame because what is shame when life is at stake? After the second time she was raped, Debbie feels that she is also at war for her womanhood: "She tightened the cloth she had around her more securely as if she were feeling cold and as if she was going to face a war, a personal war for her womanhood" (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 174). By now she knows that there are more ways to kill a person than simply to take away one's life.

Ironically enough, Debbie also finds out that war has positive sides, allowing women to show their full potential. Debbie sees her mother, who she thought was just another rich man's frivolous wife, and other women similar to her mother as strong, as survivors. They

comfort each other and do not allow their spirits to sink because they think not just about themselves but also about their children, family and the whole community. They do not want the war, but they have learnt how to face its consequences. They have a better sense of the past and past mistakes than men and they know that their grandmothers were also in war and they survived and that this is not the last war and that their children will probably have their own wars to fight. Regardless of that, they have not lost their humanity or like Kainene in *Half of a Yellow Sun* says: "We are all at war and we all decide who we want to become" (Adichie 486).

Women start refugee camps, like Kainene does, or, like Debbie's mother Stella, they organize underground channels for transportation of food and people. Women around Debbie empower her to finish her quest. Unfortunately, when she reaches Abosi, he tells her that her trip was in vain, "I am me. Debbie, the daughter of Ogedemgbe. Tell me if I were a man, a man born almost thirty years ago, a graduate of politics, sociology and philosophy from Oxford, England, would you have dismissed my mission? … You are brave but you've answered the question yourself. You are not a man" (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 239).

She now understands her mother when she says that she is only a woman in a man's world. Debbie has been trying to be a man, but now she realizes that she could never be one so she decides to be a woman. She knows that the ideals that Abosi fought for no longer exist and the only thing that remains is the hunger for power. However, many people, including Dr. Eze, still believe in a better Biafra, a land of plenty for all Africans. Yet, these dreams are soon to be crushed because Eze, along with other prominent Igbo men, is killed by his own people. Debbie now knows that she must go abroad to get help. She travels to London to inform the world about the war and to end it. She also wants to bring food to Biafra. Like other women, she sees and experiences what it means to live a life during the war; she knows that the real war is about food and medicine. Again, women are the ones who provide food, medicine and take care of people in the war, while men are so detached from the real life that they only see dreams and propaganda, the future, which is probably not going to happen. Women like Kainene know better than to believe in propaganda, mass hysteria and false promises.

Being a woman in a war means to see the ugly reality, to cope with it on a daily basis and still manage to survive. Women are being killed and humiliated by torture and rape not only physically but also emotionally. However, in all that they remain sane and keep going on because they know if they fall apart, everything will. Women thus posses the true strength

that can transform the world and make it, not necessarily better, but maybe a more humane place.

2.2. The Voice of the People

In their novels, Emecheta and Adichie choose the main protagonists that have a similar background as themselves. Since their background is more or less upper and upper-middle class, the protagonists seem to be too detached from what is happening to the vast majority of Nigerians. That is why Emecheta and Adichie choose literary devices such as "point of view" and multiperspectivity to make their novels closer to the mindset of ordinary people. Emecheta uses the point of view of many people her main protagonist Debbie encounters to show the state of mind of ordinary Nigerians, whereas Adichie has a slightly different approach. In addition to using the voice of the people to transmit the message, she also chooses the point of view of the three main protagonists to portray the hardships of her people. One of them is Ugwu, the voice of the underprivileged Nigerian majority. Bryce writes:

> On the last page, however, we realize that the story is Ugwu's, pieced together from all the stories that collectively make up the novel, its title appropriated from Richard: *The World Was Silent When We Died*. This device allows Adichie gracefully to relinquish her position as narrative authority, in favor of a spokesman for the voiceless—which she does not claim to be. (59)

Adichie gives her book credibility by using Ugwu as voice of the people because she was not directly affected by the war; therefore she cannot claim the pain of her protagonists as her pain. The same is with Emecheta who was in London during and after the war. Both authors realize that they are somehow privileged for not having been a part of the war, so they want to honor the people who were not that lucky.

Emecheta starts with what resembles a journalistic type of writing, stating the facts and events that eventually led to the Biafran war. Multiperspectivity gives her book credibility and her readers feel as if she herself was in the middle of things. She starts with describing the English perspective, the causes that initiated the conflict. Later on, she uses the voice of the people to state her own opinion and popular beliefs, first of which is the tale of the bank clerk from Kanu:

> "How can politicians preach 'One Nigeria' when a tribe of people is being massacred?" he kept asking himself. "When the

> Europeans ruled us, few people died; now we rule ourselves, we butcher each other like meat-sellers slaughtering cows"……Ugoji wondered whether perhaps Regina had not been lucky. The passengers on the platform were still alive-just-but the killers made sure that those Ibos who went back home would always remember their stay in the North. Nearly all the women were without one breast. The very old ones had one eye each. Some of the men were castrated, some had only one arm, others had one foot amputated. (*Destination Biafra* 88-89)

Ugoji, the clerk, is the voice of the Igbo people who are banished from the North. Barbara Tateka is the political voice. She believes that the real enemies are the British and that Biafra and Nigeria should unite in order to be able to rule over their own country. That is probably Emecheta's own opinion incorporated in the state of mind of a young upper class patriot.

Furthermore, Emecheta describes the hardships of Western Igbos who are Abosi's scapegoats and suffer even more butchering, raping and killing than the Eastern Igbos. She portrays them through Nwoloko, Abosi's friend from the army, and the Igbo people Debbie meets while she travels to see Abosi. They all know that Western Igbos are sacrificed in order to preserve Biafra. Debbie sees the truth by spending time with them and realizes how much wrong has been done to them from both sides. She also realizes how privileged her life is compared to the lives of these people; they become her strength, not "One Nigeria" or Biafra, but the people she sees.

As the war goes on, Western Igbos become more isolated and alone and realize that no one will defend them, so they take matter into their own hands. They refuse to help Abosi and send their man to Biafra. They denounce Biafra:

> Biafra, Biafra, what is Biafra?...We are Ibuza people, but now we live in the bush thanks to your Abosi and your Biafra. Our town is now a ghost town. Go there and see Hausa soldiers killing and roasting cows. They shoot anyone in sight, and kill anyone who gave shelter to our people. And when we needed you, where were you? Where was your Abosi when our girls were raped in the market place and our grandmothers shot?

> Please go back to your Biafra. (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 230)

Disappointment turns into rage and Western Igbos start to form their own militia in the bush to protect themselves. The government's failure brings people to the point of seeking desperate measures.

Similarly, Adichie uses multivocality to point out and comment not only on the bad politics of the 1960s but also on the problems that are present even today. Adichie chooses three protagonists from different walks of life to describe the war that leaves nobody untouched, regardless of their origin, money or education.

The first protagonist is Olanna, who is very detached from the people of her own country because she was educated abroad and her rich family protects her from seeing the reality of Nigeria that they themselves helped create through corruption and unequal distribution of wealth. Olanna's only encounter with the real world is through her aunt and uncle who live in Kano. All of that changes once she leaves her safe zone in Lagos and starts living in Nsukka. The first clash with reality is her partner Odenigbo's mother, an uneducated village woman who thinks Olanna is a witch for being breast-fed by a nanny and for being educated. The second and far gruesome clash with reality are the horrors that she witnesses in Kano:

> She opened the calabash. "Take a look," she said again. Olanna looked into the bowl. She saw the little girl's head with the ash-gray skin and the braided hair and rolled-back eyes and open mouth. She stared at it for a while before she looked away. Somebody screamed. The woman closed the calabash. "Do you know," she said, "it took me so long to plait this hair? She had such thick hair. (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 188)

Olanna is now permanently scared and can never go back to her old life again. Her only hope is Biafra. Like Richard, she needs Biafra to wipe out all the bad things that have happened and that they have seen. Yet, she also wants to be a Biafran and belong to a nation, something that she never could have felt while living in Nigeria. For Olanna and Richard, Biafra is a promise of a better future. Olanna was too rich and too detached from the sufferings of her countrymen; Richard, on the other hand, used to be seen as a white colonist. Now Richard has become Biafra's greatest adversary who tries to use his influence in the

English newspapers to help Biafrans gain their freedom and to fight the misrepresentation of their struggle by the Western press.

