



THE MODERN AFRICAN NOVEL, AN INESTIMABLE ARBITER: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S PURPLE HIBISCUS

DR. CLEMENT CHUKWUKA IDEGWU¹

¹Department Of English School Of Languages College of Education P.M.B. 2000 Agbor
Delta State Nigeria.

Abstract

Christianity and feminism have become inescapable realities of the moment that writers all over the world are highly concerned about the application of these concepts, their abuses, the biting effects of such on the "fragile peace" that exist between humans and what the ideals ought to be if peaceful co-existence is our watch word. The situation is much more complex in Africa where these two concepts are alien to the people. The greater complexity lies on the fact these current waves - Christianity, and Feminism have a subtle way of affecting the human psyche that before they comprehend what they are in for, they are highly engrossed that they, daily look back in anger for ever getting involved. The author will discuss Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus in the light of the above, showing how the African novel meditates as a combatant in the crisis created by this strange marriage in African.

Key Words : The modern african novel, an inestimable arbiter: a critical perspective

340

340-365

INTRODUCTION

We are all born weak and helpless. All lead the same short, troubled life. We grow and wither as quickly as flowers, we disappear like shadows. Pg 32. JOB 14 : 1-2 GOOD NEWS BIBLE.

"Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of troubles. He comes forth like a flower and fades away. He flees like a shadow and does not continue. P. 503.

The above quotations from the book of Job which sees man's earthly journey as very brief and filled with pains and all that make his life a futile exercise serve as a beautiful premise on which to anchor our discourse: the modern African Novel: an inestimable arbiter: a critical perspective on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus.

Modern man is an epitome of pain. Right from birth, he works very hard in order to take care of that which he will deliberately and consciously choose, a coffin carver, who will design his coffin as she deems fit, and forces him to rest in it, whether he feels it is time to rest or not, whether he likes it or not, whether he rest in peace or in pieces not the issue, when she feels he must have put in place, companies, estates and global networks, and another "he" for her pleasure, and a continuation, for the procreation of the slave, a mere head which must be turned at will by the Powerful and Almighty NECK – The Women. This is why Idegwu (2010) sees man as a

a house fly trapped in a spider's web, flapping its wings in its struggle to make a mark, free itself or impress it on the web, or the spider who perhaps in it's ingenuity forms the web, so that it is capable of doing something meaningful, ends in the weakening of its wings and its eventual death. The fly ends up dying, but more significantly is the fact that it dies still trapped in the web and unable to force itself out from the claws of death (p. 163)

Idegwu's explanation above crystallizes into an eternal head that must be turned at will even for "game" by the all powerful NECK. Or how else will one explain a man, a fly, that dies still trapped in the spiders web (THE NECK). He remains a prisoner as many times as he resurfaces or reincarnates.

Modern man's ugly state has been compounded by Christian religion an umbrella which women employ to cage men, and feminism, an ideology which the very radical ones among the NECK specie use to network the globe trying to win more adherents to their club where widowhood is applauded, a coveted trophy to those who have been able to terminate their men for wherever wrong their men must have committed against them.

The thrust of this article is that modern African novel remains an inestimable arbiter, a settle of this fierce dispute between man and woman for in it, the aggrieved parties in their various kingdoms vent their anger on their presumed enemies and in venting their anger forget to hide their prejudices, their short comings or faults which make all parties wanting in one area or the other. And for this and all other things one could say ALL HAVE SINNED. In deed all have. Leo Buscaglia (1982)

opines that

the loving person is the person who loves him or herself. I say this so often, and people say "oh, yes, you're so right", but they just don't do it! You will never be able to love anybody else until you love yourself" (p. 209).

That's our thrust - man and woman have sinned. They have both been found wanting. It is no longer our ability to cast stones at each other, it is far from it. It is not a matter of killing each other, for none can live comfortably without the other for our years of separate and collective pretences have shown how isolated and frustrated we are in our pretences.

THE BEGINNINGS

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the Lord caused a deep sleep: and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and close up the place with flesh.²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³The man said, this is the bone of my bone and the flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman; for she was taken out of man. (p.4) Niv. 1990. Genesis

The Christian myth like all other creation myths emphasize that God's initial purpose of creation centres around man. "God made man in His image and likeness. That done, God made a woman out of him, and for him, because no suitable helper was found (p4). He, the man named her, like he did all other beings on earth.

In Africa, before the coming of Christianity, and its attendant problems, the relationship between a man and his wife, or wives as the case may be has been very cordial. The woman has been a suitable helper in virtually every area of life. Though by nature, man seems polygamous, he has never undermined the wife, hence, he consults her as a helper from time to time. He consults her even on very critical matters such as when he sees the need for a second wife. In this situation, he calls her, tells her his intentions, and allows her if she wants, to look for a woman she could have as a mate. The man could present three

347

613

women, and allows her to make a choice out of the three. And when she finally decides whom she could have as a mate, she goes to woo her for her husband. In this situation all the children call the woman, "mama". It is difficult to know whom the children's real mother is

Ngugi (1985), one whom one could call an ancestral literary father to Adichie, explains the harmony in African world even in a polygamous home thus:

Boro, Kori and Kamau were all sons of Njeri. Ngotho's eldest wife. Njoroge's only true brother was Mwangi who had died in the war. But they all behaved as if they were of one mother. Kari worked in an African tea-shop called Green Hotel... But sometimes his brother did not come. Home was dull. But the mothers could tell stories and Ngotho too, when he was in the mood.

