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## **African Leaders and their Betrayal of the People: A Critical Perspective on Ngugi's *Devil on the Cross* and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus***

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### **Abstract:**

Over five decades, African continent has been bedevilled by bad leadership. It has been stated in many forums that the history of the continent is nothing but the muted index of war. The main reason for the backwardness is a treacherous leadership which is in geometrical progression. This paper is therefore, an attempt to explore the treacherous nature of African leaders which accounts for the vast majority of the people living in abject poverty today. It also explicates the context in which African novelists write and their sensitivity to the issues that affect the masses of the continent. In this discourse we try to show how Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, our primary sources, x-ray the reality of the Africa situation and proffer solutions which will help solve the perennial problems that have bedevilled the continent for over five decades now.

**Keywords: African Leaders, Betrayal, People**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ahmed Yerimah has observed that literature serves as a “weapon used to confront, antagonize, question and demand for change in a society” (184). Henry I. Bell-Gam corroborates this view by positing that the literary artist “is the conscience of a nation in crisis”, hence he must act as “the people’s teacher and to produce works that are socially relevant, he has to portray and interpret the historical, sociological, political, economical and cultural issues of his time” (136).

The prevailing circumstances or turn of events which Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie seek to antagonise and change, as the conscience of the society, are indeed the problems of neo-colonialism, most especially in Kenya and Nigeria.

Ngugi and Adichie graphically depict the corruption and maladministration both in the family units and the political aspects of the society. They interpret the socio-political aspects of their society with a view to raising the people’s consciousness in order to create an ideal society. This is why Henry L. Bell-Gam (2003) argues that art is “an institution whose goal is the betterment of human beings living within a society” (136) The reality of the

moment is that life is very far from better for the citizens of Kenya and Nigeria and indeed the entire continent. Perhaps, the question that may disturb the concerned citizens is how come the current state of things. Nwachukwu-Agbada (2008) explicates this by positing that the current fate in the African continent:

Is traceable to the triple 'legacy' of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism, none has been effected without the assistance of local 'catalysts'; slavery was aided by our local Chiefs and Kings;... and neo-colonialism by local political leaders who although they may have assumed their initial leadership positions by popular mandate, later abandoned the electorate, and in their people's economic and social struggles, took sides with foreign interests in order to earn for themselves personal economic largesses from the metropole (14)

Ngugi and Adichie in *Devil on the Cross* and *Purple Hibiscus* show how political leaders abandon the electorates or the masses in their quest for selfish desire. The thrust of their novels, therefore, is disillusionment and the act of violence as a therapy.

#### TEXTS AS PRAXIS

Ngugi, a well known African novelist employs his fiction as a means of x-raying the socio-political reality of his country, Kenya with a view to raising the people's consciousness and repositioning the state. In *Devil on the Cross*, he discusses the state of Kenya and other African countries after their attainment of independence from their colonial masters. Kenya, like most African countries gained her independence after a protracted guerrilla struggle. The Mau Mau uprising remains fresh in our mind. Ngugi, explains in *Devil on the Cross* that the fight to end colonialism by the mau mau gurrilla compelled the whites to rethink their stay in Kenya, and Africa by extension:

What shall I do, seeing that these people over whom I have always lorded are now about to expel me from these plantations and factories .... If I wait until I am clubbed and gunned out of the country, I will live forever in shame .... But now I know what I shall do, so that when eventually I go back to my own country though the front door, I shall be able to return here through the back door. (82).

This reality is very glaring in many independent African states since independence: Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, Egypt and the rest members of the Africa Union are examples of where the colonialists left for their countries through the front doors and had since returned through the back door. As Ngugi further explains in *Devil on the Cross*, the white, a genius in strategizing had put things in place to ensure maximum profit for "I shall be able to return here through the back doors and shall be well received, and "I shall be able to plant seeds that will take root more firmly than the ones I planted before" (82), he stressed before granting independence to the African countries. Today, what he came up with is neo-colonialism by which he exits through the front door, and had since returned through the backdoor as a well equipped foreign businessman. The whites achieved this through the establishment of multinational companies in Africa. This is why the various multinational companies in African countries are mere openings "for rapacious capitalist exploitation in the name of renewed development" (68) as Apollo Obonyo Amoko (2010) posits in his book *Postcolonialism in the Wake of the Nairobi Revolution*. Hence, we find the greedy African elite make fortunes out of human misery. Instead of helping the masses fight against corruption which has become endemic in Africa, the political elite protect corruption and its corrupting institutions.

Wariinga, Ngugi's heroine in *Devil on the cross* in her dream articulates Ngugi's idea of the evil of continuous exploitation of the peasants through neo-colonialism. Wariinga's dream about the crucifixion of the devil, and his being brought down from the cities and resuscitated by the Kenya elite or upper class exposes the great disillusion currently on in Africa:

Instead of Jesus on the cross, she would see the Devil, with skin as white as that of a very fat European she once saw near the Rift Valley Sport Club, being crucified by people in tattered clothes – like the ones she used to see in Bondeni – and after three days, when he was in the throes of death, he would be taken down from the cross by black people in suits and ties, and , thus restored to life, he would mock Wariinga. (139)

What Ngugi has done in his portrayal of the actuality of things in postcolonial Africa is to depict the resurrection of the Devil by Kenyan and African capitalists. The sorry state of things as Ngugi demonstrates in *Devils on the Cross* is that the Devil's feast held at the cave in Ilmorog shows that the imperialists deliberately crouched the possibility of the hegemonic return of the greater good for the greatest number of people, putting in place a sound structure which permits and ensures that a "social order, stability and advancement, of all which are defined by the colonilising power (116) as Asheroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin put it.