The third protagonist, Ugwu, is the voice of the voiceless. He is a poor village boy who is sent to the town of Nsukka to serve a Master, and who, like many Africans, is unable to find his place in the modern world. He is not educated enough to understand the ways of the world like his Master, but he sees it with his unique view. This makes him a loveable character and brings him close to the reader. His thoughts on politics, relationship and loyalty represent the views of ordinary Nigerians. He is in touch with the ordinary people and knows what many of them had to go through in order to survive the war. He knows that Nigerian girls have to sell their bodies to soldiers to procure the food for their families, that people are fighting and friendships are being broken over a can of milk. However, he is not just the observer. He is forced to join the Biafran army and with it comes the trail for his humanity. During his time as a soldier, Ugwu is the voice describing the everyday life of soldiers to the reader. Ugwu's character gives the army the humanity which they lost since they are depicted as either larger than life or as butchers. In addition to that, Ugwu represents an ordinary, non-violent man in a war situation. By describing Ugwu's experience, Adichie shows that everybody is capable of monstrosities if given the right push. Ugwu rapes a girl because he starts to feel the power he now has as a Biafran soldier, but what is more important, he feels what it is like to commit horrible things due to mass mentality and inability to break away from the peer pressure:

> "Target Destroyer, aren't you a man? *I bukwa nwoke*?" On the floor, the girl was still. Ugwu pulled his trousers down….He didn't look at her face, or at the man pinning her down, or at anything at all as he moved quickly and felt his own climax, the rush of fluids to the tips of himself: a self-loathing release. He zipped up his trousers while some soldiers clapped. Finally he looked at the girl. She stared back at him with a calm hate. (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 458)

After the rape, Ugwu is transformed forever. Like the people of Nigeria, he will never gain back the innocence he had before the war. The things he has seen or done are too painful and horrible for him to face, even when he tries to describe them in a book. Now, he would give anything for things to be as they were before, but nothing will be like before and Ugwu

realizes that. The only path to recovery is to slowly let the wounds heal and try to build a new country, alongside with yesterday's enemies, and learn how to coexist.

2.3. The Failure of Male Leadership

Both Emecheta and Adichie write about male and female aspects of the war. What is interesting is that both authors portray men as a disappointment in war - as leaders, husbands, fathers and sons. Men want women to be weak and under control, denied their equal rights. They abuse their absolute power, shift blame and cause death and destruction. Nwonkwon comments:

> In Nigeria's Britain-based Buchi Emecheta, dissidence is active. It is overt. The female characters have had enough from men. Most of these men are at best marginally intelligent. They are mostly ugly or irrational. Their images are often as bestial as their reckless and uncaring brutality against women…. That they are sons and fathers or grandfathers does not matter. In the end, women are just able to stay put in the world as wives, mistresses, or slaves. It is all the same. (201)

While African men ask for equality and the end of discrimination for themselves, they deny their women the right to the same things.

Emecheta and Adichie have a different approach when it comes to the failure of male leadership. While Emecheta is more interested in what male leadership is doing to the country, Adichie is more interested in the private, family sphere. Emecheta shows how bad leaders, like Abosi and Momoh, destroy the country and its people, but also how much power corrupts and that neither them nor the previous leaders are capable of governing the country. She uses an ingenious metaphor to show the failure of their governance. Both of their wives are pregnant and they end up losing their children. Adams argues:

> In each case, the death of a child signifies that a new nation cannot be born: Biafra is an abortive effort and the "new" Nigeria, without its seceded peoples and under an abusive military regime, is "monstrous" and incomplete….Emecheta may use the trope of motherhood in order to symbolize the "birth" of the nation, but she nonetheless refuses to render the female body allegorical or abstract while doing so. Julianna and Elizabeth are unable to experience the (problematic) "joys" of motherhood because of the political and moral impotence of

> their *husbands*. It is thus the *male body* which bears the responsibility for the country--a clever conceit considering the fact that Nigeria is primarily represented as a fatherland. As a result, the deaths of Momoh's and Abosi's children, for which they are accountable, come to mirror the countless deaths of innocent children in the midst of the warfare. The future of the country is literally dying as a result of these men… As they dreamed of a new Nigeria, and believed that corrupt politicians were their only problem, they underestimated the power of British (neo) colonialism as well as the pull of ethnic nationalism. (292)

The two leaders' private sphere becomes one with the public sphere because their inability to run a state equals their inability to take care of their families. Momoh's wife Elizabeth is going crazy and finally gives birth to a deformed child, symbolically a deformed Nigeria. Abosi's wife Julianna realizes that he is no longer the man she married and loses her child, which coincides with the loss of Biafra. She is disappointed at him just like the Igbo people.

All of the leaders fail - British puppets because of the corruption, Momoh and Abosi because of their hunger for power. It is precisely Odomousu and Doromousu's hunger for power that starts the bloodiest wars in Nigerian history, and all that for oil and contracts. Soon everybody starts seeing the profit they can gain from the war and it breaks loose. Men in power give weapon to poor, uneducated boys and send them off to fight their war.

The failure of male leadership empowers a growing army that nobody wants or can control. The true horrors of the war begin once yesterday's poor boys become army men, representing the state and having ultimate power. They use their power for bad things because the war brings out the worst in humans. They desecrate women like Debbie in *Destination Biafra,* taking away their dignity and leaving them with a permanent scar. When Debbie's mother Stella asks the Nigerian army (whose soldiers attack Debbie) for justice, she is being mocked at: "It's war madam. I am sure those boys were only provincial militia….Give her hot water to wash yourself. Hundreds of women are being raped – so what? It's war. She's lucky to be even alive. She'll be alright" (Emecheta 135). The war thus serves as a justification for deranged individuals to pillage, rape and kill, and if those individuals are leaders, the whole army must obey what they say.

Every war is a failure of somebody's, usually male, leadership, because it results from an incapability to settle things in a civilized manner. For a war to be successful, a leader must create demonized enemies because in order for people to kill other people they must believe that their enemies are not human any more. Similarly, Nigerian soldiers believe that Igbos are lower than animals and that they need to be exterminated: "Search them for arms, search them for food! Let them go to their Biafra and starve. Search them." (Emecheta, *Destinatuon Biafra* 167). They kill Igbos, run over their dead bodies and treat them with utmost disrespect. Those kinds of monstrosities make the other side fight even more and, what is worse, hearing about those horrors makes everybody fight, from intellectuals to villagers. War propaganda deliberately makes everybody oblivious of the fact that violence causes just more violence.

While people are fighting and losing lives, Momoh and Abosi are becoming surer of themselves. Their pride and sense of ability and power only grows once they see the mass supporting them in their cause. Momoh starts pushing Alan and Britain away; he feels that now he is capable of running his country by himself. Abosi, on the other hand, has to find the culprit for the fall of Benin and the massacre of the Western Igbos. He decides to blame it on his friend Nwolko for not defending the town properly, and Nwolko is accused of being a traitor and is killed. A true leader would be able to accept his defeat and encourage his people to fight even stronger. As the situation gets even more out of hand, Momoh starts searching for mercenaries and weapons in the West. He says that he will pay in oil, which is not even his as it is in Biafran territory. Momoh thus again fails as a leader because he is unable to finish the war and has to ask the West for help. Yet, without the Western support he would be nothing, and the only reason why the West cooperates with Momoh is because he promises them the oil. Payments in oil show arrogance and ignorance - arrogance because Momoh is sure about winning and ignorance because the oil money could provide a better life for his people. This way, the profit will go to Western hands to pay off the war debt. The sad part is that the war started because of oil and now the only people that profit from it are Westerners who would have profited anyway. Abosi is also arrogant and ignorant - arrogant because he is too sure of himself and ignorant because he is oblivious of the fact that his people are starving to death. The only person who sees all of this is Debbie. She is disappointed in male leadership in her own country, so she decides to go and search for help abroad. Yet again, the male leaders of the West, along with Alan, disappoint her. Alan refuses to stop selling arms to both Momoh and Abosi, and Western leaders are not interested in helping the people in Nigeria or Biafra because they do not see how that would benefit the West. The failure of

leadership is applicable not only to African but also to European leaders who have the power to stop the war but simply refuse to do that.

Momoh and Abosi's madness reaches the highest point when Momoh gets angry for being called a murderer. He starts the ethnic cleansing. Abosi, on the other hand, starts killing his own people because he feels betrayed by them since he is losing the war. At the end of *Destination Biafra*, their failure is completed. Abosi flees the country and Momoh, although he wins the wars, fails as a leader because everything Nigeria has is now going to be Western. He has sold his land and his people to win the war that he himself started in order to establish the sovereignty of the very land and people. As a result, Nigeria is lost again, just like in colonial times, and that is Momoh's greatest failure.