'Our elder mother wanted you', Njoroge said when they reached home. It was already dark, while Njeri was always 'one' or 'my elder mother', Njukubi, being the younger wife, was always just 'mother'. It was a habit observed and accepted by all. (p22).

Even as a polygamous home, all the children call the woman mother. "Our elder mother" is a mark of respect for the eldest wife of the home. In spite of the fact that Ngotho had three wives, it is difficult for an outsider to notice that the children are not from one mother. This is the beauty of the African world before the Whiteman came.

There was harmony everywhere. Though marital squabble was there as seen in every society, none lasted till sun set for the differences were quickly resolved and normalcy restored. None thought of killing each other for their quarrel was like that of the tongue and the teeth.

That was the beautiful African world before the white man came with his religion, Christianity, and now feminism. While Christianity alienates its adherents or believers from the beautiful African communal world view, and plants individualism through its unguided preachings, feminism creates an eternal bitterness where there was none, or perhaps where there were mere trivial issues that would have been resolved at nights by couples during their holy communion service at night when the children must have gone to bed.

Before now, a man and his wife work collectively towards the upbringing of their children and family, the degree of their individual inputs not withstanding. But today, owning individual property is very much in vogue. The man is buying in his name; the woman is buying in her name, each doing very funny things just for the pleasure of owning estates. This is one of the evils of our time.

At this juncture, it might suffice us to examine some of the key concepts in our discourse.

Barbara Berg () sees feminism as

The freedom to decide her own destiny; freedom from sex-determined roles; freedom from society's oppressive restrictions; freedom to express her thoughts, fully and to convert them freely to actions (for, feminism)... demands the acceptance of women's right to individual conscience and judgment. It postulates that women's essential worth stems from her common humanity, and does not depend on the other relations in her life (qtd in Hooks 194).

To Bar Barbara Berg, feminism is all about a woman's right to freely think and do whatever she wants to do in life. It talks about freedom to exercise her "humanness" or womanhood.

Hooks Bell (1981) advances our discussion by saying that

"Feminism is not a struggle to end male Christianity or a movement to ensure that women will have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to evaluating the ideology of domination that permeates (society) on various levels - sex, and class, to name a few - and a commitment to re-organizing society so that the self development of a people can take precedence. (p.193).

Hook's explanation above is relevant to our discourse on the impact of Christianity and the feminist posit in marriage life. It shows that perhaps in women's attempt to acquire equal right with men, fail to understand that even among equals, there is need to reverence the other based on. One's self assessment of the other having an edge. There is no way humans will be on a queue without one person being in front and the other being behind. Don't we have first among equals?

In this area, therefore, Beatrice Orife (2010) becomes more relevant to us in finding a middle course that will enhance human relations. According to her

The central concern of feminists is not to validate the claim that women are oppressed by a patriarchal order or demythologize negative images of women but to evolve a feminist basis of social relations, aimed at enhancing women's self esteem and helping them to find their voice in a male dominate social order. (p.169).

"...enhancing women's self esteem and helping them to find their voice in a male dominated social order" is not a problem for in Africa before the advent of these alien ideology, women had expressed their voice.

Achebe (1979) in *Things Fall Apart* shows the beauty of the African world and that women have a voice.

*'Do you know Ogbuefi Ndule?' Ofoedu asked.
'Ogbuefi Ndule of Ire village', Okonkwo and Obierika
said together 'He died this morning', said Ofoedu.
'That is not strange. He was the oldest man in Ire,'
said Obierika.
'You are right', Ofoedu agreed. 'But you ought to ask
why the drum had not been beaten to tell Umuofia of his death.'
'Why?' asked Obierika and Okonkwo together.
'That is the strange part of it. You know his first wife
who walks with a stick?
'Yes, she is called Ozoemena.'
'That is so,' said Ofoedu. 'Ozoemena was you know,
too old to attend Ndule during his illness. His younger wives
did that. When he died this morning, one of these women went
to Ozoemena's hut and told her. She rose from her mat, took
her stick and walked over to the Obi. She knelt on her knees
and hands at the threshold and called her husband, who was
laid on a mat. 'Ogbuefi Ndule,' she called three times, and
went back to her hut. When the youngest wife went to call her
again to be present at the washing of the body, she found her
lying on the mat dead'. (p. 47)*

That was "Mama" as the eldest wife of a polygamous man was called, reacted to the death of a loved and cherished husband. There was peace and harmony in every home whether polygamous or monogamous. Man as the head and initiator, loves and cherishes his wife or wives as the case may be. In fact Achebe move further to say that

*'It was always said that Ndule and Ozoemena had one
mind,' said Obierika. 'I remember when I was a young boy
there was a song about them. He could not do anything
without telling her.
'I did not know that,' said Okonkwo. 'I thought he was
a strong man in his youth.'
'He was indeed,' said Ofoedu '.....'
'He led Umuofia to war in those days,' said
Obierika; p. 47-48.*

These long quotations from Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* become relevant as they explain that in Africa before the coming of these two foreign destroyers of the beauty of the African marital landscape, peace had existed beyond measure in marriages, and that Achebe's

the progenitor of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie fore warn early enough that the white man and his Christian religion and the attendant feminism have come to "put a knife on the things that held to us together and we have fallen apart". (v)

Christian religion compels a man and his wife to Clift to themselves as one. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (p.2) KJV.

