PORTRAIT OF DISPLACEMENT, MIGRATION AND TRANSCULTURALISM IN THE NOVELS OF CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE

BY

OUNO VICTOR ONYANGO

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DECLARATION

Declaration by Candidate:

I certify that this thesis entitled '**Portrait of Displacement, Migration and Transculturalism in the Novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie'** is my original work, that it has never been presented before for a degree in this university or in any other institution of higher learning, and that the sources cited within the text have been duly acknowledged.

Candidate's Sign: _____ Date: _____

Ouno Victor Onyango

PHD/FA/00162/2014

Declaration by Supervisors:

This thesis has been submitted for examination under our guidance and approval.

1. **Prof. Kitche Magak**

   Department of Literary Studies,

   Maseno University

   Sign: _____ Date: _____

2. **Prof. Catherine Muhoma**

   Department of Literary Studies,

   Maseno University

   Sign: _____ Date: _____

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research to my son, Chris Maurice Ouno, modern literary critics who appreciate Adichie's knack for experimenting with new cultural vistas, budding critics of African literature and those who acknowledge fictions as platforms upon which discourses on such contemporary issues as cultural recreation are explored.

ABSTRACT

The socio-cultural patterns of the twenty first-century have increased people's mobility across the planet. The cultural complexities and interactions that these combined factors generate seem to foster an emerging transcultural orientation. Literature is a mirror of the society and these patterns have not eluded literary writers. Both physical and metaphoric manifestations of dislocation exist in literary works. By way of characterisation and manipulation of a variety of stylistic resources, literature provides resourceful ways for describing ourselves or altering our vocabularies for a variety of purposes. Thus, literature gives us the chance to enlarge our sensitivity and our imaginations. Against this backdrop of denationalisation, new arrangements of form and content in novels that have adapted to a changed cultural and social paradigm need to be investigated. There is need for interrogation of literary works, Adichie's novels in particular, which fall within this purview to determine the socio-cultural dynamics of displacement and demonstrate how émigrés navigate their way through new cultural environments as they strive to attain a cultural equilibrium. This is the critical burden of this investigation. The specific objectives of the study are: to explore the socio-cultural circumstances that compel characters of Adichie's novels to move out of their traditional localities; demonstrate how the émigrés of Adichie's novels negotiate the cross-cultural complexities of their new worlds; and determine how the émigrés of Adichie's novels establish transcultural citizenship. This study benefits from a multi-dimensional construct of critical hybridity, a conceptual framework comprising ideas drawn from postcolonial studies and dialogism. Premium is placed on the ideas of Fanon, Said, Bhabha, Epstein and Bhaktin. The study takes an analytical research design. The three novels, *Half of a Yellow Sun, Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah,* constitute the study population for this research. This homogeneous sample represents one third of Adichie's literary publications. These three novels have been purposively sampled. The novel form, on account of length, accords a literary writer all the freedom they need to explore issues extensively; it is bereft of the structural limitations of condensed forms like poetry and short stories. The three novels are also set in the same fictional universe. Close reading is adopted as the primary data collection method. This study concludes that dislocation is both physical and transcendental. Physical and transcendental émigrés wade through new cultural environments and struggle for belonging in such culturally fractured worlds. In their endeavour to carve a cultural niche for themselves, they embrace transcultural citizenship. This study enriches the body of critical studies on displacement, migration and transculturalism. The results of this study demonstrate the nature and content of transcultural outputs that are more attuned to the cosmopolitan and pluralistic sensibilities in the contemporary society.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Literature is a mirror of life. Verisimilitude is a prominent feature in literary creativity. The word 'verisimilitude' means 'true-seeming' and it is drawn from Aristotle's conception of mimesis, which Aristotle primarily used in drama to justify the lofty view of literature. Morgan notes that this conception of literature is 'frequent' in modern literary works (Morgan 'The Meaning of Vraisemblance in French Classical Theory' 293). In this sense, it possible to regard literary works as platforms upon which real social issues are canvassed. Viewing literary imaginations as reflections of life experiences, this study focuses on the portrait of displacement, migration and transculturalism in the novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

The world is in a state of flux. Billions of people worldwide are forcibly displaced today as refugees, asylum seekers, or internally displaced persons (Muhsin). The world is rapidly changing and forced migration, economically and politically instigated, has attracted the attention of sovereign states, intergovernmental agencies and civil society groups. Conflicts, engendered by external and internal conflicts and wars, have resulted in mass movement of people to safer places. Oftentimes, these conflicts culminate in ethnic rifts, violence, loss of lives, physical assault and psychological abuse. To gain a sense of security, even a false one; a number of people are compelled to move to other places. International agencies are grappling with the political crisis in Africa and the Middle East. Yemen, Somali, South Sudan, Burundi, DRC Congo, Palestine and Syria are among the long list of countries that are heavily affected by political turmoil. Displacement and migration have posed an international challenge. Notably, there is a large African diaspora across the world. Said notes that the

modern era is one where ‘immense aggregates of humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons’ (*Reflections* 177). In the light of these many cases, developing an understanding of the causes and consequences of forced migration and gaining the intellectual skills to effectively deal with its challenges are essential, both for addressing the causes of forced migration and for the management of effective programmes to assist forced immigrants. Literary writings are mirrors of societies and it is necessary to carry out a scholarly investigation to determine literary perspectives on displacement.

There is also a non-physical dimension to displacement that is advanced by Smith in his attempt to distinguish between Western and non-western conceptualisations of nations. The distinguishing feature of the non-Western nation is its ‘emphasis on a community of birth and native culture’ (Smith 11). The characteristics of a Western nation are ‘historic territory, legal political community, legal-political equality of members, and common civic culture and ideology’ (Smith 11). Thus there are people who live in the geographical region defined by the Western model but have chosen to live in ethnic nations. In a sense, members of the African communities who do not conform to European notions of nationhood are culturally displaced. Displacement from geography and human society has been a feature common to contemporary communities worldwide. One budding Palestinian poet recently observed in a Skype interview: ‘Some individuals have the land, have everything, but they still feel like strangers’ (Maarouf). This observation points to the convoluted nature of dislocation. The contemporary drivers of displacement are complex and multi-layered, increasingly problematic and challenging. Melendez acknowledges this complexity in his analysis of Valdes’ works and observes that ‘Valdes [re]writes the nation from the experience of multiple displacements ... and gives voice to the marginalised subject, and displaces it, making her narrative a masterful one that breaks literary and social canons in order to devise a space for herself within the literary arena and her characters within modern Cuban society’

(110). This is an interesting dimension to displacement (exploration of novel spaces in characterisation and manipulation of formal features) that calls for literary-academic investigation.

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre presents 2015 as a record year, and tragically so, for internal displacement related to conflict, violence and disasters, affecting one hundred and twenty-seven countries worldwide (1). According to this report, the Middle East and North Africa bore the brunt with Syria, Yemen and Iraq accounting for over half of new conflict displacements worldwide. To address this complex issue, the aforementioned Norwegian agency is currently examining figures for displacement caused by conflict and violence as well as those caused by disasters, with the intention of providing a comprehensive picture of displacement. Many forced migrants now fall outside the recognised refugee and asylum apparatus. Much displacement today is driven by a combination of intrastate conflict, poor governance and political instability, environmental change and resource scarcity. These conditions, while falling outside the traditional definition of refugees and asylum seekers, leave individuals highly vulnerable to danger and uncertain of the future, compelling them to leave their homes in search of greater security. In addition, the blurring lines between voluntary and forced migration as seen in mixed migration flows, together with the expansion of irregular migration further complicates today's global displacement picture. New drivers and emerging trends of population displacement display an increasing mismatch between the legal and normative frameworks that define the contemporary patterns of forced displacement. There is need for a full recognition of the fact that the challenge of forced migration is an integral part of the development agenda today. Literature, on account of its verisimilitude of life, needs to be interrogated to determine how it has reacted complicated patterns of displacement mentioned above. Cook recognises these complications and acknowledges the need to investigate new literary forms, especially the works of immigrant

writers, to discern the different shades of displacement in the contemporary society. Cook opines:

> Salman Rushdie is ... one of the most persuasive spokesmen we have for the benefits, in increased tolerance and moral understanding of cultural displacement.... Particularly in this 'century of wandering,' in this age where traditional cultures are being drawn more and more into conflict and confrontation, it is the immigrant writer who is best equipped by the kind of double vision attributed in Gibreel and Saladin in *The Satanic Verses* to come up with the corresponding new literary forms. (23)

Cook's observations are also articulated by Muhsin, a poet. In a January 2014 interview with *The National*, which has been cited in this study; he noted that the 'question [of displacement] has become a subgenre in the humanities and in the next twenty years, it will be one of the main topics in academia... We are talking about billions of people dislocated. The [literary artist] cannot stand aside and claim that he has nothing to reflect on' (Muhsin). There are a number of literary artists who have reacted to the question of displacement. Displacement literature offers an indeterminate and dualistic sense of self, which is constructed 'from the affective experience of social marginality, from the disjunctive, fragmented, displaced agency, and from the perspective of the edge' (Bromley 1). There is still need for the interrogation of the works of these artists to develop incisive studies on the emerging trends. Adeleke, in 'Trends in African Literature,' has made a similar argument. She posits:

> African texts that are circulated internationally deal with topics that are easily assimilated into large global concerns like feminism, and transnational migrations and their repercussion in the politics of multiculturalism. Works that deal with national

issues like development, social dislocation, problems of democratic institutions and so on... (317)

The above observation provides a useful entry point for this study as Adichie's novels fall with the ambit of transnational works that engage with global concerns. The trends of strife in post-colonial Africa are equally worrying and several literary writers have reacted to the political crises in the continent. This study focuses on the Nigerian case of turbulence and the consequent cases of displacement and migration to other nations and the adoption of a cultural model that defies the existence of pure traditional brands. The Nigerian society, as demonstrated by Oladitan, has had a complicated history of political turbulence. Oladitan observes that the quantity of literary production and the variety of approach to what is essentially the same subject-matter is indubitably striking. The events of that period have been copiously documented by Nigerian and non-Nigerian writers employing the modes of fiction and non-fiction. Achebe says that 'life and art had got so entangled that season' (*British-Protected Child* 43). In fiction, the following titles can be attributed to the events that unfolded during this period of political turbulence: Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* and *Girls at War*, Cyprian Ekwensi's *Divided We Stand*, Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy,* where the writer employs discordant language to reflect the lawlessness and chaos that characterised this era, Ben Okri's *Laughter Beneath the Bridge*, Wole Soyinka's *Season of Anomy*, Flora Nwapa's *Never Again*, Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra,* Ali Mazrui's *The Trial of Christopher Okigbo* and Elechi Amadi's *Sunset in Biafra*. In the genre of non-fiction there are Soyinka's *The Man Died,* Kalu Okpi's *Biafra Testament*, Olusegun Obasanjo's *My Command* and recently Chinua Achebe's *There Was a Country*. There has also been a remarkable attention on this period in the genres of poetry and drama. Christopher Okigbo's *Labyrinths with Path of Thunder*, John Clark's *Casualties,* Chinua Achebe's *Beware Soul Brother*, Odia Ofeimun's *The Poet Lied* and Peter Onwudinjo's *Women of Biafra* are among

poetry collections reflecting the events of that period. This remarkable attention demonstrates that literary discourse on displacement requires literary interrogation.

After what Oladitan calls 'Achebe's pioneering *A Man of the People,'* a number of works have been created to reflect the Nigerian case of political turbulence and the aforementioned list does not sufficiently portray the overwhelming literary response to the crisis (10). In fact, the Nigerian story, a microcosm of the African story, continues. There is need for a re-evaluation of the past to determine the contributions that it makes to modern fiction and literature in general. Another scholar, Izevbaye, in what resonates very well with Oladitan's proclamations, notes that periodic revaluation of the African novel is necessary in order to develop a lively critical heritage as support for its growth. One function of such revaluation, he contends, 'would be to sift the recent past for significant contributions to fiction in order to affirm our continuity with it, and encourage a redefinition of existing literature in the light of new knowledge about literature and society' (Izevbaye 7). Izevbaye adds that since our attitudes to existing novels are constantly being affected by the publication of new ones, it is important for us constantly to re-examine our critical attitudes and perhaps find a new critical language to reflect our modified consciousness of what the literature means to us and an important example of such redefinition of concept is in the modification of culture. Cross-cultural dialogue and the adoption of new cultural sensibilities are critical gaps in scholarship that should be explored in literary-academic scholarship.

An endeavour to re-examine the African novel in its entirety is not a realistic task, neither is a re-evaluation of all Nigerian novels. To allow for a fairly detailed re-evaluation of the Nigerian novel, a representative sample is the only way to go. In such undertaking, one needs a novelist who portrays events set in the same fictional universe as an earlier work, usually chronologically following the events of that work. And one would be tempted to concur with

Ngugi's implicit classification of Achebe's novels as sequels. As a lecturer in the Literature Department in the University of Nairobi, he had hoped to 'trace the development of the messenger class from its inception in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, to their position as the educated 'been-tos' in *No Longer at Ease*; their assumption and exercise of power in *A Man of the People*; to their plunging the nation into intra-class civil war in *Girls at War*' and one might add the insurmountable hills that they build in *Anthills of the Savannah* (Ngugi 63). In the absence of Chinua Achebe, it is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who relives the structural peculiarity in Achebe's novels. Unlike Achebe, who narrates the disruption of cultural unity in *Things Fall Apart*, a magnification of this disruption in *Arrow of God*, a barbarization of African culture in *No Longer at Ease* and the subsequent chaos witnessed in later works; there are literary writers who have utilised their foreign experiences to expand the Nigerian narrative a little more. Such writers invest their creative energies in the fictionalisation of 'culture contact' beyond the borders. Being indirect participants in the initial Nigerian crisis, they provide relatively objective views of the same and even transcend it. This is the reason the phrase 'transcultural literature' is used to refer to these literary works and it is necessary to carry out literary investigation on such works to determine the inherent characteristics that they exhibit.

There are significant issues that have been raised about the contemporary state of culture and society. One such issue is that in a rapidly globalising world, cultures as well as societies and identities tend to be fluid and 'less irreducibly different,' less internally homogenous, less coherent or self-contained and less territorially fixed than it was assumed (Engler 27). They may appear more like loosely bound or mutually exclusive absolutes; especially at the present time when cosmopolitan dispositions and pluralistic sensibilities – fostered by migrant transnational or neo-nomadic experiences and modes of being – become ever more relevant. This is the reason Arjun, in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*,

proposes that we look at contemporary cultural forms as irregular, boundary-less and without any clear structure. He writes:

> The cultural forms, which we should strive to represent as fully fractal, are also overlapping in ways that have been discussed [...] in biology (in the language of polythetic classifications). Thus we need to combine a fractal metaphor for the shape of cultures (in the plural) with a polythetic account of their overlaps and resemblances. Without this latter step, we shall remain mired in a comparative work that relies on the clear separation of the entities to be separated. (46)

There is need for a comprehensive reading of modern literary works in their cultural contexts, and their configurational sites and trajectories of cross-cultural dialogue, where convergence, friction and difference generate cultural tension. Scholarly investigation that cares for the literary or the imaginative in its cultural complexity as pertaining to issues of self-hood, individuality, community, religion, nation, class and gender is needed. Studied in this context are issues that have cursorily noticed or neglected like diasporic literature and their expression of exilic consciousness. This argument serves as useful entry point for this thesis.

The view that Said presents in *Culture and Imperialism* is not any different. He argues that '[n]o one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages and cultural geographies, but there seems to be no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about' (Said 407). Literary discourse is not alien to porous nature of cultural boundaries and Adichie's novels provide imaginative platforms upon which the indistinctness of cultural geographies is explored. To this end, there is need for interrogation of her novels to determine how she paints this cultural picture.

The fluidity expressed above is encapsulated in the concept of transculturalism, which emphasises the significance of continual social interactions between and among certain communities as well as individuals. Some of its aims have been to gather the separate dimensions of the multicultural 'mosaic' in an effort to form a plural unity by means of triggering the dynamic potential of cultural diversity. This prompts the possibility of fluid exchange between ethno-cultural groups, while potentially dismantling divisions based on cultural, racial, gendered, or socio-economic 'Othering.' It allows for the maintenance of an open dialogue between different cultural groups or individuals in their contact zones and shapes a transnational perception. A study of how literature responds to this dialogue is therefore necessary and Adichie, a migrant writer, gives a rich platform for the exploration of cultural dialogue in her works.

It has been argued that the shift from discourses of cultural difference to the celebration of cultural fusion is problematic, since its assumptions do not, in fact, reflect the current status quo fraught with pervasive inequalities but instead present an idealised space of cultural hybridity. In the face of the perceived threat to what are commonly seen as autonomous cultures and traditional modes of expression, the sense of liberation evoked by the thought of a transcultural future may be coupled with a sense of anxiety, as ways of life which hitherto gave a sense of identity and agency are challenged. This anxiety elicits 'self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals' (Edles and Appelrouth 354). Moreover, by seeming to equalise (ethno)cultural groups or individuals and their identities, transculturalism may paradoxically contribute to promoting essentialist racial or ethnic discourses, and ignore how the cultural production and distinctiveness of minorities are symbolically and materially contained within the spheres of power and privilege. Furthermore, in a transcultural exchange or mixing of values, the individual is neither turned into the other nor is one's identity acknowledged to be the same as it used to be before the encounter with the dominant culture.

Thus, transculturalism is a transected notion: it may promote equality but at the same time point to the fact that diversities – in the form of autonomous cultures – gradually disappear while a new diversity – embedded in transcultural permeations of different backgrounds and ways of life – is established; it may advocate non-racist and non-ethnic discourses but at the same time perpetuate them. It is important to carry out investigation on African literature to explore the diversity of literary perspectives on transculturalism.

Transculturalism and its creative expressions promote a new understanding of cultural encounters. They unveil the often asymmetrical but always multi-directional flows of cultural circulation that are marked by ruptures, disjunctures, and mutual tensions but also by commonalities and shared ventures, affects, or outlooks. The significance of a transcultural 'transforming' approach (and experience) in writing, reading, and critiquing has been highlighted by Dupuis when marking the differences between transculturalism and interculturalism within a literary context:

> Transculturalism … does not limit itself to two cultures facing each other, trying to work out what they assume to be their intrinsic discrepancies. Transculturalism takes place when at least two—and sometimes three or more—cultures are not only engaged in dialogue, but partake in a more profound and often contradictory process, in which enlightenment, understanding, and continuous reassessment of identity are at play. The ultimate aim is to transform each other's identity through a long, arduous, and sometimes painful negotiation of Otherness. (501)

The modern literary writer looks upon traditions and contemporaries in terms of a textual lineage that invigorates new art and makes it a vibrant space that gathers into focus the old and the new. The emergent textual space is one of synthetic engagement and dialogue. The interrogation of this textual space is necessary in modern scholarship and this study

acknowledges this necessity. In dealing with transculturalism and its literary expressions, the African story cannot be ignored. Socio-political and economic circumstances have led to either voluntary or involuntary displacement of African citizens and subsequent migration to other continents in the hope of better life. These patterns of mobility have significantly affected cultural orientations, sensibilities, and literary expressions. It is not possible to delve into the copious body of African literature that reflects transcultural dynamics, but the Nigerian context offers a fairly representative sample for such undertaking. The major events of the Nigerian crisis are well known: the military coup of 15th January 1966, the mass killing of the Igbos in the Northern region, followed by another coup in July of the same year; the creation of states in the following year and the secessionist attempt which culminated in the thirty-month Civil War which ended in 1970. Oladitan argues that the Nigerian crisis stretches beyond the aforementioned cluster of events. He contends:

> ... the explanations for this cluster of events went further back beyond January 1966 and the consequences continued beyond the cessation of hostilities. The first military eruption hardly makes sense by itself without reckoning with the pervasive politics of graft and violence during the First Republic, the western Nigerian crisis of 1962, the 1964 federal elections, and the troubles in the west up to the eve of the military intervention. The crisis should also include the bloodless coup which swept General Gowon from office in July 1975 in which General Murtala Muhammed was killed. Furthermore, one cannot only dismiss from the crisis the 'oil boom' and its effects: the conspicuous extravagance, corruption and indiscipline which largely explain, and have been used to justify, the spate of coups. (Oladitan 10)

The word 'transculturalism' is used here to define the cultural space that immigrants adopt outside their traditional localities. 'Trans' refers to continuities across borders and to the

permeability of borders and other dividing lines. The 'cultural' comprises the local, the regional, and the countrywide both in the institutional and legal aspects and in the discursive aspects it extends to other, similarly diverse societies. It avoids an implicit assumption of 'transnational' studies – that is, of a cultural and bordered nation incorporating common state-wide populations with citizen status: when individuals are displaced from their traditional homes. It entails 'a journey from multiculturalism to [adoption of new] horizons and eventually leads to a cosmopolitan citizenship, [which] forces us to envision the world through a cultural prism and culture, therefore, becomes the eyeglasses through which we analyse, project and solve our problems' (Cuccioletta 9). Multicultural studies have deliberately avoided the possibility of establishing a solid and unitary identity from multiple cultures yet this is an interesting cultural perspective. There are literary works that addressed this cultural establishment and should be investigated. Asichie's novels can be read against this lens.

A critique of how this cultural transition is canvassed in literary discourse is necessary. This study is, therefore, pivoted on the trilogy of displacement, migration and transculturalism in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novels, *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*, which belong to the growing terrain of the literary works of mobility, that is, those literatures that are affected by or deal with travels, exploratory drives, migratory flows, exile, diasporic experiences, expatriate or transnational experiences, and, more recently, neo-nomadic trajectories that are attuned to the attainment of global or transcultural citizenry.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Literature is a mirror of life and contemporary issues revolving around displacement and migration are voiced in literary works. There is an increase in the numbers of displaced persons who are on the move across cultural and national boundaries. Some of these

movements are occasioned by unfavourable socio-political conditions and this has been explored in non-literary scholarship. There is still need for an exploration of how socio-cultural circumstances that force persons to move out of their traditional homes are articulated in literary art. In this liquid age, patterns of mobility affect cultural orientations and sensibilities. When individuals migrate to new places, they have to confront cross-cultural complexities of unfamiliar environments. The cultural products of the present era, and in particular literary works interested in the interactive and dialogic dynamics between and across cultures, need to be subjected to interrogation. African writers have represented these new cultural dimensions arising from global mobility and Africans have been victims of forced or voluntary displacement. Migration to new localities prompts the émigrés to go through a process of acculturation, deculturation, neoculturation and transculturation. Implied in the aforementioned process is the idea that cultures are shaped by continual interactions and overlapping political relationships, and transformed through specific and individual actions. This concept is not alien to literary discourse and scholarly investigation should be carried out to determine how literature addresses itself to this. Literary writers have addressed the contextual and individual relationships to cultural experiences rather than a static and categorical approach to culture and the novel, a genre which is not constrained by the structural limitations of poetry and the short story, offers a good imaginative platform for interrogating the portrait of cultural experiences. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novels fall within this purview and, therefore, useful for this kind of interrogation. What is particularly intriguing is the consistency with which these ideas permeate into her novels. It is against this backdrop that this study will endeavour to determine the socio-political and economic circumstances that force individuals to move out of their original locations, how the displaced persons navigate their way through new cultural environments and how the émigrés strive towards the attainment of transcultural citizenry. Treating literature as imaginative platform

for social reflection and relevant avenue upon which social data can be drawn; this study attempts to fill this gap by relying on evidence from Adichie's novels.

1.3 Research Questions

This study responds to the following questions:

1. How do Adichie's novels serve as platforms for the articulation of the socio-cultural circumstances which force characters to move out of their traditional localities?
2. How do émigrés of Adichie's novels negotiate the cross-cultural complexities of their new worlds?
3. How do émigrés of Adichie's novels establish transcultural citizenship?

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to demonstrate how displacement, migration and transculturalism are mediated in Adichie's novels. The specific objectives of the study are:

1 To explore how Adichie's novels serve as platforms for the articulation of the socio-cultural circumstances which force characters to move out of their traditional localities

2 To demonstrate how émigrés of Adichie's novels negotiate the cross-cultural complexities of their new worlds

3 To determine how émigrés of Adichie's novels establish transcultural citizenship.

1.5 Rationale of the Study

The global interest that Adichie's works have earned is undeniably remarkable. Conducting an interrogation of her works is obviously a justifiable endeavour. Studies on Adichie's works have attracted increasing interest in literary scholarship in recent times, as a result of her recognition as the new voice of Nigerian and indeed African literature, given that she has gained a measure of success that eludes many old and new generation writers within and outside Africa. This study serves to expand the critical horizons explored by earlier critics; but more importantly, it provides more useful fodder for literary scholars who intend to wade into similar research areas. Literary scholars, some of whom are cited in the second chapter of this thesis, have made implicit references to the three main elements of the study, suggesting some viability of this study.

In the spirit of global consciousness, there is need for a critique of literary productions or discourses that engage literary scholars and researchers in general on contemporary cultural dynamics. Globalisation is changing the ways we experience national identity and culture – thus complicating identity currently affected by fluid political and cultural borders that once separated nation-states and the people within them. Therefore, the need to manage differences – and the created friction – is more pressing in the globalised world engendering a new educational agenda. Literary scholars must confront and work through competing and contrasting cultural models and social practices, adjusting to and accommodating differences in such areas as place, gender, language, and the complicated interrelationships of race, ethnicity, and accompanying inequality. Adichie adopts a collaborative cultural dimension that circumvents traditionalism in an attempt to deepen readers' understanding of issues affecting their world and existence as well as the world beyond them. Locally created fiction may not offer adequate exposure to such vital pieces of information.

Transcultural literature is generating more intricate demographics, cultural facts, and identities. Entire continents and nations are undergoing intense cultural transformations. Nations and economies, therefore, need to adapt to the new, complex forces brought about by globalisation. Similarly, local politics and worldviews need to change or be stressed in a way where 'absentee citizens' in the diaspora can exercise political power in the communities they leave behind and in the new societies in which they find themselves, as well as in all realms of social life. Literary scholarship on Adichie is consistent with the openness and trust needed to understand global perspectives as well as transcultural dynamics. More specifically, it is important to demystify the socio-political and economic challenges that force individuals, especially from African countries, to migrate to other continents. Equally important is how these immigrants transform themselves culturally to fit into these new environments.

1.6 Scope of Study

This study focuses on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novels, *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* with a view to investigating how they represent displacement, migration and transculturalism. References are made to other works written by Adichie and other contemporary Nigerian writers for purposes of demonstrating the socio-political and economic patterns of early twenty first-century globalisation and the cultural complexities and interactions that have fostered emerging transcultural orientations and transcultural modes of literary expression. Secondary data have been drawn from the scholarly works of other literary critics, especially critical materials that are relevant to the objectives of this study. References have also been made to other scholarly materials on the conceptual framework adopted for this study; to wit, critical hybridity. Relevant critical materials on dialogism and postcolonialism have been used in the determination of the conceptual framework for this study.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

This study employs a multi-dimensional construct of critical hybridity. In considering the use of this conceptual framework, this study recognises the relevance of critical hybridity as captured in postcolonial theory, especially by Fanon, Bhabha and Said and Bhaktin's dialogism as well as Epstein's projection that gives room for the possibility of attaining of a unitary identity from a multi-cultural one. To use hybridity in its traditional sense is inadequate. The theory of 'cultural hybridity' – has been used in literary-academic discourse. The craft of the theory is credited to the post-colonial critic Homi Bhabha. In his critique of the interrelations between the coloniser and the colonised, he draws the conclusion that any cultural identity in the 'contact zone' of intercultural relations is constructed in a hybrid space, which he regards as 'the Third space of enunciation' (37-38). He coins the term 'in-between' to describe the negotiated cultural product in 'the Third space.' Living 'in-between' cultures does not suggest a mere exchange between cultures, but it aims at the creation of new cultural forms (Location of Culture 86-88; 'Cultural Diversity' 206). Marie Pratt accentuates that the 'third' space as an ambivalent contact zone, that, on the one hand, offers perspectives of 'copresence, interaction, interlocking understanding and practices' (7). On the other hand, these points are tense areas where 'disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other' (Pratt 7). It also comes without guarantees for a holistic criticism of the subject in question. As a single idea or a unitary concept, hybridity is an association of ideas, concepts, and themes that at once reinforce and contradict each other. The varied and conflicting nature of its use points to the fluidity of employing hybridity as a universal description of culture. Indeed, one learns very little when they repeat loosely that every culture is hybrid or, as happens too often, when fragments of discourse or data are cobbled together and called hybridity in several registers — historical, rhetorical, existential and economic. It is therefore imperative to situate every analysis of hybridity in a specific context

where the conditions that shape hybridities are addressed. To address the inadequacies prompted by the use of hybridity in its traditional form, ideas of Fanon, Said, Epstein and Bhaktin are used to modify it to suit contemporary state of culture.

Transnational immigrants today appear to live dual or even multiple lives across national borders, with help from a range of new technologies involving media and channels of communication such as Internet-based chat or telephony, mobile phones, and interactive online social networks. Literary writings explore the implications of accumulated findings on this for researchers and scholars investigating the contemporary experience of globalisation in relation to diasporas and their technology-enabled interconnections with home and host societies. Against the context of existing conceptual frameworks, the utility of the multi-dimensional construct of critical hybridity, involving the five processes of migration, acculturation (the gradual acquisition of the characteristics and norms of a host's culture), deculturation (the émigré does not value the culture of the dominant partner or the host and is left in a confused, alienated and marginalised state), neo-culturation and transculturation, is considered as a guiding concept in this emerging area of study.

Fanon observes that history teaches us that the anti-colonialist struggle is not automatically written from a nationalist perspective (97). In post-colonial nations, the incapacity of the leadership to address the concerns of the masses usually engenders disaffection. The general feeling of disillusionment by the masses results in migration to other places. In some cases, disaffection is manifested in the form of a revolt. As a result of violence, citizens are displaced. Consequently, some decide to move to other countries. The progenitors of the liberation struggle mobilise masses to rally behind their ideologies. The liberators' confrontation with an unprepared ruling elite always precipitates political violence, which is normally perceived by the ruling elite as the best method of silencing the political dissidents.

In their new locations, the émigrés go through a process of cultural dialogue. Bakhtin's theory of dialogism offers useful insights into this process. In Bakhtin's view, an expression in a living context of exchange - termed a 'word' or 'utterance' - is the main unit of meaning (not abstract sentences out of context), and is formed through a speaker's relation to Otherness (other people, others' words and expressions, and the lived cultural world in time and place). A 'word' is therefore always already embedded in a history of expressions by others in a chain of ongoing cultural and political moments (*Dialogic Imagination* 284).

Said's *Orientalism* offers a description of the system by which nations appropriate from Others to define themselves (2). Among postcolonial theorists, there is a wide consensus that hybridity arose out of the culturally internalised interactions between 'colonisers' and 'the colonised' and the dichotomous formation of these identities. Considered by some scholars as the father of hybrid theory, Bhabha argues that colonisers and the colonised are mutually dependent in constructing a shared culture (247). This study has enriched the understanding of the concept of hybridity as advanced in postcolonial studies. It integrates different types of hybridity in a framework that makes the connections between these types both intelligible and usable. With that goal in mind, this study has projected a reclamation of a critical and historically informed approach to transnational discourse and critical hybridity offers a new all-encompassing framework for studies on displacement, migration and transculturalism. The usage of the word 'critical hybridity' in this study conveys a synthetic notion of culture and a dynamic understanding of relations between cultures.

For the purpose of this study, critical hybridity is understood historically in a triple context: (a) the development of vocabularies of racial and cultural mixture from the mid–nineteenth century onward; (b) the historical basis of contemporary hybrid identities; and (c) the juncture at which the language of hybridity entered the study of transcultural literature. It is

also conceived of as a rhetorical notion, which entails comprehension of (a) uses of hybridity in mainstream literary discourse and (b) the analysis of the advent of hybridity in transnational discourse for its rhetorical aspects. If, conceptually, hybridity is invoked in writings unsympathetic to critical approaches to transnational discourses, rhetorically, hybridity facilitates a broader negation of power in public treatments of intercultural relations.

The literary texts sampled for this study fall within the context of transcultural literature, recognising that there is an increase in the numbers of displaced citizens who are on the move across cultural and national boundaries. Patterns of mobility affect cultural orientations, sensibilities and the selected literary writings paint these patterns. For this reason, the cultural products of the present era, and in particular those transcultural literary works interested in the interactive and dialogic dynamics between and across cultures, need to be analysed through a critically hybrid perspective. One might thus conclude that in order to advance our understanding of the current literary production, prompted by the present age of global mobility, it seems necessary to acknowledge the presence and identity, the fluid nature and the transforming role of transcultural works. By examining these literary works – Adichie's novels for that matter – through a critically hybrid lens, a more profound grasp and a broad-based interpretation of the inescapable and often unpredictable influence of other cultures in our contemporary societies is attained. This conceptual framework recognises the interactive nature of cultural dialogue.

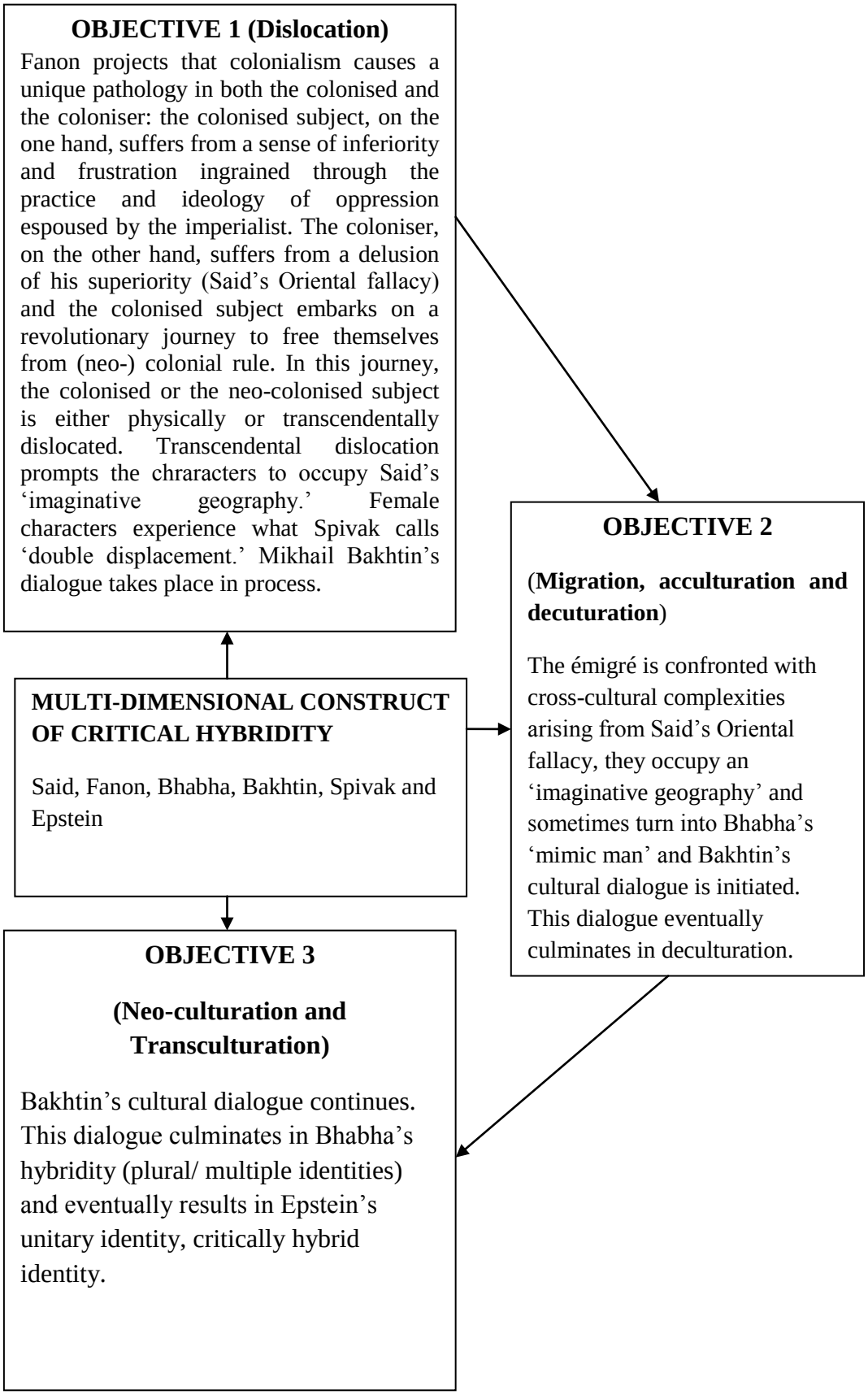
By way of illustration, this conceptual framework entails six-stage analytical procedure that can be split into more elaborate assumptions. First, drawing from Franz Fanon, the study recognises that colonialism causes a unique pathology in both the colonised and the coloniser: the colonised subject, on the one hand, suffers from a sense of inferiority and

frustration ingrained through the practice and ideology of oppression espoused by the imperialist. The coloniser, on the other hand, suffers from a delusion of his superiority and the colonised subject embarks on a revolutionary journey to free themselves from (neo-) colonial rule. In this journey, the colonised or the neo-colonised subject is either physically or transcendentally dislocated. Said's argument that the coloniser's supremacy is usually enhanced by 'oriental fallacy' and the supposedly inferior group, the colonised, is forced to occupy an 'imaginative geography' are used in the exploration of the socio-cultural circumstances that force characters to move out of their traditional homes in Adichie's novels. This is what the first objective entails. The second objective seeks to determine how émigrés of Adichie's novels negotiate the cross-cultural complexities of their new worlds. In the analysis of data on this objective, Fanon, Said, Bhabha and Bakhtin's ideas are used. Migration is motivated by the colonised subject's desire, Fanon argues, to chart a revolutionary path in a bid to free themselves from (neo-)colonial chains. In their new cultural environments, they are alienated. This cultural alienation can be canvassed using Said's projection that Oriental fallacy pushes the culturally inferior subject to 'an imaginative geography.' The émigrés embark on another journey: acculturation. By acculturating themselves, they become what Bhabha regards as 'mimic men.' In this new mission, the émigré engages in a cultural dialogue as envisaged by Bakhtin. A cultural dialogue is, therefore, initiated. This plays out prominently as the émigré gradually acquires the characteristics and norms of the host's culture. As envisaged by Fanon and Said, acculturation does not resolve the conflict in the psyche of the Oriental occupants, the colonised or the émigrés. It, instead, ushers in a new form of colonialism or cultural domination. The émigrés have to go through a deculturation process to free their psyches from cultural bondage. Deculturation is a product of cultural dialogue. The émigrés, in Bhabha's terms, becomes culturally ambivalent as they discover that 'mimicry' is

humiliating. The émigré does not value the culture of the dominant partner or the host and is left in a confused, alienated and marginalised state. The third objective of this study seeks to determine how émigrés in Adichie's novels establish transcultural citizenship. In this interrogation, Bhabha's agument that émigrés occupy the third space of cultural enunciation in their endeavour to stave off cultural confusion, alienation and marginalisation becomes a critical theoretical principle. This process envisaged in Bhabha's aforementioned tenet is regarded here as neo-culturation. In this process of becoming, cultural dialogue continues as projected by Bakhtin and the émigré is faced with the challenge of reconciling the multiple cultural identities to attain some kind of equilibrium and it is through transculturation that a stable, unified cultural identity is attained. Epstein's arguement is useful here. Beyond the attainment of a culturally hybridity, a critically hybrid identity is realisable.