Adichie also describes the failure happening in the private sphere. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* this type of failure again revolves around men, especially in Kainene and Olanna's lives. The first one is their father. He is a failure as a father because he offers his daughters in exchange for a contract, as mistresses or wives, whatever suits the gentlemen more. Secondly, he is a failure as a husband because he has mistresses and cheats on his wife. Thirdly, he fails as a businessman and a pillar of the community because he is corrupted and greedy. Unfortunately, the failure does not stop there.

Another important man in Olanna's life, her partner Odenigbo, also fails her multiple times. He fails her when he is unable to stand up to his mother when she is abusing Olanna because he believes that all women are unreasonable and that their fight is just insignificant bickering. That is disrespectful and hurtful to Olanna. He fails her again when he has intercourse with Amala, and what is worse, he tries to blame it on his mother and refuses to take responsibility. He also refuses to take responsibility for his own child:

> "It's you and not your mother. It happened because you let it happen! You must take responsibility!"…"I am not a philandering man, and you know that. This would not have happened if my mother didn't have a hand!"…"Did your mother pull your penis and insert it into Amala as well?" Olanna asked. (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 301)

He again fails her during the war when he is unable to cope with the situation and runs away into alcoholism and probably has an affair with the neighbor Alice. He is not capable of supporting Olanna during hardships and shows that he is weak, and in the end she has to be the one who takes care of everything. Not only does he fail her, but he also fails himself by

succumbing to the lowest instincts during the war, believing the propaganda and not being the critical thinker and intellectual as he used to be. He cannot stop living in the past, cannot forgive Richard an affair with Olanna and cannot give up the failed dream of Biafra. The past drags him down and because of the past he fails to live and cope with the present.

Richard, Kainene's partner, also fails her as a man multiple times. First of all, he fails her when he succumbs to his desires and cheats on Kainene with Olanna. He does not even like her that much; he is only interested in her sexually and for curiosity he is willing to betray Kainene's trust and ruin his relationship. After that, he fails to take responsibility for his actions: "Richard paused. 'You had emotional problems, and I should not have-'
'What happened took two, Richard,' Olanna said, and suddenly felt contempt for his trembling hands and pale shyness" (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 304)-. He also fails as a writer because he never manages to write his book and finally he fails in finding Kainene.

Adichie also describes the failure of Western reporters. They fail to see the horrors in Biafra and do something to prevent or stop them. They are only interested in taking some pictures which they will be able to sell for a high price: "He walked over to the children and gave them some sweets and took photographs of them and they clamored around him and begged for more. Once, he said, 'That's a lovely smile!' and after he left them, the children went back to their roasting rats" (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 464). Just like politicians, reporters are not interested in doing anything because they believe this war does not concern them.

Yet, the reporters are not the only men failing Nigerian women. A priest in Kainene's refugee camp, who impregnates a young girl and gives her food in exchange for sex, does too. So do the Nigerian soldiers who burst into people's houses, stop and search them on the street and make their lives miserable.

All of the above is the product of a bad leadership. When a leader is intelligent and strong, he or she can be a role model for his or her people. Emecheta and Adichie depict the reality in which men fail as leaders and in the process ruin states and families, succumb to greed and power and end up having nothing. Neither author claims that women are better leaders, but they do claim that they would be better role models, more humane and forgiving. With those characteristics, women are presented the leaders of the future.

3. Memory

3.1. Old Gods and New Gods

Christianity came to Africa a few years after colonialism. The indigenous people did not want to give up their religion, so the colonists forced them into doing that. First, they treated them with violence, later they gave them benefits if they converted. The benefits included anything from food, clothes to education. People who were chiefs and kings, powerful in general, usually stayed true to their old gods and old faith. People who were less powerful and poorer took Christianity as a possibility to improve their lives. Hughes discusses:

> The outcasts and rejects from the Ibo social structure were prime candidates for conversion to Christianity. As Christian converts, these individuals then frequently found themselves placed in positions of power in the new colonial order with the result that there developed a steady erosion of the ranks and privileges invested in the traditional social authority. (628)

Christianity brings education and equal possibilities for everybody, as long as they are Christians and accept everything that comes with Christianity. That means giving up on old beliefs and tradition, one's ancestors and culture. Some people did that gladly, while others realized the consequences of losing one's past and tradition. As years passed, the ones who stayed true to the beliefs of their elders became poorer and started losing their authority and positions. Finally, all the people were forced to be Christians. Meanwhile, the ones who did that earlier took the highest positions in the state. This trend has carried on until today. The descendants of the ones who converted earlier are the Nigerian elite, rich and educated. The descendants of the other ones are punished with poverty and lack of education.

Nigerian society is thus polarized between the very rich and very poor Christians and non Christians, the educated and the non-educated, men and women. In *Purple Hibiscus* Adichie describes what happens when those polarities collide. She takes the figures of a father and a son to portray the clash of old and new Nigeria. She portrays two relationships - the relationship between Jaja and his father Eugene and the one between Eugene and his father Papa Nnukwu. Eugene and Nnukwu represent the historical clash between Christianity and old gods, whereas Eugene and Jaja represent the clash between old views and Christian

fundamentalism and modern world, where people realize that every religion is valuable and should be cherished because religions are not just about gods, but also about heritage, ancestors and culture. These clashes brought changes. The first one, that brought education and money to Nigeria, also required total separation from heritage and tradition. The second one will teach Nigeria how to make peace with its past and incorporate it in a better future. These changes are weakening the power of the Church, so that in Nigeria, like in many other countries, the Church supports traditional views and patriarchy. Ministers are mostly white and keen on supporting colonialism, which usually results in discrimination against the majority of the population. Just like in colonial times, ministers do not trust the indigenous people and consider them savage and brute. They only trust the ones who are converted. They do not respect the country of Nigeria at all. This is vividly described in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* when white nuns refuse to sing the Nigerian national anthem, believing that the people of Nigeria do not have the intelligence to have their own state. Both nuns and priests are trying to introduce as little change as possible. The priests know that if they do not maintain the current social structure, people will realize that their ways of thinking are questionable. In order for the Church to have power, the cult of the father must remain intact. Jaja and Kambili idolize their father like a God. He can do no wrong and his word is the law. Also, his orders are never to be questioned and when Jaja asks the first question, the conflict arises. Kambili admires the father and for her he is the perfect being, "I would focus on his lips, the movement, and sometimes I forgot myself, sometimes I wanted to stay like that forever, listening to his voice, the important things he said. It was the same way I felt when he smiled, his face breaking open like a coconut with the brilliant white meat inside" (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 25). Her love and admiration for her father will be later replaced with her love for father Amadi. She chooses him because he has power and authority, but does not use them in a way her father does. Through him she is searching for her father's love and approval. Her father Eugene is a dysfunctional person. He is a sleek, elegant businessman and charitable Christian on the outside, but a brute, abusive father and husband on the inside. His own struggle through the binaries of Nigerian society has made him the person he is today. In order to succeed, he had to give up everything he was, denouncing his heritage, tradition, faith and his family. However, he is grateful for that because he believes he was shown the right way, "I didn't have a father who sent me to the best schools. My father spent his time worshiping goods of wood and stone. I would be nothing today but for the priests and sisters in the mission" (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 47). His experiences made him a totalitarian head of family who plans and controls every second of his children's and wife's lives. His abusive

and intolerant behavior makes them fear and adore him at the same time. This novel, as it has been explained before, is the novel about binary opposites. Papa Eugene carries these opposites inside of him. His education gives him a ticket for a better life and the power to challenge the corrupt government in his newspapers. On the other hand, his religious education makes him abusive and brute, a fundamental Catholic who refuses to give freedom to his own family while he demands his and other people's rights and freedom from the government. His opposites are Ade Cooker and his sister Ifeoma. They found the balance between being Catholic and maintaining their heritage, being strong and having a vulnerable side, a private family side. Eugene's challenge is his relationship with his father Papa Nnukwu. Nnukwu is pagan and will remain one regardless of his son's pleas and treats. Eugene discards his father and shuts him out of his life. He does not help him financially (even though Nnukwu lives in poverty and Eugene is rich), nor does he allow him to see his grandchildren more than fifteen minutes a year, "Kambili and Jaja you will go this afternoon to your grandfather's house and greet him. Kevin will take you. Remember, don't touch any food, don't drink anything. And, as usual, you will stay no longer than fifteen minutes" (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 62).