The clifting or joining together of a man and a woman, and their becoming one flesh that which seems an irrationational mathematics, perhaps, creates an absurd situation that is devoid of the inestimable beauty of the Umu-ncu and Umu Ledi – the extended family system, which served and still serve as a mediators or important rallying points in moments of crises in marriage and other critical moments, in African.

This is why Adichie's Beatrice could not have anyone to talk to about her husband excesses, and Eugene on his part had no one to complain to about the unbecoming behaviour of the wife which must have been one of the major factors for his wife – beating acts. All these led to the tension that finally destroyed the family.

Eugene Achike and Man's Foolishness

When one sits down to analysis man's actions from the genesis of the world, it beats one's imagination to a breaking point that man has been very very foolish. All his actions since the so called "suitable helper" was used to crown his cap has been very detrimental to his being. The co-ordial relationship he had with God at creation got broken simply because he was poised to please.

Then the Lord God took the man (Adam) and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat of, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. (p2). NKJ

Adam got this command from God and kept it religiously. He never faulted. But when "the suitable helper" came, she helped him (Adam) to disobey God's command". She took of it's fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate (p. 3), just to please the wife, the NECK who must turn the head which ever way she pleases. And for this he got:

"Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, (rather than that of God your creator) and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, shall not eat of it.

"Curse is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it. All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread. Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return". (p.3 NKJ)

Just for Adam's love for Eve he got that eternal curse: And Eugene for his wife tilled the ground metaphorically and after harvest had his mouth closed eternally by his NECK - Beatrice, the skillful manipulator of the head.

Papa - Nnukwu while praying for himself and his two children, Eugene who stupidly abandoned his father, and Ifeoma the caring daughter, bless his children thus.

"Chineke! Bless me. Let me find enough to feed my stomach. Bless my daughter, Ifeoma. Give her enough for her family. "He shifted on the stool. His navel had once juttied out, I could tell, but now it looked like a wrinkled egg plant, dropping.

"Chineke! Bless my son, Eugene. Let the sun not set on his prosperity. Lift the curse they have placed on him" Papa Nnukwu leaned over and draw one more line. I was surprised that he prayed for Papa with the same earnestness that he prayed for himself and Aunt Ifeoma. P. 166

A careful observation and analysis of the prayer spell out the following salient points: He asked God to give him enough to feed his stomach, to give Ifeoma enough to feed her family, and for Eugene he said "Chineke! Bless my son, Eugene. Let the sun not set on his prosperity. Lift the curse they placed on him" (p166). A Curse? Ephesians chapter 6 verse 1-2 says children honour parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise" that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth". (p1136 NKJ).

The above is God's injunction. An order man has to execute without question - your parents in the Lord, in the church and "your father and mother," - biological parents. This is highly spelt out by the God who Eugene claims to believe greatly in.

Eugene Achike rather than obey Gods order clift to the wife like Adam. He never visited his father, and when his children Jaja and Kambili request to visit their grandfather gives them only fifteen minutes. Hear him: Kambili and jaja, you will go this afternoon to your grandfather's house and greet him. Kelvin will take you. Remember, don't touch any

food, don't drink anything. And, as usual you will only stay not longer than fifteen minutes. Fifteen minutes." (p61) "...as usually only fifteen minutes," a year. That's how much the children can stay with their grandfather"

Adichie through her narrative leads us further into Eugene's degree of insanity. Papa himself never greeted Papa - Nnukwa, never visited him, but he sent slim wads of naira through Kevin or through one of our Umanna members, slimmer wads than he gave Kevin as a Christmas bonus." (p61).

This is why Aunt Ifeoma, Eugene's only sibling laments Eugene's disregard for their father in the following expression:

"You know why Eugene did not get along with Ifeodora?" Aunt Ifeoma's whisper was back, fiercer, louder. "Because Ifeodora told him to his face what he felt. Ifeodora was not afraid to tell the truth. But you know Eugene quarrels with the truths that he does not like. Our father is dying, do you hear me? Dying. He is an old man, how much longer does he have, gbu? Yet Eugene will not let him into his house, will not even greet him. O joka! Eugene has to stop doing God's job, God is big enough to do his own job. If God will judge our father for choosing to follow the way of ancestors, then let God do the judging, not Eugene."

I heard the word Umanna. Aunt Ifeoma laughed her throaty laugh before she replied. "You know that the members of our Umanna, in fact everybody in Abba, will tell Eugene only what he wants to hear. Do our people not have spine? Will you pinch the finger of the hand that feeds you?" pp 95-96.

Chinweizu (1990) In Anatomy of Female Power gives us an insight on why Eugene acted the way he did by citing Ambrose Bierce thus:

... according to Ambrose Bierce, love is "a temporary insanity curable by marriage".¹⁵ For the sake of accuracy, he should have qualified that by the opening phrase "In men." Similarly, when Francis Bacon remarked: "It is impossible to love and be wise,"¹⁶ he should have added the opening phrase: "For a man." Likewise, the saying "Love is blind" should be taken as short hand for "a man in love is blind to his best interests". None of these remarks applies to women. A woman in love is far from insane; she is anything but unwise or blind to her interests. On the contrary, her first sigh of love is like a whiff of smelting salts which clears her head, leaving her with four eyes and night vision; it instigates her to a ruthless pursuit of what she wants. That woman is indeed most rare for

whom love is a beclauder of the eyes or a confuser of the head
Page 41.