These processes are portrayed in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novels. The dichotomy of coloniser-colonised contest is in the analysis of data on dislocation, which is relevant in the articulation of issues revolving around the first objective of this study. The transcendentally displaced persons occupy Said's 'imaginative geography' to gain temporary reprieve from discomforting socio-cultural environment. Acculturation and deculturation as conceptualised in Said's 'Oriental fallacy,' Bhabha's 'Othering,' and Bakhtin's 'cultural dialogue' are employed in the analysis of data for the purposes objective two, which deals with cross-cultural complexities. The concepts of difference, mimicry and ambivalence as advanced in Bhabha's are useful at this stage. Bakhtin's dialogue continues and it is useful in the analysis of data necessary in attainment of the third objective. Bhabha's 'hybridity' and Epstein's ideas are also utilised in this stage. The foregoing illustrations demonstrate that this multi-dimensional construct of critical hybridity is the most effective framework for the study on displacement, migration and transculturalism in Adichie's novels.

A Diagrammatic Illustration of the Conceptual Framework Adopted for the Study



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A number of critical studies have been conducted on displacement, migration and transculturalism. These issues have generated interest from literary and non-literary scholarship. There are a number of scholarly journals, essays and book-length publications that focus either exclusively or partially on the aforementioned concerns. Some of the literary materials reviewed in this section are based on Adichie's works. Evidently, the issues which form the backbone of this proposed study have attracted academic scholarship yet critical gaps still emerge from the scholarly materials. An attempt has been made, therefore, to review the existing literature on displacement, migration and transculturalism with a view to pointing out these gaps.

2.2 Socio-Cultural Dynamics of Displacements

There are a number of literary and non-literary scholars who have conducted researches and/ or made comments that are relevant to the socio-cultural factors that compel persons to move out of their homes. The starting point for this review is Hwang's article, 'Ethnicity and Nationhood in Achebe's *Arrow of God*.' Hwang argues that '*Arrow of God* is a good example of a narrative that probes the postcolonial identity by seeking to identify the moment of transition of a society with a pre-colonial identity to one with a national identity' (58). He employs Smith's distinctions of the two brands of nations to demonstrate that Achebe's characters in *Arrow of God* are culturally displaced from the pre-colonial identity of nations (Smith 5, 16). He contends that 'the diametrical focus of each type [of nation] may help to explain the pre-colonial identity crisis described in Achebe's *Arrow of God* where a very territorially minded 'political master' attempted to govern very ethnically minded 'nominal subjects'' (Hwang 58). 'Ethnic nations tend to focus on promoting a more fluid cohesion

through the sharing of a common ancestral identity, while territorial nations tend to superimpose identities on people within a given territory by drawing on legal and economical structures to demarcate 'them' and 'us' [in what looks like the process of othering]' (Hwang 63). Hwang cites the government memorandum in the novel that sums the cultural crisis in the Igbo society: 'the memorandum calls attention to an issue that is central to novel – the question of installing a more Westernised identity over a more African ethnic identity.' The result of this installation or imposition is cultural displacement. Hwang's position differs from Tembi, who despite recognising that 'NoViolet's *We Need New Names* and Chikwa's *Harare North* are narratives of displacement,' consider these novels as responses to 'the social and economic difficulties in post-independence Zimbabwe and the subsequent [physical] movement of people within the country' (22). Although Hwang does not directly deal with the question of cultural displacement, his arguments offer very useful fodder for this study.

Abdul Jan Mohamed's submissions also reinforce Hwang's. Just like Hwang, Abdul does not explicitly regard cultural displacement as a product of European imperialism; however, his critique of the colonial strategy of bulkanisation or polarisation serves as a significant pointer to cultural displacement:

> The limited choice of either petrification or catalepsy is imposed on the African by the colonial situation; his subjugation and lack of political power prevent him from constructively combining the [European and African] cultures and leave him more vulnerable to further subjugation. If he chooses to be faithful to the indigenous values, he remains, from the colonialist's view point a 'savage' and the need to 'civilise' him perpetuates colonialism. If, however, he attempts to espouse Western values, then he is seen as a vacant imitator without a culture of his own. Thus colonialist ideology is designed to confine the native in a confused and subservient position. (Abdul 5)

From the above observations, it is evident that the subjugated African citizen has to struggle to find their own cultural space within territories defined by the colonial powers. To maintain fidelity to traditional African culture, they have to detach themselves from the Western-dominated African societies. Achebe notes that the 'autonomous Igbo villages and towns, so deeply suspicious of political amalgamation ... should ever face an enemy able to wield the resources of a centralised military power, acting directly or through local surrogates. They would need every fortification to maintain their delicate solidarity' (*Home and Exile* 17). Achebe's sentiments are shared by Abdul Jabbar, who uses evidence from Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, to argue that the collection of short stories 'subtly presents a section of humanity that is loss of identity, the sense of belonging and cultural displacement' (486). Afshin, on the other hand, gives a very interesting dimension of cultural displacement; using Jhumpa's *Namesake*, he avers that 'displacement could alternatively be called emancipation or freedom' (30). Afshin's sentiments resonate very well with the postulations of Cook Rufus. Using Salman Rushdie's works for illustrations, Cook notes that 'although [Rushdie] is obviously aware of the pain and disorientation involved, [he] seems to regard cultural displacement as essentially a positive and liberating experience, one of the best ways in world 'of seeking freedom' (23). Abdul Jabbar, like Ashfin and Cook, do not place his analyses within the context of African literary discourse, a critical knowledge gap that the proposed study seeks to fill; however, they provide very useful scholarly insights. This study integrates both perspectives on cultural displacement. Besides, it presents displacement as the first phase of a triad of cultural transformation.

Malissa, Hardev and Mani, in 'A Study of Displacement in Jean Rhys' Novel *Wide Sargasso Sea,*' equate displacement to alienation. The trio argue that 'stereotyping of people based on their skin colour' is one main cause of alienation. They contend that Antoinette's husband is a victim of 'this labelling of people' (as white or black). According to the three, it is the

'feeling of ostracism intensified in the moment when he realised how great the difference between his wife's world and his own [are that leads] to a feeling of alienation' (117). The arguments of three critics are useful to this study as they deliberate on a dimension of displacement that is likely to issue from the novels sampled for the study. It, however, does not address the question of displacement in the context of the literary works that the study explores.

Akubuiro also makes very significant contributions literary discourse on displacement. She makes an observation about the timing of Adichie's novels and notes that the 'decade within which Adichie was born can be said to represent, to a great degree, the flowering of Biafran war literature. Just as she rightly acknowledges in her *Half of a Yellow Sun*, there cannot be but a spectacular indebtedness to the tradition of the Nigerian civil war literature in her work. And without doubt the prominence of Nsukka, Adichie's place of infancy and adolescence and setting of her works, either in the production or promotion of the war literature is quite phenomenal' (Akuibiro, Daily Sun). This article situates Adichie's works within the body of post-war literature, which is a significant entry point for this study. Nonetheless, it does not show how the political circumstances of the period necessitated migration to other places. Besides, the focus of this study is Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. References to other works are evidently veiled. This study goes beyond the acknowledgement of the fact that Adichie's novels fall within the purview of post-war literature; it demonstrates how her novels, not just *Half of a Yellow Sun*, paint picture of involuntary displacement.

Ibeku, who does not explicitly delve into the socio-political dynamics of displacement, gives the impression that these movements are socially instigated. The chauvinistic frame of traditional African societies did simply peripheralise women, but it progressively forced them to seek refuge in other environments that they perceived to be more socially accommodating. Ibeku devotes her critical energy to the question of feminism and its predominance in *Purple*

Hibiscus. 'Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*,' she argues, 'is a feminist work that challenges the dehumanizing tendencies of the menfolk.' According to her, this is demonstrated by the character of Mama (Beatrice) 'who undergoes a series of humiliation, dehumanisation, and denial from her husband.' The novel, in her view, portrays Mama as a virtuous woman who puts up with everything from her husband. Mama derives consolation from the church and society. She feels that her marriage to Eugene is a favour considering the fact that he had refused to listen to his kinsmen on the need to take another wife. Mama believes her husband favoured her by refusing to take a second wife despite the pressure he received from his relations. It is obvious that she had lost two pregnancies as a result of her husband's violent action and he, her husband, 'should be blamed for her inability to give birth to more children' (Ibeku 436). This article portrays male dominance in African societies as a product of female inaction; however, it does not acknowledge chauvinism as one of the social circumstances that compel individuals to move out of their countries in search of new social environments that are accommodative to new cultural dynamics and responsive to the prevailing cultural dialogue. This study does.

Akpome, whose postulations are similar to Abdul's analysis, delves into the synergy between fact and fiction in Adichie's novels and although she does not cite political turbulence as one of the circumstances that compelled Nigerian citizens to migrate to other places, he provides useful hints. He looks at hybridization in the context of integration or fusion of factual and fictional elements. He notes that unlike 'Rushdie and Dangor [who] propose more flexible configurations and nuanced delineations of identity, Adichie, who like the others, engages with a set of largely similar social, historical and political concerns, tends rather to privilege the affixation of (personal) identity to ethnicity and to a culturally determined idea of nation.' Akpome further argues that Adichie, in her award-winning second novel titled *Half of a Yellow Sun,* 'tells the story of the fratricidal Nigerian Civil War of 1967 – 1970 using

innovative narrative and structural schemes that include the decentred voice, a beguiling meta-text and the hybridization of factual history and fictionalisation' (151). This article, just like Akubuiro's article, places Adichie's novels within the Nigerian political context. It limits the 'affixation of personal identity to ethnicity and culturally determined idea of nation' and neglects the significance of transcultural dynamics in the determination of individual identity. It places Adichie's novels within the historical context, specifically the civil war era, but it does not specifically identify ethnic alignments and tensions as some of the causes of mass movements. This contextualisation, nonetheless, is significant to this study.

Arabian and Vida, using Adichie's *Americanah* as the main point of reference, reveal how immigrants leave their country of origin toward the West with a hope of making a new home but racial discrimination in western societies alienates them as 'other' and brings them a sense of unbelonging which effects their decisions considering the issue of return (541). They aver:

> Diaspora as the issue of everyday life for many people all around the world includes both voluntary and forceful displacements of groups and individuals toward other lands. The critical shared aspects within the concept of diaspora including displacement, a sense of belonging, otherness, and the issue of return are best shown by Adichie in her novel. *Americanah*'s accomplishment is in presenting the hardships of living abroad including that sense of belonging both toward homeland and host land before and after displacement, and also that sense of alienation which is caused as a result of being different. In the world of novel, characters leave their country of origin with the hope of making a new home in another land. But the situation changes in their new land. (Arabian and Vida 541)

Arabian and Vida acknowledge the challenges of immigrants as a result of forceful and voluntary displacements, which are significant to this study. However, their arguments are backed up by evidence drawn from the latest novel. The two do not deal will the specific socio-political circumstances that compel individual characters to move out of their homeland. This study, unlike Vida and Arabian's, demonstrates that the two novels that precede *Americanah,* provide useful background information to the issues that are developed in the latest work.

Dalley sees Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* as a significant example of postcolonial trauma fiction, a text that examines the complexities of representing catastrophe in non-metropolitan contexts. Set before and during the Nigerian Civil War of 1967–1970, Dalley contends, the novel depicts 'typified instances of the horrors of that conflict, including mob violence, mass starvation, rape and aerial bombardment — events framed as true and historical, epistemological assertions.' Dalley argues that Adichie explores both the psychic need for victims (individual and collective) to have their trauma 'recognised' by others, and the affective, ethical, and aesthetic tensions inherent in that demand. Adichie's work, according to this critic, is thus an archetypal case of what Luckhurst calls our 'contemporary trauma culture'— a set of affective dispositions and publishing norms that promote, and sometimes problematise, aesthetic engagement with the pain of others (Luckhurst 2). As the popularity of Adichie's novel attests, Dalley argues, trauma culture is now more global than ever — a development that makes the questions it raises all the more significant. This journal explores some of those issues, focusing on the links this novel and others like it draw between trauma, 'recognition,' and the production of new forms of ethico-political 'solidarity' (Dalley 370). Dalley makes reference to the traumatising experiences of Nigerians during the Biafran war and calls for 'deterritorisation' of such trauma. She does not deal with the effects of the 'horrors' of war like displacement and migration, a gap that this study fills.

Ranjana contends that Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* presents the human story of this political event which was not only a legacy of colonisation but also reflected the cruel faces of tribalism, oil-politics and economic deprivation. Adichie covers the years leading to the war, the course of the struggle and its aftermath while narrating stories of death and survival, love and loss, betrayal and hope. Her stories are of how the lives of ordinary people are suddenly changed by the horrors of living close to enemy lines, the pain of living in refugee camps and dying without a home ('There Was a Nation' 383). Ranjana acknowledges the effects of the Biafran war – loss of lives and disillusionment among others – especially in reference to *Half of a Yellow Sun*. It does not show how the other novels come to bear on the same issues; nevertheless, Ranjana provides useful hints on the circumstances that compel individuals to move out of their traditional homes. He does not specifically deal with the question of displacement and migration, a gap that that this study endeavours to fill.

2.3 Navigating the Cross-cultural Complexities of New Environments

The cross-cultural challenges that émigrés encounter as they navigate their way through new worlds need to be addressed comprehensively. There are a number of literary critics that have weighed in on this debate. Mami, to begin with, critiques Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck* and attempts to show how Adichie effectively evokes and thus convinces readers 'how cultural reification still remains a critical issue today, exactly like when it was noted with the Marxist cultural critic George Luckács back in the 1920s.' The issue that Adichie addresses, according to Mami, is that 'while the task of outsmarting colonialism has been successfully carried out, Africans still have to outsmart the reifying propulsions of the media industry if they ever aspire to meaningful freedom.' For Mami, positive discourses, like immigration to the U.S., and the U.S. as a utopia for societal and economic organisation, have been shown to be imprecise overgeneralisations, lacking concrete evidence and by perpetuating such 'instrumental reason,' the media emits African unhappiness and misery as fate. According to

Miami, the same media celebrates 'the flattening of ideals, madness and dystopia' instead of inaugurating the precept of a happily functioning society (224). This journal is useful to this study in the sense that it touches on discourses around immigration and what the writer calls 'imprecise overgeneralisations.' It displays misconceptions about African culture that are propagated in the media, a cross-cultural dialogue as it were. Nevertheless, these arguments are limiting in regard to scope. In any case, Mami relies heavily on the evidence from one source, the short story. Besides, Mami does not show how Adichie's other works, especially her novels, come to bear on this issue.

Atieh and Ghada also explore the challenges that internally displaced persons encounter in their places of temporary refuge. The authors regard *The Story of Zahra* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* as post-war narratives that expose the hurdles that women face during periods of political turbulence. They portray women as the most disadvantaged victims of political atrocities. 'Addressing the traumatic experience of female non-combatants during war, both *Story of Zahra* and *Half of a Yellow Sun,*' the two argue, 'evolve as significant modes of war trauma narratives.' A review of wartime literature and scholarship, the two aver, reveals an exclusive focus on 'the masculine world of combat and suppression of the female response to the distress of war.' In this context, Al-Shaykh's and Adichie's narratives, according to the two scholars, 'rectify this lacuna and address the effaced trauma of female individuals.' The two scholars argue that *Story of Zahra* presents a mode of individual trauma, namely pre-war childhood trauma where Zahra, a Lebanese female, experiences domestic violence, alienation from the mother, gender discrimination, and sexual abuse; all complicated by the escalation of the Civil War. They observe that in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, witnessing the Biafran Civil War atrocities precipitates a collective trauma as several female and male civilians undergo fear and hunger, for instance, Olanna, a female professor at Nsukka University in the Igboland, witnesses the murder of the Igbo people, including her relatives, around their compound in

Kano. Kainene, Olanna's twin sister, 'undergoes a similar traumatic encounter when, in a very horrifying scene, she sees the tragic death of her steward' (Atieh and Ghada 2). This article deals with the traumatic experiences that individuals, especially women, undergo during war but fails to pursue the thesis to its logical conclusion; it does not deliberate on the consequences of the experiences such as the decision to migrate to other countries and how these immigrants deal with the challenges they face in new environments.

Awa, using *Purple Hibiscus* for her illustrations, puts a strong case for the artistic merit that Adichie achieves by fusing English language with local African idioms. This journal celebrates the efficiency of liberalising language use in literature. Language, Awa contends, is rule governed and accumulation of norms; contrastingly, Adichie as 'a creative and inventive literary explorer who is grounded in the basic linguistic norms has liberated herself by bending and discarding the linguistic choices forced on her by English language.' In so doing, Awa says, '[Adichie] has embellished her *Purple Hibiscus* with copious and eloquent transliteration, countless and worthwhile word coinages, multifarious and valid lexical borrowing, profuse and evant folk songs, riddles, zillion and significant incantations, sundry dirges and umpteen lampoons.' All these linguistic games, according to Awa, have made the English language capable of expressing, projecting and capturing African creative impulse and cultural roots; consequently, the reader especially the non-indigenous, understands Igbo culture and ethnic aesthetics. In her view, these portray '[Adichie's] sense of pride in African culture and existence and reveal her as a disciple of Achebe; surprisingly her Igbo linguistic frames are not limiting factors to the English language but extension to the Language' (Awa 63). Awa's journal acknowledges what other critics of Adichie's works have attributed her fame to: following the footsteps of Chinua Achebe. Adichie adopts appropriation in the use of English language: 'the [English] language is taken and made to 'bear the burden' of [the writer's] own cultural experience' (Ashcroft *et al* 38). In fact, it comes close to Akpome's

criticism. While it is evident that this journal makes no direct reference to the question of displacement, migration and transculturalism, it provides useful hints on the strategies used by émigrés to negotiate cross-cultural complexities.

Chukwumezie and Okechukwu, using the fictional experiences in Saadawi's *Woman At Point Zero* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, highlight the achievements that women have made in their attempts to define their space in an erstwhile male-dominated society. The two argue that the 'African adage that no man can win a battle against his clan (culture) seems to stand as a witness against this new female posture.' Emancipation, from the novels reviewed, the two critics contend, 'thrives practically within the family setting but suffers a great setback in the larger traditional society.' The woman who is successful at pulling down the denigration within her family would be unsuccessful at an attempt to overpower the institutions of the prevalent culture wherein she is located since these cultural institutions have given the people (especially men who are custodians of these institutions) 'protection' and a 'sense of belonging and, except the woman is liberated from her prevalent culture, emancipation cannot be said to have been attained' (Chukwumezie and Okechukwu 68). These two scholars celebrate the strides that female characters make in their fight for gender equality. They make no reference to the issues that shall form the gist of this study; they make very useful contributions insofar as the questions at hand are concerned. Women are essentially discussed as émigrés, but they advocate for the exploration of a new cultural space that would accommodate their potentiality in the global era, an observation that is useful to this study.

2.4 Émigrés and the Establishment of Transcultural Citizenship

Appiah, in *Ethics of Identity*, uses transculturalism and cosmopolitanism interchangeably and defines cosmopolitan 'as someone who thinks that the world is, so to speak, our shared hometown, reproducing something very like the self-conscious oxymoron of the 'global village' (217). He, like Cuccioletta and Grosu, deliberately avoids the use of

multiculturalism. According to Grosu, 'if we compare transculturalism to multiculturalism, the essential difference between them stems from the way we perceive their outcomes [and] cultural diversity is either a melting of cultural markers (transculturalism) or a gathering of multiple and distinct contributions to the mainstream culture (multiculturalism)' (107). Though the definitions given by the three are not grounded in literary studies, the distinction that comes out provides a useful pointer to the unitary approach that this study takes.

A number of intellectuals have injected their input on the confluent nature of cultures and the consequent establishment of transcultural citizenship. One notable scholar is Arianna. She contends that 'transcultural literary works engage with and express the confluent nature of cultures overcoming the different dichotomies between North and South, the West and the Rest, the coloniser and the colonised, the dominant and the dominated, the native and the (im)migrant, the national and the ethnic,' and reshapes 'national collective imaginaries in an effort to adjust to the cosmopolitan vision in a new age of transnational and supra-national economic, political, social and cultural processes' (3). This averment acknowledges the untenable nature of cultural monolithicism, the dismantling of traditional cultural tropes and the need for interrogation of the paradigm shifts in cultural representations which are key components of the study. Though she does not specifically delve into the novels in question, she proffers a significant dimension to cultural studies that are useful in the exploration of the debate on globalisation. Arianna's arguments resonate very well with Brydon and Tiffin who recognise that to 'decolonise is not simply to rid oneself of the trappings of imperial power [but] also to seek non-repressive alternatives to Imperialist discourse' (12).

Another scholar, Yu-chuan Shao, analyses Zhu's *Ancient Capital* with Julia Kristeva's concepts in confronting the revival of nationalism in Taiwan. By reading *Ancient Capital* with Kristeva's psychoanalytic rendition of cosmopolitanism, she investigates the theme of catastrophe in Zhu's text. Her reading is not only about the minority's anxiety over what Zhu

sees as xenophobic nationalism in contemporary Taiwan but it is also an attempt to envision Taiwan, in the midst of a national mobility, as a cosmopolitan space that accommodates all forms of 'foreign-ness.' By exploring what Kristeva calls the encounter with the irreconcilable,' she demonstrates the relevance of recognising the effect of the uncanny toward the Other in the understanding of the ethics of cosmopolitanism (Shao 99). Using evidence from Zhu's novel, Shao confirms that discourse on cosmopolitanism has not eluded literary writers. Her analysis is not situated within the framework of critical hybridity, a gap that this study fills.

Tartaglia regards transculturalism as a concept that cannot be wholly perceived as positive, confirming that it is a transected notion. He alludes to Simbach's definition, which regards transculturalism as 'looking at life for shared interests, which extend across cultural, historically contingent boundaries' and says that 'it is rooted in cultural baggage' (Simbach 1; Tartaglia 1). Simbach traces this 'cultural baggage' to 'the European Enlightenment's idea of universality' and as such, it is a 'project of cultural imperialism; an attempt to undermine the values of other cultures because we do not like them' and, therefore, it 'is not good after all' (Simbach 1). This view validates the intricate nature of the concept of transculturalism; however, Simbach's arguments are not grounded in literary writings. Besides, it looks at the concept from a negative perspective, a notion that this study negates.

Darie, drawing evidence from *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun,* focuses on the portraiture of trauma and resilience after the Biafran war. The image of war within the Nigerian space erupts with a tremendous potential of dehumanising. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reveals the horrors and the consequences of watching those horrors from a psychological perspective which defines a particular worldview, a proposal for understanding not the reasons underlying an act, but the reasons for the inability to react. When the society collapses, the human being tries to adapt or perish. In Adichie's novels *Purple Hibiscus* and

Half of a Yellow Sun, the rules of the game called everyday life have been altered and the characters react in extra-ordinary ways. Adichie's characters are incapable of interiorising the atrocities and as a result, they cease to define themselves as products of normality, mediate on a crossway between acting toward rebellion or toward assimilation and transformation.

Adichie is the voice of the wound inflicted by the Biafran war, a battle asserting the tragedy of believing in balance and the right to intimacy. The trauma of war, a shattering experience in itself, escalates in social illness, when inflicted by Africans on Africans (Darie 1033). Nigerians gained their independence, but the futility of such a lesson in history is once again proven to be the only stable assertion. Adichie's narrative enterprise is distressing, not by insisting on the substance of horror, but by describing it minutely, with a rationality that belies the grotesque of the images darkening her writing. In *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie analyses African culture-related behaviour and artifacts as witnesses of the traumatic history of African wars, stressing the silence and the distorted voicing of a freedom lost to its own meaning. The representation of war in Adichie's novels is in itself a testimony of desolation and meaninglessness, and its reverberations in modern African literature are signifiers for a profound social guilt. She makes similar submissions in 'African Womanhood and the Trauma of Self-Assertion.' In recognising modern African literature as signifiers of profound social guilt, Darie opens a unique platform for a discussion on cultural re-orientation. By revealing that Adichie's characters rebel against the norms and defy interiorisation, she intimates the start of these characters' journey towards global citizenry, a component of Adichie's works that this study explores in detail.

In yet another journal, Ranjana argues that Adichie's short stories paint the picture of ordinary lives, names that are 'often forgotten because of their assumed insignificance in master narratives. Her short stories, Ranjana argues, offers a platform for recalling and remembering the rank and file of the society 'so that they would not be lost.' As the world

outside changes, Ranjana further contends, human lives do not remain unaffected, but what remains are the shared values (‘Many Stories’ 769). It is the recognition of the common familiarities which makes Adichie’s stories to transcend the boundaries of postcolonial discourse and usher in new ways of writing and reading texts. This essay acknowledges the transcultural dynamics in Adichie’s works and intimates the inadequacies of post-colonial theory in critiquing her works, especially in its recognition of cultural transcendence in her works. The discourse here, however, as opposed to what this study explores, is limited to Adichie’s short stories. Therefore, despite the fact that it offers useful fodder for this thesis, it does not tap into the useful resources that Adichie’s novels offer.

Dawson and Pierre argue for the effectiveness of linguistic hybridisation in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*. The objective of their study is to determine how attitudes to (varieties of) languages inform on social change. It rests on the assumptions that attitudes to languages used in a society is a part of the cultural knowledge constitutive of that society, and that changes in that cultural knowledge, therefore, should be reflected in judgement evolution across time. They have analysed two iconic novels of Nigerian literature separated by nearly half a century, by identifying exhaustively the representations of Ibo, Nigerian English and Standard English according to their uses, functions and judgements. Critical changes have been identified (Dawson and Pierre 931). The duality between coloniser and colonised is epitomised in *Things Fall Apart* by a strict division between Ibo and English and a castigation of those straddling the division. Yet, the novel remains Anglo-centric in making any instances of Ibo accessible to the English reader through typographical demarcation, translation, paraphrase and a glossary. *Purple Hibiscus* presents nuanced configurations of Ibo as well as Pidgin and Standard English as parts of the repertoire of African, and indeed White characters. It offers less compensation made for the non-Nigerian English speaker, as Ibo is not always typographically demarcated or made semantically

accessible. These scholars, like Akpome and Awa, invest their critical energies on the question of appropriation which is central to the debate about globalisation.

Dickson and Okoro, using Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Achebe's *There was a Country* for their evidence, demonstrate how fictionalisation of history can provide a useful platform for national reconciliation. Irrespective of how Nigerians from whatever tribe feel about the events of the 1960s, particularly the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War, the fact remains that the events have become a significant, albeit painful part of Nigeria's history that can never be wished away. Like Toni Morrison's *Beloved* which the author insists is 'not a story to pass on', yet is set down in writing, not to pass on the pain nor to instigate revenge but to interrogate history and make its pain tolerable and bearable, Adichie and Achebe, the two scholars argue, insist on a story that must be told so that a healing process which ostensibly began with the 'no victor no vanquished proclamation and the 3Rs programme (of the Gowon administration) which for about four decades on still crawls can be completed through a convocation of a national summit for reconciliation.' The success of the narratives, the two contend, lies in their non-judgmental tone which allows the reader to digest the painful memories without anger. They posit that Adichie achieves this through her multiple narrators - Ugwu, Olanna and Richard, 'who bring to bear on the story their diverse perspectives, while Achebe's story, though told from a personal perspective benefits from a multiplicity of sources so that the memory can allow for both criticism and the possibility of a national reconciliation' (Dickson and Okoro 88). References that are made to the Nigerian civil war form pertinent background information to this thesis. Since the scholars rely primarily on the illustrations drawn from *Half of a Yellow Sun*, they do not critique the interconnectedness of Adichie's novels, specifically how the horrors of civil war inform the plots of subsequent writings. The study attempts to seal these critical gaps by exploring Adichie's novels as sequels. As such, this

study acknowledges that they are built on a three-tier narrative structure representing triad of displacement, migration and transculturalism.

Eromosele looks at Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* as a novel about growth, and thus, a story of cultural maturation. According to her, the novel chronicles the transition from self-ignorance to self-discovery and self awareness. Most critical readings however, she says, focus on Kambili's discovery of her 'voice,' emphasising the psychological independence she achieves and de-emphasising the very vital part of her person that finds expression later in a sexual metamorphoses. The regime under her father had not only prevented her from speaking her mind but also from feeling her own body. As a teenage girl, this is perhaps the most heinous abuse the father could have doled out to her. Teenage years are particularly unforgettable for many people because they represent their transition from childhood to adulthood. The sexual hormones at this time work overtime, and it is the sole privilege of the teenager to feel the rush of these hormones and deal with them. 'Success or failure in this very fundamental issue goes a long way in determining the sexual and/or mental health of an individual later in life' (Eromosele 99). Eromosele's article, unlike this study, makes references to one novel and subsequently takes a look at the process of growth and maturation as national issue. This argument offers useful fodder for initiating a debate on cultural transcendence.

Etim and Ima attempt a deconstructionist reading of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. They insist that there are breaks in the internal logic of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* which allow Eugene, one of the central characters in the text, to be seen as 'an epitome of a hero; a principled protagonist who is murdered for being unwavering in his beliefs.' This reading is necessitated by the perceived tendency observed in current criticisms on the text to interpret Eugene's character based on authorial meaning (Etim and Ima 13). Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction, which forms the central theoretical framework for this study, maintains that

owing to the instability of meaning in human language, a text cannot have one possible interpretation, but rather is made up of several and often contradictory meanings. This is what this study reveals about the character of Eugene. Deconstructionism validates the necessity of this study as it recognises multiple interpretations in the reading of a text. Arguably, a critical 'aporia' has not been arrived at and there is need for further criticism of Adichie's works. Choosing deconstructionism validates the need for a decentred look at Adichie's works. It opens a window for further dialogue on the question of culture. Moving away from Bhabha's traditional 'hybridity' serves to demonstrate the validity of the argument that the window on criticism never closes. But most interestingly, this study uses a critically hybrid framework to evaluate Adichie's concerns in the three novels, especially in regard to the portraiture of African émigrés and steps they undertake to become global citizens.

Ganyi attempts a feminist reading of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*. To this writer, women are the 'real heroes but who are unwittingly thrown into frustrating marriages because they want to fulfil the laws of nature as dictated here by religion.' Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* is like Ramatoulaye in *So Long a Letter*; 'independent and assertive, with a clear knowledge of what they want even in distress.' Unlike Ramatoulaye's, Ifeoma's problem is not institutionalised religion but the government which is corrupt and vindictive of everyone, male or female who expresses his or her freedom loudly and criticizes the failures of the rulers. He argues that despite 'her husband's death, Ifeoma faces up to life' and 'struggles on the side of truth while her brand of Catholicism, unlike her brother's is realistic and forward looking.' These, in his view, 'are the real heroes' (Ganyi 9). Ganyi celebrates heroines in *Purple Hibiscus* and makes significant arguments about women empowerment. In fact, Adichie's investment in heroines is not unique to this novel; rather it is evident in other works as well. This study demonstrates that one of the

options that these female characters take is a strive towards the attainment of global citizenry and investigate the significance of these heroines in the furtherance of transculturalism.

Anyokwu puts a very strong case for the inevitability of what he calls 'osmotic interpenetration' in this era of globalisation. In the post-colonial text, therefore, 'English cannot remain pure neither can Igbo: an osmotic interpenetration must result in their interaction.' Thus, Anyokwu argues, 'the resulting product is a most veritable pointer to the currents of globalisation at work in contemporary culture and society. A good degree of verisimilitude is achieved in the novel as the writer tries with considerable success to capture the speech habits and linguistic patterns of most Igbo-English speakers' (Anyonkwu 89). Anyokwu's focus is primarily on linguistic dynamism. He portrays linguistic purity as a mirage, thus pointing to the inadequacies of languages globally. He recognises, from a linguistic point of view, the instability of linguistic frames and the fallacy of cultural purity. Anyokwu's article touches on language, which is an important cultural element and acknowledges the concept of linguistic impurity which is central to the whole debate about cultural hybridity and/ or fluidity. The debate inititated in Anyonkwu's article is, in this sense, useful in reinforcing the data in this thesis.

Ezinwanyi and Michael, using Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* for their illustrations, argue that Adichie uses the artistic platform to demonstrate the need for cultural reconciliation. They see Adichie's brilliant combination of irony, syntax, and suspense as formal manipulation of *Purple Hibiscus* intended to 'reflect the crises engendered by cultural imperialism and in several ways, scholars have been called on to seek the diffusion of such crises through a mid-course of accepting the positive values from both cultural orientations.' *Purple Hibiscus*, according to them, is also a call for the avoidance of religious fanaticism and extremism and this has become so 'germane to Nigeria buffeted by current religious crisis in Jos and the octopus-like bombings of Boko Haram' (Ezinwanyi and Michael 425). In their view, this

work therefore 'calls for restraint, tolerance, co-existence, and the spirit of togetherness for there to be peace and prosperity in Nigeria.' These scholars' submissions are buttressed by evidence that is drawn from *Purple Hibiscus*; the scholars make no reference to the other two novels that form the basis of this study. The need for cultural integration has been interiorised; it does not stretch beyond the national borders. This study stretches beyond national as well as cultural boundaries.

Amaka also undertakes a feminist reading of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and examines the use of code alternation in strengthening indigenous cultures and languages as explicated in a female writing. Amaka demonstrates how Adichie uses her writing as 'an avenue to disentangle the supremacy of English over the indigenous languages.' The code-alternations that are used for clarifications, Amaka opines, make the cultures and languages of the writer clearer to a wider audience. According to Amaka, code alternations for euphemism explain the use of a word or phrase that is less offensive, neutral or indirect to describe something that is offensive. Code alternations are, in Amaka's view, simply meant for amusement or humour while those for 'tone-softening are geared towards harmonising peoples' minds.' One can simply say that the aim of the inclusion of indigenous linguistic patterns in the novel is to enable it to 'carry the weight of its culture' (Amaka 255). This article shows how Adichie infuses English with indigenous languages to demonstrate the beauty of cultural integration. Like a number of essays that have been reviewed in this section, Amaka's references are limited to one novel. Besides, Amaka does not explicitly deal with the question of African émigrés and the question of global citizenry that form the integral components of this study, but she recognises cultural hybridisation as a significant step towards cultural globalisation in literary discourse.

Guarracino, drawing evidence from the blog posts in Adichie's *Americanah*, demonstrates the power of the social media in reshaping the traditional structure of literary compositions.

The interstices among these posts – and between the blog and the novel – highlight, in Guarracino's view, 'the criticalities regarding the question of authoriality and authorship in contemporary writing, postcolonial and otherwise.' This fiction, he says, reacts creatively to the intersections between traditionally published literature and the growing field of writing in the digital sphere. This field, according to him, is still mostly 'uncharted territory for literary criticism: works such as Adichie's prompt the critic to devise new tools for cultural analysis, tools able to account for the overlap between technology and new articulations of literary writing' (Guarracino 22). This article points to the need for a redesign of critical tools in the analysis of Adichie's works, something that this study attempts to carry out. It acknowledges that Adichie's works stretch beyond the already established literary traditions and thus the need for new theoretical lenses. It also points to cultural transcendence and this study digs deeper to unravel this. It particularly looks at defiance of traditional establishment as a useful step towards the attainment of global citizenship.

