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**RE-EXAMINING ECOFEMINISM IN THE WORKS OF CHIMAMANDA NGOZI  
ADICHE’S *PURPLE HIBISCUS* & *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN***

**Jeremiah Samuel METHUSALEH**  
[mekau65@gmail.com](mailto:mekau65@gmail.com)

**James Chuchuk ISRAEL**  
[jchuchuk@gmail.com](mailto:jchuchuk@gmail.com)

**Kaduna State University, Nigeria**

### **Abstract**

This paper uses Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus* to explore ecofeminism, specifically by showing the interdependence and connection the female characters have with the environment and, the marginalization and subjugation of women and nature. The study connects the emancipation of women and solidarity for the environment in the textual analysis. This study also draws from the tenets of ecofeminist criticism to investigate the interaction of ecology and gender. The research is restricted within the framework of the two text and ecofeminist theory. The study affirms that, Chimamanda presents strong female characters that subtly resist both patriarchy and colonialism in the face of environmental degradation. This study is of sufficient academic and intellectual subject of dissertation because, it raises a twenty first century concern of conserving and preserving the environment and natural resources. Indeed, this study will contribute to the ongoing discourses on gender, showing the connections between struggling women and degraded environment. Thus, this study calls for support and advocacy in tackling the social and ecological menace.

### **1. Introduction**

Chimamanda, a feminist and successful African writer in the twenty first century has attracted both national and international recognition through her ground breaking novels, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. This achievement has attracted critics to interpret, re-interpret, examine and re-examine the philosophies behind her writing. For example, Begum (2017) in “Women Empowerment in *Purple Hibiscus*” states that, Adichie’s novel hits at the glaring inequalities so as to produce the required change likely to bring equality among husbands and wives. Akpome (2017) in “Cultural Criticism and Feminist Literary activism in the Works of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Gender and Behaviour” posits that Adichie’s novels features female protagonists through whom

she provides powerful critiques of the androcentric social, cultural, and political structures of the societies she focuses on.

Maya (as cited in Ikediugwu, 2013) submits that Adichie’s powerful focus on impact of war on civilian life, and the trauma beyond the trenches, has made substantial contributions to feminist activism both on a global scale and in post-colonial societies. Kivai (2010) also argues in “The Female Voice and the Future of Gender Relationships in the Nigerian Nation in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*” that, Adichie’s novels are a clarion call to all women to realize that ‘they can live comfortably without being attached to the cultural beliefs and obligations which control women’s lives. These interpretations arguably suggest that Adichie is a feminist and that her feminism does not deviate from the African point of view.

However, underneath her works, Chimamanda raises ecological concerns aside the feminist and effects of civil war examined by different critics. Thus, this research aims at merging two concerns and re-examining the two texts from an ecological gender perspective – ecofeminism. Ecofeminism, a philosophical theory which emerged from the second wave of ecocriticism mainly asserts that the dominance of women is interconnected with the dominance of nature. The theory goes further to argue that any feminist movement without the environmentalist cause falls short of and is lacking argument in nature (Tan, 2020). The term ecofeminism was proposed for the first time in 1974, by French philosopher Françoise D’Eaubonne, who gave an ecological turn to feminism from a cultural-constructivist perspective and from the eagerness to overcome the concentration in the complaint of women and their subsequent defence at all costs (Sagol, n.d.).

Edward (2015) posits that ecofeminism concern spans not directly from feminist perspective but is historically associated with a non-feminist environmental philosophy. According to him, environmental issues have been addressed by philosophers since ancient Greece but the issues took shape in the early 1970s. This movement is a merger of similar cultural concerns (the ‘eco’ part of ecofeminism) as a movement opposed to the harm and degradation of the environment. Feminism (the ‘feminism’ part of ecofeminism) as both a theory and a movement seeks to end not just the subordination and oppression of women, but of other social groups as well. For Mallory (n.d.), feminism has had a long-standing commitment to addressing all forms of oppression because it understands that the social processes that produce gender oppression complexly intersect with and help to generate and maintain other oppressions as well.