Jaja and Kambili fear their grandfather because they associate his beliefs with something strange and scary, something that one goes to hell for. For them non-Christians are people who are just bidding their time on Earth before they go to hell and experience eternal damnation. What is worse, not only are they taught not to tolerate other religions, but they are also taught that their tradition and heritage is something they should be ashamed of because their father does not do things the old way, but follows the new, good, Christian, European way instead: "He did things the right way, the way white people did, not what our people did now!" (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 68).

The old people's way is represented through Papa Nnwuku, who refuses to become a Christian and embrace the European way of life. He believes in tradition and the traditional way of life. He believes that Christianity corrupts people and is disrespectful of the life they lived before. He cannot understand why his son Eugene behaves as if the two of them were equals because they are not; his son should obey him and listen to him, not shut him out of his life and disrespect him. He thinks Christianity has made his son the way he is, that the religion has made Eugene feel as if the father and son were equal because Christianity preaches that God and Jesus are equal. Papa Nnukwu cannot understand how somebody could be so disrespectful of the elders to believe that.

What he also learns is that the son will not be the one who will aid him in the old age, as he has been taught to think. He now knows his daughter is the one who aids him and keeps their family together because without her, Papa Nnukwu would not be able to even see or know his grandchildren, his son's children. Aunt Ifeoma is the voice of reason; she mediates between her father and brother but also between her brother and his children. She sees what Eugene's beliefs and his state of mind are doing to his children; she sees their and their mother's bruises and fear; she is the only one who can tell her brother that enough is enough. Her home, even though it is poorer and smaller than Eugene's, still feels like a home to Kambili and Jaja. Ifeoma shows Kambili and Jaja the new way of life, which combines Christianity and makes room for tradition and heritage. She introduces them to Father Amadi, a priest who became God's man for the right reason, not for the money he can get from his congregation like father Benedict. For the first time Kambili and Jaja see that life can be joyful, that religion can be about helping, community and that God has no race because the God they have been introduced to is white and his son Jesus is blond with blue eyes: "…God laying out the hills of Nsukka with his wide white hands, crescent-moon shadows underneath his nails…" (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 131).

Being in Nsukka with Ifeoma and her children teaches Jaja and Kambili that they have much more than only one choice, being educated or knowing your tradition, being Christian or having your heritage. They learn the importance of balance, multiculturalism and acceptance of differences. For Jaja the process of transformation comes quicker, but Kambili is more skeptic until she sees their grandfather praying. Listening to his prayer, she realizes that faith and religion are two opposite things because everybody shares the faith in some kind of God. It is their religion that keeps them apart.

Religion is oppression, like Kambili's cousin Obiora said. People need to believe that they are sinful and bad so that heads of their churches can tell them what is good and what is bad and how much money they must give so that their sins can be forgiven. Like any oppression, religion creates tyrants like Eugene who burns Kambili's feet with hot water because he wants to show her what it is like to walk into the sin. He does that because the priest who was his teacher had done that to him to show him how much sin hurts. It would be wrong to say that all religious people are like Eugene and that religion creates monsters. Eugene is just an example of what can happen when religion is taught wrongly. White missionaries believe that abuse is the only way black children will learn obedience and respect. They cannot understand that they already know what obedience and respect are, but they do not express it in a European way. The question that arises is: can Eugene be blamed

for his actions if he only preaches, thinks and does what he is taught to. He pays the price for his mistakes when his wife kills him, but is that enough? When he is dead, Kambili and her mother find out that he donated a vast amount of money to charity. The question is if he donated it because he felt that that was the right way, the merciful and Christian way, or did he try to buy forgiveness for his sins against his family in that way. His firm belief in Christianity may lead him to believe that there is a way to atone; however his atonement again happens through money. Every sin can be atoned for if one has enough money.

When Christianity fails in the times of trial, people turn to the *dibija*s and ancient gods. So does Olanna in *Half of the Yellow Sun* when Kainene disappears. She goes to a *dibija* to help her find Kainene who has gone across the enemy border in search for food. Kainene never returns, so after contacting the authorities and praying, Olanna resorts to a *dibija*. Unfortunately, the *dibija*'s magic fails to resurrect Kainene. People turn to whatever they believe to save them or help them, regardless of their education and background. Misfortune brings people together.

In her novel *The Bride Price* Emecheta describes how being pagan and Christian at the same time can work and what implications it can bring. She also describes what it means to have friends and family at your side when the going gets tough. Emecheta describes the event with a bit of mockery. Father of Aku-nna and Nna-nndo, Nna Eugene is dead and now as a son, Nna-nndo has to decide where his father is to be buried because he was both pagan and Christian. Nna-nndo says it is going to be in heaven because he was taught in Sunday school that people who die go to heaven and because, "They preferred Nna to go to heaven, because heaven sound purer, cleaner, and, to cap it all, the heaven of the Christian was new, and foreign; anything imported was considered to be much better than their old ways" (Emecheta, *The Bride Price* 42).

Christianity becomes nothing but fashion and competition of who is more sophisticated and erudite. In that respect, Christianity is like English, given first to the chosen few to show the masses what good can one get of learning it or obeying the European God. The purpose of introducing Christianity in Africa is, therefore, to control those people who cannot be controlled by force.

Emecheta tries to challenge the old beliefs by describing the life of a girl called Aku-nna in her novel *The Bride Price*. After her father's death, Aku-nna leaves Lagos and goes to live in Ibuza with her mother and brother, her journey begins. Her childhood is over and now she is forced into adulthood; her position from a city girl with a bright future and a chance for an education and a university degree slumps to that of a village girl who has to get married as

soon as she is able to conceive a child. However, she manages to make the most of her current situation and finds a man who is educated, who understands her and is willing to support her in pursuing her dream of becoming a teacher. However, the community does not approve of their relationship so they run away together. Unfortunately, their misfortunes are not over just yet. They do get married and have a child, but Aku-nna dies at childbirth. Her death is a punishment for both of them for not obeying the rules of the community and for not paying the bride price:

> Every girl born in Ibuza after Aku-nna's death was told her story, to reinforce the old taboos of the land. If a girl wishes to live long and to see her children's children, she must accept the husband chosen for her by her own people, and the bride price must be paid. If the bride price was not paid, she would never survive the birth of her first child. It was a psychological hold over every young girl that continues to exist, even in the face of every modernization, until the present day. (Emecheta, *The Bride Price* 168)

Emecheta addresses the question of old taboos and beliefs and shows how it is impossible that they disappear. She also takes a stand that although Christianity and colonialism brought injustices to people in Nigeria, they are not the only things to be blamed for the current situation. The old beliefs can be as dangerous as Christianity; people will discriminate against each other no matter what and fundamentalism is not something related only to the Christian faith.

Christianity and the old religions are similar in the core. They preach a belief in something one cannot see with one's own eyes, a life after death, and punishment for one's sins but also they preach goodness, respect of nature and people, companionship and help. One cannot be more accurate than another because there is no way of measuring who is right and who is wrong. However, one thing is certain. As long as politics and the governments keep failing and disappointing people, the religion and tradition will continue to rise stronger because they are the only thing people can rely on.