The above extracts from Ambrose Bierce authenticates our position about the foolishness of man when it comes to love. Man gets blind to his best interest when he is in love. Adam did. Eugene Achike followed. As if that was not enough Jaja appended his signature to that which he never did, got jailed where he remains. Adam lost the splendid nature of the garden and in the scorching sun he toiled, Eugene laboured for another to eat. Jaja left his inheritance for a murderer, - his mother an Eve to enjoy.

Eugene in his error of judgment for the love of his wife left the father uncared for. Hence, the father of a business morgue, the owner of the Standard Newspaper, a philanthropic, a major donor to Reverend Fathers and Sisters of the Catholic, and one greatly loved by the street beggars for his generosity.

"If I had meat in my soup", Papa - Nnukwu said, "I would offer it to you".

"It is alright, Papa - Nnukwu", Jaja said.

Papa - Nnukwu took his time swallowing his food... There was no drink besides him, not water (p66).

This is the father of Eugene Achike, the man next to "God", one who washes the outside of a cup very well but leaves the inside very dirty.

Adichie moves on to tell us the deplorable state of Papa - Nnukwu.

He shook Jaja's hand and hugged me. I pressed myself to him just a moment longer, gently holding my breath because of the strong, unpleasant smell of cassava that clung to him.

"Come and eat", he said, gesturing to the tiffin mat. The enamel bowls contained flaky fufu and watery soup bereft of chunks of fish or meat...

His left eye was going blind and was covered by a film the colour and consistency of diluted milk...

"Papa Nnukwu, are you well? How is your body?", Jaja asked.

Papa - Nnukwu struggled as if to say there was a lot that was wrong but he had no choice. "I am well, my son. What can an old man do but be well until he joins his ancestors... "My legs ache often." (pp 64-65).

This is how Eugene treated his father, a man who gave birth to him. Eugene did not treat his father well as shown above for according to him, the old man refused to become a Christian. But aunty Heoma, whom he rejected because she told him the truth is a Christian. Kambili, Adichie's fifteen years old narrator puts it thus:

We did not know Aunt Ifeoma or her children very well because she and Papa had quarreled about Papa-Nnukwu. Mama had told us. Aunt Ifeoma stopped speaking to Papa after he had barred Papa-Nnukwu from coming to his house and a few years passed before they finally started speaking to each other. (p. 65)

Take a critical look at the statement "Mama had told us". Mama saw the strange relationship between father and son, and between brother and sister and refused to speak against it for selfish reasons. Perhaps, their presence would have inconvenienced her and her children. Or how else could one interpret a situation where a man who refused to care for his father and sister on the ground of religion could give gifts to beggars on the roadside whose religious status he does not know, and who are necessarily none Christian. In another development, he sent Ade's wife and her baby were sent to overseas for treatment. Yet he could not give his father the desired medical attention.

The Reverend Father Benedict and the Reverend Sisters whom Eugene spends heavily on never bothered about his father, Papa – Nnukwu. The Bible which talks about feeding the poor and visiting the sick, which Papa Nnukwu is one of them, among other things did not occur or matter to them.

Margaret Sanger as cited by Elizabeth Gould Davis (1973) must have been very correct when she posits that

If Christianity turned the clock of general progress back a thousand years, it turned back the clock two thousand years for women... The churchmen deprived her of her place in and before the courts, in schools, in acts, in literature and society. They shut her mind from knowledge... [and] they chained her to the position of which they had thrust her. (page 252)

In deed Christianity took her more than two thousand years backward for in African society any woman who claims to have come to marry her husband and excludes her husband's relations is doom. So, Beatrice was doom from the beginning. And a husband who is so blind that he fails to see that if he runs away from his people and clift to his Christian religion and wife is bound to die early, will labour for others to eat. This is why Susan Faludi (1991) in her book *Backlash The Undeclared War Against American Women*, warns that

"Men are hurting more than women – that is, men are, in many ways, actually more powerless than women now". Warren Farwell pauses...

Feminism may have improved female lives, he asserts, but for some women, "the deeper the feminism, the more closed the women were to men".

... "We are in an era now where men don't feel understood by women," he says. It's gotten so bad that middle-aged women seeking husbands might even benefit from the shortage of sensitive young ladies. "Older women who are looking to get married could really compensate for their loss of looks by understanding men" (p.300).

Faudi in the above statement explains man's helplessness, and the precarious nature of the situation. It is painful that only middle age women and the older ones who have lost their usefulness even try to understand man. Where is their "understand" when it is because they are no longer articles for sale and gifts that could be received with appreciation or a thank you?

"Kambili, you are precious". His voice quavered now, like some speaking at a funeral, choked with emotion. "You should strive for perfection. You should not see sin and walk right into it." He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it towards my feet. He poured the hot water on my feet, slowly, as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen. He was crying now, tears streaming down his face. I saw the moist steam before I saw the water. I watched the water leave the kettle, flowing almost in slow motion in an arc on my feet. The pain of the contact was so pure, so scalding; I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed.

"That is what you do to yourself when you walk into sin. You burn your feet," he said (p.192).

How on earth will a sane man, an Africa who has only two children a boy and a girl want to kill his only daughter "He lowered the kettle into the tub, tilted it towards my feet. He poured the hot water on my feet, slowly as if he was conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen". (p. 192) And criminally funny enough, "he was crying now, tears streaming down his face." (p. 192), and the narrator-victim, continuing said, 'I saw the moist steam before I saw the water' (p.192).