Pioneer and leading philosopher of ecofeminist theory, Karen J. W posits that:

What makes ecofeminism distinct is its insistence that nonhuman nature and naturism (i.e., the unjustified domination of nature) are feminist issues. Ecofeminist philosophy extends familiar feminist critiques of social ‘isms’ of domination (e.g., sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, anti-Semitism) to nature (i.e., naturism). According

to ecofeminists, nature is a feminist issue. In fact, an understanding of the overlapping and intersecting nature of isms of domination is so important to feminism, science, and local community life that I have found it helpful to visualize ecofeminist philosophy as the intersection of three spheres in the drawing on the facing page. According to this way of visualizing ecofeminist philosophy, it arises out of and builds on the mutually supportive insights of feminism, of science, development and technology, and of local perspectives (1997, p. 9).

Hence, it is worth noting that ecofeminism brings environmental issues together with human issues and thus, the social sphere. This development has therefore created a new domain for the movement of feminism and also expands its scope by combining feminist theory with a new domain of theory, ecocriticism, which used to be considered irrelevant to this cause. Therefore, ecofeminism is regarded to be highly useful as it incorporates the natural with the human sphere and insists on the fact that environmental problems are directly connected with the women's experience.

As evident in Chimamanda's novels, her characters are not submissive to exploitation but active in an effort to revolutionize their situations. Her female characters are also dependent on the sustainability of nature. Obviously, her feminism does not deviate from the African point of view; rather she embraces women's sexuality. Again, the changing environments in her works affect the characters in their quest to liberate themselves from male dominated society. Environment is also key in shaping her female characters. This study seeks to show how feminism and ecology are engaged in complementary and mutually supportive mission of ending women domination and degradation of the ecosystem.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This study is conceptualized within the ecofeminist theory. Ecofeminist affirms that African women, nature, people of colour are all oppressed. Thus, this paper employs ecofeminism to understand how Adichie imagines the gender and nature problem and how it closely connects with the bio system and post-colonial Africa. According to Spretnak (1990), ecofeminism grew out of radical, or cultural, feminism (rather than from liberal feminism or socialist feminism), which holds that identifying the dynamics – largely fear and resentment – behind the dominance of male over female is the key to comprehending every expression of patriarchal culture with its hierarchical, militaristic, mechanistic, industrialist forms.

Ecofeminism according to Gaard (2011), emerged from the intersections of feminist research and the various movements for social justices and environmental health, explorations that uncovered the linked oppressions of gender, ecology, race, and species. For Gaard, an early text of radical feminism, 'Mary Daly's Gyn/Ecology' (1978), exposed the historical and cross-cultural

persecution of women as legitimized by the various male-dominated institutions of religion, culture and medical science (that is, Indian Suttee, Chinese foot binding, African genital mutilation, European witch-burnings, American gynaecology, Nazi medicine), linking the physical health of women and the environment with the recuperation of a woman-centred language and thought.

Ecofeminism as a theory for Cuomo (2020) begins with the belief that people are capable of ethical and mutually supportive relationships with each other, as well as with, and in, nature. At the heart of ecofeminism states Cuomo, is the devaluation and destruction of the natural world, and the oppression of nature-centred, female-respecting cultures, witnessed in recent centuries. Seemingly, Sagols (n.d.) in reading Karen Warren's ecofeminist philosophy states that, ecofeminism is structured from a radical ethical stance: self-construction of woman from the extension of justice in the aspiration of an egalitarian world and attached with nature. The ethics for Karen Warren according to Sagols is to transcend the 'Logic of dominance' set by the patriarchal system. This implies to affirm equality and unity between male and female and all livings.