3.2. The Coming-of-Age Novel

In recent times, Nigerian authors have finally gained their place in society. Interestingly, young authors have gained their place through their works and their protagonists. If one compares the works of Emecheta and Adichie, it is visible that whereas Emecheta uses only the female voice and female protagonists to address the issues of Nigeria, Adichie also uses male protagonists who serve as *doppelgangers* for the leading female protagonists. In *Purple Hibiscus* we have Kambili and Jaja, but in *Half of a Yellow Sun* we have Olanna and Kainene who are both female, but Kainene has all the features of a typical male protagonist. A strong, willful, caretaker of her family and servants, she is in oil business, which is again a typical male occupation. Bryce comments:

> …the doppelganger is far from being an unsettling and disturbing stranger, rather the intimate other half of a protagonist in quest of her own identity and self-hood. It embodies the use of the feminine double both as shadow or negative to the paradigmatic male protagonist of Nigerian fiction, and also as double of the self. The doppelganger, in other words, comes in from the margins of consciousness to inhabit the body of the protagonist—both literally and figuratively—while at the same time, the text of contemporary social reality is haunted by traces of a repressed past. That past is preeminently the Civil War: its legacy of violation, both of people and democratic forms of organization. It is also the elevation, through violence, of a patriarchal elite on the backs of ordinary Nigerians, but especially women. (59)

What the relationship between Kambili and Jaja epitomizes is the identity quest in *Purple Hibiscus*. The coming-of-age novel in African literature is very interesting because it has little to do with the novels of that type that are written in the West. Whereas Western novels are concerned with the changes that occur within the body and the mind of the protagonist and usually coincide with finding and having the first long-term relationship, African coming-of-age novels are concerned with obstacles and discrimination that young girls and women have to fight against. Agbaw explains:

> As African women struggle against roles assigned to them by patriarchal structures, their daughters must either accept the limited options presented as their ultimate destiny, or look for alternative identities in a world that nurtures, confuses, and at times destroys them. Their fight to maintain a "self" they feel comfortable with must begin at an early age. Like many of their mothers, these teenaged girls may choose to accept the limitations of their gender, or, like their fathers, they may continue to deal with the reality of being black and African in a world still governed by western values. (121)

What usually happens in such novels (and in real life) is that those young girls are either married off or sent abroad to go to university or to work. Those few ones who stay are usually portrayed as twins, the main protagonist usually female or the gentler, feminine of the two sisters. In *Purple Hibiscus,* Jaja is Kambili's *doppelganger*, her more courageous, outspoken self. While he represents the side of her that she cannot express, her cousin Amaka represents everything she strives to be - a modern, funny, beautiful young woman, surrounded by friends. Jaja also has somebody to look up to and that is his cousin Obiora because he takes care of his family, he is critical of the society, he is the man and protector of the house, something Jaja knows he must be and he will only succeed in being after he stands up to his father once and for all. He blames himself for everything that has happened, "I should have taken care of Mama. Look how Obiora balances Auntie Ifeoma's family and I am older than he is. I should have taken care of Mama" (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 289).

He takes the role of the man of the family when he confesses his mother's crime, the murder of Papa. However, before that, he knows he has to resort his and Kambili's dignity, but he can only do that by defeating their father, the one who has taken their dignity away. He must rebel against his father to gain his place in society and turn that rebellion into his own personal quest. However, that victory will not be only his, but Kambili's as well. Their fight is a fight for a better Nigeria, a fight of the young ones against traditional ways of their fathers which have been proven bad. Jaja revolts by refusing to participate in Church ceremonies because the Church is directly connected with the patriarchal society and traditional order. Kambili, on the other hand, challenges the rules of society by falling in love with the priest. Jaja's revolt and Kambili's love are the same because they are on the quest for their true self, but they also challenge the rules of society. That gives them the possibility to show their

human side and to connect with people. The loss of their grandfather connects them even more with their cousins because now the gap between Jaja and Kambili, and Amaka and Obiora is getting smaller because the experience of losing Papa Nnukwu is something they all share. Jaja and Kambili realize how detached they are from the real world and problems in their big and comfortable, but cold house filled with fear. They now understand that respect is not related to fear and that family and family relationships should be based on love. Staying in aunt Ifeoma's house is the trigger they need to start their transformation from children to adults. The purple hibiscus Jaja brought from Nsukka, from aunt Ifeoma, is a symbol of their change. Hibiscus is the symbol of joy, happiness and love they get to know in Nsukka, "Jaja's eyes shone as he talked about hibiscus, as he held them put as I touched the cold, moist sticks" (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 197).

The hibiscus brings the changes to their house that cannot be reversed. Those changes will alienate Jaja from Papa even more, but Kambili will still try to forgive and give Papa a second chance. When the tragic event occurs and Papa is dead, Jaja takes the responsibility. He throws away his life so that Kambili can have hers. What he cannot understand is that he and Kambili are connected and that his misfortune leaves her scared too. Kambili can only heal with Jaja by her side. Jail time and separation from the loved ones are the prices Kambili and Jaja have to pay for revolting against the rules of the social order. It is very common in Nigerian literature that the main protagonist undergoes some kind of personal tragedy because it is believed that only through catharsis and healing, especially communal healing, society can grow and develop.

3.3. The Position of Women

There are several issues concerning the position of women in Nigerian society. Tradition, patriarchy, Christianity and modern economy maintain the status quo. Female writers, who are the loudest voice of change, are also discriminated against and they have problems voicing their opinion publicly. According to Hughes, female authors face difficulties publishing their literary work; therefore these writers cannot make a living solely on their writing. They are forced to either have a day job or to be housewives. In addition to that, novels by Nigerian female authors are described as romance novels which results in a loss of credibility when it comes to educated audience. Female writers have to fight through the male canon. (Hughes)

Most protagonists of female novels usually fight society in one way or another. Lee Erwin writes about the challenges these heroines have to face and the way they fight to define themselves through the post colonial experience:

> … the protagonists in Nigerian women's novels struggle to overcome the "cultural and sexual conditioning typical of the traditional patriarchal organization of many African societies" and to be able to make decisions without consulting their elders [. . .] doing what conscience dictates, not what is preordained from without in accordance with models from which they are already estranged…This is not to argue that women can "write back to" reinvented traditions by simply recovering some essentially "true" history for themselves; plainly what is at issue here are always-contested *constructions* of tradition that can nevertheless be put to use by women as well as men in negotiating the radical alterations in their society brought about by colonialism and neocolonialism. In that contestation, it is particularly important that feminist conceptions of gender not inadvertently duplicate masculinist reinventions of tradition by reducing the whole range of women's struggles for authority and social power to struggles within the individualized and sexualized sphere of male-female relations. To read all popular fiction by women as working outward from the domestic sphere

> of romance, however revisionary those readings might be… (81-83)

Nigerian women writers have experienced two kinds of discrimination, both racial and gender-based. Yenika - Agbaw explains:

> As African women struggle against roles assigned to them by patriarchal structures, their daughters must either accept the limited options presented as their ultimate destiny, or look for alternative identities in a world that nurtures, confuses, and at times destroys them. Their fight to maintain a "self" they feel comfortable with must begin at an early age. Like many of their mothers, these teenaged girls may choose to accept the limitations of their gender, or, like their fathers, they may continue to deal with the reality of being black and African in a world still governed by western values. (121)

However, works by women writers can provide an in-depth insight into postcolonial literature and the issues it addresses. Postcolonial literature is mostly man-oriented for several reasons. The first reason, already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is the inability of female writers to publish their books. The second one is a scarcity of well educated women in postcolonial countries due to discriminatory educational politics, traditional values and money issues. The third one is the expectation that society and community have regarding women and their position. Women are to be good mothers and wives, take care of their family and abstain from a career or even an opinion of their own. They are moved away from the public sphere into the private sphere.

According to Bryce, throughout history, women have been marginalized and mythologized as either witches or mothers. Historically women were not able to express themselves in any other way. They were supposed to stay at home and take care of their family, be good, obedient and cherish their husbands. This image and way of conduct has peaked during the Victorian era in Western countries. As time has passed by, Western women gained their independence, but colonial politics and religion, both Muslim and Christian, kept women in colonies servile and weak. Today, traditional values and the social order help keep women as far away from politics and the public sphere as possible.