Such state of life is a pitiable sight. It is criminally pathetic. In a real African world view, members of the extended family will go searching, whichever way they can, the cause(s) of an abnormality in the life of the brother or uncle.

And as if there were fresh doses of the anointing, the one, one experiences or sees too frequently in these Pentecostal churches where they fall head - long, shouting hysterically, moving in cyclical pattern trying to explain the mystery of life to the unbelieving members either in plain and decodable language or in tongues which needs another circle of

interpretation by same speaker with the auction or another whose task it is to merely watch and interpret, Papa

...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. Hell fire. The kicking increased in tempo... I curled around myself tighter, around the pieces of the painting, they were soft, feathery... kicking, kicking, kicking. Kicking. Perhaps it was a belt now because the metal buckle seemed too heavy. Because I could hear a scush in the air. A voice was saying, "Please, biko, please" More stings. More slaps. A sultry wetness warned month. I closed, my eyes and slipped away into quiet.

Page 207 When I opened my eyes, I knew at once that I was not in my bed. The mattress was firmer than mine. I made to get up, but pain shot through my whole body in exquisite little packets. I collapsed back.

(Pp. 206 – 207)

As he does this, "he talked nonstop, out of control in a mix of Igbo and English like soft meat and thorny bones. Godlessness. Heathen worship. Hellfire" (p.206) Talking at random like a psychiatric patient his kicking of Kambili increased in tempo.

Papa put his hands under my arms to carry me out, but I heard Mama say, "Let me, please". I did not realize that Mama had come into the bathroom. Tears were running down her face. Her nose was running too, and I wondered if she would wipe it before it got to her mouth before she would have to taste it. she mixed salt with cold water and gently plastered the gritty mixture into my feet. She helped me out of the tub, made to carry me on her back to my room, but shook my head. She was too small. We might both fall. Mama did not speak until we were in my room (pp.192-193)

Whatever Mama, Mrs. Beatrice Eugene Achike did in terms of plastering the gritty mixture on her daughter's feet is irrelevant for her actions are anti African. She never for once reported the ill-treatment meted on her and her children to her in-laws, neighbours, Christian brethren and not even Father Benedict whom they see as God in human flesh. Not even when she had a miscarriage.

I was in my room after lunch, reading James Chapter five because I would talk about the biblical roots of the mounting of the sick during family time, when I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parent's hand – carved bedroom door. I imagined the door had gotten stuck and Papa was trying to open it.

I stepped out of my room just as Jaja came out of his. We stood at the landing and watched Papa descend. Mama was shrug over his shoulder like the jute sacks of rice his factory workers sought in bulk at the Seme Boarder....

"There's blood on the floor" Jaja said. "I'll get the brush from the bathroom".

"We cleaned up the trickled of blood, which trailed away as if someone had carried a leaking jar of red water – colour all the way downstairs. Jaja scrubbed while I wiped. Pp. 32-33

That was how Beatrice Achike, Kambili's mother had her miscarriage. The children felt bad that they had to brush the bathroom and other areas stained by the blood. Poor children. And when their mother returned few days later, she spoke to her children as if it was a trivial matter. She seems very hypocritical. Here her

"Umum," she said, hugging us. "My children. She wore the same white T-shirt with God is love written on the front....

"There was an accident, the baby is gone," she said. P. 34.

"there was an accident, "the baby is gone" the kind of accident she never mentioned. She never complained to the appropriate authorities. She never did. Perhaps she knew if she complained her role as a neck that turns the head whichever way she desires will become very glaring and blames will be apportioned the way it should be.

Though she never complained, and for whatever reason(s) she never did not matter here and now, one may never cease to wonder why a man will choose to destroy himself by either deliberately destroying his children (only two) for that matter, and his wife, or by being foolish to the extent of allowing the neck, his wife to manipulate him to self-destruct the way she did if she was the real problem. Perhaps Eugene has no excuse for according to Mukoma wa Ngugi (2011) "the point is that torture traumatizes both the victim and the perpetrators. The perpetrator can choose to carry on in denial, but that comes at a cost because it will find expression in violence directed inwards or at those closest to the torture (p 26). This explains why Eugene "was crying...tears streaming down his face" (p 192) as he poured the hot water on Kambili's feet" (p. 192).

WOMEN ALWAYS IN SELF-DESTRUCT

My husband maybe the head of the house, I am the neck that turns the head – an American housewife. (P69)

The about quotation cited by Chinwezu (1990) is an indication of matriarchies operating covertly or otherwise behind a façade or mask of the highly criticised patriarchy by feminist propagandists. Christianity covertly or otherwise helps in the sustenance of matriarchy. A woman as the neck of a man decides on which way to turn the head. This is why Eugene Achike could be turned away from his father who though a traditional worshipper, needs all the care by Christian religious practice and a woman who wants to exclude her husband's family in order to enjoy her husband's wealth with her relegates. In a typical African society Beatrice, selfish madam Beatrice would have spoken to her husband to take care of his father and when he fails, summon him before the elders of the family. She never did that. What is the difference between beggars godless beggars, Eugene gives money every day on the streets and his father who believes in God but dislike the Christian approach to reaching that God, Eugene through ignorance and the selfish manipulation of Beatrice, and Beatrice due to selfishness fails to understand, and turn her husband that the supreme God says honor your father and your mother so that your days may be long. (1990)

Chinwezu (1990) must have been very right when he observes that:

now she has married him, moved into his house, and settles down to manage her hard worker. Husband management, the grand preoccupation of wife power, has as its prime objectives:

- (a) *to keep the husband productive of enough wealth, status, power, fame, etc as will satisfy the wife's own ambitions, and*
- (b) *to keep him from running away, however harrowingly she exploits him" (p66)*

Perhaps one could add until she kills him even when he is no longer useful as Beatrice did to Eugene

This is why Chinwezu (1990) adds that to achieve these aims, a wife brings all her skills in the manipulation, domestication and taming of her husband to suit her purpose. In the art of managing men, rare is the male Caesar who can match the average girl of seventeen.