For Sagols (n.d.), ecofeminism is a science that has taken into account the outstanding role of woman in ecological equilibrium because reproduction depends on her, thus, the excessive or moderate increment of human population and the consequent depletion or conservation of land resources. This assertion denotes that, the woman has a singular capacity to make possible harmonious and unitary life for every living being. To further assert the argument, D'Eaubonne (as cited in Sagols n.d.), posits that ecofeminism is structured from a radical ethical stance: self-construction of woman from the extension of justice in the aspiration of an egalitarian world and attached with nature. Definitely such support outlines an eco-ethical feminist ethos. A practical task to women according to Sagols, is to avoid overpopulation. This is the main factor of damage for the environment. As Gaard states, women are indeed the ones most severely affected by climate change and natural disasters, but their vulnerability is not innate; rather it is a result of inequities produced through gendered social roles, discrimination, and poverty. Rahmani (2007) also posit that, women's bodies have always been sites of land conflict, proxies for political power, and fields of competition for resources and genetic domination.

For Ecofeminists, they oppression of women and degradation of nature is parallel to each other and it based on power relations like man over nature. Patriarchal system like capitalist system, harm both nature and women. Therefore, the power concept should be restructured. Degradation of nature contributes to the degradation of women because in an environmental catastrophe, primarily those affected are women. Therefore, ecofeminist theory calls for an end to any kind of oppression and domination by emphasizing that this attempt may be achieved with the liberation of nature. Hence, to preserve nature means preserve women and next generation. Seckin (2014)

nevertheless, asserts that ecofeminist theory include the idea that woman cannot save the earth by herself so; they need men's efforts as well. Arguably, ecofeminist theory promises liberation from any kind of exploitations related to patriarchal identification of femaleness and nature. Note

### 3. Exploring Chimamanda's African Feminism

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's writing is influenced by various factors. Obviously, the society in which she finds herself in is constantly an influence on her stories. According to Nwosu (2017), Chimamanda is a stern, resilient, and unapologetic reformist feminist. With her feminist approach, she is poised to break down gender-based discriminatory barriers. A reformist-feminism basic tenet criticizes the individualistic and systematic, traditional and modern, conventions that discriminate against women. Nwosu (2017) goes further to argue that as part of gender inequality, gender stereotypes were part of the society Adichie was raised in. She did not quite fit the perfect 'girly' image and type, hence, considerable societal pressure was put upon her. In another sense, Nwosu (2017) avers that Adichie also draws inspiration from Achebe himself. Adichie herself acknowledging his influence, explains that Achebe's 'work gave her permission to write her own stories'.

On the other hand, Voices magazine (2018) posits that Chimamanda is a liberal feminist because, her school of thought borders on stagnation and anti-intellectualism. Voices further assert that Chimamanda still holds the same liberal worldview she held in 2007, like a decade-long scripted performance. The Voices are against Chimamanda not mentioning her influences. This act for Voices shows that, Adichie has erased the black women that paved the way before her, thus delegitimizing their work and her pride in failing to publicly engage with feminist theory is, quite frankly, embarrassing.

Adichie (2014) herself in one of her Technology Entertainment and Design(TED) converged states that, since feminism was un-African, I decided I would now call myself a happy African feminist who does not hate men and who likes to wear lip gloss and high heels for herself and not for men. She further posits in another 2016 TED Talk that what makes her very happy is that she talks about what women and girls go through everywhere in the world. It's possible Chimamanda writes to make a change in Africa and by extension the world. Because her experiences allow her to span societal issues from race, identity, ecology and love.

As Nwosu (2017) posits, the spectrum of Chimamanda's writing is inspired by Nigerian society and history, including trans-Atlantic slavery, colonialism, the Biafran war, Military coups and counter-coups that rocked the Nigerian state from the 60's to the late 90's, and Nigerian political instability- tragedies that still have wide – reaching and enduring consequences on today's society. According to Oshindoro (2019), Adichie expresses her own individuality within the uniformity in a rather upsetting way: with regards to the actualization of gender equality, her brand of feminism

deviates very aggressively from the conception of other Nigerian, especially Igbo and female writers.

Ikediegwu (2013) reading of Adichie suggests that Adichie is a feminist and that her feminism does not deviate from the African point of view. This implies that Adichie is not a radical feminist rather; she approaches feminism from the African point of view. She understands that Africans live and cherish communal life.