Some authors believe that female writers support the male domination by using language and images that represent women in a bad light, depicting them as immature and

unsympathetic towards other women. According to Pandey, "That female writers would depict old(er) women as inquisitive, conniving, greedy, and generally unsympathetic towards other women is disturbing" (117). She believes that:

> It is one thing to inform the world of gender biases and gender-based injustices, another to confront them, and yet another to successfully reform them. While the examples of gendering analyzed here are by no means exhaustive, they do draw attention to linguistically salient gender inequities and the role that language plays in overtly and covertly conveying them. Language, as we see, is a powerful weapon; yet merely criticizing sexist male characters or hastening their demise does not constitute female liberation. That women often view other women as their adversaries or rivals and misery-creators in the literature examined is indeed a matter that female writers must promptly address and seek to rectify. Writers have a moral responsibility to question such misplaced accusations and conflicts. They must depict (more) strong female characters who are supportive of each other. A body of West African literature—particularly contemporary literature—with strong, self-reliant, and independent female characters is very much in order. Like orishas, or goddesses, female creative writers from West Africa have a social responsibility and obligation to consistently and purposely employ the language and ideology of female empowerment. Critical language use and a concerted effort are in order, and are bound to initiate a societal shift toward gender balance. An analogy with a well-known African saying about child rearing is applicable in this arena; namely, it takes a group or an entire village to raise a woman's status. (132)

According to Pandey, female authors should write about strong and powerful women and by doing that, they will help Nigerian women. She explains how women are considered less worthy than men. A woman can be good only when she is perfect; therefore society prescribes rules of conduct for girls and women which they have to follow. Otherwise, society

would excommunicate them. Emecheta addresses this problem in her novel *The Bride Price*. She describes the lives, tradition, norms and rules of the Western Igbos from Ibuza. They have the rules of how a woman should sit in order to stay pure. Men are allowed not only to have many wives but also to cheat. Women, on the other hand, are considered promiscuous and witches if they cheat on their spouses. Emecheta goes on explaining how the community's negative attitude toward women is also visible through the community's view on the feminine biological process, such as menstruation. Women are considered impure and are not allowed to sleep under the same roof with men, bathe in the river or eat the same food when they have their period. The only good thing about women's period is that women can bear children, preferably male children.

Women are also subdued to men, even when it comes to their bodies. Mutilation of female genitals is characteristic for sub-Saharan Africa, especially for Nigeria. This custom scars women not just physically but also emotionally for their entire life, and the sole purpose of it is to degrade women and make them feel like second class citizens. Women's sexuality is usurped in numerous other ways. Once a girl has her period, boys start to woo her. Such a courtship is described in Emecheta's *The Bride Price*: "Boys would come into your mother's hut and play at squeezing at girl's breasts until they hurt; the girl was suppose to try as much as possible to ward them off and not be bad-tempered about it" (97). This game could be considered borderline raping. It is not pleasant and the main protagonist Aku-nna dislikes it and tries to cover herself up. However, she is accused of being a woman of loose moral because it is believed that if she does not enjoy these sexual games in front of everybody, she certainly has secret sexual partners. In addition to that, after being kidnapped, Okobushi, the kidnapper, tries to rape her to claim her as his own and to send the towel with her virgin blood to her mother. This just shows what kind of degradation women experience and that nobody cares about what happens to them because after the bride price is paid, her family is gone and her husband's family now becomes her only relatives, her sole caretakers and providers. Marriage is a choice only if a woman is well-educated and lives in an urban area. If not, marriage is all she can hope for. After that, she becomes the mother.

The glorification of motherhood and the cult of mother have been used to promote the image of women as housewives for along time. The premise is that once a woman becomes a mother, she does not need anything else apart from taking care of her family. If she comes to need anything else, society makes sure that she feels as if there is something wrong with her if the motherhood does not fulfill her completely. Also, women see their children, especially male children, as a ticket to a better life. Pandey addresses this problem:

> For married women, procreation guarantees recognition and, in many cases, happiness. Motherhood as a powerful, security-granting or reassuring, rejuvenating, and life-sustaining experience—particularly when a male child is involved…The seeming contradictions between the predominantly sexist roles for West African women depicted in the bulk of the fiction, and the often redeeming, empowering experience of motherhood (Mezu 1993:30) can be explained only by a focus on the centrality and value of community and child-rearing in West African society. Since the ultimate power of adding (members) to the community rests with the woman, she wields creative and didactic powers. Since the primary role of raising children rests with the woman (or, in the case of a polygamous household, the womenfolk), West African women play a pivotal role. *(*118-120)

Women are considered a failure if they cannot conceive or give birth. The problem is that not only men are imposing this image on women, but a great majority of women are imposing that image on themselves and women around them as well. Olanna in *A Half of the Yellow Sun* and Ma Blackie in *The Bride Price* both have trouble conceiving. Ma Blackie feels worthless and goes to a *dibija* to help her with her problem. Olanna goes to a doctor, but she feels just as worthless and bad as Ma Blackie, regardless of her education and social position. Her feeling of worthlessness is getting worse every time Odenigbo's mother visits them. She is an old woman who believes that a woman should do nothing else apart from getting married and having a family. She believes that education corrupts women. She also believes that Olanna is a witch since she is educated. She constantly humiliates Olanna and tries to make her son leave her. She is afraid that the women in her village will think her son is impotent and forces Amala to have an intercourse with her son. The climax happens once Olanna finds out that her man has impregnated Amala. After that, she stops wanting Odenigbo's child. Both Olanna and Amala are hurt because of how society functions. Amala feels as if she were raped because she did not want to have an intercourse with Odenigbo and to have his child, but she knows that as a village girl, she must give herself to a rich and educated male. Nobody even considers her own wishes or plans. She is treated just like an

animal that is required to bring offspring into this world and later she becomes disposable goods.

When Ma Blackie finally gets pregnant with her second husband, she is so smitten that she no longer pays attention to what happens to her older children because finally, she has proved to society that she is not barren. In both novels, both characters feel that they failed as women and society enhances that sensation. Society determines the role and choices of women. This creates a friction between traditional and modern women who, in attempt to take charge of their own lives, become more career-oriented and decide to have a family later or not to have one at all. Neither of these extremes is good. Friction among women serves only men, who are guided by the premise "divide and conquer". While women are busy fighting each other, men run countries and make global decisions. This is not something that can apply only to African countries, but to every country in the world as well.

The cult of motherhood in Nigeria is closely tied to the image of a dominating father, who cannot establish any relationship with his children other than authoritarian. Papa Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus* is a good example. He is rich and respected in society, but at the same time he is a controlling sadist and a religious fundamentalist. His family is afraid of him and that is why they do everything he says. He beats and abuses them, but his wife cannot bring herself to leave him because she knows that without him she would be nothing, "Where would I go if I leave Eugene's house? Tell me, where would I go?" (Adichie 250). This kind of father does not have a loving family; he lives with a group of people who cohabit because of fear.

Another type of father-figure is the father in *The Bride Price*. He loves his daughter Aku-nna because she will bring him the bride price. He would like to love her even more, but society does not permit him to do that. It would be considered awkward if a grown man loved his daughter, "A girl belonged to you today as your daughter, and tomorrow, before your very eyes, she would go to another man in marriage. To such creatures, one should be wary of showing too much love and care, otherwise people would ask, 'Look, man, are you going to be your daughter's husband as well?'" (Emecheta 17). Hence, society has the ability of turning something so pure and innocent like parental love into something deviant.

Another problem is the belief that exists in Nigerian society that women are nothing without men. That can especially be seen in relation to widows. According to Ewelukwa, being a widow in Nigeria (this applies to the rural parts of Nigeria) can be very dangerous both physically and mentally. They have to have the mourning period, shave their heads and live in a small hut for thirty days. Ewelukwa goes on describing what these women are put through. The hut is so small that they cannot even sit up straight. After that, they are being

accused of murdering their husband or plotting with witches to murder him. Their children are taken away from them and they are usually disinherited because the husband's closest male relative is put in charge of the children and the money. Widows sometimes face murder charges in court. The testament of their husband's last will can stop his family from disinheriting the widow, but nobody writes wills because they are believed to bring death. Rich and educated women from cities do not have that kind of problem because the judicial system in the cities is far better developed than the system in rural areas and they also have the money to bring their cases to the court (426-429). Ewelukwa explains that there are two reasons why a husband's family takes the inheritance from the widow. The first one is money; the second one is the fact that the women are considered to be little girls all of their lives, who just replace a father for a husband. They are perceived as immature and borderline stupid (431). Ewelukwa also describes many other problems in Nigerian society that effect women, and some of them are even more highlighted when a woman becomes a widow. First of all, there are property problems because the land is the community's land and once the father of the family dies, his land becomes the community good. Laws that need to protect women and children exist, but they are poorly executed. There is also a problem of wide acceptance of polygamy, marriage in common law, hostile police and judiciary. There is no good will to help women and protect their rights (432-436).

In *The Bride Price* Emecheta describes what it is like to be a widow and a fatherless child: "When you have lost your father, you have lost your parents. Your mother is only a woman, and women are supposed to be boneless. A fatherless family is a family without a head, a family without shelter, a family without parents, in fact a non-existing family" (28). Children are now orphans and they depend on the kindness of strangers and the community. In Ma Blackie's case, she, along with other property, now belongs to her late husband's older brother Okonkwo. Accordingly, in such societies women are nothing and they can only accept their fate.