Girls learn it by observation or through conversation with their mothers or aunts, or during initiation rites in those societies which still practice them. The result is that, by puberty, if not before, the average girl can manipulate a situation so as to receive as gifts whatever she desires even without explicitly asking for them. This skill, which she is ready to use on her male slave, demonstrates a much higher order of managerial craft than order-barking prefects, captains,

generals, presidents, tycoons and other male-style commanders ever attain. After marriage, she keeps her skills sharpened through refresher courses, alias klatches or gossip sessions whenever woman talk what, for them is serious shup (pp66-67).

So there is no small woman. No woman is small. No woman is naïve. Even the most stupid female (woman) can skillfully manipulate and destroy the Caesars and Napoleons of the world. Beatrice Eugene Achike could be said to not only have turned her husband to herself that he becomes so isolated and needs psychotherapeutic treatments, but renotes her Kambili and Jaja to hating their father the way they did. That Jaja could talk to his father any how, and the mother embraces him without scolding him shows her ingenuity in her attempt to launch her final onslaught to kill the man, and put Jaja another man in Jail. See Jaja unbecoming behavior:

"Jaja, you did not go to communion" papa said quietly, almost a question

Jaja stared at the missal on the table as though he were addressing it.

The wafer gives me bad breath"

I stared at Jaja. Had something come loose in his head?..

"And the priest keeps touching my mouth and it nauseates me," Jaja said. He knew I was looking at him, that my shocked eyes begged him to seal his mouth, but he did not look at me.

"It is the body of our Lord." Papa's voice was low, very low. His face looked swollen already, with pustipped rashes spread across every inch, but it seemed to be swelling even more.

"You can not stop receiving the body of our Lord. It is death, you know that"

"Then I will die", (Pp. 6-7)

That Jaja could be hold enough to tell the father that he would prefer to die than to obey him shows the degree of the poisoning of the children's mind. Adichie's narrator, the author's mouth piece tells us that Jaja did not move. Papa Swayed from side to side. I stood at the door, watching them. (p.7). No father will be happy over such in subordination from his heir apparent. What would Papa, a man screwed beyond the nut could hold do Than to drink "his tea quietly" as Jaja knelt besides Mama, flattened the Church bulletin he held into a dustpan, and placed a jagged ceramic piece on it." Careful, Mama, or those pieces will cut your fingers," he said. (P8)

Ever human being, even the very core feminists in their temporary moments of sanity or rationality will expect Mama to order Jaja out of her sight for talking to Papa as if

Papa was his slave. Rather than do this, she, Bentrice, the mother of a son that had just abused his father, her husband gave the boy a Kuddus for a well acted script. Kambili the younger sister could do nothing but recoil as she makes us understand "I pulled at one of the cornrows underneath my black church scarf to make sure I was not dreaming. Why were they acting so normal, Jaja and Mama, as if they did not know what had just happened?" (P8).

Kambili could not understand, she explains to us. Could it be true that she did not really understand that Adichie could say through her voice - Kambili - "And why was Papa drinking his tea quietly, as if Jaja had not talked back to him," (P8) is to achieve her main thrust in the text - to showcase man as a total evil. Papa or Eugene could not have done otherwise. He merely avoided stirring the debris in a stagnant water. Even Kambili, the narrator "slowly... turned and headed upstairs to change, out of my red sundry dress," (P8) she tells us.

Man! Men are to housewives what flies are to the wanton boys. They kill the flies at will for game or for pleasure. Clark (1998) succinctly corroborates the above thus:

Women have no right-no special rights that I know of, they bestow their gifts on whom they like, run their households as they please, bring up our children the way they deem fit and to crown it all, they dispute rights with their mother-in-law in their ambition to change us. So what special right do they want? (P20)

Clark above may seem too simplistic, yet it is the gospel truth about the reality of the moment. A critical analyze of Adichie's Purple Hibiscus will show that woman have no special right to demand for they have all the rights. They bestow their gifts to whoever they want, run the house and their husbands the way they want and ensure that the future generations are structured to maintain the ordinance the way they desire it.

Even Kambili the fifteen years young narrator as a NECK could turn father Amadi as she desire

Mama Joe finished my hair before father Amadi came back. She gave me a red mirror neatly broken in half, so I saw my new hair style in fractions.

Thank you. It's nice," I said.

She reached out to strengthen a cornrow that did not need to be straightened. "A man does not bring a young girl to dress how unless he loves the young girl, I am telling you. It does not happen," she said... A woman in blue wrapper with a boy tucked under her armpit bought the whole basket of snails just before father Amadi came to pick me up...