### 3.1. Ecological Concerns in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Purple Hibiscus*

According to Sincy (2020), nature and the environment play a significant role in Adichie's work, which at many instances become inseparable from the narrative. For Mule and Morve (2020), Adichie depicts nature as a character, thereby helping the reader to understand the central character's moods. One of the most important aspects of human-nature interaction is the capacity of plants to cure human diseases. Nsukka was surrounded by a variety of trees some of which had high medicinal value. While travelling through Nsukka in their car Amaka mentions the healing capacity of dogonyaro leaves. This can also signify the mental healing of Jaja and Kambili after reaching Nsukka. The narrator states:

Gmelina and dogonyaro trees stood firmly on either side. The sharp, astringent scent of the dogonyaro leaves filled the car, and Amaka breathed deeply and said they cured malaria. We were in a residential area, driving past bungalows in wide compounds with rose bushes and faded lawns and fruit trees (PH, p. 130).

Seemingly, in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Richard the British character asked Harrison and Jomo for traditional herbs to cure his erection problem. 'By the way, Harrison, do you happen to know of any herbs for men?' ... 'Yes, but I mean vegetables for sickness' (HOYS, p. 92). Harrison wonders why a white man is interested in African herbs. Richard not getting his desire response asked Jomo, 'By the way, would you know of any herbs for men? For men who have problems with ... with being with a woman?' (HOYS, p. 93). Jomo's bewilderment made Richard lie that 'I want to write about it' (HOYS, p. 93). And the pity on Jomo's face prompt him to utter; 'it no work for white man, sah' (HOYS, p. 93). But it actually worked for Jomo's brother. According to Jomo, 'my brother get problem before because the first wife is not pregnant and the second wife is not pregnant. There is one leaf that the dibia give him and he begin to chew. Now he has pregnant the wives' (HOYS, p. 93). It is obvious that Richard has heard the undying power of African traditional herbs in curing different sickness. This bring to fore; the symbiotic relationship humans share with nature and the importance to care and nurture the environment.

In another instance, Harrison narrated on how children were cure of kwashiorkor by eating a leaf.

Harrison shook his head. ‘Hunger is bad, sah. My people are watching the goats.’ ‘Watching the goats?’ ‘To see what they are eating, and after seeing they are boiling the same leaves and giving their children to drink. It is stopping kwashiorkor’ (HOYS, p. 380).

Ugwu also believe that there are herbs with magical power. He melted his Master’s sockets while trying to iron them. Ugwu hoped that by preparing a stew with a plant the Africans believed to have magical properties, he will be forgiven for his mistakes. The narrator states:

His grandmother had not needed to grow her favourite herb, *arigbe*, because it grew wild everywhere ... Ugwu walked around in search of *arigbe*... he had never smelled anything like the spicy sharpness of *arigbe* in the bland food Master brought back from the staff club; he would cook a stew with it, and offer Master some with rice, and afterward plead with him. Please don’t send me back home, sah. I will work extra for the burned sock. I will earn the money to replace it... if the *arigbe* softened Master’s heart, perhaps he could grow it and some other herbs in the backyard (HOYS, pp.18-19).

Seemingly, the character’s close association with nature also helps the reader to be conscious of the environment. Auntie Ifeoma’s garden is a place of rejuvenating and freedom. Angela (2018) asserts that, the purple hibiscus flower adds grace and candour to her poor residence. Her garden at university of Nigeria Nsukka is a circular burst of bright colours, budding hybrid hibiscus plant that blossoms purple flowers. Other plants include ixora, roses, lilies, croton growing side by side like a painted wreath (PH, p. 120). For Angela, the flowers in her garden show her as more ecumenical and accommodating than her brother Eugene Achike. In contrast, Eugene flowers are plucked to decorate the alter in St Agnes’ Catholic church Enugu only, while the flowers in Auntie Ifeoma’s house are plucked by women from both catholic and Anglican to decorate their church alters. In a form of good bye tour of Nsukka, the university town, Auntie Ifeoma takes the children to Odim Hill for a picnic. This is another environmental consciousness which Auntie Ifeoma portrays. A brief description of the hill is given with such insects as grass-hopper:

The climb was easy because there were many zigzagging paths. There was a fresh smell in the air and, once in a while, a crackling in the grass that bordered the paths ... grasshoppers made that sound with their wings...’ (PH, pp. 277-278).