In Africa, the peasants and workers are greatly oppressed by African national bourgeoisie and the foreign imperialists. Ngugi further explains that Kenyan peasants and workers in particular and Africa in general are daily used as "pot that cooks but never tastes the food" (208). Ngugi in presenting the reality of the African nation state expounds that the new African elite replaces the colonialist in terms of form. Ngugi indeed upholds the fact that the progression from colonisation to independence is tantamount or akin to the shift from colonilisation to neo-colonialism. It invariably means that the Whiteman leads Africa from his safe heaven abroad. Ngugi in the first section of the fourth chapter of *Devil on the Cross* portrays this in unequivocal terms that the colonialist on leaving Africa manufactured native elite who continued the exploitation of the people: "then he gave them his property and goods to look after and even to increase and multiply. To one he gave a capital amounting to 500,000 shillings, to another 200,000 shillings and to another 100,000 shillings, to every servant according to how loyal he had served his master, and followed his faith, and shared his outlook" (83). Today, it is evident that the African elite are truly loyal to the whites. This is why Ngugi tells us in *Devil on the Cross* that the white master says appreciatively to the African elite:

As for you, from now on I shall no longer call you slaves or servants in public. Now you are truly my friends. Why? Because even after I have given you back the keys to your country, you continue to fulfil my commandments and to protect my property, making my capital yield a higher rate of profit than was the case when I myself used to carry the keys. Therefore, I shall not call you servants again. For a servant does not know the aims and thoughts of his master. But I call you my friends because you know.... and I shall continue to let you know ....all my plans for this country, and I shall give you some of what I acquire, so that you will have the strength and motivation to break the skulls of those who talk about the "masses" with any measure of seriousness.(86)



The above extract shows that the African elite politically are perfect representatives of the former colonial masters. Achebe and Armah also portray the African elite the same way. Self interest is the major thrust of the actions of the African elite, hence their electioneering campaign promises are never kept. In fact, Ngugi, in *Devils on the Cross* further explains the working agreement between the imperialists and the African elite thus: “we will fool the gullible masses. Long live stability for progress! Long live progress for profit! Long live foreigners and expatriate experts! (85) The exploitation of the masses by the executive and the legislative arms of the government which Ngugi has shown in his writings, David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe (1983) explicate succinctly below:

It is by rigging local elections and bribing his way into office against equally ruthless opposition that Gitutu reaches the rich goal of chairmanship of the local housing committee. Now he can pocket the fabulous percentages offered by foreign speculators in exchange for building contracts, and then correctly allocate the Jerry-built maisonettes that result to line his pockets even more richly. The community endures debased local administration while publicly subsidize housing is hawked on the black market. (119)”

Ngugi in *Devil on the Cross* truly portrays that which is very evident in modern African society by graphically depicting the government and legislative body as tools in the hands of the oppressor. Wangari was imprisoned in Nairobi for vagrancy and was commanded to assist the police in locating the real thieves and robbers in Illmorog. The readers are astonished to see the Master of ceremonies glared at by the Superintendent of Police in charge – Gakono – apologizing for having disrupted the “unholy” gathering at the cave:

“Then I saw the master of ceremonies stand up and looked over at the superintendent, who was standing there silent and immobile. “ What’s all this all about, superintendent Gakono? Is this a coup or what?” he demanded angrily. Gakono, springing to attention, saluted and started offering apologies and begging for forgiveness in a trembling voice .... “I am sorry sir, truly sorry to tell you the truth I did not know that you were the people who had gathered here. I thought it was the ordinary small-time thieves and robbers from Njeruca... (97).

This is happening everywhere in the modern African society. What Ngugi depicts in *Devil on the Cross* above with regard to a high degree of injustice and corruption, Idegwu (2010) corroborates by stating that “this is not different from the nation in Gowon’s regime when Late Gani had to defend a poor factory worker whose wife was abused by the then Benue State SSG (Andrew Obeya). Gani’s success, though gave succour to the factory worker cost him one year of his freedom. He was placed in gaol for one year for embarrassing the then Federal Military Government.” (81).

That an SSG takes a poor factory worker’s wife is evil. It becomes very grievous when the factory workers’ attempt to get justice is frustrated, and the human right lawyer who advances his cause put in goal for one year. Ngugi further explains the precarious state of the poor in our society when Muturi addresses Gaturia and Wariinga thus:

As a worker, I know very well that the forces of law and order are on the side of those who rob the workers of the products of their sweat, of those who steal food and land from the peasants. The peace aid, the order and the stability they defend with

armoured cars is the peace and the order and the stability of the rich, who feast on bread and wine snatched from the mouth of the poor—yes, they protect the eaters from the wrath of the thirsty and the hungry.

Ngugi in Muturi's address to Gatuiria and Wariinga in *Devil on the Cross* as shown in the extract above clearly shows that the various agencies at the state are deliberately put in place to protect the exploiters from the wrath of the masses who are perpetually kept thirsty and hungry by the actions and inactions of the elite who manage the independent African nations.

Having discussed Ngugi's portrayal of the substantiality of Kenya and the African continent, and how much the neo-colonialists exploit the peasants and workers, it behoves us to explicate Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's graphic presentation of the tyranny of our leaders both in the home front and in the governance of the state.

Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus*, her first novel x-rays the Nigerian society, pointing out the disillusionment in the family circle and the nation. Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* graphically presents what exist in most Nigerian homes where the father is very tyrannical. Eugene treats his children and wife without respect to their personal feelings and ideological stand. He is rigid about his role as custodian of the socio-religious world views that members of his family must model their lives after. Adichie's presentation of the stark reality of the relationship between Eugene as a father and Jaja and Kambili (the children) are in-depth exploration of the psychology of the characters. The crises in the family are her watchword and a psychological analysis brings to the fore the cause-effects, and the way out of such family quagmire. Adichie's motivation for such psychological exploration seems in tune with Isidore Okpewho's view about how he knots the threads of the strands of his novel. Okpewho(2004) posits that:

Novel writing might be degenerating into some kind of chronicling of events if you did not explore the psychological undertones of the action and this is what has fascinated me more than just describing dramatic actions in the novel form. I am basically a story-teller as a novelist but I am drawn more towards exploring the underpinnings and backgrounds of people in certain situations than just chronicling what they are doing... I am drawn more to questioning and examining the motivations in the backgrounds of action. (130)

Okpewho's stimulation for the psychological quest of the characters in his novels might as well be Adichie's impulse. Having said that, attempts will now be made to analyse situations where Eugene demonstrated high handedness in the management of his family – children, and the psychology of Eugene:

When he was ten, he had missed two questions on his catechism test and was not named the best in his First Holy Communion class. Papa took him upstairs and locked the door. Jaja, in tears, came out supporting his right hand with the left, and Papa drove him to St. Agnes hospital. Papa was crying too, as he carried Jaja in his arms like a baby all the way to the car. Later Jaja told me that Papa had avoided his right hand because it is the right he writes with. (44-145)

The fact that Jaja missed two questions in a Holy Communion test, his first test in that area of life, and that he is subject to such mistreatment speaks much about Eugene. Eugene

almost destroyed Jaja's finger or hand. In choosing the hand to be punished Eugene avoids Jaja's right hand because he writes with it. Even after beating him and disfiguring his finger, he carried him to the hospital like a baby crying, as he, Jaja cries. This is Adichie's way of depicting what happens in most families in Nigeria. Still on the Holy Communion, Kambili was badly beaten because she took cornflakes before the Panadol tablet she takes to assuage menstrual pains. Ogwude (2008) states that "her father is fixedly concerned that as a result of that failing she would not be able to go for communion! Her mother and brother were also victims of this assault, ostensibly for conniving with Kambili instead of restraining her" (P.117) Solomon O. Azumurana (2011) buttressing the authenticity of the above statement, stresses that Kambili herself states:" I started to wolf the cereal down, standing. Mama gave me the Panadol tablets ... Jaja did not put much cereal in the bowl, and I was almost done eating it when the door opened and Papa came in (101).

Kambili, the narrator, taking cereal or food as she takes Panadol as prescribed medically "swallowed hard"(101) on sighting her father. And true – to- type, her father thundered "You are eating ten minutes before mass? Ten minutes before mass?" (102) The events that followed the narrator sees as nomads and their cattle, hence father was like a Fulani nomad "as he swung his belt at mama, Jaja and me, muttering that the devil would not win" (102). The undue high-handedness or tyrannical tendencies exhibited by Eugene could be seen from a critical analysis of the prevailing circumstance. Eugene's flogging of Mama, in spite of her explanation that Kambili's menstrual 'period started and she had cramps" (101) brings to the fore the reality of the dilemma of most alienated Africans whose exposure to Western education and Catholicism make them act stupidly, such that they undermine the act of love which all religions subscribe to in their attempts to show their familial responsibility to God. This type of situation could be seen in various homes in our society.

It is indeed very clear here that Jaja 17, whose real name is Chukwuka, and Kambili, 15, truly lived under the protective custody or religiosity of Eugene, their father but became withdrawn or introverts due to limited exposures to the world outside their domestic shield built around them by their father. This account for Onukaogu Allwell Abalogu and Onyeriowu, Ezechi's (2010) view that Jaja and Kambili's

Consciousness of life and existence has, therefore been formed by what their father can provide for them: a gripping sanctimonious fidelity to the extreme tenets of Catholicism. A rigidly mechanical life, ordered and routined to the last detail, and supervised with military precision by their father himself. (148)

The thrust of the matter is that the call for discipline and academic excellence should be done in love. This is to ensure that it does not become counterproductive. Furthermore, Adichie writes that Eugene also frowns at Kambili taking the second position in class. Papa as Eugene is fondly called, drives Kambili to school and had long conversation in front of the school building. Kambili, the narrator says:

*I came second in my class. It was written in figures 2/25' My form Mistress, sister Clara, had written 'Kambili is intelligent beyond her years, quiet and responsible. The Principal, mother Lucy, wrote 'A brilliant, obedient student and a daughter to be proud of,'*

*But I knew Papa would not be proud. He had often told Jaja and I that he did not spend so much on Daughters of the Immaculate Heart and St. Nicholas to have us let other children come first... I had come second. I was stained by failure. (46-47).*

The reports of the form mistress and the Principal who are unbiased umpires with regards to the assessment of Kambili's academic performance are clear indications of her academic excellence. To come out second out of twenty-five is beautiful. Eugene's inability to appreciate, perhaps as a result of his upbringing by a Catholic Priest who must have exhibited racist tendencies towards him, had negatively tendencies on his children. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010) posit that Eugene's behaviour towards the children created great problem in their lives. According to them, "utterly frustrated by Kambili's unconversational disposition, her classmate brands her a snob, whose father's wealth has made arrogant. Their cousins, Amaka and Obiora think that they are 'abnormal' because 'Kambili just behaves like an Atulu when my friends came' (151). They further add that "Amaka also discovers that even Jaja is strange: (150). This is basically why Aunty Ifeoma allows Kambili to become close to Father Amadi, the attractive and ebullient priest: (151).