2.5 Review of Literature on Critical Hybridity

A number of scholars have invested their critical energies in the question of hybridity in the criticism of literary works. One of these intellectuals is Fanon. Fanon argues that the colonized have, over a long period of time, devoted their energy to eliminating iniquities. He adds that this fight for democracy against man's oppression gradually emerges from a universalist, neo-liberal confusion to arrive, sometimes laboriously, at a demand for nationhood, but the unpreparedness of the elite, the lack of practical ties between them and the masses, their apathy and their cowardice at the crucial moment in the struggle, are the cause of tragic trials and tribulations:

> Instead of being the coordinated crystallization of the people's innermost aspirations, instead of being the most tangible, immediate product of popular mobilization,

> national consciousness is nothing but a crude, empty, fragile shell. The cracks in it explain how easy it is for young independent countries to switch back from nation to ethnic group and from state to tribe - a regression which is so terribly detrimental and prejudicial to the development of the nation and national unity. As we shall see, such shortcomings and dangers derive historically from the incapacity of the national bourgeoisie in underdeveloped countries to rationalize popular praxis, in other words their incapacity to attribute it any reason. (Fanon 98)

It would appear that the unpreparedness is one of the reasons disillusioned citizens find it difficult to live in their traditional homes. Migration to other localities prompts them to redefine their cultural inclinations through a cultural dialogue. An utterance or a word is marked by what Bakhtin terms 'addressivity' and 'answerability' (it is always addressed *to someone* and anticipates, can generate, a *response*, anticipates an *answer*). Discourse (chains or strings of utterances) is thus fundamentally 'dialogic' and historically 'contingent' (positioned within, and inseparable from, a community, a history, a place): '[one] lives in a world of others' words' (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 143). 'Any understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is,' in Bakhtin's perspective, 'inherently responsive...' This, he further explains, means 'any utterance is a link in the chain of communication' *(Speech Genres* 68, 84). In *Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin notes that 'the word lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context' (284). These observations accentuate the fluidity and the complexity of cultures. In addition, they acknowledge that new cultural formations are products of dialogue – generated responses and/ or anticipated answers to utterances by others 'in the chain of communication.' This speaks of a continuity of culturally defined interaction that defies the existence of stable cultural benches.

Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture*, suggests that there is a 'Third Space of Enunciation' in which cultural systems are constructed. In this claim, he aimed to create a new language and mode of describing the identity of Selves and Others. Bhabha says:

> It becomes crucial to distinguish between the semblance and similitude of the symbols across diverse cultural experiences -- literature, art, music, ritual, life, death -- and the social specificity of each of these productions of meaning as they circulate as signs within specific contextual locations and social systems of value. The transnational dimension of cultural transformation -- migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation – makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The natural(ised), unifying discourse of nation, peoples, or authentic folk tradition, those embedded myths of cultures particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, though unsettling, advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition. (247)

Said suggests Orientalism 'has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience' (1-2). Using a theoretical framework influenced by Gramsci's notion of hegemonic culture and Foucault's notion of discourse, Said draws significant attention to the intricate and complex process by which the West must use the East to construct itself, its culture, its meaning. In an illuminating excerpt describing the process of Orientalism, he writes:

> To formulate the Orient, to give it shape, identity, definition with full recognition of its place in memory, its importance to imperial strategy, and its 'natural' role as an appendage to Europe; to dignify all the knowledge collected during colonial

> occupation with the title 'contribution to modern learning; when the natives had neither been consulted nor treated as anything except as pretexts for a text whose usefulness was not to the natives; to feel oneself as a European in command, almost at will, of Oriental history, time, and geography…to make out of every observable detail a generalisation and out of every generalization an immutable law about the Oriental nature, temperament, mentality, custom, or type; and, above all, to transmute living reality into the stuff of texts, to possess (or think one possesses) actuality mainly because nothing in the Orient seems to resist one's powers. (Said 86)

Hybridity, then, may be better understood, following Nakayama and Krizek's research on whiteness, as a strategic rhetoric. Whiteness, the two U.S.-based rhetorical scholars wrote, 'garners its representational power through its ability to be many things at once, to be universal and particular, to be a source of identity and difference' (Nakayama and Krizek 302). A similar fluidity and polyvalence imbue hybridity with persuasive power. A strategic rhetoric of hybridity frames hybridity as natural, commonplace, and desirable in intercultural relations, and therefore non-contentious. It is one aspect of globalisation that represents the whole as egalitarian exchange and positive change. In this respect hybridity is a metonym for globalisation.

Hybridity in a postcolonial world makes it difficult to determine the very definitions of culture by which nations define themselves. Given that nationalism is founded upon a collective consciousness from shared loyalty to a culture, one would assume this culture is well-defined. Yet the 'solid' roots of historical and cultural narratives that nations rely upon are diasporic, with mottled points of entry at various points in time. An investigation of the roots of cultural symbols like folk stories, religion, and music would reveal sources varied and wide-ranging. Furthermore, culture is defined in relationship to other cultures. The

above elements shall be employed in the operationalisation of the concept of critical hybridity in this study. As an emergent phenomenon that eludes easy classification, there needs to be further methodological experimentation and development in order effectively to integrate its historical, rhetorical, structural and textual dimensions in concrete research studies. Therefore, the critically hybrid framework employed in this study proffers steps toward the full integration of historical, rhetorical, and empirical aspects of hybridisation in international communication theory and research.

To this end, the term transcultural here is used in two ways: (a) as a mode of reflexive identity and cultural orientation—that is, in Mikhail N. Epstein's and Ellen Berry's terms, as 'the self-distancing, self-estrangement and self-criticism of one's own cultural identities and assumptions' (Epstein and Berry 307); and (b) as a critical perspective that sees cultures as relational webs and acknowledges the transitory, confluent, and mutually transforming nature of cultures, as theorised by Wolfgang, Epstein and others (Wolfgang 204).

2.6 Conclusion

Critical materials reviewed in this chapter reveal that displacement, migration and transculturalism have attracted some attention in both literary and non-literary scholarship. While it may be difficult to exhaustively delineate the fine details of the socio-cultural lineaments inherent in literary works, there is need for critics to conduct studies that constitute a more crystallising platform in the determination of the ideological intentions which are thinly disguised in the creative sensibility of literary artists, especially in regard to the socio-cultural circumstances that force characters to leave their traditional homes, the cross-cultural complexities encountered in new environments and the establishment of global citizenry. The literature reviewed in this section reveals that Adichie's works have been interrogated by several scholars; however, there is still need for academic investigation of

Adichie's works to determine how the issues raised above play out in her novels. In fact, the works cited in this review do not sufficiently deal with the matter in question. Even if they do, insufficient evidence from the selected novels has been adduced. Such lack of adequate evidential materials reduces most of the commentaries highlighted above to sweeping statements. There are very significant critical gaps that issue from the reviews above. It is the intent of the researcher to attempt to seal these gaps by subjecting the three novels, *Purple Hibiscus, Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*, to further investigation to justify the centrality of displacement, migration and transculturalism.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the research design, the study area, study population, sampling techniques and sample size, data collection methods, data analysis and presentation.

3.2 Research Design

This study employs analytical research design. The researcher relies on facts or pieces of information already available in the three literary texts sampled and critical materials from secondary data, and analyse them to make a critical evaluation of the materials. The researcher, in this regard, answers the questions why, how, when and by whom that are pertinent to the resolution of the research problem identified. It is a detailed study. Pieces of information collected from the data sources specified have been broken down into manageable components to show how they contribute to the three objectives of this study. Analytical research design is qualitative in nature and it addresses itself to the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour. This research, thus, is construed as a function of researcher's insights and impressions. This design depends on what Reason calls 'critical subjectivity.' He describes it as 'a quality of awareness in which we do not suppress our primary subjective experience; nor do we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed and swept along by it; rather we raise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process' (Reason 10). The aim of this choice is to gain familiarity and a deeper understanding of the literary portrait of displacement, migration and transculturalism in the three novels sampled for the study.

3.3 Study Area

This study focuses on the portrait of displacement, migration and transculturalism in the novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Of specific interest to this study are the social, cultural, political and economic circumstances that compel individuals (who are in this case fictionalised as characters in Adichie's novels) to move out of their traditional homes, how the displaced persons (characters in Adichie's novels) negotiate cross-cultural complexities in their new environments and how the émigrés (of Adichie's novels) establish transcultural citizenship. This study draws relevant literature from other literary-academic works to develop research outcomes that are grounded in extensive readership.

3.4 Study Population

The three novels written by Adichie constitute the study population for this research. These novels include *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*. These three literary works form the primary population sample for the proposed research on the literary portrait of displacement, migration and transculturalism.

3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

For the purpose of this study, purposive sampling has been identified as the most appropriate technique. Also regarded as non-probability or purposeful sampling, purposive sampling entails selection of certain units or cases 'based on a specific purpose rather than randomly' (Tashakkori and Teddlie 713). Based on the objectives of this study and the qualitative nature of this research, non-probability sampling is the most suitable sampling method. Palys, a research scholar, actually argues that it 'is virtually synonymous with qualitative research' (697). Ideally, a study of Adichie's works in their entirety provides a detailed view of her take on the issue identified for this investigation; however, consolidation of data gathered from all genres that Adichie has experimented with may be technically impracticable. Again, it is difficult to come up with an exhaustive discussion of all the literary materials and glaring

biases are likely to be noted in the overall outcome. It is on these bases, among other attendant arguments that are not indicated here, that the researcher is compelled to settle for a sample.

The stature that Adichie has earned as a literary writer and a critic has contributed to the interest that she has marshalled from critics. As it is observed in the introduction, she has distinguished herself as one of Africa's most celebrated writer. She is one of the few African writers that have won the coveted Oscar award for Literature. Undoubtedly, she is one of the most prolific African writers today. Adichie has published three novels, Americanah, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*; one dramatic fiction, *For the Love of Biafra*; four short stories, 'Ghosts,' which was initially published in *Zoetrope: All Story*, 'Checking Out' and 'Apollo,' which were published in *The New Yorker* and 'The Arrangements' in *The New York Times Book Review* in 2016; a twelve-short-story anthology, *The Thing Around Your Neck;* and an anthology of poems, *Decisions*. Three out of the ten literary works have been sampled for this study. This sample represents thirty percent of the total population of Adichie's oeuvre. The three novels were written against the backdrop of military protests staged by dissidents with a view to transforming the Nigerian society and socio-economic and political consequences of this turbulence. Adichie's novels, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah* represent the social malpractices of the decadent Nigerian society during this period as well as the effects of the same. Breakdown of law and order and disruption of peaceful co-existence must have concerned Adichie. Besides, these novels portray events set in the same fictional universe and one literary work develops an earlier one, usually chronologically following the events of that work. This provides a useful frame for the study in question. Additionally, the novel form allows Adichie all the freedom she wants to give a thorough treatment to her vision; it is bereft of the structural limitations of condensed forms

such as poetry and the short story. It is on this basis that the study has relied on the literary data in the three novels. Furthermore, dealing with a homogeneous sample presents minimal complications as opposed to heterogeneous samples that are complex.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

For the purpose of this research, and in order to achieve the objectives identified above, data have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. This study draws its secondary data from scholarly literature on Adichie's novels and critical materials on the conceptual framework adopted for this research. The secondary data contributes towards the formation of background information the reader needs to comprehend more precisely what this investigation seeks to achieve as its core outcomes. Correspondingly, such secondary materials will enable the researcher to reinforce the arguments advanced in the process of analysis. In the process, it is anticipated that sound and constructive arguments are realised. In fact, the design of the literature review, identification of the research problem and theoretical framework among other salient components of the thesis issue from these data.

Primary data have been drawn from Adichie's novels selected for this study: *Half of a Yellow Sun, Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah.* An intensive reading of the three novels has been conducted and attempts have been made to isolate pieces of information on characterisation and formal features that deem relevant for substantiating the thread of the argument in the study as well as the illustration of the sub-items designed to realise the final judgment or the conclusion. Be that as it may, the overall understanding of the plot of the three literary texts is the most fundamental component in this study. A preliminary study takes a comprehensive look at further literary points of reference – the novels themselves, *Purple Hibiscus, Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*. Secondary study focuses on journals and dissertations to find out what has already been covered on the topic. Most research has been done on the three novels, the scholarly journals, both physical texts and internet-accessed, textbooks and other

secondary materials that delve into the elements that form the main components of the study, the conceptual framework and methodological tools that are useful in the effective conduct of this study.

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

Textual data analysis has been employed in this study. This is a very personal process with few rigid rules and procedures. For this purpose, the researcher has gone through a process called content analysis (analysis of the contents of the primary and secondary materials read in order to identify the main ideas that emerge from such reading). Qualitative content analysis, in essence, elucidates unique overriding themes, rather than creating a statistical analysis of the incidence of specific words or concepts. 'Qualitative content analysis involves a process designed to condense raw data into categories or themes based on valid inference and interpretation' (Wildemuth & Zhang 2). According to Patton, a qualitative content analysis can be defined as 'any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings' (453). The researcher employs this method in its appropriated form and pieces of information gathered through the process are verbally presented as opposed to diagrammatic representations of frequencies that are common in quantitative research. This process involves a number of steps: (i) identification of the main ideas in three novels; (ii) assigning codes to the main ideas highlighted in the process of reading of the novels and annotation of the main ideas; (iii) classification of the ideas gathered in a systematic manner; and (iv) integration of the ideas to draw a holistic conclusion. It is at this stage of research that the theoretical framework chosen for the study is tested. The researcher has demonstrated how the raw data gathered from the aforementioned sources conform to the tenets of the conceptual framework for this study.

The contents of the literary analysis comprise four basic kinds of materials: (a) statements expressing the researcher's own ideas about displacement, migration and transculturalism; (b) data or evidence from the text in condensed, paraphrased, and quoted form; and (c) discussion of how the data support the researcher's interpretation and (d) condensed, paraphrased and/ or quoted forms of secondary data drawn from scholarly works of other writers that are relevant to this study. The quotations have been used in accordance with the researcher's purpose; to wit, to show how the citations reinforce the researcher's arguments on the representation of displacement, migration and transculturalism.

The qualitative content and textual analyses serve as bases for deciphering commonalities. According to Fico, Lacy, and Riffe, 'the researcher must decide whether the paragraph around the assertion, several paragraphs, or the entire article is the appropriate context unit' (72). This study involves a textual analysis of Adichie's novels and a qualitative content analysis of secondary data coverage of issues related to themes presented in the novel. Alan McKee describes textual analysis as a method by which a researcher analyses a text and 'makes an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text' (1). In this study, a textual analysis has been used to extract portions of Adichie's fiction and pinpoint several literary components of the said fiction that weave together to develop the thread of the arguments in the proposed study. Textual analysis hinges on the premise that a text can be fragmented (in this instance, into sub-texts), analyzed, and put back together in a fluid and digestible explication of that text itself. In doing so, researchers can evaluate a text's components to give an informed and well-rounded elucidation of the text's many intricacies and its meaning as a whole. In the instance of Adichie's novels, this study has compiled a pool of extracted sub-texts that have been interpreted through novelistic literary cues and context, and, more importantly, these literary sub-texts have been subjected to the tenets of the conceptual framework adopted for the study.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

This study has adhered to the ethical considerations that normally guide standard research procedures. This study has, for instance, relied on the ideas of a number of scholars in the development of the research proposal as well as in the collection, collation and verification of data. These ideas have been duly acknowledged in the in-text citations and in the final referencing (here captured as works cited).

CHAPTER FOUR

PHYSICAL AND TRANSCENDENTAL HOMELESSNESS: SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF DISPLACEMENT IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S NOVELS

4.1 Introduction

This study recognises that Adichie's novels have pictorial qualities and the socio-cultural dynamics of displacement are painted in them. Fanon's theory of 'wretchedness' and the effort to overcome a 'wretched' status, Said's 'Oriental fallacy' and 'imaginative geography,' Bhabha's 'Othering,' Bakhtin's dichotomy of superior and inferior discourse and Spivak's 'double displacement' are used to interrogate the data on displacement in this chapter. Displacement is an all-encompassing phenomenon and the contemporary society is facing up to this pervasion on an unprecedented scale, particularly in the fledgling democracies. In its most literal sense, it refers to the act of moving or being put out of the usual or original place. As such displacement may be perceived as voluntary or involuntary. It can take several forms depending on the contextual circumstances in which it happens: migration, desertion, exile, diaspora, exodus, travel, escape and imprisonment among others. In their exploration of socio-cultural dynamics of displacement, Adichie's novels subscribe to Ngugi's manifesto in *Writers in Politics*. Here Ngugi avers:

> Literature cannot escape from the class-power structures that shape our everyday life. Here a writer has no choice. Whether or not he [or she] is aware of it, his [or her] works reflect one or more aspects of the intense economic, political, cultural and ideological struggles in our society. What he [or she] can choose is one or the other side of the battle-field: the side of the people, or the side of those social forces and

> classes that try to keep people down. What he or she cannot do is to remain neutral. Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is what and whose politics? (x).

Adichie does not escape from the socio-cultural realities that define her society. The contextual circumstances displayed above are captured in her novels. These conditions share many traits. Displacement forces subjects to confront a sense of loss, alienation and disorientation. It may lead displaced persons to experiment a taste of newly gained power and freedom. In this scenario, the displaced subjects undergo a process of transformation and renewal that entails a re-fashioning of identity. As a metaphor, displacement can also describe a wide range of phenomena, from social mobility to imperialistic conquest, intellectual retreat, marginalisation and other forms of cultural peripheralisation. These are some of the potential metaphorical manifestations of displacement. Socio-economic and political factors compel a number of people to move out of their traditional homes. Literary works are mirrors of the society and dynamics of displacement have not escaped them. This section of the thesis stimulates a discursive dialogue about the nature and socio-economic dynamics of displacement. The theme of war and of its atrocities, in social dissolution, psychological trauma and the hardships of reconstruction, does not remain without echo in the twentieth century. The experiences of war, with their psychological scars, still haunt many generations of African writers and what is more deeply felt at a social level is not the direct effects of a conflagration (number of deaths, loss of property, political instability), but a sense of insecurity, a deeply felt psychological trauma which destabilises the entire structure on which the individuals caught in the conflict had constructed their identity. The impact of such a trauma is so powerful that it triggers nightmarish narratives years after the event, as the literature of the contemporary African writers proves. In reading Adichie's novels, this study acknowledges that 'beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics'; they have 'emerged out of the experience of colonisation and asserted

themselves by foregrounding the tension with imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre [and] it is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial' (Ashcroft *et al*. 2). The discursive practice of post-colonial theory and dialogism, as advanced in the conceptual framework of this study, forms the basis of the critical discourse in this chapter. This chapter specifically explores Adichie's novels, mainly *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, as imaginative platforms upon which the socio-cultural factors that compel characters to move out of their traditional locations are articulated.

4.2 The portrait of Alienation as a Non-Physical Construct of Displacement in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

When displacement is brought to the civil population, the group as a whole bears the consequences. There is also a context of specificity regarding the experiences of different categories. This is especially the case with regard to those who otherwise are the most vulnerable within a larger group. For instance, women experience consequences of displacement more cruelly than men. Women displacement-related experiences are specific due to factors including, but not limited to, dilapidated settlements, poor health facilities, lack of privacy and proper sanitation facilities, and constraints on their mobility. In the absence of men folk, they shoulder the burden of feeding the family and rearing children even when aid and assistance is measly or practically unavailable. The breakdown of social fabric and disintegration of families affect them adversely. They become, in some cases, victims of sexual exploitation which ranges from rape to physical harassment. Spivak regards women dislocation as falling within the purview of '*double* displacement' (90). The discussion in this chapter will draw heavily from Adichie's first two novels, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun.* The female characters in these two novels bear the heaviest brunt of dislocation.

The plot of *Purple Hibiscus* comprises an intricate web of flashbacks. Like the two others that follow, it moves backwards and forwards in time in what is idiosyncratically Adichie's narrative style, but there is clearly a chronological time sequence behind the asymmetrical structure of the novel. The protagonist of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is culturally dislocated. She rejects her father's notion that Western culture, which is symbolically represented by Christianity, is superior to Papa Nnukwu's. In her dalliance with Papa's uniquely African views of life and a consequent denial of Eugene's European preoccupation, she becomes a victim of cultural exclusivism. She realises that they 'may have, without knowing, planted [themselves] right in the field of [the white man's] grazing, and now [the white man's culture] has come and eaten [them] out of [their] roots' (Clark-Bekederemo 74). The cultural atmosphere in her father's house with its 'grave implications of an exclusiveness' tends to 'obscure for them the moral and spiritual risk in the process in which they are so clearly caught up, that of an active formation of an elite taking its intellectual and cultural bearing from the West and becoming disengaged as a result from its own cultural and human milieu' (Abiola xvi).

The use of Igbo, an indigenous Nigerian language, is regarded as a form of incivility so that when Eugene speaks 'entirely in Igbo,' Kambili considers it a 'bad sign.' Kambili has this to say of her father's disregard for use of Igbo: 'He hardly spoke Igbo and although Jaja and I spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak it in public. We had to sound civilised in public, he told us, we had to speak English. Papa's sister, Aunty Ifeoma, said once that Papa was too much of a colonised product' (HYS 13). Yet it seemed that Eugene's obsession with Western values came in the form of slavery, hence Aunty Ifeoma 'had said this about Papa in a mild forgiving way, as if it were not Papa's fault, as one would talk about a person who was shouting gibberish from a severe case of malaria' (HYS 13). This simile demonstrates that Oriental fallacy leads to mental ill-health of sorts; the victim is thus unable

to think clearly and coherently. Eugene's mental ill-health generates fear in Kambili and her father's house ceases to represent peace and comfort that a home offers, instead the presence of her father terrifies her.

Food is another aspect of the Igbo culture that features in Kambili's discovery of her socio-cultural identity. The food of her childhood has been very sweet and artificial. She is not allowed to cook even though it is part of the Igbo tradition for the women to cook. Thus, she has no control over what she eats and drinks. The treats such as biscuits and wafers and fruit juice have all been processed in her father's factories. She describes the interaction with her father alluding to the sweetness of sugar. Kambili feels 'as though [her] mouth was full of melting sugar' when her father takes her hand in his (PH 26). When she arrives in Nsukka, she is unable to perform the simplest of tasks such as peeling yam but she soon learns how to use the knife and prepare the traditional *orah* soup (PH 134). After she returns from Nsukka where she intimated with Igbo traditions and gains agency as an Igbo woman, she begins to abnegate the sweetness of the food of her childhood. Nsukka offers a sense of the ritualistic – rooted – quality of life in the village as opposed to the rootlessness of the life in the city. 'Melting sugar' metaphorically suggests the gradual weakening of her father's hold on her and by extension the loosening of her initial attachment to Western values. She refuses, in Nyong'o robust terms, to let the 'ghosts of an alien clan' crush her roots in her father's 'half-lighted book-cave' (12). Adichie, like Achebe, does not want 'to be excused from the task of re-education.' Achebe, in his essay 'The Novelist as a Teacher,' makes a sagacious observation in this regard:

> The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done. In fact he should march right in front ... I for one would not wish to be excused. I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past – with all its imperfections – was not

> one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them. (45).

Separated from her aunt, distanced from her grandfather Papa on account of this attachment's potential to ignite nostalgic cultural nationalism and estranged by her father; Kambili embraces the diasporic existence. She is a victim of what Spivak calls 'double displacement.' She feels detached from her cultural heritage, which is embodied in the image of Papa. In her non-physical escape from a tyrannical and intolerant father, she is culturally dislocated. She cannot literally go back to her aunt Ifeoma; therefore, she physically lives with her parents but mentally occupies what Anderson calls 'an imagined community' or what Said calls an 'imaginative geography and history,' which 'helps [her] mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatising the difference between what is close to it and what is far away' (Anderson 15; Orientalism 55). Nsukka, Adichie's centre of African folklore, offers Kambili a sense of cultural reawakening as she discovers how alien her father's life is. Kral argues that the 'kaleidoscopic quality of the world geography, its conditional elasticity, leave the contemporary subjective at a loss, on a shaky ground and struggling to find his or her bearings in a world where new territorialities have emerged at the crossroads between the actual and the virtual' (75). Kambili's dilemma is the struggle of a subject that is caught between two cultural territorialities. Kambili's dilemma, like Toundi in Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy*, is complicated by that her father's religion (Christianity) has taught her to feel pity for herself as an African. Christianity, it is evident, acts in tandem with imperialism as it reinforces the cause of the coloniser by freezing the cultural enthusiasm of the colonised so that the colonial powers are able to rule with minimal opposition. To do this, it persuades the Africans that they are religious and therefore cultural savages. It is, in the opinion of the coloniser, the coming of the white man that 'civilised' them. As such, they are compelled to feel that uncritical acceptance of the white man's culture is God's will for the universe.

Resisting this thinking alienates one from the white or Christian-civilised population. For Kambili whose father belongs to the said population, rejection of this creed only dislocates her and Nsukka, which gives her a feel of real life, one that is not sugar-coated like her father's, becomes her 'imagined geography.' The artificiality of her father's life pushes her away from the realities of her Igbo tradition, so that acquisition of simple hands-on skills like peeling of yams becomes difficult. Evidently, her father's alien lifestyle (a life that is shaped by stereotypes perpetuated by the mainstream Western culture) estranges her from her people. This is what she says:

> I did want to talk to Papa, to hear his voice, to tell him what I had eaten and what I had prayed for so that he would approve, so that he would smile so much his eyes would crinkle at the edges. And yet, I did not want to talk to him; I wanted to leave with Father Amadi, or with Aunty Ifeoma, and never come back. (*Purple Hibiscus* 268).

The above paradox does not only depict Kambili's mental displacement; it also shows Kambili's dilemma where she must choose between the symbolic imprisonment of her father's love and her new-found freedom. Kambili's dilemma is the sensation of feeling as though her identity is divided into several parts (seeking Papa's approval, rejecting Papa, leaving with Aunty Ifeoma and leaving with Father Amadi), making it difficult, almost impossible, for her to have a unified identity or cultural allegiance. This manifestation of displacement produces an alienation of vision and a crisis in the protagonist's self-image. To this end, *Purple Hibiscus* displays a sense of dislocation which is invoked through a perpetually detached cultural outlook which contests the absolute notions of belonging. Living in an environment where Igbo tradition is stigmatised as savage, she relentlessly oscillates between her aunt's house and her father's so that she is completely disengaged with cultural solidarity because she is unable to conceptualise any real place to call home. Her

father's blind worship of Western cultural values pushes her to what Said calls 'a double kind of possessive exclusivism ... the sense of being an exclusive insider by virtue of experience' (*Orientalism* 106). Though born and raised in her father's home, Kambili exhibits the affective experience of social marginalisation.

Constantly assuming an outsider perspective within her own father's house, Kambili encompasses the peripheral and fragmented vision of Otherness. She, her mother and brother have lived in a family that has repressed and devalued them that it has become difficult for her to reconcile her Igbo identity with her family's Western-oriented cultural inclinations. In the first instance, she appears to be turning down her true self. She is desperately yearning for a new life so that her thoughts are predominated by an emancipated psyche but she is afraid of perceiving herself from this unique individualised perspective. She is occasionally compelled to look at herself through the alien cultural eyes of her father. America presents itself, albeit vicariously, as the new location of her displaced mind. Said's arguments seem to suggest that displacement goes beyond the physical as he notes that it 'is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home' (Reflections 137). This could also be seen in postcolonial Nigeria where the former colony still craves validation from her colonial master but also wants a complete break from the past.

Papa symbolically represents the pure African cultural values yet Father Amadi also represents something that she desperately yearns for. The image of her father puts a wedge between her and her grandfather. She is looking forward to his approval because she regards him as a representation of her ideal values, yet the thought of her father's Puritanism inflicts fear in her. The protagonist feels 'a longing for something [she knows she] would never have' (PH 165). Her traditional location is territorially fixed because she cannot rebel against her father, yet she feels culturally out of place. Though she does not physically move away from her father's house at this stage, she feels mentally displaced. Kambili's new location, it

seems, is imaginatively constructed from the affective experience of detachment. Her internalisation of anti-West (anti-Eugene) sentiment from Nsukka (her aunt's world) begins to shape her new experience. The excesses of her father's demands prompt her to question the authenticity of Western values as espoused by Eugene. Her father, who ridiculously aims to escape his supposedly 'savage blackness,' associates her quest for a little privacy with religious profanities like masturbation (*Purple Hibiscus* 191). Kambili's 'valid and active self [is] eroded by *dislocation*, resulting from ... the experience of enslavement ... [It is] destroyed by *cultural denigration*, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 9). Eugene Achike bars Kambili and her brother Jaja from going to the shrine, which is traditionally regarded as the symbol of traditional Igbo religion. Besides, the two children are barred from eating in their grandfather's place. It would appear that Eugene has conspired with the West which, in particular, normalises and appropriates Africa (microcosmically represented by the Igbo society) by freezing it into some timeless zone of the primitively static past. He is a paragon of the extremes of cultural alienation in a postcolonial situation.

Seemingly, Adichie uses him to critique the social worth of a religion that threatens familial cohesion and isolates men from their social consciousness. His estranged cultural consciousness generates tensions in his house, yet he remains blind to the reality of his own predicament. His subservience to the West (here represented by Christianity, a religion that he blindly worships) has not only barbarised his perception of the Igbo traditional society, but it has also distorted his view of the past. Fanon makes a critical observation about the capacity of colonisation that illuminates the situation and thus, 'colonisation is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts,

disfigures and destroys it' (Fanon 170). Transcendental homelessness arises from this distortion, disfiguration and the consequent destruction of traditional values. The cultural hollowness of the protagonist's life is sharply captured in the dream motif at the end of the novel; the figure of Eugene still terrifies her – she wakes up 'screaming and sweating.' She longs for the father figure as a child and she deliberately preoccupies her mind with thoughts about Eugene, yet she still finds it difficult to reconcile with him and thus 'something jerks [her] up [whenever] he reaches out to hug [her].' Papa's cultural impositions had frustrated them yet she does not know whether she and Jaja 'will be able to say it all.' The substance of this dream is presented below:

> I have nightmares about the other kind, the silence of when Papa was alive. In my nightmares, it mixes with shame and grief and so many other things that I cannot name, and forms blue tongues of fire that rest above my head, like Pentecost, until I wake up screaming and sweating. I have not told Jaja that I offer Masses for Papa every Sunday, that I want to see him in my dreams, that I want it so much I sometimes make my own dreams, when I am neither asleep nor awake: I see Papa, he reaches out to hug me, I reach out, too, but our bodies never touch before something jerks me up and I realise that I cannot control even the dreams I have made. There is so much that is still silent between Jaja and me. Perhaps we will talk more with time, or perhaps we never will be able to say it all, to clothe things in words, things that have long been naked. (*Purple Hibiscus* 306)

Displacement is also orchestrated by an increase in domestic violence and, as a result, women confront gender-based violence perpetrated by misogynistic members of the family (men). 'The subaltern,' it is evident, 'cannot speak' and 'there is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as a pious item' and unfortunately, Adichie suggests that this 'representation has not withered away' (Spivak 104). For women, who are socialised to believe that they

have to show gratitude to monogamous men; it takes them too long to realise that '[w]hen a house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on your head' (*Purple Hibiscus* 213). It is Eugene's wife who bears the brunt of domestic violence and eventually decides to take refuge in her sister-in-law's (Aunty Ifeoma's) house. Defiance in Eugene's house, which microcosmically represents revolt against the ruling regime, only exists in the family members' figments of imagination and takes an experimental shape as analogically presented by the narrator:

> Jaja's defiance seemed to me now like Aunty Ifeoma's experimental purple hibiscus: rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the one the crowds the crowds waving green leaves chanted at Government Square after the coup. A freedom to be, to do. (*Purple Hibiscus* 16)

Eugene's wife and her ilk do not realise that women have been pushed to the outer fringes of society; they have been conditioned to think that marrying socially well placed men is a favour and they have to remain submissive to them even in the face of unthinkable adversity which is manifested in the ugliest faces of chauvinism. It is such self-imposed vulnerability that makes it difficult for them to chart new destinies. Eugene's wife wakes up to the realities of her society at a painful cost. She is physically violated by her husband and aborts. Against the doctor's advice to take a rest, she takes 'Eugene's money and [asks] Kevin to take [her] to the park,' hires a taxi and moves to her sister-in-law's place. Her obsession with marriage and social status blinds her to Eugene's violent tendencies. The outcome of this blind subservience is animalistic cruelty from a religious man she had conditioned her mind to trust absolutely. What she reveals to Ifeoma and her family members speaks of bestiality: 'You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, *nne*? Your father broke it on my belly.... My blood finished on that floor before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it' (*Purple Hibiscus* 248). Yet part of the blame falls fairly

and squarely on her. Women, it would appear from this incident, move out of their traditional localities on account of extreme chauvinism and domestic violence.

4.3 Depiction of a Hostile Intellectual and Political Climate in Adichie's Novels

Adichies *Purple Hibiscus* gives both explicit and implicit indicators of a hostile political climate at the onset. The coloniser-colonised dichotomy envisaged in Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth is manifest in this novel. The coloniser has left the African society, but the post-independence black leaders have taken their positions. *Purple Hibiscus* begins with the description of a Sunday service, fraught with messianic epithets. This political hostility makes it difficult for liberal-minded people to conduct their businesses in Nigeria. 'Big Men' have 'decided to sit at home and do nothing after the coup, to make sure the government [does not threaten their] businesses' (*Purple Hibiscus* 5). Eugene's paper, *Standard*, which speaks the truth has 'lost advertising.' After the arrest and torture of Ade Coker, the editor of *Standard*, Eugene, the proprietor of the paper resolves that they 'are going to publish underground' for it was 'no longer safe for [his] staff' (*Purple Hibiscus* 43). In a business environment where soldiers are always 'milling around,' it becomes dangerous for even small-scale traders to carry out their activities peacefully.

'The real danger' in a society like the one Adichie fictionalises in *Purple Hibiscus*, 'is from that fat, adolescent and delinquent millionaire from all those virulent, misshapen freaks sired on Africa by Europe' (*Anthills of the Savannah* 52). In the end, the offices of *Standard* are vandalised and Ade is shot 'to make sure he would never publish anything again' (*Purple Hibiscus* 147). There are dehumanising acts of violence in the market; market women are physically assaulted and their property blatantly vandalised. The shocking description of the grotesque scene at the market accurately displays the inhuman face of military officers: 'The whip ... landed on the woman's shoulder. Another soldier was kicking down trays of fruits, squashing papayas with his boots and laughing' (*Purple Hibiscus* 44). These acts of bestiality

pervade the text. The new occupants of administrative offices have adopted the strategies of the former coloniser. They unleash terror on rank and file of the society to cement their hold on power.

Professionals are forced to leave the country because of unfavourable working conditions, exacerbated by poor remuneration. America presents itself as a respite for disgruntled African scholars. University lecturers are forced to call off 'yet another strike' because the Federal Government claims it 'has no money' and lecturers have not been 'paid their dues for the last two months.' Aunty Ifeoma humorously narrates and thus, '*Ifukwa*, people are leaving the country. Philipa left two months ago ... She is now teaching in America. She shares a cramped office with another adjunct professor, but she says at least teachers are paid there' (*Purple Hibiscus* 76). This paints a worrying trend of brain drain. Though Ifeoma puts on a brave face in the face of imminent adversity, the ruling regime's disregard for plight of academicians cannot be gainsaid. It would appear that academic merit does not really pay in a morally depraved society. There are, instead, quick rewards for the corrupt. Consequently, the academicians live in pathetic state. Ifeoma, a university don, cannot afford to refill her gas cylinder; she has to use her 'old kerosene stove' (*Purple Hibiscus* 76). Ironically, in this face of this indignity, the words inscribed on the pedestal at the university's gate are 'To restore the dignity of man.' This, ridiculously as it appears, is the university's motto (*Purple Hibiscus* 112). Universities, the highest institutions of learning, it seems, are founded on pretence and half-truths. The conditions that university lecturers are subjected to speak of nothing but indignity and inhumanity. It is the rhetorical question that the young thoughtful boy Obiora incisively poses that demonstrates the ingrained nature of the country's political malaise: 'But when did man lose his dignity?' (*Purple Hibiscus* 132). This characterisation presents what one would consider a serious textual flaw, particularly because this social commentary sounds too shrewd to be conceived of by a young mind. Yet it is undeniably true

that the best path towards the restoration of man's dignity should be one that endeavours to determine when man actually lost it. This resonates very well with Achebe's opening remarks in his autobiographical work, *There Was a Country*, which is an attempt at establishing the beginning of loss: 'The rain that beat Africa began four to five hundred years ago ...' (1). On account of military tyranny, the country's public resources are misappropriated. 'If some Big Man in Abuja has stolen the money, is the V.C. supposed to vomit money for Nsukka?'At fourteen, Obiora cuts the figure of a very perceptive citizen, one who understands just too well what bedevils his country. Indeed it is difficult to understand why a country like Nigeria which is ranked as the third largest producer of oil would be hard hit by fuel shortage. Humorous and satiric as it sounds, 'sucking fuel is a skill you need' to survive in this economically turbulent African state (*Purple Hibiscus* 150). In such a despicable environment of rudderless leadership, one that considers leadership as an opportunity for plunder; one would seriously be compelled to consider moving out in search of a reasonably sensitive political environment. The decision made by academicians is therefore not surprising; it seems like the most logical thing to do in an environment that is intellectually unrewarding. A different environment, in this case America, is the only hope for intellectuals whose dedication to work cannot be recognised at home. Here again, it is the young boy Obiora who voices the unarticulated thoughts of his mother; he says his mother 'will have her work recognised in America, without any nonsense politics' (*Purple Hibiscus* 224).