For Olumide and Sunday (2019), this not only solidifies Auntie Ifeoma's love of nature and the environment, it equally paints her in glowing terms as someone who desires to educate others especially children about nature, by familiarizing them with the environment especially the flora and fauna of Igbo land in which the novel is set. Indeed, Auntie Ifeoma is a quintessential ecofeminist as she single-handedly manages her home effectively, ensuring its neatness and beauty as well-being of the society and its survival seems to be her priority as indicated through her effort to see that the purple hibiscus is made to grow in Enugu, in the home of her oppressive brother, Eugene to which she sends some of the stalks through Jaja, Eugene's son.

Olanna's acquaintance with nature can be seen in her journey to Kano. She prefers to travel by land than by flight.

Olanna chose not to fly up to Kano. She liked to sit by the train window and watch the thick woods sliding past, the grassy plains unfurling, the cattle swinging their tails as they were herded by bare-chested nomads. When she got to Kano, it struck her once again how different it was from Lagos, from Nsukka, from her hometown Ummunachi, how different the North as a whole was from the South. Here, the sand was fine, gray, and sun-seared, nothing like the clumpy red earth back home; the trees were tame, unlike the bursting greenness that sprang up and cast shadows on the road to Ummunachi. Here, miles of flat-land went on and on, tempting the eyes to stretch just a little farther, until they seemed to meet with the silver-and-white sky (HOYS, p. 46).

Here, Olanna had a craving for nature. The narrator carefully paints a contrast description of Southern and Northern Nigeria. She wished to take in the freshness of the air that smells of hills and history that can free her from the tensions within her. This shows Olanna's eco-critical consciousness in inhabiting the world of nature.

For Richard, nature is a place of reminiscence and airing his sorrow. His close association with nature brings a nostalgic feeling of England, his father and mother sitting with him and his father read them poetry.

They were in the orchard now, in the dense interweaving of orange trees, and Richard felt a strangeness overcome him. He felt himself receding, his mind unfurling, rolling back on its own. The orange trees, the presence of so many trees around him, the hum of flies overhead, the abundance of green, brought back memories of his parents' house in Wentnor. It was incongruous that this



tropical humid place, with the sun turning the skin of his arms a mild scarlet and the bees sunning themselves, should remind him of the crumbling house in England, which was drafty in summer. He saw the tall poplars and willows behind the house, in the fields where he stalked badgers, the rumpled hills covered in heather and bracken that spread for miles and miles, dotted with grazing sheep (HOYS, p.97).

For Kambili, nature outside her bedroom seems in a dialogue. She enjoys the comfort of nature as a relief for her pressurized life under the power of her father; ‘closer to the house, vibrant bushes of hibiscus reached out and touched one another as if they were exchanging their petals’ (PH, p.17). Again, Kambili bathes with rain water and leaves the earthworm without trying to disturb its peaceful existence.

That night when I bathed, with a bucket half full of rain water ... I did not heat water, either, because I was afraid that the heating coil would make the rain water lose the scent of the sky. I sang as I bathed. There were more earth-worms in the bath tub, and I left them alone, watching the water carry them and send them down the drain (PH, pp. 263-270).

This act according to Sincy (2020), illustrates Kambili’s growth as an individual ready to protect the natural surroundings rather than threatening it. Also, Kambili’s shifting attitude towards nature signifies her stage of transformation from ignorance to maturity.

According to Ukelabuchi (2020), women and children suffered and the land is not spared either as the burden of hatred, anger, bitterness and bloodshed is daily cast upon its shoulders. Women just like the land are exploited and violated without any form of justice being upheld for them. Female characters such as Olanna, Kainene, Anulika, Kambili, Beatrice, Auntie Ifeoma, Eberenchi, Odenigbo’s mother, Edna, Alice and Mrs Mouleko are all the representatives of the African women who have internally as well as externally accepted the patriarchal values even though those norms seem to be largely unjustifiable to them. The recurring image of the head of a young girl who was beheaded and the head put in a calabash (p. 185) is symbolic of the horrendous violence of a war where women are the most vulnerable.