Having discussed Adichie's portrayal of the substantiality of the family unit in Nigeria, it behoves us at this juncture to explicate the novelist's exploration of the betrayal of the government with regard to electioneering campaign promises and promises made at the success of each coup de tat, among others.

The military's abuse of powers could be seen by the way the government harasses those seen to be viable oppositions in the society. Adichie's treatment of the political situation in Nigeria and Africa has been greatly applauded. Her fearlessness in handling such matters in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of A Yellow Sun* even as a very young writer is highly commendable. She seems to have set her mind on the heydays of the military's adventure in Nigeria's political atmosphere. She craftily portrays a situation in which the helpless and docile Nigerian citizenry are highly subjected a very highly and strangulating climate of undisguised or blatant disregard for fundamental human rights, a very high degree of political corruption, and a mindless upturning of the temper for the rule of law. Members of the opposition were continuously detained. The Babangida and Abacha regimes continued to gag the press and reporters were detained. The right of association soon became a luxury. Adichie tactically implores the coup which occurs early in her story to discuss the determination of the Standard Newspaper which epitomizes the ideal journalism to show the gagging of the press:

The day after the coup, before we left for evening benediction at St. Agnes, we sat in the living room and read the newspapers; our vendor delivered the major papers every morning, four copies of each on papa's orders. We read the Standard first. Only the Standard had a critical editorial, calling on the new military government to quickly implement a return to democracy plan. Papa read one of the articles in Nigeria Today out aloud, an opinion column by a writer who insisted that it was indeed time for a military president, since the politician had gone out of control and our economy was a mess. ( 25)

The critical posture of the Standard Newspaper like that of the Newswatch Magazine of the Late Dele Giwa era, was too hot for the military who then set out to cow the press. This accounts for the presidency sending soldiers to arrest Ade Coker as he drove out of the editorial offices of the Standard. His car was abandoned on the roadside, the front door left opened" (38). Kambili, the narrator, explores the manner of arrest in Nigeria when she says: I imagine Ade Coker being pulled out of his car, being squashed into another car, perhaps a black station wagon, filled with soldiers, their guns hanging out of the windows. I imagined his hands quivering with fear, a wet patch spreading on his trousers (38).



Journalists who practised functional and investigative journalism faced constant harassment and manhandling from the government. Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* tries to influence her society and bring about a change. The act of ensuring that the people are able to stand for the good of the society remains a paramount function of literature. This is what Ken Saro-Wiwa (1994) in his book *A Month and a Day tries* to explicate as he delineates the power of literature to some Nigerians from postcolonial contradiction, and the state violence that has engulfed the whole of Africa. Saro-Wiwa asserts that: Literature must serve society by steeping itself in politics, by intervention and writers must not merely write to amuse or to take a bemused critical look at society. They must play an interventionist role. (81)

This interventionist role, an act of intellectual militancy, a pragmatic sensitization via discourses, Adichie exhibits as she explores the reality of Nigerian and African socio-political landscape in her novels. She creates the awareness by the exposition. She explains in *Purple Hibiscus* that:

Nobody knew how they had found out where the offices were. There were many soldiers that the people on that street told Papa it reminded them of pictures from the front during the civil war. The soldiers took every copy of the entire press run, smashed furniture and printers, locked the offices, took the keys and boarded up the doors and windows. Ade Coker was in custody again. (145)

After the first arrest of Ade Coker, and the subsequent release, and the unpretentious acts of the government to ensure that the press is cowed, Ade Coker of the Standard Newspaper went underground. In Babangida and Abacha's regimes, Newswatch and Tell Magazines went underground for a while in Nigeria. However, Adichie explores how the government SSS discovered where they were publishing from and destroyed everything. Onukaogu and Onyerionwo (2010) explicate this by stating that "Ade Coker's second detention and the discovery of the hideout office of the Standard" (125) remains an indication of the repressive military establishments' attempt to permanently gag the press. They were to state further that "this, as corroborated by real life experience, is the goal of the military government when it sets out to witch-hunt journalists, writers and social crusaders: to break them and render them incapable of constituting questioning opposition." (125). However, Ade Coker's refusal to be broken by the State marks him out as a journalist of high repute and indeed a socio-political activist. Adichie further explains how the government employs bribery and black mail thus:

The government agents, two men in black jackets...came some time ago... They came in a pickup truck with the Federal Government Plates and parked close to the hibiscus bushes. They didn't stay long later, Jaja said they came to bribe papa, that he had heard them say that their pickup was full of dollars. (9)