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627

"Thank you" I said to father Amadi as we walked to the car. He had paid Mama Joe so well that she protested, weakly, and said she should not take so for plaiting the hair of Aunt Heoma's niece. (P233)

Father Amadi took Kambili to plait her hair, and paid Mama Joe, the woman who did the plaiting very well that she protested that it was too much. Though some persons may see it as an act of generosity, it is very important for us to state here and now that a reverend father is not supposed to behave like that. For him to suggest the plaiting and like a nanny carried her there, waited patiently for it to be done leaves much to be desired. It merely explains that men could be turned around whichever way women want.

Father Amadi came after Jaja had cut up the chicken and Amaka had put half of it in a plastic bag for the freezer. Aunt Heoma smiled when father Amadi told her he was taking me to get my hair done. (P230). That is the ability of woman to turn men around whichever way they desire. Not even the elects like Father Amadi and company are able to stand. And when every turning of the head has been completed, the phone definitely will start to ring and it will ring for a long time. At the end, we find Mama Come.

Into the living room a short while later. The wrapper casually tied across her chest hung low exposing the birthmark, a little back bulb, above her left breast.

"They did an autopsy," she said. "They have found the poison in your father's body". She sounded as though the poison in Papa's body was something we all had known about, something we had put in there to be found, the way it was done in the book I read where people hid Easter eggs for children to find. ...

For a long, silent moment I could think of nothing. My mind was blank. I was blank...

"Why did you put it in his tea?" I asked Mama, rising. My voice was loud. I was almost screaming. "Why in his tea?"

But Mama did not answer. Not even when I stood up and shook her until Jaja yanked me away. Not even when Jaja wrapped his arms around me and turned to include her but she moved away.

The policemen came a few hours later. They said they wanted to ask some questions. Somebody at St. Agnes Hospital had a copy of the autopsy report with them. Jaja did not wait for their questions; he told them he had used rat poison, that he put it in Papa's tea. They allowed him to change his shirt before they took him away. (Pp283-284).

Man. Jaja liken father like son. They took him to jail while his father had gone to eternal grave.

"Poison?" I said Mama tightened the wrapper, and then went to the windows; she pushed the drapes aside, checking that the louvers were shut to keep the rain from splashing into the house. Her movements were calm and slow. When she spoke, her voice was just as calm and slow.

"Started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Ntukka. Sisi, got it from me: her uncle is a powerful witch doctor. (p283)

This is how things are climaxed. The scripts have been perfectly acted. Women, feminism and Christianity. Where is the wisdom in it, for a woman, the first and only lady of a business morgue to allow a mere house girl who is not privileged to enjoy the beauty of a first class marriage to destroy her crown. Here, we see Sisi, a woman, helping a fellow woman to destroy her crown permanently. Whom did they use? Another Adam's son-Sisi's uncle, a powerful witch doctor.

If women must kill for whatever reason(s) that seem(s) plausible to them, then, the words of Meja Mwangi (1977) must be obeyed by them. According to Mwangi

*Days run out of me
Life goes from bad to worse
Very soon, very much soon,
Time will lead me to the end
Very well, so be it.
But one thing I beg of you
If the sun must set for me,
If all must come to an end,
If you must be rid of me, the way
you have done with all my friends,
If you must kill me
Do so fast.
KILL ME QUICK,
(Preface)*

The words of the Kenyan writer Meja Mwangi (1977) above becomes very relevant in our attempt to end the pursuit of self-destruct by the female specie. If men must be killed for whatever wrong or perceived wrong they have done or may do, there might be need to do that at birth rather than allow them to work tirelessly to build what they may not be allowed to enjoy. And this will create a colony of women. None will be there for them to be "suitable helpers to". What do will do?

Greg Anderson (1995) argument will help us – man and woman to live and face the challenge that sometimes human may be irrational.

In my observations, the people who have most success are those who, in spite of illness, do all they can to live for today. These are the ones who see life as complete even though it may have some health challenges. They have made an essentially spiritual decision to live now. (p.87)

THE ONLY WAY

Papa sat down at the table and poured his tea from the China tea set with Pink flowers on the edges. I waited for him to ask Jaja and me to take a sip, as he always did. A love sip, he called it, because you shared the little things you loved with the people you loved... But Papa didn't say anything as I watched him raise the cup to his lips (p8).

Feminists have criticize Eugene Achike's behaviour for being a wife beater and one who abuses his children. In as much as we condemn beating one's wife, and perhaps one's children, we still wish to say that children sometime need corrective beatings which are directed towards bringing discipline to the home. This is why Eugene for instant could not call his daughter, Kambili and son Jaja to take their usual love sip as shown above. Jaja's behaviour is an affront to the fathers authority as the head of the house.

"You cannot stop receiving the body of our Lord. It is death, you know that".

"Then I will die" Fear had darkened Jaja's eyes to the colour of coal tar, but he look Papa in the face now. "Then I will die, Papa"

Where is the father that would take such nonsense from his child, a son, an only son, whom he loves. A fair apparent. None. Not even the feminists, if they are able to throw away sentiment, even as women or if they were to become men.

All these affronts took place before the child's mother. And instead of reprimanding the son for such stupid acts, clapped for him thus: Jaja knelt besides Mama, flattered the church bulletin he held into a dustpan, and placed a jagged ceramic pieces on it. "Careful, Mama, or those pieces will cut your fingers," he said. (p.8)

In a typical African society this is very much unacceptable. No one, no man will take it. Not even "The People's Court". Even the narrator Kamibili frowns at it: I pulled at one of the cornrows underneath my black church scarf to make sure I was not dreaming. Why were they acting so normal, Jaja and Mama, as if they did not know what had just happened? Page 8.