The gang rape of the bar girl (p. 457), the rape of Ugwu’s sister by military men (pp. 497-526) were all horrors of the war. This incident of rape is from the ecofeminist point of view. That just as the women were rape, Biafran was dehumanized and devalued during the war. Lives, properties, crops, etc. Were all destroyed during the war. Here is an example of High-Tech and Ugwu’s inhumane violation of the woman:

The bar girl was lying on her back on the floor, her wrapper bunched up at her waist, her shoulders held down by a soldier, her legs wide, wide ajar. She was sobbing, ‘please, please, biko.’ Her blouse was still on. Between her legs, High-Tech was moving, his thrusts were jerky, his small buttocks darker-colored than his legs. The soldiers were cheering ... Ugwu shrugged and moved forward. ‘Who is afraid?’ he said disdainfully. ‘I just like to eat before others, that is all’. ‘The food is still fresh!’ ‘Target Destroyer, aren’t you a man? I *bukwanwoke?*’ on the floor, the girl was still. Ugwu pulled his trousers down, surprised at the swiftness of his erection. She was dry and tense when he entered her. He did not look at her face, or at the man pinning her down, or at anything at all as he moved quickly and felt his own climax (HOYS, pp. 457-458).

For Ukelabuchi (2020), Adichie’s use of the words: ‘eat’ and ‘destroyer’ which reflects Ugwu’s devouring and destroying of woman, is an indication of the devastation and destruction of Biafra land. Upon his return to the village, Ugwu finds out his mother is dead and that soldiers also raped his sister. It is clear that the circle of violation goes round and round. Ugwu breaks down in tears. He weeps for what was destroyed in the war. Beyond the physical destruction, his weeping upon coming to knowledge of what had befallen his mother and sister suggests an outcry for a stop to such injustice. Ukelabuchi is concerned that Adichie, despite her representation of violent acts of rape, murder, and the manner with which bodies were violated and destroyed, there is a plain refusal to pass judgment on her characters despite their roles.

In *Purple Hibiscus* too, Eugene brutally beats his wife and children at home for disobeying him, his wife later suffers two miscarriages. ‘There was an accident, the baby is gone’ ... ‘you know that small table where we keep the family Bible, nne? Your father broke it on my belly’ ... ‘My blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes’ (PH 41-43, 253). In another scene, Kambili takes little corn flakes to enable her take a pain relieving drug to ease her stomach discomfort, and Eugene believes this law should not be broken, not even on health grounds because it ‘desecrate the Eucharistic fast...’:

He unbuckled his belt slowly. It was a heavy belt made of layers of brown leather with a sedate leather covered buckle. It landed on Jaja first, across his shoulder. Then Mama raised her hands as it landed on her upper arm, which was covered by the puffy sequined sleeve of her church blouse (PH, p. 110).

Kambili also suffers a brutal attack for bringing the painting of Pa Nnukwu to their house and trying to protect it from destruction.

He started to kick me. The metal buckles on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitoes. He talked nonstop, out of control, in a mix of Igbo and English, like soft meat and thorny bones. Godlessness. Heathen worship. Hellfire. The kicking increased in tempo ... the stinging was raw now, even more like bites, because the metal landed on open skin on my side, my back, my legs. Kicking. Kicking. Kicking. Perhaps it was a belt now because the metal buckle seemed too heavy ... more stings. More slaps. A salty wetness warmed my mouth. I closed my eyes and slipped away into quiet (PH, p. 217).

According to Laure, et al (2018), Eugene is a stark reminder of the patriarchy and male chauvinism. His attitude and behaviour prevent his wife and children from being happy. He is violent and usually beats both wife and children. The red hibiscuses in Eugene's house stands for his oppressive attitude, blood and constant violence.