Adichie, through her narrator in *Purple Hibiscus* shows that the military is very corrupt. The moment a military regime comes to power through the usual military coup d'état, efforts are made to gag the press. If gifts and bribery fail, decrees are promulgated to silence the press. The military does not tolerate criticism. The military abuse the rights of the press in order to make sure they do not criticize their activities. Nosa Igiebor (1988), a seasoned journalist, in an article "Cry, the Be Loved Press" in *Newswatch* magazine, (10) states that the government in such a situation is out to frustrate the journalists from reporting the truth to their reading public. Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* explains that everything they do could be seen from the way they "yanked at the hibiscus as they left" (9) when they could not

entice Eugene Achike with their pickup full of dollars.” (9) The yanking which forcefully cuts off the hibiscus from the parent plant foretells the forceful killings in Africa. Ade Coker, like Dele Giwa in real life, is resolute in his convictions that the freedom of the press is incontestable. Investigative journalism remains his watch word. Adichie later takes her readers into the horror of state violence. Ade was blown up when he opened the package—a package everybody would have known was from the Head of State; even his wife Yewande had said that Ade Coker looked at the envelope and said “it has the State House Seal’ before he opened it”. (12) That was how Coker was finally destroyed by the State (9). Coker paid the supreme price for his avowed insistence on investigative journalism and commitment to the truth. The real life episode of Dele Giwa, the founding editor-in-chief of Newswatch Magazine, which has political undertone is what Adichie models her story after. Abdul Rasheed Na’ Allah (2003) amplifies Adichie’s motives in explicating on the Nigerian nation in *Purple Hibiscus* the way she does by positing that the Nigerian writer, and indeed African writer is: “a person that people look up to, in whose works people are trying to see how they relate to the social cultural and political problems that we are facing (470).

Adichie captures the adverse effects of coup on the Nigerian body polite when her narrator reports Papa’s (Eugene) opinion thus: Coups begets coups, he said, telling us about the bloody coups of the sixties which ended up in civil war after he left Nigeria to study in England. A coup always began a vicious circle. Military men would always overthrow one another, because they could, because they were all power drunk. (32) The various coups in Nigeria have not done anything to improve the well-being of the citizens. The coups have impoverished them greatly. Samuel Abiodun Adebawale sums up the effects of the military incursion in Nigerian politics when he posits that:

A deepening, oppressive and overwhelming perception of insecurity rules ruthless and remorseless over Nigeria. Terror rides with reckless abandon on a freakish horse of trepidation and fear of the unknown. Throughout the land, sorrow, woes, and throes flourish. Misery sail unchecked with the wind. Oppression rises at dawn and refuses to set. No single soul dares to feel safe, sheltered or secure under the dictatorial stagger of the almighty Power – tipsy military junta. Nothing is well in Nigeria.(4)

Indeed the effects of military regimes have been very devastating. A critical evaluation of the General Babangida and late General Abacha’s regimes will show all the vices easily identifiable with the quintessential or prototypical modern-day military overlords. The propensity or inclination to grab or snatch power and perpetuate same with the Adolf Hitler’s brute force and unprecedented degree of looting of public fund for selfish and personal interest and uncanny zero-level tolerance of opposition views and objections were experienced all over the nation. Serial pulverization of known and perceived opposition and the final liquidation or domination of the opposition were highly condemned by local and international bodies. The killing of Ade Coker of the Standard Newspaper in *Purple Hibiscus* is a portrayal of the brutal killing of Late Dele Giwa of blessed memory and the Ken Saro-Wiwa’s in General Babangida and late General Abacha’s regimes respectively and the incarceration of many others.

Another area which Adichie’s hammer falls on is governments’ attempt to stifle the academic. Sole Administrators were appointed instead of Vice Chancellors, to run the affairs of the university when the government sees lecturers or the intellectuals as unpardonable enemies. When such a thing is done, education suffers greatly. Adechie tells us about the reaction of the people against such imposition thus:

We cannot sit back and let it happen, Mba. Where else have you heard of such a thing as a sole administrator in a university?.. “A governing council votes for a vice-chancellor. That is the way it is supposed to work, Oburia?...” They said there is a list circulating, Ifeoma, of lecturers who are disloyal to the university. They said they might be fired. They said your name is on it.” “I am not paid to be loyal. When I speak the truth, it becomes disloyalty” (217)

This is one of the vices of a military regime. The idea of having a military sole administrator appointed to run the affairs of a university is very wrong. These were characteristics features of military regime in Africa. The students went on rampage chanting “All we are saying, sole Administrator must go! All we are saying, he must go! No be so? Na so!” (223) “The singing became louder“(223). Adichie further explores and explains the reasons for the students’ demonstrations. “Our water only runs in the morning, o di egwu. So we don’t flush when we urinate, only when there is actually something to flush. Or sometimes, when the water does not run for a few days, we just close the lid until everybody has gone and then we flush with one bucket. It saves water.”

Having talked about that, it is necessary for one to examine Ngugi’s *Devil on the Cross* and his solution to African problems. Ngugi in discussing the solution to the predicaments which Kenyan peasants and workers in particular, and Africans in general are facing daily, talks about the inevitability of a revolution. He sees the revolution of the peasants and the workers, and all meaning people in the society as something not only inevitable but something that must be done here and now. This is because the pattern of exploitation has reached its zenith. In *Devil on the Cross*, Ngugi puts it thus:

We, who are gathered here and now, belong to one clan: the clan of workers – I think all of us saw the incredible spectacle of those who have bellies that never bear children come to scorn us. They have been flattened by the fruits of our sweat and blood. Those bellies are barren and their owners are barren. What about us the workers...today here, we refuse to go on being the pot that cooks but never tastes the food. (P.208)

Here, Ngugi argues that despite the fact that the food prepared by the cook is tasty and delicious, the cook is deprived of eating it. This is because the master of the house does not allow her to eat the pudding. By analogy the peasants and the workers in Kenyan society daily toil and produce the resources which they never enjoyed. The neo-colonial Africans exploit the poor and the indigent.