Academic institutions in Africa are not free from political machinations of the ruling class. They are, in the young boy's words, a 'microcosm of the country.' America might not be the heaven that disillusioned African scholars aspire to live in, but it offers a glimmer of hope. 'At least people get paid when they are supposed to' and Ifeoma stands a better chance of accomplishing her desire to become a senior lecturer. At home, 'they have been sitting on her file' for far too long. Yet the effects of inflation are bitingly painful. Nothing captivatingly

captures the direness of the situation more succinctly than the humorous comparison that Ifeoma makes about her inability to afford basic commodities like milk and thus, 'I just can't afford milk anymore. You should see how the prices of dried milk rise every day, as if somebody is chasing them' (*Purple Hibiscus* 233).

The above-mentioned simile, hyperbolic as it would appear, accentuates the frustrations of the country's academics. In fact, to borrow Pollard's words; 'many a truth is spoken in jest' (44). To afford a decent meal of chicken, she must hope for the lopsided thinking of her bird-brained student who has resolved to get married and probably have a child because 'nobody [knows] when the university would re-open.' The chicken is dramatically killed and 'put in the freezer before it loses weight, since there's nothing to feed it' (*Purple Hibiscus* 234). Interestingly, the frequent power outages cannot allow for this, so the whole chicken has to be eaten. The vultures have lost their prestige, as Papa-Nnukwu would say, but not because people no longer like them; sadly they have been supplanted with human vultures. The elevation of folkloristic wisdom is not in vain here; the greed and avarice that characterise the ruling elite has pushed the plebs to the economic periphery, the outermost fringes of the country's economy. In the peripheral spaces that they occupy, they feed on the remnants of the country's economy like the vultures. This animal imagery presents an unadorned and starkly disturbing picture of life in a materially craving Nigerian society. What Achebe sarcastically describes as 'an insistence by the oppressed that his oppression be performed in style' is no longer tenable in morally depraved societies (*Anthills of the Savannah* 139).

The dream motif employed in the novel demonstrates the collective disillusioned psyche of the Nigerian citizens. In her dreams, the narrator projects that her aunt's condition would only worsen so that her only option would be to leave the country. Thus the 'sole administrator [pours] hot water on Aunty Ifeoma's feet [who in turn jumps] out of the bathtub and, in the manner of dreams, jumped into America' (*Purple Hibiscus* 230). The hot bathtub

metaphorically represents the unbearable working conditions, which are punctuated by harsh economic and political climate, in the post-independence state. Adichie seems to be conscious of the attendant accusations that her critics would level against what would appear to be a propagation of a defeatist attitude. Using the young voice of Amaka, she raises this very debate: 'Why do we run away from our own country? Why can't we fix it?' Technically, running away is not the answer, but it also the only practical answer.

The paradox embedded in Amaka's questions highlights the dilemma of post-independence African citizens; they understand just too well that they have a crucial role to play in nation building yet they also understand that part of the solution to the problems bedevilling the continent lies in abdicating from their responsibilities. To push the political elite to recognise their efforts in social transformation, they have to create a gap. One has to go against the grain and spearhead this revolt. Obiora's answer, cowardly and escapist as it seems, is the only practicable one: 'It's not running away, it's being realistic. By the time we get into university, the good professors will be fed up with all this nonsense and they will go abroad' (*Purple Hibiscus* 232). The government, just like the mute professors, urgently requires a forceful push or so it seems. The so-called loyal academic staffs derive their pleasure from frustrating their disloyal colleagues. Loyalty earns one, ironic as it appears, a special place in the power theatrics of the university administrators. This illusion blinds them to the frailties of the administrators. To compel them to discern the evils of the administration, it seems logical to get the disloyal faces out of the picture. To stave off 'obsequious foolishness,' to put it in Achebe's robust terms; the loyal members of staff must be made to feel some sense of disaffection. In so doing, they would be forced to leave the country and consequently compel the administrators to appreciate the value of the university's academic staff.

Universities are at the mercy of external political machinations; there is 'a sole administrator' imposed on the council by the powers that be. Taban decries this political infiltration when he

postulates that ‘our intellectual leadership has been left to the politicians’ (4). This political culture of micro-management of academic institutions resonates well with Fanon’s projection that ‘after independence, this underdeveloped bourgeoisie, reduced in number, lacking capital and rejecting the road to revolution, stagnates miserably. It cannot give free expression to its genius that was in the past hampered by colonial domination, or so it claims’ (99). The hope that the intellectual space would open up upon the full realisation of self-rule has turned into a mere illusion. The governing council of the university does not control the affairs of the institution. The government has stripped it of its responsibility to vote in a new vice chancellor. Lecturers who speak the truth about the ills of the university administration are considered disloyal and earmarked for dismissal. The sole administrator uses threats to cement his hold on power. Most university lecturers are afraid of speaking against the administration because they would want to secure their jobs; they have traded their minds for employment. They have sold their souls. Ironically, they believe they are doing so in the best interest of their families so that staving off this intellectual disaster becomes a herculean task: ‘Ifeoma, do you think you are the only one who knows the truth? Do you think we do not all know the truth, eh? But *gwakenem*, will the truth feed your children? Will the truth pay school fees and buy their clothes?’ (*Purple Hibiscus* 223)

It would appear that ‘too many are only too willing to compromise and keep their political thoughts well hidden, even sometimes, one suspects, from themselves (Enahoro 239). In a morally depraved society like the one fictionalised in the novel, telling the truth is a revolutionary act and therefore a rare feat that calls for men and women of rare mettle. As a mother of two, Ifeoma understands just too well how the survival of her children matters; however, she seems to think that revolt should not be based on physical survival alone, but also the survival of spiritual values such as humanity, integrity, justice, and the need to preserve one’s mental wholeness. She discerns the need for a holistic survival of the society

and to bend the social values upon which a community is built is injurious to its very fabric, the glue that gels it. She refuses to succumb to terror, injustice and loneliness. There is no opportunity for voicing concerns as 'soldiers are appointed lecturers and students attend lectures with guns to their heads' (*Purple Hibiscus* 223). What infuriates Ifeoma is not the admission by her colleague that political resistance can only breed further frustrations; on the contrary, it is the palpable display of vulnerability by the country's top intellectuals, their confession that protesting against the social ills of university administration would be too tall an order, that invites her fury. The narrator reveals that 'she was angry at something that was bigger than the woman before her' (*Purple Hibiscus* 223). The woman is therefore a cog in the wheel, one woman in the corpus of African scholars whose 'men have died.' Perhaps one might argue that this is the main reason she decides to leave the country.

It would appear that Adichie, like Soyinka and Imbuga, suggests that when a society represses its citizens, it can no longer be regarded as home. The title of the volume speaks about the death of a Nigerian journalist, beaten to death for an alleged attack on Gowon. His death acquires a metaphorical quality in Soyinka's memoirs, the silence of conscience's death, the silence of the human soul when confronted with pure evil and not daring to challenge it. Imbuga, like Soyinka, makes a critical observation about the post-independence Africa, which he anagrammatically calls 'Kafira.' He succinctly notes: '[In Kafira], it doesn't pay to have a hot mouth. ... and silence is the best ship home...' (Imbuga 24). Socio-political inaction had become a survival tactic in oppressive societies in Africa and 'when a man plays with [political] fire, he gets burned [and serves] as an example to others that may have hot mouths like him' (Imbuga 63). Those who challenge the existing regime are regarded as psychotic and 'madness' is a common motif in Imbuga's oeuvre. In his play, *Betrayal in the City*, it is Jusper who plays the mad man's role. This madness motif falls neatly into the thematic pattern of Soyinka's writings as well. Soyinka avers that 'madness is

when society maintains silence, when all of them — wound their voices around our [silenced] innermost guts and made each man partake of the brotherhood sacrament of blood and guilt and pain' (*Season of Anomy* 11). Soyinka himself was forced to contend with the bestiality that defines post-independence African nations and in his own admission what saved him from insanity as his incarceration, as he himself declares, was his camaraderie with the other prisoners, and this shared experience kept their humanity alive. From his prison notes emerges an obsessive need to find a meaning to all this — attendant human suffering of war, because, as Soyinka shares with his readers, — '[the war] must… be made to fragment more than buildings: it must shatter the foundations of thought and re-create' (*The Man Died*, 182). An organism caught in an anomic universe, in which the only certitude is death, must de-construct itself, in order to die or to be re-constructed, even if it will forever bear the scars of that tragedy. But *The Man Died* moves beyond being an artistic plea to humanism and compassion. It became and still is, like Adichie's novels, the dais from which he took daring stands, making known his opinion about the futility of such a war, the great risks that his country was about to take on unsubstantiated grounds. A close reading of *Purple Hibiscus* demonstrates Adichie's artistic affinity to the socio-political tragedy presented in Soyinka's works.

The existence of a corrupt system of government makes it difficult for citizens to access basic necessities like education. Besides, political instability seems to be the order of the day as coups beget coups. The bloody coups in the sixties usher in civil war. In an unstable and corrupt political system, Nigerians are compelled to leave their homes in search of a stable political climate where education is uninterrupted. Kambili's father, Eugene, had to leave 'Nigeria to study in England' because a 'coup always began a vicious cycle' (*Purple Hibiscus* 24). Military leadership is unpredictable; military men would always want to overthrow one another because they are all power drunk. The unbridled greed and avarice that characterises

those in power gives very little room for proper management of the education sector. Cabinet ministers stash 'money in foreign accounts, money meant for paying teachers' salaries' (*Purple Hibiscus* 24). Private schools within the country are literally out of reach for poor and average families. Most youngsters 'don't go to school anymore because their families can't afford it' (*Purple Hibiscus* 179). Fanon's arguments distil the objectives of postcolonial leaders in African countries and the *locus classicus* of his vivid description of post-coloniality is contained in his famous book *The Wretched of the Earth*:

> In an underdeveloped country, the imperative duty of an authentic national bourgeoisie is to betray the vocation to which it is destined, to learn from the people, and make available to them the intellectual and technical capital it culled from its time in colonial universities. We will see, unfortunately, that the national bourgeoisie often turns away from this heroic and positive path, which is both productive and just, and unabashedly opts for the antinational, and therefore abhorrent, path of a conventional bourgeoisie, a bourgeois bourgeoisie that is dismally, inanely, and cynically bourgeois. ... After independence, this underdeveloped bourgeoisie, reduced in number, lacking capital and rejecting the road to revolution, stagnates miserably. It cannot give free expression to its genius that was in the past hampered by colonial domination, or so it claims. (99)

Fanon's averment offers an incisive appraisal of the contemporary political class. The new vision of the political elite in contemporary African societies is to amass wealth by every means possible. Political leadership is predicated on material gains. In the furtherance of this cause, they deliberately deny their citizens opportunities to gain access to quality education. They regard intellectualism as a threat to the existing social order. They predate upon the ignorant masses and exposure to quality education is bound to ignite a social revolt. Parents flee from their homes because they fear their children would become what they cannot

recognise. The story of Prof. Okafor's son reinforces Ifeoma's misgivings about Nsukka and Nigeria in its entirety. Perhaps, she too, like Chiaku implicitly impresses upon us, is afraid to deal with the social cancer. Prof. Okafor's son steals his father's examination papers and sells them to his father's students. Part of this indicting story is presented below:

> Now that the university is closed, the students came to the house, to harass the boy for the money. Of course he had spent it. Okafor beat his son's front tooth out yesterday. Yet this is the same Okafor who will not speak out about what is going wrong in this university, who will do anything to win favour with the Big Men in Abuja. He is the one who makes the list of lecturers who are disloyal. I hear he included my name and yours. (*Purple Hibiscus* 243)

The rot in the country's educational system is a reflection of the decay in nation's top echelons of power. It is ridiculous for parents to expect their children to exude moral values yet they cannot resist the heavy tide of immoral filth in the national leadership. 'The man dies in all of us who keep silent in the face of tyranny' and this ill fate spreads to the younger generation (*The Man Died* 13). As a result, they bear a more devastating brunt of misrule. The professor's misguided energy is a subject of public ridicule; his pretentiousness does not elude the novelist's mockery. Instead of healing the cancer, he is fruitlessly treating cancerous sores that 'will keep coming back.' The commentary posed by Ifeoma's friend epitomises a biting wit: 'What I am saying is Okafor should not be surprised and should not waste his energy breaking a stick on his poor boy's body. It is what happens when you sit back and do nothing about tyranny. Your child becomes what you cannot recognise' (PH 244). Evidently, Adichie, as Soyinka's student, draws from his cup of wisdom in *The Man Died*. She is developing a pivotal character in her story yet she does not blind the reader to her faults. She, in the spirit of her warning against the danger of a single story (her characteristic rallying call for pluralism), provokes the reader to critique the modern Nigerian

intellectuals. The professor in question does not approve of dissidence in the university and has, in spite of the high academic pedestal upon which he stands, turned himself into a political stooge. He only acts at the behest of the university management, which is an appendage of the ruling dictatorial government. Ironically, his son's conduct surprises him. He, at best, represents the hypocrisy of the ruling regimes in post-independence African states. The autocrats have a firm grip on political power and 'continue to reign because the weak cannot resist' (*Purple Hibiscus* 245).

The future of the continent is evidently bleak; the African continent has been condemned to a vicious cycle of authoritarianism. Unfortunately and cynically so, the young members of the African societies have resigned to this fate. This is what Amaka, Obiora's pale shadow, finds frustrating. In her view, her mother's decision to leave the country paints a pessimistic picture of Nigeria's future; 'the educated ones leave, the ones with the potential to right the wrongs. They leave the weak behind.... Who will break that cycle [of tyranny]?' Ifeoma's decision to leave the country is largely, in her view, escapist. Yet there is a sense in this escapist move. A society that disregards intellectual input cannot sustain meaningful intellectual growth. Ifeoma is ideally intellectually displaced. Her social vision does not resonate with those of her colleagues like Prof. Okafor and his ilk, who have sold their conscience to the highest bidder (the Nigerian leadership). The objectionable conduct of the professor and other like-minded academics illuminates the vicious cycle of darkness which has gripped the neo-colonial African states. It evokes the image of disenchantment; the intellectuals, who should be the most steadfast shepherds of morality, do not have the commitment to spearhead the moral edict, thereby holding the nation at ransom and allowing for the propagation of political mediocrity. Perhaps nothing captures the reality of post-independence disillusionment than Achebe's autobiography, *There was a Country*:

> We, the intellectuals, were deeply disillusioned by the ineptitude of Nigeria's ruling elite and by what we saw taking place in our young nation. As far as their relationship with the masses was concerned, Nigerian politicians, we felt, had slowly transformed themselves into the personification of Anwu – the wasp – a notorious predator from the insect kingdom. Wasps, African children learn during story time, greet unsuspecting prey with a painful, paralyzing sting, then lay eggs on their body, which then proceed to 'eat the victim alive.' (108)

Achebe's observation here is a damning indictment of his society. As suggested in the title of his autobiographical, Nigeria had ceased to exist, so that *there was a country* and not a nation. In an environment that stifles intellectual growth, the future of the youngsters is diametrically bleak. Ifeoma, therefore, fears that her children will be consumed by the moral decadence that defines Nigeria's top leadership and she perceives a new location, in this case America, as a safe haven for her children's moral growth. Nsukka represents her idyllic cultural desires but it also marginalises her. She feels proud of participating in the enlightenment of her fellow Nigerians and strives to prosper from her intellectual sweat yet the future that she envisions seems so far away that she considers herself intellectually displaced. Her thought patterns do not resonate well with those of her colleagues. Adichie, in exploring this dimension of displacement, subscribes to Geog Lukacs' submission in *Theory of the Novel* where he argues 'with compelling force that that the novel, a literary form created out of the unreality of ambition and fantasy, is the form of 'transcendental homelessness' (qtd. in *Reflections* 144). Thus Ifeoma, though living in Nigeria and working in a local university, is transcendentally homeless. For Cabral, 'culture is the vigorous manifestation on the ideological or idealist plane of the physical and historical reality of the society that is dominated or to be dominated' (65).

The same state of political chaos pervades *Half of a Yellow Sun* and the horrifying details of death circumvent a country bleeding innocent blood in pointless crimes and hunting scenes. Unlike *Purple Hibiscus* where there is a general feeling of civil inaction, the Nigerian citizens portrayed in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are socially conscious of the upheavals of the ruling regime. The second novel is dominated by Nigerian intellectuals who are not willing to play second fiddle to the country's leadership. The characters feel they have a lot to play insofar as the political affairs of the country are concerned. The question that Odenigbo, one of Adichie's main characters, poses to his new house servant summarises the philosophy that pervades the novel: 'You are my houseboy. If I order you to go outside and beat a woman walking on the street with a stick, and you give her a bloody wound on her leg, who is responsible for the wound, you or me?' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 7). Though Ugwu does not respond to this question, the context of the debate makes the anticipated answer crystal clear. His attitude is different from the Nsukka university intellectuals who believe that their destiny and the destiny of their children are in the hands of the political leaders. He and other characters in the novel consider education as a critical tool for social revolution. Again, it is the question that the inquisitive Odenigbo poses to Ugwu that accentuates the significance of education: 'Education is priority! How can we resist exploitation if we don't have the tools to understand exploitation?' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 8). It is, in this sense, a continuation of the socio-cultural narrative in *Purple Hibiscus*.

Olanna, like Kambili, feels culturally displaced in her father's house. Her parents' preoccupation with material gain does not seem to excite her. When Chief Okonji, the finance minister, visits the family; her mother's seemingly overly hearty guffaw over this visit irritates her. Olanna is asked to attend the dinner meeting 'because of the building contract her father wanted.' She is instructed to put on 'something nice' because her materialistic sister Kainene 'will be dressing up too.' She appears pigeon-holed in a cultural environment

that is at variance with her social ideals and for a mother who imagines that 'mentioning her twin sister somehow legitimised everything' makes the situation even worse. She is compelled to think of the post-independence Nigeria, to put in Said's words, 'as spiritually orphaned and alienated' and as such, 'the age of anxiety and estrangement' (Reflections 137). Olanna is subjected to undue family pressures and constraints but in the face of her parents' material pursuits, she projects the self-consciousness of an individual who is committed to transcend familial and provincial cultural limits. It is not surprising, therefore, that she considers 'acknowledging the humanity of the people who served them a simple thing to do' in spite of her father's suggestion that 'he paid [his servants] good salaries' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 30). Olanna does not believe that material remuneration should be used as an excuse for disregarding the dignity of humanity. Servants and other low cadre employees deserve to be treated humanely. As opposed to her mother who says 'thanking them would give them room to be insulting,' she (Olanna) genuinely expresses her gratitude to Maxwell (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 30).

Olanna, it appears, still regards spiritual values highly and her parents' acquisitive physical appetites do not agree with her testament. She reveals 'there was something wet about Chief Okonji's smile,' a metaphoric and therefore euphemistic description of his sexual lust. In fact, the narrator notes that 'the movement of his lips made saliva fill his mouth and threaten to trickle down his chin,' suggesting an overwhelming and uncontrollable desire for physical satisfaction. As opposed to her mother who regards a favour from a senior government official as a privilege, Olanna finds it insulting as it demeaning. It is little wonder therefore that she loses her appetite (the avocado that she usually liked was bland now, almost nauseating) – a symbolically unspoken statement of disgust – and announces she has 'decided to go to Nsukka' and that she will 'be leaving in two weeks' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 31). By placing her spoon down, she makes an explicit riot act and puts an end to speculations about

the possibility of her future dalliance with materialistic men. She believes that the offer at Nsukka University is an opportunity for a great departure from her parents' social climbing mentality. She evidently prefers a decent and honest living as opposed to the quick financial fixes that come as a result of 'spreading legs for elephants.' Unfortunately for Olanna's father, Nigerian maleness is equivalent to material greed: Kainene's 'excellent eye for business' earns her the cumulative strength of two sons. For Olanna, however, her father's conduct compels her to move out of the house. Her parents' calculated move that is aimed at giving Chief Okonji an opportunity to make his predatory advances at her does not bear any fruit. During the after-dinner ritual (moving to the balcony for liqueurs), it is her recollection of Odenigbo's first visit in Lagos that triggers her nostalgic cultural nationalism. She recalls that Odenigbo had, in his usual penchant for revolt, repudiated her father for belittling Nsukka University. Her 'father said that the idea of Nsukka University was silly, that Nigeria was not ready for an indigenous university, and that receiving support from an American university – rather than a proper university in Britain – was plain daft' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 32). Odenigbo had raised his voice in response to this blatant propagation of 'Oriental fallacy.'

Arguing that Nsukka is free of colonial influence, Odenigbo rejects, in Fanon's terms, 'the perverted logic' of colonisation. He had characteristically raised his voice higher and higher in spite of Olanna's persistent signals to have him stop. After Chief Okonji's futile attempt to initiate a false sense of intimacy, she experiences a form of detachment when she returns to her room. 'Her room felt alien' and it appears that the chief's sexually exploitative tendencies rekindles her memory of 'men who walked around in a cloud of cologne-drenched entitlement with the presumption that, because they were powerful and found her beautiful, they belonged together' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 33). She gains a renewed sense of agitation and develops a feeling of 'transcendental homelessness.' Her confrontation with Chief Okonji

makes her even more conscious of the artificiality of her room – 'the warm wood tones, the tan furniture, the wall-to-wall burgundy carpeting that cushioned her feet, the reams of space that made Kainene call their rooms *flats*' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 33-34). The chief's behaviour renews her resolve to leave Lagos. She says: 'I don't want to work in Lagos. I want to work in the university and I want to live with him' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 35). Besides, she realises 'just how distant [she and Kainene] had become.' Staring at the door, which is metaphorically suggestive of her desire to leave, the narrator, in a flashback, offers adequate background information to demonstrate that she had always felt transcendentally excluded:

> She was used to her mother's disapproval; it had coloured most her major decisions, after all: when she chose two week's suspension rather than apologise to her Heathgrove form mistress for insisting that the lessons on Pax Britannica were contradictory; when she joined the Students' Movement for Independence at Ibadan; when she refused to marry Igwe Okagbue's son, and later, Chief Okaro's son. (35)

Kano offers Olanna a respite from the chocking cultural atmosphere in her father's residence. Again, to delink herself from her father's easy materialistic lifestyle, she chooses 'not to fly up to Kano.' She cannot hide her admiration of Uncle Mbaezi's 'earthiness' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 38). Earthiness here speaks of an ordinary life, natural and bereft of artificiality. It is Uncle Mbaei who introduces her to the politics of Nigeria: the organisation, protests and discussions of the Igbo Union, and the discriminative policies of northern schools. The natural environment in Kano thrills her: the narrow market paths, small boys carrying loads on their heads, women haggling, traders shouting and Aunty Ifeka sitting by her kiosk. She, like Kambili Achike, finds a semblance of home at her aunt's place. Though not well educated, Aunty Ifeka exudes the 'earthiness' of Aunty Ifeoma. She is facing similar economic challenges. That Odenigbo's basic university house, with its sturdy rooms and plain furniture and uncarpeted floors' fascinates does not come as a surprise. Interestingly, it

is not ‘Mohammed’s red sports car, parked in front of the sprawling yard’ that strikes her; ‘what held Olanna’s attention was the house: the graceful simplicity of its flat roof’ (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 44). The oxymoronic expression ‘graceful simplicity’ demonstrates her admiration and natural preference for ordinary, unsophisticated lifestyle. Her simple life endears Olanna to her:

> Olanna examined the plain face and wished, for a brief guilty moment, that Aunty Ifeka were her mother, anyway, since it was Aunty Ifeka’s breasts that she and Kainene had sucked when their mother’s breasts dried up soon after they were born. Kainene used to say their mother’s breasts did not dry up at all, that their mother had given them to a nursing aunt only to save her own breasts from drooping. (39)

The ‘artificiality of her parents’ relationship always [seems] harder, more shaming, when she [is] here in Kano’ (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 43). ‘[Olanna] had always been separated from [her parents] by hallways that got longer and more thickly carpeted as they moved from house to house.’ Their relocation to the current residence does not make things any better for her ‘with its ten rooms’ and her parents choosing ‘different rooms for the first time.’ In fact, she confesses that she had never ‘heard her parents making love, never even seen any indication that they did.’ The distance, which symbolically represents lack of intimate attachment, is a far cry from her aunt’s small house, which seems natural. She imagines what growing up had been for her cousins ‘seeing their parents through the curtain, hearing the sounds that might suggest an eerie pain to a child as their father’s hips moved and their mother’s arms clutched him.’

Adichie’s protagonist invents, in Said’s postulation, ‘an imaginative geography’ to give her mind a temporal home away from her father’s unnatural lifestyle. Aunt Ifeka’s house, Olanna’s new temporary location, re-ignites a yearning for lost origins. This gives rise so

profoundly to a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating the incessant desire to return to childhood, to be one again with Aunty Ifeka (the imaginary image of the mother she desires), to go back to the beginning of her life and start anew. The surge of an overwhelming nostalgia for lost origins is imminent. The sight of children playing the schoolyard and in the yard near the Ifeka's house thrills her. She is captivated and engrossed with the children to the extent that they then substitute for the lack which she has felt from early childhood. Yet this return to childhood is like the imaginary in Lacan – it can neither be fulfilled nor requited and thus the yearning for childhood bliss amounts to a symbolic representation. The imaginary, according to Lacan, is the undifferentiated early state of the child, a fusion of subject and parent, which remains latent in adult life, manifesting when the child falsely identifies with others. This, of course, means that the child, Olanna in this case, is constantly in search of that lost self of completion that she imagined she had or shared with her parents in early childhood. The symbolic is, therefore, the demarcated world of the adult with its enforced distinctions and repressions. Olanna is in the process of attempting to get to the real world of childhood which she cannot fulfil yet she is caught up in the imaginary sphere of its representation. 'She wished she were fluent in Hausa and Yoruba, like her uncle and aunt and cousin were, something she would gladly exchange her French and Latin for' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 41).

Nsukka, Olanna's new location, offers her an opportunity to explore her crave for naturalness. The first thing she does, in the spirit of making peace with her fears in Odenigbo's absence, is that she throws away 'the red and white plastic flowers on the centre table' and supplants them with 'the African lilies and pink roses, freshly watered by Jomo' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 47). Ugwu, who looks horrified at the decision and cannot, ironic as it sounds, 'believe her foolishness,' says: 'But it die, mah. The other one don't die.' This incident raises a pertinent question about mortality and immortality as projected in

Westernised African settings. It foregrounds the hilarious remark that Okeoma later makes in the story: 'My father's brother fought in Burma and came back filled with one burning question: How come nobody told him before that the white man was not immortal?' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 50). Okeoma's remark is humorous, but it captures the stark reality of post-independence African states where even simple notions like life and death have been distorted. Plastic flowers are lifeless and the impression that they have some immortal life is perverted logic. It is this artificiality of life that drives her away from her father's palatial house. The glitter of European materialism – symbolised by the plastic flowers – do not appeal to her in any way and her revolt against Western-oriented and black-adopted materialism stems from the deepest part of her soul. To underpin her predilection for a simple life, she makes it part of her business to make Ugwu feel part and parcel of the Odenigbo family.

Richard Churchill's decision to leave London is precipitated by emotional derangement and cultural alienation. In his own recollection, he reveals that he 'was an only child. [His] parents died when he was nine.' His parents had always been away and it is his grandmother, Molly, that had brought him up. Forced to stay with his aunt in London (an environment that was completely different from the 'tiny village in Shropshire), he had contemplated 'running away from the first day' of stay at his aunt's place. It is this tiny village, or so it appears, that had offered him a real and natural sense of homeliness. His physical displacement from this 'tiny village' shatters his comfort as the new location – London – only estranges him from a natural life, bereft of the sophisticating intimidation in London. The substance of this flashback is captured below:

> '[My parents] were often away. It was Molly, my nanny, who really raised me. After they died, it was decided I would live with my aunt in London. My cousins Martin and Virginia were about my age but terribly sophisticated; Aunt Elizabeth was quite

> grand, you see, and I was the cousin from the tiny village in Shropshire. I started thinking about running away the first day I arrived there.' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 61)

Molly symbolically represents his idyllic lifestyle – natural and unsophisticated, perhaps more like Olanna's. He, more like Olanna, had had to contend with distant parents who strangely 'stared at each other when they talked, forgot his birthdays ... never knew when and what he ate.' The narrator, in a biting sarcasm, observes: 'His parents] had not planned to have him and because of that, they had raised him as an afterthought' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 115). After thinking about what he had been running away from for a while, he concludes 'he knew he was running away from a house that had pictures of long-dead people on the walls breathing down on him. But he didn't know what he was running towards.' By stretching beyond traditional conceptualisation of the centre and the periphery, Adichie positions herself strategically in the mushrooming movement that is aimed at decolonising existing knowledge. This portrait markedly departs from the traditional territorial subjectivities associated with postcolonialism.

Richard's hastened push to stay with Susan also presents a similar form of dislocation. Susan, it appears, is an embodiment of all the sophistication in his aunt's place in London. His meeting with Susan, which is largely presented in flashbacks, had been purely based on convenience. His attitude to Susan's residence had been more or less the same as his feeling towards his aunt's place in London. Lagos, like London, invoked the image of artificiality, quite different from the naturalness that village life offered. He reveals that he did not like the idea of staying with Susan, much like staying in London, from the very beginning and like Olanna, it is Nsukka that presents an idyllic 'imaginative location' for him:

> He had been in Nigeria for a few months when Susan asked if he would like to move in with her, since her house in Ikoyi was large, the gardens were lovely, and she

> thought he would work much better there than in his rented flat with the uneven cement floors where his landlord moaned about his leaving his lights on for too long. Richard didn't want to say yes. He didn't want to stay much longer in Lagos. He wanted to do more travelling through the country while waiting to hear back from Nsukka. (56)

Richard's relationship with Susan starts on a bumpy road; Susan's social circles diametrically put him out of place: 'he felt out of place.' It is, in this regard, not surprising that he 'preferred talking to the women,' for instance, he feels comfortable in the company of a university lecturer, 'a timid Yoruba woman who seemed to feel just out of place as he did' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 53). Besides, her attitude to natives is stereotypically demeaning. She dons the domineering personality of a woman who believes that no else's opinions matter but hers. In her presence, Richard remains a pale shadow. She cuts the figure of a control freak who believes that a man has to be heavily cordoned off, physically guarded against potential threats so that when talks to Julia March, 'mostly about her research on the *Asantehene* in Ghana,' Susan comes over and pulls him by the arm. Susan's melodramatic response to his association with other women is not only baffling but also scary. She violently breaks a glass to show her disgust at Richard's seeming cosiness with other women. She does this when Richard spends time with Clovis Bancroft, Julia March and the timid Yoruba woman. Richard is forced to apologise every time she does this. Ironically, he is sometimes compelled to say he is very sorry even when he is 'not quite sure what he [is] apologising for' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 54). Having to play this ridiculous facade suffocates him.

The artificiality of their life in Susan's apartment is even more ridiculously suffocating. It speaks of detachment, unnaturalness and superimposition. The monotony of his routine is strikingly comical. He occasionally looks out the window at the gardeners to break the boredom orchestrated by his humdrum life. He pounds at the typewriter and 'although he [is]

aware that he [is] typing and not writing.' This paradox is a clear indication that the environment does not give him the impetus he needs to prod his artistic musings. This pretentious is exacerbated by Susan's unnatural relationship. She is only too 'careful to give him the silences he needed, save for the occasional whispers over 'some water' or 'an early lunch.' In a corresponding ironic response, Richard 'answered in a whisper, too, as if his writing had become something hallowed and has made the room itself sacrosanct. He did not tell her that he had written nothing good so far.' He puts on a false image of seriousness because he imagines that telling her the truth would hurt her. In reciprocation, he shows his 'gratitude by attending the parties he disliked.' After this pretence is not enough, he tries to be funny to please her. It is little wonder that Kainene's natural smile attracts him: 'she didn't smile in that plastic way the mistresses did' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 57).

Kainene's genuinely natural emotions, it seems, depart significantly from Susan's superimpositions. His emotional attachment to Kainene is similar to what Lacan calls an imaginary return to childhood. Richard's meeting with Kainene reawakens his natural emotions; he pulls down the facade momentarily so that when 'Susan came back and tugged at him but he didn't want to leave.' Kainene offers him an emotional reprieve from Susan's domineering and supercilious attitude. To spend more time with Kainene, he pretends that he and Kainene 'have a mutual friend in London.' The two 'exchange small kernels of intimacies' and when she leaves, 'Richard' who 'was usually amused by Susan's mini-autobiographies' suddenly felt irked by Susan's sardonic attitude to the 'obviousness' of Chief Ozobia's riches. His interaction with Kainene puts a wedge in his relationship with Susan; he feels a rare connection to her and finds 'himself talking in a way he usually didn't, and when their time ended and she got up, often to join her father at a meeting, he felt his feet thicken with curdled blood. He did not want to leave, could not bear the thought of going back to sit in Susan's study and type and wait for Susan's subdued knocks' (*Half of a Yellow*

Sun 63). Susan's house no longer gives a semblance of a home to him; it triggers nostalgic memories of his childhood and he, for the first time, puts on a brave face and resolves to leave Susan's house:

> [T]hose short moments [of freedom from surveillance] had made it all worthwhile, these moments of pure planetary abandon, when he felt as if he, and he alone, were in control of the universe of his childhood. Recalling them, he decided he would end it with Susan. His relationship with Kainene might well not last long, but the moments of being with her, knowing he was not weighed down by lies and pretense, would make the brevity worthwhile. (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 66)

What compels Richard to leave Susan's flat, it is evident, is variance of interests. He is evidently trapped between a deprived rurality on the one hand and a deprecating urbanity which hardly offers him anything on the other. Lagos is an aberration, an artificial creation associated with the elitism of London; it is dominated by neo-colonial elites and as such, it bears the indifferent and decadent qualities of the metropolis. Their needs are different: '[Richard] hoped he did not sound insincere, but it was true; they had always wanted different things, always valued different things.' The use of repetition here is deliberate as accentuates the incongruence of their relationship. It dawns, albeit belatedly, on him that he 'should never have moved in with her.' There had been, it is shown, very minimal communication in this relationship; it 'had been like an artless flow with little input from them, or at least from him.' The employment of simile here conjures up a vapid image, dull and lacking in liveliness. 'The relationship had *happened* to him.' The use of italicisation foregrounds the emotional distance that had been exhibited in the affair. Kainene's relationship does not offer emotional security. Perhaps because of the flashy suites that they temporally occupy in the hope of attaining emotional fulfilment (consummating their love), the natural touch he [Richard] so desperately craves for is still missing. 'Perhaps it [is] why an erection [eludes]

him: the gelding mix of surprise and desire.' No matter how he wills his body and mind to work together, he remains 'limp' and does not 'become hard' and the 'flaccid weight between his legs' is a feeling that defies that his willpower. In her characteristic style - an idiosyncrasy, a (porno)graphic exposition of sexual scenes, thinly veiled lewdness, a writing style parallels Achebe's and Armah's; Adichie presents the burden of unrequited emotion as a compelling force behind characters' displacement in her novels. When he 'fails' her again, he feels 'a swift surge of irritation, towards himself for being uselessly limp,' he sets out to leave for Nsukka University, the 'little patch of dust in the middle of the bush' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 68). The 'home of the roped pot,' Igbo-Ukwu, his new location offers him a physical semblance of the tiny Shropshire village he had once called home.

The arrival of Odenigbo's domineering mother, who perceives her presence as a possible deterrent to her son's social progress, also occasions Olanna's physical dislocation. The arrival of Odenigbo's mother in Nsukka sparks a series of drama in the house. She does not hide her preconceived notions about *her son*: the notion that *her son* has not had 'a proper soup' because his meals are prepared by a boy who does not 'know about real cooking,' that her son has been wasting 'money on expensive things' and 'her assuming that everything [in the house] belonged to [*her son*]' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 95). That she does not respond when Ugwu tells her that Olanna had brought many things from Lagos speaks of unusual smug. She speaks so triumphantly about chauvinistic stereotypes like the idea that a 'boy does not belong to the kitchen,' setting the stage for speculation over the motive of her female companion, Amala. The arrival of Olanna reveals the old woman's obvious arrogance. She literally keeps her 'hands to her sides' to avoid hugging her back. Her response to Olanna's offer to help is bitingly sarcastic; she says she wants to 'cook a proper soup for her son,' rubbing in the presumption that both Olanna and Ugwu cannot do it and to put her off completely, she scornfully says, 'I hear you did not suck your mother's breasts' (*Half of a*

Yellow Sun 96). She declares war against Olanna and the supposed witches that had sent her to *her son* that Odenigbo will 'marry an abnormal woman only over her dead body' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 97). Olanna comes face to face with the ghosts of her childhood, a lost childhood intimacy. What appears to be more deprecating is that her parents' apparent misconduct have warranted for the aspersions that are cast on her character. Interestingly, her university education plays out in Odenigbo's mother's stereotypical cards: 'Too much schooling ruins a woman,' she says, 'everyone knows that. It gives a woman a big head and she will start to insult her husband. What kind of wife will that be?' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 98). The reason for Olanna's dislocation is two-fold; she is forced to confront the ghosts of her unpleasant childhood and to contend with a woman whose psyche is, ironic as it seems, deeply afflicted by male chauvinism.