The problem of women in Africa is the problem of two Africas - traditional and modern. Nigerian politicians and government try to combine the traditional values and common law with the needs of modern market economy and human rights. However, in the future, the combination of the old and the new rules will be no longer possible. In this particular case globalization and international law may bring positive changes for women in Nigeria.

3.4. "Mother Africa"

"Mother Africa" is a concept that refers to a different Africa. According to Adams, it stands against the neo-colonial policy and exploitation of African countries and it calls for unity of all people in Africa regardless of their tribe. Emecheta and Adichie both create female protagonists who represent "Mother Africa" in their novels - Debbie in *Destination Biafra* and Olanna in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, respectively. Each of the protagonists represents different characteristics of "Mother Africa". For Emecheta "Mother Africa" represent the unity of all Nigerians against the British oppression; it is more oriented on global politics, the image of Nigeria in the world and outer factors. Adichie, on the other hand, is more oriented on inner factors such as family, marriage and the role women in preserving Nigerian society.

Emecheta's Debbie is an interesting character. She is the daughter of a wealthy man, educated, a feminist and in a relationship with a white man. She refuses to be like other rich Nigerian women - to be a rich husband's obedient wife with no mind or will of her own. She also believes in one nation, Nigerian nation, and abhors tribal division. She represents the new, better Nigeria, one strong nation that can be self-governed and that can bring stability and prosperity to its own people. Her relationship with Alan is a symbol of Nigeria's relationship with Britain. Not only does she have an egalitarian relationship with Alan, but she also refuses to marry him at the end of the novel, which is very important because she rejects to be a wife and to confine herself to a marriage and a husband. Like "Mother Africa" and Nigeria, she also refuses Britain and its domination. Adams comments:

> Emecheta manipulates the trope of "Mother Africa" not as an unproblematic symbol to "mirror" the state of the nation or continent, but as a positive (and greatly refigured) alternative to the neo-colonial ploys of the British and the separatist drives of Nigerian males who have torn apart the country in their quest to control the fatherland… *Destination Biafra* clearly represents one of its central characters (in this case, the central character, Debbie) as a "Mother Africa." The woman who returns from England and refuses to marry an Englishman for the sake of her honor, on one level, represents the strength of a Nigeria (and of an Africa) that will no longer tolerate British domination…The fact that Debbie is not married (and has no intention to be married) suggests that a patriarchal family structure will not be

> reimplemented. In other words, Debbie will not be like her mother, forever subservient to a man until he dies. (294)

It is not only her relationship with Alan that makes her a "Mother Africa". Through Debbie's personal tragedy, her rape and her journey through war stricken Nigeria, Emecheta describes, the suffering of the whole Nigeria and its people. In that context, Debbie's rape is a symbol of the violation of Nigeria. Debbie is violated by her own people, Nigerian army, that she proudly belongs to. In the same way Nigeria is violated by her own people, the corrupt government, the exploitation of land and its resources, war, hunger and destruction: "But how unfair, Debbie thought to be the victim of the very people she was trying to help. If Biafran soldiers had done this, she might have been more able to understand. But Nigerian soldiers!" (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 157). Debbie gives everything to her people and gets nothing in return. She is now tainted like the very Nigeria herself. Everybody constantly repeats to Debbie that now she is a tainted good, a raped woman that nobody wants to marry anymore. Nigeria is tainted in the same way - as a country that has a bad reputation because of war, an insecure, dangerous country that nobody wants to go to, invest and live in. Emecheta connects Debbie's state of mind with nature, the ravished countryside and the destroyed land. Being tainted and a persona non grata, Debbie decides to find a purpose in her life. Her purpose becomes Nigeria, one nation and one people, but she is not interested in Nigeria in a political way. She wants to gather all the people from all the tribes, all the orphans and give them a better life and a better country. She wants to be a mother to them; she wants to be the mother of all Nigerian people. She refuses Alan the way Nigeria refuses Britain; she knows that now Nigeria has to build herself up without Britain's help. She sees now that men and leaders are all the same and that the strength of a country lies in women and children who can build a better future, "I see now that Abosi and his like are still colonized. They need to be decolonized. I am not like him, a black white man; I am a woman and a woman of Africa. I am a daughter of Nigeria, and if she is in shame, I shall stay and mourn with her in shame" (Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* 258). Like Nigeria, she too refuses to succumb to the West once more. She is not weak like a man and, more importantly, she is not afraid of her shame, but she embraces it and learns to live with it. She knows that acceptance and coping with the past is the only way for Nigeria to prosper.

Olanna, on the other hand, is the healer of the community. In Nigerian society, community and relatives play a vital role. One can argue the reasons behind it are high mortality rate and a great number of low income families, which forces people to help each

other in order to survive. Children are not considered orphans in the Western sense because a child is a child of the community and somebody in the community will take care of theit. Women play the central role in all of that, taking care of families, relatives and children and keeping the communities and families together. Olanna represents everything the women of Nigeria have to be in order to survive. They have to be strong, independent and self-sufficient, but also supportive of their husbands in the times of turmoil. Olanna has to sacrifice everything for a man who betrays her repeatedly. In that respect, she represents the concept that a woman should bear the problems of the community on her shoulders, that she should be the healer, the mother of the community and all of its children.

The concept that is a complete opposite to "Mother Africa" is the concept of the "New Woman" that is epitomized by her twin sister Kainene. Olanna and Kainene represent two different Africas and Nigerias. Kainene represents the Nigeria that accepts its past and, what is more important, is determined to make the best of it. She knows that the answer to the problem is not to cut off all ties with the West, but to use the West to Nigeria's advantage. Olanna, on the other hand, represents Africa that longs for better times, times untainted by colonialism; she glorifies the past and past deeds and her life choices reflect that. She chooses Odenigbo, a radical tribalist, in order to be his loyal partner, to have his child. In a way that is why she chooses and supports Biafra because Biafra is a chance for people to have a new country, untainted by the past and colonialism, free from the West and its influence. Biafra is a promise of a new beginning. Olanna needs that promise, not just because of her country but also because of herself. Her relationship with Odenigbo takes a downturn after he cheats on her. However, Olanna stays with him and proves to be the healer and the patron of the community. She takes her life into her own hands and makes the decision to stay just like her aunt Ifeka told her: "Your life belongs to you and not your man" (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 283). She stays because she chooses to and not because she is forced to. She also takes his child and becomes its mother because she chooses to. That is her strength and the strength of all Nigerian women. The key to their strength is forgiveness. They do not only forgive their men but they also learn how to live with hurt. Olanna is much better prepared and copes with the war much better than Odenigbo because she knows that she must stay strong through the hardships, not just because of herself but also because of her family. She forgives Odenigbo his repeated betrayals, his drinking and the inability to cope with life. She knows that she is the only one who can help him make through it all. She also knows that there are worse things that can happen, much worse than cheating, "There are some things that are so unforgivable that they make other things easily forgivable" (Adichie, *Half of a*

Yellow Sun 435). She knows that war and destruction can bring much more hurt than cheating. Therefore, her forgiveness and acceptance of the past makes her the healer even during war times. Olanna takes care of her family and other children who are affected by the war. Her compassion for everybody, including her neighbor Alice whom Olanna suspects is having an affair with Odenigbo, makes her the healer of the community. Her willingness to forgive and forget the past allows her to build a new, better future.

"Mother Africa" is an interesting notion that has caused many controversies. According to Adams, some critics believe it promotes the traditional role of women and a false assumption that one state can be self-sufficient (288). On the other hand, "Mother Africa" is a positive notion that represents Nigeria's, or better yet Africa's, will to make its own choices, the readiness to take politics and economy into its own hands and not to depend on anybody else, to be an equal partner with the West and not to succumb to Western will. It also brings the notion of womanhood to its fullest, glorifying women who put their families and children first, who care about the community and think about what consequences their actions will have on their families and their children. These women's sacrifice is chosen, not imposed on them, and they make it for the greater good. Such women are the mothers, the healers and the heroes of the community.