Cook and Okenimkpe (1993) corroborate the above by stressing that *Devil on the Cross* is “Ngugi’s” determination to speak to the masses of Kenyan nation, awaken them to a serious appraisal of their predicament and propel them into combined action to right the situation” (121-122). This becomes very necessary because Achille Mbembe (2011), argues that African elite who took over from the colonial master and could be seen as national bourgeoisie employ the idea of nationalism “to maintain its own power” constantly taking over the “hegemonic control of the imperial power, thus replicating the condition it rises up to combat” (151). In other words, the elites who took over from the Colonial master maintain the status quo, exploiting fellow Africans, even more than the colonialists did. This is why in proffering solutions to the African predicament – Ngugi explains the need to take a critical look at the past as a way of articulating the future. Ngugi believes that it is the creative writer’s responsibility to use the past to inculcate its true values and ideals in his community

in order to have a better future. Ngugi employs a representative female character who can stand in the face of exploitation and help reorder things at the end. Wariinga though sexually molested as Wanja in *Petals of Blood* refuse to end up accepting the subordinate position the oppressor places her. Wariinga realises that the Kenya woman cannot remain the “flowers to decorate the beds of foreign tourist” and sexual toys for they played a very vital role during their resistance against colonial oppression:

...you...think that there is no job a woman can do other than cooking your food and messaging your bodies... Why have people forgotten how Kenyan woman used to make guns during the mau mau war against the British. (245)

Not only did Wariinga continue her studies to become a Mechanic but was bold enough to kill Norrika, the Rich Old Man who abused her. The rich Old Man was to Wariinga what Kimeria was to Wanja. Wariinga’s killing of the Rich Old Man is Ngugi’s way of proffering violence as a way out of the African predicament, and that the fight for freedom is something both sexes have to fight for the exploitation of the neo-colonialists is detrimental to both sexes. There is a deliberate attempt on the part of Ngugi to sensitize and conscientise the people towards becoming bold and ready to say not to the oppressors.

Sandra Elma (2010), *Voicing Oppression: A Rhetorical Reading of Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s Devil on the Cross* corroborates the above by stating that “Ngugi, by his use of satire and hyperbolic language images to raise an awareness of ongoing exploitation of the poor” (17). Elma further stresses that:

Ngugi shows how religion is used ideologically by the oppressors to maintain their position of power. Religion is an important source of constraints on Ngugi’s discourse and the strategy he uses to turn the constraints to arguments for his cause is by turning everything upside down. He unveils the eyes of the oppressed making them realise their oppressed situation and how religion is played on by their oppressors. (18)

Indeed Ngugi’s main preoccupation in the *Devils on the Cross* is to decolonize the mind of the people. It is the people awareness of how much they have been exploited that sets the stage for a new beginning which is violent: “Wariinga discovers that Gaturia’s father was her first seducer, and she shoots him with a pistol. (254). David G. Hulm (2000) explains that Ngugi’s *Devil on the Cross* seeks to rouse the colonized “from mental slavery” to expose and undermine the agents of colonialism. The process of decolonizing the mind, through the restoration and advocacy of African culture will employ the oppressed to seek the means for their self-liberation and self-determination. Colonialism and neo-colonialism have created what Ngugi calls a “culture of fear”, which keeps the oppressed silent. Their silence keeps the bars of colonialism in place” (249).

An explication of the text - *Devil on the Cross* – shows that resistance and redemption or repossession or freedom are products of Wariinga when she learns and become conscious of how to resist the oppressors. The experience at the feast changes her from a spectator to an active participant in the struggle:

Today Wariinga strides along with energy and purpose, her dark eyes radiating the light of an inner courage, the courage and light of someone with firm aims in life – yes, the firmness and courage and faith of someone who has assumed something self-



reliance. What is the use of Shuffling along timidly in one's own country? Wariinga, the black beauty! Wariinga of the mind and hands and body and heart, walking in rhythmic harmony on life's journey! Wariinga the worker" (218)

Wariinga who becomes a Mechanical Engineer at the Polytechnic, and has acquired a physical and social confidence by learning Karate and Judo can adequately deal with any male intimidation and harassment. It is Ngugi's way of calling for arms struggle to liberate one from any form of oppression. The success of it all could be seen in Gaturra's explanation of Wariinga's social relevance or significance:

We, the Kenya youth, must be the light to light up new paths of progress for our country. You for instance are a very good example of what I am trying to say. Your training in Mechanical Engineering, fitting and turning, moulding, is a very important step. It is a kind of signal to indicate to other girls their abilities and potentials (244)

Indeed Wariinga is a positive model for new generation Kenyan youths: self-reliant and a judge, the people's judge. Wariinga, by shooting the Rich Old Man to death as mentioned earlier in the discourse makes her speak with the People's voice as the Peoples judge. Wariinga's execution of her oppressor like Wanja's execution of Kimeria in *Petals of Blood*, is more than a personal revenge. It carries with it the force of communal retribution and justice. The beauty of Ngugi's solution could be seen in the last part of *Devil on the Cross* where the Wariinga we are shown at the end of the novel is able to differentiate herself from the former identity:

No, this Wariinga is not that other Wariinga. This Wariinga has decided that she'll never again allow again herself to be a mere flower, whose purpose is to decorate the doors and windows and tables of other people's lives, waiting to be thrown on to a rubbish heap the moment the splendour of her body withers. The Wariinga of today has decided to be self-reliant all the time, to plunge into the middle of the arena of life's struggles in order to discover her real strength and to realize her true humanity. (216).