Odenigbo's reaction to his mother's conduct compels her to stay away from him even further. His visit is punctuated by casualness, an obvious lack of seriousness that irks Olanna. Instead of consoling Olanna, asking her to return to the house and giving her assurance that 'he would tell his mother off in front of her, for her'; he decides 'to stay at her flat, like a frightened little boy hiding from his mother' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 102). Evidently, Odenigbo's defencelessness leaves even more vulnerable. That he is not ready to tell off his mother and instead finds excuses for her unbecoming behaviour puts Olanna in an awkward situation. Odenigbo's suggestion that something is 'wrong with her' when she rejects his idea of staying at her flat offends her emotional intelligence. This non-committal attitude speaks of an artificiality that is offensively distancing; it would appear that Odenigbo's 'overexalted intellectualism,' seemingly Platonic, had robbed of the naturalness of emotionalism. Odenigbo's intellectualism blinds him to his fiancé's emotional needs:

> She shook her head. She would not let him make her feel that there was something wrong with her. It was her right to be upset, her right to choose not to rush her

> humiliation aside in the name of an overexalted intellectualism, and she would claim that right. 'Go.' She gestured towards the door. 'Go and play your tennis and don't come back here.' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 102)

Emotionally drained and lacking in company, she decides to visit her neighbour Edna Whaler, 'the pretty American black woman.' However, she changes her mind and returns to her lonely house, to the 'bland' rice that tasted 'nothing like Ugwu's.' Reaching out to her sister Kainene, out of frustration and desperation; she 'felt a rush of melancholy; her twin sister thought something had to have happened for her to call.' This call deepens the frosty relationship that she and Kainene had; it impresses upon her that a desultory talk between her and Kainene would not happen any time soon. Withdrawn and devastated, she resolves to travel to London.

The reunion of Olanna and Odenigbo is disrupted by the news about Amala's pregnancy. At first, the presence of Mama (Odenigbo's mother) unsettles her, but when Odenigbo reveals that his mother 'and Amala are just leaving,' Olanna becomes relieved. Odenigbo's attitude to Amala prompts her to think differently about her return to Nsukka. She 'noticed how scrupulously they avoided any contact, any touch of skin, as if they were united by a common knowledge so monumental that they were determined not to be united by anything else' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 223). As a result of the emotional pain occasioned by the revelation of Odenigbo's dastardly act, she leaves and returns to her flat. It is not Odenigbo's unfaithfulness that compels her to leave but Odenigbo's inability to own up. Besides, by sleeping with young guileless girl, she assumes the personality of the Okonjis of Nigeria, men who believe that by virtue of their social status, they have the power to predate on vulnerable women. To shun loneliness, she travels to Kano to seek her comfort from her aunt. Aunty Ifeka, though not as educated as Aunty Ifeoma, projects image of fortitude exhibited in the aunt motif that pervades Adichie's three novels. Odenigbo, like 'all [Nigerian] men,' had

'inserted his pen in the first hole he could find when [Olanna had gone] away' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 226). It is not this crude stereotyping of men that strikes Olanna; it is the radical feminist position that a woman should only allow their lives to change if they want to and she (Olanna) 'must never behave as if [her] life belongs to [Odenigbo].' Determined to cut her own niche, she leaves Kano. This exploitative tendency of men is a replica of oppressive mechanisms that were employed by the imperialists to sustain power as they undermined natives. By sexually predating upon the village woman, Odenigbo drastically falls back to colonial administrator's chief strategy. Olanna desires to embark on a cultural redefinition exercise and Odenigbo's demeaning act undermines her efforts and alienates her. She seems to understand just what it means to decolonise one's mindset and what it entails. Olanna's decision, it is apparent, is in tandem with Okot's proclamation in *Africa's Cultural Revolution*. In order to demolish cultural dominion and restore Africa's pride, Okot makes the following recommendations:

> Africa must re-examine herself critically. She must discover her true self, and rid herself of all 'apemanship.' For only then she can begin to develop a culture of her own. Africa must redefine all cultural terms according to her interests. As she has broken the political bondage of colonialism, she must continue the economic and cultural revolution until she refuses to be led by the nose of foreigners. We must also reject the erroneous attempts of foreign students to interpret and present her. We must interpret and present Africa in our own way, in our own interests (vii).

The other cases of physical and transcendental displacement are prompted by the political tensions in the country. After the coup d'état spearheaded by Major Nzeogwu, ethnic profiling compels the Southern population to rethink their decision to remain part of the Nigerian society. The political anxiety in the country becomes deeper and bloodier; 'the prime minister was missing, Nigeria was now a federal military government, the premiers of

the North and West were missing' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 124). Because of the political tension orchestrated by the dethronement of the government of the day, the Nigerian civilian population felt insecure. Olanna, for instance, postpones 'her trip to Kano because of the coup' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 128). The BBC branded this 'an Igbo coup' and as expected, a number of Igbos were excited about the possibility of better governance, 'the end of corruption' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 125). Ironically, the supposed orchestrators of the coup, the Igbo people, are harassed in the streets. Ibekie's revelation demonstrates the height of the ethnic tension in the country: 'My uncle in Ebutte does not sleep in his house any more since the coup. All his neighbours are Yoruba, and they said some men have been looking for him. He sleeps in different houses every night, while he takes care of his business. He has sent his children back home' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 133). For Kainene's father, this coup presents an opportunity for amassing wealth and he does not 'waste any time in ingratiating himself' (*Half Yellow Sun* 134). Politically aggrieved by the possibility of losing the civil service positions as a result of economic marginalisation, the Northern population organise a countercoup 'only six months after the first' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 138). The assassinations, the structure of the group of conspirators, and the politics of the military government brought to power nourished an anxious belief in ethnically orchestrated conspiracies — an Igbo bid to dominate Nigeria and the Hausa-Fulani factions (Northern Nigeria) of the army and the Northern population's bid to diffuse the dominance of the Igbo. This political contest draws another scarlet scar in the face of Nigerian history. Numerous Igbo officers and civilians were killed in Lagos, Ibadan, and Abeokuta. Several Igbo officers are killed in Kaduna:

> Lagos was in chaos. [Olanna's] parents had left for Igbo. Many Igbo officers were dead. The killings were organized; she told him about a soldier who said the alarm for a battalion muster parade was sounded in his barracks and everyone assembled, the

> Northerners picked out all the Igbo soldiers and took them away. (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 138)

The parallels between the bloodshed of this action and the ruthless army troops and the hordes of savage civilian lynching for pure pleasure in *Season of Anomy* are striking. The massacres of Igbo in northern cities, followed by a desperate retreat of the civilians, ruled out the concept of — one Nigeria, at least, from Igbo's point of view. Hatred and lack of trust replaced the openness of the past relations between Igbo and the northern Nigerians. Bothe ethnic and religious factors play significant roles in these clashes. The ritual murder of Colonel Udodi Ekechi is not only horrific and heart-wrenching; Northern soldiers put in a cell in the barracks and feed him 'his own shit. Then they beat him senseless and tied him to an iron cross and threw him back in his cell. He died tied to an iron cross.' This ritual killing demonstrates detestation, a deep-seated hatred, for Christianity. Most Igbo officers are murdered and the few lucky ones like Madu go into hiding after a narrow escape. ENBC Radio Enugu 'reports that up to five-hundred Igbo people have been killed in Maiduguri,' Igbo people are killed like ants, a mark of unmatched banality, 'a whole family, a father and a mother and three children, lying on the road to the motor park,' and 'a pregnant woman split open in Kano' are indications of the height of senselessness in military brutality (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 144). Olanna is forced to leave Kano after a spate of killings that leads to the murder of her uncle and her aunt. Religion is used as an excuse for violence; the announcement that comes from a Hausa voice in the face of this tension says it all: 'The Igbo must go. The infidels must go' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 147). Olanna only manages to sneak her way out of Kano. This political mess is clearly captured in Fanon's postulations:

> ...the people's bitter disappointment, their desperation, but also their pent-up anger, can be clearly heard. Instead of letting the people express their grievances, instead of making the circulation of ideas between people and the leadership its basic mission,

> the party erects a screen of prohibitions. The party leaders behave like common sergeants major and constantly remind the people of the need to keep 'silence in ranks.' This party, which claimed to be the servant of the people, which claimed to work for the people's happiness, quickly dispatches the people back to their caves as soon as the colonial authorities hand over the country. The party will also commit many mistakes regarding national unity. For example, the so-called national party operates on a tribal basis. It is a veritable ethnic group which has transformed itself into a party. This party which readily proclaims itself national, which claims to speak in the name of the people as a whole, secretly and sometimes openly sets up a genuine ethnic dictatorship. We are no longer witness to a bourgeois dictatorship to a tribal one. The ministers, private secretaries, ambassadors, and prefects are chosen from the leader's ethnic group, sometimes even directly from his family. These regimes based on the family unit seem to repeat the age-old laws of endogamy and faced with stupidity, this imposture and this intellectual and spiritual poverty, we are left with a feeling of shame rather than anger.
>
> These heads of government are the true traitors of Africa, for they sell their continent to the worst of its enemies; stupidity. This tribalization of power results, much as one would expect, in regionalist thinking and separatism. Decentralizing trends surface and triumph, the nation disintegrates and is dismembered. (126)

The post-independence Nigerian leadership had failed to unite the citizenry, setting the stage for rivalry. Military storm is a consequence of political disillusionment and a 'pent-up' anger against the ruling regime. Ironically, this anger is directed at innocent civilians who are directly responsible for the mismanagement of the country's affairs. In a country where the citizens are intellectually and spiritually drained, igniting ethnic passions becomes the obvious political bait. The tribal narrative is swallowed hook, line and sinker by an

unsuspecting civil majority. The result is what Fanon regards as the disintegration and dismembering of the nation and consequent displacement of citizens from their traditional homes.

Forced to live in a politically discriminating environment where the Northern leadership would rather pay foreigners twice than hire a Southerner, the Igbo nation is compelled to chart a new political path. Besides, wanton killing of Igbos continues and a number of people decide to run to refugee camps for safety. The Igbo people flee, Colonel Ojukwu takes over as the leader of Igbo and 'people were talking about secession and a new country, which would be named after the bay, the Bight of Biafra' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 156). The secession plans come at a bloody price; Gowon capitalises on Nigeria's military might to intimidate the newly formed Biafran nation. Olanna and odenigbo are forced to leave Nsukka University after an incursion. 'The campus streets [remain] eerie; silent and empty' (*Half of a Yellow Sun 179*). In their new temporary settlements, peace does not prevail. Odenigbo's family finds itself holed up in a bunker most of the time to shield itself from the effects of bombing.

The declaration of ceasefire by the Biafran leader Ojukwu does not give any promise of peaceful co-existence. It ushers in an even more hostile intellectual climate for Biafran academics. When Odenigbo returns to Nsukka, he and his family are subjected to physical abuse by the Nigerian military officers. First, he is harassed on account of suspicion, the fact that his car still had a Biafran number plate. His observation that he intends to change the plate when he arrives at Nsukka gets him into further trouble. The officer says, 'Ah, Nsukka University. You are the ones who planned the rebellion with Ojukwu, you book people' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 418). This affront demonstrates the delicate nature of the political situation in Nigeria and the seeming uncertainty about the future of the Biafrans in a temporally united Nigeria. This return does not offer a flicker of hope as the joy of the returnees is cut short and

'in the briefness of too bright flares shrivels a heritage of blighted futures' (Soyinka *Idanre and Other Poems* 50).

There is very little hope that intellectualism will have a place in this new-found union. Odenigbo and his ilk had succeeded in keeping their, to put in Soyinka's words, *men alive* (protesting against the social injustices of ruling regime) but this artificial union of the two disparate nationalities (Nigeria and Biafra) dampens their hope of triumphing over the retrogressive social forces that define the neo-colonial Nigerianness. The agents of the new oligarchy, the Nigerian soldiers, are even bolder in their resolve to exterminate the *book people* who are responsible for igniting massive revolt against the Northern regime. Instead of starting the new journey of reconciliation with open minds, soldiers, who represent the militaristically futile North, are making it clear that they are not ready to accommodate divergent opinions. To demonstrate their disgust at intellectual revolution, they ransack Odenigbo's house with a view to confiscating and obliterating seditious materials that might exist in his house at Nsukka. The intent of this military action is to instil fear among the Biafra-allied intellectuals. Cowed, intimidated and outnumbered, the Southerners, it is anticipated, would subserviently submit to the authority of Northern leadership. The return of Odenigbo to Nsukka does not offer any promise of peaceful co-existence; it offers an emboldened Northern population an opportunity to beat its political drums of war. Odenigbo's return to his home does not give any form of respite from political woes of displacement; it ushers in a new form of dislocation. He, his family and their ilk acquire new statuses as 'foreigners.' Adichie's choice of the title, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, provides an accurate metaphoric description of Nigerian state; there is no clarity of vision as the colour imagery associated with the sun suggests opaqueness, haziness, obscurity or blurred vision. Adichie, it seems, proffers a much detailed version of what Saro-Wiwa articulates in his vignette, 'Africa Kills Her Sun,' a letter which he introduces by a paradox that serves as a

critical cast of aspersions on the future, if any, of this content. He pities those 'who are condemned to live in it' yet he also regards Africa as a 'beautiful world.' The disappearance of Kainene emphasises the political anxiety and uncertainty about the future of Nigeria. The permanence of the suspense at the end of the story reveals the complexity of this matter. In fact, the two rivals (Madu and Richard), who are both in love with her, ironically fight over her memories. Her unwaning commitment to community service, a sudden turnaround of social philosophy and a lucid indication of an intimate attachment to the plight of the underprivileged members of her (physically displaced and vulnerable) Igbo society endear him to readers as it, for the first time, awakens her parents' long-dead conscience. But more importantly, the fight between the two archrivals is an indictment on the implications of the lip-serviced union of the two rival factions – the Northerners and the Southerners.

The confrontation between Richard and Madu captures the fragility of the new political alliance. For the Northerners, it seems a perfect opportunity for vengeance and chest-thumping has presented itself. The Southerners, on the other hand, have nothing to celebrate; all they have is memory – a reminiscence of a politically tumultuous past that offered them a semblance of peace and a chance to reassert their rightful place in the political destiny of their nation. Tangible bits of this memory are being trampled upon by the agents of Nigerian oligarchy and what remains is largely an abstract memory, more like the philanthropically charitable activities of Kainene. What is presented in this novel is, therefore, a delicate political situation. That the writer, Adichie, unceremoniously ends her story is not surprising; it is definitely a deliberate move – one that is aimed at demonstrating the future of the half-lighted, indeed translucently lit, Nigerian society hangs in the balance. What exacerbates the precariousness of the political scenario in the presumably united territory called Nigeria is the futility of predicating the unity of a nation on a Northern population whose psyche is heavily afflicted by Greco-African hubris and a Southern population that is transcendentally

homeless in a turbulent political marriage of convenience. Achebe makes an insightful account of this period in his autobiographical work, *There was a Country*:

> The post Nigeria-Biafra civil war era saw a 'unified' Nigeria saddled with a greater and more insidious reality. We were plagued by a home-grown enemy: political ineptitude, mediocrity, indiscipline, ethnic bigotry, and corruption of the ruling class. ... A new era of great decadence and decline was born. And it continues to this day. At this point, the intellectuals were faced with a conundrum. We could no longer pass off this present problem simply to our complicated past and the cold war raging in the background, however significant these factors were. We could not absolve ourselves from the need to take hold of the events of the day and say, Okay we have had a difficult past... From today, this is the programme we have; let's look at what we have not done. (243)

This damning reappraisal of the post-war era captures the disillusionment that Adichie demonstrates in her second novel. Achebe's observation, it is evident, lends credence to Adichie's deliberate decision to introduce a complicated social dilemma at the end of the novel. It would appear Adichie, like Achebe, noted that the political chaos in Nigeria was not coming to an end any time soon; 'it continues to this day.' The declaration of a ceasefire compels Biafrans to return to their forced marital status, a political marriage of convenience or what Magak calls 'unmutual wedlock' (Magak 'The Birth of a Stillborn' 131). This union deprives the Igbo people of the cultural unity that the traditional ethnic community had enjoyed in its resolve to secede from the mainstream Nigerian society whose constitution, it is evident, is based on a presumed 'common civic culture and ideology' propounded by the West (Smith 11).

The colonial powers had arbitrarily drawn borders on the atlas and thus lumped diverse groups of people together. The two novels are certainly those of despair at the failure of the emergent ruling class to actualise the great nationalist dreams and to make independence 'the all-embracing crystallisation of the inner-most hopes of the whole people' (Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* 119). The betrayal motif and the atmosphere of disillusionment pervade the novels. Adichie foregrounds this by fusing the historical and the psychological experiences. Nonetheless, Adichie injects some glimmer of hope at the end of the novel: 'Above, clouds like dyed cotton wool hang low, so low I feel I can reach out and squeeze the moisture from them. The new rains will come down soon' (*Purple Hibiscus* 307). The new rains presage the dawn of a new era. It is therefore little wonder that Adichie paints the picture of *Half of a Yellow Sun* in her second novelistic work. The sun is 'yellow,' a colour image which suggests dawn. It is half and this means that the dawn anticipated in *Purple Hibiscus* does not fully materialise.

4.4 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that displacement is a multi-layered phenomenon and Adichie's novels provide rich imaginative platforms upon which this phenomenon is articulated. Dislocation arises, as shown in this discussion, from several factors and Adichie does not disappoint for she presents rare literary innovation in her portrait of these factors. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili assumes a dislocated state of existence and detached consciousness which reflects the indeterminate unfolding of events shaped around her senseless cognitive meandering within the novel. Written from a first-person point of view, from the subjective perspective of Kambili; *Purple Hibiscus* questions the authenticity and provisionality of constructed identity and displaced consciousness from the beginning. The protagonist rejects what Phillips calls 'the cultural cringe,' the perception that one's own culture occupies a subordinate cultural place on the periphery. A sense of peripheral existence, which is

engendered by cultural subservience, is expressed through the emphasis on exposition and descriptive detail tailored to evoke an atmosphere of lifelessness and monotony. Adichie, it would appear, therefore, strives to articulate a deliberately partial and fractured view of a culturally displaced character. Thus displacement is not a static phenomenon; it is prone to multiple meanings which are dependent on the new conditions and perspectives in the ever-changing world today. The principles outlined by Fanon in The Wretched of the Earth accurately fit into the analysis of the socio-cultural factors that force characters to leave their traditional homelands. Fanon's ideas blend very seamlessly with Said's Oriental fallacy and the concept of 'imaginative geography,' Bakhtin's dichotomy of dominant and inferiority discourse as well as Bhabha's concept of 'Othering.'

CHAPTER FIVE

NAVIGATING THE CROSS-CULTURAL COMPLEXITIES OF NEW WORLDS DEPICTED IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S NOVELS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter carries further the formal and thematic pattern of discussion as set in the preceding chapter. It discusses the suitability of the dialogic principle as established in Bakhtin's theory, Said's Orientalism, Bhabha's 'othering' and Fanon's 'wretchedness.' It explores Adichie's novels as platforms upon which émigrés' navigation of cross-cultural complexities are imaginatively depicted. Her novels are interrogated in this section as fictionalised accounts of cross-cultural complexities of new locations. Subjected to atrocities, social evils and difficulties in conflict situations or other unbearable circumstances, civilians are forced to flee their homelands. The flight nonetheless does not, in a number of cases, put an end to émigrés' plights. A long struggle for survival, settlement and return await them at the places they migrate to. Female and male émigrés deal differently with trauma of dislocation, renegotiating identities and rebuilding social networks. Although the initial impact of violent displacement is comparatively severe for women than men, the former generally adapt more quickly to their new environment, finding new spaces through informal support networks to meet their needs. Women, on the other hand, as actors in their own survival may show resilience in adverse conditions and in the process become empowered. Thus, migration presents a double-edged implication for a woman; it leads to untold suffering yet it may have some positive impact.

Having to live in a new environment, émigrés or displaced persons engage in 'artful negotiation' to navigate the cultural complexities that they are exposed to (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 22). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin suggest that post-colonial theory 'is the most

appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted' (2). Adichie's novels, which are the subjects of this interrogation, are set the world during and after the period of European imperial domination and the effects of this on African citizenry and the African diaspora. In the words of Arthur Gakwandi, 'Nationalism and modern African literature have followed closely parallel courses and derived reciprocal inspirations one from the other, both being part of an awakening and a search for a new place in the world for the African' (1). Purple Hibiscus, as demonstrated in the fourth chapter of this thesis, heavily dwells on the post-independence challenges within the African environment that compel individuals to move out of their traditional locations. The movements highlighted in the discussion that precedes this chapter are not strictly physical. Even the physical movements cited mainly fall within the country. For purposes of the discussion in this chapter, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah* form the crux of the arguments on cross-cultural complexities of new environments. The primary focus is on how acculturation and deculturation processes complicate the cross-cultural interactions between natives and émigrés.

5.2 Depiction of Stereotyping and Difference as Cross-cultural Intricacies of New Worlds in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novels

Adichie's novels paint migration to new cultural environments as an experience that exposes the émigré to a number of challenges. One of these hurdles is the inescapable reality of having to face the cultural intricacies of a new world. Though both male and female émigrés have their share of difficulties in such new cultural environments, it would appear that women bear the greatest brunt. On the one hand, women share common cultural experiences with the other émigrés (men) as a major constituent of the civilian population. On the other hand, there is a gender-based component to socially ascribed roles. This gender dimension to experiences for émigrés is rooted in the culture of discrimination that denies women equal

status with men and, among other things, deprives them of basic rights such as access to education, mobility and participation in decision making. Women émigrés meet variegated consequences of violence – economic, socio-cultural, physical, sexual and psychological.

The section deals with the stereotyping and difference as some of the complex hurdles that émigrés in Adichie's novels encounter. Brislin argues that stereotypes 'refer to beliefs about a group of people that give insufficient attention to individual differences among the group's members' (*Understanding Culture's Influence on Behaviour* 198). Crawford and Unger, in a similar vein, aver that 'stereotypes occur whenever individuals are classified by others as having something in common because they are members of a particular group or category of people' (*Women and Gender* 37). Stereotyping, in the contexts highlighted by the aforementioned scholars, occurs in relation to religious, racial, and ethnic groups where it is common to attribute 'a range of fixed characteristics to individuals on the basis of their group membership' (*Goddard The Language of Advertising* 126). The primary focus of this section of the study is to demonstrate how Adichie's novels provide imaginative platforms upon which the issues of stereotyping and difference are articulated. Interest is placed on characters that are displaced from traditional homelands and are, subsequently, forced to confront cross-cultural hurdles.

Purple Hibiscus, Adichie's first novel, to begin with, explores the cultural intricacies of new worlds. The protagonist, Kambili, does not physically move to a different world (one that is set apart from her traditional Nigerian location) to qualify as an émigré in the strict sense of the word yet she experiences several cross-cultural complexities. She fits the description of a transcendental émigré. She suffers frustration and slavery as a result of her father's preoccupation with the white man's delusion of superiority. Her cultural prison is not a physical establishment but a mental one. It, as such, expresses the psychological sense of inferiority and subservience in face of colonial edifice. This situation necessarily involves

turmoil and disturbance for it consists of competing and contesting ideas. For her, the escape from this cultural prison entails breaking from this sense of inferiority and establishing a clear identity and a sense of pride and dignity. This pride is her awareness of the past heritage. This is captured in the realm of imagination in which her grandfather's apparition appears to her. It is her village (her grandfather's company) and her aunt's place where she finds redemption, the dialogue and debate concerning the true essence of her being are explored. Because of transcendental displacement from her homeland and community, she undergoes a crisis of cultural identity. She struggles with the question of cultural identity since she is unable to trace her original ancestral community. The fact that she meets people from different cultural groups complicates her situation. She attempts to construct for herself a definite and unique cultural identity. In this quest, she hopes for a genuine emancipation through a spiritual and cultural identification with her African roots. She makes deliberate attempts to purge her psyche of the colonised mindset that defines her father's life and has consequently afflicted her mind. Her father's world evidently represents, though vicariously, the West while her aunt's depicts the Nigerian socio-political reality. She goes through the process of acculturation and deculturation. The writer, therefore, attempts an exploration of the non-physical migration, an interesting dimension to relocation which calls for a detailed analysis. This study acknowledges this perspective; however, for the purposes of this thesis, the biggest chunk of the findings in this chapter will be attributed to characters that have physically moved out of their traditional locations, more specifically individuals that have gone out of their national boundaries in their bid to chart new cultural paths.

In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, it is through the character Chiaku that the portrait of cross-cultural complexities in foreign environments is introduced. In her conversation with Ifeoma – a talk that is laced with sarcasm – she reveals that her life in England was characterised by racial prejudice. The racially segregated environment in England, in Chiaku's opinion, is

representative of all new cultural environments. This explains why she suspects that the Americans must be treating Philipa as a 'second-class citizen.' Her comments are replete with racial stereotypes; she homogenises the diverse white population and forces them into sameness. In this way, she subscribes to what Said calls 'Oriental fallacy.' 'Oyinbos,' the equivalence of whites, are stereotypically racist and consider black émigrés as second-class citizens. In London, blacks are regarded as 'monkeys.' The substance of her claims is captured below:

> All my years in Cambridge, I was a monkey who had developed the ability to reason. … That is what they tell you. Every day our doctors go there and end up washing plates for *oyinbo* does not think we study medicine right. Our lawyers go there and drive taxis because *oyinbo* does not trust how we train them in law. (*Purple Hibiscus* 244)

Chiaku's description of the English cultural environment is a stereotyped portrait. She reveals the complexities of new cultural environments. The émigré is excluded from participation in the socio-political and economic destiny of the host's nation. Émigrés from African countries like Nigeria are generally and collectively regarded as intellectually inferior. The whites, on the other hand, see themselves as superior. This creates the nexus of 'us' and 'them' as the prominent dichotomy that highlights existing cultural difference. This difference is what creates the 'other.' The 'others' are constructed by the dominating culture and the positions they occupy are pre-determined. The neo-colonial structure is basically alienating, excluding the displaced persons from belonging to certain privileged classes or taking up certain jobs that are considered more dignified and with higher remuneration. The émigré is meant to be exploited for labour and material gain. This sense of political, social and economic alienation is variously explored in Adichie's novels. The result, as evinced in the case of Chiaku, is a

sense of bitterness and anger; she feels that the treatment accorded to Nigerian citizens in London is humiliating. Her statements are borne out of rage and disgust.

In Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Olanna's father dismisses Odenigbo, a senior lecturer at Nsukka University, on account of the presumption that the quality of education in local universities still pales in comparison to American and British universities and sarcastically regards the 'idea of Nsukka University' as a 'silly' one (32). That Olanna's uncle proudly regards her ability to finish a Master's degree at London University a herculean task is not surprising. 'It is not easy,' so he claims. Yet the idea of Nsukka University, in perverted logic of the native, is 'daft' (40). This fallacy does not escape the writer's satiric attack and it is the young Abdulmalik who becomes the subject of the writer's ridicule: 'He looked as if it were he who was receiving the gift; he had that expression of people who marveled at education with the calm certainty that it would never be theirs.' It is striking to note that the young boy in question represents the future of the black populace. The possibility of the perpetuity of cultural perversion is disturbing; 'Mother England,' to borrow Nazareth's words, is seen as 'a superior country in which everybody lives, and has always lived, on a high economic and cultural plane' (20). Adichie demonstrates the weak-kneed readiness with which the assimilated black colonised persons can be persuaded to throw on a white mask of culture and privilege. Kainene dates 'so many white men in England' in spite of their 'false validations' and 'thinly veiled condescension' because she imagines that the perceived superiority of the whites would compensate for her physical unattractiveness. She does realise that this crave for validation, which arises from an apparent inferiority, merely perpetuates the dominance of an essentially unchanged centre. She does not recognise the potency of racial stereotyping that is at the centre of oppression because she is an emotionally drowned victim. In the colonial dichotomy of coloniser-colonised or white-black, it is evident that white is privileged in the discourse of the colonial relationship. It is the prologue of

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* that crystallizes this dichotomy. Aside from deliberately hiding the identity of his protagonist, Ellison provides an interesting background to the invisible Griffin:

> I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fibre and liquids – and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me, they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imaginations, indeed, everything and anything except me. (1)

This grounding of Orientalisation in the Western education system draws heavily from Ellison's idea of invisibility. The layout of the world map physically projects Africa as a subjugated region. 'The world is round, it never ends' yet 'the people who drew the map decided to put their land on top of our ours' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 10). This argument suggests that Oriental fallacy is, by design, a well-orchestrated myth in the very architecture of the European education. To transcend this fallacy, members of the Orient have to sift the materials that gather from the schooling system. Uncritical consumption of unsifted knowledge is not only detrimental to the Orient's cultural growth, it is also misleading:

> There are two answers to the things that they will teach you about our land: the real answer and the answer you give in school to pass. You must read books and learn both answers. I will give you books, excellent books. They will teach you that a white man called Mungo Park discovered River Niger. That is rubbish. Our people fished in

> the Niger long before Mungo Park's grandfather was born. But in your exam, write that it was Mungo. (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 11)

The problem of cultural identity involves the question of the self and of culture. In other words, this means reflecting on the essence of culture itself and the implication that there is a reasonable motive of self-questioning. In turn, we may also ask whether the self-questioning is motivated in the problematic, uncertain, or insufficiently reflected idea of our selves or in a desire to analytically reaffirm the fragility of culture. Odenigbo, for instance, rejects the tag 'sir,' regarding it as an arbitrary title that cannot serve as a permanent identity tag (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 13). From a face value, one would argue that this rejection is informed by Odenigbo's modesty, yet it literal interpretation is a metaphoric one that displays a repudiation of the permanence of social class. He regards class as an arbitrary and transient phenomenon. It is illogical to use the tag as it presupposes social fixation and rigidity and an attempt to suggest that societies are stagnant is inaccurate. The Western culture, in apparent stereotyping, regards such titles as marks of civilisation, so that what he (Odenigbo) projects as a real self is regarded as a mark of crudity, discourtesy or lack of civilisation. This problematises the self and culture.

The image of Africa as 'the Dark Continent' pervades the cultural dialogue *Half of a Yellow*, especially as seen through the eyes of 'Susan's *pretty boy*,' Richard. In the expatriate parties, the men that Susan always nudged him to join (mostly English, ex-colonial administrators and business people from John Holt and Kingsway and GB Ollivant and Shell-BP and United Africa Company) 'have the familiar superiority of English people who thought they understood Africans better than Africans understood themselves' and as is stereotypically expected of their supercilious kind, they claim that Africans are 'not quite so ready to rule themselves after all' (36, 53). As expected, Richard is dissuaded from investing in Igbo-Ukwu art because 'it does not have much of a market' and understanding that he is dealing

with capitalists comprising former colonisers and modern African imperialists, he does not bother to explain that he is not interested in money but the 'aesthetics.' Susan, unlike Richard, espouses the White Supremacist ideology that only permits an intra-personal cultural dialogue. This is a stereotypical depiction of Western artistry. Susan portrays African art as lacking in the aesthetic of Western art. Bartolome, in 'Critical Pedagogy and Teacher Education: Radicalising Prospective Teachers,' says:

> Members of the dominant culture typically tend to border cross without compromising their position of cultural and social privilege. This type of border crosser can travel the world, study the 'Other' in a detached and curious manner without ever recognizing that cultural groups occupy different positions of power and status and that many cultural perceptions and practices result from such power asymmetries. Often, these types of ideologically and politically 'blind' border crossers assume 'tourist' or 'voyeur' perspectives that are very much tainted by their unconscious deficit and White supremacist ideologies. (109).

Bartolome juxtaposes Susan, the monolithic tourist border crossers with those who, she says, cross 'ethnic and socio-economic borders and come to the realisation that some cultural groups, through no fault of their own, occupy positions of low social status and are marginalised and mistreated by members of higher-status groups.' This is the position that Richard occupies. This new cultural environment is a stereotyped one. African art, which falls within the Oriental geography, is collectively branded as less compelling and, therefore, less likely to attract the choosy affluent class that is accustomed to the superior art forms from the West. This realisation has enabled him 'to authentically empathise with the cultural 'Other' and take some form of action to equalise asymmetrical relations of power and eradicate the stigmatised social identities imposed on subordinated students' (Bartolome 10). The White Supremacist has constructed a monological world for himself. Everything is

supposed to seen through a single consciousness. *Others* have value only in relation to this monolithic perspective; they are reduced to an inferior status. They are not recognised as 'another [artistic] consciousness' or as having rights. From a Bakhtinian point of view or dialogic perspective, monologism is taken to close down the world it represents, pretending to be the ultimate word.

In monolgism, 'truth,' constructed abstractly and systematically from the dominant class, is allowed to remove the rights of consciousness. Each subject's ability to produce autonomous meaning is denied. Qualitative difference is rendered quantitative. This performs a kind of discursive 'death' of the other, who, as unheard and unrecognized, is in a state of non-being. African art is becomes 'dead' because the West, which represents the dominant perspective has determined that it occupies an inferior status and its aesthetic appeal cannot be equated to foreign art. The monological word gravitates towards itself and its referential object. Consumed by this Oriental fallacy, émigrés exist solely to transmit the host's ideology. Monologism is similar to the 'master-signifier' in Lacanian thought, and 'arborescence' in Deleuze.

Racial stereotyping dominates the desultory talk among the white businessmen. One of the white businessmen says this: '[Nigerians] are bloody beggars, be prepared for their body odours and the way they will stand and stare at you on the roads, never believe a hard-luck story, never show weakness to domestic staff' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 53-54). The image of non-productivity, infertility and lethargy pervade the discussions. This description paints a visual image of a continent that is inhabited by economically underprivileged persons who have resigned to their fate. The image of Africa as a continent that comprises of dishonest citizens is also an ingrained stereotype in this remark. In this context, one is persuaded to think of monologism as stereotyping and subsequently as capitalism: only what is profitable is deemed significant. As Guattari observes, if we laugh or cry, if we fear old age or death, if

we are ‘mad,’ does not matter to capitalism – it is ‘noise,’ in the information-theory sense. Even at a limit-case such as starvation, human need is irrelevant – a poor person may have a vital need for food, but they do not have effective market demand. This perhaps explains why the white businessman believes that Nigerian beggars should be treated indifferently. The idea that blacks are untidy as brought in the aforementioned excerpt finds near accurate resonance with Honwana’s ‘The Hands of the Blacks,’ where the palms of the hands of the blacks are considered to be lighter than the rest of their body because it is the only part that presumably had contact with water when Africans were ordered to go and take a bath. In more or less what seems to echo Chiaku’s recollection of her life in London, the ‘uppity African stood out in Richard’s mind: An African was walking a dog and an Englishman asked, ‘What are doing with that monkey?’ and the African answered, ‘It’s a dog, not a monkey’ – as if the Englishman had been talking to him’ (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 54). The African citizen is still regarded as primitive or apelike, a picture that the image of a monkey conjures up in this flashback. Césaire, in a similar breath, opines that the ‘colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal’ (20). It is this result, this boomerang effect of colonialism that Adichie points out in the development of Susan’s character. The result of dehumanisation is two-fold: it serves to demean the very existence of black population and excludes them from mainstream cultural discourse, yet it also dehumanises the perpetrators of dehumanisation (the whites themselves) because they exile themselves from the rest of humanity and lose sight of their isolation. Sublimating their impunity into a tradition and a way of life blinds them to the cultural realities of the day. Susan, unlike Richard, is living in denial yet she is a victim of this cultural isolation. At the end of the day, the pretty boy (Richard) rejects her and communes with dehumanised blacks. Initially, she resorts to violent acts, such as breaking of

glasses, when Richard seems to be getting closer to other women. She employs this archaic mode of defense against her 'imaginary competitors.' When she comes face to face with the real competitor from the population she had disregarded, she becomes isolated. Unlike Susan who retains her emotional stoicism, Richard's dalliance with Kainene offers him an opportunity to escape this isolation.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, just like *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*, Adichie demonstrates that people constantly struggle against external definitions of their thoughts and actions, which have deadening effect on them. The dominant class does not recognise that there is something within each concrete person which can only be actualised through a free discursive act, and not in a pre-determined or stereotyping context. This portrait of cultural difference and stereotyping demonstrates that her literary works, novels to be specific, cannot be divorced from the totality of culture. For Ngugi, '[literature] is functional' and cannot be 'severed from the physical, social and religious needs of the community.' Art is, in Ngugi's proposition, 'an integral part of a community's wrestling with its environment; part and parcel of the needs and aspirations of the ordinary man' (*Homecoming* 6-7). From the standpoint of literary scholarship, the idea of cultural identity is conceived of primarily with reference to literary identity in the community we are living in. Bakhtin's argumentation corroborates this viewpoint and is, therefore, most relevant for this kind of discussion:

> Literature is an inseparable part of the totality of culture and cannot be studied outside the total cultural context. It cannot be severed from the rest of culture and related directly (by-passing culture) to socio-economic or other factors. These factors influence culture as a whole and only through it and in conjunction with it do they affect literature. The literary process is a part of the cultural process and cannot be torn away from it. (*Speech Genres* 140)

It is important to note, however, that if the very existence of literature can be defined in terms of structuralism (and, in another context, by Heidegger) as a re-examination of the possibilities of language itself (and through its refracted historical consciousness), then the problem of literary identity would logically be reduced to the natural environment of native language, that is, to one's national culture. Such a view cannot, of course, be a relevant interpretation of literary identity in a rapidly denationalising world, where even national literatures are under immense pressure to transcend the national cultural boundaries. To read contemporary literature in that manner is to suggest the existence of a concept of identity that implies that characteristics of modern cultures are finite and self-referential, which is unacceptably misleading. The identification of literary identity with national culture is regression to the idea of identity conceived of in the twenty-first century. The literature that acknowledges the dynamism of cultural identity is the acceptable way of confirming national entities and the genuine representation of the cultural self in contemporary literary discourse. This understanding of identity was a result of the romantic interpretation of the self as the inner reality of a given subject. It revealed in itself the concept of the subject as an absolute and autonomous being and denied any decisive or obligatory references outside itself. It denied transcendence outside oneself and identified itself only with its immanent reality or with its own immanent validity. The subject of cultural identity defined itself by its own subjectivity, interpreted as being self-aware, self-sufficient, and self-referential. In the contemporary discourse, being is recognised to be authentic while comprehensible only as interior consciousness.