3.5. The "New Woman"

The concept of the "New Woman" has recently appeared in Nigerian novel. For decades Nigerian literature has been dominated by strong male protagonists and weak female characters, who are either obedient wives and mothers or old witches. Nowadays, the female voice is finally being heard. Bryce writes:

> I suggest that the forms of feminine identity evident in earlier women's writing, constrained by nationalist priorities that privileged masculinity, have given way to a challenging reconfiguration of national realities in which the feminine is neither essentialized and mythologized nor marginalized, but unapologetically central to the realist representation of a recognizable social world. (49)

Female protagonists are thus gaining central stage in contemporary Nigerian novel. However, those women are not portrayed as feminists, as is the case in Western novels. Those new women in Nigerian novels are usually without a partner or are in a relationship in which they are the dominant partner. Adichie presents the "new woman" in *Half of a Yellow Sun* through Olanna's twin sister Kainene, and in *Purple Hibiscus* through Kambili's aunt Ifeoma. Those women are not the main protagonists, but rather stand in contrast to the main protagonist. Ifeoma contrasts her brother Eugene; just like her daughter Amaka contrasts Kambili. Amaka's life and views are influenced by her mother, a professor at Nsukka University and also a widow. Even though Ifoma lost her husband and grieves for him, she also knows that there are some advantages to being unmarried. She believes that "sometimes life begins when marriage ends" (Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* 75). That does not mean that she wants her husband dead, it just means that sometimes it is hard to be a mother and a wife first and one's own person second. She also tells that to her students who get married and then leave university for good. She is not a feminist in a sense that she believes women can and have to live permanently without men. Ifeoma only wants women to reach their full potential before they enter marriage and start families because after that women will have to think about the consequences of their actions. Their actions will not only affect them, but also their families. The education is often neglected when one has to take care of home and family.

On the contrary, Eugene seems to be detached from this world; he is very spiritual and religious, and hard to make acquaintance with. Ifeoma, on the other hand, is down to earth,

friendly and very conscious of the world that surrounds her. Yet, what is more important, she embraces the whole world; she incorporates the new and the old religion, the tradition and modernity all in one, and in her world the two opposites work perfectly. She speaks both to her father and her brother, she is a Christian who attends pagan celebrations, she is well educated, but struggles to make ends meet just like the rest of the country. Hence, she is a modern woman, but she also bonds with other women and other people in the kitchen; they bond while cooking like their female ancestors did. She manages to combine the two Nigerias without leaving anything or anyone behind. Her decision to leave Nigeria and to go to the USA is also a sign of openness. She does not want to leave her country, but when she realizes that her future and the future of her children might come in question in Nigeria, she decides to go and find a better life for her children. On the contrary, the protagonists such as Debbie and Olanna, who represent "Mother Africa", and stay in Nigeria regardless of the situation in the country. Ifeoma, however, decides to take advantage of the globalization and search for better opportunites; she does not defy the changes and modernity, but embraces and uses them to her advantage.

Kainene is very similar to Ifeoma. She understands that Nigeria or Africa cannot be self-sufficient and that they have to work with the West, but not like in the old times when the West exploited their country and shared the profit with the privileged few. She knows that the education and taking matters into one's own hands is the only way to salvage Nigeria. She does not share the vision of the wonderful pre-colonial past like Olanna; she knows the modern world, and she is determined to make the most of it. That is why she chooses to work side by side with her father in oil business, which explains her choice of boyfriends. Richard is not Kainene's first white boyfriend. Olanna cannot understand why her sister chooses to date white men; she feels as if Kainene betrayed her race and her country. On the other hand, Richard's ex-girlfriend Susan also cannot understand why Richard dates a black woman. In that respect Olanna and Susan are both racists. The interracial relationship, such as that between Kainene and Richard, is the foundation of a new, modern, multicultural society and world. One can argue that Olanna feels that way because she herself believes that her upbringing and education have made her Europeanized much more than she would want it to be and maybe that is why she chooses to be with Odenigbo, a strong black man with radical attitudes. She could have chosen him to validate her own Africaness. The life with Odenigbo will show her what the real life of the ordinary people looks like in her country, without her father's money and everything that goes with it. That may be the reason why she wants to believe in Biafra, a land that will bring a new chance, free from the colonial past. On the other

hand, Kainene might have chosen Richard because he is not as dominant and strong as other men or perhaps she needs to date a white man since she is not considered beautiful in Nigeria because she is too thin, unlike Olanna who is considered a goddess and a typical feminine beauty. Maybe she chooses him just because he preferred talking to her than meeting Olanna, "'There she is, my sister,' Kainene said. 'Shall I introduce you? Everybody wants to meet her.' Richard didn't turn to look. 'I'd rather talk to you,' he said. 'If you don't mind, that is.' (Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* 73).

Kainene also does not believe in Biafra. She is very skeptical about it because she knows that war is nothing but propaganda and that ordinary people will not benefit from it in any way. In addition to that, she does not need to recreate herself through Biafra like Olanna. She knows and likes the world as it is. The only thing that needs to be done is to peacefully improve it. Kainene also shows great personal strength during times of trials, the war and her personal problems concerning Richard and Olanna's affair. She is the one who breaks the vicious cycle by burning Richard's manuscript. She decides to stop revenging and, in the process, hurting people who do not deserve it. She decides to create a new future, to forgive and not to hold onto the past and past traumas like Olanna. Olanna constantly glorifies the past, either her past or the pre-colonial past. Kainene, however, knows that the answer is in the future and letting go of old grudges and problems.

Olanna and Kainene's rivalry is the rivalry between the two Africas and the two Nigerias. These opposites are very present in Adichie's novels and they are presented through two families, representing two types of lives that are being led in Nigeria. One family has more money, but less love and has no sense of togetherness and vice versa. Eugene and Ifeoma's family and Olanna and uncle Mbezi's family belong to this group. This is very significant because these binary opposites are very present in Nigerian society. Binaries create friction and a sense of inequality that further divides tribes and communities. People alienate themselves from the nation as a whole and form their own nations, based on their tribal affiliation and bloodlines. That being said, the duty of a writer as an educator of the community is to create fictional protagonists who will understand and connect the two worlds, who will help the people accept their history and move toward a more multicultural society and acceptance of differences, away from their standard social template.

Conclusion

Nigerian past can be divided into the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era. Every period brings with it new changes and challenges. Colonialism that created Nigeria itself also defined Nigerians' perception of themselves. Western influence brought the concepts such as nation, democracy and citizenship; it also altered native cultures and marginalized their languages. The female population was most influenced by these changes; women became marginalized and mythologized as either caring mothers and wives or promiscuous witches. Buchi Emecheta addresses these issues in her novel *The Bride Price* (1978).

At the end of the colonial period, Nigeria gained its mock independence with a puppet, corrupted government that allowed Britain and the West to continue exploiting its land. Irregularities during elections, Britain's growing influence in independent Nigeria and fight over money and oil fields led Nigeria into a Civil War and one of the world's greatest humanitarian crises - the hunger in Biafra. In their novels *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007) and *Destination Biafra* (1983) Adichie and Emecheta portray the war from their unique points of view, stating that the Biafran War was a women's war; women were the ones who took care of refugee camps, children, the sick and the dying. They traded for food; they were forced to give up their dignity so that their children would be able to eat. Men, on the other hand, started the war because of the great ideas that eventually killed just little, ordinary people, not the politicians and leaders who started the conflict. Men failed as leaders of both their country and their families. Later on, men were the ones who could not accept the defeat and united Nigeria. Women, however, have kept on, embracing the new order because it promised peace. The post-war years have brought new challenges for Nigeria. Their connection to Britain through colonial legacy, especially through the English language, has opened new horizons, but also old wounds for the Nigerians. As a result, the movement to stop defining Nigeria through the prism of the West has grown stronger as more and more people demand that their languages should take its rightful place in schools and universities; tradition and heritage are becoming worthy again after total annulations in the name of the Christian God. With all these new changes, women can finally bring their issues to the spotlight. The trope such as that of "Mother Africa" and rise of the coming-of-age novel have marked a new chapter in literature, bringing the unique, female perspective on the war, colonialism, post-colonialism and the womanhood in Africa. Women's texts, like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, introduce the "New Woman" – a new protagonist,

marking a new era for women who do not fall into the "Mother Africa" category. Interestingly, "Mother Africa" and the "New Woman" are not two opposite polarities, but rather two versions of Nigerian woman. Their relationship represents what Nigerian state of mind should be like, respecting and acknowledging the differences, but understanding that everybody is the same, everybody is Nigerian regardless of their tribal or religious affiliation. Challenge of a multicultural society can be a root of many problems, but it can also be a way to learn tolerance and accepting the differences. The future of Nigeria is the future of its people, their ability to live and work together towards a better state.

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