Similarly, Olanna's father cheats on his wife. And Olanna confronts him:

I wish you had some respect for my mother. Its disrespectful that you have a relationship with this woman and that you have bought her a house where my mother's friends live, Olanna said. You go there from work and your driver parks outside and you don't seem to care that people see you. It's a slap to my mother's face (HOYS, pp. 272-273).

Olanna's mother-in-law visit to their home was reflective of private patriarchy and the internalisation of patriarchy. Mama attempts to re-socialize Olanna according to the set patterns of patriarchy and to realize that her position in the family is low and temporary.

He will not marry an abnormal woman, unless you kill me first. Only over my dead body! Master's mother clapped her hands then hooted and slapped her palm across her mouth so that the sound echoed (HOYS, p.122).

Here, Olanna experiences negative judgement of her 'womanhood' from Odenigbo's mother, who is of the notion that women who have received too much schooling were ruined as women.

And on top of it, her parents sent her to university. Why? Too much schooling ruins a woman; 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? (HOYS, p.123).

Hlumelo (2020) asserts that *Half of a Yellow Sun* underscores the interdependence between humans and their environment. Although the women are entrapped by both the patriarchal and colonial system, they are not portrayed as passive victims. Olanna assumed the role of the head of her family at this point of necessity that her friend Alice tells her; ‘I don’t know how you do it, keeping everything together and teaching children and all that. I wish I were more like you’ (HOYS, p. 335). For Hlumelo, Olanna’s new position as head of the family forced her to consider the survival of her family; she went to the relief centre daily to secure provisions to sustain them. Gender roles ceased to exist despite an inner conflict with herself that ‘she was doing something improper, unethical: expecting to get food in exchange for nothing (HOYS, p.343).

There is no doubt that, the Biafran war highlights the strength of the women which is oppressed in patriarchal societies, their ability to provide and rise above adversity is brought to the forefront. Father Marcel and Father Jude violated many young women in exchange for food. The priest abuses his position of power and Olanna reacts to the knowledge with anger, confronting the priest for being ‘Amosu! You devil!’ (HOYS, p.499). The sexual exploitation of women in Biafra can be interpreted to be the state of Nigeria and the environment during the Biafran war. The vulnerability of the victims (women and girls) relates to the larger social problem taking place in the environment. The two Priests, Father Marcel and Father Jude are representative of the coloniser who are stationed within society and continues to exploit the women and environment under the pretext of helping them and under the cloak of religion.

The stories of these women reveal that their pains, pathos and traumatic experiences are the representatives of the entire female race that has been badly dehumanized by the patriarchal social conventions. Richard recounts such an experience of Umannachi women:

I know Umannachi people well, they find too much trouble, he said ‘my people warned my cousin not to marry an Umannachi man but she did not hear. Every day they beat her until she packed her things and returned to her father’s house’ (HOYS, p. 152).

The story above shows how women are treated like animals and given physical tortures in the African family. The unnamed character is the representative of all the females living in suffocation and exploitation under the brutality of patriarchy.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper asserts that Adichie carefully sketches her female characters to reflect facets of African women. This implies that, Adichie is conscious of the environment her characters grow and imbued them with stern resistance to liberate themselves and the opportunity to achieve their highest potential. The study shows how Adichie remove the stereotypical portraiture of women and move towards stronger representation of women characters taking responsibility for their own destinies. These women declined many aspects of a typical traditional African woman and embody the description of 'new woman'. This study has equally asses the determination of these women to survive in the face of violence, sexual assault, extreme observation, senseless brutality and careless threats to their lives and property. In the midst of all this, the women find solace in nature which influences them positively. They live in a hostile environment which has made them silent, fearful, submissive and disempowered. Thus, the healing presence of the environment shows the interconnectedness women share with nature. These women are mostly affected because they are closest to nature. As such, nature serves as a place of empowerment, self-discovery and disempowerment for the women. There is no doubt that Nigerian literary landscape has been interrogating and is still interrogating issues of nature and ecology saliently, accidentally and openly in literary works.

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