Gikandi (2009), explains that "Wariinga has acquired agency; instead of functioning as an object of male desires, she has become a figure of female insurgency against postcolonial patriarchy" (221). And indeed a true "daughter of the Iregi rebel" (222) as Ngugi stresses in the text.

Having talked about Ngugi's solution to African predicament, it behoves us at this juncture to state, that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichei, our second novelist in this discourse also proffers solution to African dilemma. She does this very clearly in *Purple Hibiscus*.

In talking about Adichie and the solution to the African predicament, it might be necessary to critically examine Achebe's preface to *Morning Yet on Creation Day* in which he reacts to the prevailing sentiment of the time that urged that the events of the Nigerian civil war be forgotten and buried. Achebe tells the world:

I do not agree. I believe that in our situation the greater danger lies not in remembering but in forgetting, in pretending that slogans are the same as truth; and that Nigeria, always prone to self-deception, stands in great need of reminders... I believe that if we are to survive as a nation, we need to grasp the meaning of our

tragedy. One way to do it is to remind ourselves constantly of the things that happened and how we felt when they were happening. (xiii).

Achebe's postulation above becomes very relevant because until a man know where he went wrong in life, he may never know how to put things right. The issues Adichie explores in *Purple Hibiscus*, such as religious bigotry, tribalism, a very high degree of immorality, ethnicity, economic imperialism and a very high degree of corruption are still basic features of our current nation state. To ensure that these mistakes of the past are not repeated, the mistakes and lessons of the events of the past must guide the actions of the present and future.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie even as "a happy feminist" she calls herself, succinctly tells us through Auntie Ifeoma, the university lecturer and finest of all the characters in the text that "you do not kill a husband you love, that you do not orchestrate a car accident in which a trailer runs into your husband's car" (74). Adichie further explains through Auntie Ifeoma, the most refined of her characters that those who believe it is necessary for a woman to kill her husband in order to acquire his wealth and women who truly kill their husbands as a way of getting out of supposed men's dominance or in order to inherit his wealth "have the brains of guinea fowls" (74).

Auntie Ifeoma's ideology that woman who kill their husbands never love their husbands in the first place and that they have guinea fowl brains would be seen from the way Beatrice reason. In the text Beatrice or Mama as she is fondly called tells us that "it is good that children go, especially the boys ...need to know their fathers' (74) family members never frown at Eugene's not allowing her own children to visit their grandfather and their "father's umunna". Little wonder then that she could ask a house girl to procure the poison with which she killed her husband.

After Beatrice killed her husband, and lost the honour of being married, we find that she merely "nods and shakes her head" (290) when spoken to. And that "Sisi got married last year" (290) after helping mama with the rat poison that killed Eugene, and could be seen sitting" on the floor of the kitchen, crying loudly; while mama watched her", shows that mama lured her into procuring the poison with which her master was killed. It also shows mama's foolishness. It further demonstrates Sisi's awareness that the kitchen should be where a man's heart is won for good and not where that which destroys the man, the unity of the home and glory of the children is conceived, planned and executed – the poisoned tea.

Omolara Ogundipe – Lashie stresses that feminism must not be about "warring with men, the reversal of role or doing to men what women think that men have been doing for centuries, but it is trying to build of harmonious society. The transformation of African society is the responsibility of both men and women and it is in their interest". This is why Idegwu (2007) stresses that "female writers...need to see their writings as viable means of emphasizing the inevitability of peaceful union between spouses as a means of creating a desired atmosphere for our development and a beautiful future for our children"(59). The inevitability of togetherness remains a concept that has been greatly explored by many literary artists of our time. Though this concept has been trashed with all the dexterity it deserved, humans in their anger and insensitivity have failed to learn to live together in spite of all odds. Azuike Maureen Amaka (2009) hinges her argument on the need for peaceful co-existence by posting that:

In *Purple Hibiscus* and *In Half of a Yellow Sun* ...the Igbo women of Eastern Nigeria have held on steadfastly to the values that they deem important that have made agonizing situations, especially during the Biafran war, to be bearable. In *Purple Hibiscus*, for instance, Auntie Ifeoma Paints in our mind, a picture of an extremely intelligent, self – sacrificing widow who also is a staunch defender of her honour so much in common with her twin sisters, Olanna and Kainene in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. All the three women have experienced significant amounts of suffering, yet they exhibit great perseverance in overcoming their difficulties (p87).

Adichie like her fellow African writers serves as the conscience of her society, and functions as its historian, salvaging and rescuing its past, criticizing and analyzing its present, thereby mentoring and helping to guide her country and continent towards their future. Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* chronicles the temperament of her society in order to ensure that her society does not forget where things went wrong. She, through this act proffers solution to the African predicament.

Adichie Preoccupies herself with the reflections of socio-political, economic and historical condition of Nigeria, her dear country and Africa. She is greatly concern with the exposition of the ills (political, religious, economic and social) in her society. She attacks these imperfections.