That's Kambili's annoyance. No woman in a traditional African society will sit down and watch her son insult her dear husband.

And the poor husband what will he do, than drink his tear slowly and leave the scene. And why was Papa drinking his tea quietly as if Jaja had not just talk back to him? (page 8). The poor fifteen years old girl, Kambili could not understand. "At a cross road, turned and headed upstairs to change out of my red Sunday dress" (p. 9)

In another perspective, when there is a problem between a man and his wife, each reports the matter to his or her family and that of the parents in laws. This is because a man does marry only the wife but her entire family. The same with the woman. And in very serious cases, both families will bring their full weight on the offender – husband or wife. And peace will be restored. This, we did not see in Eugene Achike's family. Eugene tilted towards her family. Showered love on them and hated his. And the wife never bothered.

Can a man behave the way Eugene did if the wife had co-operated very well with him? This is a multi million dollar question. To a every large extent, he could have behaved differently if the wife had a different personality. Hence Amara (2012) warns women thus:

Don't make yourself the nagging type whether dating or married. A man needs a woman who can give him peace at all times. Nagging does not solve anything, prayer and love do. Make yourself fun to be around. Let the man look forward to seeing you. Men want a girl (woman) who can get their mood up when they are down. You just have to be a source of strength to him.

Above, remains a very good admonition for women. Nagging scares people, or loved ones away. It widens the already existing or perceived gaps. It is very destructive. Who knows, perhaps Beatrice nags a lot. Everything about her, that will help us pass valid judgement on her had been deliberately avoided by Chimamanda Adichie, the feminist writer.

It is disturbing. Hence Buscaglia Leo warns:

I'd like to talk to you about a concept that means a great deal to me, and that is the concept of togetherness. I really am concerned about how separated we all are. Everybody seems to be involved in what Schweitzer talked about so many years ago when he said we're all so much together in crowds and yet all of us are dying of loneliness (p225).

Eugene and the wife Beatrice, lived together, attended mass together, ate together, slept together, had sex with each other, yet they "are dying of loneliness". Arnadaa Mahtar M' Bow (1980) must have been very right when he posits that

What is required of the international community is a sustained effort to demasculinize the very concept of human knowledge, to examine scientifically the psychological, social

and above all cultural determinism which still limit a full understanding by men and women of their inter-relatedness and to work for a veritable renaissance of the relations between all human beings... We are moving towards a decisive re-orientation in relations between men and women both in the home and at places of work and leisure.

This is what has to be done. Efforts must be geared towards 'destroying everything that hinders the full comprehension by man and woman of their inter-relatedness, and the inevitability of such, in order to create the desired peace and harmony necessary for growth, fulfillment and the full realization of human potential in this short earthly journey.

Dr. Martin Luther King as cited by Terence Mccalley (2012) the American Ambassador to Nigeria in an article titled Martin Luther King's Non-Violent Legacy admonishes thus: "I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. You can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be" (p. 45). None can be until the other is what he or she ought to be. This is because if "husband and wife should naturally supply one another's deficiencies; and if the wife performs her functions worthily she may even make herself the ruling partner" (p122).

Is it not stupidity and zero level intelligence that could make a woman whose first child is about seventeen (17) years old to tell us "I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor" (p. 283). What on earth should make a housewife whether decent or not to condescend so low to discuss her marriage with her house girl, and employs same to go and source for the poison to kill her husband for her, a man who refused to have a second wife. "Do you know how many mothers pushed their daughters at him? Do you know how many asked him to impregnate them, even, and not to bother paying of bride price?" (p. 245) Madam Beatrice asked us in praise of the husband, she finally killed. She feels the man at death would have left enough money and estate for her to enjoy.

It is also absurd to find that neither Eugene nor Beatrice, his wife could understand that "torture traumatizes both the victim and the perpetrator. The perpetrator can choose to carry on in denial, but that comes at a cost because it will find expression in violence directed inwards or at those closest to the torturer" (p. 26) as Mukoma Wa Ngugi (2011) would put it.

In conclusion, I wish to state that it is very necessary for Eugene Achike and his wife Beatrice, and the mass of humanity to realize that Christianity, and feminism and any other ideology whether in existence or yet to exist, will only be of good, if there is great

moderation in the application of such. And that no matter how beautiful these ideologies seem to us, they will lead us to self-destruct if they undermined our roots. In deed, Mariama Ba sums the thrust of our argument perfectly well in the following statement.

My reflections determine my attitude to the problems of life. I analyse the decisions that decide our future. I widen my scope by taking an interest in current 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.
(p. 58)

What the African novel does is to explicate this inevitable and necessary complementarity between the HEAD and the NECK, the Adams and Eves of this world, beyond any reasonable doubts, showing how stupid it is for any of them to engage in acts capable of self-destruct. Rather than inflict any form of pain on the other in their attempts to dominate and manipulate the other, they should strive to understand that which they believe in for it is only in such a state will they overcome the mistakes of the past, and live like trees planted by the river side. It is when we have done this that the African novel, an inestimable arbiter would have perform the task of helping to awaken the conscience of the world to the plight of the powerless in a world where muscles of arms rather than morality seems to determine the fate of life" Viet Wild 314, as Chanjerai Hove a Zimbabwean write posited in his acceptance speech for the Norma Award.

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