Overall, Adichie's novels give a damning picture of cross-cultural experiences. The relationship between the émigré and the host is lacking in the symbiosis of a dialogue. Racial stereotyping has helped the whites, who are the occupants of the culturally superior status, believe in their own superiority. This includes the belief in a hierarchy with the whites at the

top and the émigrés, who are from Africa, in various degrees of inferiority. The picture painted in these novels is that of, in Marshall's robust words, 'ideas of natural racial superiority of an undeniable, scientifically established racial superiority.' This establishment 'provides a seemingly irrefutable defense of Britain's imperial position' (*The Cambridge Illustrated history of the British Empire* 221). Marshall foregrounds this scenario when he revisits J. E. Wellden's statement to his pupils in 1899. Wellden, a public school headmaster, had told his pupils that they were 'destined to be citizens of the greatest empire under heaven,' and moreover, that they had to be inspired with 'faith in divinely ordered mission of their country and their race' (qtd in Marshall 63). These racial attitudes have been ingrained for centuries and are not easy to shed off.

5.3 Depiction of Cultural Mimicry and Deculturation in Adichie's Novels

This section focuses on how émigrés chart their paths in new cultural environments. Mimicry is one of the options that are highlighted in Adichie's novels. Mimicry is found in various forms in Adichie's novels. Émigrés' actions and behaviour are refashioned to enable suit the new cultural environment. The characters developed in Adichie's novels strive to fit into the new cultural environment. The aftermath of cultural mimicry is also depicted in these novels. The émigré is does not derive comfort in imitation. A resolution is, therefore, invited. This resolution has so much ambivalence that it resists clear-cut categorisations. Deculturation arises from recollection of forgotten or submerged or repressed realities. Bakhtin, whose ideas are employed are employed in the analysis of the data in this section, observes that 'at any moment in the development of the dialogue, there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development along the way, they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form in a new context' (*Speech Genres* 170). The portrait anticipated in this section is that of characters that are unable to reconcile 'immense, boundless masses of recalled contextual meanings' and

subsequently find themselves occupying culturally ambivalent spaces because 'nothing conclusive has taken place' in this new phase of cultural consciousness (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 166). In Bakhtin's other words, the émigré's 'thought is born and shaped in the process of interaction and struggle with others' thought' (*Speech Genres* 92). A mirror of how émigrés navigate their way through cross-cultural complexities is painted variously in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*.

In Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the concept of cultural mimicry is seen through the eyes of the character Richard, a white émigré who has evidently resolved to start a new life in Nigeria. One would argue that the cold reception he receives in Nigeria stems from Sartre's theory of 'anti-racist racism.' In this sense, he is a victim of Negritude thinking, a dialectical progression that Sartre regarded as a temporal and counterproductive response (antithesis) to the thesis of white supremacy. For Punter, however, we are globally living in 'the post-colonial' and, as a consequence, the process of 'mutual postcolonial objection is,' he maintains, 'one that confronts us every day in the ambiguous form of a series of uncanny returns' (Punter vi). In Punter's view, postcolonialism is not restricted to ex-colonies. Richard is therefore no exception to this postcolonial influence. His attempts at acculturation, overt and deliberate efforts to identify with dominant Igbo culture, set him further apart from the mainstream Igbo society. He, like Ifemelu and Obinze (African émigrés in Europe and America), finds his real self lying buried beneath the alien personality imposed on him by cultural dominion.

Richard discards his native Igbo language and dedicates his time to master English in a bid to find temporal acknowledgement by the predominant Igbo language. In essence, he, a subjugated white class, is driven to reproduce the characteristics of the dominant Igbo culture in a way that closely resembles the true dominant culture. At first, he does this to facilitate his research on Igbo; however, later he finds himself deeply consumed by Igbo culture that he

literally defends it with the ethno-subjectivity of the local population. He is, for instance, ethnically affected by the injustices meted out on the Igbo population by the Northerners. His preoccupation with acculturation is not any different from Nicholas' in *Americanah*. Nicholas regards the acquisition of the English language a significant demonstration of his children's academic success in England. He feels duty-bound to speak to them in English and religiously guards against the use of Igbo. He regards the use of his native language as a deterrent to his children's progress in the mastery of English. The narrator says: 'He spoke to them only in English, as though he thought that the Igbo he shared with their mother would infect them, perhaps make them lose their precious British accents' (*Americanah* 296). He does not realise he is culturally estranging his children from his native Nigerian culture. Instead he gives the impression that linguistic infection would alienate his children from the mainstream English culture. He, it seems, has resolved to allow himself to be consumed by the alien identity of the dominant British lifestyle and he does not want to consider the danger of subjecting his children to the quandary of cultural rootlessness which plagues the generation of African émigrés in the West. His idea of civilisation is 'a mimicry of the centre proceeding from a desire not only to be accepted but to be adopted and absorbed. It [causes] those from the periphery [like émigrés] to immerse themselves in the imported culture, denying their origins in an attempt to become 'more English than the English' (Ashcroft *et al*. 4). He derives joy in this cultural estrangement and congratulates his children on their impressive efforts in the mastery of the foreign language. He fails to acknowledge that there is danger in embracing a narrow, monolithic and authoritarian form of education which, instead of teaching, largely conditions one to behave in a particular manner. Here, Adichie introduces a cultural dialogue about the foundation of culture and the myopic thoughts that inform changes in cultural allegiances. Okot's definition of culture articulately speaks of this fallacy:

> Culture is philosophy as lived and celebrated in a society. Human beings do not behave like dry leaves, smoke or clouds which are blown here and there by the wind. Men live in … institutions. And all these are informed by and in fact built around the central ideas people have developed, ideas about what life is all about, that is, their social philosophy, their 'world view.' (13)

Nicholas, it would appear, considers the denouncement of Igbo culture as a parental obligation. The use of Igbo in his house is abominable. As such, Igbo is 'systematically destroyed by enslavement, and … rendered unprivileged by the imposition of the language of a colonizing power' (Ashcroft *et al.* 9). Nicholas' wife, Ojiugo is compelled to adopt what Obinze regards as 'the gaudy theatrics of Nollywood films' and argues that that the education of her children 'is much better [in England].' She feels that her freedom of expression is deeply curtailed in this new environment, one that she crudely admits does not allow her 'to fuck in public,' yet she gives that false impression that English lifestyle thrills her. She theatrically and hyperbolically reveals some of the challenges that émigrés encounter in foreign environments. She, like Chiaku, suggests that the discriminative nature of European societies makes it difficult for African émigrés to compete fairly. The English employers do not recognise the education system in Africa. Those who have gone through African schools must upgrade their knowledge by enrolling for courses in England in order to be absorbed in the discriminative job market. This is the predicament of Ojiugo and her husband. In Ashcroft's words, 'a privileging norm [has been] enthroned at the heart of the formation of English [language] as a template for the denial of the value of the 'peripheral,' the 'marginal,' and the 'uncanonised' (3). In Ojiugo's own confession, the contradiction embedded in mimicry is highlighted:

> But this country is not easy. I got my papers because I did postgraduate school here, but you know he only got his papers two years ago and so for so long he was living in

> fear, working under other people's names. That thing can do wonders to your head, *eziokwu*. It has not been easy at all for him. The job he has now is very good but he's on contract. He never knows if they will renew. (*Americanah* 297)

Life in a foreign environment, as shown in the above illustration, is challenging. Fanon says, 'To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture. The Antilles who wants to be white [i.e. treated as human and adult] will be the whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is… Historically, it must be understood that the Negro wants to speak French because it is the key that can open doors…[W]e find a quest for subtleties, for refinements of language—so many further means of proving to himself that he has measured up to the culture (38). The job market does not recognise academic papers that are drawn from the émigrés' home countries and the émigrés are forced to embark on a new academic journey in their bid to secure job opportunities. They constantly live in fear of repatriation as their temporal strategy is an illegal one; they take fake identities to secure jobs as they pursue their studies to gain acceptance into the foreign economy.

The émigrés' lives are characterised by uncertainty; one might secure a good job but the terms are mainly contractual and the chances of having such contracts renewed are slim. One would argue that it is the very notion of European Enlightenment and cultural superiority that Adichie subjects to scrutiny. This notion evidently produces subordination and oppression of a variety of people and their knowledge. 'Otherness' is, irrevocably, a cultural reality. The Other does not necessarily endanger its selfness or its principles of identity: 'The reality principle coincides with the principle of otherness' (De Man 103). According to this notion, the validity of cultural identity cannot be an equivalent to the measure of originality of an inherent national subjectivity in it. Formations of cultural identity pass through their own 'deconstruction' and permanent multiplication of cultural relations. Consequently, the interweaving of cultural and literary influences does not result in loss of identity.

Rather, it constructs a multiple plane where yet inactivated possibilities interact and merge. In Europe, the convergence of different cultures has been a permanent factor of their existence. On the other hand, the role of marginal phenomena and traces of contacts with minor cultures were not insignificant in European cultural and literary history. Concepts of identity cannot mean simply 'to be something' or to be 'identical with oneself,' or, in other words, identity should not be seen as 'the first way of being' (Descombes 35, 37). Rather, the principle of identity coincides with the principle of otherness or -- to use Bakhtin's terminology with the principle of dialogism: 'The self is the gift of the other' (qtd. in Kershner x).

Obinze comes face to face with socio-economic challenges of his new environment. Despite his rosy educational background, he finds it difficult to get a decent job. When his visa expires, he becomes frustrated. Nicholas's family offers him temporary shelter but turns him into a house keeper. He spends most of his time in the house engaged in domestic drudgery – cooking, baby-sitting and cleaning the house. The arranged marriage between him and Cleotilde does not see the light of day. It is the ridiculous outfits that he puts on on the wedding day – the big trousers that bunched up when Obinze tightened his belt and the big jacket that 'shielded this unsightly pleat of cloth at his wait' – that worried him but the guilt of living a lie. When what Obinze had feared so many times in the past, 'so many moments that had become one single blur of panic,' really happens, 'it felt like the dull echo of an aftermath' (*Americanah* 344). He is arrested on his wedding day and whisked away like a common criminal. Cleotilde's drama, flinging 'herself on the ground with that perfect dramatic flourish' in what seemed like a rare moment of her Africanness and crying, does not make things any better for Obinze. The policemen barely glance at her and it is Obinze who bears the heavy brunt of the police force. He feels 'the heaviness of the handcuffs during the drive to the police station' as Nicholas's trousers slip 'down his hips.' The police cell

conjures the image of 'chimpanzee's cage at Nsukka's dismal, forgotten zoo.' The immigration officer is kind enough to allow him access legal counseling yet he makes it clear to him that such efforts would be fruitless. His case is seemingly cast on stone; it is obvious that he has to be deported on account of his illegal stay in England and his unsuccessful attempt at participating in a 'sham marriage.' Ironically, the arrival of the puffy-faced lawyer, who is expected to give a sense of relief, dampens his spirit further. The lawyer does offer even a flicker of hope to him. Aside from his pleasant and sympathetic demeanor, his verdict on Obinze's case is unpleasant and callous; an appeal to the case will only delay it but eventually he will be 'removed' from the United Kingdom. He says these words 'with the air of a man who had said those same words, in that same tone, more times than he wished to, or could, remember.' He comes with a bag but does not bother to open it as he sits 'across from Obinze, holding nothing, no file, no paper, no pen.'

The lawyer's demeanor suggests pointlessness, bleakness and hopelessness. The lawyer gives the impression that any intellectual investment in a case like his would be futile. It is the use of the derogative word 'removed' that Obinze finds not only irksome but also demeaning. It is a dehumanising expression; it suggests very little regard for humanity. It objectifies émigrés and pushes them to the periphery. The lawyer deliberately avoids the formality of the immigration officer. Instead he presents a crude picture of the verdict that awaits him. The narrator says, 'That word made Obinze feel inanimate. A thing to be removed. A thing without breath and mind. A thing' (*Americanah* 345). The indignity of this sarcastic remark borders on the absurd yet it reveals the stark reality of racial superiority in segregating societies like the United Kingdom. The indifference of the lawyer is even more dehumanising than the conditions of the police cell. To retain his last shred of dignity, Obinze offers to return to Nigeria. He feels, the narrator says, 'the last shard of his dignity was like a wrapper slipping off that he was desperate to retie.'

While Obinze decides to leave the United Kingdom in his attempt to recover his last shard of dignity, other Nigerian émigrés consider deceit as an act of social prowess. At the holding facility in Manchester Airport, Obinze meets two Nigerian nationals who speak so unashamedly about the devious tactics they employ to evade the British authorities. Vincent, for instance, asks Obinze how they had caught him 'with an instant familiarity' that speaks of notoriety. While others are slumped in their sorrows, the two 'Nigerians trade their stories, sometimes laughing, sometimes self-pitying.' One of them announces that he has been caught before on account of corruption. He speaks of detention so proudly that one would imagine that chicanery is a form of social success: 'Ah this *na* my second time. The first time I come with different passport' (*Americanah* 346). This transformation, an obvious preoccupation with a culture of licentiousness, marvels Obinze. This is the substance of what the narrator says of him:

> Obinze envied them for what they were, men who casually changed names and passports, who would plan and come back and do it over again because they had nothing to lose. He didn't have their savoir faire; he was soft, a boy who had grown up eating corn flakes and reading books, raised by a mother during a time when truth telling was not yet a luxury. He was ashamed to be with them, among them. They did not have his shame and even this, too, he envied. (Adichie, *Americanah* 347)

Like Ojiugo, the two Nigerians are so obsessed with the United Kingdom that they are ready to do anything to stay put. The two do not seem to worry about the moral consequences of their actions. What worries the conscientious characters like Obinze does not bother them at all. They have sold their body and soul to the foreign bidder. Unlike Ifemelu who sees an augury of her return home every time she meets a fellow Nigerian, they are not excited about visiting home, neither are they thrilled by thoughts about their families. Those who have acquired cultural navigation skills do not believe their native culture can offer any social

fulfillment. Ojiugo, for instance, is desperately struggling to ensure that her children exclusively learn the foreign British culture. In fact, she feels her children should be 'more British than the British.' She is so excited about her daughter's new circle of foreign friends that she cannot hide her joy over Nne's new-found companion, a Russian girl. It corresponds to Ugwu's excitement about his master's foreignness at the beginning of Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun;* Odenigbo spoke a 'feathery' Igbo, 'Igbo coloured by sliding sounds of English, the Igbo of one who spoke English often' (4). Ojiugo's excitement over an alien culture goes overboard; she mimics her daughter's foreign accent hyperbolically. And she is convinced that her daughter's foreign speech mannerisms will propel her socially and she 'will go places.' She is, one might be tempted to argue, the character in whom Adichie's heavily invests hard-hitting sarcasm. Even when Ojiugo visits Obinze at the holding facility in Manchester Airport, she insensitively rants about her children's success at acclimatising with the British lifestyle instead of showing empathy to Obinze. She is a typical representative of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* as she seems convinced that anything that is clothed in white is perfect and worthy of emulating. West assumes dominance over everything she and her husband once valued. She, Ojiugo, is obsessively indoctrinated with Oriental fallacies. She is literally consumed with these fallacies and she does not recognise who she truly is. She does not realise that her obsession with western civilisation further serves to reify the superiority dogma that has been imposed on the 'Orient.' She cuts the perfect figure of Okot's metaphoric 'dry leaves,' 'smoke,' or 'clouds' that are easily blown or swept away (*Africa's Cultural Revolution*13).

The British culture gives the child a lot of freedom so that the parent cannot exercise control over the child's conduct yet Ojiugo and her husband are blinded to this reality: Chika and Bose, like the other Nigerian parents in the United Kingdom, 'really forgive so much from their children because they have foreign accents. The rules are different' (300). Ojiugo does

not acknowledge the sarcasm underneath Obinze's euphemistic remarks. She feels that her native culture is puritanical if not primitive as metonymically represented in Chika's claims of a 'bush accent' (302). As a metonym, the employment of the word 'bush' resonates very well with the typical Oriental fallacies about non-West territories, specifically the lopsided argument that Africans are apes and thus lacking in Western civilisation. She and her ilk believe that Nigeria, and macrocosmically Africa, does not teach children respect but fear. She does not realise that pushing her children to the outer fringes of nativity would alienate them from their own people. Obinze invites her to, in Kral's words, 'envisage the long-term consequences of [cultural alienation] which may result in a tragic *nowhereness*' (75). Again when Obinze raises concerns about the future of these children, her remarks are repulsively defensive. It puzzles Obinze that she does not 'mourn all the things she could have been':

> 'One day they will be grown and leave home and you will just be a source of embarrassment or exasperation for them and they won't take your phone calls or won't call you for weeks,' Obinze said, and as soon as he said it, he wished he had not. It was petty, it had not come out as he intended. But Ojiugo was not offended. (*Americanah* 301)

Adichie's strategy is to contrast the natural grace and dignity of traditional African ways with the bizarre artificiality of modern habits and practices that educated Africans have copied from the America. The primary target is Ojiugo's, and macrocosmically the émigré's, apemanship. Adichie widens her scope of Ojiugo's blind worship to include much larger social, political and economic issues arising from fanatical, unthinking westernization. Ojiugo sharply contrasts Obinze, who has discovered himself in a strange new world and reacts strongly to anything that deviates from his own cultural expectations and prejudices.

Aisha, Ifemelu's salonist, goes through similar challenges in America. This is revealed when she asks Ifemelu the sacrilegious question about 'papers.' It is worth noting that émigrés 'did not ask other immigrants how they got their papers, did not burrow into those layered, private places, it was sufficient simply to admire that the papers had been got, a legal status acquired.' This statement foregrounds the banality of cultural mimicry. The stigmatizing status of the other seems so alienating that any documentation that would guarantee some semblance of acceptance is admirable. Aisha's story reads like a retelling of Obinze's frustrating experiences as an émigré in the United Kingdom. She, like Obinze, had been advised to marry an American man in order to acquire American citizenship. Unfortunately for her, 'he bring many problems, no job, and every day he say give me money, money, money' (*Americanah* 450). Chances of obtaining a green card are so slim that émigrés imagine that one needs some supernatural attachment to acquire one.

The hyperbolic expression captured above is significant in the sense that it gives prominence to the portrait of cultural mimicry as a consequence of resignation. Aisha believes that 'Ifemelu belonged to a group of people whose green cards simply fell from the sky' (451). For émigrés like Aisha who cannot get their green cards from an employer, living in a foreign world becomes even more frustrating. The acquisition of legal documents that would secure one's stay in America is pipedream for the socially underprivileged. They cannot raise enough money to bribe their way through the system unless a rare opportunity like a lottery presents itself as suggested in the case of Chijioke. The protagonist of *Americanah*, Ifemelu, learns that Aisha is not able to visit her ailing father because she does not have legitimate travel documents that would guarantee her safe return to America. She hopes that the lottery winner, Chijioke would honour his marriage proposal and enable her facilitate the acquisition of legitimate 'papers.' Her father is unwell and though she is able to send him some money, she is worried that she would fail to attend his burial ceremony in the event that he passes

away before the anticipated marriage. Aisha's wan tone and expressionless face magnify her tragedy so that Ifemelu's irritation over her inquiry about 'papers' dissolves 'and in its place, a gossamered sense of kinship grows.' Aisha's tragedy literally torments Ifemelu and the narrator's description of her reaction to Aisha's haplessness says it all:

> What was she doing? She should get up and leave, and not be dragged further into Aisha's morass, but she could not get up and leave. She was about to go back home to Nigeria, and she would see her parents, and she could come back to America if she wished, and here was Aisha, hoping but not really believing that she would ever see her mother again. She would talk to Chijioke. It was the least she could do. (*Americanah* 452)

The rhetorical question presented at the beginning of the above quotation speaks of ambivalence. The protagonist is unable to define exactly where she belongs. She does not know whether to be contented with her seemingly privileged position, which is 'not quite' privileged or to empathise with Aisha. She, in this sense, fails to display her true cultural allegiance. As a historical concept, cultural identity implies an introduction of difference into itself, in other words, an element of reciprocity into its own being (Descombes 38). Cultural identity – as an element of the historical process cannot remain of the same nature and is never a perpetuation of itself; it cannot be preserved in a fixed, unchanged form; it inherits the 'divine privilege' to introduce its authentic construct of alterity and innovative nature into itself through its continuous contact with the Other and Otherness. Using her blog posts as primary platform for cultural dialogue, Ifemelu offers many African Americans and other émigrés an opportunity to re-evaluate their views about life. Paula, for instance, is using these blog posts to 'push' her students 'out of their comfort zones' or what she calls 'safe thinking' (*Americanah* 403). Paula disabuses the notion of the so-called 'safe thinking,' the idea that Americans, particularly African Americans, should not

talk about discrimination ‘because in America everything is fine and everyone is the same’ (398). According to Bill, American journalists are no exception to this ‘silent’ rule of safety. The difference lies in wordplay; editors argue for the use of ‘subtle’ or ‘nuanced’ expressions. Ironically, ‘nuance means keep people comfortable so everyone is free to think of themselves as *individuals* and everyone got where they are because of their *achievement*’ (*Americanah* 416). The émigré is pigeonholed in this narrow, rather myopic definition. There is very little room for adopting or advocating for a more dynamic and democratic notion of the new cultural world. Determination of what is supposedly socially acceptable is the exclusive preserve, or so it would seem, of the dominating class. The émigré is unable to release their intellectual potential; consequently, consciousness and pride of their rich cultural heritage is diffused. In the process of these interactions, cultural identity is re-established through constant dialogue with other cultures. This dialogic nature pre-determines the study of cultural identity and the cultural intricacies in new environments. Bakhtin’s theory, thus, undoubtedly offers one of the most appropriate methodologies for the study of cultural identities in multicultural environments.

Bakhtin, more particularly, stretches beyond the metaphysical orientation of the earlier formalists and where he developed his ideas under the specific circumstances of prescribed ideological monism and totalitarianism. Both contexts, the formalist and the totalitarian, evoked specific philosophical and theoretical responses by Bakhtin and his followers and served the unmasking of fundamental flaws in the organisation of Western rationality. Bakhtin’s views of dialogism, in fact, extricate European rationality from its predicaments in that they mediate toward an ideology of otherness. The event of Bakhtinian ideology of Otherness as overcoming ideological monologism was due to the historical changes in the self-consciousness of European thought after the initial manifestations of Modernism.

The position advanced by the character Paula can be understood through a critical reading of Bakhtin's work and the background of contemporary poststructuralist premises may prove influential in this regard. But even more important considerations can be drawn from Bakhtin's specific terminological solutions that have brought some ethical and ideological dimensions of art to light. In the eighties, after a decade of an exceptionally warm reception of Bakhtin's ideas in theoretical debates, De Man intervened with skepticism: 'why the notion [could] be so enthusiastically received by theoreticians of very diverse persuasion and made to appear as a valid way out of many of the quandaries that have plagued us for so long' (100). However, De Man misread in Bakhtin the inherent quality of dialogism, namely conflict and contradiction, to wit, the quality implying the inscribed space for Otherness as something different and opposing. In *Marxism and Philosophy of Language,* Bakhtin presented an ontological frame to his ideas and dialogism is disclosed as a notion indicating awareness of competing views on the same thing. It implies the presence of relativised, deprivileged truth of something or, in other words, it implies the de(con)struction of the authoritative or absolute word about it. This argument repudiates the notion of 'safe thinking.' This concept, established in the philosophy of concreteness, poses anew the problem of truth and its certainty. It presupposes a non-finite character of truth, a multiplicity of focuses on it, a notion of its inexhaustiveness, that is, an immense, boundless 'wealth of its being.'

If a dialogic word is an antonym to authoritative discourse, and dialogism means decentralising or a centrifugal force in the conception of the subject or of truth (as evident in marginal comic genres), then these two Bakhtinian concepts have similar value as Heideggerian philosophy in that it has brought elaborated concepts for the de(con)struction of the history of ontology. This Heideggerian call for de-(con)struction which later echoed in American poststructuralist deconstructive hermeneutics, means

that the 'task of destroying is an effort at a creative preserving of history' (Leitch 66). Further, there are corresponding implications in the notion of dialogue and in the Heideggerian thought on 'defamiliarization and unconcealment of truth' (Leitch 70). Also, 'a word, discourse, language or culture undergoes dialogisation' (Holquist 427). Holquist's comments on Bakhtin give a most accurate translation to the North American reading public as well as an extensive survey on the problems of Bakhtin's dialogism. The concealed idea in Holquist's *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* is that behind 'safety' is fear. Notions of cultural superiority have given rise to linguistic disguises. The opportunity for cultural dialogue that Adichie offers in her novel affords the reader a chance to unravel the underlying cultural intent of the American citizens.

Some other notions from Bakhtin's taxonomy are important for the discussion of cultural identity: 'alien' or 'other' as in someone else's word, 'otherness' 're-accentuation,' a quality of incompleteness or absence of capability of definitive finalisation or in the appropriate English translation (as used by Holquist) 'inconclusiveness' or 'open-endedness.' There are also some seminal attributes like 're-accentuated,' 'dialogised,' 'refracted,' all of them assuring the presence of at least two different words or views on the given object. This implies Bakhtin's fundamental assertion that 'truth cannot triumph or conquer' (*Speech Genres* 141). In his view, the basis for the one and only truth concerning cultural identity is 'thwarted,' if not eliminated, while the problem of cultural identity is to be viewed through the principle of Otherness as exemplified in Ifemelu's character. She says this of the pretense that defines Americanism: 'Nothing is just what it is. Everything has to mean something else. It's ridiculous' (*Americanah* 385). The principle of otherness makes almost impossible for individuals to look at things objectively; Ifemelu notes that Marcia, one of the minor characters in novel, 'was talking about how black women are fat because their bodies are sites of anti-slavery

resistance' (385). The fact that Nigerians consider those who study overseas as more socially privileged than the locals is a lopsided cultural view that thrives on Otherness. The old woman who speaks highly of her son at Enugu Airport presents a damning picture of how ridiculous cultural mimicry is, and thus: 'He is the first in our village to go overseas, and our people have prepared a dance for him. The dance troupe will meet us in Ikeduru. My fellow women are jealous, but is it my fault that their sons have empty brains and my own son won the white people's scholarship?' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 27-28). The white man's education, more like what Chiaku says in *Purple Hibiscus*, is regarded highly. The local education system, it seems, is considered substandard. As such, products of this education system do not exude the intellectual merit that overseas trainees exhibit. Fallacious as it seems, those who study abroad have very high approval ratings. The old woman believes that the training that Nigerians acquire locally does not equip them adequately with technical skills. The excitement of the villagers demonstrates the Oriental fallacy's pervasion of the African intellectual psyche. The identity of culture is multiform in its being and its actual individuality functions as cultural dialogism. Thus, through dialogism the heterological nature of literary or cultural phenomena in the tradition of a given national history can be explored with fairly consequent argumentation. Cultural identity is complexly structured and it represents a non-finite wholeness. The identity of any national literature is undoubtedly multiform through its historical stages.

In Bakhtinian thought, motivated by the search for a concrete philosophy, the quest for the real self shows a reverted Cartesian position. In his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin argues that the self is a stream of statements and that so long as man lives; he is 'never coincident with himself' (48). The self cannot serve as the subject to all existing things any longer, or in other words, it has lost its own Cartesian substantiality: 'I realise myself initially through others,' Bakhtin argues, continuing, 'From them I receive

words, forms, and tonalities for the formation of my initial idea of myself' (*Speech Genres* 138). Ifemelu's relationship with Blaine heavily influences her decisions to rephrase her blog posts, so that her independence – the independence of the self – ceases to exist momentarily. The narrator observes: 'At first, thrilled by his interest, graced by his intelligence, she let him read her blog posts before she put them up. She did not ask for his edits, but slowly she began to make changes, to add and remove, because of what he said' (386). The inability of the self to serve as the subject to all existing things prompts her to reshape the texture of her 'initial ideas.' In effect, her blog posts 'sounded too academic, too much like [Blaine].' This ideally points to the insufficiency of the Cartesian subject being defined in cogito.

Bakhtin describes mimicry as a 'false tendency toward reducing everything to a single consciousness, toward dissolving in it the other's consciousness' (*Speech Genres* 141) and he argues that 'quests for my own word are in fact quests for a word that is not my own, a word that is more than myself; this is a striving to depart from one's own words, with which nothing essential can be said' (*Speech Genres* 149). In Ifemelu's effort to cut her own cultural niche, she develops a perspective about life that significantly departs from her original thoughts. She begins by resenting Blaine's unsolicited edits, but later accommodates certain components of his thoughts. In the end, her ideas become a product of both her initial thoughts as well as Blaine's. The narrator observes that she felt 'irritated' at Blaine's rather academic persuasions, 'but with the niggling thought that he was right' so that she thought of his 'positions [as] firm, so thought-through and fully realised' (*Americanah* 386-7). These mixed feelings define a decultured state. Cogito, ergo sum or, as it goes in a later dictum, ego cogito, ergo sum, is for him an inadequate answer about the self. Instead, truth is not defined as what Thomas Aquinas calls 'adequatio' any longer or, in the sense of identity, as being the same. Ifemelu's reunion with Obinze and the 'awakening' that comes with it

nudges her to tell Obinze that she had always thought of him, but the distinction between what is 'true' and what one 'feels to be true' raises her doubts about what she had actually felt. 'She wanted to tell him, 'There is no week that passed that I did not think of you.' But was that true? Of course there were weeks during which he was folded under the layers of her life, but it *felt* true' (*Americanah* 551). There is truth that is wished for, felt and then there is the real truth and Ifemelu's sounds like one that had been felt because, in her own admission, '[she] always saw the ceiling with other men' like Blaine and Curt. Yet again she does not know whether she had been 'having sex,' 'fucking,' or 'making love' and whether there was a significant difference between the three. 'The real face of truth is agonistic, defined as a field of contradictions. Truth could be defined as undecidability: the realm of the Cartesian certitude is annihilated. Truth is acknowledged not to be univocal and the concept of identity is to be redefined. The truth of the real self of culture is defined as not remaining the same; it is defined in an inscribed will to difference (Descombes 35). Modern philosophy, as well as Bakhtin in his philosophical anthropology, introduces difference into the very definition of identity. This difference is equally figuratively illustrated by the reunion of the two major characters in *Americanah*; Ifemelu 'remembered clearly the firmness of his embrace, and yet there was, also, a newness to their union; their bodies remembered and did not remember,' a paradox, a contradiction as it were, occasioned by the clash between their past and present identities. In a deliberate attempt to reconcile these seemingly disparate identities, she 'touched the scar on his chest, remembering it again' (551).

Cultural identity as revealed through history of literature and other forms of art is an entity, which is very concrete in its being. Culture should not be understood as a sum of phenomena, but as a concrete totality, where the notion of totality should be understood pragmatically (not metaphysically), to wit, as something open, non-finite, as

something inconclusive in its character. Bakhtin's explanation of the study of literature and cultural identity paints a clearer picture of the non-finite nature of culture. He avers:

> There exists a very strong, but one-sided and thus untrustworthy, idea that in order better to understand a foreign culture, one must enter into it, forgetting one's own, and view the world through the eyes of this foreign culture. ... In the realm of culture, outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of another culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly. ... A meaning only reveals its depth once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closedness and onesidedness of these particular meanings, these cultures. We raise new questions for a foreign culture, the ones that it did not raise itself ... Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched. (*Speech Genres* 6-7)

That even 'consciousness' is a real fact for Bakhtin is an argument that is explored in Adichie's novels. In *Marxism and Philosophy of Language*, he asserts that consciousness is materialised in the material of signs. The sign or, to follow strictly his views on language, the word (Russian slovo, Greek logos) or utterance (as the smallest unit of language), refracts the social and historical entities in itself. He also reminds us of the constant interplay between the sign and its related historical being. At this point, again, Bakhtin's views are very close to Heidegger's: When Heidegger elaborates his ideas of the existential meaning and the role of art and explains why man is 'located in the world and situated historically' only 'through poetry' (qtd. in Leitch 65), he also points out that the historical being itself is emerging into the unconcealedness only through the language of poetry: 'Thus art is: the creative preserving of truth in the work of art. Art then is the becoming and happening of

truth. ... All art, as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what it is, is, as such, essentially poetry. The nature of art ... is the setting-itself into-work of truth' (The Origin of the Work of Art 274). Nothing captures this than Adichie's *Americanah*, particularly the debate on the difference between professed tragedy and actual tragedy: 'the actual tragedy of Emmett Till … was not the murder of a black child for whistling at a white woman but that some black people thought: But why did you have to whistle?' (425). Adichie seems to be suggesting that the desire for the supposed 'safety' in cross-racial interactions compels émigrés to ignore the tragic plight of the black population. Instead of agitating for social justice, they feel compelled to find fault with the actions of their black counterparts. In a new cultural environment, the émigré, or so it appears, is unable think independently; consequently, they act in fear. The experience that Adichie presents in this novel is akin to the experiences captured in Baraka Amiri's *Dutchman*, where Clay, an African American is butchered in the presence of his colleagues who simply turn a blind eye to the tragedy on account of fear. The domain of poetic composition in the wider sense, that is, of the arts and of culture, has a privileged position in that it is 'a mode of the lighting projection of truth' (The Origin of the Work of Art 275). Thus, according to both Bakhtin and Heidegger, language and thinking imply the presence of the historical consciousness or of the historical being.

The identity of a culture is established through a complex reality of historical processes. The question of cultural identity should then be legitimately posed on a very concrete level. Bakhtin's gnoseological point of departure is based in his philosophy of concreteness. My methodological expectation that the implications of Bakhtin's notion of dialogue epitomises in itself the complexity of reality should then prove relevant in the discussion of cultural identity as well. When posing the question of cultural identity methodologically on the ground of the reality principle, a move into the field of

comparative literature is inevitable. However, not only the reception of one culture by another is meant here by comparative literature. Much more than in cultural influences through direct or indirect contacts, comparative literature is interested today in a re-examination of the historicality of being entrapped in the languages of different literatures and arts. The question of analyses of literary texts (or other works of art) refers us to the historical being concealed in them, and how it participates in the truth of a global self-understanding of man or woman and, consequently, in the truth of historical subjectivity of different cultures. On the other hand, the question of mutual relations between world literatures only on the basis of empirically realised contacts and influences is insufficient in modern comparative literature. Today literatures cannot be studied ignoring the questions of history itself; neither can they evade matters of their national being - both of which provide answers concerning the situation of individual literatures in a given historical segment of global thought. The study of cultural identity also gives answers connected to the very 'facticity' of the historical being which defines the situation of a literature. The problem of American, English or African cultural identity, for instance, has to be understood in the context of its juxtaposition with other cultural identities.

Cultural identity of a given national history is its 'primordial founding' (Leitch 69) and it brings forth its existence while its mode of existing is in a multitude of its own faces through history. It is a complex image of the many-sided interests of its own self. The identity of culture, if we follow Bakhtin and his notion of dialogue, is not univocal and it is neither a sum of different qualities nor of characteristics that clearly set the given culture apart from others. As any individuality, cultural identity is a meeting point of several cross-cultural influences. It is of a complex plurivocal character, open to its own changes in order to preserve its own being in a new context of interests. Our cultural identity is our

intertext. The immense and boundless world of Otherness constitutes a primary fact of existence of our cultural identity. In his later notes Bakhtin states the following: 'The study of culture (or some area of it) at the level of system and at the higher level of organic unity [implies the following notions]: open, becoming, unresolved and unpredetermined, capable of death and renewal, transcending itself, that is, exceeding its own boundaries' (*Speech Genres* 135). The presence of interests in Bakhtin's definition of cultural identity reveals that the question of politics is indispensably inherent in the event of culture through history. Forming itself and existing through cross-cultural interactions, cultural identity exposes its inevitable intertextual character. This intertextual character of cultural identity suggests infinite diversity of its being: 'The world of culture and literature is essentially as boundless as the universe,' argues Bakhtin (*Speech Genres* 140).