Still on the murder of Eugene by Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus*, Nnolim (1999) condemns the act of murdering a husband as a way out of a holy marriage. He posits that: “We must assert that murder is murder, and murder is a criminal act under the laws of all human societies. What is a woman, a symbol of nurturance doing with murder? (53). Nnolim’s position here is clear and is the acceptable order of things. This is because murder is murder and it is inexcusable whether it is committed by a man or a woman. It is inexcusable for any woman to commit murder simply because she wants to fight patriarchy or gain freedom. If freedom is her watch word, devoice remains a better option. This is why Chibueze Prince Orié’s (2010) argument as she cites Michaela Foucault saying that “murder establishes the ambiguity of the lawful and the unlawful” (169) is untenable. There is nothing ambiguous about the fact that murder is criminal and unacceptable. Orié’s (2010) further argument that: “Eugene ..... is a fanatic who bullies his household, is poisoned to death by his wife, Beatrice when she finally finds herself at point zero” (p 170) is an unacceptable excuse for there is no record of how much she tried to resolve her problems with her husband. The fact that she fails to take responsibilities for her action, and deliberately allows her only son to waste his youthful and viable moment of his life in prison for thirty three months makes her the worst criminal in human history.

Having talked about Beatrice Achike’s error of judgment in her murder of Eugene. It is necessary to stress that Eugene beating his children and wife the way he did is unacceptable. That he beats Jaja and Kambili and cause them pains and hospitalization is very bad. And that Beatrice had miscarriages due to his beating her is highly condemnable.

Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* explains that “Uncle Eugene is not a bad man, really,” Amaka said. “People have problems, people make mistakes” (p 246). Rose Acholona (2004) stresses that: “It must be emphasised that feminism art would be failing in it’s duty, if it should ever give the false impression that women’s culture is now pure and free of all immorality, murder and crime; and the women the only possible angel in this idyllic

wonderland. The fact is that women, good or bad, like the men are invariably the products of their socio-cultural milieu.” (57).

It is therefore, pertinent to state that Adichie’s posit through Amaka, Kambili’s (the narrator) cousin and Acholona’s view that Eugene Achike, the murdered, a victim of a wife’s unreasonable act, and Beatrice Achike, the murderer, equally a victim of a man’s inability to control his temper are equally guilty of not being able to manage their relationship hence the irreparable damage they brought to their family. Susan Amdit (2002) argument about the need for men to be very careful is very necessary at this stage of our discourse. According to Amdit men should be very careful:

Because women who refused to be men’s slaves, who do not passively let themselves to be discriminated against, oppressed and cheated by men represent a danger for men” (159).

Should be expounded to include women themselves and their children when they fail to employ wisdom in making men who believe in slavery to see the foolishness of their beliefs in this twenty first century. It is through such inclusion that Amdit’s view becomes meaningful in a world where peaceful co-existence has become the quest of the vast majority of the mass of humanity that populate the world. This is why Adichie calls on couples to critically study their partners. That Adichie tells the readers that Eugene cried “tears streaming down his face” (192) as he “poured the hot water on” (192) Kambih’s feet, explains to her how the revered father he stayed with while at Gregoris came in and saw him and asked him” to boil water for tea,...poured the water in a bowl and soaked my (his) hands in it” for committing a sin against his own body and Beatrice’s actions and inactions that gave rise to their problem make both inexcusable as it is in real life. The pretentious nature of father Benedict and the club of sisters who used their religious position to exploit the Achike’s family is Adichie’s way of saying that the society is culpable. Brenda Tooper (2010) explains that Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* “uncompromising rejects is bigoted Eurocentric white priest, like father Benedict, and the braid of Catholicism into which he has brainwashed Papa, who is a caricature in his over zealotry” (6). This same unholy type of Catholicism we find on Beatrice who neither condemns her husband’s mistreatment of Papa – Nnukwu or the family, nor tells the world of the evils of her husband’s actions. Mariama Ba sums up our discussion on Adichie’s solution to the problems of matrimony thus: “In current world affairs, I remain persuaded of the inevitable and necessary complementarity of man and woman. Love, imperfect as it may be in its content and expression, remains the natural link between these two beings” (58).

Dr. Leo Buscaglia (1982) in *Living, Loving and Learning* amplifies Mariama Ba’s conviction of the necessary and inevitable complementarity of man and woman. He talks about our dying of loneliness in spite of our being so much in crowds. Buscaglia’s puts it thus: “I would like to talk about.... the concept of togetherness. I really am concerned about how separated we all are. Everybody seems much together in crowds and yet all of us are dying of loneliness”. (225).

The loneliness in the Eugene’s family arises from the fact that each of them – Eugene and Beatrice, failed to understand that one is a completer of the other. Eugene without Beatrice is a minus....The wholeness will never be there. Hence life will never be fulfilled. In the same vain” (61) Beatrice will remain a minus until she is grafted to her man”. (61) as Idegwu (2007) puts it. Adichie’s expression of the negatives in *Purple*



*Hibiscus* is to “define and emphasize the opposite state (peace/consonance) which it deserved” (130) as Ayo Kehinde (2009) enthused.

## CONCLUSION

The above explication of Ngugi and Adichie’s thrust in *Devil on the Cross* and *Purple Hibiscus*, respectively clearly shows that Kenya and Nigeria, the countries of the novelists and Africa, the continent are in great trouble. Their explication of the predicament of the continent is an indication that things are not well. It also shows that the novelists believe that revolution remains the way out of the present predicament. It is our submission, therefore, that violence to change the situation that is inimical to the people’s health and well-being is a welcome act. It must also be stressed that violence that is not in the interest of all and sundry is evil and should not be executed. For Beatrice Achike’s violent act is and remains inimical even to her very being.

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