Openness and un-predeterminedness are the most evident characteristics of culture and its identity. The formation of the self of a given culture through encountering with Otherness cannot, as Bakhtin reminds us, change the existence of it, but only the sense of its existence. Here Bakhtin put in another crucial remark that sounds very much in accord with Post-structuralism: 'Authenticity and truth inhere not in existence itself, but only in the existence that is acknowledged and uttered' (*Speech Genres* 138). The interacting of cultural identities, as follows, results in a change of the sense of their existence. As a reflection of the self in the empirical, the Other should always lead to the self-affirmation of one's existence. Thus, self confidence of a culture – or self-consciousness, can only be activated and creatively flourish through the principle of Otherness. Cultural dialogism does not mean obliteration of individual cultural identities. To retain these individual identities, the dialogue has to be sustained: 'The thing about cross-cultural relationships is that you spend so much time explaining' (*Americanah* 563). Cultural dialogue, as history witnesses, reassures the pertaining of a gap between existing

cultural identities and their evolutionary possibilities. Against this background, it is necessary to determine the possibility of reconciling cultural identities. Besides, it is important to demonstrate whether the perceived unity of divergent cultural positions is the solution to an Othering society. This will form the thrust of the arguments in the next chapter of this thesis.

5.4 Conclusion

Displaced persons face a number of hurdles in the new environments where they seek refuge. Kambili and her brother, who are temporarily compelled to leave their parents' home for a temporary accommodation at their aunt's awaiting the resolution of the conflict between their parents, provide the initial indication that émigrés face cross-cultural challenges in their new environments. They do not move out of Nigeria yet the challenges they encounter in their aunt's and grandfather's homes are reflective of other émigrés in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah.*

Although being constantly re-established through Otherness, cultural identity cannot be deprived of its own evolution and of its own evolutionary interests. Through creative contacts it participates in its own change of sense. Cultural consciousness today, in an awareness of the infinite diversity of cross-cultural influences on its own being, is not endangered of being dissolved in another cultural identity. Uniqueness of identity of a culture lies in its very features of differences and its Otherness throughout history. Identity features of a given national literature cannot be exhausted. This inexhaustiveness, inscribed in cultural identity through its dialogism, is a guarantee, which enables its persistent existence. In this regard, the perceived fear of European cultures – especially now with the on-going plans of an extension of the European Union – that they will lose their distinct cultural identities is predicated on groundless cultural misgivings. More than two thousand years after the birthing of literary genres and literary 'languages,' literary history bears witness to the differentiation of distinct European literatures and cultures. In

their mutual interactions of cultural identities and literatures, the existing differences of individual national literatures still largely persists. Nonetheless, the condition of a permanent flux of contacts and influences, the cultural identity of a national literature is continuously undergoing the impacts of new qualities and peculiarities. Traditional identities are gradually shedding off, but the contemporary literary cultures can still be linked to specific national identities on account of their uniqueness. Linked to features of another cultural identity, one cultural identity re-accentuates its own inexhaustible characteristics. It can be changed radically or be enriched, but its transformation cannot discredit its very existence (*Speech Genres* 137).

And as to the practicality and application of the arguments in this chapter, the future of cultural integration processes, as is evident in the perspective of the proposed reflection on the identity principle as dialogism, is not likely to endanger the existence of several cultures and their individual identities in Africa and the West. Based on Bakhtin's dialogism, one might only say that a cultural identity awakens in another's consciousness and lives on its own unrepeatable existence.

In conclusion, Adichie seems to suggest in her novels, in resonance with Bakhtin, that cultural identity represents non-finite wholeness. Openness and un-predeterminedness are its most evident characteristics. Through its complexity of influences, cultural identity defies predictability. The picture captured in Adichie's is one that demonstrates that in the absence of the exploration the possibility of creating a unique émigré identity from the fusion of multiple cultures in their new environments, the émigré acquires a decultured state. In *Americanah*, Aisha, Ifemelu, Ginika and Ojiugo feel that they need to become white, even if they are not 'quite white,' to get something out of life in a new and strange cultural world. Their struggle to be part of the new cultural environments they occupy get them to positions which make their efforts ridiculous in the eyes of the people close to them. Ifemelu's finds

Ginika's obsession with cultural mimicry ludicrous. In the same way, Ojiugo's preoccupation with British lifestyle appalls Obinze. The exaggerated effort to become someone else is something that Ginika and Ojiugo experience. Ojiugo, Ginika and their ilk do not transform to a different cultural state; they derive comfort in their new statuses as cultural apes. They develop a false sense of belonging which then invites a false sense of security. For Obinze and Ifemelu, mimicry or acculturation is not a secure state; they discover that copying or imitating the culture of the host or the supposedly superior class does not make one equal to the host. It, instead, puts one in a more compromised position. The copycat becomes the subject of the host's ridicule. It validates the claims of superiority that are raised by the host. To this end, the host is vindicated.

The elusive reformatory zeal among the émigrés referred, in Bhabha's 'On Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,' as 'mimic men.' Ifemelu and Obinze are able to discern the misleading, deceptive and fatal nature of this zeal. Ginika and Ojiugo, the postcolonial mimic men become authorized versions of otherness, and thus part-objects of a metonymic colonial desire emerging as inappropriate colonial subjects. Through a cultural dialogue, dynamic characters like Ifemelu and Obinze reject this superficial comfort in mimicry and adopt ambivalent cultural perspectives, the feeling of cultural *nowhereness* or decultured state. They face the trauma of colonial ambivalence resulting from 'mimicry' marked by 'a difference that is almost nothing, but not quite – to menace – a difference that is almost total but not quite' (Bhabha 131). The nexus of 'self' verses 'Other' culminates in uncertainty, fluidity and disillusionment of the émigrés. Their situation becomes all the more wobbly, pendulum-like and wavering. This ambivalent or love-hate relationship with the 'Other' ultimately, eventually as it were, makes the émigrés' lives meaningless, lending credence to the use of the phrase 'cultural nowhereness' in the description of this new cultural state. 'The mimicry of the postcolonial subject is therefore always potentially

destabilizing to colonial discourse, and locates an area of considerable political and cultural uncertainty in the structure of imperial dominance' (Ashcroft *et al. Postcolonial Studies* 151).

CHAPTER SIX

TRANSCULTURALISM AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COSMOPOLITAN CITIZENSHIP IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S NOVELS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter demonstrates how Adichie's novels progress from the portrait of an émigré who is occupying a culturally ambivalent space, a decultured state, to a positive subscription to a dynamic engagement with multiple cultural identities. In Bakhtin's words, speech and complex cultural discourse in Adichie's novels is mixed through and through with 'heteroglossia' (an other's speech, and many other's words, appropriated expressions) and are necessarily 'polyphonic' ('many-voiced,' incorporating many voices, styles, references, and assumptions, not a speaker's 'own') (*Speech Genres* 68–84). The émigré is prompted to embark on a journey of cultural self-discovery. In this journey, the émigré goes through a process that entails the rejection of status quos that culminates in initiation into a transcultural state. At first, these multiple identities are unmerged into a single perspective, so there is a plurality of consciousness. The émigré, at this stage, occupies Bhabha's hybrid space. The émigré acquires a unitary identity as opposed to an ensemble of competing discourses encapsulated in multicultural state. The transcultural or cosmopolitan citizen is, therefore, one who exhibits one transcendental perspective or consciousness that integrates all the signifying practices, ideologies, values and desires that are deemed significant. The discussion in this chapter is aimed at demonstrating that we are living in an age of increasing interconnectedness, where political borders and cultural edges tend to blur and growing numbers of people throughout all layers of society are 'on the move' across the planet, experiencing the effects of dislocation, deterritorialisation and cross-cultural acculturation. Even though their numbers may still be relatively limited, their mobility patterns and

strategies are impacting on societies at large and call for new social, political and lifestyle configurations and conceptualisations. Thus the growing influence of views and approaches related to transnationalism, neocosmopolitanism in its rooted/situated/vernacular variants, flexible citizenship, neonomadism, transculturalism that are trying to grasp and theorise the dynamic nature of our global modernity. Transculturalism may no longer be approached as a dialogue internal to Europe or EuroAmerica, but is a global discourse in which many participate, producing different formulations of the modern as lived and envisaged within their local social environments.

Contemporary literary productions paint pictures of a new generation of culturally mobile characters. Such works are regarded as transcultural literature in this study. That is, creative writers depict characters that, by choice or by life circumstances, experience cultural dislocation, live transnational experiences, cultivate bilingual or pluri-lingual proficiency, physically immerse themselves in multiple cultures, geographies or territories, expose themselves to diversity and nurture plural, flexible identities. While moving physically across the globe and across different cultures, these characters find themselves less and less trapped in the traditional migrant/exile syndrome and become more apt instead to embrace the opportunities and the freedom that diversity and mobility bestow upon them. Modern literary writers, like Adichie, have found themselves at the forefront in capturing and expressing emerging transcultural sensitivity – 'the freedom of every person to live on the border of one's "inborn" culture or beyond it' (Epstein 334). This transcultural mode of thinking appears better suited to the needs of a rapidly globalising society. In this way, not only do they contribute to the development of a transcultural literature able to 'transcend the borders of a single culture in its choice of topic,' vision and scope, but they also promote a wider global literary perspective (Anders 1). This study explores how the identity and cultural metamorphosis inherent in the 'dispatriation' process (the transcultural process that may be

triggered by moving –physically, virtually and imaginatively – outside one's cultural and homeland borders) allows these writers to adopt new creative modes through a transcultural lens, 'a perspective in which all cultures look decentred in relation to all other cultures, including one's own' (Ellen and Epstein 312). It is through this process that internationally renowned writers like Adichie have acquired their transcultural mindset, developed their orientation towards the world at large and showed us the path towards a transcultural attitude or mode of being. The protagonists in her two novels, Half of a Yellow Sun and Americanah initially paint the picture of individuals who belong simultaneously to more than one culture, 'subjects of difference[s] that [are] almost the same but not quite' (Bhabha *Location of Culture* 122). The portrait anticipated in this discussion the subsequent formation of a cultural identity that integrates the 'more than one culture' into a single holistic one.

This study expressly focuses on a specific and extremely narrow segment of the mobile global population, that is those middle-class progressive creative intellectuals among the so-called 'knowledge workers' or, in Ulf Hannerz's lexicon, people with 'decontextualized cultural capital' who are privileged enough – by census, educational background, life opportunities/circumstances, creative/expressive abilities – to benefit from and get the most out of their transnational life-patterns and imaginations (246). These are individuals who, moreover, have been particularly affected by their multiple displacements and have developed an acute sensibility towards a cosmopolitan consciousness. Adichie articulates transcultural consciousness through characters that are able to relive their memory of Africa – enslavement, new births, misery, pain and joy – as they create new worlds in their cultural environments. These characters have rediscovered their true identities (roots) and the will and initiative to reconstruct their identities. Adichie's novels, to this end, explore the emancipative nature of this cultural rediscovery. This chapter teases out a series of articulations that are suggestive of both resistance to cultural dominance and the search for

new cultural paradigms. The task entails searching for interrelated discourses that critically interrogate issues of imperialism, patriarchy and other retrogressive practices and, in response, seeking liberated spaces and worlds.

6.2 The Portrait of Transculturalism and Cosmopolitan Citizenship in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Novels

The picture of the émigré painted in Adichie's novels is that of one who cannot permanently occupy a decultured space or a culturally ambivalent status. A cultural equilibrium is established through a process of cultural transformation and in this process, two stages can be identified: neoculturation and transculturation. Adichie's characters acknowledge that the social world is made of multiple voices, perspectives and subjective 'worlds.' To exist is to engage in dialogue and dialogues do not occur between fixed positions or subjects. Characters are also transformed through dialogue, fusing with the other's discourse. The other's response can change everything in one's own consciousness or perspective. Dialogism characterises the entire new imaginative world that Adichie's characters occupy. Authentic human life, as mirrored by Adichie's characters, becomes an open-ended dialogue. The world thus merges into a multi-voiced, dialogic whole. Its separation (as Marxist and Fanonian alienation explored in the fourth chapter of this thesis) or splitting (as in Lacanian master-signification canvassed in the fifth chapter of this study) is overcome through awareness of its dialogical character – in effect, as one big borderland. The neocultural world is a world of many worlds, all equally capable of expressing themselves and conceptualizing their objects. Adichie's novels are perceived as constructs of great dialogue among unmerged souls or perspectives. Ideas are not presented in abstraction, but are concretely embodied in the lives of the protagonists like Kambili, Olanna and Ifemelu. As dialogical texts, Adichie's novels present relations as dialogical rather that mechanical or object-like and shun cultural pigeonholing. This dialogue opens room for transcendence of difference. These multicultural

perspectives are finally collapsed into a unitary identity. This is the major point of departure between the conceptual framework of critical hybridity and Bakhtin's dialogism and indeed Bhabha's hybridity. The establishment of this unitary cultural identity is what this study regards as transculturation. This process culminates in a transculturalism and the attainment of transcultural citizenship. In this study, transcultural or cosmopolitan citizenship is painted as a distinct cultural phenomenon. Opinions are still divided on the definition of this emerging concept, yet in an increasing mobile society, there is need for crystallization of debates around this concept. Attempts are made at transcending, at crossing, literally as well as figuratively, are shown again and again as fraught attempts, articulated by the key characters in *Half of Yellow Sun* and *Americanah.* In *Half of a Yellow*, Jomo's rare hunting skills earn him the name of Kenya's great man 'Kenyatta' (15). The intertwined history of the struggle for liberation in Africa leads to a corralling of identities, which is a relatively recent layer in the contemporary cultural palimpsest.

Americanah, Adichie's third novel, lends itself very well, both thematically and structurally, to the framework of critical hybridity. It offers a rich contact zone where historically and culturally African, English, Native American and African American histories and cultures meet, and with varying degrees of intensity, engage. The lexical deviation in the title of this novel suggests America's porous or permeable state. As a society, America is penetrable. Beyond the traditionally acknowledged American citizen, an 'American*ah*' can be constructed. The introduction of the suffix 'ah' seems meaningless from a superficial viewpoint. The two do not ordinarily fit the definition of a morpheme, which should the smallest indivisible unit of a word. They do not convey any meaning in the strict sense of the word, but a closer scrutiny reveals a totally different picture. America does not represent a closed cultural system; it is penetrable. An émigré is, therefore, capable of attaining a cultural identity that transcends Americanism. This is the identity that Ifemelu strives to attain.

Americanah revolves around the character Ifemelu, a Nigerian woman who travels to the United States to further her education and embarks on a journey of socio-economic adventure. In this adventure, the novel accords the reader an opportunity to think through gaps in discourse and the dismantling of traditional cultural narratives of sorts, including notions of superiority of the host's culture over the émigrés', and allows for the articulation of the transcultural. Ifemelu's story provides room for a gradual alteration of the cultural bases and addresses the disproportionate patterns of power relations in a variety of cultural environments. She, like Obinze and his ilk, makes deliberate efforts to create a platform for alternative cultural spaces. Her story reads like a continuation of Kambili and Olanna's tale in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* respectively. Critiqued together, one gets the impression that they fall within the same fictional frame. Kambili's transculturation process is not triggered by physical displacement from the national borders but rather an imaginative movement outside the traditional Nigerian boundary. This chapter delves deeply into Adichie's *Americanah*. In illustrating the establishment of cosmopolitan citizenship, this study argues that transculturalism has become ever more interwoven and susceptible to many applications, interpretations and meanings. On account of its polyvalence, it can no longer be understood holistically in a one-way flow of cultural data. Adichie's novel provides a useful platform for deliberation on the multivalent nature of the concept of transculturalism and its establishment.

In *Americanah*, the central character Ifemelu goes through a process of neoculturation and transculturation in her new-found hobby: blogging. She stays in the American society but rejects the mainstream American culture. She, for instance, frowns upon the irresponsible and irritating behaviour of grown up American men eating ice cream cones in public, the escapist thinking that race is no longer an issue in the contemporary American society and the coated language of the American adults, unnecessary euphemism that makes the use of such words a

'fat' derogative so that fatness becomes a social stigma. In America, the word 'fat' is bad and connotes such negative moral judgement as 'stupid or bastard' (*Americanah* 6). Initially, she attempts to acculturated herself into the mainstream American culture and when she blogs, comments from 'readers like Sapphic-Derrida, who reeled off statistics and used words like 'reify' in their comments, made her nervous, eager to be fresh and to impress, so that she began, over time, to feel like a vulture hacking into the carcasses of people's stories for something she could use.' This resigned and lackadaisical attitude to her social life, an intellectually lazy attitude to scholarship, which is encapsulated in her unoriginal blogs, one that pushes her to live other people's lives and to imitate their views about life, robs her of confidence in self. She begins, the narrator observes, to make 'fragile links to race. Sometimes not believing herself. The more she wrote the less sure she became. Each post scraped off yet one more scale of self until she felt naked and false.'

This naked and false self highlighted above represents the deculturation stage. She is awoken from this nakedness by the rude man at the supermarket, who says that 'fat people don't need to be eating that shit' as she paid for her giant bag of Tostitos. What is originally framed as an offensive remark turns out to be an eye opener for Ifemelu. She recognises that she has been living a lie. When returns home, she takes her time to re-examine her life. The 'mirror' she uses symbolically reveals the grim reality of her pretentious life. She begins to internalise an anti-American sentiment and thus a new consciousness begins to shape her cultural experience. Adichie engages the reader in a transitional in-between interpretive space where notions about culture and identity are challenged and renegotiated. Ifemelu's cultural awakening suggests a significant step towards rebirth as she makes a bold move towards the establishment of new borders of cultural identity. In Bhabha's view, the in-between space of border transition is 'neither a new horizon, nor a leaving of the past' as the [émigrés] 'find themselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures

of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion' (*Location of Culture* 1-2). Ifemelu, triggered by the insolent man's physiological spat, re-evaluates conventional notions of American identity. It would appear that the literary focus of *Americanah* is not an effort to amalgamate opposing cultural ideas, but to transcend the differences and generate an 'other space' where the writer's remonstration of traditional Americanism can be evaluated. She resolves to pursue her original dream. This is unveiled when the narrator notes:

> But back home, as she stood and faced the mirror's truth, she realised that she had ignored, for too long, the new tightness of her clothes, the rubbing together of her inner thighs, the softer, rounder parts of her that shook when she moved. She was fat. She said the word 'fat' slowly, funneling it back and forward, and thought about all the other things she had learned not to say aloud in America. She was fat. She was not curvy or big-boned; she was fat, it was the only word that felt true. And she had ignored, too, *the cement in her soul*. (*Americanah* 7)

Adichie, using her protagonist Ifemelu, explores, in Ashcroft's terms, how 'hybridity and the power it releases may well be seen as the characteristic feature and contribution of the post-colonial, allowing a means of evading the replication of the binary categories of the past and developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth' (Ashcroft 183). Ifemelu rejects Ginika-*ism*, the false illusion that coating reality with unreality would make one happier and comfortable as propagated by her friend Ginika. Ginika, like the Nigerian taxi drivers in America, is living in denial. Like Nigerian taxi drivers who do not want to identify themselves as drivers and are aggressively eager to tell their countrymen in the States that they have a master's degree and taxi driving is their second job, she advises Ife to avoid the use of the word 'fat.' Nigerian taxi drivers take false identities to shield themselves from public scrutiny; they take 'on all sorts of false names' and this is the reason Ife becomes wary

when a taxi driver introduces himself as Mervin Smith. She (Ife) shuns them because they are not proud of who they are and the kinds of jobs they do to earn a living. She projects her rebellious self, one that is critical of the hypocrisy of the socio-cultural dogmatism. Apart from denouncing the cultural paradigm of hollow decency, she embarks on a journey of introspection, self-discovery and reincarnation. The mirror's truth, an image that repetitively appears in Adichie's *Americanah*, reveals that Ife is fat. This revelation offers her new opportunity, a chance to get back to her original track. The 'cement in [Ifemelu's] soul,' is something that 'had been there for a while, an early morning disease of fatigue, a bleakness and borderlessness,' 'amorphous longings, shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living, that had melded into piercing homesickness,' suggesting an exhibition of a mixed cultural sensitivity. The use of the word 'cement' metaphorically captures an element of determination and steadfastness; she still had a strong will to explore and make discoveries about life. Yet she had temporarily stopped living her life. The impressionistic façade of happiness had overshadowed her real self. Her exploratory research on Nigerian lifestyles displays a certain measure of craze for home. The substance of this neoculturation is captured below:

> She scoured Nigerian websites, Nigerian profiles on Facebook, Nigerian blogs, and each click brought yet another story of a young person who had recently moved back home, clothed in American or British degrees, to start an investment company, a music production business, a fashion label, a magazine, a fast-food franchise. She looked at photographs of these men and women and felt the dull ache of loss, as though they had prised open her hand and taken something of hers. They were living her life. Nigeria became where she was supposed to be, the only place she could sink her roots in without the constant urge to tug them out and shake off the soil. (*Americanah* 7)

Obinze is a critical part of Ifemelu's homesickness yet that is not all. The American culture had reinforced her traditional alignment to the Nigerian culture and the need for exploration of new cultural vistas. Ifemelu resolves to end their three-year creaseless relationship Blaine, one that had defied blame and friction because Barack Obama victory had bonded 'anew over their shared passion.' The insolent supermarket man, however, reinvigorates Ifemelu's boldness: 'she had not had a bold epiphany and there was no cause; it was simply that layer after layer of discontent had settled in her, and formed a mass that now propelled her' (*Americanah* 8). Barack Obama placates the animosity between them and offers their relationship a semblance of peace. Nigerian culture, like Obinze's love, offered Ifemelu some form of contentment and nudged her to disregard existing cultural borders. Her 'relationship with Obinze was like being content in a house but always sitting by the window and looking out' (*Americanah* 9). This pictorial comparison foregrounds the temporal nature of this union. Ifemelu's uncertainty about the future and what it holds for her complicates the situation. Her unfinished business with Obinze puts her at crossroads. She makes plans about her future and evens dreams but he deliberately shuts her boyfriend Blaine out of this side of her life. She applies for jobs in Lagos behind her boyfriend's back because she wants to 'finish her fellowship at Princeton and then after her fellowship ended, she did not tell him because she wanted to give herself time to be sure.' Evidently, her boyfriend Blaine does not represent her cultural vision; his presence does not paint the picture of the life that she envisages. He is a temporary distraction from Ifemelu's path towards cultural transcendence. She radically departs from Blaine's vapid academic thoughts and embarks on a new journey. Her remarkable objectivity on racism is a significant point of reference. She notes that there are several 'racisms' and the idea that traditional manifestations of racism are no longer prominent does not mean that racists cease to exist as demonstrated in *Americanah* where Adichie says:

> In America, racism exists but racists are all gone. Racists belong to the past. Racists are the thin-lipped mean white people in the movies about the civil rights era. Here's the thing: the manifestation of racism has changed but the language has not. So, if you haven't lynched somebody then you can't be called racist. If you are not a bloodsucking monster then you can't be called racist. Somebody has to be able to say that racists are not monsters. They are people with loving families, regular folk who pay taxes. (390)

The perception that Ifemelu offers in regard to what would ordinarily appear to be a clichéd subject injects some elements of novelty and freshness to its treatment. The sarcasm that underlies the title of this blog post deliberately foregrounds her declaration for a new cultural outlook: 'Job Vacancy in America – National Arbiter in Chief of 'Who is Racist.' Racism has mutated over the years and manifests itself in different forms, so that the sufferers of the so-called 'Racial Disorder Syndrome' should be placed into different categories of 'mild, medium and acute' syndrome. Adichie, it would appear, creates a protagonist who deviates from the typical character of an *Americanah* (a blind imitator of American mannerisms); she does not rely on external approval to gain fame, neither does she depend on other's validation to remain relevant. Rather she defiantly maintains her objectivity to retain her *genuine* honesty. She rejects the notion of gaining undeserved fame by writing 'terrible things about his own people' (*Americanah* 394).

Obinze exhibits a transcultural mode of thinking. Against all socio-cultural odds in his native Nigeria, he remains humble and deliberately avoids the high-handedness and exploitative tendencies of the plutocrats, something that seems to define traditional Nigerianness, yet he rises through the ranks to become a very successful businessman. After his humiliating and seemingly unceremonious return from England, he learns that 'Big Men and Big Women did not talk to people, they instead talked at people' (*Americanah* 30). This is the experience he

encounters when he is introduced to Chief, a very rich and amorous Nigerian man. When Nneoma takes him to the Chief's residence, he finds an opportunity to obtain first-hand information on the stereotypical demeanor of Nigerian capitalists. The chief literally monopolises the discussion, 'pontificating about politics, while his guests crowed.' Yet his audience, despite their fussy looks – wearing the uniform of the Lagos youngish and wealthyish (leather slippers, jeans and open-neck tight shirts, all with familiar designer logos), displayed 'the plowing eagerness of men in need.' Yet Obinze, like Olanna and Ifemelu, is typical of the modern isolated characters of African fiction. In *African Literature*, David Cook's comment on these characters is particularly insightful. He observes:

> The key figures in African novels are typically at variance with their societies, however closely wedded to them they may be in certain respects … In the challenge that these protagonists offer to group behaviour, they are unrepresentative. While the issues they raise may be those unavoidably facing their societies, they themselves become atypical. It is normal to be a unit in the close-knit social pattern; so that to break the set design is abnormal. (4-5)

Obinze, like Ife, does not seem to speak for the Nigerian society; he cuts the figure of an outsider and in this sense he gives one the impression of an anti-hero of the typical Nigerianness. His travels open the eyes of his mind and allow him to have a better perception and understanding of the world around him. Exposed to cultural plurality and diversity by choice as well as life circumstances, he manages to transcend the borders of a single culture and begins to promote a global cultural perspective. Material comfort, what Armah calls 'the gleam,' does not seem to attract him (35). The background that the narrator provides does not mould him in the typical sense. His encounter with the Chief reinforces his rejection of the greed for material wealth for its sake. He devotes his life, it evident, to the pursuit of his own form of social fulfillment. From Obinze's outsider

perspective, the Chief and his ilk do no realise that *the wretched of the earth* have to, as a matter of exigency, 'start over a new history of man and take account of not only the occasional prodigious theses maintained by Europe but also its crimes, the most heinous of which have been committed at the very heart of man, the pathological dismembering of his functions and the erosion of his unity, and the context of the community, the fracture, the stratification the bloody tensions fed by class, and finally, on the immense scale of humanity, the racial hatred, slavery and exploitation' (Fanon 238).

That Edusco's success story is an easy appeal to Obinze's conscience does not come as a surprise. The fact that he acquires material wealth does alienate him from his original social background. The plight of the rank and file of the Nigerian society has not eluded him. This is the reason, it would appear, he admires men like Edusco, 'men who did not know any Big Man, who had no connections, and had made their money in a way that did not defy the simple logic of capitalism' (*Americanah* 560-561). In open defiance of the 'Big Man' syndrome, he begins, with 'only a primary school education,' to apprentice for traders, starts off 'with one small stall in Onitsha and now [owns] the second largest transport company in the country' (561). In the face of moral decadence, Edusco's success demonstrates, though not the Krishna way, that rising through the ranks honestly is still not a myth, but a social reality. He, like Obinze puts it, understood that they 'lost the Biafran war and learned to be ashamed' (561). Losing the Biafran war did not dampen the spirit of Igbos; it taught them to appreciate the value of social cohesion. This explains why successful Igbo men who had 'learned' from the experiences of war do not find the parochialism of shallow ethnicity any attractive. Obinze appreciates social justice and value of human dignity and this elaborately illustrated by the following words:

> [Obinze] imagined Edusco talking about him in a gathering of other self-made Igbo men, men who were brash and striving, who juggled huge businesses and supported

> vast extended families. *Obinze ma ife*, he imagined Edusco saying. *Obinze is not like some of these useless small boys with money. This one is not stupid.* (*Americanah* 562)

Obinze's assessment of these supposedly successful men's demeanor reveals an independent and transnational view of Nigerian life. Diaspora-*isation* has set him apart from the typical thinking of the postcolonial Nigerian bourgeoisies, who do not associate themselves with the plebian masses. He incisively notes that there is a measure of discomfort in the submissiveness of the capitalists' institutionalisation of loyalty or sycophancy; they are evidently suffocated, confined and trapped by the social constructs of the hegemonic control of the power brokers like Chief, who believe in the myopic principle of 'no-one-knows-tomorrow.' This is a highly selfish and individualised perception of life, one that does not see the society beyond its present state. This parochial view of social life denounces the notion of posterity and celebrates excesses of the spur of the moment; it celebrates economic plunder and self gratification. The Chief speaks 'with a triumphant tone, mundane observations delivered as grand discoveries.' It amuses Obinze how frank Nneoma is in her flirtations: her exaggerated animation and shiny ego-burnishes. She (Nneoma), it would appear, displays a Nigerian version of Ginika-*ism*. She enthusiastically urges Obinze to keep hanging around until Chief does something for him. Like Ifemelu's meeting with the rude man at the supermarket, Obinze's meeting with Chief significantly transforms his cultural worldview. The narrator says:

> Chief's steward always served fresh pepper soup, deeply flavorful pieces of fish in a broth that made Obinze's nose run, cleared his head, and somehow unclogged the future and filled him with hope, so that he sat contentedly, listening to Chief and his guests. They fascinated him, the unsubtle cowering of the almost rich in the presence of the rich, and the rich in the presence of the very rich; to have money, it seemed,

> was to be consumed by money. Obinze felt repulsion and longing; he pitied them, but he also imagined being like them. One day, Chief drank more cognac than usual, and talked haphazardly about people stabbing you in the back and small boys growing tails and ungrateful fools suddenly thinking they were sharp. Obinze was not sure what exactly had happened, but somebody had upset Chief, a gap had opened, and as soon as they were alone, he said, 'Chief, if there is something I can help you do, please tell me. You can depend on me.' His own words surprised him. He had stepped out of himself. He was high on pepper soup. This was what it meant to hustle. He was in Lagos and he had to hustle. (*Americanah* 30-31)

Like Ifemelu, Obinze's cultural vision is gradually unclogged; he expresses a desire to have the experience of other more amicable worlds, worlds that are receptive to the flourishing of new humane possibilities. He regains his clarity of vision from his consumption of pepper soup. Initially, the glamour of luxury fascinates him, more like the impressionistic blogs that clog Ifemelu's judgment. Momentarily, clamour for easy life consumes him, pushing him to an obsession with materialistic fantasy so that he bears very close semblance to the rich who are consumed by money. He develops mixed reactions to material success: 'repulsion and longing.' When Chief reveals that he has been betrayed by young confidants, Obinze promises to offer an honest departure from the perfidy of 'the small boys' and 'ungrateful fools.' His sudden transformation into a typical Nigerian opportunist surprises him. The fact that he takes advantage of Chief's unfortunate past to rake in material capital does not in any way differ significantly from Ifemelu's hacking into other people's stories to popularise her blogs. When Chief praises him on account of good home training, he puts on a half smile to conceal the oddity of Chief's ridiculous compliment. Yet when his boss, Chief, observes that hunger and honesty is a rare combination in the country, he nods but 'he was not sure whether he was agreeing about his having this quality or about the rarity of this quality' (33).

Obinze succeeds but he does not derive any happiness from his material success. Instead his new social status offers him a perfect opportunity to examine traditional Nigerianness and Americanism even more carefully. He learns that banks in Nigeria, like most banks in the world, give loans to people who do not need money and that there is a certain measure of racial attachment to success in business when Nneoma advises him to find a white man and employ him as the General Manager. When he takes his offer letter to the bank, he feels 'surreal saying fifty and fifty-five and leaving out the million because there was no need to state the obvious.' The ease of it all dazes him, 'how even the semblance of wealth oiled paths.' Adichie, it is evident, spares no pains in exposing the cynicism and hypocrisy of post-independence African elites.

Using Obinze, Adichie forcefully registers her concern at the excesses of the African bourgeoisies and the exploitation of the toiling masses. On account of his integrity, Obinze stands above this material filth and drifts away from the typical Nigerianness. Impressionistic lifestyle attracts in Nigeria just like it does in America, so that all he needed to do was 'to drive to a gate in his BMW and the gateman would salute and open it for him, without asking questions.' Interestingly, even the American embassy was no different: 'He had been refused a visa years ago, when he was newly graduated and drunk with American ambitions, but with his new bank statements, he easily got a visa' (33). The immigration officer at the Atlanta Airport treats him warmly, a great departure from the harsh treatment he had encountered in England. The officer is warm and chatty and easily asks him how much cash he has. In fact, the officer is surprised at the little money he declares as opposed to the 'thousands of dollars' that other Nigerians of his class declare all the time. This general ease does not satisfy him; he feels a certain longing and hollowness. Wealth essentially brings him social comfort and he is unable to reconcile his social stature and his true self. There is evidence of a rift between these two conflicting selves as exemplified in this illustration:

> This was what he now was, the kind of Nigerian expected to declare a lot of cash at the airport. It brought to him a disorienting strangeness, because his mind had not changed at the same pace as his life, and he felt a hollow space between himself and the person he was supposed to be. (*Americanah* 33)

Obinze's critique of his wife's demeanor at Chief's party reveals something of a transcultural perspective. Kosi's pretentiousness makes him uncomfortable. 'There was something immodest about her modesty: it announced itself' (34). It is like the marketing director's 'unbearable politeness that is worse than any insult' (*Americanah* 393). Adichie employs paradox in this instance to foreground the exaggerated nature of Kosi's plastically overdramatised mannerisms. She dramatises them, it would appear, chiefly to draw attention. Her behaviour is not natural; it is simply acted out in a rather Jerzian manner. Her charm, like 'Curt's kind, with its need to dazzle, to perform … in that well-oiled way that slightly embarrassed Ifemelu,' does to excite Obinze (*Americanah* 268). A woman who pigeon-holes herself in the traditional cage – what Femi Ojo-Ade calls 'the gilded cage' – does not appeal to him. This is equally quite typical of Nigerianness where the woman is a flower and it is Femi who captures the typical Nigerian scenario quite aptly. Femi opines:

> Woman is considered to be a flower, not a worker. Woman is supposed to be relegated to the gilded cage; she is not the contributor to, the creator of, a civilisation. So the new black bourgeoisie, all awash with the off-white paint of civilisation, emerged in the arena of inhumanism. (158)

Kosi's conventional wisdom does not appeal to Obinze. She has relegated herself to the periphery and ironically feels comfortable in this position. She ridiculously seems to derive joy in playing second fiddle to men and does not recognise that times have changed. That Obinze feels deeply attracted to Ifemelu can be understood in this context. Ifemelu sets her

record straight, revolts and breaks free from her false sense of security. Determined to take a new path, new beginning; she resolves to find her own moorings and identity. She casts off Americanism, which impedes the psychological and intellectual awakening of émigrés and inflicts a paralysing and numbing influence on the émigrés' psyche. She begins a fresh exploration of the existing space, identity and generally American life. She does not give in to conventional perceptions, those that seep into the émigrés who submit to their fate without resisting and rebelling. They, Ginika and her ilk, accept and conform to the social conventions and in turn become perpetuators of American hypocrisy. Seemingly devoid of option and voice, perhaps fearing that objecting to the cultural norms of the dominant group would alienate them from their newfound company; they mould new émigrés to accede to these conventions. Ifemelu refuses to be content with conventionality and instead embraces a more liberal and emancipated standpoint. Transculturalism, in her view, or so it would seem, entails the acknowledgement of the idea that 'the only race that matters is the human race' (*Americanah* 5). Miss Adebayo's argument is in tandem with this philosophy; she avers that in 'the bigger picture, we are all one race' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 20). One would contend that other notions of racial differentiations are constructs of the white man; '[we are] black because the white man constructed black to be as different as possible from his white' (HYS 20). Ifemelu, Obinze and Odenigbo, are, in Achebe's terms, 'lucky in their wrestle with multiple-headed [cultural] spirits.' Achebe opines:

> We lived at the crossroads of cultures. We still do today, but when I was a boy, one could see and sense the peculiar quality and atmosphere of it more clearly … But still cross-roads does have a certain dangerous potency; dangerous because a man might perish there wrestling with multiple-headed spirits, but also he might be lucky and return to his people with the boon of prophetic vision. (67)

Yet even traditional notions of nationhood like the tribe (what Odenigbo claims to be the naturally constituted and 'authentic identity for the African') have been dismantled. It no longer carries the national image that it held for the African citizens; it has been barbarised as it is a colonial product. Nothing puts this better than Professor Ezeka's observations; most African citizens have become aware that they are members of a given tribe because of the white man: '… you became aware that you were Igbo because of the white man. The pan-Igbo idea itself came only in the face of white domination. You must see that tribe as it is today is as colonial a product as nation and race' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 20). This view of tribe as presently constructed demonstrates the near lack of indigenous cultural purity and thus the inevitability of denationalisation.

These traditional notions should be re-conceptualised and re-evaluated. Adichie appears to suggest that transculturalism resides outside the restrictive boundaries and myopic confines of race and thus foregrounds a claim to an identity that rejects narrow social constructs. Transculturation is, it seems, a process initiated by the realisation that long-held notions about culture must be reassessed. This standpoint is a repudiation of uncritical notion of pan-Africanism as it too is a creation of the white man. The tragedy of post-independence African citizenry is the intransigent hold on traditions that no longer have a bearing in a fast-globalising society. There are claims to definitive and distinct cultural shapes that do not exist in reality. To a large extent, Odenigbo's tragedy is the tragedy of many an African citizen who still cling on to tribes yet as they are currently constructed, they only serve the interests of the imperialist administrators. In this way, Adichie's novels endorse the transformative nature of literary creativity as they seem to demonstrate the power of fiction to 'slip the restrictive noose of race' in its efforts to realise a transcultural quality (Caryl 131). This statement is akin to what Obama calls 'wanting to grow into a human being' – a figure of speech that this study regards as a euphemism for transculturalism. And for one to realise

humanness fully, Obama argues, they 'need some values' such as 'honesty,' 'fairness,' 'straight talk,' and 'independent judgment' (49).

The arrival of Olanna, an émigré, presents a linguistic dimension to transcultural discourse. Her exposure to London lifestyle does not affect her mastery of the Igbo language. In what looks like Master Odenigbo's ability to blend English words in his Igbo sentences musically and sonorously, a quality that excites the young Ugwu; she (Olanna) does not 'stumble in her Igbo.' What is interestingly ironic is the effortlessness with which Olanna demonstrates the mutual co-existence of English and Igbo in her talk; '[Ugwu] had not expected English that perfect to sit beside equally perfect Igbo' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 23). This illustration points to Pratt's observation that the 'third' space is an ambivalent contact zone, that, on the one hand, offers perspectives of 'co-presence, interaction, interlocking understanding and practices' (7). She cuts the image of African scholars whose dalliance with West education has only re-invigorated their aspirations to authenticate and reinterpret their traditional African values. Olanna has an exemplary mastery of the English, something that comes naturally to her, yet this artful mastery does not alienate her from Igbo. She is the perfect antithesis of Ojiugo, who impresses upon her children to elevate the foreign at the expense of her own. Unlike Odenigbo's English which is 'music,' Olanna's is 'magic' – 'a superior tongue, a luminous language, the kind of English he [Ugwu] heard on Master's radio, rolling out with clipped precision. It reminded him of slicing a yam with a newly sharpened knife, the easy perfection in every slice' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 22). Contrary to Ugwu's expectations, Olanna carries out herself modestly and even offers to 'show [him] how to cook rice properly, without using so much oil,' an indication that her stay in London had not alienated her from a natural life. It would appear that her distaste for 'so much oil' figuratively speaks of her disregard for flashiness. 'There was something polished about her' yet she exhibits natural emotions – 'moaning loudly, sounds that seemed unlike her, so uncontrolled and stirring and throaty'

(*Half of a Yellow Sun* 25). She downplays the ticket seller's fury at the porter for supposedly failing to take her to the VIP lounge at Enugu Airport. She comfortably sits at the general lounge 'opposite three little children in threadbare clothes and slippers who giggled intermittently while their father gave them severe looks' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 27). In spite of the highly placed position that her father holds and her exposure to Western lifestyle, she still feels passionate about communing with the underprivileged in her society. The musty smell in the crowded lounge does not nudge her to leave. Her exposure to foreign lifestyle prompts her to adopt a transcultural view. In what looks like a plea for a transcultural approach understood as a solution for a harmonious cultural dialogue, Brooks describes transculturalism as a 'converge' of cultures, in which each social group contributes 'something of value to a new, blended mainstream culture' (24-25).

Adichie delegitimises and deconstructs 'Oriental fallacy.' Against Olanna's oratory finesse, her Igbo words are softer and equally perfect. Her efforts at perfecting both languages signify her acknowledgement that no culture is superior to the other. The hyperbolic description of her spoken English would ordinarily suit alienated African scholars like Obi Okwonkwo (Achebe's *been-to* in *No Longer at Ease*), who believe that their uncritical adoption of western speech mannerisms place them above their 'pan-African' counterparts. Olanna, unlike Ojiugo's investment in assimilation to whiteness, appears to have deterritorialised cultural belonging through self-invention. In this way, she, and Adichie for that matter, makes deliberate attempts to shift the restrictive cultural boundaries of her traditional Nigerian society as well as the typified whiteness and deconstructs established cultural formations, norms or notions to reassert legitimate belonging on individualistic grounds. Adichie, like Okot p'Bitek before her, seems to be 'simply and rightly saying that we cannot ape and hope to create' (vii). She vouches for cultural transcendence as opposed to cultural authenticity. The stature that her father (Chief Ozobia) holds does not separate her from the

mainstream plebian society. Her exposure to Western education, something that excites ordinary Nigerians like the grandmother at the airport who believe that studying overseas sets *been-tos* apart from other Nigerians, does not seem to thrill her. It is little wonder that the reaction of the grandmother startles her. She gives the impression of someone who has incorporated the entirety of her experiences 'into [her] character and personality and respond to all subsequent experiences from the perspective of [her] new self' (Storti 65).

The flashback that comes after the airport incident further reifies Olanna's cultural re-invention. She nostalgically recalls that their first meeting was orchestrated by a similar drama. A ticket seller had signalled a white man to jump the queue in an obvious preferential treatment, in what loudly indicated the racially afflicted mindset of the African citizens. Putting on what the narrator humorously calls the 'contrived 'white' accent of 'uneducated people,' he had pronounced: 'Let me help you here sir' (29). Olanna reveals that it is Odenigbo's bold protest against the injustice at the airport that attracted her to him. He had 'walked up to the front, escorted the white man back into the queue and then shouted at the ticket seller,' an incident that stands out as the most blatant and daring move against social injustices perpetuated by African employees who are brainwashed by Oriental fallacies. To show his disgust at the employee, he had said: 'You miserable ignoramus! You see a white person and he looks better than your own people? You must apologise to everybody in this queue! Right now!' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 29). By doing this, he transcends the conventional myths and notions of white superiority and prompts Olanna to, in the writer's own words, 'think of the least hurtful way to untangle herself from Mohammed.' Odenigbo projects a transcultural perspective that resonates very well with her ideas. He dismantles stereotypical notions of white dominance and presents a new cultural outlook. His rejection of an Orientalised social space points towards the possibility of transcending the boundaries of the traditionally oppressive identity categories upon which human beings are defined and

evaluated. The transcultural 'space' that Odenigbo projects 'here is hybrid, shifting, and reflective of the elaborate relationships that construct our sense of space in the contemporary world' (Sara 15).

Olanna, as opposed to her cousin Arize who regards marriage as the epitome of bliss and social fulfillment, thinks differently and markedly departs from the traditional stereotyping of marriage as the hallmark of a traditionally acclaimed femininity. She turns down Odenigbo's marriage proposal because it is a threat to their happiness. 'Each time he suggested they get married, she said no. They were too happy, precariously so, and she wanted to guard that bond; she feared that marriage would flatten it to a prosaic partnership' (*Half of a Yellow Sun* 52). Prose, in this context, metaphorically suggests monotony and consequently boredom. She disabuses of the notion that women, and indeed the two main players in the marital arrangement, have to secure their happiness by rushing into marriage. In doing this, Olanna subscribes to Oprah Winfrey's observation, a deconstructed view of the marital institution as it were, that she and her long-term partner Steadman Graham 'wouldn't [have been] together' if they had formalised their partnership in marriage. Speaking to *Vogue*, Oprah Winfrey indicates that Steadman, a partner she has known since 1986, has a very traditional view of married household, which she insists she would never 'fit in with.' 'His interpretation of what it means to be a husband and what it would mean for me to be a wife would have been pretty traditional, and I would not have been able to fit into that' (Winfrey). She admits, ridiculous as it might seem for traditionally oriented characters like Kosi, to being impatient and not regretting 'never having children,' as she does not believe she would have made a good mother. Olanna's reluctance to marry Odenigbo can be best understood in this context. Adichie, like Oprah, seems to suggest that the traditionally dogmatised position that marriage entitles one to happiness is misguided. In subscribing to this view, Olanna establishes transcultural citizenship. She also believes that beauty goes beyond physical

attractiveness and to reduce it to appearance alone is myopic. Nothing describes her cultural views than what Ali Mazrui calls the 'third phase of cultural nationalism.' In *The Anglo-African Commonwealth,* Ali Mazrui postulates:

> A third phase of cultural nationalism is the capacity to take pride in some aspects of African culture without feeling an urge to renounce western [or any other foreign] culture at the same time. But when a cultural nationalist reaches this stage … [they are] beginning to accept the proposition that there is such a thing as a global pool of mankind's cultural achievements from different lands. (108)

According to Gilroy, the 'movements of black people' from Africa to Europe and America has not only resulted in 'slavery and exploitation,' but it has also led to the creation of groups involved in 'struggles towards emancipation, autonomy and citizenship.' Hybridity, then becomes, Gilroy argues, a pertinent aspect of what he regards as a 'black Atlantic,' which he describes as an 'intercultural and transnational formation' and which 'provides a means to re-examine the problems of nationality, location, identity and historical memory' (16). The development of colonial hybridity should therefore be canvassed in the context of the 'political and intellectual cross-fertilisations' that have been borne out of the black diaspora. 'Black Atlantic' is a tag that is borne out of neoculturation. In the same vein, Hall contends that the contemporary black identities in the west emerge from the 'cut and mix' process of 'cultural diaspora-*isation*' (447). Transcultural citizenship, in this regard, becomes the end product of the cultural cross-pollination that is occasioned by the movements of individuals across the planet.

Ife's perceptions about physical intimacy are nothing short of transcultural. She does not traditionally regard sex as an absolute indicator of infidelity and she is honest about it. To assume that colour or race difference would not propel one to some sort of 'intimate'

discovery is to overplay the holiness card. 'There was something fluid, almost epicene, about his lean body, and it made her remember that he had told her he did yoga. Perhaps he could stand on his head, twist himself into unlikely permutations' (*Americanah* 382). Apparently like Armah who uses Rama Krishna in his famous novel *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* to dispute the possibility of leading a morally perfect life in seclusion; Ifemelu dismisses this perfection in cultural isolation.

The artificiality of emotions baffles Ifemelu. Blaine's ability to 'switch his emotions on and off' is a case in point. Blaine's 'slipping on of the condom with such slow and clinical concentration' betrays her sense of emotionalism and her quest for the 'improbable.' She is persuaded to think 'of him as a person who did not have a normal spine but had, instead, a firm need of goodness' (*Americanah* 383). The use of contraceptives like condoms is a Western-oriented concept; it is an acceptable mode of guarding against sexually transmitted diseases and unpremeditated pregnancies. Yet its use raises questions about the spontaneity of emotions. Ifemelu is finding it difficult to understand how someone who is emotionally consumed would still find time, in midst of intense emotional feeling, to switch off his emotions to think rationally and then switch on his emotions. The ability exercise emotional restraint at the point of its greatest intensity exudes a measure of plasticity. It is this artificiality that makes certain aspects of emotions quite unreal. To question the conventional notions of contraception is beyond the traditional conception of culture or even Western civilisation. According Ifemelu, Blaine cuts the figure of 'a perfect father, this man of careful disciplines' – he runs every morning and flosses every night. 'It seemed so American to her, flossing, that mechanical sliding of a string between teeth, inelegant and functional' (*Americanah* 384).

Blaine, it is evident, is symptomatic of the black elites who are deeply consumed by western life; their lives are purely 'academic,' and it is therefore small wonder that he pushes Ifemelu

into his routinely bookish lifestyle, one that is characterised by strict dietary habit and regular physical exercises – 'she began to floss, as she began to do other things that he did – going to the gym, eating more protein than carbohydrates – and she did them with a kind of grateful contentment, because they improved her. He was like a salutary tonic; with him, she could only inhabit a higher level of goodness' (384). He, more like Armah's escapist character Rama who does not realise that 'there is too much of the unnatural in any man who imagines he could escape the inevitable … [realities of social] life,' allows himself to be blinded by extreme attempts to escape from the real construct of his cultural heritage (Armah 48). He is the subject of the writer's biting sarcasm and ridicule; his obsession with the desire to live up to his elitist background sets him apart from the rest of the society. He is figuratively likened to 'a salutary tonic' – his lifestyle is predictably vapid and predicated on a civilisation lane that is largely destructive. He lives 'in a parallel universe of academia' and does not – or so it seems – 'really know what's happening in the real world' (Americanah 220).

To understand cultural diversity as contemplated in the framework of critical hybridity, one has to acknowledge, much like McClintock argues, the interconnectedness of race, gender, sexuality and class. Any attempt to regard the aforementioned as distinct realms of experience is bound to be futile. McClintock posits that these aspects of identity do not 'exist in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together retrospectively like armatures of Lego. Rather, they come into existence in and through relation to each other – if in contradictory and conflictual ways' (5).

Hardt and Negri, in *Empire*, theorise that an ongoing transition from a modern phenomenon of colonisation centred on individual nation-stations to an emergent postmodern construct created among ruling powers. There is a progressive decline in the sovereignty of nation-states and the emergence of a new form of sovereignty, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rules. This new global form of

sovereignty is what they call 'Empire' – a consolidation of power that represents 'the real subsumption of social existence by capital' and 'post-modernised global economy' (222-224). This identity, it appears, is a product of neoculturation; it parallels the Black Atlantic identity, which is a result of the weakening of pan-African identities. This citizenship is borne out of social and economic coercion and as such it typifies the post-Cold War identity: 'The Cold War forced people to choose, and it was either you became an internationalist, which of course meant communism to Americans, or you became part American capitalism, which was the choice African American elite made' (*Americanah* 418). Transculturation becomes the 'only way to change the conversation' and 'people who are doing new things, pushing boundaries' are created (*Americanah* 421).

In *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, they (Hardt and Negri) the term 'multitude' to refer to the population of the world that they believe is increasingly networked and has the potential to resist 'Empire' and establish genuine democratic principles. The challenge for the 'multitude' in this era is 'for the social multiplicity to manage to communicate and act in common while remaining internally different' (xiv). Yet the said population, Edwards avers, is 'defined by diversity rather than commonalities' (16). In *Americanah*, marriage and sexual relations are symbolic sites for exploration of cultural diversity. Obinze, in spite of the luxury and prestige that his social status attracts, remains steadfast in his quest for a new cultural vision. He openly admits, for instance, that he loves cooking yet his wife thinks that his 'wanting to cook [is] an indictment of her [womanhood],' a perspective that he 'found silly' (Americanah 555). He abnegates what he regards as 'basic mainstream ideas of what a wife should be' as it mechanises the marital institution. That he loves cooking and cannot do it because it affronts traditional womanhood is as pretentious as it is dishonest: 'There's a lot of pretending in [his] marriage.' Besides cooking, his marriage is guided by the natural desire arising from self fulfillment, rather parties feel obligated to

stick to the union in spite of its artificiality. Obinze discloses that he had married Kosi 'when [he] was feeling vulnerable; [he] had a lot of upheaval in his life at the time.' This disclosure speaks of the unnaturalness of their union, one that is informed by a feeling of 'a great responsibility' for the other party 'and that is all.' He feels compelled to take care of Kosi because he had rushed into a union with her to make himself less susceptible to social upheavals. To shun the possibility of finding himself in a similar situation, she asks Ifemelu for more time to enable him 'put things into perspective' (557).

The return of Ifemelu re-ignites Obinze's quest for a new cultural space. He dedicates a lot of his time to reflect on the genesis of his relationship with Kosi, their marriage and all. He recalls that Kosi had apologised to him for giving birth to a girl, saying 'Darling, we'll have a boy next time.' This reaction revealed to him that 'she did not know him' (*Americanah* 565). The writer uses the oxymoronic expression 'gentle contempt' to show his reaction to Kosi's unwarranted apology. He frowned upon her for displaying her loyalty to traditional perceptions about the place of the girl-child, yet he pitied her for what the writer sarcastically calls 'wanting a boy because they were supposed to want a boy.' Obinze discovers that what his perceptions about life are entirely different from Kosi's; 'the questions he asked of life were entirely different from hers' (565). Separation offers him a new lease of life; stories of 'children [who] are more contented with separated parents than with married unhappy parents' excite him and he finds it difficult to dam up his emotions when one person observes that he had felt relieved by his parents' divorce because his parents' unhappiness had been 'heavy.' The metaphor 'heavy' accentuates the emotional burden that unhappy marriages impose on innocent children. At the end of the day, his decision to leave Kosi is largely informed by his desire to lead an honest life, one that can be emulated by Buchi: 'I want to raise Buchi. I want to see her every day. But I have been pretending all these months and one day she'll be old enough to know I'm pretending' (*Americanah* 588).

As evident in the aforementioned examples, Adichie's novels are portraits of a new generation of transcultural mobile characters that, by sheer chance, by choice, or by life experiences, expose themselves to cultural plurality and diversity. Cultural plurality and diversity are painted as transcultural and transnational experiences are mirrored in these novels. Through these literary works, Adichie succeeds in imaginatively painting the picture of characters that are capable of transcending the borders of a single culture and managing to promote a global cultural perspective. Concurrently, this cultural transcendence painted as fusing process. Ifemelu vouches for a return to an idealistic historical past and its tradition which is encapsulated in Adichie's more-phantom-than-physical geography 'Nsukka,' which only compares to Wole Soyinka's Aiyero in *Season of Anomy*. Consequently, in Adichie's novels, transculturalism coexists in a symbiotic relationship with a newly rediscovered feeling of natural awareness and self-consciousness. Not only can Adichie's protagonists be easily described as pioneers of a new cross-cultural trend (borne out of transcultural citizenry), but they can also be seen as preservers of African past and traditional heritage, which is, in *Americanah*, for instance, manifested in Ifemelu's predilection for the remote past. In *Americanah*, Adichie's heroine nourishes a certain freedom of treatment and attempts to reinterpret African myths and their heroes in a bid to create her own cultural mythologies. Through her quest for eternal truths, she strives, rather ceaselessly, to chart a path to a better society.

Adichie's expressed purpose in writing her novels, or so it seems, is to present her sense of the anomic conditions of the universe represented in its social, political, religious and economic upheavals to a gradual change in that condition and, finally, to celebrate the glory of the universe thus transformed, a renewed world in which man knows how to admire, hope, trust and endure the vicissitudes of life. In this world, she projects universal values such as love. This, it would appear, is Ifemelu's cultural 'Ceiling.' When she allows Obinze to 'come

in,' she figuratively demonstrates that she has accepted his cultural strivings towards this universality. Obinze has recognised that her marriage to Kosi symbolizes the social upheavals that define Nigerianness such as materialistic glamour, the tragic submissiveness of women, the overbearing attitude (hubris) of maleness that submerges womanhood, the complacency of woman and other plebian, rather unprivileged citizens and the general unwillingness to break away from oppressive cultures among other cultural anomies – is no longer feasible. He understands only too well what their options are: 'to accept the things [they] can't be for each other and even turn into the poetic tragedy of [their] lives. Or [they] could act' (*Americanah* 588).

By acting, he means dispatriating, charting a new cultural path, one that is not anchored on hypocrisy. Living a fettered life which is defined purely by a desire to reciprocate submissiveness by showing gratitude is untenable in a real world. He makes a bold and radical admission: 'I should never have married her.' This is a clear indication that even though he had declared allegiance to her (Kosi), he seemed 'to be always moving away.' That is why he knows 'something was missing.' He understands that he is duty-bound to raise Buchi, his daughter. He wants to see her every day, but he also knows he has been 'pretending all those months' and one day his daughter will be old enough to determine that he is pretending. Adichie here confirms Manguel's position that 'home is always an imaginary place.' Like Bukenya's Kitandawili whose 'most focused and most meaningful years of life' begin when he becomes honest to his mermaid, Obinze's decision to move out of the house marks the beginning of his real life, the start of his journey towards 'home.' (Bukenya 10; *Americanah* 588). This new-found allegiance is best explained by Manguel when he posits:

> Even when declaring allegiance to one place, we seem to be always moving away from it … Nationalities, ethnicities, tribal, and religious filiations imply geographical and political definitions of some kind, and yet, partly because of our nomad nature and partly due to the fluctuations of history, our geography is less grounded in a physical than in an imaginary place (Manguel 145).

The portrait of the main characters like Ifemelu, Olanna and Odenigbo in Adichie's novels demonstrates to us what it means to live within a multiple sense of belonging, made of plural affiliations and a rather dispersed sense of allegiance and of place or home. In such cultural set-ups, borders of a single nation are transcended in favour of a planetary view of humanity (and of community). This planetary view of humanity – the development and acquisition of a plural, elastic, metamorphic identity with multiple states of belonging – is a new direction, a new solution to the eternal problem of identity. Using Brian Castro's words, 'hybridity; a mixture of forms, a mixture of character types is what' Adichie injects into her novels. It is what her protagonists evidently envision. Castro calls this 'a proliferation of selves' and 'a juxtaposition of differences' (115). Adichie is writing herself 'out of crippling essentialist categorisations out of the control exerted over multiplicities' (Castro 115). Adichie's main character Ifemelu is not only American and Nigerian but she is also transcultural. The porous nature of the American cultural boundary has given room for the injection of new cultural vistas so that the citizenship that émigré establishes is not just American; it goes beyond it. To call Ifemelu African American is to peripheralise her experiences outside America and Africa. Besides, an African American identity lacks the solid and unitary wholeness that is envisaged by Epstein. Ife's citizenship transcends Bhabha's hybridity. She attains a critically hybrid identity. The title *Americanah* which is derived from the identity that Ife establishes at the end of the story is as apt as it is accurate.

6.3 Conclusion

The foregoing arguments demonstrate that émigrés go through a process of denationalisation that propels them to the attainment of transcultural citizenship. Its own creativity, when being enacted in a dialogue with other cultures, changes itself only to a new sense of its existence. Comparatively speaking, the creativity of individual cultures exists through permanent re-interpretations of their own image of identity. While taking into account the processes of cross-cultural interactions and the permanency of re-interpretations in the formation of individual cultural identities, the role of the marginal and peripheral and their validity has evolved into a new context. In a cultural dialogue that results in overcoming monolithic or hegemonic views and statuses, demarcations between majority cultures and marginal cultures become thin and almost indistinct. Enacted dialogism is democratic in its origin and in its essence. In history, the marginal and the peripheral has proved influential through its will to power. The role of the marginal, following Bakhtin's philosophy of Otherness, has ultimately changed the historical transformations of thought in the twentieth century and Adichie's novels have, using the words of one of her characters (Blaine), attempted to 'prove that the world can be like [a] room. It can be a safe and equal space for everyone. We just need to dismantle the walls of [cultural] privilege and oppression [in order to establish transcultural citizenship]' (*Americanah* 418). To a certain extent, the cultural essence (or the quintessence of identity) is represented by the 'paradoxical, [contradictory] (or simply narrative) coherence of a transformational and constantly dynamic process of becoming with its multiple entries.' As Ellen Berry and Epstein posit, the goal becomes to 'mutate' beyond any singular or bounded mode of cultural identity – even a hybridised identity – in order to 'become transcultural' (Berry 130).

In our rapidly globalising world, cultures, as well as societies and identities, tend to be more fluid and intermingled, less irreducibly different and less 'territorially fixed' than in the past

(Engler 27). Especially now, when cosmopolitan issues and pluralistic sensibilities – driven by transnational and transcommunal experiences – tend to become more relevant. It is within this emerging social context that a new generation of mobile writers, on the move across cultural and national boundaries, has started expressing a 'transcultural' sensibility and mode of being, fostered by 'the process of self-distancing, self-estrangement, and self criticism of one's own cultural identities and assumptions' (Berry and Epstein 307). The protagonists in Adichie's novels initially attain a culturally hybrid state as envisaged in Bhabha's theory. Bhabha regards hybridity as 'the perplexity of the living as it interrupts the representation of the fullness of life' (*Location of Culture* 114). Hybridity stops the old way of life and creates a mixture of new ones, something that Adichie's main characters like Ifemelu, Obinze, Blaine, Olanna and Odenigbo experience. This is what is regarded as a neo-cultural state in this study.

In this thesis, the main element that distinguishes these early 'transcultural writers' from their precursors and/or 'cousin species' (migrant/exile/diasporic/postcolonial writers) – albeit all belonging to the wider 'genus' of 'the literature of mobility' – is their relaxed, neo-nomadic attitude when facing issues linked to identity, nationality, rootlessness and dislocation. It is an attitude that reflects itself also in their creative outputs, which can already be inscribed within the realm of 'transcultural literature', a literature able to 'transcend the borders of a single culture in its choice of topic', vision and scope, thus contributing to promote a wider global literary perspective (Pettersson 1). The protagonists created in Adichie's novels, specifically Ifemelu, Obinze, Odenigbo and Olanna, transcend borders of single cultures, adopt multicultural, hybrid or neo-cultural perspectives, and subsequently establish unitary and holistic cultural identities, which are transcultural or cosmopolitan in nature.

More than the stylistic solutions, which can belong to different literary genres and approaches, it is the intentions and the cultural dispositions of transcultural authors while

writing their works of fiction that mostly count and should be taken into consideration when (at least initially) dealing with transcultural literature. Evidently, it is by expressly analysing the lived experience of creative dispatriation that a better understanding of the nature and the content of transcultural literary outputs – more attuned to current cosmopolitan and pluralistic sensibilities – can be arrived at. It is not just a question of literary definitions and genres. It is instead a question of changing mindsets, different cultural approaches, heterogeneous identities, deterritorialising dynamics and, subsequently, of emerging new imaginaries that are being created in the process, through the active interaction between transcultural writers and transcultural readers. As Dominic Sachsenmaier points out, 'In the near future, it will be a major intellectual, political and also economic challenge to harmonize claims to diversity with global commonalities and responsibilities' (42).

Hence, the significance of a transcultural 'transforming' approach and experience, enhanced by (or simply conveyed through) its literary expressions, that instead of heightening conflicts and culture clashes promotes the value of 'confluence,' fruitful encounters and mutual respect; dismantling boundaries instead of erecting new barriers, encouraging a new sense of communality. Welsch's intellectual submission summarises the kernel of this chapter; he observes that it is possible for us to transcend the narrowness of traditional, monolithic cultural ideas and constraints and develop an increasingly transcultural understanding of ourselves (201). West African literature's capacity to dismantle traditional borders, a capacity to transcend regional cultural boundaries is equally demonstrated by Jones. Of West African literature, she has commented:

> West Africans are savoring at firsthand the thoughts, the ways of life, of peoples all over the world; and many of our writers, actual and potential, have travelled in what are for them, new areas … their contacts with Britain and America have deepened and widened. Even those who stayed at home have been involved in a revolution of ideas,

> religion, architecture and political systems, but inevitably, in West African writing. At the same time, the resources of traditional inspiration for those who wish to draw from them are far from dry. West Africa is therefore capable of producing a whole gradation of types and standards of literature, for the new influences touch at all levels. (Jones 93)

There are so many challenges to human life in the contemporary society. Some of these challenges, like the cross-cultural complexities of living in a new world, appear undefeatable. There is need for adoption of a common cultural vision from different perspectives all essentially oriented by the belief that living together can only be fully achieved when the business of living espouses diversity and care for the other as the principle of unity, when the unifying principle is difference. Ifemelu and Obinze are the embodiments of social positives in *Americanah*. Both characters are realistically painted and together they act the forces of cultural regeneration in the novel. It is Ifemelu who attests to the proposition that Adichie has been gradually leaning over to transculturalism as the solution to the cultural complexities that émigrés encounter in new worlds. Adichie, through her mouthpiece Ifemelu, seems to imply that transculturalism is a natural way of life, one that is not influenced by the artificiality of vain material quests. Transculturalism is, as such, a product of eternal elements of not only traditional African cultural heritage and the Western culture, but it also incorporates cultural experiences that go beyond these dogmatic cultural disctinctions. Ifemelu's yearning for a return to Nigeria is not rooted in blind African cultural nationalism, but a realisation that the traditional life in the African society has a significant bearing on cultural regeneration. Nsukka, Adichie's idealised symbol of perfection, purity, dynamism and vitality, definitely becomes Ifemelu's new desired location; it brings to her vocation as a voyager a drive and intellectual power which puts static characters like Kosi in the shade. Unlike Kosi and her ilk who are associated with closed spaces, Ifemelu's dynamism and

vitality are suggested by her desire to explore the untrodden cultural paths. Interestingly, she goes beyond these explorations and establishes an identity that encompasses the eternal cultural traits in different geographies.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS INTO FURTHER RESEARCH

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of findings of this study. It also gives concluding remarks on the issues deliberated in this thesis, what these concluding mean and the implications thereof. Suggestions have also been made into further research, an intimation of related areas of research that can still be explored by aspiring and/ or prospective literary scholars and other researchers.

7.2 Summary of Findings

In Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novels, there is no room for, to use Ngugi words, 'art for art's sake' and 'the very act of writing is a social act … As such [Adichie] tries to see what are the factors that impinge on a human being … the kind of social structure that breeds the various kinds of conflicts and tensions we have in this society and how we can transform the structure so that some of the conflicts [like culture-related ones] might be eliminated' (Ngugi, *Writers in Politics,* x). Ngugi makes similar proclamations in *Homecoming*. He opines:

> Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society. The relationship between creative literature and these other forces cannot be ignored, especially in Africa, where modern literature has grown against the gory background of European imperialism and its changing manifestations: slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism … There is no area of our lives which has not been affected by the social, political and expansionist needs of European capitalism (150).

There are both literal and metaphoric manifestations of displacement in Adichie's novels. Adichie's novels stretch the debate on displacement beyond its superficial association with physical dislocation. 'For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must make a new start, develop a new way of thinking, and endeavor to create a new man' (Fanon 239). The cultural complexities of new environments compel émigrés to embrace a new notion of internationalism, one manifested in the creation and proliferation of a new cultural discourse which is both international and transcultural in nature. Progressively, the émigrés develop a cosmopolitan dimension to life, one that is borne out of the fact that dialogue breaks down cultural boundaries and the émigré is able to interweave apparently opposed cultural identities. This transcultural spirit manifests itself in the novels of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Each one of the émigrés in the novels discussed in this thesis seems to have individual perceptions about their culture and the culture of the Other but no matter how much these views may differ, due to their own, unique temperaments, they are still dominated by a tendency to promote a large diversity of transcultural sensitivity. Adichie's dominant preoccupation, it would therefore appear, lies in her interest for cultural diversity and otherness. This concern is nurtured and facilitated by the cultural interactions made possible to Adichie's characters by the empire and by the rich flow of information and the eclecticism occasioned by the dialogue between the émigrés and the citizens from the European countries and the west in general but also by intrapersonal dialogue with the African cultural experiences. *Americanah*, in sharp contradiction to its association with a Nigerian citizen who is blinded by American culture, is a metaphor for 'citizen of the world.'

7.3 Conclusions

Notions of individual cultural identities packaged as European, African or American, among other tags, defy the natural order of social progression. Such notions suggest stagnation, aloofness, and immobility against the reality of increasingly mobile societies. It is an

insufficient and reductionist view on culture and literature, for example, the 'soul of nation' (Herder) was, in fact, already conceptualised by Goethe when he constructed the concept of world literature. But any gesture of openness in the 'intellectual history' or 'history of ideas' can be understood as self-affirmation of the romantic absolute and autonomous subject (Fugmann 22; Bontempelli 69; Crossley 6). Any notion of an understanding of openness as a feature of transgressing or of the self-revaluation of the romantic self can be found only in the phenomenon of romantic irony. Thus, cross-cultural interactions undoubtedly problematise the question of cultural identity. Considered this way, it is pre-eminently a concept belonging to the field of comparative literature. Literary works, genres, trends, and periods of artistic orientation in a given nation, as manifested through history, cannot exist as isolated events of the closed national existence of cultural history and cannot be understood without contacts with literary phenomena of other national cultures. No cultural identity can be identified or analysed only on its national ground. Any national culture was given form on the borders of other influential cultures. The three novels selected for this study bear evidence, among others, of untenability of cultural absolutes. No society can lay claims to the existence of a distinct cultural identity. Clearly, literature cannot be but an intercultural historical phenomenon of mutual artistic and other influences from several cultures, of mutual interactions of artistic expression produced in different cultural circumstances, and thus of mutual reception of Otherness.

Despite being labelled as an émigré, Ifemelu, the protagonist in Adichie's *Americanah*, just like Richard in *Half of a Yellow Sun* who is tagged as an Oyinbo, 'operate[s] outside the confines of a nation and consequently address[es] questions of multiple forms of cultural, sexual and existential belonging' (Claudia 5). Her primary cultural allegiance, it would seem, is to her motherland Nigeria, yet this does not limit her perceptions about life. She assumes the figure of a culturally unfettered personality. She deliberately sheds off and, in some

instances struggles to overcome the ethnic, national, imperial and religious boundaries imposed by previous categorisations of cultures. She understands the inherent limitations in their making and refuses to be swayed by them. Ifemelu's identity and allegiance (to wit, whether she feels 'more' Nigerian or 'more' American) is not distinct. She is poised between geographies and several cultural traditions. Her stay in America, her travel to London and the other excursions she partakes of do not initiate a process of cultural subtraction or denial, rather it inculcates in her a cultural newness, one in which inclusivity reigns supreme. She embraces a vision that encapsulates disparate cultural entities in a single affiliation. These encounters prod her to adopt an all-embracing cultural visualisation, one that repudiates partiality, secretarianism, intolerance and domineering stances. In this all-encompassing visualisation, 'just about every other category has deconstructed, or at least has self-destructed' (Herzfeld 46).

The protagonist exudes a revolutionary cultural spirit. This spirit creates the ideological basis upon which her radical social stance is built. Ifemelu's desire to break with the traditional artificialities of cultural dogmas and to reject sophistication of any kind and to plead for a common cultural sensibility, all have their roots in revolutionary ideals that she embraces. She gradually, but profoundly and irreversibly transforms her cultural attitudes. She embraces this new notion of internationalism, one that is manifested in the creation and proliferation of a new cultural discourse that is both boundless and transcultural in nature.

Adichie's protagonist, Ifemelu, exhibits a cosmopolitan citizenry in the sense that she breaks down cultural boundaries and manages to interweave apparently opposed cultural identities. This very spirit manifests itself in practically every facet of her life. She displays a unique temperament, but overall, her actions are dominated by a tendency to promote a large diversity of transcultural sensitivity. As Arianna puts it, if migrant writers were still concerned with the main question of 'how to traverse, intellectually and emotionally, the

distance between a familiar 'here' and an alien 'there', transcultural [citizens like Adichie's protagonist Ifemelu or Richard for that matter] have already accepted or restored their inner Other' (12). Ifemelu, for instance, has 'already incorporated,' to use Arianna's words, 'the stranger within [herself]' (12). It is particularly on the basis of these cultural crossings that Adichie's creative works are built. Her novels, to this end, are literary expressions of 'what it means to understand the nuances in cultural transaction and transformations' (Arianna 12).

7.4 Recommendations

Cultural transformations and interactions have always been part of human history, but what the contemporary society is facing today is a more and more rapid growth in their dynamics and practices. As has been noted in this thesis, contemporary literary writers like Adichie have positioned themselves (circumstantially, intellectually or as chance would have it) at the vanguard of transcultural encounters emerging from biographies and lifestyles that can no longer be placed in somewhat established or unchanging cultural milieus. Characters in Adichie's novels find themselves negotiating, compromising and, at times, in conflict with several cultures on a daily basis, thus affecting their cultural dispositions and imaginations. Adichie, like other transcultural writers, is decidedly sensitised towards the processes of cultural arbitration, convergence and transformation. Her characters are often confronted by the same kind of cultural complexity and heterogeneity. It would appear that they operate in a cultural environment that is bereft of any fixed borders. Therefore, the geographic, national and homeland boundaries as well as allegiances are self-made, self-chosen and perhaps continually re-conceptualised. This re-contextualisation is cultural dispatriation, post-nationality, neonomadism, frontier-lessness or digitalism.

Though being themselves cosmopolitans and polyglots, explicitly disregarding political, national or linguistic affiliations in their search for literary autonomy, transcultural literary writers are not international writers in the way Casanova envisions and defines them in the

worldwide reality of the literary space (her so-called World Republic of letters) – that is, writers who 'draw upon … [a] transnational repertoire of literary techniques in order to escape being imprisoned in national tradition.' The evanescence of fettering national traditions heralds a new cultural dispensation. Adichie's novels represent fresh and unexploited domains of literary inspiration and produce a flood of cultural innovations that intrigue contemporary readers and critics. For Adichie and her ilk, these unexploited domains demand a changing of mindsets, different cultural approaches, exploration of heterogeneous identities, deterritorialising dynamics and, ultimately, embracing emerging new imaginaries that are being created in the process through active interaction or cultural dialoguing.

7.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has distinguished herself as one of the literary writers who work at an international or transnational level with a manifested, transcultural penchant – that is a specific lens, a peculiar way of adopting cultures, interfering with them, letting themselves be transformed by them and, ultimately, imaginatively writing about them. In this way they have started developing the modes and tropes of a concomitant emerging transcultural literature.

This thesis recognises that dislocation is both physical and transcendental. It also acknowledges the existence of transcendental émigrés, but it does specifically trace the lives of these characters to determine whether they too can attain a transcultural identity without necessarily moving physically to new locations. This is a rich area that calls for literary-academic research. It is also necessary to determine whether transcendentalism is equivalent to transculturalism. Migration is both voluntary and involuntary. Yet the bulk of this thesis is premised on forced migration. It is therefore equally important to determine whether voluntary émigrés also go through the processes established in the conceptual framework identified for this study. No culture, it appears from this thesis, is superior to the other, yet it not exactly clear whether migration can gradually trigger similar cultural redefinition among

Western societies that live in the delusion of superiority. Again, this study does investigate the possibility of this cultural change in detail. Adichie invests her artistic energy in the characterisation of Richard but this study does not conclusively determine that characters like Richard, who migrate to locations other than the West ever aspire to acculturate, deculturate, neo-culturate and transculturate.

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